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## HOW TO DO THINGS WITH ENGLISH WORDS—IN INTERCULTURAL SITUATIONS ON BASIC GLOBAL ENGLISH (BGE) AND BEYOND\*

### Abstract

The article dwells on requirements of English when used as a lingua franca, predominantly on the concept of Basic Global English (BGE). It shows that the use of English words and phrases does and must differ from standard English when English is used in intercultural situations. It shows how BGE and Advanced Global English can be prepared for such situations. It also illustrates issues that still require more research and shows ways to address these issues: the acceptability of communicative strategies (by using text creation tasks and meta-pragmatic judgements tasks), the differences of connotative meanings (by using semantic differentials), and the creation of self-study material, the assessment of transcultural competence in lingua franca English.

### 1. Introductory Remarks: Communication in a Globalized World

2008 has been the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. On this occasion the recently published volume of the *Journal for EuroLinguistiX* (<http://www.eurolinguistix.com>) was a special issue shedding light on speech acts realizations in different European countries. According to some futurologists and economists (cf., e.g., Nefiodow 1996, Pincas 2001, Händeler 2003, Rifkin 2004, Spiegel 2005, and the contributions in Harrison/Huntington 2000) one of the biggest economic problems in a knowledge-based society is to channel the flood of information, to extract relevant knowledge and to apply it in a productive way—all within well-balanced financial limits. In today's world companies no longer must improve the flow of information between man and machine, they rather need to focus on improving the flow of information between and among humans. People rather have to learn how to communicate with colleagues, customers, providers and partners in an atmosphere of trust, tolerance, empathy and efficiency so that information can flow without obstacles. And in a globalized world this also requires a global means of communication (cf. also my ideas of socioeconomic linguistics in Grzega 2005a, 2005b & 2006a: 275ff.). Some of the objectives supported by the UN, too, can only be realized if we know how to communicate<sup>1</sup>. The question of how to behave in an intercultural situation is a clearly onomasiological one.

Therefore, *Onomasiology Online* seems a justified venue to say a few lines about function-to-form mapping in intercultural situations. Since the currently most prominent language for intercultural communication seems to be English, this article will dwell on English as a lingua franca.

### 2. English as a Tool of Global Communication

English seems currently the most widely accepted candidate and used lingua franca—

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<sup>1</sup> Take into account the goals “to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies”, “allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries” and “the right of the public to have access to information” in the UN Millennium Declaration and “the right to education”, that “Education [...] shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations” in the UN Declaration of Human Rights Art. 26 and “the right freely [...] to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” in the UN Declaration of Human Rights Art. 27.

however, looking at the biography of other *linguae francae* in the past, it is recommendable that English is not promoted as language of the US or the UK: “If English is to be considered a world language, it should not be restricted to any single culture. English as an international language should be able to accommodate different cultural elements and thoughts” (Poon 2006: 25ff.). As a first step toward a “natural” form of Global English I have proposed the concept of Basic Global English (BGE).

### 3. A New Concept of English as a Tool of Global Communication

Several studies on communication between non-natives argue that non-native forms are actually sometimes quite intelligible and are not an obstacle to communicative success, while other non-native forms may cause communicative breakdown. Given these empirical results on English *Lingua Franca*, I thought about a more effective way of teaching and learning English as a *lingua franca*—particularly since interviews with employers and trainees, surveys of the Council of Europe (cf., e.g., TNS Opinion & Social 2006), observations of how teachers deal with learners’ utterances deviating from standard English and the critique that can be raised against curricula and widespread language textbooks corroborate this search for a new way of Teaching English as a Foreign Language for both socioeconomic and didactic reasons. To be more blunt, here are a few concrete examples:

- (a) According to the quoted publication by the Council of Europe the majority of the citizens in the following European countries do not feel that they have sufficient knowledge of English for participating in a conversation in English: the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain as well as the immigrant population in Ireland and the UK.
- (b) Short answers like *Yes, it is/No, it isn’t* are highlighted in some German curricula. But how important are they for *lingua-franca* situations? Some curricula include etaphorical/idiomatic expressions already at a low level, too. But how helpful and successful are expressions that cannot be interpreted word-for-word in *lingua-franca* communication? Some curricula do not cover communicative, or politeness, strategies at all, e.g. the curriculum for Bavarian Hauptschulen.
- (c) In the German curricula the communicative aspect is generally not focussed on before Year 2 of learning English (e.g. the speech acts “explaining games”, “giving information about oneself, one’s hobbies, one’s school”, “writing a profile”, “asking about one’s family” in the Bavarian curriculum’s second year of English), while the first year is characterized by a lot of fossilized phrases in games, rhymes and songs.
- (d) Concepts of “simplified English” up to 2004/05 respected only some principles that seemed important to me: BASIC English (cf., e.g. Ogden 1934, Templer 2005), Essential World English (Hogben 1963), Threshold Level English (cf. van Ek/Alexander 1980). Nevertheless, it has to be highlighted as positive that these concepts are based on well reflected principles, while Globish (Nerrière/Dufresne/Bourgon 2005) is rather based on intuition and ignores all kind of theoretical and empirical linguistic knowledge (for a more expanded critique see Grzega 2006b and 2008b).

