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**Separated by a Common Language:
Asian Students Writing in English**

Renu Gupta, Ph.D.

Separated by a Common Language: Asian Students Writing in English

Renu Gupta, Ph.D.

Abstract

According to research in contrastive rhetoric, student writing in English is influenced by the rhetorical structure of the native language. This study examines essays written on a general topic by MBA students from three countries—China, India, and Singapore. An analysis of the essays showed that students from China, who learned English as a foreign language, structured their essays as an exposition, whereas students from India and Singapore, who had studied in English-medium schools, gave equal weight to a discussion of the counterarguments. Student comments revealed that prior instruction in English composition influenced the structure of their English texts.

1. Introduction

When experienced ESL teachers read student essays written in English, they are often able to identify each student's home country. Their judgments are partly based on lexical choice and syntax, but the primary clue is the rhetorical patterning of the essays. One explanation for these rhetorical differences in student essays comes from contrastive rhetoric, which argues that L2 students transfer the rhetorical structures from their L1 to the texts that they write in English (Kaplan, 1966, 1987). Several studies in contrastive rhetoric have found differences between the rhetorical structures of English texts, which are characterized as linear and direct, and the structures of texts in other languages such as Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese (see Connor, 1996 for a summary of studies). However, contrastive rhetoric has been criticized because its underlying assumptions remain unclear (Casanave, 2004) and it sets up a simplified binary distinction between English and other languages (Kubota and Lehner, 2004).

An alternative explanation, which this paper explores, is that social and educational contexts determine how students learn to construct English texts. Since texts are constructed and situated in social practice, there may be preferred styles for English texts that are endorsed by society and transmitted through educational institutions. Case studies of ESL learners have documented student frustration with writing in US universities, where the writing conventions differ from the way the students learned to construct English texts in their home countries (Canagarajah, 2002; Fox, 1994); in order to gain a better understanding of student problems in writing academic essays, we should first examine how they are taught to write in English (Charteris-Black, 1997).

In former British colonies, where English is often the language of school instruction, studies indicate that teachers may not address rhetorical organization in their English

composition classes. Mohan and Lo (1985) found differences in the text structures of essays written by students in Hong Kong and Canada that they partly attribute to the different instructional practices in the two countries: in Canada, teachers and textbooks placed greater emphasis on text organization, whereas in Hong Kong the focus was on sentence-level accuracy. The situation is similar in India, where teacher feedback and evaluation focus on spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and originality of ideas rather than organization (Rani, 1995); there is little in the way of explicit instruction and students are either left to their own devices (Kesari, 2002) or directed toward a model essay (Singh, 1985). These studies highlight the importance of examining the broader social and educational context within which writing in English is taught and learned in different countries.

Although research in contrastive rhetoric has tended to treat English texts as a unitary phenomenon, Kachru (1996a, 1997) has argued that there are differences among English texts in different countries; she draws a distinction between texts written in the US versus texts from Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and former British colonies, citing Biber (1987) on syntactic differences and Connor (1995) on structural differences in school essays.

There is little detailed analysis of the structural differences between texts written in the US and those from other English-dominant countries. However, evaluation criteria and textbooks offer insights into what constitutes “good writing” in different countries. In the US, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) states that “[a] well-written essay should contain discourse elements, which include introductory material, a thesis statement, main ideas, supporting ideas, and a conclusion” (Attali, 2004: 4).

Other researchers at this organization have reinforced the centrality of the thesis statement to an essay (Burstein, Chodorow, and Leacock, 2003; Burstein, Marcu, Andreyev, and Chodorow, 2001; Higgins and Burstein, 2006; Higgins, Burstein, Marcu and Gentile, 2004) and the thesis statement plays an important role in the ETS teaching package, *Criterion* (Educational Testing Service, 2007). Additional criteria come from US textbooks designed to teach ESL composition that emphasize not only the thesis statement but also the use of topic sentences, supporting details, and transition words, such as *first*, *however*, and *moreover*, to signal sentence and idea relationships (see, for example, textbooks such as Oshima and Hogue, 1999).

