

Joachim Grzega

Elements of a Basic European Language Guide*

Abstract

This article is a synopsis of the preceding articles, which were all based on the same method, but which focussed on an individual European country or language. The article describes European communication strategies, or characteristics, in 14 points, e.g. (1) Europeans typically use the informal pronoun to address their parents and their everyday colleagues at work, but they typically use the formal pronoun for administration officials; (2) the most typical small talk topic is the weather; (3) when making an argument, Europeans first give their opinion and then give reasons related to that; (4) to express disagreement Europeans prefer the strategy “I see what you mean, but I think...”; (5) if they want to turn down an offer, Europeans typically use a phrase like “(No), I don’t have time, I have something else to do.”; (6) to end a conversation, the most typical strategy is “I have to go now, I have something else to do”. Europeans abstain from indirect strategies. The article lists a few more general strategies for transcultural communication and gives some basic sentences in national official languages of Europe’s countries.

Sommaire

Cet article est une synopse des articles précédents, qui étaient basés sur la même méthode, mais qui se concentraient sur un pays ou un idiome individuel de l’Europe. L’article décrit des stratégies, ou bien particularités, européennes en 14 points, p.ex. (1) les Européens typiquement choisissent le pronom d’adresse informelle avec leurs parents et leurs collègues qu’ils voient au travail tous les jours, tandis qu’il prennent typiquement le pronom d’adresse formelle avec les employée d’administration; (2) le sujet de Small Talk le plus typique est le temps; (3) pour donner leur opinion, les Européens articulent celle-là d’abord et puis donnent des explications quant au sujet; (4) pour exprimer un désaccord, les Européens recourent à des expressions telles que « Oui, je comprends ce que tu veux dire, mais je pense que... »; (5) pour décliner une offre, les Européens recourent à une phrase telle que « (Non), je n’ai pas le temps, j’ai autre chose à faire »; (6) pour terminer une conversation, ils se servent des expressions du type « Il faut que j’y aille, j’ai autre chose à faire ». Les Européens n’aiment pas les stratégies indirectes. L’article donne encore quelques stratégies générales pour la communication transculturelle et donne quelques phrases élémentaires dans les langues officielles et nationales des pays européens.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel ist eine Synopse der vorangegangenen Artikel, die alle auf der gleichen Methode beruhten, aber sich auf ein einzelnes europäisches Land oder Idiom konzentriert haben. Der Artikel beschreibt europäische Kommunikationsstrategien bzw. -merkmale in 14 Punkten, z.B. (1) Europäer verwenden typischerweise das informelle Anredepronomen mit ihren Eltern und ihren täglichen Kollegen bei der Arbeit, aber sie verwenden typischerweise das formelle Pronomen mit Verwaltungsangestellten; (2) das typischste Small-Talk-Thema ist das Wetter; (3) wenn sie ihre Meinung sagen wollen, sagen Europäer erst ihre Meinung und geben dann themenbezogene Gründe; (4) um auszudrücken, dass sie anderer Meinung sind, bevorzugen Europäer die Strategie “Ja, ich sehe, was du meinst, aber ich denke...”; (5) wenn sie eine Einladung oder ein Angebot ablehnen wollen, sagen Europäer typischerweise eine Phrase wie “(Nein), ich habe keine Zeit, ich habe etwas anderes zu tun”; (6) um das Ende eines Gesprächs einzuleiten, sagen Europäer “Ich muss jetzt gehen, ich hab noch etwas anderes zu tun”. Europäer sehen von indirekten Strategien ab. Der Artikel listet einige allgemeine Strategien für die transkulturelle Kommunikation und gibt einige elementare Sätze in den nationalen Amtssprachen der Länder Europas wieder.

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1. Introductory Remarks

Europe can be defined in a political way (i.e. the EU countries), in a geographical way (i.e. the countries from the Atlantic to the Ural) or in a cultural way. It is the latter definition, the anthropological-cultural one, in which *Europe* will be used in this article. In this definition the features of language, religion, history and ethnic descent are the most basic criteria to define and characterize a civilization¹.

