Business English and the Real World: Gender, Power, Hierarchy

Judith Mader, Rudi Camerer
BESIG-CONFERENCE, 14 November 2014

1. Are We Teaching the Right Things?
2. English as a Lingua Franca: How does it Affect Us?
3. Three Examples: Gender, Power, Hierarchy
4. Teaching Business English for the Real World
Vienna-Oxford
International Corpus of English
http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/

Each: approximately
1 million items

INTERNATIONAL CORPUS OF ENGLISH
http://ice-corpora.net/ice

Business correspondence
M1- ATTN: Mr Wang Jiawei,
M2 How are you?
M3 (1) How are you? Wish you prosperity!
M3 (2) How are you? Wish you prosperity!
M3 I have recently received Contract AS-6589 signed by your company. Thank you for ordering 60x58 cotton shopping bags. We are extremely grateful to you for your cooperation and support at the beginning of the New Year. In order to guarantee the time of delivery now we are making adequate arrangements to design samples and prepare materials according to your order. You can trust our commitment to collaboration.
M3 (2) I have recently received Contract AS-6589 signed by your company. Thank you for ordering 60x58 cotton shopping bags. We are extremely grateful to you for your cooperation and support at the beginning of the New Year. In order to guarantee the time of delivery now we are making adequate arrangements to design samples and prepare materials according to your order. You can trust our commitment to collaboration.
M4 At the same time, our company sent over 104,000 cotton bags and the delivery number is CVC/B 98055. We haven’t received your payment yet. According to Mr Zhang, the payment of US$ 35,490 was sent on November 30. However, we consulted with Henan Branch, China Bank and found that no payment had been made by your bank so far. We kindly ask Mr Lian [the addressee] to help check about this at your earliest convenience because delayed payment may affect directly the carrying out of our sales orders. Please think about the possible further collaboration between you and us. I hope that you can help Mr Zhang sort out this issue.
M5 Thank you for your cooperation! Happy New Year!
M5 Zhen Liangchen (shang)

Influence of L1 on **pragmatics**

--- request schemata in **writing**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anglo-American style</th>
<th>Common in China, Indonesia, Japan …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salutation Request</td>
<td>Salutation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign off</td>
<td>Face-work / Securing of Good Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons for request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sign off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Influence of L1 on **pragmatics**

**e.g.** Turn-taking conventions

Turn-stealing / interruptions vs. seniority, gender etc.

Influence of L1/C1 on **pragmatics**

**e.g.** Reacting to a compliment

“You speak Chinese really well.”

a) Thank you.

b) I have been trying hard to learn, but my Chinese is still not good.

c) No, no, my Chinese is very poor.
ELF users regularly …

- do not use third-person singular present tense
- use of relative pronouns who and which interchangeably
- omit definite and indefinite articles or insert them where they do not occur in SE (e.g. they have a respect for all, he is very good person)
- pluralize nouns that do not have plural forms in SE (e.g. informations, knowledges, advices)
- use the demonstrative this with both singular and plural nouns (e.g. this countries)
- extend the uses of certain ‘general’ verbs to cover more meanings than in SE, especially make, do, have, put, take (e.g. make a discussion)
- ...

http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/

The causes of communication breakdown in ELF

productive & receptive skills affected!

Key: 1 = pronunciation; 2 = vocabulary; 3 = grammar; 4 = other causes

Jennifer Jenkins (2000). The Phonology of English as a Lingua Franca
Influence of L1 on pronunciation

1. Ms. Mustafa
Ms. Mustafa grew up in Kazakhstan and has worked there for many years. In this interview, she talks about her experience in several countries, including China and Nigeria.

Listen to what she says and mark whether the following statements are true (T), false (F), or not mentioned (N).

- Ms. Mustafa does not like her English very much.
- Her English pronunciation is good.

2. Dave
Dave is a Scot who has lived in Germany for some years. Here he talks about his experience with a German football club.

