Comparison and Contrast of Spanish and English Discourse Styles

Carolyn M. Spencer

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/dlls

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/dlls/vol16/iss1/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Deseret Language and Linguistic Society Symposium by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Comparison and Contrast of Spanish and English Discourse Styles

Carolyn M. Spencer
Brigham Young University

The purpose of this study was to determine the preferred written religious discourse style of Spanish and English natives, and to investigate any contrasts of form that were found between the two languages. This study looks at written religious testimonies of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, specifically those written by church members to include in giving gifts of the Book of Mormon. Though there were differences and contrasts of form in preferred discourse style by natives, some data supports the notion that native discourse style may be modified by association with another culture.

The impetus for this study began when a friend asked me to translate a religious testimony he had written in English to be included in a Spanish translation of the Book of Mormon he intended to give to a friend. I agreed. However, when I looked at the task carefully, it seemed impossible to translate his words literally because intuitively I sensed that a translation faithful to the original would be offensive to a Spanish native. I wondered just why I felt this way. I wondered if differences would be found more in the way it was written than in the actual words that were used. This proved to be a motivation to do this study. I thought that in comparing Spanish with English, preferences of written discourse style would be found to exist. Also, even though this religious expression appeared to be the same task, I wanted to find out how the literary style of a Spanish testimony might differ from an English testimony.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that a man's view of the world is conditioned by his language and that thought is actually constrained by that language (Trudgell 1985). This has been a concern of the sociolinguists who ask about the structure of discourse, and how much variation in structure there may be between language groups. Styles of jokes, introductions, apologies, compliants, storytelling, arguments, etc. are all forms of expression that have been found to change across languages. It seems that different languages have preferred styles in the way ideas are presented.
It is true that the rhetorics of various languages are different and that those differences derive from the internal logics of the languages, logics that tend to arrange phenomological reality in quite different ways. (Kaplan, 1976: 1).

The English language is not restricted to one rhetorical form, but some of the constraints of form can be recognized when looking at specific types of discourse.

To take the most obvious case, narratives will contain a large number of conjoined sentences; "how-to" (procedural) text will be organized around a series of imperatives; cause-result text will include if/then's and modals; etc. (Hatch and Long 1980:9).

An example of non-English rhetorical form can be found in Navajo and Western Apache. The form is to repeat a phrase or a word for emotional emphasis. This redundancy is not perceived by them to be repetition, but to serve as a logical way to emphasize a particular idea (Bartelt 1983).

Not only rhetorical structures may be featured by a specific language, but also the choosing of a topic and the way that topic is developed. McKay (1986) said, according to a study by Scarcella, that daily conversation topics among Spanish speakers were more likely to include references to family, and references of a more personal nature to the speaker than among English speakers. Further comparisons McKay made with Australian students' and Chinese students' writing on a given topic showed that Australian students referred to the other party in the third person and used suggestions, whereas, Chinese students made direct remarks to the reader and used imperatives. She suggested that different language groups approach a given topic with a different set of cultural assumptions. (McKay 1986).

Different rhetoric styles, like fashion, may go in and out of popularity. This means that some styles become specifically linked to a particular period of time. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was stylish to write long sentences, sometimes over sixty or seventy words. Today's English has shorter sentences. Long, complicated sentences are considered tedious and hard to decipher (Milward 1983). However rhetorical styles change, at any one time "...there is a culturally and historically determined preference shared by the majority of the members of a certain community in a given period." (Schogt, 1988: 83).
Today, the rhetorical style of English is a direct linear style (Kaplan 1976). That is, in developing discourse the writer will first introduce an idea in a topic sentence, and the sentences immediately following this will be in support of, or show proof of the validity of this idea by citing evidence, details, examples, illustrations or elaboration about the topic (Hodges and Whitten, 1986).

On the other hand, though Spanish rhetorical style has characteristics in common with English, it is more oblique. The reader will be eased into the subject gently, and while following sentences comment on the subject, some will be of a more distant nature from the topic and will have only indirect reference to the subject at hand. Language will be chosen carefully by Spanish speakers for its artistic effect (Kaplan 1972: 64).

