

Transcript of Cultural Considerations webinar

[Gary Smith](#)

20 November 2024

Find video at [this link](#)

00:00:03:24 - 00:00:28:23

Lodewijk van Noort

Yes. Welcome, everybody. Welcome to this plain webinar about cultural considerations in plain language. My name Lodewijk van Noort. I'm PLAIN's President and I'm happy to see you all here. And also see a few of our board members are. First, we want to thank Michelle and Farida for organizing this amazing webinar and a reminder that "Writing simply is not simple".

00:00:29:00 - 00:01:02:20

Lodewijk van Noort

And in the presentation you will see today, we will give you some practical tips to show people whatever the subject matter or coach norms. A text does not have to be overly complicated. And that presentation will be given by Gary Smith. And Gary is here with us today. And Gary, it's quite funny because I just saw on Instagram that it's almost exactly a year ago that we first met in Romania, during one of the EFC conferences, a conference for translators and interpreters, and that was the first time we met.

00:01:02:20 - 00:01:12:22

Lodewijk van Noort

And I heard your story and I thought, this is something plain members should hear. So that's why we invited you. Very welcome. And I'll give you the floor.

00:01:12:24 - 00:01:23:12

Gary

Okay. Thanks. Yeah. For me, I found to the idea of playing very interesting myself as well. Obviously, that's why I became a member after this. So I will share my screen now. Yeah. Is that right?

00:01:23:14 - 00:01:49:06

Gary

Good morning, good afternoon. Good evening. Wherever you happen to be. And welcome to this short introduction to the importance of culture and its effect on plain language, and why we need to take it into account when we're trying to write and get our clients or whoever authors to write in plain language, to.

00:01:49:08 - 00:02:16:24

Gary

I just said good morning. And as you know, different countries, wherever you are, we. Good morning, good evening, good afternoon. Depending on where you are. But it also depends on a cultural consideration of when is the morning. Because if you come here, a very literal culture like mine, the UK then put it morning is literally before noon and the afternoon is literally after the noon 12:00 midday.

00:02:17:01 - 00:02:45:05

Gary

But if you come from a culture like the culture where I live, which is in Spain, a morning is generally before lunchtime and lunchtime in Spain is 2 or 3:00 in the afternoon, so rather late. So if your client says we need the text by lunchtime or in the morning, and it's going to be different in Spain, good afternoon, then also in Spain is going to be after 2 or 3:00 because it's not such a literal culture.

00:02:45:07 - 00:03:08:11

Gary

Good evening. What is evening? I suppose it's 4 or 5:00 in the evening until about 7 or 8, depending on where you are going in the world when the sun goes down. But if you live in Ecuador, for example, where the sun goes down at 6:00 every day, there's no such thing as evening. And in fact, the word evening doesn't exist really, in Spanish they don't use it.

00:03:08:13 - 00:03:33:08

Gary

So what is evening? Good night. I would suppose we all understand what night is. It's when the sun has gone down. But is it a greeting or a farewell? Because if you're in the UK or the US, good night generally means goodbye. I'm going home, I'm going to bed. Whereas in Spain it could be a greeting. I'm going out and I'm meeting you for the first time.

00:03:33:10 - 00:03:56:20

Gary

I can say good night as a greeting, because often people go out very late at night in Spain anyway, so it's used as a as a greeting. So again, these are very simple expressions. I'm using them to show the importance that even basically simple vocabulary can have a different

meaning in different national cultures. Dinner time, for example, can be very different depending on where you are.

00:03:56:20 - 00:04:18:19

Gary

If you want to meet at dinner time, then you've got to be very specific about the time. So yes, the cultural significance of vocabulary. For example, when I first came to Spain, I ordered a vegetable sandwich. I was vegetarian in those days. I no longer am, but I remember ordering a vegetable sandwich and taking the literal translation sandwich all.

00:04:18:21 - 00:04:42:10

Gary

And I discovered that I was given a sandwich which contained tuna, egg, cheese. I think maybe there was a leaf of lettuce in there somewhere. But later I realized the cultural significance of a vegetable sandwich in Spain was a sandwich with little or no red meat, which wasn't good for a vegetarian. British, on the other hand, can be very vague.

00:04:42:10 - 00:05:04:20

Gary

For example, if you say, how was the project and the British person might say, it's not bad, but they're just being polite. They're trying not to hurt your feelings. And it may mean it's no good in the UK. We need to talk. And that brings us on to the subject of politeness, which can vary radically between different countries, cultures.

00:05:04:22 - 00:05:25:07

Gary

You can try to be too polite or too little polite. Incidentally, I mentioned in passing the Culture Map in a book by Erin May. I've taken a few examples in the next couple of minutes I'm going to show from here, but there are lots more if you're interested in, the way different cultures, work, you can take a look at this.

00:05:25:09 - 00:05:52:08

Gary

Okay, so we have things like peach or coconut culture. What does that mean? Well, peach culture is, soft on the outside, hard on the inside, and coconut vice versa. This basically means there are cultures which are friendly at first, but perhaps in the US, we could talk about the have a nice day culture. If you sit next to an American on a train or an airplane, that they'll probably chat to you about their family, maybe even end up showing you photos of their kids.

00:05:52:10 - 00:06:17:09

Gary

But that doesn't mean we're going to be exchanging telephones and being lifelong friends where it is be misinterpreted. In other cultures, such as Chinese culture, for example, where they're not

used to being pushy at the beginning. So we need to take into consideration if they're friendly at first or serious at first, because this could lead to understanding misunderstandings.

