

*The international strategies of an organization—ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, heterarchic—are reflected in its international communication. The discussion presented here, based on Hedlund's application of Perlmutter's categorization of management strategies, focuses on the alignment of an organization's goals and market positions with its international communication approaches. The categorization implies that an organization's global management strategies should be aligned with its international communication practices. As such, an organization that seeks a larger role in the international market yet takes an ethnocentric stance in its communication strategies may be less successful than one with a more polycentric, geocentric, or heterarchic approach to international communication. Thinking about international communication within such a framework enhances not only consulting practice but teaching as well.*

## The Alignment of Global Management Strategies, International Communication Approaches, and Individual Rhetorical Choices

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Businesses are interested in making the global marketplace work well. In recent decades, their efforts to do so have expanded beyond successful trade in raw materials, processed goods, and services such as transport and consulting to include intellectual and financial collaboration in high-technology development and joint ventures. Responsibilities for international communication have also expanded throughout organizations; control of international communication has shifted from being centered with a small number of mid- to high-level executives to being diffused among a large number of individuals in many divisions and departments. With this shift in the locus of control, however, an organization's international communication has become more difficult to align with its global management strategy. As a result, organizations increasingly need to assess their international communication, ensuring that indi-

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viduals' rhetorical actions are aligned with the organization's global strategy, and to conduct focused training to address weaknesses.

Written communication—used to bridge time zones, to convey complicated information, and to confirm agreements—is a key component of international success and therefore an obvious area in which to invest effort in assessment and training. On the basis of their ethnographic research in corporations, Robert Brown and Carl Herndl argue that writing training in the workplace needs to be both sensitive to cultural assumptions—in the organization's own culture as well as the larger culture(s) in which it functions—and supported by management. To obtain management support, international training programs clearly must be able to address these cultural assumptions, some of which are evident in an organization's management strategy, market involvement, and mission statements. Management support for international workplace writing and communication training will depend on the market share and globalization strategies being followed. International training should be most effective in an organization with a strong commitment to globalization, but not all organizations need international training to the same extent.

Determining whether an organization or division will benefit from international communication intervention is critical to the successful performance of organizations, workers, and researcher-trainers. As part of assessing the international training needs of an organization, I have drawn on management communication and strategic planning research to construct a framework in which to talk about the international workplace communication practices of an organization and their relationship to, or alignment with, the organization's strategic goals at four levels: global mission, global management strategy(ies), international communication approaches, and individual rhetorical choices.

As Figure 1 illustrates, in a completely aligned organization each of the four levels supports every other level. For example, the global mission (the end to be achieved, e.g., high global market share) helps an organization to determine its global management strategies (the means to achieve that end, e.g., attention to local markets). The global mission and strategies, in turn, help an organization to determine its international communication approaches; and all three levels help an organization's individual writers to determine their rhetorical strategies. The same works in reverse: Individuals' rhetorical strategies support an organization's international communication approaches,

