# CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE EFL WRITING CLASS

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**ABSTRACT**: Combining insights from cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, intercultural rhetoric, and intercultural communication theory, this paper discusses issues in EFL writing classes that arise from cultural specificities. Namely, it discusses topic development, readers' expectations, and rhetorical organization across cultures, as well as their importance to the production of a "communicative" text in English. The paper also offers a rationale for the teaching of culture in the writing class and advances possible activities that aim at the production of discourse that is close to the "communicative text" in English.

**KEYWORDS**: EFL; intercultural communication; writing teaching pedagogy.

**RESUMO**: Integrando conhecimentos avançados em linguística cognitiva, análise de discurso, retórica e comunicação intercultural, o presente artigo discute como a cultura interage com a produção de texto em língua estrangeira. Especificamente, trata da progressão do tópico, das expectativas dos leitores e da organização retórica preferidas por diferentes culturas e a relevância que assumem na produção de um texto "comunicativo" em inglês. O artigo também argumenta pelo ensino da cultura alvo na sala de produção de texto em LE e avança algumas atividades direcionadas à produção textos "comunicativos" em inglês.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**: Ensino de LE; comunicação intercultural; produção de textos em LE.

## Introduction

Combining insights from cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, intercultural rhetoric, and inter-cultural communication theory, this paper discusses issues in EFL writing classes that arise from cultural differences. Namely, it discusses topic development, readers' expectations, and rhetorical organization across cultures, as well as their importance to what I call a "communicative" English text. That is, English discourse that shows individual autonomy, inventiveness, forthrightness, action (SHAUGHNESSY, 1977), and personality.

According to Reid (1993), teaching culture is a complex process even in EFL classes attended by students of the same culture and native language. That is so because each one of us brings to class our own subcultures. The EFL teacher then needs to consider individual attitudes, aims, and reactions, guiding EFLers to identify and analyze their values and expectations and those of the target language culture. Such an approach contributes to the writing class in the sense that students become aware of their readers' ways with words and of what their prospective English speaking readers expect to find in a text to construct meaning successfully. The EFL writing teacher, to paraphrase Reid, becomes a cultural informant. As EFL student-writers learn more about the culture of the target language and the expectations of its readers, the closer their texts will be to the prototypical communicative text in English (SALIÉS, 2004) and the more likely EFL student-writers will succeed in conveying the intended message.

Why is it so? When readers encounter a text, their presuppositions interact with the writer´s presuppositions, as represented in the text, to create meaning (BENNETT, 1988). A presupposition pool contains information from general encyclopedic knowledge, from the context in which discourse takes place, and from the discourse that has been presented (VENNEMAN, 1975; BROWN & YULE, 1983)—the co-text. If the

writer's presupposition pool is too distant from those of his or her readers, communication fails. In writing pedagogy, this aspect of communication is referred to as "identification of audience expectations." Such match is especially hard when non-native writers write for native readers. To ameliorate disjunctions in communication, EFLers need to learn about the sociocultural practices of the English-speaking people. With this knowledge in hands, they can better match their written discourse to the expectations of English readers.

To further stress this point, Scovel (1991), Kramsch (1998; 2010) and others have already argued that language and culture are closely interwoven. Language is the main symbol system people use to make meaning, a medium for expressing culture (SCARCELLA & OXFORD, 1992). As such, it should be at the very center of the EFL writing class (see also SHEOREY, 1975). It is not reasoning, discourse structure, or rhetoric which is contrastive across peoples but **culture**. Because culture shapes what we see and how we see, our discourses will vary accordingly. In Sheorey's words, it is the "cognitive framework" which is culturally conditioned. People reason from assumptions and values that have been culturally shaped (see also MINSKY, 1975 and STODDARD, 1986). Their discourses reflect their cognitive frameworks.