00:06:17:11 - 00:06:36:11

Gary

Some examples here. Very generally speaking, the Americas would be friendly at first, and other countries, Russian or Japanese get more serious of that. So how do we get around this? If we're writing an email, for example, we could make a friendly comment and see if there's a reaction, a short friendly comment. If there's no reaction, then you just carry on and get straight to the point.

00:06:36:13 - 00:07:03:14

Gary

We also have come from tasteful cultures. What do I mean by that? I mean cultures where it's okay to disagree. You could disagree, maybe even with your boss, depending on the hierarchical culture, which we're not going to get into. Generally speaking, here are some examples of confrontational cultures and non-confrontational cultures which they try not to criticize and are very evasive about, disagreeing.

00:07:03:19 - 00:07:32:19

Gary

Even though you have to do it sometimes expressive cultures, cultures where in spoken language people might gesticulate a lot, as in Italy. And I find this interesting in that it doesn't coincide exactly with confrontational culture. So in Mexico, for example, they can be very expressive in spoken or written language, but that doesn't mean they're confrontational, which may be confusing.

00:07:32:21 - 00:07:56:00

Gary

When you read one of their emails. So non-confrontational culture, we if we say it's not bad, because we're being non-confrontational, this may lead to some confusions. We might say, by the way, as if it's an additional piece of extra information, when in fact it's the essential information. But we're being overly polite. So what do we do?

00:07:56:02 - 00:08:22:01

Gary

Well, well, one of the things I tend to do is to be positive all the time. So it's good, but it could be improved, but is rather negative because we know if we say back then good, but obviously something is bad. So I tend to avoid bad and continue on the positive with and good. And it could be improved by correcting all of the silly mistakes and changing the structure completely.

00:08:22:03 - 00:08:52:07

Gary

But keep it positive. So this is what we're talking about. Indirect coaches or direct coaches? Take a look at these emails. For example, Japanese email talks about. But whether it's getting very friendly and gradually asking for the sales figures, if they didn't mind, obviously, the Singaporean business person would read this Japanese email and think, why are they talking about the winner?

00:08:52:09 - 00:09:24:03

Gary

Why are they being so vague and evasive? And the Japanese person might think the Singaporean is being extremely blunt and even rude, like they don't trust them or something. This really is a result of low or high context cultures. Yes, but technical expression basically means you need a lot of context or not a lot of context. If you go straight to the point, or if you bury the message somewhere in politeness, or as I call them, blunt and subtle.

00:09:24:03 - 00:09:52:06

Gary

Hint coaches. And here we have some examples supposedly. Again, I don't expect you to revise this. So somebody said, for example, can you do this job and you say, I'm on holiday. What does this mean? Well, if you're in a blunt culture, they would say no by directly. If you're a subtle hint culture, they might say it would be difficult, but somebody from a blunt culture might think, well, it would be difficult that you didn't say no.

00:09:52:11 - 00:10:13:15

Gary

So it may be possible. This happens in British shops, for example, when they say the management would greatly appreciate it if customers did not read the magazines. Well, if you come from a blunt culture, which Spain is a rather blunt culture, they might read this and think, well, the management would greatly appreciate it. But it doesn't say I'm forbidden, it doesn't say no.

00:10:13:17 - 00:10:32:03

Gary

So we could be extremely blunt and rude and say, you read it, you bought it. But that's not very nice. So how do we do it? We say, please do not read the magazine. Thank you. Do not read is an imperative. So it's very clear we use the imperative, you know, the same time we use. Please and thank you.

00:10:32:03 - 00:10:56:15

Gary

The polite words. Simple imperative and polite expressions like please and thank you for. This is an example of a friend of mine who wrote a note to her noisy American neighbors, which was very rude, and I translated and basically said, please don't be noisy. I won't go into that. So we have again, still talking about national coach.

00:10:56:16 - 00:11:23:01

Gary

We have big picture and detail coaches, big picture. They like a lot of information before they take the decision. And detailed coaches are more trial and error. They look at the details and they see the details. Big picture takes the general idea. So for example, if you come from a detailed culture like my native culture, Britain or the US, we have expressions like sandwich technique.

00:11:23:01 - 00:11:54:23

Gary

What is the sandwich technique? That's where when you want to give a piece of bad news, you sandwich between two pieces of good news. Well, if you come from a big picture culture, you will hear the two pieces of good news. If you also use the expression use three positives for every negative. That's that's something we often say in the UK and the US in order to soften the criticism, we say use three positives for every negative and then it doesn't sound so bad.

00:11:55:00 - 00:12:18:12

Gary

But if you come from a big picture culture, you will hear three positives. So it's 75% good and that's not what we're trying to say. Examples of that and that's very general. And France in, in Europe would be an example of the big picture culture where they would hear three positives and only one negative, so they wouldn't catch the subtle hint.

00:12:18:14 - 00:12:55:01

Gary

So we need to ask for clarification often. My advice in this is always try to be self-effacing. It's probably my fault. Blame yourself about the misunderstanding. We need to get written reminders. In Spain, for example. They don't often give email acknowledgment of receipt. The thing to remember about written reminders. If you made a decision with somebody, for example, in a meeting, spoken agreement may be very important in some cultures, such as Arabic cultures.

00:12:55:03 - 00:13:18:07

Gary

And then if you send them a written remind and they might even feel a bit annoyed thinking, well, we just decided on this. Don't you trust me? Do you think I'm lying? So with written reminder to game, we need to be self-effacing. Say things like just to recap summarizing in case I missed anything again, it's my fault and email recognition.

