

## SUMMARY

- ◆ Reports on a study of 300 people in the Netherlands, France, and Senegal
- ◆ Finds that the cultures differ with respect to the presentation introduction they prefer
- ◆ Presents a model to predict the extent to which an introduction will be appreciated in a culture

# Cultural Differences in the Appreciation of Introductions of Presentations

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he introduction of a presentation is of great importance in attracting the audience's attention. A good introduction wins half the battle. When a speaker loses this advantage, the audience will be less focused. This is the reason why so much attention is paid to introductions to presentations in communication training courses and communication handbooks.

Current advice on how to begin a presentation does not differ much from advice given in classical rhetorical theory. The introduction to a presentation has to fulfill the three functions developed by the Sophists and adopted by Cicero (Andeweg, de Jong, and Hoeken 1998; McCroskey 2001).

- ◆ Gaining the attention of the audience (*attentum facere*)—A presenter needs to appeal to the listener's attention to make the listener absorb the presented information. Appeal tactics are particularly important when the audience is tired or indifferent toward the presenter or the presentation (Quintilian 2001, 4.1.49).
- ◆ Establishing the speaker's credibility (*benevolent facere*)—An unsympathetic listener attitude toward the presenter or the presentation will hinder the persuasive effect of the presentation (Quintilian 2001, 4.1.5).
- ◆ Increasing the ability to listen (*docilem facere*)—The introduction needs to include a preview by means of which listeners are informed about (that is, are prepared for) the content of the full presentation (Aristotle 1957, 29.1).

The idea that a good presentation should meet these three classical rhetorical functions seems to be universal: it oc-

curs in presentation guidelines originating in diverse cultures. However, there are indications that an introduction that fulfills these three functions in one culture does not necessarily fulfill them in another culture.

For example, a comparison of recommendations in advice books from different cultures regarding introductions to presentations shows that Dutch advice books (Korswagen 1988, p. 107; Merk 1993, A2, p. 110; van den Boogaard and colleagues 1989, p. 255) do not recommend the use of ethical appeals through which the presenter sketches his or her personal qualities and those of his or her organization, whereas French advice books (Charles and Williams 1988, p. 64; Boissinot 1996, p. 73) strongly recommend using such appeals in introductions.

Handbooks about international business communication and intercultural communication mention hardly anything about such cultural differences with regard to the introductions to presentations (Beamer and Varner 2001; Gudykunst and Kim 1997; Hofstede 1991, 2001; Scollon and Scollon 1995; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998). The exceptions are Lustig and Koester (2000, p. 227), which describes the role of cultural differences in presentations in detail; Ober (1998), which offers some tips for giving presentations abroad; and Bennett and colleagues (1998), which devotes a whole chapter to presentation skills in an intercultural setting and, in another chapter, offers practical hints on giving presentations in various European business contexts. These recommendations are not based on experimental research but on observations of

Manuscript received 15 August 2004; revised 8 December 2004; accepted 10 December 2004.

presentations made by people from different cultures and the reactions to those presentations in an international context.

In this article we present the results of an experimental exploratory investigation into the differences among audiences from the Netherlands, France, and Senegal in West Africa on how introductions with three different types of emphasis are appreciated: overview (an introduction that summarizes the outline of a presentation), anecdote (an introduction that introduces the topic in an indirect way through an illustrative story), and ethical appeal (a brief description of the qualities of the speaker and his or her company).

We first offer a literature review in which we explore several relevant theories on differences in cultural values that led us to expect that cultures would differ in their appreciation of different introductions. Subsequently, we formulate research hypotheses. On the one hand, these hypotheses are based on theories about differences in cultural values between France, Senegal and the Netherlands. On the other hand, they are based on recommendations for introductions provided in current French and Dutch advice literature. The next two sections describe the method of the study and the results. Then the conclusions are presented and discussed. Finally, we address the implications of our research results in relation to three practical applications: giving presentations abroad, listening to presenters from other cultures, and designing other sorts of documents for international audiences.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Claes (1998) has shown that, on the basis of the theories of cultural values proposed by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1980, 2001), one may expect that cultures will differ in what they consider to be a good presentation. She refers to three aspects of culture to explain why a presentation may be more appreciated in one culture and less in another: complexity of communication, polychrony/monochrony, and formality. Differences regarding the first two aspects are related to Hall's descriptions (1976) of high-context and low-context societies, and of polychronic and monochronic societies. The differences regarding formality are related to one of the five dimensions, according to which cultures differ from each other in Hofstede's theory (1980, 2001): power distance.

Certainly other cultural values such as masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and emotionality may also have an impact on the type of presentation that people appreciate most. However, in this article we will focus on the three values mentioned by Claes (1998), which she believes to be the three "key points that correspond to profound cultural differences, and which also affect the way a presentation is supposed to be handled" (p. 103).

Below we explain what these values mean in terms of the cultural differences with regard to appreciating different types of presentations, according to Claes's theory. In addition, we explain what they might mean for differences in the appreciation of *introductions to presentations*. Since it is not always easy to relate theories about cultural differences to differences in the appreciation of presentations and introductions to presentations, we present our ideas as research questions.

## High and low context

Hall (1976) argues that every human being is faced with so many perceptual stimuli—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and bodily sensations—that it is impossible to pay attention to all of them. Culture determines which stimuli persons perceive or do not perceive and how they interpret these stimuli. According to Hall, the cultures of the world differ in the extent to which they use context and situation for the interpretation of a message along a continuum that ranges from high to low context.