With these observations, I have attempted to create an alternative concept of (teaching) English to beginners that shall allow students to acquire communicative competence in a comparatively fast way: Basic Global English (BGE). For a complete description of BGE and information on current projects with BGE readers are referred to the respective Internet site (<http://www.basicglobalenglish.com>, cf. also the first illustration of the model in Grzega 2005c). This article focusses on onomasiological aspects. Didactic aspects and experiences are more elaborated elsewhere (Grzega 2008a & 2008b and Grzega/Schöner 2007).

## 4. Basic Global English

Empirical studies have revealed that communicative breakdowns are mostly caused by lexical or phonetic obstacles; concerning pragmatic misinterpretations, studies have not yet led to any clear conclusions (cf. James [1998], Jenkins [2003] and Seidlhofer [2004] for states of the art). Consequently, the core goals of BGE are an essential pronunciation of phonemes and the command of a generally useful vocabulary plus vocabulary-extension tools. In addition, learners should acquire a few general pragmatic skills for international communication.

### 4.1. Vocabulary and Vocabulary-Extension Techniques

Words are the fundament of communication. There are three major problematic lexical areas: (a) lexical gaps, (b) “serious false friends”, (c) metaphorical expressions (that cannot be interpreted word-for-word or are not very obvious). To enable learners to master situations where they don’t know a designation, BGE includes the evolution of a basic vocabulary with word-formation and paraphrasing techniques plus an individual word-stock at the same time.

Since BGE is meant as an offer for a rapid acquisition of both active and passive communication skills, word selection was not guided by purely notion-based and morphosemantic principles. The aspect of passive communication called for the inclusion of word frequency principles and encyclopedic-transcultural principles. As Bauman and Culligan’s General Service List was, at the time when I first thought about creating BGE, the most recent frequency list (1995), I first collected all types with more than 500 tokens in their corpus—unfortunately only words, not designations. This resulted in 208 words (including pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions). I then eliminated the function words and put these into the grammar section where they are treated as grammatical morphemes. The stock was then supplemented by lexemes that appeared vital for conversation: I checked “basic vocabulary” books for learners of English of different mother tongues as well as the basic word list of the DCE and accepted those words that were free from clear bonds with any specific, individual nation or culture. Then I had my students discuss this list in class and on the *EuroLinguistiX* discussion forum. Eventually, I could reduce the list to 750 words. For the words from Bauman and Culligan’s list I only accepted salient meanings (based on my check of “basic vocabulary” dictionaries). Thus, *court* designates only “courthouse”, but not “royal home”, *juice* only “drink out of fruits”, but not “electric power”, *game* only “play”, but not “deer”. With some words describing the exact denotation or reference might be difficult due to cultural divergence in prototypicality. Thus *football* in Europe differs from *football* in North America and *football* in Australia. Such peculiarities should be pointed out to the learner.

In addition, BGE encourages learners to apply word-formation patterns to words from the basic vocabulary if they do not have the proper word at hand. Here are two examples of BGE word-formation methods:

- Combine two words (sequence: in English the first word determines the second), e.g. *main street, birthday, home country, front door, computer program, mother tongue* [already listed in the Basic Vocabulary]
- Attach *ment* to a verb to express the action in the form of a noun or the result of the action, e.g. *judgement, development, payment*

Finally, BGE also lists techniques of paraphrasing to overcome lexical gaps, e.g. “Use the sequence “superordinate term – particular feature”, e.g. *a cat is an animal that eats mice; a piano is an instrument with white and black keys; a piano is the instrument that Duke*

*Ellington and Arthur Rubenstein played.*” Moreover, learners should get to know the use of hedges such as *kind of* and *somehow*. Metaphorical expressions are often problematic and speakers, including native speakers, are advised to abstain from them.

In BGE, each learner should also, from the very beginning, gather an individual set of 250 words for talking about themselves or things they are interested in. This concept guarantees learners a comparatively high degree of autonomy. The teacher merely suggests a good (bilingual) dictionary to the learners (a list of links to on-line dictionaries is provided at <http://www.onomasiology.de> under “Helpful Internet Sources”).