In other English-dominant countries, writing instruction may be less explicit. One attempt to make writing instruction more transparent to students is the textbook prepared by the Open University in the UK (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, and Swann, 2003). Coffin et al describe three ways of structuring argument essays. The first type, an exposition, closely resembles the essay defined by ETS and ESL textbooks, but without the terms “thesis statements” and “topic sentences”; the essay writer states the overall position, then provides sub-arguments and supporting evidence (counter-arguments may be given but are not obligatory), and closes the essay by reinforcing the overall position.

The authors describe two additional argument types: the discussion and the challenge. In the discussion essay, “the writer explores the issue from two or more perspectives before reaching a position in the concluding section” (p. 60), whereas the challenge essay begins by stating “the position which will be argued against. A series of rebuttal arguments and supporting evidence then follow. Finally, the writer puts forward the overall argument or position” (p. 60). In both the discussion and challenge essays, counterarguments play an important role and the writer’s stance is explicitly stated only at the end of the essay. From this, we see that students in the UK are expected to use a range of text structures, even if these are not taught explicitly.

The types of text structures taught in different countries may explain the results of two studies. Reid (1996) compared the second sentences (i.e., the sentence following the topic sentence) of native and nonnative writers in the US and found that the two groups used different sentences. When Allison, Varghese, and Wu (1999) replicated the study in Singapore with undergraduates who used English as their dominant academic language, the students did not generate appropriate second sentences; more importantly, neither did the raters, who came from the UK and Australia. This seems to reaffirm the structural differences between US and British/Australian texts.

With globalization, there has been increased interaction through teacher exchanges and international business, resulting in altered notions of effective writing in English; for example, in China, English composition textbooks now teach students to write in an “Anglo-American” style (Kirkpatrick, 1997). In other countries, such as India, educational practices are more resistant to change, because they are constrained by the local examination system, but the demands of the workplace have slowly begun to filter down.

This paper examines the English essays written by students from three Asian countries—China, India, and Singapore—and explores the educational contexts and workplace practices that shaped students’ notions about writing English texts. In these countries, English plays different roles and is learned through different modes. In China, English is learned as a foreign language, but the status of English is more complex in the two former British colonies—India and Singapore. In India, where English may be used in education and for communication, learning is through “predominantly scholastic transmission” (Gupta, 1997: p. 53), whereas Singapore is one of the “multilingual contact variety countries” where English may or may not be acquired purely through the educational system (Gupta, 1997: p. 55).

The data for the paper come from two sources: essays written by MBA students in Singapore for a placement test, and their comments on writing texts during the subsequent remedial writing class. The analysis showed that students from China followed the expository argument structure, whereas students from India and Singapore gave equal weight to a discussion of the counterarguments.

The paper first describes the test and analyzes the essays written by the three groups of students. The second section describes student comments during the writing class that point to the role of English writing instruction as the source of their notions about writing, and describes writing instruction in the three countries. The final section discusses changes in English language instruction in Asian countries as a consequence of globalization.

2. Background of the Participants

The participants in the study were students from Asian countries enrolled in an international MBA program at the National University of Singapore. They had been selected for the program on the basis of their GMAT scores, work experience, and a personal interview. Since the business faculty had expressed concerns about their students' ability to write in English, the administration decided to run a remedial writing course for students who had obtained low scores on the writing component of the GMAT.

The writing component of the GMAT examination, which is called the Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA), consists of two 30-minute writing tasks—*Analysis of an Issue* and *Analysis of an Argument*—that have no word limit. The two essays are scored holistically to produce a single score that ranges from a low of 1 to a high of 6. Students who had scored 4 or lower on the AWA component were asked to sit for a placement test, and if they again got a score of 4 or lower, they were required to attend the remedial writing course.