In high-context cultures, most of the meaning of a message cannot be deduced from the words that are uttered, but has to be deduced from the context and situation in which these words occur. For example, the Japanese, Middle Eastern, and Latin American cultures are all considered to be high-context cultures, as they can be characterized by implicit communication strategies. In these cultures, respondents commonly avoid a straightforward answer to a question and tend to provide the answer with an implicit meaning that may be different from or only indirectly related to its explicit meaning. "Yes," for instance, may actually mean "I don't know." Moreover, a question is often answered indirectly by means of a metaphor or a story ("Let me tell you a story . . ."). Thus, to be able to correctly interpret answers in high-context cultures, the indirect meaning of the words uttered needs to be identified.

In low-context cultures, the meaning of a message can be primarily deduced from the words that are said; here, context and situation play only a minor role. To avoid misinterpretation, nothing is left to chance, and meanings are communicated explicitly. Low-context cultures are highly verbal and hardly attend to non-verbal stimuli. Examples of low-context cultures are Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and the United States. Here's an example of a low-context utterance.

*I propose a price of 14 euros for each packet, with 12 CDs delivered in boxes of 144 packets within 15 working days after acceptance of the order by fax or e-mail.*

Claes indicates that high- and low-context cultures differ in what they consider to be a good presentation. In high-

context cultures, the complexity of communication is high. The audience therefore explicitly searches for underlying signals. In this regard, eloquence, rhetoric, metaphoric language use, and non-verbal signals are highly appreciated. In low-context cultures, the complexity of communication is low: people expect unambiguous, direct and explicit language use. Non-verbal communication is restricted to certain conscious and controlled movements. Regarding the introduction to a presentation, we would expect that an introduction that includes topics that are indirectly related to the content of the presentation (for example, a historical event, an anecdote, or a metaphor) will be highly appreciated in cultures with a high complexity of communication. Furthermore, we would expect that an introduction including an explicit formulation of what is going to be said (for example, an overview) would be appreciated most in cultures with a low complexity of communication.

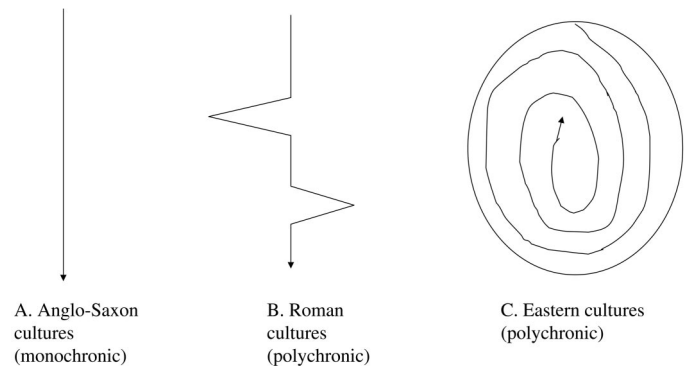
### Polychrony versus monochrony

According to Hall (1976), cultures also differ in time management. He distinguishes between polychronic and monochronic cultures. Time is not very structured in polychronic cultures. People are able to do different things at the same time, and priority is given to relations with individuals rather than to a fixed program. In polychronic cultures, interruptive *têtes-à-têtes* during meetings are very common and are not regarded as a lapse in manners.

In monochronic cultures, time is ordered in strict units, and people prefer to perform only one task at a time. Features of monochronic cultures are tight half-hour schedules and chaired meetings with strictly regulated speech turns. There is an African proverb that accurately describes the difference between polychronic and monochronic cultures: "God gave time to the Africans, and He offered the clock to the Europeans."

Kaplan (1966) and van der Wijst and Ulijn (1991) have shown that there are differences in lines of reasoning between monochronic and polychronic cultures. Presentations in monochronic cultures such as the Anglo-Saxon usually proceed directly from one point to the next (see Figure 1A), whereas presentations in polychronic cultures take a less direct course. The Roman way of reasoning is characterized by a line of reasoning that begins with statements on the main theme of the presentation and that continues with occasional non-functional digressions during the remainder of the presentation (see Figure 1B). Finally, it is common for the Eastern line of reasoning to start with a statement that is implicitly related to the central topic of the presentation and to gradually attend to this topic in a more explicit manner (see Figure 1C).

According to Claes, a polychronic audience does not like highly structured presentations but prefers unexpected turns, metaphor, s and eloquent digressions. Monochronic



**Figure 1.** Ways of reasoning in three types of cultures.

audiences, on the contrary, expect a presentation to be highly structured and prefer this structure to be rigorously maintained.

Regarding the introduction to a presentation, we would expect that people from polychronic cultures would probably appreciate an introduction that contains indirect references to presentation contents (such as anecdotes, metaphors, or allusions to historical events), whereas people from monochronic cultures would presumably prefer an explicit summary of the outline of the presentation (such as an overview).

### Power distance

According to Hofstede (2001), the differences in values between cultures can be reduced to differences in five dimensions: power distance, collectivism/individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and Confucian dynamism. All five of these dimensions could affect the form and content of presentations and the type of presentations most appreciated by various cultures. However, Claes deals only with power distance, which she calls formality.