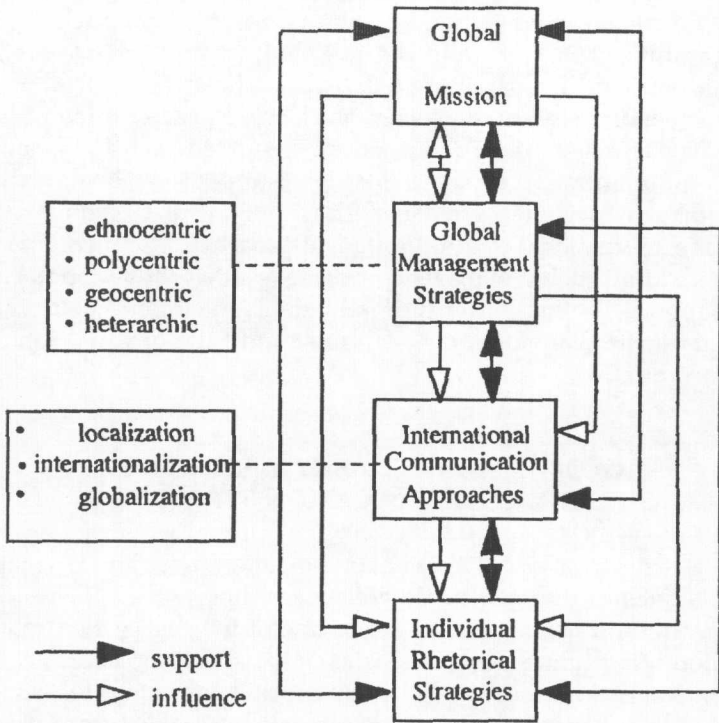


Figure 1. Directions of Influence and Support in Communication Approaches and Management Strategies

which support the global management strategies, which in turn help achieve the global mission. Although in this framework support is always bidirectional, influence is not; except in one instance, influence is top-down. The global management strategies (at the second level) influence the kinds of communication approaches that can be taken, and the organization's communication approaches (explicit or tacit) influence individuals' rhetorical choices. Only at the two top levels is influence reciprocal, because the effectiveness and success of an organization's global management strategies will affect how an organization achieves or even reconceptualizes its global mission. In summary, the individual international writer has the power to support but not to change the strategic direction of the organization.

When alignment does exist between an organization's global mission and management strategies, then communication intervention (e.g., training in writing) would be indicated, assuming that misalignment exists between or among individuals' rhetorical choices, international communication approaches, and global management strategies. This misalignment can be defined as the extent to which an organization's communication supports or fails to support its global mission and global management strategies. The following discussion focuses on three international communication approaches used by organizations and four global management strategies that those approaches can support. The implications of individuals' rhetorical choices and how these also can support or fail to support the organization are outlined briefly.

### GLOBAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES SHAPING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

To achieve their global mission, organizations use global management strategies that can be described as ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, and heterarchic, a special case of the geocentric strategy (Hedlund 9). Management strategies or perspectives, according to Robert Maddox, can shape the international communication strategies employed by members of the organization (61). These four global management strategies may be employed by organizations that engage in any form of international business. In turn, the strategies are supported or maintained by one or more of three major international communication approaches: localization, internationalization, and globalization. These approaches represent organizations' formal responses to customers' needs for linguistically tailored information and are frequently used in the computer industry (Hoft).

- *Localization*, the most familiar approach, represents a source (national and/or local) perspective, in which information is designed for a particular culture or language of the target group. For example, in the United States, documentation produced only for US consumers is localized to the United States; the United States is both the source and target country for the information.
- *Internationalization* is the adaptation of source country information for an international market by separating "universal" from culturally determined variables. In this approach, both the base (global) and the cultural (local) variables of the product and information are identified

before the product and documentation are adapted for an international market. For example, operator manuals produced by the John Deere Corporation are illustrated, regardless of target culture, with the same "flatman" drawings—a global variable—whereas the text—a local variable—is written in different languages (Kostelnick 191).

- *Globalization* is an approach intended to streamline distribution in a number of countries. Globalized products can be used in different cultures and globalized documentation is designed from the beginning for a wide range of linguistic contexts (Hoft). Globalized documents, like globalized products, are designed to be easily expanded; for example, in addition to containing graphics and simplified English, a document may be created with ample white space to allow texts in different languages to be added later without major document redesign.

To date, these three communication approaches have been applied more often to customer information than to internal workplace information. However, international workers have many, if not all, of the same information needs as international customers and can also benefit from texts written to meet their needs. Therefore, application of international customer-focused communication approaches to workplace writing should make workplace communication more efficient. The choice of approach depends on the number of nations and languages involved in a given communication and on the global mission of the organization.

The following sections outline the four global management strategies and the communication approaches that most often support them. In addition to describing these global management strategies, I also suggest which of the four are more supportive of intervention aimed at improving international communication.

