

# 17 COMPOSING TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS FOR LOCALIZED USABILITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

*Keshab Raj Acharya*

With the international spread of business, you are now globally connected.<sup>1</sup> This global interconnectedness has increased your ability to understand and function as an informed member of and participant in diverse national and global cultures. To design and compose more effective texts (print, digital, multimedia, visual) for audiences from other cultures, you need to understand how cultural factors affect people's perception of your message in those cultures.

Culture matters in defining your behaviors, norms, values, and belief systems. These cultural factors affect how audiences in the international context perceive and react to the message you share with them. These cultural factors also mean that writing for international audiences is different from writing for your domestic audiences. This chapter uses different examples to illustrate these ideas. Specifically, the chapter uses these examples to demonstrate the need for writing **usable**, **meaningful**, and **credible messages** for audiences from other cultures. The chapter also introduces the process of document localization as a tool for creating such messages from the perspectives of multicultural audiences. The chapter concludes by providing guidelines and best practices for composing culturally usable, meaningful, and credible texts for diverse audiences in international contexts.

In your technical writing class, you might be given a number of assignments to complete individually or in teams. These assignments might include different technical documents, such as instruction manuals, memos,

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proposals, reports, emails, and product descriptions. In composing these documents, your main goal is to have your work seen as credible or trustworthy by the intended audience. Composing such credible texts requires an in-depth understanding of:

- The audience you are writing for. (Who are they?)
- The purpose for which your audience is reading your work. (What do you want your readers to do after reading your work?)
- The context in which the audience will use your work. (Where are they when reading and using it?)
- The type of document you are composing. (What are you writing, and in what format?)

Understanding these factors can be challenging even in contexts familiar to you, but these dynamics become even more complex when writing for audiences across cultures.

Culture can be defined as “the sum total of the beliefs, rules, techniques, institutions, and artifacts that characterize human populations” (Ball and McCulloch 258). Culture is a “set of values and beliefs, or a cluster of learned behaviors” people share with other members in a particular society (Lebrón 126). In other words, culture encompasses the set of behaviors, norms, values, and belief systems—the cultural aspects held in common by a group of people in a society. As such, culture varies, and these variations affect how your audience understands and uses the documents you produce. In short, writing technical documents for audiences from other cultures involves understanding the cultural aspects of your target audiences (St.Amant 148–151).

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## RHETORICAL CONTEXTS OF TECHNICAL WRITING

**R**hetoric is the process of creating messages that address the expectations and needs of your intended audience. The more you understand what your audience knows about a topic and how members of that audience discuss it, the more effectively you can compose messages that your audience can understand and use effectively—for example, using instructions to assemble a new cabinet. Technical documents need to be clear, concise, accurate, and professional. Clarity, accuracy, and precision are essential elements in composing usable, meaningful, and credible technical documents for readers from other cultures. Composing a usable

or easy-to-use text is not enough; you must also think about how meaningful—that is, how the text resonates with different cultures—and how credible the text is for your target audience.

Consider a situation in which you want to use a printer in your university library to print out a class assignment. You go to the printing station where only one printer is available. As soon as you hit the print command button, you see an error message pop up on the screen, notifying that the paper tray is empty. You have ten minutes left before the library closes, and nobody is available to assist you. You look around and find reams of printing paper in a cabinet. Now, you take out a few sheets for printing, but you don't know how to load the paper into the machine. On the wall adjacent to the printer, you see a set of instructions. They read:

If the printer has run out of paper, fill the tray back up and press the power button to go on with the print job.

If you are a native English speaker, you might not have any problem understanding and following the instructions. You know what the instructions mean, so you can perform the actions they describe and successfully complete the desired task.

Consider you are an international student with a limited command of English. Unlike the native English speaker, you are unfamiliar with some of the terms in the instructions. While reading the instructions, you become confused because you don't know what the phrases such as “run of,” “back up,” and “go on with” mean. You grapple with making sense of these phrases for a moment, but you have no idea that:

- “run out of” means “consume or deplete all of something”
- “fill [something] back up” means “replace the contents of a container”
- “go on with” means “continue or proceed.”