Power distance is the extent to which members of institutions and organizations that do not have power expect and accept that power is not equally divided. The more people accept that power is not equally divided, the greater the power distance is. Hofstede indicates power distance on a scale from 0 to 100. A low power distance, for example, is found in Denmark (18), Great Britain (35), and the Netherlands (38), while a high power distance is found in Mexico (81) and Panama (95).

In cultures with a high power distance, the distance between the powerful and the rest of the population is literally and metaphorically large. The powerful have power, wealth, and status. The subordinates—employees, pupils, children—expect that the powerful will tell them what they should and should not do, while the powerful expect that subordinates will do nothing without asking

prior permission from their superiors. In such cultures, formality is high. People abide by the rules of behavior and dress codes, and they use titles and forms of address that express the differences between the powerful and the powerless. In cultures with a low power distance, the difference between people with and without power is less pronounced. The powerful have less status and privileges. Subordinates have a say in matters, and the superiors listen to them. These cultures are rather informal.

According to Claes (1998), people from formal cultures will appreciate presentations in which the presenter shows that he or she has power and knowledge, whereas people from informal cultures will prefer presentations in which the distance between presenter and audience is as small as possible.

In our view, ethical appeal, an introduction in which the presenter sketches his or her personal qualities and those of the organization, would be more appreciated in formal cultures than in informal cultures.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In this section we will first formulate research hypotheses on the basis of theories about differences in cultural values among France, Senegal and the Netherlands. Then we will check whether the current recommendations in advice literature from those cultures are in line with these hypotheses and—if they are not—we will formulate alternative hypotheses.

Our research was conducted in three countries: Senegal in West Africa, France, and the Netherlands. A reason for choosing these countries was that their cultures differed in the cultural aspects that, according to Claes (1998), could be related to presentations: context, polychrony/monochrony, and power distance.

Hall explicitly mentions France in his theories of high-context and low-context cultures and polychronic and monochronic cultures. He terms it a rather polychronic, medium-context culture. However, he does not characterize the Netherlands or Senegal. On the basis of what we

know about communication styles and time management in the Dutch and Senegalese cultures, however, we believe that the Netherlands, on the one hand, can be considered what Hall calls a low-context, monochronic culture (see Claes and Gerritsen 2002, pp. 166–167; Mole 1993, p. 67; Pinto and Pinto 1994, p. 24). These cultures also include other North and West Germanic cultures such as German and Scandinavian cultures. On the other hand, Senegal, which is an African culture, is a high-context polychronic culture (see Claes and Gerritsen 2002, p. 241; Pinto and Pinto 1994, p. 24). The data for the analysis of power distance is derived from Hofstede (2001). A high figure indicates a high power distance, and a low figure, a low power distance. The Netherlands is a culture with a low power distance; France and Senegal both have a rather high power distance. Table 1 summarizes the differences and similarities among the three cultures.

The cultural differences among the Netherlands, France, and Senegal lead us to expect that these countries will differ in the type of introductions that they appreciate most. We used three types of introductions in our study: an overview, an anecdote, and an ethical appeal. We expected that the Dutch monochronic culture with its low context and low power distance would value overviews most, and anecdotes and ethical appeals less since overviews indicate the structure of a presentation and sketch its outlines, a pattern that is compatible with low context and monochrony. In an anecdote, the speaker does not state precisely what he wants to say. The listener has to discover what is meant. Such an introduction is not in line with a low context culture. In ethical appeals, the speaker displays his or her qualities and those of the organization, and appeals to sentiments to accept authority. Such an introduction is not consistent with a culture with a low power distance, either.

We expected that Senegal, with its high context and high polychrony, would appreciate anecdotes more than overviews. And due to the high power distance in Senegal, ethical appeals would be more appreciated there than

**TABLE 1: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE NETHERLANDS, FRANCE, AND SENEGAL (BASED ON HALL AND HOFSTEDE)**

	The Netherlands	France	Senegal
<b>Context</b>	Low	Medium	High
<b>Monochronic/Polychronic</b>	Monochronic	Rather Polychronic	Polychronic
<b>Power distance</b> (0 = low, 100 = high)	38	68	77

overviews.

We also predicted that France would show the same preferences as Senegal but that the differences between France and the Netherlands would be smaller since French culture resembles Dutch more than Senegalese culture (see Table 1).

In our literature review, we showed that introductions to presentations have to fulfill three functions: *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem facere*. It is plausible that there is a direct relationship between the appreciation of an introduction and the extent to which that introduction generates *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem*. The more an introduction fulfills these three functions, the more it will be appreciated. This conclusion leads to the following hypotheses.

**H1.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **overviews** will be the Netherlands > France > Senegal.

**H2.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **anecdotes** will be Senegal > France > Netherlands.

**H3.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **ethical appeals** will be Senegal > France > Netherlands.

So far we have formulated hypotheses about differences among France, Senegal, and the Netherlands concerning appreciation of introductions based on theories of cultural differences. We can, however, also formulate hypotheses on the basis of another source: recommendations for introductions given in the current advice literature of these three countries. It is plausible to assume that such recommendations would be in line with what people in the respective culture like most. Unfortunately, we did not find any advisory handbooks published in and for the Senegalese culture. Since we did find such handbooks for France and the Netherlands, we can only check whether the advice given for the use of overviews, anecdotes, and ethical appeals are in line with hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 for the French and Dutch cultures.