However, because the teaching of culture is time consuming and the overcrowded EFL curriculum reserves scant hours even to major topics such as writing, EFL instructors refrain from inserting culture in the curriculum. It follows that students grow in the language in the linguistic sense, lacking a deeper understanding of how cultural specificities reflect in their invention, arrangement, style, and delivery patterns (MATALENE, 1985). Their written discourse becomes a marginal representative of the "communicative" text in English, hindering comprehension.

Some instructors, in an effort to fill in that gap and conform to the time limitation of EFL courses, adopt what Omaggio (1993), Seelye (1984), and Galloway (1985, p. 362)

call the *Frankenstein Approach* (pieces of information from every culture given in small samples -- "a taco from here…a bullfight from there"). If we apply Omaggio (1993), Seelye (1984) and Galloway (1985) to EFL writing instruction, the first thing we will teach students is that English texts show a clear thesis statement as well as topic sentences. We will also teach them that texts written in English normally show a deductive structure--from the general to the particular: An introduction that sets the stage, supporting paragraphs that offer examples and details, and a conclusion that wraps up everything that has been said. Kaplan (1966) controversially called this straightforwardness the "linear" structure of the English text. However, these "facts are cheap" (SEELYE, 1984: 3). They need to be interpreted within a problem-solving context that emphasizes psychological, sociological, and anthropological concerns (ATKINSON, 2003). Only by adopting a sociocognitive approach to teaching culture in the writing class will the instructor help students to capture the essence of the "communicative" text in English (SALIÉS, 2004).

The "communicative" text in English encompasses not only the writer's vantage point, but also the culture of its readers. By culture (OMAGGIO, 1993; GEERTZ, 1973), we understand everything that readers have learned along a life time, embracing all aspects of human life including habits, beliefs, behaviors, preferred cognitive styles, values, literacy traditions and what they expect to find in a text: a sociocognitive framework. If a sociocognitive approach to the teaching of culture is adopted in the writing class, instructors will be preparing student-writers to understand and cope with cultural variation across discourse modes and contexts, treating the text as a speech event that has a function to perform, conventions and a psychological frame to follow.

Omaggio (1993), Seelye (1984), Scovel (1991), Scarcella (1983), Kramsch (1998; 2010) and Oxford (1992), Atkinson (2003), Campos (2009), among others, endorse the teaching of culture in the language class as an integral part of language instruction.

According to them, the EFL writing class should nurture an understanding of how there is no one "fixed" or "correct" way to produce a text, but many possible ways depending on the cultural milieu of the writer and of the intended audience. Many are the reasons to argue for such an approach. Next, I introduce three that have been extensively discussed in the literature: (i) different cultures have different ways of developing topics; (ii) rhetorical organization varies across cultures; (iii) the main objective of a speech event is to successfully make meaning and fulfill its communicative purpose.

**Topic development across cultures**

According to McKay (1989), Scarcella (1983) and Hu, Brown, and Brown (1982), topic development is predictable from cultural and social experiences. That is, topic development is a variable that influences what McKay calls "discourse accent." Scarcella (1983), investigating spoken discourse, found that cultural background influenced which topics are acceptable for informal conversations. Native speakers of Spanish used far more personal topics when in informal conversations than English speakers in her research study.

Hu, Brown, and Brown (1982), investigating written discourse, found that in an essay to persuade a brother who does not work hard at school, Chinese EFLers focused on the importance of education for the nation as a whole. Australian students, in turn, stayed with the individual level. In the same study, Chinese students wrote the response as if they were directly addressing their brothers, using imperatives. Australians, on the other hand, used third person singular.

Following a similar trend, McKay (1989) compared essays written by EFLers from the Beijing Institute of International Relations and the Xian Foreign Language Institute to 27 essays written by ESLers in San Francisco. Learners in the two research conditions wrote on the same topic. In spite of the open-ended nature of the task--

describe a bus stop scene and what happens when it rains heavily--Chinese EFLers developed the topic in a striking common way. They restricted the topic by stating a social reason for taking the bus; used metaphorical language to describe the sudden beginning of the rain fall; and described the crowd as consisting of women with babies and senior citizens. To close their essays, they drew a moral lesson, an approach that may derive from their government educational policy, according to McKay. ESLers in the United States undertook the task in a different way. They described the rainfall in terms of weather prediction; provided an excuse for riding the bus instead of driving; described the crowd in a wide range of ways; showed concern with time and with the opinions of others; and drew no moral lessons. In brief, ESLers in the US developed their topics according to their cultural experience in that country: concern with the weather forecast, time, and people's opinions.

