

The Context of Blessing in the Inner and Outer Circle Writings

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Abstract

The study examined the differences in the writing patterns of the Inner and the Outer Circle writings that were suggested by Kaplan's (1966) Contrastive Rhetoric. Using Thatcher's (2004) shared context framework, as well as an adaptation of John's (1997) Writer and Reader Sharing Knowledge of a Text Model, two inspirational non-fiction literatures were investigated for their use of the term blessing. Investigation proceeded using a three-step device of identifying the major and the minor points of both texts, citing the supporting details used in the Introduction, Elaboration and the Conclusion sections and, discussing how the Inner and the Outer Circle cultures impinge on their selection of supporting details in these three sections. Data showed the American writer examined exhibited three writing patterns different from their Indian-English counterpart. The study has considerable implications in the way educators teach and respond to the writing of their non-native learners.

1.0 Introduction

In the over 40 years since its inception as a notion in applied linguistics, Contrastive Rhetoric (Kaplan, 1996) has undergone some ground breaking developments. What began as a research that drew attention to the cultural and linguistic differences in the expository writing of ESL students, the study has gradually expanded its focus into five domains worthy of inspection. The first domain looks into contrastive text linguistics to compare discourse features across languages. The second concerns the study of writing as cultural activity. It is in this area of undertaking that the process of learning to write in different cultures is being compared. The third ventures into contrastive studies of the classroom dynamics of L2 writing. In the fourth domain, the focus is on contrastive rhetoric studies dealing with the integration of culturally different intellectual traditions and ideologies. Finally, the fifth domain highlights contrastive rhetoric studies concerning a variety of purposes (Connor, 1996). This last aspect is the response of contrastive rhetoric to the ever expanding genres under consideration as well as to the variety of contexts that determine ESL writing.

While all these developments in Contrastive Rhetoric contribute significantly to the understanding between the interface of language and culture, the Contrastive Rhetoric studies that investigate how cultures of L1 and L2 writers are embedded in their writing strategies are relevant in the sense that these studies strengthen the idea behind Contrastive Rhetoric Hypothesis (CRH). This hypothesis posits that L2 writers organize ideas in writing differently. Studies have in fact been made to substantiate this claim. For instance, it is observed that the Inner Circle writing is characterized by logicalness, linearity and direct approach while the Outer Circle writing tends towards non-logicalness, non-linearity and indirectness (Kaplan,1972; Reid,1989; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Kachru, 1999). Of particular interest among the Outer Circle varieties of English is Indian English writing. In a study made by Datta (1978; Kachru,1999), it was held that in the Indian tradition, the demonstrative form of inference, which is embodied in logico-philosophical discussions contains five stages:

- 1) "clear enunciation of the proposition to be proved;
- 2) statement of reason;
- 3) statement of universal relation, supported by concrete instance;
- 4) application of the universal relation to the present case;
- 5) conclusion."

(p. 57)

However, this structure, according to Kachru (1999), is necessarily reflected in Indian writing as evidenced by Garapati's (1991; Kachru, 1999) study on the grouping of Gondi dialects. In another study, Smith(1991; Kachru, 1999) compares Western and Indian English writings by examining the *Introduction* section of academic texts.

Smith's findings showed that of the fifteen papers written by Indian scholars, "only one *Introduction* explicitly states what the paper is arguing about. The other eight state the purpose clearly while the remaining six fail to provide any at all" (p. 58). The same non-statement of the thesis is observed in two papers written by Western authors. Another study (Kachru, 1997) that concerns the categorization of verbs in Indian English reveals that verbs are categorized in terms of volitionality. In addition, Indian English texts are observed to imitate the stylistic features of the Sanskriticoetics.

According to Vyas, Tiwari and Srivastava (1972) in Kachru's article (1999), an Indian declarative essay, which corresponds to an argumentative text in the Inner Circle Englishes, contains three parts: introduction, elaboration, and conclusion.

In another article by Kachru (1999), he emphasized the need to continue the research on Indian English texts to draw definite conclusions about the relatedness of written and oral modes. It is with this idea in mind that the present study ventures into.