Because Spanish and English originate from separate language families, and because research shows that there are currently differences in rhetorical styles, it is natural to assume that the literary style of each language group in writing religious testimonies would also be different. However, it was hypothesized that similarities would be found because the task of writing a religious testament or "testimony" for gift copies of the Book of Mormon was the same. Besides this, there would probably be similarities because religious expectations exist regarding the basic content of the message of a testimony. These expectations include telling about personal convictions of truth of the Book of Mormon, and religious experience with the Book of Mormon. But it was also predicted that notable differences would be found, and those differences would be reflected in the testimonies the native subjects preferred.

The first task of the study was to determine if natives had preferences for a discourse style. Samples of written testimonies were gathered. The English samples came from a church unit (ward) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints. At the time there was a project being conducted by that church unit to encourage church members to write something about their religious convictions and insert it in the front of gift copies of the Book of Mormon. Fourteen written English testimonies were chosen at random from a group of approximately thirty-five.

The fourteen Spanish samples were selected from three different sources. The first source was from the same church unit. Some
members who had completed missions in Spanish-speaking countries submitted their testimonies in Spanish. Another source was from a list of "approved translations" distributed from the church headquarters, and given to church members conducting the project. This list showed Spanish testimonies on the left and English equivalent translations to the right. Church members who didn't speak Spanish, but who wanted to give their books to Spanish speakers, were encouraged to copy a testimony of their choice from that list. In addition, four natives were asked to submit their written testimonies to be used for gift copies of the Book of Mormon.

Each of the written testimonies were typed on a separate card and numbered. There were sixteen subjects used in this study: eight native Spanish-speakers, and eight native English-speakers. These native speakers were asked to read the cards in their native language and rank them in order of preference with their most preferred testimony first. The first five cards from each subject were then scored according to their ranking with the most preferred card receiving a 5, second preferred receiving a 4, third preferred receiving a 3, next preferred receiving a 2, and last preferred among the five receiving a 1. The results of this scoring can be seen in Tables 1 and 2. The * indicates the two testimonies with the highest scores. The + in the Spanish table indicates the testimonies written by Spanish natives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table #1</th>
<th>English Testimonies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sb</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lf</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kb</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hb</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ks</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table #2
Spanish Testimonies
*indicates testimonies preferred +indicates native Spanish testimonies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kv</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>io</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four testimonies, the two from each language group with the highest scores, were used for analysis. These were testimony #5, and #12 in English, and testimony #4, and #12 in Spanish. The two most preferred English testimonies can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: English Testimony #5
When in life, we find something that brings us joy and happiness we want to share with others that knowledge. By reading this book I have come closer to the Savior and His plan. I know the teachings of this book are true and they testify of Christ. When used with the Bible the picture of God's plan for us is complete. Please Read, Ponder and Pray.

English Testimony #12
Congratulations on receiving this Book of Mormon. Like the Bible, it is scripture. It is another witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ. That not only did he live, but after his death, he visited the peoples of the Americas as a resurrected being. He commanded them to keep this record so that everyone can know of the Saviors reality, of the purpose of our lives and or our need to seek the Savior and become like him.
The most preferred Spanish testimonies, #4. and #12, can be found in Table 4 with an English translation following each.

Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Testimony #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me siento muy agradecida con Nuestro Padre Celestial por esta oportunidad que tengo de compartir mi testimonio contigo. Yo se que vive mi Senor y este hermoso libro me ha hecho sentirlo desde la primera vez que lo lei, porque puede darme cuenta que este libro realmente viene de Dios y no del hombre, puedo sentir la fortaleza espiritual que los profetas tienen y a las grandes tentaciones a los que se enfrenta, puedo ver muy claramente la guia de Dios para con los que le buscan y lo son fieles hasta el fin. Estoy tan agradecida a Nuestro Padre Celestial por conocer la verdad de su evangelio y con esto puedo sentir su amor y el deseo que el tiene de que todos podamos regresar a su presencia nuevamente. Siempre que leo el Libro de Mormon aprendo cosas nuevas y mi Fe acrecenta aun mas. Se que si tu lees este libro deseando recibir una respuesta a tus preguntas y orando con todo tu corazon a Dios, El te hara sentir que estas cosas son verdaderas y comparto contigo mi testimonio en el nombre de Nuestro Senor Jesucristo. Amen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English translation of #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel very grateful to our Father in Heaven for this opportunity that I have to share my testimony with you. I know that God lives and this beautiful book has made me feel this since the first time that I read it because I took note that this book really came from God and not man. I could feel the spiritual strength the prophets had and the great temptations that they faced. I could very clearly see the guidance of God with those that seek Him and with those that are faithful to the end. I am very grateful to our Father in Heaven for knowing of the truth of His gospel and with this I can feel His love and the desire that He has that all of us return to his presence again. Always when I read the Book of Mormon I learn new things my faith grows even more. If you read this book desiring to receive and answer to your prayers and praying with your whole heart to God He will have you feel that these things are true, and I leave my testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Testimony #12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muchas veces habia dudado si yo realmente tenia un testimonio de la Iglesia de Jesucristo y de que Dios vive y del Libro de Mormon pero hace poco mis dudas fueron aclaradas cuando, pensando acerca de esto, descubri que era lo que me hacia leer diariamente mis escrituras y orar y tratar de cumplir los mandamientos y ahora se que eso especial que me motiva a hacer esas cosas es mi testimonio, el cual quiero compartir contigo. Se que el Libro de Mormon es sagrado y verdadero, fue escrito por la mano de los hombres inspirados</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
por Dios. Para mi es muy especial puesto que ha logrado un cambio en mi vida y en la de mi familia y nos ha hecho muy felices. Amo el Libro de Mormon y doy gracias a Dios por haber hecho posible que lo tengamos.

English translation of #12

Many times I have doubted if I really had a testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ and that God lives and of the Book of Mormon, but a short time ago my doubts were clarified. When, thinking about this, I discovered what it was that made me read the scriptures and pray and try to obey the commandments and now I know that special thing that motivates me to do these things is my testimony that which I want to share with you. I know that the Book of Mormon is sacred and true. It was written by the hand of man inspired by God. For me it is very special, particularly since it has made a change in my life and in the life of my family and it has made us all very happy. I love the Book of Mormon and I give thanks to God for having made it possible that we have it. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Taking these testimonies, I used ideas offered by Kaplan (1972)(1985), Richards (1985), Lautamatti (1987), and Eggington (1985)(1989), to analyze the text using the techniques of macro-analysis and micro-analysis. In order to do macro-analysis, each text is divided into parts of related discourse named Discourse Units (DU), as well as subdivisions of those units. These units can be counted and compared, for style as well as length. In order to do micro-analysis, details of the discourse are identified, and compared. The specific details identified in the micro-analysis of this study include topic, linking of topic to additional sentences, lexical chaining, greetings, imperatives, prayer format, emotional content words, and reference to writer or reader.

When looking at the macro-analysis (Tables 5 and 6), it is easy to see that the preferred English testimonies had fewer Discourse Units than the preferred Spanish testimonies. English Testimony #5 had two DU, #12 had just one, whereas, Spanish Testimony #4 had five DU, and Spanish Testimony #12 had four DU. This not only means that Spanish writing was longer, but also that it contained more separate ideas.

The two preferred testimonies in each language followed a predicted discourse style for that language. The English style used direct logic because each statement following the DU added weight to the sentence claim. There were imperatives. Sentences were short and
to the point with little embellishment. The writing is concise, short, and written with fewer details when compared with the Spanish testimonies.