Silva (1992), while investigating ESL graduate students' perceptions about differences between writing in their mother tongues and in English, indirectly illustrated how topics may be developed in different ways because of cultural constraints. His Chinese native speakers revealed, for example, that in Chinese parables, sayings, references to ancient Chinese history are a common way of expressing ideas or hammering a point.

More recent studies (UYSAL, 2008; KIMURA & KONDO, 2004; RASS, 2011) reinforce these findings. Uysal (2008) shows that 39% of the argumentative essays written in English by eighteen Turkish university students were developed inductively. Participants developed the topic by exemplification and a collection of obscure topic sentences in each paragraph. In the talk-aloud protocol, they declared they did not feel the need to include a main idea because "the examples were effective enough to speak for themselves" (UYSAL, 2008: 194). As Uysal discusses, the student-writers might have assumed their readers could make the connections by themselves, tracing the roots of

such behavior to educational practices in Turkey: "The common use of specification, especially in Turkish essays, might have roots in Turkish writing instruction in which the writing types practiced […] were consistent with use of that macro-level pattern (UYSAL, 2008: 194-195).

Kimura & Kondo (2004) came to a similar conclusion in their study of 72 Japanese-university-ESL writers. Their learners also relied on specification and multiple different topic sentences to develop their topics within a paragraph, which suggests, according to the authors, a link with Japanese writing education. Kimura and Kondo propose that participants act as if English paragraphs are identical with Japanese *danraku,* a style that does not require any logical combination between sentences in a paragraph, only that sentences are topic related.

Contrary to Kimura & Kondo's (2004) and Uysal's (2008) participants, Rass' (2011) participants do not support their assertions with examples. Their topics progress by means of several parallel assertions, which readers are expected to take as unquestionable truths. The writing of Rass' eighteen teacher trainees is characterized by appeal to emotion, elaborateness and excessive indirectness, traits common to writing education in Arabic.

These findings do not exclude variability within each culture, as well as individual variation. Rather, they do point toward the need to develop context sensitivity to the dynamic and hybrid nature of cultures (ABASI, 2012). They clearly demonstrate that there is not a better way of writing, simply different ways, entrenched in cultural practices. Similar to other behaviors in our daily lives such as greetings or manners at the table, written discourse has a culturally accepted paradigm or a paradigm that is readily accessible in speakers' sociocognitive frameworks. To use Kaplan's (1987) words, if one intends to produce texts to be read by village women in Southeast Asia, the texts should

reflect schemata that the women in Southeast Asia carry to facilitate information storage and retrieval networks.

**Rhetorical organization**

Similar to topic development, research has also shown that different cultures have different preferred rhetorical organization patterns. Kaplan (1966) was a pioneer in contrastive rhetoric research (the study of how writing varies across languages), showing that English speakers favor linearity, Arabic speakers parallelism, Asians indirection, and Romance language speakers digressions in the way they compose. Although he has been highly criticized for that article ("the doodles article"), he planted the seed for the development of what we know now as intercultural rhetoric (ABASI, 2012; ATKINSON & CONNOR, 2008). This approach advocates "sensitivity to the social context and the dynamics of the interactions between readers and writers through texts" (ABASI, 2012: 196) and foregrounds the situatedness and particularity of the writing activity.