The present study traces the influence of culture on an existing genre – the religious philosophical genre – by explaining how the two cultures of the two varieties of English are embedded in their writings. These varieties are the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle writings.

Specifically, the study attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How is culture embedded in the use of supporting details of Bruce Wilkinson's *The Prayer of Jabez* and AnantPai's *How to Achieve Success*?
2. How is the word 'blessing' affected by these writers' cultures?

AnantPai begins his seven-chapter text *How to Achieve Success* (1993) with the question raised by the Sphinx concerning what the secret of success was. Those who heard the question gave different responses. According to the boatman, the secret was simply positive thinking. To an arrow, it was aim. On the other hand, the Nile River said it was restraint. A hammer answered that it was training. The oar gave hard work as its answer. To this, the bubble gum's reply was the ability to stick to something. The Sphinx finally answered its own question by revealing that the secret of success was PARTHA, which represented the first letters of the answers.

The author then stresses that success does not exempt anyone even those with humble beginnings. He cites great people in India like ChandraguptaMaurya, Shalivahana and SherShah Suri. For instance, Shalivahana, who established a mighty kingdom, was a potter's son. What follows in the remaining chapters was the author identifying practical steps that all can apply to daily life to strengthen their convictions to target the aim that they want to achieve. These steps include believing in oneself, rising to one's potential and relaxing one's self. The author ends the text by putting emphasis on the power of relaxation to renew anyone.

The Prayer of Jabez (2000) written by Bruce Wilkinson is also a seven chapter text that provides a useful insight as to how the simple prayer of Jabez found in 1 Chronicles 4: 9-10 of the holy bible can transform the lives of even ordinary people. Wilkinson explains that the key to being granted what one wants to achieve is to ask God and trust that He will give whatever one asks Him. He shows how this is true when God granted Jabez, whose very name means pain, abundant blessing because Jabez had the insight to ask God for blessing. He then cites ordinary people, whom he had met over his long years of ministry, whose lives have changed because they too ask God for blessings.

The author ends the text by identifying the six steps that incorporate the Jabez prayer to one's life. The first step is to recite the prayer daily for thirty days. Next is to put small reminders of the prayer in the places where one stays frequently. Third is to reread the author's book and to ask God for important insights that one may have missed in the earlier readings of the author's book. Fourth is to tell someone this newfound habit. Fifth is to record the changes and the opportunities that happen in one's life as a result of this prayer. The last step is to say the Jabez prayer for one's family, church, and friends. In conclusion, the author emphasizes the need for action on the part of the user of the prayer to make all that he asks for to come true.

2.0 Methods and Procedures

Thatcher (2004) identified the need to start with similarities based on shared contexts. Then, differences can be embedded in the framework of these similarities (Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Lucy, 1996; Thatcher, 2004).

Although this framework does not have a definite terminology, Thatcher justifies its efficacy as framework as it works against analysing a second culture using the cultural constructs of the first culture (Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Thatcher, 2004).

The paper will adapt the same three variables identified by Thatcher in 2004. These are:

1. Relations of individuals to groups (individualism vs. collectivism);
2. Applications of rules (universal vs. particular) and;
3. Roles of context in communication (high vs. low context).