As a result of not being able to accomplish the task, you leave the printing station in frustration and anger. Who do you blame? Yourself, or the unknown person who wrote these instructions? Why?

### CREATING USABLE TEXT

One of the main goals of technical communication is to compose information in plain language that everyone—regardless of educational background or language proficiency—can read, understand, and use.

Composing documents in plain language means enabling your audience to “find what they need, understand what they find, and use what they understand appropriately” (Redish 163). Plain language is particularly important for international audiences, many of whom are not native speakers, or who might use a different dialect of a language, such as English, to communicate. In the printer example, it is best to remove phrasal verbs and use plain language, such as the following:

The printer needs more paper. Refill the paper tray and press the power button to continue.

The lesson here is one of culture and comprehension. Unless your text meets the audience’s expectations and needs, they will not be able to perform their desired tasks. In other words, when you are composing messages for the international audience, you should focus on usability—that is, creating texts that are easy to read, understand, and use in a range of cultural environments. From a usability perspective, your text should be easy for your readers to read, understand, and use in their own cultural contexts and locations.

Now, let us consider another scenario. You are an American student who just arrived in the UK for a study abroad program. After arriving on campus, you decide to deposit some money in a nearby bank. As you enter the bank, the supervisor asks if you would like to open a “current account.” You are unsure what to say because you have no idea what the “current account” means. When the supervisor clarifies, you understand that “current account” means “checking account” in your home country. While completing the application form, you are asked to enter your date of birth, which you write as “11/09/2003” (i.e., November 09, 2003) just as you would in the US. However, the supervisor misinterprets it as “September 11, 2003” due to the UK’s date format being “day/month/year” (09 November 2003) instead of the “month/day/year” format used in the US. Consequently, you are requested to complete a new application form with your date of birth formatted according to the UK standard.

Both this example of the bank account application and the prior example of the printer instructions involve usability. Both also reveal that rhetoric—or the process of creating messages that address expectations and needs of your intended audiences—can be central to usability in intercultural, cross-cultural, and/or international situations even when all parties are native speakers of the same language (e.g., a US student and a UK bank supervisor). In the process of composing texts (print, digital, multimedia, visual) for audiences from other cultures, it is important to recognize how rhetoric plays a crucial role in addressing their needs and expectations.

Both examples also reveal how usability is a matter of understanding the rhetorical expectations of multicultural audiences and creating texts that meet those expectations. For instance, among the key characteristics of professional communication in the US cultural context are directness (the quality of being clear, straightforward, and to the point), brevity (the quality of being brief or short in duration or amount), concision (the quality of being concise by avoiding unnecessary words, redundancies, or wordiness), and precision (the quality of being exact and accurate). But people in Japan often prefer a much more “roundabout approach, in which ideas are conveyed through implication rather than stated explicitly” (Ingre and Basil 7). Essentially, understanding the rhetorical conventions of writing in the target culture—or the culture with which you are sharing information—is essential for composing effective technical documents.

In sum, what works in your cultural context might not work in another. For this reason, it is important to be culturally aware of your audience’s rhetorical expectations and needs when creating technical documents for an international audience. By considering these factors, you can produce usable, meaningful, and credible texts that meet the needs of your target audience in the international context.

## UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Differences in cultural rhetorical expectations can result in misunderstanding (a mistaken or incorrect understanding), misperception (a false or inaccurate perception), and misinterpretation (making a wrong interpretation) when sharing information across cultures. From the perspective of international cultural contexts, these aspects can lead to workplace conflicts, poor interpersonal and intergroup relationships, and inefficiency. Therefore, composing texts for multicultural audiences requires a deeper understanding of cultural diversity—the differences in audiences’ behaviors, norms, values, and belief systems.

Learning to understand other cultures is valuable and enriching, and can provide new avenues to succeed in today’s globalized world. To gain a deeper understanding of audiences in international contexts, you can start by answering four core questions:

- Who are my readers/for what cultures am I writing?
- What do I want my readers to do after they read my document?
- In what context do my readers use my document?
- What type of document am I composing?

If you have clear answers to such questions, you are in a better position to compose usable, meaningful, and credible documents for multicultural audiences.