In other words, all rhetorical modes identified in the "doodles article" are possible in any language. However, there are preferences. That is, all forms do not occur with equal frequency or in parallel distribution across cultures. Variations are marked by sociolinguistic constraints, for written versus oral usage, and for other features of the psychological context. Rass (2012), Uysal (2008), Kimura and Kondo (2004), among others demonstrated such a tendency. Strong evidence for composing specificities across languages comes from text analysis. In a study I conducted of Portuguese and English texts (SALIÉS, 2004), I found that because English has fewer morphological traps, it is more context dependent or writer responsible (HINDS' terminology, 1987). In English, because the reader cannot count on morphology to disambiguate meaning, the writer must provide information with specificity. On the other hand, Portuguese has a rich

morphology to guide its readers, being less writer-responsible and allowing digressions to occur without impacting clarity. Morphology helps readers to tie who does what to whom or what belongs together. In another instance, French is a reader-responsible language; Chinese is in transition; and Japanese has a non-person orientation, focusing on social and relational control (HINDS, 1987). In reader-responsible languages, readers supply some significant portion of the propositional structure while those in a writer-responsible system expect to have most of the propositional structure supplied to them (the case of English).

Evidence also comes from studies that investigated students' perceptions of these specificities (SANTOS, 1992; SALIÉS, 2010). Santos' subjects revealed that Chinese paragraphs are more inductive, with statements typically supported by citations of historical events while in English paragraphs are more deductive and rational. Santos and Saliés also illustrated the issue of directness. Malay (SALIÉS, 2010) and Japanese (SANTOS, 1992) native speakers reported valuing indirectness in their writing in L1 because direct expression is considered impolite. For that reason, they avoid writing conclusions in their essays, choosing, instead, to be vague. English texts, however, value directness in general and tend to close with a conclusion.

In line with the work of Chafe (1987), Chafe & Danielewicz (1987) and other linguists dedicated to discourse analysis, Kaplan (1988) himself seems to put structural considerations aside in his latest articles, rejecting the straight jacket of the linear, deductive structure he himself suggested to be typical of English in 1966, for the benefit of the reader. What should be of primary consideration is the topic framework of a text (see also LAND & WHITLEY, 1989). That is, the features, derivable from the sociocultural context and from the discourse domain that are explicitly reflected in the text and that are called upon in meaning making (see BROWN & YULE, 1983). If, instead of a thesis, clear topic sentences and a linear propositional structure students use

repetitions or lexical collocations to create a topic framework, ultimately, coherence and clarity, there is no need to try to impose a linear structure in the name of uniform English like discourse teaching policy. If we do so, we are encouraging our ESL students to reproduce an experience that is foreign to them (LAND & WHITLEY, 1989), a straight jacket that disregards learners' subjectivity and capacity to negotiate power (see LIU, 2011). The result will be a text with neither face nor voice. In the view of intercultural rhetoric, student-writers should be empowered to make meaning through the topic structure or a semantics that takes in consideration the sociocognitive frameworks of the texts' potential readers.

In brief, writers composing in different languages will produce rhetorically distinct texts because literacy skills are not only learned, but shaped culturally and linguistically (GRABE & KAPLAN, 1989), but also because writers have their own identities and should be allowed to negotiate power in their discourses. EFL writing pedagogy needs to make student-writers aware of sociocultural and psychological nuances present at the discourse level to bring their texts closer to communicative texts in English. In Grabe and Kaplan (1989) words, the objective of writing instruction to non-native speakers of English is to provide a body of knowledge underlying various types of writing for different audiences in different culturally bound settings. That includes teaching composing conventions to meet the academic writing needs of EFLers; teaching sociolinguistic constraints; and teaching the distribution of reader's and writer's responsibility in the target language. By no means has this included imposing the rhetoric structure of English as if it were the only one accepted. However, this does mean increasing cultural awareness about the target audience so that communication becomes as fluent and immediate as possible (see CAMPOS, 2009, for an extensive discussion on strategies to raise cultural awareness and how to create multicultural materials for the language classroom).