Most Euro-linguistic studies have focussed on questions of language politics and language systems². Europe is the civilization with the largest multitude of official languages. But Europe is not only characterized by a multitude of language systems, it is also characterized by a multitude of pragmatic systems. Getting an overview of the most important intersections and differences is vital for realizing national identities and a European identity. Especially for situations of intercultural communication people should acquire such pragmatic competences, since, while grammatical mistakes are often interpreted as a lack in language proficiency, pragmatic mistakes are normally seen as a lack in politeness, a flaw in the speaker's character. An important area to cover are speech acts that carry phatic function: greeting and leave-taking terms, address forms, thanking, complimenting and small talk. Another important field are face-threatening acts, such as saying no and requesting.

2. Description of European Communication Behavior

Based on different observations and studies³, I already made a first attempt of characterizing European communication behavior (Grzega 2006: 193-254; 2008a). With the help of a common questionnaire⁴, specific studies for this volume of *JELiX* took a closer look at addressing, answering the phone, small talk, giving arguments, making and turning down an offer, and ending a conversation. Based on these studies (Butu 2008, Demaeght/Depuydt

¹ For Europe, language means multitude of languages (whereas other civilizations seem to have one or two strong bracketing language(s), e.g. Arabic [which is also religious symbol], or believe that their languages are all dialects of one big language, e.g. Sinic civilization). Since linguistic diversity is an elementary feature of European civilization, it may be argued that homogeneity may on the one hand facilitate communication, but on the other hand may destroy an important identity factor (and maybe also a chance) for Europe. *Europe* thus refers to those nations that are characterized by a minor Greek and a major Latin heritage (including the rules of law) and a tertiary Germanic heritage (from the 6th c.), the (West) Roman variant of Christian religion (and its developments during the Reformation and Counter Reformation), the use of the Latin alphabet, the separation of spiritual and secular power, societal pluralism and individualism, a common history of the arts (in their broadest sense) as well as a common history of education and formation (see, for example, the development of the universities in the Middle Ages or the relatively recent introduction of compulsory education). European civilization can thus be contrasted with Slavic-Orthodox, North American, Latin American, Islamic, Hindu, Japanese and Sinic civilization (possibly also African and Oceanic civilization).

² Cf. Hinrichs (in print).

³ There is quite a number of studies on cross-cultural pragmatics and cross-cultural communication. The University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition presents an annotated select bibliography of speech acts at <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/index.html> (focussing on pragmatic competence in foreign language learning and teaching). An MLA search for "speech acts" even leads to 562 hits for European languages (by far the most of which are on requests), but each of these studies deal with just a limited number of languages (cf. Grzega 2006: 196). Even the *CCSARP*, the *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project* (cf. Blum-Kulka/House/Kasper 1989), included only eight—mostly non-European—cultures. There are no studies that comprehensively contrast European speech communities

⁴ The type of the questionnaire was a semi-expert interview on communicative strategies (SICS) (cf. Grzega/Schöner 2008). Such an interview, in form of a questionnaire, asks informants not for their own personal communicative behavior and judgment, but for the typical linguistic behavior in his/her nation, as told from the perspective of someone who has to describe this to a foreigner. Informants are regarded as semi-experts due to their experience within, and observation of, the community. This is especially true of people who have to do with language professionally (such as students of language, linguists, journalists); they were therefore preferred as informants.

2008, Grzega 2008a, Grzega 2008b, Grzega 2008c, Grzega 2008d, Grzega/Štekauer 2008, Grzega/Turunen 2008, Keevallik/Grzega 2008, Regan 2008, Suszczyńska 2008, Urteaga Aldalur 2008), we can add a few more strokes to give the picture of European communicative behavior clearer shapes⁵.

Most European nations use “low context” communication (i.e. rather direct style⁶, person-oriented, self-projection, loquacity⁷). This is a label that goes back to Hall (1963), who juxtaposes it to “high context” communication (i.e. indirect style, status-oriented, reservation, silence). Another oft-cited study in the field of cross-cultural communication⁸ is Hofstede (2000). In Hofstede’s nomenclature, Europe can be regarded as a generally individualistic civilization (i.e. people prefer a rather direct and analytic style, they mention important points before an explanation or illustration in an argument, they base decisions on compromise or the majority’s vote); in contrast, the Sinic, Japanese, Arabic and Hinduistic civilizations are collectivistic (i.e. a rather indirect and synthetic style is used, explanations and illustrations are mentioned before the core point of an argument, decisions are finalized after consensus). The other categories defined by Hofstede are

- “masculinity” (a high degree of masculinity infers, e.g., focus on fictional literature, traditional family concepts, and work)
- “uncertainty avoidance” (a high degree of uncertainty avoidance infers, e.g., focus on emotions, expert knowledge, a clear structure of addressing behavior)
- “power distance” (a high degree of power distance infers, e.g., instructor-centered teaching, centralized decision-making, negative association of power, prosperity and old age).