00:13:18:13 - 00:13:40:11

Gary

Let them know you received some cultures. I'm not used to doing that and if you are working

with a culture that is used to it, they may think you haven't received the email. Okay, another example of national coaches poly chronic and mono chronic culture. What does that mean? Well poly chronic is multi time. These are multi-tasking cultures which can chop and change and do different things.

00:13:40:11 - 00:14:06:19

Gary

Stop doing one thing for doing one thing and to motivate, stop doing one task and move on to another and then come back to it. Whereas mono chronic cultures, would prefer to do one step at a time, finish the job before going on to the next one. So the stereotypes for these would be for example, Southern Europe would be multitasking Spain, Greece, Italy, mono chronic.

00:14:06:19 - 00:14:30:19

Gary

The stereotype would be Germany, Britain for example, things like interrupting and spoken language. For example, if you ever watch TV in Spain or Italy or Greece, will you watch a chat show? You see people interrupting each other all the time. It looks very rude. It is a little rude, but it's not as rude as it would be in the UK or Germany.

00:14:30:21 - 00:14:53:05

Gary

Because people are used to changing the subject, moving on to another, and then coming back to this subject later. It's not such a big deal. In poly chronic cultures, punctuality will be another one. Obviously, they're not so worried about in exactly the right time. They don't get so stressed out about task we do in the UK. It affects tasks like shopping even.

00:14:53:07 - 00:15:14:19

Gary

Yeah, the chat a little bit about that because we have the queue which in the culture I come from is a is a veritable art form. The British, the famous British queue, the British queue for everything, even if they don't need to. On a sunny, hot day, they'll queue for a highly calorific product with the cork behind them.

00:15:14:21 - 00:15:38:19

Gary

Looks like OCD obsessive compulsive disorder, which I would like to call here obsessive cultural Disorder. The British obsession with queues, which I found very ingrained. And it took me several years in Spain to to break out of this and realize that there are other ways of queuing. Here is the an example of Capital Hill, the dreadful, horrific day of 6th of January, the Capitol Hill riot.

00:15:38:19 - 00:16:00:00

Gary

And yet, look at them. They're all standing behind the red rope, forming a nice line. I use this photo as an example just how ingrained this culture can be. British queue on Oxford Street. The Swedes leave a bit more space in southern Europe. They're used to hugging and kissing. So we have queues like this in Spain, where you turn round and chat to the person next to you.

00:16:00:03 - 00:16:20:11

Gary

Sometimes even a friend arrive late and comes in Friday. It's no big deal. If you're shopping, for example, and you only want to buy a bottle of wine, and the person in front of you in the shopping queue has a big trolley full of product, and they're going to pay with coins, then you can just say to them, look, do you mind?

00:16:20:11 - 00:16:42:14

Gary

I'm just going to buy this bottle of wine and you can go past them. Usually that's fine. It's not considered rude. In the UK that would be considered very rude. Don't do that in Tesco's. So how does this affect the way we are writing? Well, here's an example of how to read instructions manuals. We've already instructions manuals for example for mobile phones.

00:16:42:16 - 00:17:03:03

Gary

Let's take a look at stereotypical light hearted. Look at how poly chronic cultures, multi time multitasking cultures read instructions manuals. Well, first for a mobile phone that would open the box and then throw away the bits of paper instructions manual and guarantee. Why? Because they want to fiddle with the buttons for five days. Why do they want to do this?

00:17:03:09 - 00:17:23:14

Gary

Because in polyphonic cultures, people like to discover the product for themselves. There may be something specific they want to look at, like the camera on the phone, and they go straight to that, and that's what they want to look at, and they discover the product for themselves. And then when they discover something they don't know how to do, that's when they look for the instructions manual.

00:17:23:19 - 00:17:48:00

Gary

Because it's a reference text, it's not meant to be read from beginning to end. And we'll look at how that affects the way we write instructions manuals a little later. So they used it for reference to fall back on, then they realized the phone is broken or missing parts. They look for the guaranteed, discovered the trial period last five days and cost the manufacturer.

00:17:48:02 - 00:18:09:19

Gary

However, in monochrome stereotypical stereotypical monochrome cultures, they do it this way. They open the box, then they read the instructions manual step by step for five days. Then finally they take the phone out of the box. They realize the phone is broken or missing parts. Look for the guarantee. You discover the trial battery last five day and the manufacturer.

00:18:09:21 - 00:18:34:06

Gary

So all I'm trying to say is there is not one that's better than the other. There's simply different ways of doing things, and we have to take this into account when we're writing for these people, which we'll look at, and we'll look at this when we come to professional culture, you have probably all worked in your own fields with, medical culture, medical profession, legal profession, public sector.

00:18:34:06 - 00:19:02:13

Gary

I work a lot with public sector and academics and physicists and engineers. I was going to get a video for this, but I don't think I can. But anyway, you can get the point. Physicists, academics, engineers would perhaps be more interested in instructions manuals, if, cylinder goes into a square hole, they're fine with that. Whereas physicists need more accuracy and they're writing, academic texts.

00:19:02:15 - 00:19:31:06

Gary

So we're talking about academic papers and technical manuals, which are written very differently. Which brings me on to the curse of knowledge. What do I mean by this? I'm talking here about vocabulary, adjectives and adverbs, acids and alkalis. Why have I put that? Well, I'm sure when you were all say 15 years, a 15 years old at high school, you probably only were acids and alkalis were not.

00:19:31:06 - 00:19:57:13

Gary

All of you will. Now, if you're not working in a chemical profession, you may have forgotten. I mention this because I once had, an engineering client who I was trying to explain some things to, you know, on his text, and he replied, stop using such linguistic jargon as adjectives and verbs. And, of course, I never thought of this as linguistic jargon, but it is for someone who works with text as we do.