**Readers' expectations across cultures**

To illustrate how social values influence readers' expectations and ultimately, meaning making, in this section I describe some characteristics of texts written by different subsets of English writers. Basically, what I show is that the amount and type of shared knowledge assumed between writers and readers vary crosslinguistically (GRABE & KAPLAN, 1989). I begin by describing how Ute English speakers construct coherence in their texts (LEAP, 1989). Ute English speakers rely on the reader to construct coherence, suggesting details instead of presenting them boldly in their compositions. The Ute English writer outlines the message, leaving to the reader the task of filling in the gaps, constructing the necessary relationships between isolated facts, formalizing the connections between segments of the narrative. The discourse framework and presupposition pool is assumed to be reader and writer conscious or to be formed by features naturally activated by the discourse. They are part of the Ute culture and are expected to be known. Furthermore, in Ute English, text arrangement carries meaning. The way in which a writer organizes information on a page is as important to the communication of a message as are factual details. When Standard English readers encounter those texts, their first impression is of vagueness, incompleteness, lack of clarity. Why? Culture influences the way discourse is framed. While Ute people value vagueness and geographic position, Standard English speakers value explicitness, clarity, straightforwardness. Consequently, Ute writers fail to meet English speakers' expectations or expectations which are consistent with the culture of English literate people, hindering comprehension.

In a case study I conducted with two Malay freshmen composition students I found something similar (SALIÉS, 2010). They revealed that writing in Malay is easier because Malay is vague, "one word has many meanings." It is up to the reader, who

shares the same presupposition pool, to find out the exact referent or image the writer is trying to evoke. English, on the other hand, "has one word for each thing", said one of the students in the interview for the study. In other words, English is a writer-responsible language, tending to prefer specificity. Consequently, the two students' major difficulty when writing in English was to meet the expectations of literate readers of Standard English. Also, they struggled to produce texts that had a unique personality or voice. In Malay, what is "shared" is what should emerge from a text, while in English, the opinion of the writer seems to take the foreground.

Silva (1992: 33) corroborates these findings. His subjects observed the difficulty of writing to an unfamiliar audience: "I always have a hard time deciding what should be written...when I compose an English essay". A Japanese native speaker mentioned how different it is to appeal and provide evidence in Japanese. If she writes an application letter to a scholarship committee she cannot write "I would be a successful student" or appeal directly because the effect would be the opposite. In English, however, this is what the audience expects. Silva's students also observed different stylistic preferences that derive from the linguistic tradition of their mother tongue. One student, for example, said that in her L1 she focuses primarily on style, writing long sentences and very complex phrase structures. Naturally, if she does that in English her audience will have a hard time to make meaning, given the linguistic characteristics of the English language such as having few inflections that cue meaning (SALIÉS, 2004). Another student in Silva's study mentioned that in French she has been trained to write rhetorical and elaborated texts, containing metaphors and expressive sentences. To an English speaking audience, this text would look like artificial eloquence.

Given the facts discussed above and following Kaplan (1988), McKay (1989), Land & Whitley (1989), Maurice (1986), Atkinson & Connor (2008), Abasi (2012) and an intercultural approach to rhetoric, I would like to argue for audience-differentiated

discourse that benefits intended readers and makes meaning through topicalization. Pedagogically, this implies that ESL/EFL writing instruction should focus on teaching students how to create a topic structure or a projected image through discourse rather than on teaching them how essays are structured in English as if there were a 'mold in which to pour discourse'. Paraphrasing Grimes (1970), if we teach students to rely on topic structure to convey their messages, we are "providing a language independent framework within which the rhetorical patterns of each language fit as a special class." That approach is not only culturally neutral but respectful of the creativity with which language users were endowed at birth.

The most immediate pedagogical implication of cross-linguistic research in topic development, intercultural rhetoric, and audience's expectations, however, is that we should introduce culture awareness exercises in the writing classroom. One of Santos (1992: 42) students felicitously expressed that view: "I believe that to learn a foreign language is to know another culture. So I hope that those who teach English composition will not only pay much more attention to correct grammar and to good organization, but also to teaching how native think when they write the same things". In the next section, I will offer some strategies to do so. The suggested activities are particularly effective to sharpen EFLers' awareness of their cultural biases, and those of their readers. The activities are a means to an end: successful written communication.