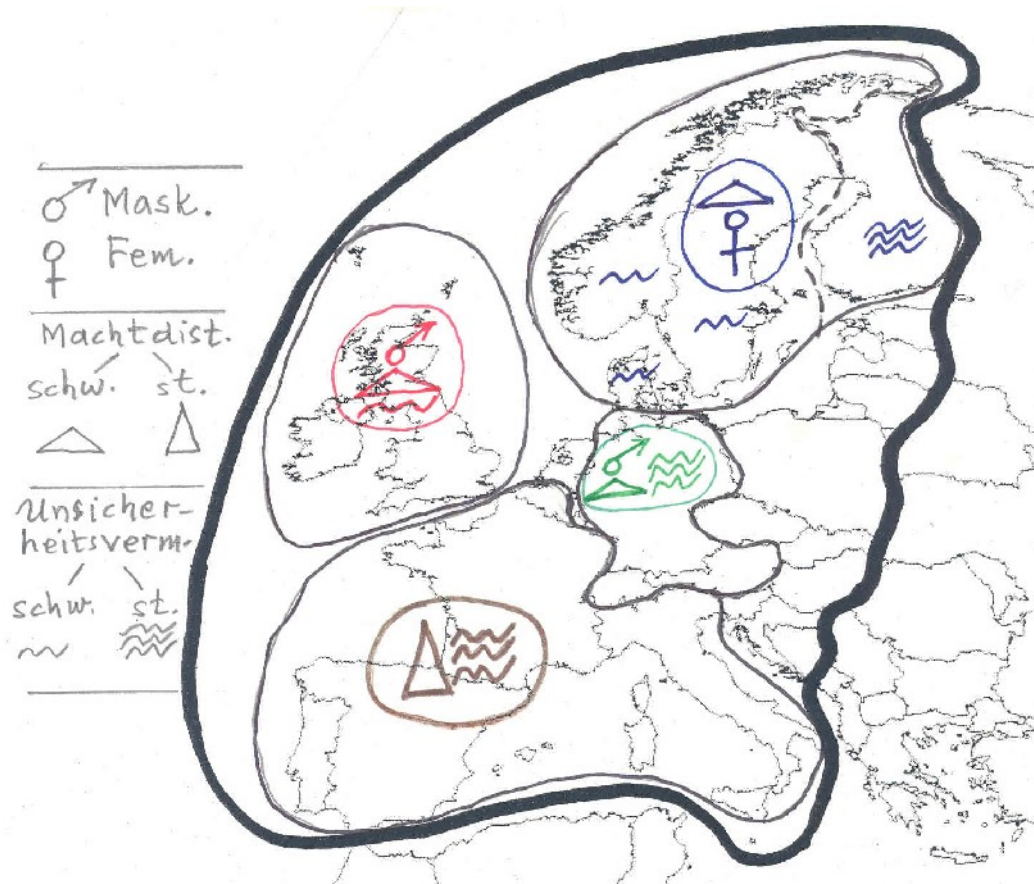
With these, European countries are more difficult to bracket as one unit. The northern European countries are characterized by low power distance; but while Germany and the British Isles are rather masculine, the Scandinavian countries are rather feminine. Within the Scandinavian countries, Finland is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty avoidance, the others by a low one. Germany sets itself apart from the British isles by its strong uncertainty avoidance. The Romanic countries have a rather strong need for uncertainty avoidance and high power distance. So we can form several sub-groups, while the whole of Europe can only be defined negatively with the rest of Hofstede’s term, namely that no single European country is characterized by a combination of high power distance and low uncertainty avoidance.

⁵ The studies did not cover all languages and countries of Europe, but they cover all types of European countries: (1) rather “central” European countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands) as well as rather “peripheral” European countries (Spain, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Ireland) and a “borderline” European country (Romania); (2) northern Europe (Finland), southern Europe (Spain), western Europe (Ireland), and eastern Europe (Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania), (3) countries speaking languages from all European language groups: Germanic (German, English, Dutch), Romance (Spanish, Catalan, Romanian), Slavic (Slovak), and non-Indo-European (Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian).