### **Ethnocentric**

A traditional strategy is ethnocentrism, which reflects the belief that "what worked at home will work abroad" (Maddox 53). Typically, an ethnocentric international organization has moved slowly into international business from a large, successful national base, and its international involvement is seen as an extension of its home territory. International work is undertaken much as domestic efforts would be, with the assumption that what was successful in one country will be successful in another.

The ethnocentric management strategy, as described by John Daniels and Lee Radebaugh, has three major variations:

1. Management does not know much about the other country and bases its decisions on current source-country experience.
2. Management recognizes differences in culture and believes that changes must be made—but the goal of the changes is to ensure that international branches more closely resemble the home office. Management may further believe that these changes can be easily made.
3. Management realizes both that environmental differences exist and that change is difficult. Recognizing these challenges, they pursue high national product penetration in search of high national market share rather than pursuing a global share of the market, even though a global strategy might be more profitable.

Any of these three ethnocentric variations in strategy can cause problems for an organization. The first two variations—basing decisions on source-country experience and imposing source-country standardization—are more likely to effect business adversely, as seen in the case of Tyco Toys™ described below. The third variation—concentrating on domestic objectives—can cause an otherwise successful organization to miss international opportunities.

Traditionally, more US firms have operated from an ethnocentric perspective in staffing their international operations than have Japanese or European firms (Leontiades 52-53). Examples pointing to an ethnocentric perspective in the United States range from the high number of management staff that US firms send overseas to supervise foreign operations, to major marketing blunders such as the large, left-hand drive American car produced for export to Japan and England where the standard car is right-hand drive and sized to maneuver narrow streets. A US-based corporation in which American English is used in all product announcements and internal documents regardless of the ultimate point of use might be described as ethnocentric or narrowly localized. Staff in an ethnocentric firm might spend little time editing or revising their work for international colleagues and might refer to the international alliance partners or associates as foreign firms or foreigners.

Ethnocentric corporations tend to invest little effort in their international communication until after they have moved into a larger arena and discovered problems. In three years, Tyco Toys, a US toy firm, went from being well positioned to enter an international market to selling off the majority of its non-US subsidiaries because of an ethnocentric strategy. Tyco Toys entered the international market with limited international experience; it expected to use US-marketing techniques in other countries and unsuccessfully approached the

Italian toy market from this perspective. The Tyco Toys CEO did not accept suggestions that the organization adapt to local customs (e.g., targeting toys to British TV figures for sale in Britain) or distribution needs (e.g., small deliveries for small European stores) (Lublin R10).

Prior to entry into a new market, organizations examine their product literature and other customer documentation and consider the need for localization, internationalization, or globalization of written products in addition to their physical products. A strongly ethnocentric organization might not make changes to written materials if its initial international entry is very small or if it assumes market conditions do not demand adaptation. Changes to this ethnocentric strategy might be considered if expansion into the new markets falls below projected levels or market share is lost to competitors who are following a different course of action. However, an organization doing well with its nationally based style may not need to change, especially if its product is competitive in the global market. Conversely, as in the case of Tyco Toys, making a major bid for global presence may fail with an ethnocentric strategy.

An organization will generally emerge into the international field, according to Gunnar Hedlund, with an ethnocentric strategy (12). Depending on the success of the ethnocentric strategy in a larger arena, the organization may or may not adapt its strategy. Many of the major Japanese electronics and automobile manufacturers with highly successful products have continued to rely on ethnocentric management styles in overseas expansion. However, the success of the ethnocentric viewpoint of the Japanese electronic and automobile industry might speak more to the desirability of their products in the global marketplace, and to the lack of competition to date in product quality, than to the global effectiveness of an ethnocentric style (Leontiades 53). Mitsubishi Electric is an example of a globally successful ethnocentric organization, with an all-Japanese board of directors and Japanese managers with Japanese-style management practices—"the Mitsubishi way, as well as the Japanese way"—in all of their foreign affiliates (Humes 316).