While writing for other cultures, you should also be careful about the writing conventions of the target culture—the culture for whom you are writing. For example, in Eastern Asia, it's common to start with general descriptions followed by opinions and statements, whereas in the Western world, the main idea is typically stated upfront, followed by supporting details (Li et al. 337). Similarly, when communicating with people in England, it is advisable to use British terms such as “lift,” “boot,” and “biscuits” instead of American terms such as “elevator,” “trunk,” and “cookies.”

Thus, the more you learn about your audience and the context of use, the better you will be able to generate usable, meaningful, and credible documents. In short, when you write for multicultural audiences, you need to employ more effective approaches for localized usability.

### CREATING TEXTS FOR LOCALIZED USABILITY

Localization is the process of adapting content to support users' requirements in a specific target locale. In simple terms, localization means making your content usable, meaningful, and credible for your intended audience in a specific target culture. Broadly speaking, localization involves creating materials such as print, digital, multimedia, and visual texts to meet the rhetorical expectations and needs of audiences in different cultures. By addressing these expectations and needs, localization makes materials easier for individuals from those cultures to understand and use. In this way, localization is a central approach to usability for intercultural, cross-cultural, and international communication.

Writing for localized usability means avoiding assumptions based on your language, location, and culture. To succeed in writing for localized usability, you need to focus on:

- **Sociocultural factors:** the forces that influence individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors within cultures and society
- **Culturally localized user experiences:** users' practical experiences and skills gained through observations or interactions with other people in the local community
- **Local contexts:** the surrounding environmental factors that influence how a product, service, or user interface is perceived and used by people in a particular region or locality

Culture has a major impact on the usability of documents. For instance, users from different cultures may not use a document if it does not align with their behaviors, norms, values, and belief systems. Because culture strongly influences how users perceive your document, understanding your audience's culture and the context of use is vital to the localized usability of your document.

Regardless of document types, producing an effective document typically requires completing the four basic tasks:

- **Deliver ease-of-use information:** because different individuals in different situations have different information needs
- **Use persuasive reasoning or logic:** because readers may disagree with the meaning of the information provided and the action to be taken
- **Weigh the ethical issues:** because unethical communication lacks credibility and promote unethical behaviors
- **Practice good teamwork:** because many organizations produce documents by a team of colleagues with varying skills and experiences

By tailoring your content to the preferences of your intended audiences, you can reduce the risk of misunderstanding information you share with them. The more you understand your audience's rhetorical expectations and cultural needs, the more likely you are to communicate information that is understood and used as intended. In essence, the better you understand the text localization process, the more effectively you can compose usable, meaningful, and credible documents for multicultural audiences in the globalized world.

## DOCUMENT LOCALIZATION PROCESS

In the globally interconnected world, you are expected to produce documents in ways that audiences from other cultures can understand and use within their local settings or environments. From an international perspective, a usable text is one that supports knowledge, experiences, and skills of users from related cultures. For this, you need to know how you can compose the localized document that can address rhetorical expectations and needs of particular users from particular cultures.

Adopting the document localization process can help you address these factors and produce effective documents for multicultural audiences. As shown in Figure 17.1, you can begin the documentation process with a documentation plan, which entails a preliminary study of the document

type and purpose, audience, and context of use. As the documentation project progresses, the next crucial phase involves delving into cultural factors. During this phase, it becomes essential to carefully examine these cultural elements to tailor the materials appropriately, aligning them with the cultural expectations associated with document usability (St.Amant 154). In the third phase, you start drafting and reviewing the document with cultural considerations and contextual awareness of the user's situation.

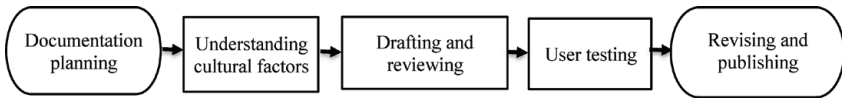


Figure 17.1: Document Localization Process

At this phase, you thoroughly review the text to ensure its functionality, accuracy, accessibility, and writing quality. While document functionality is concerned with how the document conveys information to its users, accuracy involves correctly presenting information without ambiguity or errors. Likewise, accessible documents ensure that all users, including those with disabilities, receive the same information. Good technical writing avoids unnecessary wordiness, jargon (overtly technical language), and reads smoothly.