Regarding the use of overviews and anecdotes, we did not find any difference between the French and the Dutch advice books. Both French and Dutch advisers recommend the use of the overview and the use of the anecdote. For France, see Anciaux 1995, p. 51; Charles and Williame 1988, pp. 20–21, 106; Ferréol and Flageul 1996, pp. 10, 153; Oger 1987, pp. 3, 39; Ruyet 1995, p. 16; Simonet 1988, pp. 65, 71. For the Netherlands, see van den Boogaard and colleagues 1989; de Jong 1996; Korswagen 1988, p. 104; Tanis 1991, p. A 1450–5; van den Hout and colleagues 1993, p. 41; van der Spek 1994, p. 33. The advice in these books does not correspond with hypotheses 1 and 2, in which we expected that the Dutch would appreciate overviews more than the French and that the French would appreciate anecdotes more than the Dutch. Based on cur-

rent Dutch and French advice literature, then, we must therefore formulate two alternative hypotheses, for overviews and anecdotes.

**H1a.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **overviews** will be the Netherlands = France > Senegal.

**H2a.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **anecdotes** will be Senegal > France = Netherlands.

Regarding ethical appeals, our expectations based on theories of cultural differences are in line with what we found in the advice literature. The Dutch adviser Korswagen (1988, p. 107) says that a presenter may only introduce him- or herself when no one else does so and when an audience does not know the presenter. However, he also states that the less pretentious such an introduction is, the more reliable the presenter will appear to be. Merk (1993, p. A2110–1) and van den Boogaard and colleagues (1989, p. 255) also state that Dutch audiences highly appreciate modesty. The Dutch adviser Bloch (1993) warns against the use of ethical appeals: “In an introduction a presenter has to focus all his attention on listeners and never on himself” (pp. 6–7). The study of Andeweg, de Jong, and Hoeken (1998) confirms that Dutch people do not appreciate ethical appeals.

French advisers, on the contrary, have a much more positive attitude towards ethical appeals than their Dutch colleagues. Pesez (1977, pp. 414, 451–452) states that a presenter should introduce him- or herself before starting the presentation, since the presenter’s job and social position affect his or her credibility. Charles and Williame (1988, p. 64) and Boissinot (1996, p. 73) encourage presenters to let their audiences know that they are competent.

## METHOD

### Material

Our research material included three versions of a written product presentation for a new mobile telephone. We thought that this product would gear the respondents’ perceptions of their environment. Another advantage of the topic of mobile telephones is that they are used all over the world, especially in cultures without a stationary telephone network such as Senegal. Besides, mobile phones are not intimately related to a certain culture, as are food or clothes, for example.

We had various reasons for investigating introductions. The first reason is that an introduction is an extremely important part of the presentation. A second reason is that—based on theories of cultural differences—we expected that the cultures studied here would differ in their appreciation of different introductions. A third reason is that it is easier to conduct experiments with an introduction

to a presentation than with other parts of a presentation. If we had examined other parts, respondents would have had to listen to a much larger part of a presentation. A final reason for studying introductions is that we could use a part of the research methodology developed by Andeweg, de Jong, and Hoeken (1998).

We investigated the degree or extent to which three different introductions were appreciated: overview, anecdote, and ethical appeal. We decided to focus on these particular introductions because they are often highlighted in publications on effective presentations and are widely used in technical and business settings (Morse 1983; Korswagen and colleagues 1988; van den Boogaard and colleagues 1989; van den Bulck 1993; van den Hout and colleagues 1993; Peype 1991; Bloch 1995; de Jong 1996; Mulder 1997; Andeweg, de Jong and Hoeken 1998). Moreover, theories led us to expect that the cultures investigated here would differ in their appreciation of those introductions. English translations of the texts of the three introductions that we used are presented in Appendix A.

### Research participants

As representatives of each of the three cultures, a group of 100 respondents (50 women and 50 men) took part in the experiments. All 300 respondents were second or third-year students between the ages of 18 and 29 (mean = 21.3). The Dutch respondents were studying business communication at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. French respondents were studying applied foreign languages at the Université François Rabelais in Tours, France. Senegalese respondents were studying marketing at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal. None of the participating students had recently read an advisory textbook or taken a course about presentation skills.

### Instrumentation

We investigated which of the three introductions was appreciated most by each culture and to what extent each of the introductions made the respondents *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem*. The respondents read the three introductions and answered a questionnaire about them (see Appendix B). We decided to offer the introductions on paper and not on video because we wanted to eliminate factors such as appearance, age, and race of the presenter and his nonverbal communication, since these aspects could affect the way in which the introductions were appreciated in the three different cultures.

We used two versions of the questionnaires to avoid language misinterpretations. We had a questionnaire in Dutch for the Dutch respondents and another in French for the French and Senegalese respondents. First, the Dutch version was drafted. Pre-testing of this questionnaire re-

**TABLE 2: CRONBACH'S ALPHAS OF THE ANSWERS OF 300 RESPONDENTS TO QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO MEASURE ATTENTUM (N = 5), BENEVOLEM (N = 5), AND DOCILEM FACERE (N = 5)**

	Overviews	Anecdotes	Ethical appeals
<i>Attentum</i>	.82	.84	.88
<i>Benevolem</i>	.85	.88	.83
<i>Docilem</i>	.86	.77	.80

sulted in minor revisions. The questionnaire was then translated from Dutch into French by an experienced translator and discussed with three native speakers of French living in the cities where the experiments were to be conducted (Nijmegen, Tours, and Dakar). Both questionnaires were subsequently tested in a pilot survey in the Netherlands, France, and Senegal. The test resulted in some changes in grammar, vocabulary, and phrasing in the final drafts of the questionnaires.