Localization—adaptation to the local conditions and culture of the target country—becomes an issue for ethnocentric organizations when their international growth under transplanted source-country conditions becomes stagnant, falls off, or is otherwise threatened. For example, the recent Mitsubishi-US sexual harassment controversy may affect US sales. The alleged harassment could be related to the unsuccessful transfer of a Japanese management style to the United

States, which would essentially be poor cultural localization, an ethnocentric error, on the part of Mitsubishi. Admittedly, localization to many individual countries can be an expensive global strategy. Careful localization to target countries tends to accompany a polycentric more than an ethnocentric management strategy.

### Polycentric

A polycentric strategy aims to respond to potentially competing demands or cultural expectations. Organizations follow a polycentric strategy when they make intensive localization efforts, investing deeply in local manufacturing and employment to decentralize operations. However, an organization's attention to localizing products and customer information does not preclude its using other strategies. Nestlé™, a Swiss firm, and PT Multi Bintang Indonesia (MBI), the Indonesian arm of Heineken, a Dutch firm, are examples of organizations that have successfully used polycentric strategies for production while maintaining a global perspective in operations. Since the early 1900s, Nestlé has customized products to regional needs across the globe (Steinmetz and Parker-Pope R4). MBI has worked with product tailoring and distribution on a tightly localized level in Indonesia, recognizing the cultural (e.g., ethnic and religious) differences within a single nation and offering a great deal of autonomy to lower-level managers (Hornaday 329-30).

However, a polycentric strategy that is extremely responsive to a culture's unique situation can be locally and globally problematic. An organization strongly committed to decentralization and highly aware of the complexity of national needs may find itself overwhelmed by polycentrism. According to Maddox,

[A] firm with a polycentric orientation believes that each foreign operation's environment is unique and difficult to understand and deal with from a home base; therefore, each foreign operation is given a great deal of autonomy to run its own affairs. (54)

There are advantages and disadvantages to distancing headquarters from the subsidiary. Small organizations, unsure of the international climate or values, often need to rely on individual local operators to establish and develop the international site; this cultural uncertainty can be exploited unfairly by locals when the parent organization does not have an on-site presence (Tannenbaum). In large organizations, a strongly polycentric orientation with heavy investment in localization



avoids some of the cultural blunders in production and sales that can plague an overly ethnocentric, centralized organization. Nestlé has been quite successful in this regard. However, the local strategies of subsidiaries can be so divergent that corporate direction is lost. As a result, the organization functions more as a holding company than as a unified entity with an overall plan and goals coordinating the efforts of the parent and offspring. Overlocalization can diminish or eradicate the competitive advantage of a subsidiary over local firms. The innovative superiority of the subsidiary is lost when local priorities eclipse international trends and developments. In such cases, then, "cultural adaptation as the sole concern can be as costly as no cultural adaptation" (Maddox 55). The competitive advantages of size and unified operation are negated if too many operations must be duplicated by the subsidiaries at the local level, and the local subsidiary may actually perform less effectively than strictly local operations. Overlocalization of communication can also be very expensive (Hoft). Some of these expenses, such as producing separate documentation and packaging for each country, traditionally considered a marketing gain, may not be necessary. In the same sense, it may not be necessary to translate all company documents into the first languages of all the members of the subsidiaries, especially if the documents are written and designed to help readers self-translate.

A polycentric organization, using localization as an international communication approach, might expend great effort to ensure that documents are translated into the languages of its subsidiaries. Product documentation might be developed and written by the target country's own local marketing department and might only marginally reflect information provided by the source company. Individuals in a polycentric organization might be encouraged to learn second and third languages to carry on some level of business with colleagues in affiliated countries, or the organization might choose to rely on professional translators to avoid miscommunication.