Listen to what he says and mark whether the statement is true (T), false (F), or not mentioned (N).

- Dave says that meeting new people is more important than improving his language skills.
- He enjoys the football culture in Germany.

3. Crafts
In this recording, Crafts from Tokyo in Japan, discusses his experiences of negotiating with people from European countries.
Influence of L1 on pronunciation

ELF and the learner’s first-language pronunciation:
- Arabic
- Chinese
- German
- Greek
- Japanese
- Malay
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish

Intercultural theory 3.0
“Perhaps the most significant aspect of this evolution has been our development over the past decade of the theoretical framework of mediated discourse analysis, an approach to discourse which focuses less on broad constructs like ‘culture’ and more on the everyday concrete actions through which culture is produced.”


Culture-based COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- Directness
- Enthusiasm
- Formality
- Assertiveness
- Self-promotion
- Personal disclosure

**A Six-Dimensional Approach for Diagnosing the Cultural Code**

**Directness:** How straightforwardly you’re expected to communicate in a particular situation. Are you expected to say exactly what you want to say, or to 'hint' at something in a more indirect manner?

**Enthusiasm:** How much emotion and energy you are expected to show when communicating. Can you express how you feel, or is it more appropriate to hide your positive feelings?

**Formality:** The amount of deference and respect you are expected to display with your communication style. Are you expected to show a high level of respect when communicating with someone in a particular situation, or can you be more informal?

**Assertiveness:** How strongly you are expected or allowed to voice your opinion and advocate your point of view in a particular culture and in a particular situation in that culture. Should you be forthright in expressing yourself, or work at hiding or sublimating your point of view?

**Self-promotion:** The extent to which you can speak positively about yourself in a given cultural situation. Should you actively promote your positive qualifications or be more self-effacing?

**Personal disclosure:** The extent to which it is appropriate to reveal personal information about yourself to others. Should you be open and forward in expressing details about your life, or is it more appropriate to hide these personal details?

The “Big Six” in Business English Training:

- EMAILS
- TEAM-MEETINGS
- PRESENTATIONS
- NEGOTIATIONS
- SOCIALISING
- TELEPHONING

**ME & MY CULTURE(S)**

**e.g. Mr. Kim**

- **Korean language community**
  - Age: late forties
  - Korean male community practice, i.e. social relaxation mostly with other men
  - His children grow up in an affluent environment.

- **Corporate culture**
  - Prestigious company
  - Worked for Kolon Co., Seoul

- **Professional group**
  - Worked on a joint-venture team in Frankfurt/M.
  - May 2012 - June 2014

- **Utilitarian discourse**

- **Gender discourse**

- **Confucian community of values**

YOU & YOUR CULTURE(S)

Place of socialisation ...
Job ....
Employer...
Professional association ...
International/intercultural experience ...
Gender community practice ...
Age ...
Parents...
Children ...
education, position in society, role of family

YOU

Questioning the concept of "national cultures"

CULTURE = NATION STATE?

Table 6.1: Long-Term Orientation Index (LTO) Values for 39 Countries and Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY/REGION</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea (South)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores for countries or regions in bold type were calculated from the original Cross-Value Survey. Years indicate the latest year of the survey. Scores for other countries or regions are based on reports.

You never meet a culture, you always meet individuals!

Culture, Stereotypes, Country Specifics?

Nation states are dynamic systems of numerous macro-, sub- and micro-cultures, partially overlapping with other cultures.
“Intercultural Competence” means possessing the necessary attitudes and reflective and behavioural skills and using these to behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations.

BE PREPARED: COUNTRY SPECIFICS – SITUATION – ROLES – RELATIONSHIPS

Intercultural Communicative Competence

BE POLITE, BE TRUSTWORTHY, BUILD RAPPORT!

YOUR 'REALITY CONSTRUCT' IS ONLY ONE AMONG OTHERS!

BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL!

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC)

Create "Cultural Islands"

Be effective in "Communities of Practice"

(Ed Schein)

(Étienne Wenger, Jean Lave, Barbara GeidtHolter, Jennifer Jenkins etc.)
4 BASIC RULES concerning Intercultural Communication

1. NEVER BE UNPREPARED!

2. YOU NEVER MEET A CULTURE, BUT ALWAYS INDIVIDUALS.

3. YOU CANNOT NOT COMMUNICATE.

4. ALWAYS BE NON-JUDGMENTAL!

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

2 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF TRAINING

- 1st, 2nd, 3rd encounters are crucial!
- positive relationship sought!

“COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE”
Implications for the teaching of Intercultural Competence in English

ONE LANGUAGE FOR ALL?

Each speaker will use his or her own politeness conventions and the use of English as an apparently common language may well hide more than it reveals.

Two basic rules should therefore be observed:

1. First and second encounters are crucial and will most probably have an effect on how the relationship continues.

2. The higher the level of the speaker’s English in linguistic terms, the more serious will breaches of politeness conventions generally be considered.

3 Practical examples

1. Power: e.g. 2 Job Interviews

2. Hierarchy: e.g. self-disclosure in intercultural encounters

3. Gender: When do we reach our limits?
1. Using English in Job Interviews

Michael (an American) tries to promote himself for a special assignment in China.

After a meeting in the department, Michael faces the decision of whether to apply for a special assignment to China. He has been in the company for two years and has enjoyed his job. However, he feels that his current position is not challenging enough.

Michael: I'm thinking about applying for the special assignment. It's a chance to work in a different country and learn more about the company's international operations.

Manager: That's a good idea, Michael. You've been here for a while and you have experience in international business.

Michael: Thank you, Manager. I'll start working on my application right away.

Michael does not help from discussing this subject. It's only after a week that he talks to another colleague who has just returned from a similar assignment.

Michael: Did you enjoy working in China?

Fellow: Yes, it was a great experience. The company provided a lot of support, and I learned a lot about Chinese culture.

Michael: That sounds interesting. I've been considering applying for the assignment, but I'm not sure if I'm ready for such a challenge.

Fellow: Don't worry, Michael. I was nervous too, but I'm glad I did it. It was a great opportunity to grow both professionally and personally.

Michael: Thanks for sharing your experience. I think I'll go for it.

Discuss with your neighbour:
1. What is your opinion on doing such a job?
2. What do you think Michael might have promoted himself differently in this situation?
2. Personal Disclosure in Hierarchical Relations

The following incident is reported by Richard Gesteland, a Danish businessman, in his book Cross-Cultural Business Behavior: When working in Singapore he decided to learn Mandarin. So he hired Stefanie, a pleasant young woman who had recently immigrated from Taiwan, to tutor him. But due to the unexpected death of both of his parents he was forced to stop the lessons for about a month. It was on a Saturday after he had got back to Singapore that Stefanie dropped by to enquire why he had missed over a month’s worth of lessons, suffering from grief compounded by jet lag and exhaustion, he briefly said that both of his parents had just died. A stricken look flashed across Stefanie’s face for just a fraction of a second, and she gasped. Then the young woman suddenly laughed out loud, right in his face, and proceeded to giggle for several seconds. A few weeks later Stefanie dropped coming and Richard had to find a new Mandarin tutor.


Photo: MS Cliparts
3. GENDER
in international/intercultural business communication
GLASS CEILING?

Photo: www.iStockphoto.com

DOUBLE BIND?

Photo: MS Cliparts
“Certain truths are so clear that we have forgotten them and we don’t really pay close enough attention to them. You cannot in any kind of high hazard world be safe without good communication.”

Edgar H. Schein
Sensei? No females allowed.

"As project manager and main designer of the software to control an integrated circuits tester, I was the natural choice to travel to Japan to teach a 5 day class to their engineers.