There were 38 students in the placement test, which was designed to replicate the AWA test as far as possible. The question prompt (see Appendix A) was taken from the sample list of questions provided for the AWA by the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC). Students composed their essays in Notepad, which allowed them to use editing facilities such as *Delete* and *Cut/Paste*, but they did not have access to spelling and grammar tools.

According to the GMAC, the topics for the AWA are of general interest and do not require specialized knowledge; the test is not genre-specific but a general essay (Rogers & Rymer, 2001). While there are problems with the AWA test in terms of the match with business writing and MBA course requirements (Rogers & Rymer, 1995a, 1995b), the essays are “a generic kind of analytical writing associated with academe, especially papers assigned in introductory humanities courses” (Rogers & Rymer, 2001, p. 113).

The students were mainly from three countries: China, India, and Singapore. With the exception of the Singaporeans, all the students had studied and worked only in their own countries. The Singaporeans, obviously, had studied in Singapore but some of them had also studied in the U.K.

Table 1 shows the number of students from each country who took the placement test and the number of students who failed.

Table 1. Results of the Placement Test

Country	No. of Students who appeared for the Test	No. of Students who failed the Test
China	19	15
India	8	8
Singapore	9	5
Other (Japan, Myanmar, Indonesia, South Korea)	4	4

3. Analysis of Student Essays

Of the 40 students who appeared for the placement test, eight managed to score above 4.5 on the re-test and were exempted from the writing course. Of the 32 students who failed the placement test, the analysis focused on texts written by the three main groups: students from China (15), India (8), and Singapore (5); the analysis was further limited to the essays written for *Analysis of an Issue*, since the students had never been formally taught how to analyze an argument.

For the text analyses, the guidelines provided by the GMAC were followed. These guidelines state that for the Analysis of an Issue, “Test takers must analyze the issue presented and explain their point of view on the subject. There is no correct answer. This task tests their ability to explore the complexities of an issue or opinion and take a position informed by their understanding” (GMAC, 2007). The most important requirement is for the writer to take and express a position on the issue. Accordingly, the essays were analyzed for the following: (a) the argument structure, namely, the author’s position, counterarguments, and the location of these statements, (b) the use of transition words to signal sentence relationships, and (c) the number of words. Three sample essays from each group are provided in Appendices B, C, and D; the statement of the writer’s position and transition words have been underlined.

3.1 Texts Written by Students from China

Contrary to expectations, all 15 texts written by the students from China were organized along the lines of the five-paragraph essay taught in ESL classes in the US. In every essay, the first paragraph restates the argument from the prompt and the final sentence of this introductory paragraph ends by stating the writer’s position, which is clearly signaled by a discourse marker such as *but*. The introduction is followed by three paragraphs, each beginning with a transition signal such as *first of all*, *second*, and *finally*. In the final paragraph, the writer re-states his or her position (sample essay in Appendix B).

Students used numerous transition words in their essays. Besides organizational markers such as *first*, they used signals such as *also* and *so* to signal the relationships between the sentences and their ideas.

These essays received a low grade not because they were poorly organized but because they contained syntactic errors, the vocabulary was limited or inappropriate, and the arguments were weak. The mean number of words for an essay was 335, and the range was between 214 and 502 words.

3.2 Texts Written by Students from India

The eight essays written by this group were among the longest, with a mean of 411 words, ranging from 245 to 519 words. Unlike the Chinese students, these essays did not have a common rhetorical structure; this finding is similar to other studies of English texts written by students at Indian universities (Kachru, 1996b).

The essay in Appendix C shows one format in which the writer has used a discussion structure. Since the writer never explicitly states his stance, it is not easy to follow the argument.

Paragraph 1:	Statement of problem
Paragraph 2:	Explanation of terms
Paragraph 3:	Counterargument
Paragraph 4:	Pro argument
Final paragraph:	Summary of benefits of both arguments

The students from India used transition signals but, in many cases, they were used either incorrectly or merely to begin a new sentence. Examples of transition sentences they used are shown below.