Unfortunately, professional translation can cause its own problems (Varner and Beamer). In particular, the addition of oral interpreters can add an unproductive level of artifice and formality, affecting the ease of communication and contributing to misunderstandings or in the worst cases to a breakdown of the business venture (Sussman and Johnson). Oral translation is complicated by variables such as the first language and subject matter expertise of the interpreter, how and by whom payment is arranged, and how the interpreter is treated by the different groups represented in the business exchange. Although the

need for oral translation by a trained interpreter is often unavoidable, oral interpretation is difficult to control or to evaluate, especially during the interpreting session (Kublin 109-11).

Written translation, a major component of document localization, internationalization, and globalization approaches, also presents communication problems. Translation is often expensive, difficult, and error-prone. The number of errors made in translation increases with the complexity of technical detail, with increasing needs for speed, and with greater differences between the languages being translated—factors that tax the skill of both expert and novice translators. Organizations using a geocentric strategy might strive to avoid or minimize translation—a goal of both internationalization and globalization approaches to product documentation.

### Geocentric

The tendency of organizations to oscillate between the extremes of ethnocentric and polycentric strategies can result in a more balanced perspective, one that Hedlund refers to as geocentric. "A geocentric orientation within the firm has been viewed as both a globally integrated business philosophy and a compromise between the extremes of ethnocentrism and polycentrism" (Maddox 55). A true international firm, as defined by Parviz Asheghian and Bahman Ebrahimi, has no international departments or subsidiaries that are specified as foreign (414). The large, global home market is the ideal, rather than a series of local markets. As an ideal, the geocentric organization makes great sense. In reality, persistent cultural differences make a single geocentric management style impossible to create. Maddox notes that "the great ease of managerial mobility and the use of third country nationals (an integral part of the geocentric philosophy) is a debatable result of a geocentrically oriented organization and appears to remain more fiction than fact" (56). That managers are not mobile and third-country nationals do not solve problems in a global organization are borne out in the rate (16%-40%) of expatriate managers returning early from out-of-country postings (because of their poor performance and/or poor cultural adjustment); an additional 50% of the remaining managers function at a low level of effectiveness (Black and Mendenhall 114). Lack of managerial effectiveness has been related to inappropriate cultural perspectives, which may in turn be related to lack of adequate training and preparation (Black and Mendenhall).

Geocentric management strategy can be viewed as a balancing act between ethnocentric and polycentric strategies. This metaphor describes Caterpillar Tractor's efforts in the 1970s to minimize translation problems in its international operations by developing a limited (950-word) English dictionary for product instructions (Thomas et al.). The limited-word instructions were more easily read by many first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) speakers of English and also were more easily translated into other languages. Nonetheless, during the time when Caterpillar employed this dictionary, it also employed an essentially ethnocentric market strategy. A competitor of Caterpillar noted, "It [Caterpillar] is so centralized, the worldwide price of any piece is set in Peoria, Illinois. In certain markets, like the Middle East, . . . [we can be] much more responsive to local opportunities and conditions" (qtd. in Davidson and Haspeslagh 130). The imbalance between the ethnocentric market strategy represented by US-pricing standards and the geocentric strategy represented by the limited-word instructions could be due to lack of strategic alignment or could represent different goals being pursued by different divisions of the organization. Another possibility, because L1 as well as L2 US-English speakers found the limited-word instructions easier to read, is that improvement for L1 US-English readers (an ethnocentric, or local, choice) could have been Caterpillar's primary goal.

Another heavy-machinery company, John Deere, uses graphics to meet global needs, employing in its equipment manuals the same pictures of "flatman," a stylized human figure, accompanied by text in different languages. The use of "flatman" figures is predicated on the belief that "graphics designed to be as global as possible" are a "universal form of communication" (Kostelnick 192) and supports a geocentric management strategy. "Flatman" shows up in many places: On a tube of the anti-inflammatory drug Voltaren™, by the Swiss pharmaceutical firm Ciba-Geigy AG, a bent "flatman" holds its sore back on one side of the tube while the drug indications are presented in German and French on the other—the "flatman" graphic is a global variable, and the languages are local variables for the mid-European market. These attempts to use graphics to bridge translation problems are, according to Charles Kostelnick, an indication that "visual language is still presumed to be 'universal'" (192). This presumption of universal usage is being tested on the Internet. Graphic Web links are used to make the John Deere Web site more accessible; for example, clicking on a bulldozer takes the user to the pertinent pages without reading English (unfortunately, once linked,

the information is still in English [URL = <http://www.deere.com>]). Graphics do not necessarily obviate the need for translation, although they can supplement text. A geocentric organization would combine text and graphics to increase the accessibility of information.