⁶ In Brown and Levinson’s terminology (1987) we can say that Europeans’ least preferred strategies for face-threatening acts are off-record strategies.

⁷ In this aspect, it should be clarified that this does not mean that Europeans say the same thing over and over again. As a matter of fact, in all European countries except the two extreme countries Ireland and Romania, the Gricean (1975) maxim of manner is highly respected.

⁸ For a state of the art cf. Dahl (2004).



[German legend: Mask. = masculinity; Fem. = femininity; Machtdist. = power distance; Unsicherheitsverm. = uncertainty avoidance; schw. = weak; st. = strong]

What are some specific features of European communication?

- (1) One of them is the mostly reciprocal use of address terms (this is different in the Slavic Orthodox and Asian civilizations). Although not entirely absent, status seems to play a less important role than in the Sinic and Japanese civilizations. Communication between the sexes is absolutely normal in Europe, whereas it is traditionally very rare in the Arabic civilization. Some tendencies in the nominal series of address terms distinguish Europe from other civilizations. In private, Europeans nowadays agree on addressing each other by the first name comparatively fast; in business communication, you should first use the correct title, even if a change toward less formal addressing may occur quite rapidly again. Titles are definitely more important in the Hinduistic, Arabic, Sinic and Japanese civilizations; the Slavic Orthodox civilization is peculiar for its frequency of nicknames in all kinds of private and informal conversation.
- (2) Except for Irish and English, there is dualism of pronominal address terms, an informal and a formal one⁹, in the vast majority of European languages (which also exists in most parts of Latin America, many parts of North America, and the Slavic Orthodox nations). Europeans typically use the informal pronoun to address
 - their parents¹⁰
 - their everyday colleagues at work
 Europeans typically use the formal address pronoun to address
 - administration officials
 With other addressees there is no uniform picture. Yet a closer look allows to group some European countries:

⁹ Brown/Gilman (1960) call these T and V forms.

¹⁰ However, in Hungary it is not untypical that people use a formal pronoun to address their parents.

- Most Europeans use the informal address pronoun for their elder relatives, but many East Europeans [Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Estonians] prefer the formal pronoun here.
- Many Europeans address their teacher with the formal pronoun, but some sort of vertical block in the mid of Europe (Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Catalonia) also allow students to potentially address their teacher with the informal pronoun, particularly at primary school.

In many business relationships (business partners, employer—employee, clerk—customer) it is the case that the address pronoun is individually negotiated.

- (3) Concerning salutation terms we find that many of them include wishes for a good time of the day, for health (or the question whether somebody is in good health), for success or for luck. The wish for peace, though, common Arabic and Asiatic, is absent in European civilization. It is also noteworthy that many European salutation phrases are frequently (at least in informal situations) highly reduced on a phonetic level, which is not the case in Arabic, Hinduistic, Sinic and Japanese civilizations.
- (4) Salutation in telephone conversations, i.e. telephone conversation openers, differ widely from country to country (the term *Hello* or a phonetic equivalent, however, is well established or well spreading in a horizontal strip of European countries [Ireland, the UK, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania] and Estonia). In business telephone conversations, openers seem to differ from company to company, but it seems typically European to integrate the company's name into the opening line. Including a name in private telephone openings is rather uncommon in Europe (exceptions are the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Finland).
- (5) There are no European-wide rules for when small talk is done; there are also no European-wide rules for when small talk is not done¹¹. The most typical small talk topic for Europe and probably for all other civilizations is the weather. In a central cluster (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Italy) and in Finland, generally complaining about politics and politicians is also not atypical¹². In contrast, a general taboo topic for small talk is sexuality; in a horizontal line including Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary plus Finland (and potentially the rest of Scandinavia, where small talk is not so common either) and at least many groups of Estonia and Italy see salary and/or other money issues as taboo topics. In Hinduistic, Arabic, Sinic and Japanese civilization people frequently ask interlocutors about their family (in Arabic civilization, however, this excludes the wife). Due to their status-oriented nature, people from the Far East civilizations often ask for information as if they had to fill out an "official form".
- (6) When Europeans want to make an argument, they most typically give their opinions first and then give reasons related to the issue.
- (7) To express disagreement, the most widespread strategy among Europeans is to say "I see what you mean, but I think ...".
- (8) Concerning requests, Europeans often avoid the bare imperative in favor of devices such as questions, modal auxiliaries, subjunctive, conditional, special adverbs. The exchange of verbal stems, present in Japanese und Sinic languages, is not a part of (Indo-)European languages.
- (9) Invitations and offers can more typically be taken literally in Europe. Invitations that are just politeness formulae¹³ such as in the US are atypical in Europe.
- (10) When somebody has to say no, this is normally accompanied by some form of apology or explanation. In the civilizations of the Far East, the formal equivalents for "no" are basically tabooed in general. The most typical strategy for Europeans to turn down an

¹¹ Not even public toilets are unanimously seen as taboo situations for small talk.