<i>Firstly</i>	used to mean <i>Let's begin</i>
<i>However, Moreover</i>	used to start a new sentence
<i>Another interpretation</i>	for a balanced argument
<i>In either case</i>	used after the balanced argument
<i>Thus</i>	used for (a) result and (b) to start a new sentence
<i>On the contrary</i>	meaning is not clear

These students used complex syntactic structures and a range of vocabulary; however, they got a low score because, in terms of organization, it was not easy to follow their argument.

3.3 Texts written by students from Singapore

The five students from Singapore wrote some of the shortest essays (mean number of words = 285.2, ranging from 187 to 367 words). Appendix D shows a sample essay, that uses a mixed structure.

Paragraph 1:	Position
Paragraph 2:	Counterargument
Final paragraph:	Position

In the sample essay, the writer states his position in the first sentence--“I find that the response to the argument is more compelling ...”—but leaves the reader to refer to the question prompt.

The students from Singapore used transition signals, such as *however*, *therefore*, and *This is why* but sometimes the meaning is unclear. In the sample essay, *therefore* signals a cause/effect relationship, but the phrase *This is why* is misplaced because it refers to points made in previous paragraphs.

4. Writing Instruction

The objective of the remedial writing course was to teach students written business communication skills; the textbook (Penrose, Rasberry, and Myers, 2001) covered the writing of direct and indirect messages, such as memos, proposals, and letters.

During the classes, students reacted to concepts and materials presented in the textbook as well as to comments by their classmates. Although it would have been better to interview the students and tape their comments, this was not possible because of student resistance to the remedial class. Since English was the dominant academic language of the Indian and Singaporean students, they were embarrassed by the required writing class and even more mortified that they had been placed with Chinese students who had learned English as a foreign language. Their comments were spontaneous remarks that they refused to discuss further; when I emailed a Singaporean student about one of his comments, he did not respond. Hence, I had to rely on notes I took either during class or in individual conferences.

The discussions with students revealed the influence of training (or lack of training) in writing texts in English. This section also briefly describes English writing instruction in these countries, based on studies of school and university teaching in these countries.

4.1 Writing Instruction in China

The students from China had learned English as a foreign language at school, university, and private language institutes. At the university and language institutes, their instructors, who were from the US, taught them text structures, such as cause/effect, and

the importance of topic sentences. The students had been through extensive practice in writing English essays using this style.

At the same time, the students drew a sharp distinction between writing in Mandarin and in English. Bao said that there are many different rhetorical styles in Mandarin but her American professor in China told her that in English “I should state my point of view in the first paragraph, write three paragraphs – one for each point—and end it by repeating my point of view.” Another student, Mei, added that the Chinese view such writing as childish, but this is the way she had been taught to write in English. Li Luan explained the strategy she uses to write in English: “In Chinese I write in many different ways. But in English I use only this direct style of writing. It is easy to follow so I can focus on my language instead of struggling with the different sections.”

In short, these students had been taught the structure of an expository or five-paragraph essay which they reserved for English texts. Similar changes in English language teaching in China have been reported by other researchers (Kirkpatrick, 1997; You, 2004a). In Japan, some students also consciously use different rhetorical styles for English and Japanese texts, because they have been told that English texts use a deductive style of writing (Kubota, 1998).

4.2 Writing Instruction in India

Ten students from India cleared the AWA exam in the first round; all of them had either studied in international schools outside India or had worked for multinational organizations in India, where they had frequent interaction with international clients and partners. The students who got low scores on the AWA section had not worked for international companies but in the Indian public sector; note that none of them managed to clear the placement test.

The students’ home languages varied—with Telugu, Tamil, Punjabi, and Hindi being the main language groups—but for all of them English was the medium of instruction at school and university. English was effectively their dominant academic language, being used for academic purposes, and was also used for written communication in the workplace.