00:19:57:13 - 00:20:22:09

Gary

We work with text for a living. But we have to remember that, our clients may not have such a great grasp because they left school 40 years ago and this happened in all, professions, in legal profession, medical profession. They sometimes make the mistake of assuming that something they have known for the last 20 years in terms of vocabulary or processes, they assume

everybody must know it.

00:20:22:12 - 00:20:50:13

Gary

But that doesn't mean the general public necessarily knows it, as we'll see in a little while. So what I'm actually talking about is the curse of profession or language. And you've probably heard this before. This is how we talk in our profession. This is how we do it. Or as academics, lawyers and the public sector may say, this is the way in which the act of writing is implemented in the contextual framework and paradigm of the sphere in which we exercise our profession is probably that to.

00:20:50:15 - 00:21:16:13

Gary

So what we need to tell our clients, our authors, is simple. Direct language is not necessarily informal or impolite. This is the message we have to get across to our customers. It's not dumbing down, not if it's done well. In fact, if a couple of geniuses with very simple, pithy phrases here, the one on the right, Einstein, equals MC squared.

00:21:16:13 - 00:21:42:07

Gary

That's five symbols which describe the relationship between energy and mass in the entire universe. You can't really condense that any further, and there's no dumbing down, as Einstein himself is attributed to saying, if you can't explain something simply, you probably don't understand it yourself. I found that to be very true quite often. And as another genius said, writing simply isn't simple.

00:21:42:09 - 00:22:09:07

Gary

I was charismatic and a good academic legal medical writer is a good writer. Basically, some people are afraid of going into, medical writing, legal writing, particularly when they're younger. I'd just like to point out the most essential things. Being a good writer, you can learn the professional culture, the vocabulary, the terminology later on, and the important thing is to know how to write well, okay.

00:22:09:07 - 00:22:40:23

Gary

Which brings me on to the Covid 19 pandemic, which I thought was a great opportunity to study how the public sector gets across important, essential information with people's lives at stake to the general population. That includes people with a low level of literacy. The last time I looked at the, statistics, according to the statistics in the US and the UK, the average level of adult literacy is 13 years old.

00:22:40:23 - 00:23:11:23

Gary

A 13 year old. So remember that when you're talking to the general public, that level of literacy may not be too high. Also, in the Covid pandemic, that would have been immigrants, children, all kinds of other people and reasons why they needed a very simple message. So, and I am a British person living in Spain, I thought it would be interesting to look at the messages the governments were giving, and simply, I did simple Google searches looking for information about what to do in the pandemic.

00:23:12:00 - 00:23:39:22

Gary

And here's a couple of examples. On the right, we've got that government UK site. Which is very simple. I think most people understand it. You click on the box and it takes you to what you need to know. I should say the Gov.uk site. Changed several years ago. By law, they had to change because the law changed in the UK, saying that if lawyers or the government don't write clearly, then they can be sued.

00:23:39:22 - 00:24:01:08

Gary

They can be legally punished. So it's not because these are public sector workers in the UK were were feeling very empathetic with the with the people. It was they had to do it in Spanish. One is that it actually comes from the official state gazette. So it's actually a legal text in Spain, when they pass a new law, it has to be published in the state today.

00:24:01:10 - 00:24:25:11

Gary

So this isn't necessarily, public information, I should point out, perhaps as a legal instrument. In fact, this part worked perfectly in the Spanish legal system. It may not be wrong use of language, but it was one of the first things I came across. Then looking a bit further, I came across this one from the Valencian region, potentially a regional health service in Spain.

00:24:25:13 - 00:24:46:16

Gary

The health department is run by the regions, not by it, by the state. So this is what they came up with. It's in Spanish. So here's a literal translation. I'm a person, I live alone, so I needed to know what should I do? Can I visit other people? For example, in the pandemic? So I looked for the information and after a week or two, the regional government came up with this.

00:24:46:18 - 00:25:07:14

Gary

I should point out they're trying to be very concise here and compared to the state, because that this is this is much better. So here it says people who live alone, who may be part of another whole unit of cohabitation, forming an extended unit of cohabitation. Each unit of extended cohabitation may only include one single person who lived alone.

00:25:07:16 - 00:25:27:06

Gary

And the person who lives alone may only be part exclusively of an extended unit of cohabitation. And throughout the period in which the measure is imposed, I'm out of breath. And that was trying to be concise. Okay, so I looked at this. I turned it around. I realized what they are trying to say is this people who live alone, maybe this is another person.

00:25:27:08 - 00:25:46:05

Gary

Why not a person who also lives alone? But look at how difficult the public sector found it to say something like this. In fact, they didn't say this is the instructions for the Covid test. As you can see, it looks like the instructions to build an atomic bomb and a lot of excess information here, which could have been put somewhere else.

00:25:46:11 - 00:26:18:02

Gary

So I wrote another one. I thought, this is what they really need to know for the general public. Simple language to liquid code. Everybody understands that. So you can do this. You can change, complicated subject. It may be complicated for the people designing the tests, but it doesn't have to be complicated for the people reading them. So professional culture, then we have governments be legalese academia, public sector who like to use 30 words instead of ten.

00:26:18:02 - 00:26:45:00

Gary

And they think this is the good way of writing. They think it has to be bureaucratic, formal or convoluted, it seems to me. And again, then we have to point out to these people that simple direct language is not necessarily informal or impolite. In fact, more words lead to less comprehension, often superfluous words can even confuse, particularly if it's a person with a low level of literacy, a low level of vocabulary.