On the other hand, although both the preferred Spanish testimonies used supporting sentences related to the topic, there were elaborating statements of ideas that were not necessarily connected to the topic. This demonstrates the oblique wandering off of the main topic as identified graphically by Kaplan (1972). It can be seen in Spanish testimony #4 Ic, and IIb, and Spanish testimony #12 IIB, 1), and III b, b), 1)

Both English testimonies used an imperative, or a greeting as a prominent feature in connecting the writer with the reader. Spanish testimonies did not use this type of connecting feature, but rather had many references to the writer and reader as if they were friends exchanging personal experiences. Thus, the use of the "tu" intimate form, which can't be translated into English equivalents, does not appear to be unnatural. The Spanish writer implores the reader to listen to his experiences, rather than commands him to take the words seriously in a more confronting English manner.

The style of Spanish sentences were much longer and more flowing than in English. More parallelism was found, and both Spanish testimonies ended with a prayer form at the end.

This evidence suggests that in spite of the fact that a written testimony is a specific religious document, the preferred testimonies as chosen by native speakers still followed the predominant discourse style of that language.

The macro-analysis of each testimony can be found in Table 5 and 6. The major DU units are identified, numbered, and set on the left of the page. Coordinate and subordinate ideas are physically set on the page in order to visually see their structural relationship to that discourse unit.

Topic sentence or individual discourse unit= DU I, DU II, DU III Referents or supporting details to a DU= Ia, Ib, IIa, IIb Series= a), b), c) Parallel ideas= A, B Elaboration on sentence idea= 1)
Table # 5

**English Testimony #5**

DU I: When in life, a). we find something that brings us joy and happiness
     b). we want to share with others that knowledge.

   Ia: By reading this book I have come closer a). to the Savior and
     b). His plan

   Ib: I know a). the teachings of this book are true and
        b). they testify of Christ.

   Ic: When [this book is] used with the Bible
        the picture of God's plan for us is complete.

DU II: Please Read [this book], Ponder[about this book], and Pray.

---

**English Testimony #12**

DU I: Congratulations on receiving this Book of Mormon.

   Ia: Like the Bible, it is scripture.

   Ib: It is another witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ.
       1) A. That not only did he live,
           B. but after his death,
           he visited the peoples of the Americas as a resurrected being.
       2) He commanded them to keep this record
           so that everyone can know
           a) of the Savior's reality
           b) of the purpose of our lives
           c) and of our need to seek the Savior
           d) and become like Him.
Table 6
Spanish Testimony #4
(translation)

DU I: I feel very grateful to our Father in Heaven for this opportunity that I have to share my testimony with you*

Ia: [My testimony is] I know that God lives
Ib: and this beautiful book has made me feel this since the first time that I read it because I took note that this book really came from God and not man.
Ic: 1)A. I could feel A. the spiritual strength the prophets had
     B. and the great temptations that they faced.
     1)B. I could very clearly see A. the guidance of God with those that seek Him
     B. and with those that are faithful to the end.

DU II: I am very grateful to our Father in Heaven for knowing of the truth of His gospel. and with this I can feel His love and the desire that He has 1)that all of us return to his presence again.

DU III: Always when I read the Book of Mormon a. I learn new things b. my faith grows even more

DU IV: If you * read this book A.desiring to receive an answer to your prayers B. and praying with your whole heart to God 1) He will have you feel that these things are true.

DU V: and I leave my testimony with you* in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*indicates "tu"- familiar Spanish pronoun with no English equivalent
Table #6 continued

Spanish Testimony #12

(translation)

DU I A: Many times I have doubted if I really had
   a). a testimony of the
   Church of Jesus Christ
   b). and that God lives
   c). and of the Book of Mormon

   B: but a short time ago my doubts [about a testimony] were clarified.

DU II A: When, thinking about this, I discovered what it was that
   a). made me read the scriptures
   b). and pray
   c). and try to obey the
   commandments

   B: and now I know that special thing
   that motivates me to do these things is my testimony

   1) that which I want
   to share with you*.

DU III: [My testimony is] I know that the Book of Mormon
   is sacred and true.
   III a: It was written by the hand of man inspired by God.
   III b: For me it is very special

   particularly since it has made
   a) a change in my life
   b) and in the life of my family
   and

   1) [it] has made us all
   very happy.