Unlike their classmates from China, students from India had never been taught explicitly how to write, but had picked it up from reading or by writing on the job. Their notion of a paragraph was to begin a new paragraph whenever a paragraph became too long. Terms such as thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting details came as a complete surprise to them; one student asked, “Do people really write this way?” Most of them resisted the notion of stating their viewpoint explicitly; when we discussed the Direct Approach given in the textbook, Mahesh said, “It would be rude to state my point of view up front. I cannot imagine doing this in the business context. It would upset my superiors.” Karan said, “My superiors in India are used to a certain style of writing.

They want a lot of politeness at the beginning.” One student, Raj, was less resistant to writing in a “direct” style. He commented, “My boss at work was an excellent writer. And yes, his reports were written in this direct style.”

Research studies on writing instruction in India find that students are not taught to become independent writers either at school (Kesari, 2002; Rani, 1995) or at the university (Dubey, 1991; Nair, 1987; Singh, 1985; Sogani, 1977). Students learn to write primarily by emulating British texts. In the composition class, teachers either ask students to write an essay based on a model, without providing an instruction or feedback (Kesari, 2002) or dictate a model essay (Singh, 1985).

Through their readings, students encounter discourse markers, such as *moreover*, but since these are never explicitly taught, for most students these words remain interchangeable. The situation remains unchanged at the university, where the teachers are trained in English literature rather than language teaching and a language-through-literature approach is used (Parasher, 1989).

Singh (1985) puts this bluntly when he says that “our students even after ten years of composition writing are still ignorant about such terms as topic sentence, outline, development of a theme, editing, etc.” (p. 68). This situation is not unique to India, but also exists in other former colonies of the British Empire such as Hong Kong (see Mohan & Lo, 1985). In these countries, writing instruction focuses on language, accuracy, and vocabulary, with little or no instruction on organization.

In the workplace, the organizational culture determines how people should communicate in writing. In Indian government organizations, documents and memos follow prescribed formats that emphasize politeness and set phrases (Mehrotra, 1995). However, with the recent liberalization of the Indian economy, Indian managers find that international clients frequently misunderstand them and are exasperated by their long-winded and indirect texts (Zaidman, 2001).

4.3 Writing Instruction in Singapore

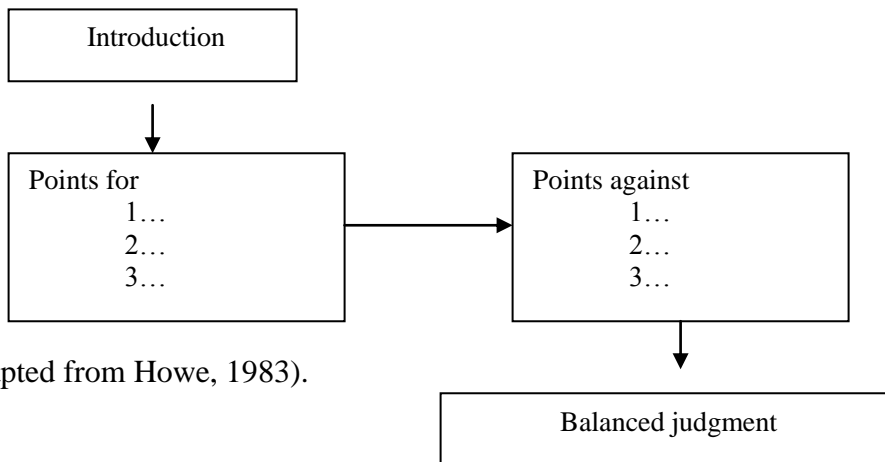
When writing their essays, the students from Singapore faced an unusual problem. Unlike their classmates from China and India who knew of only one way to organize their essays in English, the Singaporeans had learned two different ways to structure their essays but did not know which method was appropriate for the test. This was borne out by comments from two students in this group. Joseph had scored only 3.5 out of 6 on the AWA test, but on the placement test he scored a high of 5. As he was leaving the examination hall, he told me, “I looked up the GMAT website yesterday and found their model essay; then I wrote your essay in that style.”