00:26:45:02 - 00:27:02:00

Gary

You put in a few extra work, then they may not understand. They may think they're missing something. We've all seen expressions like this. I'm sure you all have them in your own languages. There's one near the end here that says furnish the payment, furnish sound like furniture that don't have a high level of literacy, or you're a migrant.

00:27:02:00 - 00:27:14:20

Gary

Or you may wonder what an ethical thing about, I can't see this on my screen. I don't know if you do, but I think it says superfluous information confuses.

00:27:14:22 - 00:27:17:06

Lodewijk van Noort

That's what it says. Yeah. You're right.

00:27:17:08 - 00:27:19:02

Gary

Can you see that when.

00:27:19:04 - 00:27:20:02

Lodewijk van Noort

We see it? Yeah.

00:27:20:02 - 00:27:35:10

Gary

Okay. Sorry. I've got something on the top of my screen time. Okay, so here's an example of the old Tom. Tom, I don't know if you some of the younger ones amongst you probably don't know what I did. The old G.P.S. we used to have in our cars, and this is what I had. I've translated it from Spanish.

00:27:35:12 - 00:27:51:12

Gary

There are toll roads on your current move. Do you want to avoid toll? Well, yes or no? Now, I was in a hurry. I'm not saying I was driving down a quiet stretch of road, but let's say you were in an emergency situation or you're simply distracted. You're in a hurry. I was in a hurry, I was distracted, I was going to give a conference.

00:27:51:12 - 00:28:13:03

Gary

Precisely. And so I saw a toll road. I don't want those. So I put no. But of course it's saying, do you want to avoid toll roads? So it's a negative question. And the answer is yes. I want to avoid them because I don't want them. So really they should have said do you want toll roads? There's no need for this excess information.

00:28:13:05 - 00:28:37:20

Gary

The first sentence there are toll roads on your car because it's asking the question about toll roads. So obviously there are toll roads on the currently. And so avoid what we want to avoid is excess information and excess vocabulary. Positive questions, no negative questions. Here's an example is in an airplane. This was in Argentina. I'm always fascinated by it.

00:28:37:22 - 00:28:58:13

Gary

And airplanes and airports because these are examples where we have millions of people, not

necessarily very literally. You have to walk across the airport and go to the right gate at the right time. And this information has to be conveyed quickly and clearly. So what? I was bored on a two hour flight. I looked at this fasten seatbelt right here.

00:28:58:13 - 00:29:19:02

Gary

Well, fasten is quite a complicated word, and yet they use this everywhere around. They fasten sound like rapid, rapidly put your seatbelt on and the access information while seated. Is it possible to stand up when you're so you didn't go up? Is it possible to stand up when you have your seatbelt on? When? Obviously not, unless you are a small child.

00:29:19:04 - 00:29:46:16

Gary

If you've had that experience, but basically too much information. Not very simple vocabulary. So we could say, I would say keep your seatbelt on. Okay. I'm going to mention a couple of publication content design. I mentioned the gov.uk site. This is basically down to this woman, Sarah Richards, who was heading the team to convert the British public sector into a public sector.

00:29:46:16 - 00:30:05:22

Gary

The simple, clear information, as we saw in the Covid information. So if you're interested in that as a good example, how to write clearly by the European Commission. You've probably all read that I've got a few links. I'll pass them to Ludovic. I should have passed on. I got the time wrong. Sorry about that. But, there are a few other links.

00:30:05:22 - 00:30:39:12

Gary

I'll give you two other ones. You may not have heard of this control. All natural language is one of these. Well, in engineering, particularly things like, national, sorry, international conglomerates, where, for example, the Airbus has Germans working on it. It has Spanish people working on it. I don't know if they still had British people working it after Brexit, but basically are artificial languages, artificial grammars really where to make sure that the Germans and the Spanish understand each other?

00:30:39:14 - 00:31:12:19

Gary

Usually speaking in English, but with very simple English, they have to understand each other. So these people came up with grammatical rules to simplify language so that everybody can understand it. And obviously we're talking about complex things, building building an aircraft. So these are actually very long. But I've taken out ten simple rules, which I'll show you now as an example of how to write from plain English, the language in English, it don't use the passive in other languages that might be, reflexive, for example.

00:31:12:23 - 00:31:40:13

Gary

Basically I'm saying don't be in personal use imperatives, as I said before. So it's very clear use short complete sentences under 25 words. I say bullet points as we're doing here, one idea per sentence and in a chronological order. What do I mean by this? Well, let's take a look at an example. Before switching on a machine, you should always check that there is nothing obstructing the direction and ensure that the protective covering have been removed.

00:31:40:15 - 00:32:08:00

Gary

Now grammatically, that sentence is okay. There's nothing wrong with it, but it's not plain, it's not short, not under 25 words doesn't use bullet points. There are three ideas in one sentence, and it's not in a chronological order. What do I mean by that? It says before switching on the machine. Now, if I'm distracted or there's an emergency situation, there's a fire extinguisher or something, then I may see before switching on the machine.

00:32:08:00 - 00:32:28:04

Gary

Then I get distracted. I switch on the machine as first thing I do, and then I come back and I've already done it wrongly. So let's do this the correct way. Check. Nothing is obstructing the paper exit. Now. If I get distracted, I can come back to this and I'm still in the same place. So I know what to do next.

00:32:28:10 - 00:33:01:04

Gary

You have removed the protective covering. And now number two. Now switch on the machine. Okay. Number three, use articles and demonstrate the this and that avoids confusion about ambiguity. Four it's okay to repeat entire sentences. Yes. It's not poetry. We're not writing to entertain. In this case, we're writing to make sure the reader understands exactly what we're having to say.