   III c: I love the Book of Mormon
   III d: and I give thanks to God for having made it possible
   that we have it.

DU IV: In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*indicates "tu"- a ,familiar Spanish pronoun with no English equivalence.

The micro-analysis shows the details of the differences and similarities in discourse style even more prominently. For example, all of the testimonies have topic and topic references as indicated by underlining. However, the English testimonies have a topic reference in each of the main DU, as well as in each of the major DU sub-parts. The Spanish testimonies have topic references but not as consistently. Spanish testimony #4 introduces the topic as underlined in DU I and in its' sub-part Ia, but not in Ib. It occurs again in Du II, and the sub-part Ila, but then the topic is not mentioned again until DU V. Lexical chaining occurs in all of the testimonies.
Ellipsis occurred in three of the testimonies: English testimony #5 in DU Ic, and then again in the assumptions of the imperative statement in DU II, Spanish testimony #4 in DU Ia., and Spanish testimony #12 in DU III.

Other features uncovered include more instances of Spanish lexical chaining, but this may have as much to do with the longer length than with style. Both Spanish testimonies end "in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." as if the writers were verbally saying a prayer. This is the accepted format to end any testimony when it is spoken aloud in church meetings, but it does not appear in the English written testimonies. Ending in this way may be an indication by the Spanish writers that they felt more connected with the reader as if they were speaking to him. Another interesting lexical feature was the use of more references to self, such as I, my, we, our, and us and you (familiar form) in the Spanish testimonies. While this, for the most part, was probably one of the ways the writer achieved a more personal voice, it also is an unavoidable result of translation into English since Spanish incorporates the subject in the verb endings. However, there are other acceptable Spanish grammatical devices, such as using reflexive and passive constructions, that would produce fewer direct references to self, but these forms were not used. An example of the reflexive form in Spanish might be:

Cuando se recibe un testimonio se siente que el Libro de Mormon es veridico. (English translation: When one receives a testimony one feels that the Book of Mormon is true.)

An example of the passive form in Spanish might be:

La verdad es conocido por el espiritu. (English translation: Truth is known by the spirit.)

One of the biggest differences shown between English and Spanish in the micro-analysis was that Spanish had many more words with emotional content. Again, part of this was due to the longer length of the testimonies in Spanish. However, English #5 had four emotional content words, and English #12 had none. In contrast, Spanish #4 had thirteen emotional content words and Spanish #12 had eight.
The key to the macro-analysis for Tables #7 and #8 is as follows:

- Topic and topic reference = underline
- Lexical chaining = @
- Greeting/imperative /prayer format = { }
- Emotional content = +
- Reference to the person writing, or that person included in a group = #

**Table #7**

**English Testimony #5**

DU I: When in life, a). we# find something that brings us joy +and happiness+  
    b). we# want to share+ with others that knowledge.

Ia: By reading **this book** I #have come closer+ a). to the Savior@ and  
    b). His @ plan

Ib: I # know a). the teachings of **this book** are true and  
    b). they testify of Christ.@

Ic: When [**this book is**] used with the Bible  
    the picture of God's plan@ for us #is complete.

DU II: { Please Read [**this book**], Ponder[about this book], and Pray}

**English Testimony #12**

DU I: { Congratulations on receiving this **Book of Mormon.**}

Ia: Like the Bible, it is scripture.

Ib: **It is another witness** to the world

    **that Jesus is the Christ.@**

1) A. That not only did he@ live,  
       B. but after his@ death,  
       he @visited the peoples of the Americas as a resurrected  
       being.@

2) He@ commanded them to keep **this record**  
    so that everyone #can know  
    a) of the Savior's@ reality  
    b) of the purpose of our # lives  
    c) and of our# need to seek the Savior@  
    d) and become like Him.@
Spanish Testimony #4

.translation

DU I: I feel very grateful to our Father in Heaven for this opportunity that I have to share my testimony with you.

Ia: [My testimony is] I know that God lives

Ib: and this beautiful book has made me feel this

since the first time that I read it

Ic: because I took note that this book really came from God and not man.