¹² In other words: personal topics are less preferred than impersonal topics (on this distinction cf. Ventola 1979); Lakoff's (1973) "politesse" maxim is more salient than her "friendliness" maxim.

¹³ Isaacs/Clark (1990) call them "ostensible invitations".

offer is to say directly, but vaguely “No, I don’t have time, I have something (else) to do”. It is also quite widespread among Europeans (save Belgians and Estonians) to tell the interlocutor “I’ll let you know” although they will surely not contact the person again.

- (11) Apologies are necessary with face-threatening acts or after someone has intruded someone else’s private sphere (which is bigger and thus more easily violated in America and Asia than in Europe, and bigger in Europe than in Latin America and the Arabic nations).
- (12) In Europe, compliments can safely be made on somebody’s clothes and appearance (in Arabic nations this is forbidden with people of different sexes), meals, a room’s equipment (even concrete objects, which is to be avoided in Arabic nations).
- (13) Europeans expect and welcome phrases meaning “thank you” in quite a number of situations, whereas Hindu people use such phrases in a very economical way and frequently contend themselves with simple looks of thanks; on the other hand, other non-western civilizations have rather complex formulae of thanks.
- (14) If Europeans want to signal that they want to close a conversation, their most typical strategy (save Austria) is to say “I have to go now, I have something else to do”. To let the other person go is a typical reaction all over Europe, except for the “culturally peripheral” European country Romania.

Such findings should be respected whenever instructors teach intercultural competence and when instructors teach a language as a lingua franca (on this, cf. also Grzega 2008e).

In foreign language teaching, students should predominantly be equipped with a certain general consciousness for intercultural communicative differences and similarities; they should be taught the most basic fixed form (adjacency pairs) and some general means for free communication. This might, for instance, be achieved through the discussion of so-called *critical incidents*. Nevertheless, even an intensive metadiscussion of intercultural problems will never be able to replace the amount of things that one will learn during a stay abroad.

Apart from tolerance and empathy, teaching and learning a lingua franca or transcultural competence in general should include language-related strategies for intercultural situations, no matter what civilization you are in. The following could be part of these rules (cf. also Grzega 2005 & 2006: 284¹⁴):

- (1) We should not generalize too early (there will also be variation within the foreign speech community, incl. the phenomenon of national standard varieties of a language).
- (2) We should keep in mind that language not only serves for transporting information, but also for creating interpersonal bonds.
- (3) We should observe others’ verbal and non-verbal behavior attentively and consciously and verbalize communicative discomfort (there may also be hidden misunderstandings).
- (4) We should talk distinctly and not too rapidly and support our utterance with body language.
- (5) We should refrain from “insider language”.
- (6) We should formulate questions in a way that the addressee cannot answer with “yes” or “no”, but that the addressee has to make explicit statements or explicitly choose an option.
- (7) We should remember and use the most basic phrases of our host country.

¹⁴ In addition, cf. also the concept by Müller-Jacquier (2000) and the training books by Fowler/Mumford (1995) and Landis/Bennett/Bennett (2004).

3. Extras: Some Basic Phrases in Different European Languages

Let's take this last point into account, again: it is good to know some basic formulae in a foreign language for emergency cases and for gaining the listener's sympathy. The following tables list the equivalences of the following sentences in European languages¹⁵:

1. Yes.
2. No.
3. Please, ...
4. Thank you.
5. I am sorry.
6. Can you help me?
7. Where is ...?
 - a. the toilet
 - b. the police
 - c. the embassy
 - d. the information

(Concerning pronunciation, specific transcriptions are only given where letters do not represent the respective sound in the transcription of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA):