As you perform the tasks from 1 to 3, you should also focus on the cultural expectations of rhetoric (presenting information in a credible way), document type (memos, letters, reports, proposals, instructions, reviews, newsletters, presentations, etc.) and the context of use.

Additionally, you need to be aware of other factors that influence the perceptions of the user of your document, including:

- **Content management:** organizing the content based on importance or priority
- **Typography:** the technique of arranging fonts, font sizes, line lengths, line spacing or leading, letter spacing or tracking, and other elements to help readers find the information they need quickly and easily
- **Abbreviations and acronyms:** words formed from initial letters of a phrase and pronounced as a word like NASA
- **Slang, jargon, idioms, humor, and clichés**

Furthermore, you need to carefully implement various rhetorical strategies during this third phase, including design elements (such as page layout and typography) and the principles of design. Some powerful and durable design principles include:



- **Proximity:** putting two related items (a visual that accompanies a text) close to each other so that the reader will interpret them as related to each other
- **Alignment:** placing texts or visuals so their edges line up along the same rows or columns, or their bodies along a common center
- **Contrast:** arranging elements for emphasis and difference (light vs dark, sans serif vs serif)
- **Repetition:** reusing of the same or similar elements throughout the document (e.g., icons, numbers, lines). (Williams 85-94)

You may also consider adding localized components to support regional differences and technical requirements in the target culture for which you are preparing the document.

In your next phase, you can run a usability test to ensure that your document works as intended for your target audience. Usability testing is the process that employs representative participants from the target culture to evaluate the degree to which your document meets their needs and expectations. This process helps you quickly identify any problems with your document and decide how to fix them for localized usability.

To collect users' insights, you can employ various user research methods, such as focus groups, individual interviews, surveys, and ethnography. Ethnographic methods involve gathering information about your document from users in a real-world setting rather than in a usability lab. There are many online resources listed in the Appendix that you can use to learn how to conduct a usability test.

After the test, you come to your final stage. Here, you analyze user feedback to improve your document by revising, reorganizing, and restructuring the contents rhetorically from a user's perspective. In addition to this, you may also need to incorporate other essential elements for publishing and completing the project. This could involve effectively integrating design elements and adhering to design principles that enhance localized usability. To achieve this, you need to consider some guidelines and best practices discussed below.

## GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES

The way a document is organized may vary from culture to culture. Unlike Canadians, for example, who like recommendations at the beginning of a report, Germans prefer the background first and recommendation later (Varner and Beamer 73). Similarly, unlike German and Japanese email messages, Arabic email messages have a high level of appreciation and praise

(Danielewicz-Betz 30). So, when writing for an international audience, it is important to be culturally aware and sensitive. This entails recognizing and respecting the norms, values, and belief systems of your readers, which can greatly enhance the impact and reception of your message.

### LANGUAGE EXPECTATIONS

The use of language in your document should be in its most accepted form, adhering to the writing conventions of the target culture where the document is used. English has many standard varieties around the world, such as North American English, British English, Australian English, and Indian English. So, while composing text for an audience from another culture, you are more likely to succeed using common English words, short sentences, and short paragraphs than using high-sounding phrases, long sentences, and long paragraphs.

When writing for international audiences, consider the following:

- **Use plain language** and avoid slang, jargon, idioms, clichés, phrasal verbs, humor (especially, puns), and metaphors (a comparison between two things that are otherwise unrelated).
- **Avoid acronyms.** An international audience may not know, for instance, what “NASA” “ASAP,” “FYI,” and “SSN” mean unless you define them.
- **Don’t use the same word to mean different things** (e.g., lie, wind, bark).
- **Avoid using special characters** such as “/\;,\*? <>” in the file name.
- **Pay attention to punctuation**, such as quotation marks (“ ”) in English, low quotes („ ”) in German, and guillemets (<< >>) in French.
- **Use “international” English** as used by the target audiences in their cultural context. For instance, different spellings in the words such as “localise,” “colour,” “centre,” “licence,” and “traveller” are common in the countries like Nepal, UK, and India.
- **Limit pronouns** as they can cause confusion. For instance, the French word “il” could mean “he” or “it,” so your French reader may be unclear about your subject.
- **Use appropriate salutations.** For instance, first names are seldom used by those doing business in Nepal or Germany. Unlike in the US cultural context, salutations such as “Dear sir” are more common than “Dear professor” or “Dear Dr. [last name]” in the Nepali cultural context when writing a letter or email to a male professor.

