

U.S. Academic Writing and Non-Native Students—Some Notes

<i>US Academic Expectations for Writing</i>	<i>Some Other Cultures' Expectations for Writing</i>
<p>Focus/Organization: Direct, linear development with thesis statement, topic sentences, no repetition. Deductive, analytical. Make point quickly.</p>	<p>Indirect, reiterative, digressive, subtle, context preceding main ideas. Inductive, iterative; holistic, descriptive, narrative.</p>
<p>Organization/Connections: Transparency of organization through use of transitional words/phrases, announce intent, make direct connections among ideas, mark emphases.</p>	<p>Less transparency, assume reader will infer important information and connections either from general statements or from excessive details, shows respect for reader.</p>
<p>Support for Main Ideas: Very specific support to narrow or clarify meaning of general ideas.</p>	<p>Generalization, suggestion, interpretation, nuance, subtlety, allow reader to infer specific examples. 'Banking' model of education values traditional knowledge; what one believes all believe so proof or support is not highly valued.</p>
<p>Borrowed Material: Use sources but analyze and question authority. Careful citing of sources, avoiding plagiarism. Consider written coherence and unity.</p>	<p>Build on authority/tradition. Ideas/language not subject to ownership; used freely. May use unrelated quotations as sign of respect for someone of higher status (including teacher).</p>
<p>Word Choice/Style: Precise, often literal meaning.</p>	<p>Exaggeration, figurative language, euphemism, indirection/discretion.</p>
<p>Written/Oral Conventions: Written usually more formal. Writing valued in curriculum, with analysis and opinion/support. Practice with writing process.</p>	<p>Oral informs or drives written. 'Banking' model of education; writing of little value, emphasis on correctness. Less practice with writing process.</p>
<p>Construction of Knowledge: Egalitarian, dialectical model of education. Knowledge is constantly co-constructed with value on originality; student's questioning and investigation</p>	<p>Hierarchical, 'banking' model of education. Knowledge exists in tradition and authority and student's knowing and reflecting on tradition leads to present application.. May feel</p>

lead to new knowledge. Working toward originality, new knowledge. Individual opinions asserted with specific support/proof.	unoriginal. Collective well-being asserted; individualism asserted only after acknowledging or within context of collective.
Problem-Solving: Based on analysis. Challenging authority shows understanding and original thinking.	Based on accumulated information, memory. Challenging authority shows arrogance, ignorance.
Feedback: Feedback on writing often very brief, direct, and focused on what needs improving. May be challenged openly.	Typical feedback may feel hyper-critical, impolite, too personal, leading to quiet/polite resistance.

Sources: Helen Fox, *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing* (NCTE, 1994); Joy Reid, *Teaching ESL Writing* (Prentice Hall Regents, 1993).

Copyright 2003, Art Lyons