00:33:01:06 - 00:33:22:16

Gary

In order to do this, we can avoid pronouns. So I'll look at this in detail in a short moment. Repeat the full noun. Repeat the noun. Often when we're at school, our literature teacher might have told us, use lots of synonyms. Don't use the same word, but that's not the case when we're trying to write clear instructions in engineering, for example.

00:33:22:18 - 00:33:49:08

Gary

Also avoid references to other sections which somebody from a multi-tasking culture may not have read because they started fiddling with the buttons. So it's okay to repeat entire sentences.

And so this sentence is not good, is not play. Insert the former into the latter. Press it. If you come from a, poly chronic culture you haven't read, you don't know what the form or the latter is all it.

00:33:49:10 - 00:34:17:24

Gary

So we need to write it all out. Repeat the action in rule seven on page 52, which I didn't read. So write the entire sentence, insert a plug into the socket and press the button. They aren't literary texts to entertain. They're going to be reference texts to inform, to come back to you once in a while. We don't read legal contracts, but when we go to bed and unless it's to send us to sleep, perhaps we we use them to refer to.

00:34:18:01 - 00:34:53:00

Gary

It's not entertainment. So all sentences should be understandable separately. Six check the numbering as I haven't done here. This should be number five again in, legal context. For example, at the last minute they might add another clause. Clause 21. You need to check that is also now connected and cross-reference to the other ones you simple words. Now that's not as simple as it sounds, but avoid synonyms are used in specific professions in the oil drilling industry, for example, there's a machine called a Christmas tree.

00:34:53:02 - 00:34:56:12

Gary

It has nothing to do with the Christmas tree. We all know.

00:34:56:14 - 00:35:05:22

Gary

at high school you were probably told to use lots of synonyms, but in this case we don't. What do I mean by simple word and not as simple as it seems.

00:35:05:24 - 00:35:30:06

Gary

Here's an example. Take machine out of box. Remove protective wrapping and take off plastic tabs. Now, if you don't have a high level of literacy or you're a foreigner, for example, you may get confused and think that these three different verbs mean three different things. So we use the same word. We move, we move, we move. And it may not be poetry, but this way the person knows that we're referring to the same thing, the same action.

00:35:30:08 - 00:35:53:11

Gary

And because everyday words might have a specific meaning in a specific professional field, for example, agreeableness has a psychological trait, agreeableness and trait are very specific terms in the profession of psychology. So we can't just say pleasantness as a psychological

feature. How's the climate today? And I happened a lot in Spain, even with journalists who should know better.

00:35:53:11 - 00:36:17:04

Gary

It's, I reply, Mediterranean as always. I live in Valencia, so the climate isn't always Mediterranean. But what they really mean is the weather, climatology ology, the study of something. So climatology is the study of climate? Yes. Sometimes I hear people say, how is the climatology? And because superfluous word can confuse having furnish the pavement motive furnish me it's pain.

00:36:17:10 - 00:36:44:20

Gary

Avoid normalization just using the simple. For example. They can also be, ambiguous. We developed a plan. What does that mean? Well, next year we'll develop it. Obviously they're using a word which is too vague. We designed a plan. Next year we'll do it. So avoid overusing favorite general word like implement and develop that aren't or. There are synonyms to avoid using synonym that aren't synonyms within a specific profession.

00:36:44:20 - 00:37:05:09

Gary

We must remember that, for example, precision and accuracy are not necessarily the same thing. And they might be. If you're writing poetry, they're not the same thing in science or engineering. And because every word should have a specific, separate meaning and technical, scientific or legal texts and you're a student, you or the author should decide on one. What do I mean by that?

00:37:05:10 - 00:37:32:02

Gary

We need to differentiate. For example, this was a text of mine on, seismology in the Valencia region. This person was talking about geographic area, political area, industrial area, area, the area of study. And so you ended up with the area of land series and the low seismic area, as shown in the lower area of the graph. So industrial areas are an interesting area study, which can lead to tendencies even more difficult to understand, such as this.

00:37:32:02 - 00:37:52:00

Gary

This area is in such an area as shown in the area. So its areas are an interesting area. So we need to differentiate each of these and we will refer to a region when we're talking about geography, territory when we're talking about politics, etc. and that way they can understand throughout the text that each of these different words is referring to a different thing.

00:37:52:06 - 00:38:15:15

Gary

So they're not actually synonyms. In this case they are. And they actually have different meanings within this text. So a specific distinct word should be used for each specific distinct meaning within the same text. You can use a placeholder to show the the ambiguity as I did with the word area. I can use that with this client to make them see how ambiguous their sentences were.

00:38:15:17 - 00:38:35:20

Gary

It's not poetry. Avoid metaphors and synonyms because the purpose is to inform unambiguously. Okay, Bluemix said. I've got five minutes, so I probably don't have too much time to get into this. This was a mild climate, one where to which crashed. It was a complete disaster in Mars because some were using kilograms. The others were using bombs.

00:38:35:22 - 00:39:05:11

Gary

Remember that numbers can vary. A billion is not the same as a billion in Spanish, which is 1,000,000 million. Remember that different countries have different compliances, different rules, which in your text may not be the same and not a country, mentioned style guys, because, sometimes you will have particularly in particular professions, people might say, this is how we write, or are you sure that's how you say it?