The second comment came from Henry during the writing course; when we were discussing the difference between direct and indirect memo writing, he exploded, “This is

the way I learned to write in secondary school. Then at the Junior College I was told to write a balanced argument and state my position only at the end. I don't care how I write—but why don't you professors make up your minds how you want me to write!"

When we examine how writing is taught in Singapore, the students' confusion becomes clear. The following description is based on Gupta (2006) and presents a brief description of writing instruction in Singapore. In some schools, students are taught to use the exposition style for their English essays. After school, students study at a Junior College for two years, at the end of which they appear for the GCE 'A' Level examinations. In a course called the General Paper, students are taught how to write essays on general topics such as *Poverty* or *Culture*. Since they have to write for an unknown examiner whose opinions are not known, students are told to display their knowledge by discussing both sides of the argument; if an opinion has to be expressed, this should be done at the end of the essay (Dudley-Evans, 1988). Figure 1 shows the structure of such an essay.

Figure 1
Structure of Essay at the Junior College in Singapore



(Adapted from Howe, 1983).

In the workplace, some students learn to be more direct in their writing; however, from the statements made by the two students, they still experience considerable confusion about what is required.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study, which examines the essays written by students from China, India, and Singapore, shows that prior instruction in English writing classes exerts a powerful influence on how students structure their texts. The students from China did not use rhetorical patterns from Chinese; when writing in English, they used an exposition format learned from their American instructors. In contrast, the students from India and Singapore (for whom English was the medium of academic instruction) used a variety of text structures. The students from India had learned to write by emulating British models

of writing and were unaware that they could organize their essays in any other way. For the Singaporeans, the dilemma was which rhetorical structure to use—the discussion format taught at Junior College or the exposition that they encountered in school and in the workplace.

One would expect student essays to reflect the influence of their native language; however, this study, though based on a small sample, shows the impact of educational practices on writing in English. The students in this study are not undergraduates but working adults who have succeeded in producing appropriate texts for the university as well as the workplace. Regardless of whether they are writing in a foreign language or in their dominant academic language, these students create texts in ways that their discourse communities teach and value.

Globalization will change this situation. We already see changes in the texts written by the students from China who were taught by instructors from the US; in Singapore, the move away from the GCE examinations to the project-based International Baccalaureate (IB) will impact the kinds of writing that students learn. And in India, the need for interaction with international businesses has led to a growing awareness of different communication styles. Asian writing in English is changing. At the same time, as You (2004b) points out, perhaps EFL professionals may come to appreciate different rhetorical preferences.

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Appendix A Placement Test

Analysis of an Issue

Directions

In this section, you will need to analyze the issue presented and explain your views on it. There is no "correct" answer. Instead, you should consider various perspectives as you develop your own position on the issue.

Question

“Some people argue that the salaries of corporate executives should be linked to those of their lowest-paid employees. This would improve relations between management and workers, reducing costly labor disputes and increasing worker productivity. What these people overlook, however, is that these high salaries are necessary to attract the best managers, the individuals whose decisions have the greatest impact on the overall well-being of the company.”

Which do you find more compelling, the argument that worker and executive salaries should be linked or the response to it? Explain your position using relevant reasons and/or examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

Appendix B
Essay Written by Student from China
Exposition. (Thesis statement – 3 supporting points – Position)

Some people argue that the salaries of corporate executives should be linked to those of their lowest-paid employees. They think that this would improve the working relations between management and workers and this would further lead to increase worker productivity and working efficiency. But I think to link this will only lead to the contrary of their assumption.

First of all, the executives of corporate usually are those who invested a lot of money when they were young to get well-educated such a MBA degree in a business school and then joined the corporation to contribute what they had learned and their most beautiful parts of their life to the corporation. Also the performance of the executives will have a great impact to the well-being of the whole company. They shoulder the greatest responsibility and face the greatest pressure in the company. They are the old soliders of the corporation and they invest most to the corporation. In return to their heavy investments to the corporation, they should be rewarded at the same level.