Since the positions of the three different introductions in the questionnaire could influence the appreciation of an introduction, we prepared four different versions of each of the French and Dutch questionnaires, presenting the introductions in different sequences. Each version of the questionnaire was filled in by a quarter of the total number of respondents in the Netherlands, France, and Senegal.

First respondents had to read the three introductions; then they had to indicate and explain which one they thought was the most and which one the least suitable. The extent to which each of the three introductions made the respondent *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* was measured by means of statements that the respondents were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (agree completely). The formulation of the questions was based on the questions of Andeweg, de Jong, and Hoeken (1998). For each introduction, the research participants were asked to rate 15 statements equally divided among the three functions: five measured *attentum facere*, five measured *benevolem facere*, and five measured *docilem facere*. To avoid pushing respondents to one side of the scale, some statements were formulated positively (for example, 3, 4, and 6) and some negatively (for example, 2, 5, and 7). The scores on the negatively formulated statements were recoded. As a result, 5 indicates a positive evaluation and 1, a negative evaluation. Using reliability analyses, we checked whether the answers relating to a certain function of an introduction were similar

enough to compute. Table 2 presents the Cronbach's alphas (Cronbach's alphas are used to test the internal consistency of measurement scales within a questionnaire). Table 2 shows that all alphas are higher than .77, demonstrating that the answers to the five questions that measured the extent to which a certain introduction made the public *attentum*, *benevolem* or *docilem* can be computed. We deal with the computed data below.

**Procedure and data processing**

Experiments were conducted during a class lecture on a topic unrelated to the experiment. The second author of this article handed out the questionnaires and gave an explanation. She was present to answer questions when the respondents filled in the questionnaire.

The data was processed in SPSS 10 for statistical significance. For Kruskal Wallis tests and regression analyses, we decided on a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . For Mann Whitney tests, we chose  $p < .01$  as a level of significance, since many such tests were performed.

RESULTS

**Appreciation**

To gain an understanding of the differences among the cultures in the appreciation of the three introductions, we asked the respondents which introduction they thought was the most and which one was the least suitable using a three-point scale to answer the question. The most suitable introduction was given score 2; the least suitable introduction was given score 0. Table 3 shows the means for each introduction and for each culture. The higher the figure, the greater the appreciation of the introduction.

There appeared to be significant cultural differences in the appreciation of all introductions, according to Kruskal-Wallis tests. Mann Whitney tests (Table 5 contains a summary of the significant differences) showed that the overview was appreciated more in the Netherlands than in France ( $z = 3.11, p = .01$ ) and Senegal ( $z = 4.84, p < .01$ ). The anecdote was appreciated more in Senegal than in France ( $z = 2.42, p < .01$ ) and the Netherlands ( $z = 5.16,$

$p < .01$ ) and more in France than in Senegal ( $z = 3.07, p < .01$ ). The ethical appeal was appreciated more in France than in the Netherlands ( $z = 2.46, p = .01$ ).

**Attentum, benevolem, and docilem facere**

Since it is plausible that there is a direct relationship between the appreciation of an introduction and the extent to which that introduction makes a person *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem*, we measured the degree to which an introduction made respondents *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* for each culture and each introduction. Scores were obtained by means of Likert scales. Table 4 shows the results.

For all introductions, Kruskal-Wallis tests showed significant differences between the cultures for making **attentum**. According to Mann-Whitney tests (Table 5 contains a summary of the significant differences), the overview attracts less attention in the Netherlands than in Senegal ( $z = 2.89, p < .01$ ), anecdote attracts less attention in the Netherlands than in France ( $z = 3.02, p < .01$ ) and in Senegal ( $z = 2.42, p < .01$ ) and ethical appeal attracts less attention in the Netherlands than in France ( $z = 3.71, p < .01$ ) and Senegal ( $z = 7.02, p < .01$ ), and less in France than in Senegal ( $z = 3.51, p < .01$ ).

According to Kruskal Wallis tests, the cultures differed also by the extent to which all three introductions made the audience **benevolem**. Mann Whitney tests (Table 5 contains a summary of the significant differences) showed that the overview made the speaker significantly more credible to a Dutch audience than to an audience from France ( $z = 3.30, p = .001$ ) and Senegal ( $z = 4.10, p < .01$ ). The anecdote made the respondents from Senegal more *benevolem* than the respondents from France ( $z = 3.23, p < .01$ ) and the Netherlands ( $z = 5.46, p < .01$ ), while it made the French respondents more *benevolem* than the Dutch respondents ( $z = 2.48, p < .01$ ). The ethical appeal made the Dutch respondents less *benevolem* than the respondents from France ( $z = 3.02, p = .001$ ) and Senegal ( $z 3.87, p < .01$ ).