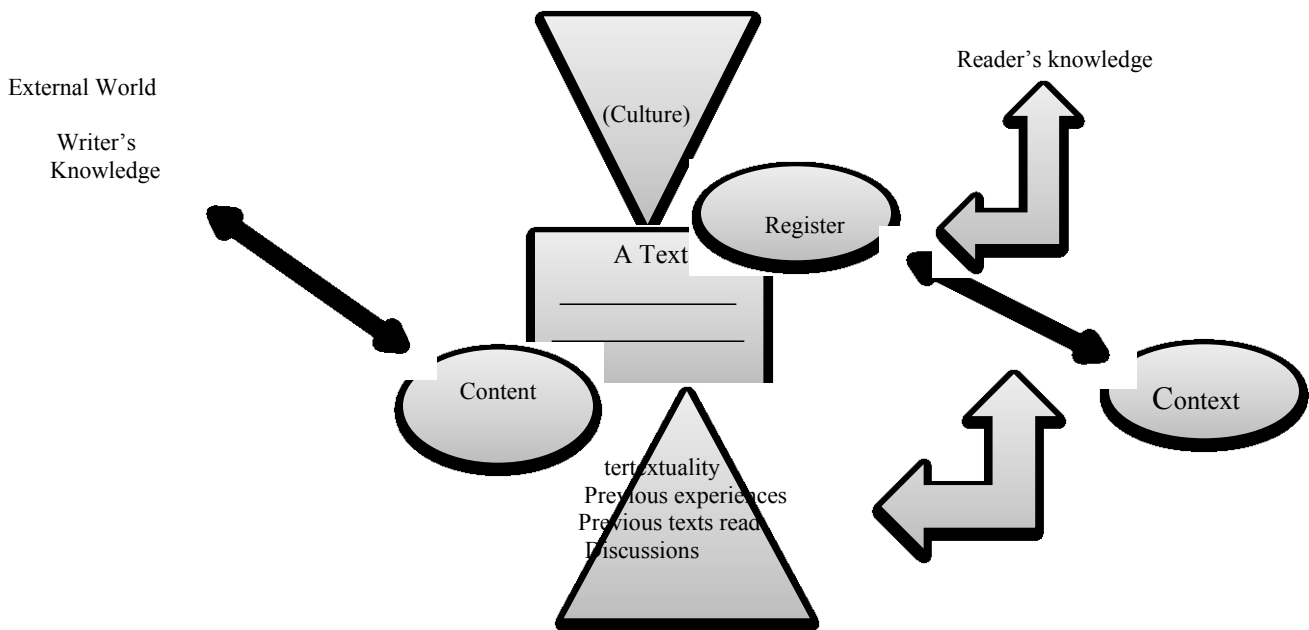
These variables will be used to determine how the cultures of the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle writers impinge on the selection of the supporting details to substantiate major and minor points in their texts. The first text under study is *The Prayer of Jabez* (2000), a 92-pages inspirational book authored by Bruce Wilkinson. Briefly, this American writer resides in Atlanta, Georgia and has written other inspirational books like *Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs* and *30 Days to Experiencing Spiritual Breakthrough*. The second text is also a book of inspiration – *How to Achieve Success* (1993). It has been written in both English and Hindi. This 82- pages book was written by AnantPai, an Indian writer who is popularly called Uncle Pai. He is originally a comics writer known for creating *Amar Chitra Katha* and *Tinkle*. He has written other inspirational books like *How to Develop Super Memory* and *How to Develop Self Confidence*.

The procedures of this study are:

1. Identify the major points as well as the minor points of both texts;
2. Cite the supporting details that are used in the *Introduction, Elaboration (Body) Conclusion* sections of the two texts and;
3. Discuss how the Inner and the Outer Circle cultures impinge on their selection of supporting details in the three sections of their texts using an adaptation of John’s(1997) *Writer and Reader Sharing Knowledge of a Text*.

Figure 1 illustrates an adaptation I made of John’s(1997) *Writer and Reader Sharing Knowledge of a Text*. This model was used to identify what pieces of culture are embedded in the writers’ use of supporting details.

Figure 1.0 Writer and Reader Sharing Knowledge of the Text



Adapted from Johns(1987, p. 37)

Figure 1.0 identifies important elements in the analysis of the two texts. These are:

1. Culture
2. Register
3. Context
4. Content
5. Intertextuality

Culture, as used in the study, is a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embedded in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitude toward life” (Geertz, 1983, p.89; Kachru, 1997, p. 49). Register refers to the “predominance of particular lexical and grammatical feature categories within a genre” (Johns, 1997, p.33). Context applies to all non-linguistic and non-textual elements that contribute to the situation in which reading and writing take place (Johns, 1997). Content refers to the completeness of the text brought about by the writer meeting the expectation of the reader (Kneffel, 1986). Intertextuality refers to the idea that texts are “ongoing processes of discourse production and reception that are always tied to other texts or utterances in a culture (Bakhtin, 1985; Connor, 1996).