Secondly compared with those executives, the lowest-paid workers are usually the fledging birds who received a poor education and did the least important works in the corporation. Certainly they should receive a much lower salary linked with their own contribution and investment to the company. Only in this way, they can be encouraged and motivated to improve themselves and contribute more to the company. If those workers are paid unproportionally high comparing with their contribution to the company, they actually are encouraged to be idle and less to the company.

Finally, as I have mentioned, the performance of executives will have the most important impact to the wellbeing of the whole company. Only when they are motivated to continuously have a high performance, the whole well-being of the company will be improved. And then the company will have the sufficient money and ability to increase the payments to the lowest-paid workers. So the payment of the executive only should be linked with their own performance instead of the payment of the lowest-paid workers.

Appendix C

Essay Written by Student from India

Discussion. (Statement of problem - Explanation of terms – counterargument – Pro argument – summary of benefits of both arguments)

Some people argue that the salaries should be linked to those of their lowest paid-employees. This would improve relations between the management and workers, reducing costly labour and increasing worker productivity.

It is an interesting argument. Firstly, we need to define what exactly do we mean by 'linked to'. It will be very irrational to argue that the managers and workers should have same pay for a simple reason. Different talent and knowledge attract different price tag! A more logical interpretation of 'linked to' could be a fixed percentage pay increase per year for both, workers as well as managers. Another interpretation could be that both, workers and managers start at different pay structure but get fixed 'dollar rise' per year. However, having this fixed pay method too has its own merit.

In either case, there is no fairness in measuring and rewarding the talent and high performance. Managers have more knowledge and skills and thus higher responsibility and accountability. They lead and direct the firms to earn higher profits. They are the decision makers. Though workers' contribution is important, it is not counted as highly skilled work. Usually, managers are highly qualified and it would be reasonable to give them higher pay. This not only necessary to attract best managers but also to retain highly talented managers. A manager is like a captain of the ship. The firm of worth \$20 billion is in his command. He hold the responsibility to navigate it in the right direction in the right manner, just like a captain of the ship does. Workers are like deckmen, who assist captain in his mission. Moreover, with fixed pay and rise method, there would not be enough motivation for those who can really perform better. Thus without motivation there is very little chance for increase productivity.

On the other contrary, the old age problem of worker versus manager conflict could be well tackled if we were to favour our basic argument. The conflict between management and workers will be reduced. There will be fewer strikes and higher productivity due to increased team work and co-ordination across the levels. Every individual will feel equally a part of the firm. The companies which do not have workers union are far more productive and efficient. This shows that harmony between workers and managers can brings windfall gains. But 'linked pay' is seldom seen as means to achieve this objective.

Thus, there is a trade off to a certain extent of need to pay commensurate to skills and responsibility versus increased productivity and reduced cost due to better harmony between workers and managers. However, it is more likely that talented managers, once acquired by a firm, will find ways to increase productivity and reduce costs by ensuring teamwork and harmony as well as other innovative ways.

Appendix D
Essay Written by Student from Singapore
Mixed (Position- Counterargument – position)

I find that the response to the argument is more compelling.

The linking of the salaries of corporate executives to the lowest employees will establish a salary hierarchy within an organization. There will be salary scale determining the salary at the various levels. This will limit the salary of the executives to factors that are within the organization.

However, the organization is facing competition in the area of hiring good people. At certain levels of management as well as certain specialised industries, the ability of the personnel has a great impact on the organization's ability to compete and excel in the industry. Thus, getting the right people will matter greatly. However, the right people are also much sought after by the market.

Therefore, if an organization wants to attract such talents, they must be ready to make exceptions to the existing salary structure.

This is why, in most public sector organizations, it is becoming very difficult to attract and retain good people.

Commercial organizations that do not allow the exceptions will be at a disadvantage and thus may not be able to maximise the return to shareholders.

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