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (2005)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Epi-glottal	Glottal
Nasal	m	ɱ	n			ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ			
Plosive	p b	ɸ β	t d			ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ			
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Approximant		ʋ	ɹ			ɻ	j	ɰ	ʁ			
Trill	ʙ		r						ʀ			
Tap, Flap		ɸ	ɾ			ɽ						
Lateral fricative			ɬ ɮ			ɬ	ɬ	ɬ				
Lateral approximant			l			ɭ	ʎ	ʎ				
Lateral flap			ɺ			ɻ						

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a modally voiced consonant, except for murmured *ɦ*. Shaded areas denote articulations judged to be impossible. Light grey letters are unofficial extensions of the IPA.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

Anterior click releases (require posterior stops)	Voiced implosives	Ejectives
ʘ Bilabial fricated	ɓ Bilabial	' <i>Examples:</i>
ɮ Laminar alveolar fricated ("dental")	ɗ Dental or alveolar	ɸ' Bilabial
ɰ Apical (post)alveolar abrupt ("retroflex")	ɟ Palatal	t' Dental or alveolar
ɮ Laminar postalveolar abrupt ("palatal")	ɠ Velar	k' Velar
ɮ Lateral alveolar fricated ("lateral")	ʄ Uvular	s' Alveolar fricative

CONSONANTS (CO-ARTICULATED)

- ɱ Voiceless labialized velar approximant
- ʋ Voiced labialized velar approximant
- ɰ Voiced labialized palatal approximant
- ɟ Voiceless palatalized postalveolar (alveolo-palatal) fricative
- ʒ Voiced palatalized postalveolar (alveolo-palatal) fricative
- ɧ Simultaneous x and ʃ (disputed)
- kp̚ ts̚ Affricates and double articulations may be joined by a tie bar

¹⁵ For assistance in collecting the equivalent sentences I would like to thank Sandra Stenzenberger.

2. Ne
3. Prosím
4. Děkuji
5. Je mi lito.
6. Promoz mně (informal) / Promozte mně (formal)
7. Kde je...?
 - a. záchod ['za:χɔt]
 - b. policie
 - c. ambasáda
 - d. informace

Danish

1. Ja [jæ]
2. Nej [naj]
3. Værsgod [væ:rsɡo]
4. Tak
5. Undskyld
6. Kan du hjælpe mig? [- - 'jælpe maj]
7. Hvor er...? [vɔr ɛr]
 - a. toilettet [toi'læddet]
 - b. politiet [pɔ'liçjæt]
 - c. ambassaden [amba'saðən]
 - d. informationen [infɔrma'çjɔnən]

Dutch

1. Ja
2. Nee
3. Alstublieft (formal) ['astɥblift] / Alsjeblieft (informal) ['asjɛblift]
4. Dank u wel (formal) [- y vɛl]/ Dank je wel (informal)
5. Sorry
6. Kunt u me helpen? (formal) [kɥnt y mɛ 'hɛlpən...] / Kunt je me helpen? (informal)
7. Waar is...?
 - a. de WC [vɛ'tse]
 - b. de politie [pɔli'zi]
 - c. de ambassade
 - d. de informatie [---'zi]

Estonian

(The stress is on the first syllable unless indicated otherwise. Double vowel symbols indicate long vowels. <a> = [ɑ], <ä> = [æ] = [p], <d> = [t], <t> = [tt].)

1. Jah
2. Ei
3. Palun
4. Tänan
5. Vabandust
6. Saad aitama?
7. Kus on...?
 - a. tualett [--'-]
 - b. politsei [--'-]

- c. suursaat
- d. informatsioon [---'-]

Finnish

(The stress is always on the first syllable. Double written consonants are long/double spoken consonants. Double written vowel are long spoken vowels. <y> = [y], <ä> = [æ], <ö> = [œ].)

1. Kyllä
2. Ei
3. Ole hyvä (informal) / Olkaa hyvä (formal)
4. Kiitos
5. Anteeksi/olen pahoillani
6. Voitteko auttaa?
7. Missä on...?
 - a. WC/vessa
 - b. poliisiasema
 - c. suurlähetystö
 - d. infopiste

Flemish

Like Dutch, but *je* instead of *ge*.