The Kruskal test revealed significant differences only

**TABLE 3: MEANS OF SUITABILITY (2 = MOST SUITABLE, 1 = NEITHER SUITABLE NOR UNSUITABLE, 0 = NOT SUITABLE)**

	The Netherlands M (SD)	France M (SD)	Senegal M (SD)
Overviews	1.48 (.64)	1.22 (.61)	1.03 (.64)
Anecdotes	0.83 (.60)	1.10 (.61)	1.31 (.63)
Ethical appeals	1.02 (.59)	1.23 (.63)	1.20 (.60)

**TABLE 4: MEAN SCORES ON ATTENTUM, BENEVOLEM, AND DOCILEM FACERE (1 = NEGATIVE, 5 = POSITIVE)**

		Netherlands M (SD)	France M (SD)	Senegal M (SD)
<b>Overviews</b>	Attentum	3.19 (0.97)	3.45 (1.15)	3.59 (1.09)
	Benevolem	4.20 (0.74)	3.72 (1.02)	3.59 (1.09)
	Docilem	4.70 (0.55)	4.16 (1.01)	3.74 (1.14)
<b>Anecdotes</b>	Attentum	3.12 (1.01)	3.24 (1.16)	3.55 (1.15)
	Benevolem	2.33 (0.89)	2.73 (1.13)	3.29 (1.27)
	Docilem	3.41 (0.93)	3.40 (0.97)	3.83 (0.97)
<b>Ethical appeals</b>	Attentum	2.70 (1.08)	3.30 (1.20)	3.87 (1.00)
	Benevolem	3.69 (0.92)	4.06 (0.89)	4.13 (0.92)
	Docilem	3.94 (0.90)	3.98 (0.99)	4.10 (0.90)

in making **docilem** among the cultures for the overview and the anecdote. Mann-Whitney tests (Table 5 contains a summary) showed that the overview made the Dutch respondents more *docilem* than the French ( $z = 4.53$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and Senegalese respondents ( $z = -7.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while it made the French respondents more *docilem* than the Senegalese ( $z = 2.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The anecdote made the respondents from Senegal more *docilem* than those from the Netherlands ( $z = 3.56$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and France ( $z = 2.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Table 5 presents a summary of the significant cultural differences in the appreciation of an introduction and in the scores on the functions of an introduction: *attentum*, *benevolem* and *docilem facere*. We also indicated which significant differences we found. For example, N > F in the appreciation column and the overviews row means that the Dutch appreciate this introduction significantly more than the French.

Table 5 shows that nearly all statistically significant differences are consistent with each other. When an introduction is appreciated significantly higher in one culture than in another culture, and when there are also significant differences in *attentum*, *benevolem*, and/or *docilem facere* for that introduction in those two cultures, these differences point in the same direction. We see, for example,

that the Dutch appreciate the overview significantly more than the French, and that Dutch scores on *benevolem* and *docilem facere* are also significantly higher than the French scores.

In this section, we will see which of these results confirm which hypotheses. We will deal in sequence with overviews, anecdotes, and ethical appeals.

Regarding **overviews**, two alternative hypotheses were formulated: H1, based on cultural theories, and H1a, based on advice books.

**H1.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **overviews** will be the Netherlands > France > Senegal.

**H1a.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **overviews** will be the Netherlands = France > Senegal.

It is clear from Table 5 that research question 1a is not confirmed, since there are significant differences between the Netherlands and France. The significant differences are more in line with hypothesis 1. There is only one significant difference that contrasts with hypothesis 1: overviews make research participants from Senegal more *attentum* than those from the Netherlands. Nevertheless, our data for overviews strongly indicates that cultural values such as low/high context and monochrony/polychrony play an important part in the preference of certain introductions to presentations. The lower the context and the more mono-



**TABLE 5: SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG CULTURES IN THE APPRECIATION OF AN INTRODUCTION AND IN THE SCORES ON ATTENTUM, BENEVOLEM, AND DOCILEM FACERE (SEE TABLES 3 AND 4 FOR RAW DATA)**

	Netherlands-France				France-Senegal				Netherlands-Senegal			
	Appreciation	Attentum	Benevolem	Docilem	Appreciation	Attentum	Benevolem	Docilem	Appreciation	Attentum	Benevolem	Docilem
Overviews	N > F	-	N > F	N > F	-	-	-	F > S	N > S	S > N	N > S	N > S
Anecdotes	F > N	-	-	-	S > F	S > F	S > F	S > F	S > N	S > N	S > N	S > N
Ethical appeals	F > N	F > N	F > N	-	-	S > F	-	-	-	S > N	S > N	-

◆ N = Netherlands, F = France, S = Senegal.

chronic the culture, the more respondents like the overview and the better they think it fulfills its function in the presentation.

With respect to **anecdotes**, two alternative hypotheses were also formulated: H2, based on cultural theories, and H2a, based on advice books.

**H2.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **anecdotes** will be Senegal > France > Netherlands .

**H2a.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **anecdotes** will be Senegal > France = Netherlands.

Table 5 clearly shows that the results are more in line with hypothesis 2 than with 2a because anecdotes were significantly more appreciated by the French than by the research participants from Senegal. All statistically significant differences corroborate hypothesis 2. Our data strongly indicates that a relationship exists between context, monochrony/polychrony, and introductions. The higher the context and the more polychronic the culture, the more people preferred anecdotes and the better the introduction was believed to fulfill its function in the presentation.

With regard to **ethical appeals**, we formulated only one hypothesis, since the cultural differences that we expected based on the theories were the same as those expected based on the advice books.

**H3.** The hierarchy in appreciation and making *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* of **ethical appeals** will be Senegal > France > Netherlands.