I was told by many of my colleagues who had taught classes in Japan that as a teacher or sensei, I would practically be a god in the classroom. They told me the students there respect teachers so much that they would bow to me and be the most polite students I had ever seen. (I arrived in the classroom with high expectations).

I was "greeted" by chaos in the class. My entrance didn’t cause even a slight pause in the engineers’ casual conversations. Only several minutes later when my host [male engineer] spoke did the men look up. I was introduced as the teacher.

I began the class and the conversations resumed again as if I didn’t exist. I waited for them to stop, tried to get their attention, spoke more loudly, all to no avail. I stopped and formally stated my background and qualifications then presented my business cards individually to each engineer. When my host made clearly showed me that outranked each one of them, they became quiet. That lasted nearly 2 hours, until old habits kicked in and the conversations resumed.

During the hands-on labs, they refused to ask me questions. They only asked my host. So he had to tell me the questions, get the answer from me and then tell them. These engineers spoke almost fluent English, so language wasn’t the issue.

I learned that the entire division of our company in Japan had a total of 3 women engineers at that time. Women were the secretaries only, so these engineers could not comprehend a female engineer. It was challenging but I kept on teaching.

On the last day, my host gave me the highest compliment. “Mary, you are a REAL engineer. But I never got the respect a male sensei would have automatically received.”
Mary McLeod is a highly qualified software engineer working for a global information technology corporation based in California, USA. Here is her report on what happened to her during an assignment in Japan.

**Sensei? No females allowed.**

“As a project manager and main designer of the software to control on-line gated circuit breaker, I was the natural choice to travel to Japan to teach a 3 day class to their engineers.

I was told by many of my colleagues who had taught classes in Japan that as teacher or sensei, I would absolutely be a god in the classroom. They told me the students have respect teachers so much that they would bow to me and be the most polite students I had ever seen. So I arrived in the classroom with high expectations.

I was “sensei” for chaos in the class. My entrance didn’t cause even a slight pause in the excitement.

I began to introduce my background and qualifications then presented my business cards individually to each engineer. When my pipe cleaner showed more than 1 person ranked each one of them, they become quiet, that lasted nearly 2 hours, until all habits to load in and the conversation resumed.

During the hands-on labs, they refused to ask me questions. They only asked my host. I had to tell me the questions, get the answer from me and then tell them. These engineers spoke almost fluent English, so language wasn’t the issue.

I realized that the entire division of our company in Japan had a total of 3 women engineers at that time. Women were the secretaries only, so these engineers could not comprehend a female engineer. It was challenging but I kept on teaching.

On the last day, my host gave me the highest compliment. “Mary, you are a REAL engineer. But I never got the respect a male sensei would have automatically received.”

**HOW CAN WE TEACH THIS?**

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS?**
Rapport building in intercultural encounters is affected by (at least) these main factors:

1. **Goals** rapport-building
2. **Face** quality & social identity face
3. **Speech-act strategies:**
   - Directness / Indirectness
   - Enthusiasm / Restraint
   - Formality / informality
   - Assertiveness /
   - Self-enhancement / Self-effacement
   - Personal Disclosure


“International English and the Training of Intercultural Communicative Competence”
Judith Mader, Rudi Camerer
*Interculture journal 12/2010*
http://www.interculture-journal.com/

Professional Business English Trainers:
*Intercultural Competence in Business English*
Rudi Camerer, Judith Mader
Cornelsen 2012

“Testing intercultural competence in (International) English: Some basic questions and suggested answers”
Rudi Camerer
THANK YOU!

elc – European Language Competence

Bettinasstrasse 30
D – 60325 Frankfurt am Main

Bahnhofstrasse 28
D – 66111 Saarbrücken

Tel. + 49 (0)69 – 53 05 59 67
Fax. + 49 (0)69 – 53 05 65 27

www.elc-consult.com
R.Camerer@elc-consult.com