## DOCUMENT FORMATTING EXPECTATIONS

As you prepare documents for your international audience, you need to make certain decisions carefully, including how to format the document. Indeed, words are important to any writer, but in technical writing, how the words look on the page is nearly as important as what the words say. If you want your readers to stay focused on your document, you need to make it visually appealing as well. In formatting a document for multicultural audiences, consider how you can:

- Allow for sufficient text expansion based on the requirements and preferences of the target audience. Text expansion occurs when the target language (the language your audience translates into) takes up more space than the source language.
- Consider where you should put your title, headings, and subheadings in your document.
- Leave appropriate margins in your document.
- Consider your audience's preferences when using columns, paragraphs, bullets, and numbers.
- Keep your document's formatting consistent throughout to avoid confusing your target audience.
- Implement the principles of design and design elements (such as font, font size, lower or upper case, line length, line spacing, and color scheme) that are acceptable in the target culture with which you share the document.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR VISUALS AND COLORS

Visuals and colors are often used in technical documents in order to enhance meaning (Cohn 25-27). These features also help capture your audience's attention. But you need to use such features carefully, for they might have different meanings in different cultures. For instance, the meanings of colors can vary depending on the culture of the target audience:

- While white in Western culture symbolizes purity, it is associated with death and mourning in many southeast Asian cultures.
- Red commonly indicates warning or danger in North America, Europe, and Japan but it symbolizes good luck and happiness in China.
- In most part of North America, yellow represents happiness and warmth but Latin America sees yellow as a sign of death, sorrow, and mourning. In Germany, yellow is the color of envy. (Dimitriiska and Efremova 80-83)

Color is an important aspect in every culture. So, understanding the meanings of colors in other cultures is crucial when adding color to your document.

Supplementing written texts with visuals such as graphics and photographs can also help achieve conciseness, clarity, and appeal. However, incorporating visuals into a text for another culture requires a better understanding of the implications of those visuals in that particular culture. For instance, Chinese users tend to favor diverting, cartoon-like visuals much more than Western users (Li et al. 150).

While integrating colors and visual elements into your document for multicultural audiences, consider the following:

- Define and explain color symbology and use colors appropriately for the target audiences.
- Use visuals and symbols that are acceptable and meaningful to the target culture.
- When using human figures, consider using simple, abstract figures devoid of recognizable human face and hairstyle. Omit any indication of skin color and use unshaded line drawings of people.
- Avoid using hand gestures unless you are familiar with their specific meanings and cultural significance in the target culture.

Certainly, you may not be able to account for all the different cultural contexts where colors, visuals, and gestures convey different meanings. But conducting user research and usability testing can help you better understand what colors and visuals your audience prefers and why.

## FORMATTING NUMBERS, DATES, AND CURRENCIES

Consider that different cultures use distinct formats for numbers, dates, and currencies. For example, phone numbers and time representations (such as 12-hour vs. 24-hour) vary around the world. To make your technical documents usable, meaningful, and credible in other cultures, you need to consider the following:

- **Date format:** Different countries use different date formats. For example:

U.S.	Ghana	Portugal	Luxembourg
5/29/2023	29/5/2023	23.05.29	29.05.2023
5-29-2023	29-5-2023	2023/05/29	
5/29/23		29-05-2023	

**Units of measurement:** Be mindful of the type of measurement units being used in other cultures. For instance, while “kilometer” is commonly used in countries like Nepal, India, Pakistan, and China, “mile” is the preferred unit in the United States, Myanmar, Liberia, and Puerto Rico.