In practice, geocentric management strategies seem to consist of making constant course corrections to adapt to new information from multiple sources or to respond to specific local demands for change. An organization can be geocentric in some aspects of its business and polycentric or ethnocentric in others. Although Nestlé concentrates on local brands produced in the target countries, a very polycentric strategy, its personnel are selected from the target regions and the technology used is the "best" globally available so that overall Nestlé employs a geocentric or heterarchic strategy (Rapoport 148). Some organizations see the geocentric, or world market, view as a goal and make a concerted attempt to maintain a wide-angle lens on market concerns. A number of such organizations have moved beyond the essentially hierarchical strategies I have described here as ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric, and have developed a flatter management strategy that Hedlund calls "heterarchic."

### Heterarchic

The heterarchic multinational corporation, an extension or special case of the geocentric corporation as described by Hedlund, resembles Jane Perkins's description of rhetorical corporations. In rhetorical corporations, members of the organization work closely together without traditional hierarchy, a concept that has led to changed and new metaphors to describe organizations. Hedlund modifies the common metaphor of the "brain of the firm" to the "firm as a brain," a definition that moves the concept of a firm beyond a brain (management) directing an unthinking body (workers) to an organization in which all actions are informed by thought (26). This metaphor of the entire organization as a brain is seen in the open-books management philosophy put forth by Jack Stack, which draws on the resources and experience of all workers in planning business strategy (*Great Game*). Open-books management views the development of business strategy as a series of moves in a game involving all workers, not just management, and motivates workers and brings them into the business as involved and committed players by relying on the idea of business as a challenging game to be enjoyed (Markels; Stack, *Great Game*, "Springfield").

In the heterarchic or rhetorical corporation, individuals are aware of a great variety of exigencies and work actively to adapt to changing circumstances. The heterarchic corporation is not limited to businesses that focus on information and new technology. However, a small company with a high proportion of its workers in direct research or other information transfer activities might more easily sustain the "firm as a brain" management philosophy than a multinational conglomerate could. The open-books management plan encourages involvement of all workers and has been applied in factory line-production organizations (Markels A1). For example, Stack applied this concept profitably in the worker buyout of an engine rebuilding plant, Springfield Remanufacturing Corporation, and in spin-offs of the original organization (Rubis). Suggestions for improving the engine plant's operations were given by all levels of management and line workers, then tested and adopted by management, a working example of the "firm as brain."

Another metaphor for the heterarchic corporation comes from Peter Drucker, who compares the traditional model for managers in a big firm to a conductor in an opera, pulling together a large number of different groups in a controlled performance. Drucker suggests that a more effective metaphor for management of the organization is the jazz group. The group does not have a common score to play but comes together as "diversified groups that have to write the score while they perform" (Schwartz and Kelly 119). Management's role in a heterarchic organization is like a member of the jazz ensemble.

Internationally, the heterarchic corporation has many centers, each contributing actions and ideas, just as in a jazz ensemble in which all parts contribute actively and creatively. To work effectively, each part of the organization must be acutely aware of the actions of the entire organization. Because there are many centers of control, with no one center taking coercive/bureaucratic control at the top of a hierarchy, control within the organization is, according to Maddox, "normative control," which requires that the centers and individuals "must be aware of central, or company-wide, goals and company-wide interdependencies" (57-58). The ensemble has to agree, then, on what they want to achieve and remain flexible to creative opportunities while playing together.