**Strategies to teach culture in the EFL writing classroom**

Many are the approaches to the teaching of culture in the EFL writing classroom. Here I offer some possibilities. To begin with, writing instructors should rely on strategies that lead EFL student-writers to become more aware of their own culture and its biases; then, they should invite students to investigate how those discoveries differ from the target culture and to contrast and compare to speculate about the differences.

Such an approach will experientially teach students that writing and being aware of others' culture in their texts are acts of inquiry. Below, I list some activities for that purpose.

*Writing and realia*. Student-writers are invited to write about an aspect of the NL culture; read about the same theme or topic in the TL; discern how cultural phenomenon differs in the two texts; and describe their attitudes about the differences. After an in depth treatment of the same topic in the target and native culture, students should be invited to write from the perspective of the target culture about the same topic. Such an approach allows student-writers to become aware of how culture influences writing; learn about discourse development in the target language as they analyze the target language text in search of cultural differences; and to put their selves in the readers' shoes, trying to bridge the gap between their schemata and that of the writer. They should try to fill in the gaps between their own experience and that of their readers, signaling with topic structure the intended meaning.

*Deriving cultural connotations*. Another activity to engage students in a writing-cultural inquiry is *deriving cultural connotations* (OMAGGIO, 1993). In this activity, instructors invite student-writers to associate culturally representative images with words and phrases of the TL through word association or semantic mapping. The instructors compare then the mappings or lists the students generate to a native speaker's list or mapping. The value of this exercise rests on its power to show students that the same word may yield multiple images across cultures. For example, Americans do not categorize "beauty" in the same way Latin Americans do. Images and connotations are culturally bound and non-native writers need to be aware of that. To enrich the activity, instructors could ask students to describe in which ways two cultures differ in their categorization of a vocabulary item or phrase. As Omaggio points out, this activity also illustrates how and why word to word translation does not work. Seelye (1993), while

discussing how cultural context is key to comprehension, mentions how cultures look at colors differently. Brazilians, for example, say *"Tudo azul"* (= all blue) when things are really going great. To English speakers "blue" would connote depression, not happiness.

*Family folklore book.* The folklore book, as conceived by Cech (1986), consists of an illustrated book, written and designed by students in which they document their family traditions, stories, customs, and social and political history. As the students write the chapters of their book, they share their creation with other peers in writing groups. This allows the group to learn about others' customs and traditions or different ways of doing the same thing, including writing a folklore book. Cech uses the book in intensive English programs to create a meaningful context for students to write within their authorities and without losing their cultural identities.

*Picture Drawing activity*. This activity was extracted from Jan Gaston (1992). It is specially efficient to show students (mainly those that refuse to recognize the importance of understanding the culture which lays behind a text) that common experience results in different perceptions even in a homogeneous cultural group or that everyone of us is a culturally-bound being. We see what we see because of who we are. It is our experience that drives our attention, recall, and interpretation of facts. In this activity, the teacher shows a picture to the class, allowing them to look at it for one minute (the instructor could break students into groups with each group having its own picture). Then, the picture is removed from view and the students have to draw it from memory. In the case of advanced EFLers, we could ask them to write a paragraph about the picture. Finally, students discuss the similarities and differences of their drawings or texts in paired discussions. They also have to point out what has attracted them the most in the picture. To debrief, the teacher conducts a discussion about the reasons students who share the same cultural background produced such different drawings or paragraphs. The teacher also shows the original drawing, asking students to compare it to their own

reproductions of it. To conclude the activity, students should think and write responses to the questions: What was the purpose of this exercise? What did you learn?