00:39:05:11 - 00:39:28:04

Gary

And if you say I use the heart rules, the Oxford English Dictionary style guy. So when I have a disagreement with a customer, then I can say it's the Oxford Dictionary that's saying it, not Gary Smith. Don't be afraid to ask questions. In all professions they ask questions. Mechanics say, what noise is your engine making? The doctor says, do you drink alcohol?

00:39:28:04 - 00:39:47:22

Gary

The restaurants says, do you want to wear medium or well-done? Don't be afraid to say no to your clients. You. If you ask a doctor, can I stop taking these pills? You don't expect them to say, yeah, do whatever you want. Do you expect them to say no and get in writing, remembering that there may be spoken agreement.

00:39:47:22 - 00:39:58:19

Gary

Cultures that get in writing for legal reasons. I wanted to talk about briefly about online offline culture. Do I have time? Do you think, living.

00:39:58:21 - 00:40:02:03

Lodewijk van Noort

Yes. We get we started a little bit later. So yes.

00:40:02:05 - 00:40:22:23

Gary

Thanks. Right. I have I got this picture where because some people on LinkedIn, they have a professional photo with a glass of wine or their cat or their partner. And you obviously wouldn't do this in a job interview. But for some reason, when we're online, some people think we need to behave differently. I don't know why they do that, but it happened on online.

00:40:22:23 - 00:40:46:07

Gary

People behave differently as they do in the real world. So to speak. You certainly wouldn't behave in these ways. If you go to a supermarket, you wouldn't say, oh, okay, I'll pay you later or I can bake this cake myself. I just don't have enough time. Or, I can find it cheaper someplace and do all sorts of things that people often say in the real world.

00:40:46:09 - 00:41:04:10

Gary

Sorry, offline, but they wouldn't say in the real world. So try to remember there's always a human behind screen. Or usually these days it's a little more difficult to tell it. So I'm going to take a quick look at some things we often hear when it comes to online coaching with our clients. I can write that faster and cheaply.

00:41:04:10 - 00:41:29:21

Gary

You may have heard that before. Well, what would happen if, for example, if we say, please write this particular advert for the Saudi Arabian market? I'm not sure what extent I can really understand, the culture there, there also factual mistakes, things like transcription. It's not saying to write for the US market. As for the UK market, what is culture?

00:41:29:21 - 00:41:52:01

Gary

Culture involves lots of things. Again, I'm not sure to what point I will ever get to the point where I can understand all of these concepts. It really comes down to these days prompting. You need a human to prompt the AI to include the culture, and that's a very difficult thing to do, which we can do.

00:41:52:03 - 00:42:12:11

Gary

So you could perhaps say, create a text to sell vodka to a very conservative reader, perhaps only for private use. For example, this, for example, I think, would be difficult for AI to to tackle to understand the difference here. What about your customers who might say this? We like this sentence. Don't touch it. What do you do in that situation?

00:42:12:11 - 00:42:30:08

Gary

Obviously, again, in the offline culture, you wouldn't do this. You don't say to the mechanic, I like this oil field to don't touch it. It's I've grown very fond of it. Get it in writing again. So if they insist to get in writing because the client is not always right, but always has the right to change the text.

00:42:30:10 - 00:42:52:02

Gary

But get in writing. What about this? We can write it ourselves roughly first in the real world. Do you say you cut your hair roughly first? Do you try to fix your car roughly first? Do you try your own medicine for obviously not, but for some reason, in our professions and online, they seem to think this is a normal thing to do.

00:42:52:04 - 00:43:11:09

Gary

What do we say? Well, we can say to them, it's better to let the professional writer do a professional job. As an example. So I often if I come across somebody like this, I correct the first few lines, a lot of red fonts, they can see it's going to be a disaster. And I give that a free sample to know what they're doing.

00:43:11:11 - 00:43:30:22

Gary

Expert by I can do this. I don't know if you've been hearing that lately, but we need to remember that I learned from all kinds of text, not professional specialist text. In other words, there will be factual mistakes, etcetera. We don't ask for everybody's opinions on how to do surgery, how to fly a plane, how to build a bridge, how to govern a country.

00:43:31:03 - 00:43:52:15

Gary

Well, actually we do that one. That's how we get Brexit. But we need to ask an expert in every profession and the same in our profession, which is writing. So no matter how many people work on a job, if they are not experts, it may be a disaster. Doesn't matter how many people are practicing heart surgery or building a bridge, if they are not professionals, it may be a disaster.

00:43:52:17 - 00:44:14:04

Gary

And by the same reasoning, no matter how many people feed AI, if they are not experts, it may be a disaster. I based on text from all over the internet, not experts. What if they say we need it yesterday? Well, it's my urgent fee. Or is it all necessary? Sometimes I find all they need is a summary, so it's worth asking this question.

00:44:14:04 - 00:44:38:03

Gary

If it's very urgent and it's a lot of information, please send your invoice by post to our head office in Milan. But all this might happen with very bureaucratic customers. Like some of mine, they have incredibly labyrinthine billing systems. We could say, here is my administration fee. That sometimes works. We have a very low budget. We have a very mistaken budget.

00:44:38:05 - 00:45:03:19

Gary

Again, it's the entire text necessary. You may just need a summary. You may just need the person to explain what's necessary. For example, if somebody is going to court next day, they might not need the entire legal text translator. They might just need to know what's happening where they stand. Maybe other options, an hourly fee or bring down the feet of the customer can see what you're actually doing.

00:45:03:21 - 00:45:29:12

Gary

Some of my favorite don't use editing software. Now, okay? Please send the text on paper by horse and carriage to the situation. No, we can't say that, but we can explain the advantages of editing software. It's not AI, it's using the client's terminology to maintain their corporate image. For example, Pepsi and Coca Cola are not the same, although they are consistency.