French

1. Oui [ɥi]
2. Non [nɔ̃]
3. S'il te plaît (informal) [siltəplɛ] / S'il vous plaît (formal) [silvuplɛ]
4. Merci [mɛrsi]
5. Pardon [pardɔ̃]
6. Tu peux m'aider? (informal) [typømede] / Pouvez-vous m'aider? (formal) [puvevumede]
7. Où se trouve...? [usətruv]
 - a. le cabinet [ləkabine]
 - b. la police [lapolis]
 - c. l'ambassade [ləbasad]
 - d. l'information [ləfɔrməsjõ]

German

(<e> = [ɛ], <ie> = [i:], <sch> = [ʃ], <ng> = [ŋ]). Double consonants indicate that the preceding vowel is pronounced short, not that the consonant is pronounced long. If not indicated otherwise, the stress is on the first syllable.)

1. Ja
2. Nein [naen]
3. Bitte
4. Danke
5. Entschuldigung [-'---]
6. Kannst du mir bitte helfen? (informal) / Können Sie mir bitte helfen? (formal) [kœnen ...]
7. Wo ist...?
 - a. die Toilette [to'letɛ]
 - b. die Polizei [poli'tsae]
 - c. die Botschaft ['bo:tʃaft]
 - d. die Information [infɔrma'tsjɔ:n]

Hungarian

(The stress is always on the first syllable, <'> indicates vowel length, not stress, <e> = [ɛ], <é> = [e:], <a> = [ɒ], <á> = [a:], <ö>/<ő> = [ø]/[ø:], <sz> = [s], <s> = [ʃ], <gy> = [j] (= very close connection of [d]+[j]), <c> = [ts], <cs> = [tʃ])

1. Igen
2. Nem
3. Tessék
4. Köszönöm
5. Bocsánat
6. Tudnál nekem segíteni? (informal) / Tudna nekem segíteni (formal)
7. Hol van...?
 - a. a WC
 - b. a rendőrség
 - c. a nagykövetség
 - d. az információ

Irish-Gaelic

1. Tá [tɑ:]
2. Níl [nʲi:lʲ]
3. Más é do thoil é [mɑ:ʃ e: dʲo ho:lʲ e:]
4. Go raibh maith agat [gʲə rʲɛvʲ mʲaʲh agʲət]
5. Tá brón orm [tɑ: bro:n ɔrəm]
6. Ba mbaith leat cabhriagh? [bʲə mʲah lʲət kəvʲrʲiəi]
7. Cá bhfuil.? [kɑ: wʲi:lʲ]
 - a. an leithreas [ən lʲɛrʲəsʲ]
 - b. an garda [nʲə gardə]
 - c. an ambasáid [amʲbʲasʲa:dʲ]
 - d. an oifig eolais [ɔfigʲ o:ləʲ]

Italian

(<'> indicates stress. <z> = [ts].)

1. Sì
2. No
3. Per favore [--'--]
4. Grazie
5. Scusi (formal) ['skusi] / Scusa (informal)
6. Può aiutarmi? (formal) / Puoi aiutarmi? (informal)
7. Dov'è ...?
 - a. il bagno [bɑno]
 - b. la polizia [--'--]
 - c. l'ambasciata [amba'ʃata]
 - d. l'informazione

Latvian

(The stress is on the first syllable. <˘> indicates length. <c> = [ts], <e> = [ɛ] (short or long) (in these phrases), <o> = [ɔ] (short or long).)

1. Jā
2. Nē
3. Lūdzu

4. Paldies
5. Atvainojiet [atvainəujiet]
6. Lūdzu, palīdziet man!
7. Kur ir...?
 - a. tualete
 - b. policija
 - c. sūtniecība
 - d. informācija

Lëtzebuergish

(<ch> = [x], <c> = [s], <w> = [v], <ë> = [ə], <ss> = [s].)

1. Jo
2. Nee
3. Wann ech gelift [---'-]
4. Merci
5. Et deet mir leed [---'-]
6. Kanns du mir hëllef? (informal) ['---'----] / Kennt Dir mir hëllef? (formal) ['----'----]
7. Wou ass...?
 - a. d'toilette
 - b. d'police
 - c. d'ambassade
 - d. den renseignements [rãseŋə'mã]

Lithuanian

(<š> = [ʃ], <č> = [tʃ], <c> = [ts], <a> = [ɑ], <y> = [iː], <ū> = [uː]. <'> indicates that the vowel is short and stressed, <'> indicates that the vowel is long and stressed, <~> indicates that this vowel is part of a diphthong and stressed. In front of [e, i, j] all consonants are palatalized, i.e. they are spoken as if a [j] is spoken at the same time.)