*Cross-cultural dialogues.* Dialogues (STORTI, 1994) between individuals of two cultures are highly representative of how differences work in inter-cultural communication. By materializing the presence of the reader with the presence of an interlocutor of a different culture, cross-cultural dialogues will help students to refrain from projecting their own norms onto people from other cultures and from assuming sameness when they write. Below I transcribe one example I extracted from Storti (1994, p.19; in Storti´s readers will find an excellent collection of brief conversations between an American and people from other cultures):

**Near the family**

**C:** So, Vincenzo, you'll be graduating in May. Congratulations.

V: Thank you.

C: Do you have a job lined up?

V: Yes. I'll be working for the Banco Central.

C: Good for you. Have you found a place to live yet?

V: Actually, the bank's very near my parents' place.

C: That's nice. So you'll be living quite near them.

Vincenzo, being an Italian, is naturally going to live with his parents (see Storti's discussion of this dialogue). In Italy, the family still is the primary focus in life and "moving away" from the extended family may not be in people's agendas.

Hoffman (1968) also offers food for thought in how to introduce culture in the EFL writing class. In Hoffman's (1968) collection of papers titled *Communication*

*analysis and comprehensive diplomacy,* Bryant Wedge illustrates how the Brazilian cultural *milieu* influences Brazilians' discourse. Working with university students in Brazil, Wedge (1968) analyzed their discussion of Kennedy's assassination, concluding that the students' reasoning rested on the assumption that the socio-political system in the United States was similar to that of Brazil and perceived all evidence presented to them in the light of that preconception. For example, they gave no credit to evidence the Warren Commission provided because to them the government is a corrupt elite who refuses to follow legal procedures and who only acts in its own interest, not in the people's. The students also tended to accept rumors of conspiracy as evidence and to be highly emotional toward the issue because Kennedy was deeply admired. Contrary to Americans, the facts of the assassination had no weight in the Brazilian students' discussions. Rather, they would offer logically sound theories of conspiracy, assuming that American and Brazilian societies function according to the same cultural rules. Americans, in Wedge's words, "tended to resent the Brazilian's stubborn suspicion of evidence" (HOFFMAN, 1968: 33) while Brazilians doubted the credibility of the American style of logic.

The professor re-established the communication line with his audience using two strategies. In one instance, he brought to his discourse the love Brazilians have for ideas by confronting one idea with another to build a general theory of motives for Kennedy's assassination. Mainly, he supported his presentation with insights from psychology that could theoretically explain the disturbed personality of the assassin. "In Brazil, it proved more effective to counter a theory with another theory than with facts" (HOFFMAN, 1968: 34). In a second instance, he used emotional association in his presentation. Instead of simply offering the evidence provided by the Warren Commission, he discussed the personality of the Chief Justice to establish acceptable *bona fides*. In doing so, he transformed doubted evidence in credible information. Wedge (1968) concludes

"American professors can adduce their evidence in terms of deductive reasoning from broad principles and thus become more understandable to Brazilian student audiences." (p. 34) By taking into account the preferences of a particular audience, the writer or the speaker increases the likelihood for effective communication (MAURICE, 1986). As Yousef and Condon (1975) say, the same evidence can yield a range of conclusions across cultures. All of them are logically sound because they stem from different cultural values, assumptions, and psycho-cognitive realities.

**Conclusion**

To succeed in their communication intents, EFL student-writers need to be aware of culturally-bound traditions that drive communication in the target language, mainly in the written mode. That is so because cultures develop topics, organize texts, and deal with audience expectations according to sociocognitive frameworks that are culture specific. As people perceive their psychological realities as they develop their discourses. It is culture that is contrastive. Only by being aware of their own cultural biases and those of their readers will EFL writers be able to produce texts that come close to a "communicative" text in English. Also, in line with previous research in intercultural communication, I have argued for a process approach to teaching culture. By experiencing a cross-cultural encounter, students may understand how it feels when an interlocutor assumes "sameness." Exercises such as cross-cultural dialogues, writing and realia, deriving cultural connotation lend themselves well to promoting such cultural awareness. Finally, this paper has argued for teaching how to topicalize. If EFL writers learn how to create semantic fields clearly indexed to their intended meanings, issues like rhetoric organization become less critical to meaning construction.

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