Writing for Global Audiences

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What we will cover

• Who is the audience?
• Two approaches to the problem
• Issues to consider when writing
  • Structuring your document
  • Vocabulary issues
  • Syntax & grammar questions
  • Cultural issues
  • Visuals in an international context
• Evaluating your document
• Translation and related fields
What the ???

Thanks to the redundancy of language, yxx cxn xndxrstxnd whxt x xm wrxtxng xvxn xf x rxplxcx xll thx vxwxs ls wxth xn “x” (t gts lt tl hrdr f y dn’t vn kn whr th vwls r).

(Source: The Language Instinct by Steven Pinker)
Who is this audience?

• Educated professionals
• Familiar with technical terms
• English is second or third language
• Varying degrees of fluency

500 million native English speakers
Two approaches

• **Controlled (simplified) English**
  • Approved vocabulary list
  • Strict rules about allowed grammar

• **Global English**
  • Guidelines about vocabulary and grammar to be *avoided*
Place the water heater in a clean, dry location as near as practical to the area of greatest heated water demand. ... Clearance for accessibility to permit inspection and servicing such as removing heating elements or checking controls must be provided.

(Source: "Learning to Use Simplified English: A Preliminary Study," by Margaret Thomas et. al.)
Put the water heater in a clean, dry location near the area where you use the most hot water. Make sure you have access to the heating elements and the controls for inspection and servicing.

(Source: "Learning to Use Simplified English: A Preliminary Study," by Margaret Thomas et. al.)
Clearance for accessibility to permit inspection and servicing such as removing heating elements or checking controls must be provided.

Make sure you have access to the heating elements and the controls for inspection and servicing.
Where you should place the water heater:

- In a clean, dry location
- Near where heated water is mostly used
- Where parts that may need to be inspected and serviced can be reached. These parts include heating elements and controls.
Structuring your document

• Use lists (bulleted, numbered)
• Show information in tables and charts
• Repeat information in introduction and summary
• Break text into short paragraphs
## Table or chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water heater</th>
<th>Space (air) heater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean, dry location</td>
<td>Clean, dry location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near where the water is used</td>
<td>Not too close to you or anything that can burn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where parts can be inspected and serviced</td>
<td>Where you can reach the controls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to select a location

1. **Is location clean and dry?**
   - **YES**: Clean location
   - **NO**: Find other location

2. **Is hot water used nearby?**
   - **YES**: Use, but higher energy cost
   - **NO**: Find other location

3. **Can parts be accessed?**
   - **YES**: Clean location
   - **NO**: Find other location
Repeat main points

This presentation focuses on:
• Audience characteristics
• Two approaches to challenge
• Writing issues

Actual presentation

Points to remember:
• Educated audience
• Simplified vs. global English
• Consistent terminology
Vocabulary issues

• Same concept = same term
• Use standard terms, spelling and usage
• No homonyms (words that sound the same, but mean different things)
• Avoid acronyms and abbreviations
Non-standard spelling or usage

Chair a meeting

Lead a meeting.

Lite margarine

Light margarine
Homonyms

**Bow** can mean:
- A long wooden stick used to play string instruments
- The front of the ship
- A weapon that shoots arrows
- A kind of tied ribbon
- To bend forward at the waist in respect
Syntax & grammar questions

- Split long run-on sentences
- Ensure antecedents and references are clear
- Add syntactic cues
- Avoid complex past/future tenses
- Don’t use gerund “-ing” construction
Unclear antecedents

Take the radio out of the car and fix it.

Remove the radio from the car. Then repair the radio.

It = radio? or It = car?
Syntactic cues

The user configuration file you specify is executed along with the system configuration file your installation uses.

(Source: The Global English Style Guide by John R. Kohl)

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Complex tenses, gerunds

The system administrator has been executing the program.

The system administrator executed the program.
Cultural issues

- Don’t use metaphors or jokes
- Avoid references to sports, popular culture
- Never refer to religion or politics
- Under no circumstances use profanity – even mild “four-letter words”
- Be aware of time zones, units of measure
- Use a formal tone
Date, time & measurements

2/10/12  UK: 2 October 2012 (2 Oct. 2012)

About 2 feet = about 60.96 cm

A short distance
Visuals in an international context
Evaluating your document

• Technical conditions
  • Slower download speeds
  • Different standard fonts
• Content
  • Clearly organized
  • Culturally appropriate
• Language
  • Easily understood
Who evaluates your text?

1. Colleagues in target countries
2. Native speakers of the target languages who live in the US/UK
3. Native English speakers familiar with the target languages
4. Last resort: Native English speakers familiar with a language similar to the target language
i18n, x18, l10n

- **i18n** = Internationalization
  - Remove local references in original
- **x18** = Translation
  - Translate text into the target language
- **l10n** = Localization
  - Adapt translation to a specific country
What we covered I

• Who is the audience?
  • Educated professionals familiar with technical terms but varying degrees of fluency in English
• Two approaches to the problem
  • Controlled (simplified) vs. global English
• Issues to consider when writing
  • Structuring your document
    • Lists, tables, charts, repetition in introduction & summary, short paragraphs
  • Vocabulary issues
    • Consistency in terminology, standard terms, spelling & usage, homonyms, acronyms & abbreviations
What we covered II

• Issues to consider when writing
  • Syntax & grammar questions
    • Long sentences, clear references, syntactic cues, complex past/future tenses, gerunds
  • Cultural issues
    • Metaphors & jokes, references to sports, culture, religion, politics, profanity, time zones & units of measure, formal tone
• Visuals in an international context
• Evaluating your document
  • Technical conditions, evaluators
• Translation and related fields
  • Internationalization, translation, localization
Resources


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