3.0 Results and Discussion

Results reveal pattern of supporting details that the writer in the Inner Circle uses to make his central idea clear. This thesis about blessing in Wilkinson’s *The Prayer of Jabez* (see

Appendix A) impacts on the American reader since the writer employs supporting details that are crucial to the American reader experience. One example of this is the writer’s reference to the testimonies of students in Dallas (p.23). Additionally, it is observed that this strategy of identifying supporting details is done in a manner that confirms what Inner Circle writing is best characterized. Concretely, the supporting details do not pay attention to dates, particular people and places but to central meanings represented by these people, places, and dates. Thus, even if references to people and places are aplenty in the *Introduction*, *Body*, and *Conclusion* sections of the text, because their particular names are not mentioned, the reader is made to focus more on what the actual American experience is pointing at. Furthermore, the use of specific names like Mr. Jones (p.25) in the fable that was given as supporting detail does not point to a distinct person. Rather, the strategy creates universal embodiment of any other universal name.

In the *Body* section of the text, the analysis of ‘territory enlargement’ uses examples of professionals like business executives and ordinary people’s tasks like domestic responsibilities of a mother (p.31) again without citing specific names represented by these classes.

Wilkinson interchanges his ‘other people’ examples with a plethora of details drawn from the writer’s own personal experiences to substantiate his major and minor points. For example, when highlighting his minor point on ‘sustaining triumph’ (Chapter 4: p. 51), Wilkinson narrates how he allows his son David to ask for his help when the task of going down the giant slide is way too daunting for him as an analogy to how Christians should relate to God if they need His help.

Finally, Wilkinson uses analysis as method to support his minor points. For instance, the writer looks closely into the meanings of the key phrases like ‘the hand of the Lord’ (p.54) and ‘keeping me from evil’ (p. 65) not only by mere definition of key phrases but by using the context by which these key phrases are cited in the Bible. This strategy is effective because it helps the reader arrive at a better understanding of the key phrases. Table 1.0 shows a summary of major and minor points found in the *Introduction*, *Body*, and *Conclusion* sections of the text. For instance, in the *Body* section of the text, the writer defines the ‘hand of the Lord’ by referring to passages in the Bible (Appendix B). Additionally, Wilkinson defines ‘keeping me from evil’, a phrase that most Christians usually adhere to when they simply rely on their own strength.

Table 1.0 Summary of Major and Minor points found in the *Introduction, Body, and Conclusion* Sections of *The Prayer of Jabez*

Text	Major Idea (Introduction)	Supporting Details
<i>The Prayer of Jabez</i>	Jabez' simple prayer has the power to transform lives	God granted requests to those who prayed the Jabez prayer: Jabez, the author and other people around the world.
	Minor Ideas (Body)	
	Analysis of what blessing means	Testimonies of students in Dallas seminar; Spiritual retreat(mentee/mentor) Jabez' background ,birthname; context of biblical times Meaning of 'indeed' attached to blessing; Blessing in daily context
	Territory enlargement	Exposed through 'definition' device and analysis of definition
	Moving out of boundary lines	Exposed through 'cause-effect'; 'analysis' and 'logical relationships' devices
	How to sustain triumph	Logical connectedness; e.g. new business opportunities threatening to outrun resources/experience; Solution offered: "Oh, that Your hand would be with me"; Analogy between author's hands on his son's cry for assistance and God's hands on His people; Definition of 'the hand of the Lord' in biblical times
	Idea (Conclusion) Reiteration	Emphasis on the idea God favors those who ask; Exposed through personal and other people's experiences
	Challenge	The idea of using the prayer effectively

The findings on Wilkinson's use of 'personal-other people-bible' pattern represents direct and linear approaches to writing and appears to coincide with Thatcher's (2000) findings on the Inner Circle's style of writing exhibiting directness and linearity. In another area, Wilkinson's writing displays similar cultural rhetorical patterns found in Inner Circle writing. These patterns are low context, universalism, and analysis (Thatcher, 2000).