00:45:29:12 - 00:46:00:21

Gary

Human error. Transposing numbers won't make mistakes. And what if they say my colleague is good at writing? Maybe he can do it. We can say, is he good at maths? Maybe you can do your company accounts too. Now we say fishing native experience professional qualified because second opinions must be from the writing professionals, which is you. We only need some editing basically means you only need someone who understands your native specialist professional culture and writes impeccably in the right register and style for your specific target readers.

00:46:00:21 - 00:46:15:09

Gary

Culture. And so sorry for rushing, but thank you for having paid attention. If you should have any queries, please do not hesitate to let me know. In other words, thanks for listening. Any questions?

00:46:15:11 - 00:46:40:06

Lodewijk van Noort

Thank you very much, Gary, and also thank you for making us laugh a little bit. This is because it is quite funny how you tell, but this is serious business, so I can imagine that there are some questions. As the questions come in, I have a question, when you are a professional and you're

working in various countries, how do you get information about culture?

00:46:40:06 - 00:46:43:14

Lodewijk van Noort

Where do you find it? Where do you start?

00:46:43:16 - 00:47:03:05

Gary

Oh, wow. That's a very good one. But you yourself live in Italy, so, you know, yeah, I think that's actually something where you would have to get in touch with somebody who is in that, in that culture, it's very difficult that we we work online and we're involved. There are a lot of digital nomads to do, do get involved with the local culture.

00:47:03:05 - 00:47:26:03

Gary

But really that doesn't necessarily mean we understand the culture. So again, there was the book I mentioned. I also put down a few, links to other ones. But yeah, basically I would say living and learning and being in contact with these people. And I'm not just talking about countries, culture, negotiators, professions. You're working with lawyers, you're working with doctors.

00:47:26:05 - 00:47:28:20

Gary

You get to know the professional culture.

00:47:28:22 - 00:47:56:08

Lodewijk van Noort

And that's very important before you start working in writing, imagine, you we had a big discussion on the chat while you were doing your presentation about people asking to other, visitors of this webinar, how do you treat time in your local areas? Because we were 2 p.m., 2 p.m.? 2 or 14:00. So is that a big thing when you're.

00:47:56:08 - 00:48:00:20

Lodewijk van Noort

And maybe you can stop sharing your screen, too, so we can see each night?

00:48:00:22 - 00:48:01:20

Gary

Yeah.

00:48:01:22 - 00:48:08:22

Lodewijk van Noort

So is this something you come along quite often, time wise?

00:48:08:24 - 00:48:34:08

Gary

No, but really, I was presenting that at the beginning, so the, people could understand that even the most basic expressions can create problems. Certainly that little shift of lunchtime and morning and, afternoon can be a problem. I certainly do get emails where people say, send it to us this morning. And I think, okay, your Spanish, that means 2:00, not 12:00.

00:48:34:10 - 00:48:46:15

Gary

Yeah. But other than that, it's not a big problem. That's really making the point that how language and vocabulary can have very different meanings, even though they seem to be expressions that we know very well.

00:48:46:17 - 00:49:15:15

Lodewijk van Noort

Yes, and always good to check your timing. Yeah. I feel like that's something we learned this week on plane two. We had some meetings this week where let's see how it works. Any other questions? And if you have a question that you don't want to put in a chat, but maybe ask here, live your you are able to show your camera, open your camera and show yourself.

00:49:15:17 - 00:49:26:24

Lodewijk van Noort

Then. I don't see any other questions and I think people have to leave for a minute. So yeah. No, like Chiara is there.

00:49:27:01 - 00:49:40:22

Speaker 4

Well, I have a question. When you have to write to, for people from different culture, a same text, what's the best strategy? What do you do in this case? Gotcha. I thank you for your presentation.

00:49:40:24 - 00:49:43:21

Gary

No, sorry, I didn't hear the question entirely.

00:49:43:23 - 00:49:59:09

Speaker 4

Sorry. Can you hear me? Yes, yes, yes. My question is this, if you have to write, the syntax, for people from different cultures, so what's the best strategy? What do you do in that case?

00:49:59:11 - 00:50:21:07

Gary

Well, yeah, this is something I tried to tackle in the talk, as you saw with the Japanese and Singaporean email, it is very different. But when we're trying to talk in plain language, which in some cultures, whether it's professional culture or, national culture, they tend to use, a lot of work, lot more words, and they really need.

00:50:21:13 - 00:50:40:04

Gary

So as I said in, in the presentation, try to be direct use imperatives, but polite words, please, thank you, etc. and that basically the the way I try to get around it is simply be polite but also direct with imperatives.

00:50:40:06 - 00:50:48:12

Lodewijk van Noort

Thank you, Kerry, for for your question. Thank you very much. Any other questions?

00:50:48:14 - 00:51:09:11

Lodewijk van Noort

Mo then of course, I would like to thank you, Gary, for, for your webinar and all the members here. Present. And of course, we will share the webinar to our website to more members. More webinars are coming up at the beginning of next year, and we also want to know what you thought of this webinar.

00:51:09:11 - 00:51:35:23

Lodewijk van Noort

So let us know and fill in the evaluation form that's now appearing in the chat. So Michelle, we already put it in the chat. So if you can fill this form and otherwise we will email you with that forum then. Gary thank you so much. Yeah there it is. Thank you very much. And I wish you all a very pleasant day and see you hopefully next time one of our webinars.

00:51:35:23 - 00:51:38:20

Lodewijk van Noort

Thank you very much and have a good day. Bye everybody.