ITC SIG abstracts on international communication

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This page has abstracts of articles on international technical communication in newsletters of other STC Special Interest Groups.

Design for international audiences

Prototype theory and international design by Kirk St. Amant. *Impact* newsletter of the Marketing Communication SIG, Fall 2001. Prototype theory holds that humans classify objects they encounter based on a "prototype," that is, a commonly encountered object that, on account of familiarity, comes to represent a class of objects. Characteristic features of prototypes become criteria for defining the characteristics of the entire class of objects. Thus, if one person thinks a robin is a typical bird, and another thinks an ostrich is typical, these two individuals may not understand each other's references to birds. Use of prototypes can help marketing communicators design effective images for international audiences. Key considerations are recognizing that prototypes differ among cultures, and designing images with the defining characteristics of the class of objects in mind.

English as a second language

Editing for ESL authors by Matthew Stevens. *The Exchange* newsletter of the Scientific Communication SIG, March, 2000. Mechanical and cultural challenges characterize editing the work of authors who speak English as a second language. Differences in language can produce garbled prose, and cultural expectations influence the way authors accept queries and corrections.

Working as a freelance scientific editor in Sydney, Australia, Stevens edits work from Japan. Japanese communication is indirect and the culture is formal in comparison to the West. The editor cannot address Japanese authors in a familiar way. Rather than directly asking for a rewrite, the editor may re-state the point, and ask "Is this what you mean?" This polite and indirect approach is effective with all authors.

When the author is skilled in a language very different from English, the editor may find seemingly garbled English prose. Effectively the author is translating into English in the process

of writing, and meaning may be lost. Editors must make sure the writing makes sense to them, and by extension to the audience.

When Japanese writers provide English prose, editors often find incorrect English uses of the articles "a" and "the." Japanese does not distinguish between L and R, and authors sometimes switch them. Japanese authors often place numbers after adjectives, for example, "larger two samples," for *two larger samples*, and often use "on the contrary" for *in contrast*. These constructions may be normal in Japanese.

English for international audiences

Internationalizing English for scientific communication by Kirk St. Amant. *The Exchange* newsletter of the Scientific Communication SIG, February, 2003. English is the dominant language in scientific communication. Steps that can be taken to make English comprehensible to non-native speakers are reviewed, in support of ensuring scientific communication is understood by nonnative English speakers with various levels of proficiency in the English language.

Marketing communication for international audiences

Aspects of international online marketing communication by Kirk St. Amant. *Impact* newsletter of the Marketing Communication SIG, Winter 2001. Access to the World Wide Web and the way people use the Web varies among countries. In particular, in some countries people view web sites in groups. Modem speed varies. Colors have different meaning in different cultures. People in various countries are used to seeing images and text used together in many different ways. Frequently users want to print web pages. The author presents questions for web authors to consider in creating web sites that meet requirements of international audiences.

Impact newsletter of the Marketing Communication SIG, Summer 2001, reports on **two sessions** at the 2001 STC Annual Conference that addressed marketing to audiences whose first language is other than English, and localization including translation and incorporating characteristics of different cultures in communication. MG 8Q reported the second phase of an INTECOM study to define international English. The language is changing as nonnative speakers adapt it to their business purposes. TR 2R, a Japanese presentation on page design and layout in the Asia/Pacific region, included studying cultural differences before localizing materials.

Multilingual marcom: marketing communications for the international marketplace by Stan Cheren. *Impact* newsletter of the Marketing Communication SIG, Summer 2000. Effective marketing communication requires clear, persuasive, professional prose crafted under tight

deadlines in an environment of constantly changing information. When marketing communication is to be used in several areas of the world, it is necessary to allow for differences in formats for time, currency, postal addresses and telephone numbers, and for differences in the space needed for text in various languages. Variation in acceptable uses of color and imagery must be accommodated. It is also necessary to ensure any slang and double meanings used are appropriate.

Careful preparation and internationalization of the English source document prevents expense, embarrassment, and possible lost sales. It is necessary to allow enough space, be careful with clever ad copy, secure the approval of all to move forward, consider differences in formats and possible meaning, and be cautious in using images, trademarks, and icons. Agreement on international requirements must be secured at the beginning of a project. It is important to work with language partners from the beginning, and to allow sufficient time for localization.

Multicultural working environment

Building an effective multi-site, multicultural team by M. Katherine (Kit) Brown. *Management SIG News*, October, 2004. Management can facilitate team building and effective work as a team by following the suggestions presented.

A regular column, ***An International Challenge,*** formerly appeared in the *Independent Perspective* newsletter of the Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG. In the Spring, 2000 issue the title is *Cultural Dynamics and International Marketing Research*. Cultures that value courtesy or secrecy highly require special approaches to marketing research.

In the Summer, 2000 issue the column addresses *Coping with International Work Stress*. Stress, karoshi (Japanese), or Druck (German) is best avoided by ensuring international ventures are compatible with personal goals and by applying relaxation, exercise, humor, diet, and open communication strategies. Professional help is available.

The Winter 2001 issue of *Independent Perspective* reported that the column editor was appointed Manager, Marketing and Strategic Development for the Canadian Technology Human Resources Board. The Board is a government-sponsored private agency that promotes the use and continuous revision of The Canadian Technology Standards (CTS), both nationally and internationally. The Board also assists Canadian industrial and occupational technology organizations in identifying and resolving human resource issues that challenge the industrial and technology work force.

Multiple languages

One world publishing: single-source editing, translation workflow, and cross-media
publishing. Dieter Gust and Michael Plattner. *Management SIG News*, October, 2004. Using a
single publishing system to publish in virtually all of the world's languages presents challenges,
described in some detail.

Translation of HTML (help)

Developing HTML with translations in mind by Patricia Divine Wilder. *Hyperviews: Online*
newsletter of the Online Information SIG, Winter 2001. Practical tips are provided.