The data above exhibit how the Inner Circle writer draws from variety of elements to complete the text *The Prayer of Jabez*. To complete the text, the writer uses his schema and derives from it actual experiences (his own and other people) and his understanding of Bible passages, then merges his schema with his Western cultural-rhetorical orientation as well as his schema of the religious – philosophical genre. The reader then, who comes from the same Christian/Western orientation, translates the messages and implications embodied in the pattern of 'personal-other people- Bible passages' pattern.

Meanwhile, data analyzed reveal that the Outer Circle writer under study expresses his central idea by putting together pieces of information drawn from different subject matters. Table 2.0 displays the vastness of specific names and dates derived from both international and local perspectives that provide the basis by which AnantPai elaborates on his major and minor points.

After describing the achievements of the personalities he enumerated, he then provides techniques to achieve the various minor points he elaborates on his individual chapters.

Table 2.0 Summary of Major and Minor points found in the Introduction, Body, and Conclusion Sections of How to Achieve Success

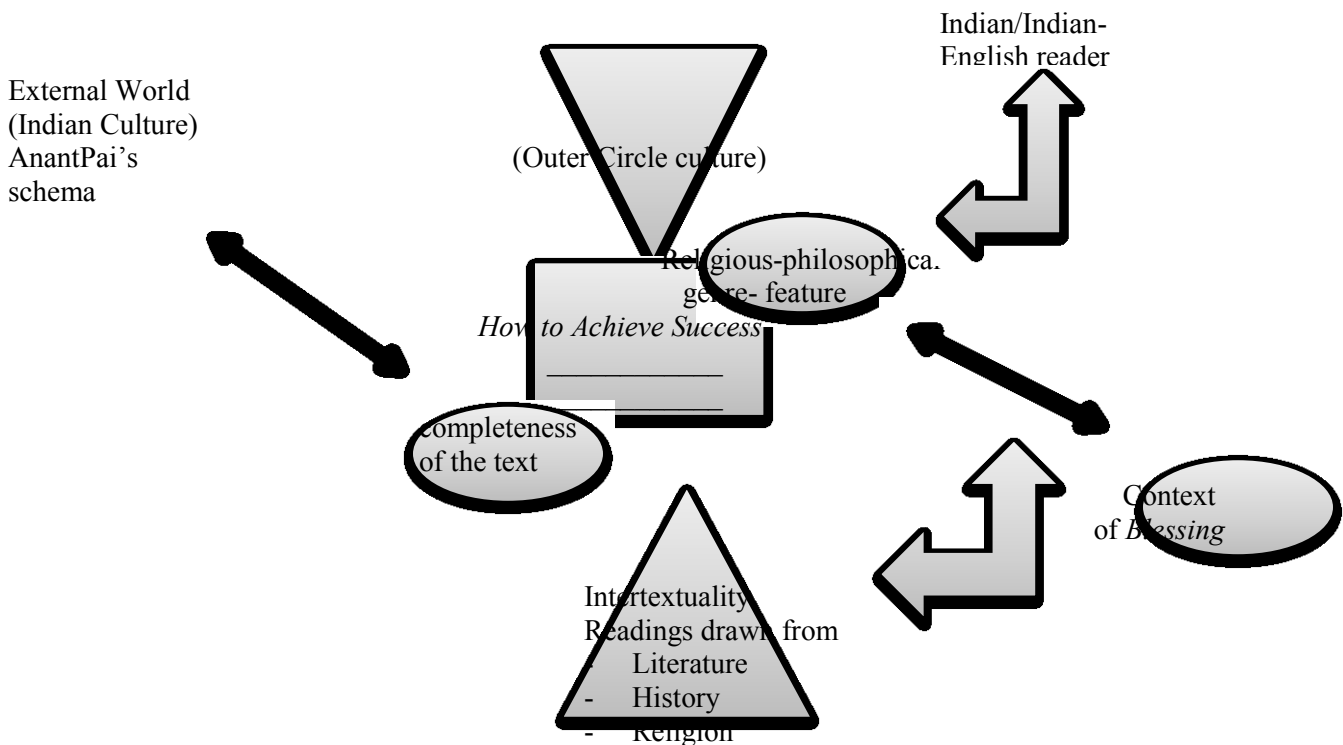
Text	Major Idea (Introduction)	Supporting Details
<i>How To Achieve Success</i>	Achieving success through inner strength	Legend of the Sphinx in Egypt; Chandragupta Maurya (Mauryan Empire); Shalivahana; Kalidasa; Sher Shah Suri (Sultan of Delhi); Mafatlal Gagalbhai; Lal Bahadur Shastri (Prime Minister of India); Sherpa Tenzing-Head of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute; Use of acronyms (PARTHA; WISH)
	Minor Ideas (Body)	
	Believing in oneself(Positive Thinking)	Muhammad Ali; Sanskrit Mudrarakshasa; Shatakami (Indiankingin78 A.D.); Emerson(American poet-see Appendix C); Ferdinand de Lesseps built the Suez Canal reducing the distance between Europe and India by 8000km; Inscription on clay tablet from Assyria dated about 2800 B.C.(see Appendix D); Socrates 'message around 350 B.C.(see Appendix E) ; Methods for thinking positively
	Set purpose (Aim)	Description of 'magnet' as analogy for 'aim'; Abraham Lincoln; Charles Darwin; Robert Sternberg's <i>Beyond IQ: A Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence</i> ; The author's <i>How To Develop Self-Confidence</i> ; Famous people like Albert Einstein, , Louis Pasteur, Srinivasa Ramanujan, Ludwig von Beethoven, MS. SudhaChandran, Franklin Roosevelt; George Bernard Shaw's message(see Appendix F); Methods for developing 'aim'
	Developing Control(Restraint)	Using metaphor like River Nile and 'tug-of-war' for restraint';charioteer and five horses for the 'mind' and the 'five senses'; Equation 'A+B+C=C'; Methods for enhancing will power
	Using time wisely(Training)	Krishna advocating ways to free the mind from anxiety and pain(see Appendix G); Dale Carnegie; AJ Cronin; William Ostler (see Appendix H)
	Idea (Conclusion) Reprogramming oneself through meditation	Suggested techniques for relaxation