- **Currency:** Pay attention to how currency values are formatted and written. For example:

U.S.	Nepal	India
\$430.50	₹ ४३०.५०	₹४३०.५०
US\$430.50	४३० रुपैयाँ ५० पैसा	४३० रुपये ५० पैसे

- **Large numbers:** Commas and/or periods are used in different places in different countries. For example,  
1,234,567.89 (US) 1.234.567,89 or 1234 567,89 (France)  
12,34,567.89 (Nepal)
- **Paper size:** Consider the paper size your target audience uses, especially for electronic documents. For example, in Nepal, A4 paper (210 x 297 mm, or 8.27 x 11.7 inches) is used in place of American letter-size (8.5 x 11 inches).

Thus, different cultures may perceive your composition of information in a variety of unexpected ways, so carefully consider the organization of contents, language expectations, colors, visuals, and measurement units, just to mention a few.

## RESEARCHING OTHER CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

Learning about, and paying close attention to, your audience and the context of use are vital to composing a text for localized usability. Of course, you might face some challenges for preparing technical documents for multicultural audiences. For instance, you might not know how to conduct user research, where to go to review related materials, and what technical tools can be employed to get user feedback on your document. However, various approaches can be employed to explore diverse cultural expectations and incorporate them into the document-writing process to enhance localized usability. Here are some suggestions that you might find helpful to implement the ideas discussed in the chapter.

## REVIEW MATERIALS CREATED BY AND FOR OTHER CULTURES

One of the best ways to learn about user expectations in other cultures is to review materials created by and for those cultures. For instance, if you are preparing a document in which you need to include information about foreign exchange rates in Nepal, you might review the website of Nepal Rastra Bank (<https://www.nrb.org.np>). Similarly, if you are writing an instruction manual for Portuguese (Brazilian) audiences, you might consult the Microsoft Portuguese (Brazilian) Style Guide (<https://tinyurl.com/5n8t8z7h>). In short, reviewing materials generated by and for other cultures can help you gain a general, initial understanding of the expectations of those cultures.

## DO INTERVIEWS WITH USERS FROM THE TARGET CULTURE

Interviews are a frequently used method to gain insights into your target audience. To gather valuable feedback from intended users, you can conduct interviews either in person or remotely, using phone or popular video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, and Skype. Preparing for an interview involves several key steps, including selecting the appropriate interview type, crafting well-considered questions, creating necessary materials, and recruiting potential participants. You need to design interview questions carefully and focus on how to interact with participants to get high-quality data. The process involves designing questions to recruit test participants, such as:

- How often do you use technical documents?
- What types of documents do you use?
- What makes you use them? Is there any reason for it?
- Would you prefer print or online documents?
- How does using print [or online] documents benefit you the most?

The resulting answers help you determine if the test participant is the appropriate person to collect feedback on your document. Gathering reliable data requires recruiting representative participants; otherwise, your results will not help you prepare the document effectively for your intended audience.

## CONDUCT USER TESTS OF DRAFT TEXTS WITH USERS FROM THE TARGET CULTURE

Conducting user tests is one of the best ways to gain insights into what users need and expect from your document in a localized context. By performing

user tests, you can identify areas where your document can be improved for localized usability, such as by using more appropriate language, cultural references, and design elements. To better understand how to implement user tests, you can consult some of the online sources listed in the Appendix. If you are conducting the test online, you can share the document by Skype, GoToMeeting, or Zoom’s “share screen” feature, or have them review it in advance. The process involves designing certain questions such as,

- What is your first impression of this document?
- Can you describe what this document is about?
- What convinces you to use this document?
- Do you find the document easy or difficult to use? Why or why not?
- Can you explain what [X] means to you in the document?
- What parts of the document did you like the most? Why?
- What parts of the document did you like the least? Why?

The answers obtained can guide you in revising and adapting the document to align with the preferences and usability expectations of audiences from different cultural backgrounds.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Composing texts for localized usability requires you to better understand how cultural factors influence your readers’ perception of the messages or texts you share with them. Cultures have different expectations and needs associated with the structure of the content, layout, style, mechanics, lexicon, spelling, and other factors. Successfully localized documents should appear as if they originated in the local culture. Miscommunication between cultures can occur due to ineffective localized usability implementation in a document.