1) A. I could feel

A. the spiritual strength the prophets had

B. and the great temptations that they faced.

1) B. I could very clearly see

A. the guidance of God with those that seek Him

B. and with those that are faithful to the end.

DU II: I am very grateful to our Father in Heaven for knowing of the truth of His gospel.

Iia: and with this I can feel His love

Iib: and the desire that He has

1) that all of us return to His presence again.

DU III: Always when I read the Book of Mormon a). I learn new things

b). my faith grows even more.

DU IV: If you read this book A. desiring to receive an answer to your prayers

B. and praying with your whole heart to God

1) He will have you feel that these things are true.

DU V: and I leave my testimony with you* (in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.)
(Table 8. continued)
Spanish Testimony #12

(translation)

DU I  A: Many times I# have doubted+ if I# really had a). a testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ@ b). and that God@ lives c). and of the Book of Mormon@
B: but a short time ago my# doubts+ [about a testimony] were clarified. DU II A: When, thinking about this, I# discovered what it was that made me# a) read the scriptures@ b). and pray c). and try to obey the commandments
B: and now I# know that special+ thing that motivates me# to do these things is my testimony 1) that which I# want to share+ with you+.

DU III: [My testimony is] I# know that the Book of Mormon@ is sacred+ and true.
III a: It@ was written by the hand of man inspired by God@
III b: For me# it @ is very special+ particularly since it @ has a). made a change in my# life b) and in the life of my #family and 1)[it] @ has made us# all very happy+.
IIIc: I# love+ the Book of Mormon@
III d: and I# give thanks+ to God@ for having made it possible that we# have it@.

DU IV: [In the name of Jesus Christ.@ Amen.]
The similarities of Spanish and English discourse style discovered in this study are that each language starts with a strong topic or idea, usually stated in the first sentence. In both languages the discourse is developed by using coordinates and subordinates and the discourse tends to develop or support the subject until it arrives at a logical conclusion. On the micro-analysis level, each language uses topic, topic reference and word level lexical chaining, pronouns, ellipsis, emotional content words and literary cohesive devices.

However, there are notable differences. English uses a direct logic approach. The topic sentence is supported by all of the immediately following sentences. While in Spanish many, but not all, of the following sentences are directly relate to the topic. The oblique development of an indirect idea with discourse about that idea occurs in each of the Spanish testimonies as expected in traditional Spanish discourse style. English testimonies have a direct statement-of-fact voice with at least one direct address or imperative to address the reader. The reader is expected to consider each idea as additional weight of evidence. This contrasts with Spanish showing the writer developing a much more personal voice with the reader by addressing the reader with the intimate "tu" form, using many more personal pronouns, as well as referring to such ideas as family, sharing, love, desires, doubts, and thankfulness. The logic is developed from the writers personal experiences and expressed feelings. Each of these Spanish testimonies begins the discourse with a softening phrase leading up to the main idea, and ends the discourse with a prayer form.

Several English testimonies in Table 1 had preferred scores close to the two most preferred testimonies that were analyzed for this study. In contrast, Table 2 scores of the testimonies in Spanish showed that two testimonies had predominant scores. These were two of the four native elicited testimonies. This indicates that the Spanish natives preferred the testimonies written by Spanish natives. It points to a recognition of, and preference to, Spanish discourse style.

There were two other testimonies written by natives, with one receiving hardly any score at all. Why didn't the native speakers more strongly prefer either of the two other native testimonies?

To try to answer this question, these other native Spanish testimonies were also analyzed. They were testimonies #8 and #14. and can be found in Table 9. Upon examination, it is apparent that they are quite
similar to an English direct linear discourse style. Neither testimony is as long as the preferred Spanish testimonies. The absence of the personal voice and intimate, prayer style is notable. One even ends on an imperative statement, as does one of the English counterparts. Both have in common the reference to a Book of Mormon scripture, which is not found in any of the other preferred testimonies. However, this scriptural reference is often used by missionaries when teaching about the Book of Mormon. Spanish testimony #8, which received a higher score by natives, has more references to feelings, (four) and addresses the reader but doesn't use the Spanish "tu" form. Spanish #8 also makes some attempt to ease the reader into the topic, but it very closely resembles English testimony #5 in most of the compared features.