AnantPai's text *How to Achieve Success* enters on the central idea of achieving success by tapping one's inner faculties. The Outer Circle writer makes use of an array of seemingly unrelated pieces of information to support this central point. Also, what is noteworthy is that the writer prefers to provide history of places, specific dates and specific people not only in India but also in other countries. This style of writing is what Thatcher (2000) describes as particularism which refers to "whether or not value systems should take particular relationship systems of the actor into account" (Hofstede, 1984; Thatcher, 2000, p. 53).

For instance in Chapter 1 alone, AnantPai identifies three specific people, one of which is Yellapragada Subbakow, an Indian who became the Director of Research at Lederle Laboratories, USA (P.11) to stress his point that people who come from humble beginnings can attain prominence. Additionally, in the final chapter, the writer uses a quote from British poet Shakespeare to illustrate how the human mind has been programmed since birth (see Appendix J). These examples show how seemingly different pieces of specific information can be made to fit in the broader scheme of the Outer Circle writers’ main idea. This preference for seemingly irrelevant data and illogical connectedness of information may prove confusing to a Western reader but like Wilkinson, Anant Pai had in his mind his Indian or Indian-English reader. The shared knowledge and the shared context between the writer and the reader make easy for them to understand the cultural rhetorical patterns being employed by the Outer Circle writer.

Figure 2 exhibits the variables that the Outer Circle writer draws from to complete his Text *How to Achieve Success*. AnantPai makes use of his schema that he shares with his Indian/Indian-English reader. He derives his examples from vast literatures and readings drawn from History, Philosophy and Religion to support his major and minor points. This modified version of John’s (1997) ‘Writer and Reader Sharing Knowledge of a Text’ displays the specific intertextual elements of AnantPai’s text.

Figure 2.0 Writer and Reader Sharing Knowledge of theText



Adapted from Johns(1997, p. 37)

The term ‘blessing’ was mentioned several times in Wilkinson’s text *The Prayer of Jabez* since the central idea of this text focuses on achieving the best in life through the power of the simple prayer. This is why the writer did not lose his focus and maintained all throughout the seven chapters of the text the goal of proving why the simple prayer of Jabez can obtain for anyone God’s blessings.