It is clear from Table 5 that there are no significant differences that run counter to hypothesis 3. Our data strongly corroborates the idea that in cultures with a high power distance, ethical appeals are appreciated more than in cultures with a lower power distance, and that this type of introduction fulfills its function in the presentation better

in the former than in the latter.

Although our data strongly supports research questions 1, 2 and 3, we did not find all the significant differences we expected at the beginning of our study. Significant differences among cultures in the appreciation of an introduction did not always go hand in hand with significant differences in the opening functions (see the data for anecdotes for the Netherlands and France in Table 5). Significant differences in making *attentum*, for example, did not always couple with any significant difference in appreciation (see the data for ethical appeals in France and Senegal in Table 5).

To gain an understanding of the relationship between the appreciation of an opening and the scores on the three functions of an opening, a stepwise regression analysis was performed for each culture with the independent variables *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem facere* and the dependent variable “appreciation of an introduction.” The results are presented in Table 6.

The scores on the functions of the introduction appear to predict the appreciation of an introduction fairly well. The explained variance (R<sup>2</sup> varies from 23% for the ethical appeals in Senegal, to 52% for overviews in the Netherlands. The third column of Table 6 shows which opening functions precisely contribute to the explained variance and in which order. The exact contribution to the explained variance of an opening’s function (β) for *attentum*, *benevolem*, and *docilem* is indicated respectively in columns 4, 5, and 6.

In all three cultures, the appreciation of overviews is predicted by the scores on *attentum* and *docilem*. This also holds true for the appreciation of ethical appeals in the Netherlands and Senegal. The appreciation of anecdotes and ethical appeals by the French respondents is only predicted by the scores on *attentum*. Table 6 clearly shows that not all three opening functions contribute equally to

**TABLE 6: RESULTS OF A STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES ATTENTUM, BENEVOLEM, AND DOCILEM FACERE AND THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE "APPRECIATION OF AN INTRODUCTION"**

The Netherlands	R <sup>2</sup>	Order	$\beta$ <i>Attentum</i>	$\beta$ <i>Benevolem</i>	$\beta$ <i>Docilem</i>
Overviews	.52	AD	.41		.25
Anecdote	.26	B	–	.34	–
Ethical appeals	.44	AD	.23	–	.20
<b>France</b>					
Overviews	.43	AD	.23	–	.17
Anecdote	.32	A	.30	–	–
Ethical appeals	.32	A	.28	–	–
<b>Senegal</b>					
Overviews	.41	AD	.26	–	.14
Anecdote	.49	BD	–	.24	.18
Ethical appeals	.23	AD	.17	–	.17

◆ R<sup>2</sup> = explained variance, A = Attentum, B = Benevolem, D = Docilem.

the appreciation of an opening. The scores on *attentum*, followed by *docilem*, seem to be best in predicting the appreciation of overviews and ethical appeals in all three cultures. There are not many cultural differences regarding the opening functions that determine whether one appreciates an opening or not. *Attentum* and *docilem facere* play an important role in all cultures. Cultures differ, however, with regard to which introduction best fulfills these functions. The overview introduction made the Dutch most *docilem*, and the ethical appeal introduction made the research participants from Senegal most *docilem*.

In summary, we can state that there is only one statistically significant difference that runs counter to research questions 1, 2, and 3, which are based on the theories of differences between cultures. Compared to the advice books, these theories clearly predict more adequately (a) which introduction will be appreciated most in a culture, (b) which introduction will best fulfill the most important opening functions, and (c) which introduction will probably be more effective in terms of communication. Appar-

ently, recommendations offered in advice books do not always accurately reflect the preferences of the members of a culture. This is remarkable, since we believed that the advice books published in and for a particular culture would mirror people's actual preferences in that culture.

#### IMPLICATIONS

The results of our study have important implications for document design aimed at an international audience. First, these results indicate that there are cultural differences in the appreciation of introductions to presentations. Awareness of such cultural differences is important for both presenters and listeners. Presenters should realize that an introduction that has the desired effect in their own culture may not necessarily have that effect in another culture.

They could perhaps remedy this problem by trying to gain insight into values and other cultural aspects of the culture of their audience. For audiences composed of people from different cultures, they should try to use a rather neutral introduction. Our data indicates that the overview

introduction could be a good candidate for such a neutral introduction.

However, the right introduction in the right place does not guarantee success. Many of the aspects involved in communication (such as conscious and unconscious gestures, eye contact, intonation patterns, voice quality, and argumentation techniques) vary from culture to culture. Presenters who use these means of communication according to the rules of their own culture may make a different impression than the one intended. It is important to study the effect of such culturally determined means of communication in presentations to be able to teach presenters the dos and don'ts of giving presentations abroad, and to teach listeners to place the behavior of presenters from another culture in the right perspective.

Second, we would emphasize that the results of our study are promising for the study of the relation between culture and communication. We have said before that it is difficult to relate theories of differences in cultural values to differences in communication, but our study has shown that it is possible to show such relationships. These results might encourage similar studies on the relationship between cultural values and communication aspects.

Further investigations are especially important since cultural differences exist not only with regard to the appreciation of introductions to presentations; cultural differences may also occur in many other documents that are commonly designed by technical communicators. Honold (1999), for instance, shows that Germans and Chinese differ considerably in the way they gather information about how to use a mobile phone and, consequently, in the instruction manuals they appreciate most. The results of Ulijn's study (1996) on the appreciation of different manuals for a coffee dispenser also indicate cultural differences: Dutch respondents preferred a manual with a simple, uncomplicated structure and short text fragments, whereas French respondents preferred a manual with an embedded structure and longer texts.