Composing technical documents for localized usability, however, can be challenging—especially if you are uncertain about how to obtain information about your audience’s behaviors, norms, values, and belief systems. The culture of your target audience has a significant impact on how users perceive and accept your message. Adopting the document localization process as a tool and researching audiences’ needs and expectations in the target culture can help produce usable, meaningful, and credible documents. In short, with user research and usability testing in international contexts, you can better understand how cultural differences affect the audience’s expectations of your text and compose better texts for better experiences.

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## TEACHER RESOURCES

## OVERVIEW AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Today, students work in a creative, robust technological environment with a variety of media outlets. By using these outlets, they are expected to



compose texts for a diverse range of audiences. Communicating effectively with an audience from another culture requires understanding how cultural expectations and needs can affect the way audiences receive and interpret texts. For instance, Western user documentation can differ significantly from Eastern Asian user documentation in terms of content organization, layout, expectations for colors and visuals, and formatting of dates or numbers. To address these challenges, students can adopt more effective composing strategies to create texts that multicultural audiences can find usable, meaningful, and credible.

As discussed in the chapter, students can adopt the document localization process as a tool to compose documents for localized usability. Through a number of examples, the essay explores the challenges and opportunities of understanding and adapting to cultural differences while composing technical documents for multicultural audiences in an international context.

When writing for audiences across cultures, students need to know that different cultures have different needs and preferences. Document types that are popular in one culture may not be popular in another. For example, a message for a Spanish audience might be different from a message for a Nepali audience. This is due to the different cultural norms, values, and belief systems that people have. For these reasons, students should view technical writing tasks as more than just sharing information with an audience; they should also be seen as an opportunity to understand cultural relevance and the rhetorical nature of localization.

This essay is ideally suited for teaching students how to compose technical documents for audiences from other cultures. It provides a comprehensive list of guidelines and practices for writing effective technical documents in the international context, as well as ideas for conducting research on other cultural expectations. Students can use this chapter and adopt the documentation localization process to gain a deeper understanding of how cultural factors impact their writing practices. Instructors can use this entry to convey these ideas and have students practice composing usable, meaningful, and credible technical documents for international audiences.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

To help students explore the ideas discussed in this chapter, consider having them address—as individuals, in small groups, or as an overall class—the following questions:

1. As demonstrated in the chapter, misinterpretations of text can arise in diverse cultural contexts. Have you ever encountered such situations due to cultural differences?

2. How can the use of color, visuals, layout, typography, organization, structure, and style be optimized in a technical document to effectively achieve informative and persuasive goals across diverse cultural and contextual settings?
3. How can information be managed for localized usability? Can you provide some examples of the best practices of audience analysis to create usable, meaningful, and credible documents in the international context?
4. This entry discusses the document localization process as a tool to create more effective texts for an audience from another culture. What challenges do you anticipate while implementing the document localization process in a text for an international audience?
5. This essay provides some guidelines and best practices to compose texts with cultural considerations. What additional guidelines and practices can you suggest for composing texts with cultural considerations? Can you prepare your own list?
6. Briefly explain the significance of the following while composing texts for multicultural audiences:
  - Cultural expectations
  - User research
  - Document localization
  - Usability testing
  - Localized usability
7. Discuss what strategies would you consider for composing usable, meaningful, and credible technical documents to be used by members from other cultures? Can you provide any examples?

## APPENDIX

- Usability Testing Guidelines: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/test/usability-testing/>
- Usability Evaluation Basics: <https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/usability-evaluation.html>
- Usability Resources: <https://infodesign.com.au/usabilityresources.html>
- Usability Testing: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-testing-101/>
- Remote Testing: <https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/remote-testing.html>
- Usability Testing Basics: [https://studentlife.mit.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Usability\\_Testing\\_Workshop\\_March2020.pdf](https://studentlife.mit.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Usability_Testing_Workshop_March2020.pdf)
- How to Test the Usability of Documents: <https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2020/05/how-to-test-the-usability-of-documents.php>