1. Taīp
2. Nè
3. Prašom
4. Āčiū
5. Atsiprašāū
6. Prašau padékite mán.
7. Kur yra...?
 - a. tualėtas
 - b. policija
 - c. ambasada
 - d. informacija

Norwegian

1. Ja [jɑ]
2. Nei [nɑ]
3. Vær så god [væɾ sɑ gu:]
4. Takk [tɑk]
5. Unnskyld [ʉnʃyɪl]
6. Kan du hjelpe meg? [kan dɑ 'hjelpe mæj]
7. Hvor er...? [vɑ ər]
 - a. toalettet [toɑ'letət]
 - b. politiet [pøli'tiət]

- c. ambassaden [amba'sadən]
 d. informasjonen [infɔrma'fɔ:nən]

Polish

(The stress is on the second-to-last syllable (or if there is none on that one syllable). <sz> = [ʃ], <dz> = [dʒ], <cz> = [tʃ], <rz>/<ż> = [ʒ], <c> [ts], <ó> = [u], <ę> = [ɛũ], <a> = [ɔũ].)

1. Tak
2. Nie
3. Proszę
4. Dziękuję
5. Przepraszam
6. Czy możesz mi pomóc? (informal) / Czy może pan mi pomóc? (formal, to males) / Czy może pani mi pomóc? (formal to females)
7. Gdzie jest...?
 - a. toaleta
 - b. policja
 - c. ambasada
 - d. informacja
8. Gdzie jest...?

Portuguese

1. Sim [sĩ]
2. Não [nɐ̃u]
3. Por favor [purfə'vɔr]
4. Obrigado [uβri'ɣaðu]
5. Desculpe [des'kułpɐ]
6. Podias ajudar-me? [pu'diɐs əʒu'darmə] (informal) / Podia ajudar-me? (formal)
7. Onde é...? ['õndɛ 'e:]
 - a. a casa de banho [ə'kazɐðə'banu]
 - b. a polícia [ɐpu'lisjɐ]
 - c. a embaixada [ɐẽmbai'faðɐ]
 - d. a informação [ɐĩfurmɐ'sɐ̃u]

Slovak

(The stress is always on the first syllable. <'> marks length, not stress. <i> = [ɪ] (short or long), <o> = [ɔ] (short or long), <ô> = [wɔ], <c> = [ts], <t'> = [tɕ] (close connection of [t]+[j]).)

1. Áno
2. Nie
3. Prosím
4. Ďakujem
5. Pardón
6. Môžete mi pomôct'?
7. Kde je...?
 - a. záchod ['za:ɔt]
 - b. polícia
 - c. veřvyslanectvo
 - d. informácia

Slovene

1. Da
2. Ne
3. Prosim
4. Hvala
5. Oprostitute
6. Mi lahko pomagata?
7. Kje je ...?
 - a. wc
 - b. policija
 - c. poslaništvo
 - d. podatek

Spanish

(The stress is on the second-to-last syllable unless marked otherwise with <'> or unless given differently. Vowels are short, <e> = [ɛ], <o> = [ɔ], <d> = [ð] unless given differently, /<v> = [β] (in the phrases here), <c> = [θ] (in the phrases here), <j> = [x], <ñ> = [ɲ].)

1. Sí
2. No
3. Por favor [fa'βɔr]
4. Gracias [graθjas]
5. ¡Perdone!
6. ¿Pues ayudarme, por favor? (informal) / ¿Puede ayudarme, por favor? (formal)
7. ¿Dónde está ...?
 - a. el baño
 - b. la policía
 - c. la embajada
 - d. la información

Swedish

1. Ja [ja:]
2. Nej
3. Varsågod ['varso:gu:d]
4. Tack [tak]
5. Förlåt ['fø:r'lo:t]
6. Kan du hjälpa mig? [kan dy: jælpa mej]
7. Var är...? ['varær]
 - a. toaletten [-'--]
 - b. polisen [-'--]
 - c. ambassaden [--'--]
 - d. informationen [införma'fju:n]

Joachim Grzega
Englisches Seminar
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg
79085 Freiburg, Germany
 or:
Katholische Univ. Eichstätt-Ingolstadt
85072 Eichstätt, Germany
joachim.grzega@ku-eichstaett.de
www.grzega.de

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