Where did the subjects get this style that does not match the style of the other preferred Spanish testimonies in this study? Both subjects are natives of Mexico and have studied English in the United States for only five months, and as yet are not considered accomplished English speakers. It is unlikely they have learned English discourse style to the extent that it would affect their writing discourse style in Spanish. The fact that these these testimonies were both written by natives who had served a mission for a North American based church may be a clue. They both had two years of training and experience serving in Mexico as missionaries with North American counterparts in a church that was founded in the U.S.A. and which church translates much of its religious material directly from English to Spanish. Is it possible that their testimony discourse style has been modified to some expected norm arising from their experiences in in a church with an English based discourse style? Is it possible that English discourse style is so deeply embedded in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints that as the church goes world-wide from an English speaking country it is also going world-wide with an imposed English style of rhetorical thinking? These questions remain unanswered by this study. The facts are that these two native speakers had testimonies that were not as highly preferred by other native speakers, and that their discourse style was different compared to the typical preferred Spanish discourse style.
Table #9  
Spanish Testimony #14

Es un registro de nuestros antiguos antepasados aproximadamente 600 años A.D. a 421 después de Cristo. Nos relata la visita de Jesucristo a las Americas. Testifico sin ninguna duda que este libro es el mas perfecto, que nos da sabiduria y conocimiento del plan de salvacion, les prometo que si lo leen logran un testimonio tambien, pongan a prueba su fe. (Moroni 10:3-5).

(English translation)

DU I: [The Book of Mormon] is an account of our ancestors about 600 B. C. to 421 A.D.

Ia: It describes the visit of Jesus Christ to the Americas.

Ib: I# testify@ without any doubt+ a).that this book is the most perfect b).that it gives us wisdom and knowledge of the plan of salvation.

Ic: I# promise you#

that if you# read it,you# will achieve a testimony @ also.

DU II: {Put your faith to the test (Moroni 10:3-5).}
Spanish Testimony #8

Al recibir usted este libro y leerlo podra darse cuenta de las grandes bendiciones que Nuestro Padre Celestial que nos ha dado a todos nosotros como sus hijos. Este es un libro que habla acerca de nuestros antepasados que vivieron hace mucho tiempo en los Americas. El Libro de Mormon le ayudara a conocer las verdades acerca de Dios y como llevar una mejor vida. Comparto con usted mis sentimientos acerca del Libro de Mormon se sin duda alguna que es verdadero y usted tendra este mismo sentimiento si usted lee Moroni 10:4-5.

(English translation)

DU I: Upon your# receiving this book and reading it, you# will take note of the great blessings that Heavenly Father@ has given to all of us# as his children.

Ia: This is a book that talks about our# ancestors who lived many years ago in the Americas.

Ib: The Book of Mormon will help you # a). to know the truth about God@

   b). and how to have a better life.

Ic. I#share+ with you# my feelings+ about the Book of Mormon.

Id: I# know without doubt+ a). that it is true

   b). and you# will have the same feelings+

   if you# read Moroni 10:4-5.
There are similarities in Spanish and English discourse styles, but there are differences as well. It may be useful in further studies to examine the remaining eighteen testimonies to try to determine what differences or similarities exist in comparison to the testimonies analyzed, and how this relates to Spanish and English discourse style. This may further verify, or discount the tentative results of this study. It may be meaningful to look at the testimonies that received no points to see if it can be determined why they were not preferred at all.

It has been shown that native Spanish discourse patterns are preferred and thus recognized by native speakers of Spanish. Discourse style seems to be culture specific, even in a specific form such as a religious testimony. To be accepted and understood as a writer in another language may mean stepping out of one's own cultural rhetorical thinking and writing patterns, and begin to operate in the accepted patterns of the other culture.
Bibliography