However, in AnantPai’s *Howto Achieve Success*, the term ‘blessing’ was mentioned only once in Chapter 2 in the context of parents and teachers blessing the son/daughter. In fact, a particular example illustrates a young man during the British days prostrating regularly before his mother each morning. The mother would, in turn, bless the son with a gesture of spreading her arms and saying that her son would become a collector someday. After 20 years, he did become one (p. 21).

This supporting detail exemplifies the tendency of the Outer Circle writer to be particularist in his writing. Not only that, the given supporting detail on ‘blessing’ shows the tendency of the Outer Circle writer to prefer contextual information.

4.0 Insights

Two significant data were observed in AnantPai’s text. One, the Indian-English writer employs the technique of using acronyms. These acronyms PARTHA (p.11) and WISH (P.13) are the writer’s own strategy of reaching out to Indian-English readers as well as to Indian readers who are within the age bracket of twenty and thirty years (<http://seikilos.Com.ar/IndianEnglish.pdf>) since the message of the text may be too intellectual or even abstract for them. Two, the writer uses code-mixing to impress upon any reader the writer’s cultural distinctiveness. Additionally, there is no explanation or English equivalent for the many Indian terms that were used. Some examples of Indian terms are ‘*sankalpa*’ (p.33), ‘*bhajans*’ (p.44), and ‘*swastika*’ (p.64).

5.0 Conclusion

In summary, the paper has shown how the use of supporting details by writers in both the Inner and Outer Circles exemplify their cultural orientation as well as rhetorical distinctiveness. Concretely, the paper characterized the different rhetorical patterns and strategies that the American and the Indian-English writers employ to make their major and minor points clear.

First, while the American writer uses the ‘persona;-other people-bible’ pattern in elaborating on his points in the Introduction, Body, and Conclusion sections of his text, it was observed that the Indian-English writer uses a lot of unrelated information drawn from different fields like History, Religion, and Literature in the three sections of his text to establish his major and minor points. Second, what is now reaffirmed from the juxtaposition of patterns is that the Inner Circle writer indeed writes in a linear manner while the Outer Circle writer writes in a convoluted manner. Third, these strategies of writing – linear and convoluted – re-establish the impression of the logicalness in the Inner Circle writing and the illogicalness in the Outer Circle writing, respectively. Fourth, it was noted that Inner Circle writing, which puts premium on an individualist culture, tends to be universalist in the manner that the Inner Circle writers, as displayed by Bruce Wilkinson, elaborates on their major and minor points through a show of universal human experience. On the other hand, the Outer Circle writing, while displaying a collective mindset, exhibits a high tendency to be particular its show of dates, names, history, and places. These data further reveal Inner Circle writers to be low in contextual information while the Outer Circle writer, high in contextual information. The paper also discussed the context of blessing as exhibiting yet again the cultural distinction between the Inner and the Outer Circle writers.

This paper has not established the value of the texts under study in terms of the functions of their recurrent signifiers in the societies that these texts were produced. It is suggested therefore that future studies look into the two texts and establish their significance using Halliday’s (1973) concept of ‘meaning potential.’

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Appendices

- A. “Oh, that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that your Hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” So God granted him what he requested. (1 Chronicles 4:9-10)
- B. “God’s power and the presence in the lives of His people.” (Joshua4: 24 and Isaiah 59:11)
- C. “There is no defeat from within. There is no insurmountable barrier, except your own inherent weakness of purpose.”
- D. “The earth is going to an end. Bribery and corruption are common.”
- E. “Children who are now tyrants...They contradict their parents and tyrannise their teachers.”
- F. “The people who get in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and if they don’t find them, make them.”
- G. “Work for work’s sake and not for the sake of its fruit.”
- H. “Consider yourself to be but an instrument of the Divine Will. That can free you from worry.”
- I. “The fault dear Brutus is not in our stars
But in ourselves that we are underlings, says Cassius in Julius Caesar.”