In a heterarchic corporation, management stresses communication as an important priority for the organization as a whole. Communications are adjusted to fit the needs of the individual on a case-by-case basis. A premier example of the philosophy of the heterarchic corpo-

ration in action is the Swedish conglomerate Asea Brown Boveri (ABB), formed in 1988 from two competing firms in Sweden and Switzerland and now consisting of "1,300 separate companies divided into 5,000 profit centres." ABB has leveraged a belief in "nuanced" globalization into clear profits ("Face Value" 56). Although a second language for two-thirds of the employees, including CEO Percy Barnevik, English is the company language at ABB. Barnevik insisted on English as the company language to enable communication between nationalities (Kozminski 60). Globalization for this electrical engineering firm is based on a strong belief that markets will continue to differ, and the successful company—the "multicultural multinational"—needs to be "diverse enough to respond to local tastes but united enough to amount to more than the sum of its parts" ("Face Value" 56). ABB's management strategies center on "a thin layer . . . [of] an elite cadre of 500 global managers [selected with] particular attention to the cultural sensitivity of its members, and to their spouses' willingness to move" ("Face Value" 56). Whereas top management is multinational, the "national companies are headed by locals and staffed predominately by locals" (Kozminski 60). As part of its "thinking globally, acting locally" strategy, ABB's matrix organization overinforms employees through a communication network moving frequent redundant messages throughout the organization (Cushman and King).

The four global management strategies and the international communication approaches most supportive of these strategies are illustrated in Table 1 with the examples discussed in the text.

Management and communication strategies are not static; an organization can have several different strategies in action at any given time, varying according to needs. These strategies can in turn support, or fail to support, the organization's global mission. The degree of support depends ultimately on individuals choosing rhetorical strategies that support the organization's global mission.

### COMPARISON OF GLOBAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND INDIVIDUALS' RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

Large or fragmented organizations may have differing or even conflicting management strategies at different levels or may move through a series of strategic positions over time. The heterarchic organization might sound ideal—and difficult to sustain—but other

TABLE 1  
**International Communication Approaches  
 Supporting Global Management Strategies**

<i>Global Management Strategy</i>	<i>International Communication Approach</i>		
	<i>Localization Target Specific</i>	<i>Internationalization Multinational</i>	<i>Globalization Universal</i>
<i>Ethnocentric Target specific</i>	Source documents not modified. Believes what works at home will work abroad (e.g., Tyco Toys' advertising in Italy)	Similar to localization	Similar to localization
<i>Polycentric Multinational</i>	Documents produced in target countries rather than in the home country (MBI-Indonesia's regional documents)	Translation of all documents into target country languages (Nestlé Foods)	Organizations concentrate on localization and internationalization
<i>Geocentric International</i>	Limited use	Simplified English decreases translation (Caterpillar's reduced word dictionary)	"Universal" graphic language (John Deere's "Flatman")
<i>Heterarchic Balanced target, international and multinational</i>	National companies headed by locals, staffed primarily by locals (ABB)	Multinational top management speaks the same language (ABB)	Matrix organization overinforms, sends redundant messages throughout the organization (ABB)

global management strategies, including ethnocentric and polycentric strategies, can also be effective. A key goal is to align the organization's actions with its needs, that is, to ensure that the individuals' actions and global management strategies align so that the global mission is more likely to be supported and met. Because international written communication at all levels of the organization is becoming a part of individual performance, a method such as a communication audit that focuses on international issues and can effectively assess individual effort could be a key tool for organizations. Such an audit would

first determine if the global mission and the global management strategies are aligned to decide if the level of support offered by individual rhetorical actions should be investigated or if a different course of action is needed to address the misalignment of these critical primary strategies. Misalignment is one indication of a nonsupportive culture. In organizations without a supportive culture, as noted by Brown and Herndl, intervention in workplace writing will not be successful. Reasons for unsuccessful training beyond those cited by Brown and Herndl include lack of time to devote to writing and revision, also a possible outcome of the misalignment of strategies.