Other studies have demonstrated that cultural background has an impact on the way people use and appreciate Web sites (Arnold 1998; Chu 1999; Hall, de Jong, and Steehouder 2004; Simon 2001). Aaker and Maheswaran (1997), Aaker and Williams (1998) and Hoeken and colleagues (2003) show that cultural values affect persuasive strategies and that advertisements may be effective in one culture but not in another. Gerritsen, Nederstigt and Orlandini (in press), moreover, demonstrate that despite strict European Union Guidelines for patient information leaflets, German and Dutch patient information leaflets for the Ibuprofen 400 painkillers differ considerably in terms of amount of information, structure, technical terminology, and layout.

All these references reveal the enormous impact of

culture on document design. As technical communicators nowadays need to create increasing numbers of documents for international audiences (Hayhoe 2004), the references mentioned above can help them take into account the cultural differences that may influence the success of their products. Unfortunately, many aspects of the relationship between culture and communication are still on the frontiers of knowledge. Hence, further research needs to be conducted to gain more insight into the communication tactics and tools that facilitate communication in intercultural contexts. **TC**

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Hans Hoeken and Hubert Korzilius for their assistance in the statistical analyses. We would also like to thank the foundation for academic research funding at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (SNUF) for subsidizing the research in France and Senegal.

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## APPENDIX A: THE THREE INTRODUCTIONS

**Ethical appeal**

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Dr. Harry Maas. Six years ago, I joined Ericsson's R&D Department. For the last two years I have held the position of head of the Mobile Telephony Department. Ericsson is the world's largest supplier of mobile phones, operating in more than 140 countries. In 1998, our net turnover amounted to approximately 30 billion guilders. We try to improve our products and services specifically and systematically through our own Quality Model. This model enables us to increase customer satisfaction in a structural way. In 1998, we received the International Quality Award from the Institute for Total Quality Management for this approach. We won this award chiefly because we introduced the I88 World. This mobile phone can be used anywhere in the world. In tests performed by independent research institutes, the I88 World proved to be the best. It is therefore with great pride that I introduce this unique product to you this afternoon.

**Overview**

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In the next 30 minutes I will try to tell you all there is to know about Aricsson and our new mobile phone, the I88 World. In this presentation, I will provide answers to the following questions (the speaker places a sheet on the overhead projector):

- ◆ What kind of company is Aricsson?
- ◆ Why was the I88 World developed? When answering this question, I will also mention what problems we encountered with previously developed models and how we solved them.
- ◆ What are the features of the I88 World?
- ◆ Why would the I88 World be a good product for your organization?
- ◆ And, finally, what position does the I88 World hold vis-à-vis competitive products?

If you have any questions or if something is not quite clear, please feel free to interrupt my presentation.

**Anecdote**

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In the first week of February, Paul, a colleague of mine, and a friend of his, traveled for a winter sports holiday to Landeck in Austria. While they were on a trip through the wooded hills of the ski resort, it suddenly became pitch-dark. They heard a loud bang. . . . Paul turned around and saw a huge white wall of snow rushing towards him and Eric. There seemed to be no escape. Luckily, at the very last minute, they found refuge in a small cave nearby. They were immediately closed in by a thick layer of snow and found themselves cut off from the outside world. Fortunately, my colleague had his mobile phone with him, which happened to be our latest model. He contacted Major Wartoc of the Austrian army without any problem. It did not take Paul more than a minute to explain to the rescuer what had happened and where the cave was situated.

Later, at about half past five, Paul and Eric were brought to safety by a helicopter rescue team. That single telephone call had helped to save the lives of my colleague and his friend. This story once again proves how useful a mobile phone can be.

**APPENDIX B: THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire was used to measure the appreciation of each of the introductions in terms of *attentum* (A), *be-nevolum* (B), and *docilem facere* (D).

The recoded questions are marked with a \*. (See the Method section of the article for an explanation.)

- 1–disagree
- 2–disagree to some extent
- 3–neither agree nor disagree

4–agree to some extent

5–agree

1. The introduction was intelligible. (D)  
1 2 3 4 5
2. The introduction was boring. (A)\*  
1 2 3 4 5
3. The introduction gave a good impression of the company's expertise. (B)  
1 2 3 4 5
4. The introduction made me curious about what would follow. (A)  
1 2 3 4 5
5. The introduction lacked structure. (D)\*  
1 2 3 4 5
6. The introduction was made in a professional way. (B)  
1 2 3 4 5
7. This introduction is not suitable for business presentations. (D)\*  
1 2 3 4 5
8. The introduction convinced me that this company is a serious business partner. (B)  
1 2 3 4 5
9. The introduction was interesting. (A)  
1 2 3 4 5
10. The introduction was convincing. (B)  
1 2 3 4 5
11. The introduction was difficult to follow. (D)\*  
1 2 3 4 5
12. I am curious about the rest of the presentation. (A)  
1 2 3 4 5
13. The content of the introduction was superficial. (A)\*  
1 2 3 4 5
14. The introduction was credible. (B)  
1 2 3 4 5
15. The introduction was insulting. (D)\*  
1 2 3 4 5

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