Within organizations in general, individuals whose rhetorical strategies match the prevailing management strategy are more likely to be successful. In an ethnocentric-oriented organization seeking a high share of the national marketplace, an ethnocentric-oriented individual might be an excellent and successful employee. In contrast, organizations most likely to benefit from international workplace training or restructuring are those in which the majority of individual rhetorical strategies do not align with their organization's global missions. Suppose, for example, that an organization has many ethnocentric-oriented employees in the source country and that the organization plans to employ a polycentric approach of localized distribution in the target countries. Given this scenario, the localization teams could experience problems in obtaining adequate support from the source-country staff. An organization in this situation might benefit from international communication training.

This emphasis on the majority of individuals is critical to international training and to the appropriate interpretation of a communication audit. Although the majority of individuals' rhetorical strategies should align with the organization's global mission, just as the global management strategies should align with this overall mission, not all communication must be in complete accord with the global management strategy. With too much uniformity, the organization risks being unresponsive to changing circumstances and missing emergent opportunities. However, a group within an organization generally has one perspective prominent at a given time, which either changes when a more useful strategy is discovered or is recognized as the most useful strategy for the rest of the organization to follow. If a global mission has been developed, the majority of individuals needs to act in accord with that mission. Consistent and effective action requires alignment between the organization's global mission and the actions of the majority of individuals. Alignment implies control and recognition of



variability, which can be achieved by knowing the performance strengths and weaknesses of the organization (possibly assessed through a communication audit or other benchmarking tools) and planning training or other action to improve performance.

Training in workplace writing, for example, assumes that individuals can improve the presentation and delivery of international documents through consciously chosen rhetorical strategies. The growing literature on workplace writing strategies, particularly in international writing, provides a variety of possibilities to improve international communication. An intriguing possibility, based on implementation models being developed primarily in the software industry, is to apply to international workplace communication the same documentation approaches—localization, internationalization, and globalization—currently applied to consumer product documentation.

### IMPLICATIONS OF ALIGNMENT

Organizations planning international expansion or continued involvement in global ventures need to understand their existing international communication relative to their global mission. For optimal performance, all divisions and most individuals within an organization need to align in the targeted direction. Critical to this alignment is an understanding of the organization's current global mission and how communication can support or undercut this chosen strategic direction.

An organization that does not have a large international component to its work and is not changing the scope of its market objectives might not need to modify its international approach. Such an organization would not be a strong candidate for international communication training. If, however, its mission were to enter the global market more aggressively, it might need to employ or develop a more geocentric strategy and incorporate the economies of scale (e.g., fewer unique documents, possible centralized document production) afforded by the planned globalization of documents. During this planning stage, assessment could help the organization determine the type and amount of training, if any, necessary to prepare individuals to communicate more effectively with new colleagues and customers. If members of the organization view international communication from a mostly polycentric perspective, focusing on localization approaches, the organization's communication would be misaligned with the

global management strategy (i.e., to become more geocentric). Such an organization would be a good candidate for focused international communication intervention to implement its change in mission more effectively.

## CONCLUSIONS

The framework I have just described introduces ways of thinking about global management strategies and their relationship to workplace communication as a macro perspective. An assumption underlying this categorization of global management strategies—ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, and heterarchic—is that organizations' global management strategies should be aligned with their international communication practices. An organization that seeks a larger role in the international market but that takes an ethnocentric stance in its communication may be less successful than one with a more polycentric, geocentric, or heterarchic approach to international communication—and may benefit from training tailored to its needs.

The value in thinking about international communication within such a framework is not only in consulting practice but in teaching, to introduce ways of thinking about organizational strategies and communication in an international arena. For many students, the micro perspective, focusing on individual rhetorical choices, is the most familiar. This macro perspective includes the communication strategies not only of individuals but of the organization and may make it easier for students to visualize the contribution of their rhetorical choices to their organization's global mission.

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