#### 4.2. Politeness Strategies and Further Conversational Strategies

In actual communication, speakers will quickly discover that knowledge of linguistic forms alone does not guarantee successful communication, it is also of paramount importance to know *when* to use which form, i.e. to know politeness strategies, since politeness strategies can vary decisively from civilization to civilization. No other concept of “simplified English” really addresses this issue, but “over-politeness” can be as irritating for an interlocutor as “under-politeness”. Therefore, BGE votes for a compromise. Based on own experiences and on others’ studies and views (e.g. Berns 1990, Bromme 2000, Clark 1996, Hall 1976, Hofstede 2000, House 1999, Hunfeld 2004, Lesznyák 2004, Meierkord 1996, Meierkord/Knapp 2002, Pincas 2001, Rosenberg 2003, Smith/Rafiqzad 1983, Sneyd 2001, Thomas 1983, Varonis/Gass 1985, Yule 1990) the following conversational strategies are part and parcel of the BGE system:

- (1) The first fundamental principle is: Mindful and respectful listening, mindful and respectful speaking.
- (2) As a “saver”, a sentence like *That’s how we say (in my country)* can be inserted or added. This signals the interlocutor that the speaker is just transferring his or her own conventions into Global English. Another way is to say directly: *I think there is a misunderstanding*.
- (3) A positive atmosphere is created if positive words are used. This holds even true for complaints. If you want to stay polite, then it is advisable that you use the positive element of antonymic word-pairs. Instead of *good—bad* it is better to use *good—not good* or (still more polite) *good—not so good*.
- (4) Terms of address: In the field of personal pronouns, English (in contrast to many other languages in the world) only has *you*, both as a formal and as an informal pronoun, both for one addressee and for several addressees. Apart from this, there are a number of “neutral titles”, e.g. *sir*, *Mr.* (when addressing male adults), *madam* or *mam*, *Ms.* (when addressing female adults). *Mr.* and *Ms.* can also be used in connection with the family names. Besides, there are professional titles like *President* and academic titles like *Professor*. If you introduce yourself for the first time you should say your full given and family name as well as your title and then say (indirectly or directly) if the interlocutor can or should neglect the title (e.g. “I am the president. My name is Dr. Paul Miller. You can call me Paul.” in contrast to “I am President Dr. Paul Miller.”; in the latter instance the interlocutor will use a very formal term of address like “President”). If you are not sure about how to address someone else you can ask this person: “So what would be the right way to call you?”. A neutral greeting term is *Hello* (informally also *Hi*), a neutral leave-taking term is *Good-bye* (informally also *Bye*). After *Hello* it would be polite to ask the other person *How are you?*; but in general you just expect the answer *Fine* and not an extended “honest” account. Letters can be opened with *Dear* + name (or + *madam/sir*, if the name is not known). Informal letters can also be opened with *Hi* + name. A letter can be closed with *Best wishes* or, if the letter is formal, with *Yours truly*, + signature.
- (5) Especially with critical topics you need to make sure that you have understood an utterance by your interlocutor. This may be done with the following phrases: *So do I understand you correctly that you want me to do the following: ...* or *So do I understand you correctly that we should do the following: ....* With critical topics you also want to make sure that your interlocutor has understood your utterance. This can be done the following way: *I am not sure if my explanation was good enough. Could you tell me in your words what you think I wanted to say?* If you use words that are unknown to your interlocutor, be ready to paraphrase words with the techniques given in the Vocabulary section under point 5 (2). Normally you should not use figurative

- language, because some cultures may not understand your images. However, if you want to use figurative language for explanation, say: *This is like...* or *This is similar to ...*
- (6) Questions and requests should not just be formed as simple interrogative or imperative sentences. The word *please* should always be added at the end. Moreover, a request should be formulated as an interrogative, not as an imperative sentence. Example: Instead of *Open the window!* it is more polite to say *Could you open the window, please?* If need be, you have to state explicitly that you're not uttering an order, but a request: *I wanted to say a request, not an order.* Besides, a conversation that is started in order to ask something from the other person should be started with the words *Excuse me, ...*. The same holds true if you want to complain or express that you disagree. In the former case, you can say: *When you do this, I feel sad, because my need for autonomy/health/beauty/leisure is not satisfied. Would you be ready to do the following?* In the latter case, this can be done with the words *I don't think so* or *I don't agree* (instead of *don't* the form *do not* is also possible).
  - (7) With the words *Sorry* or *I am sorry* you apologize for a small and big "offense" you have committed. It is already a small offense if you come too close to somebody. You respond to the phrase (*I am*) *sorry* with the words *That is* [or *That's*] *OK* or *No problem*. If you feel that there was a true offense, then you may want to ask: *Please tell me if I have hurt you in any way. This was not what I wanted. I am sorry that this has hurt you.*
  - (8) Offers should be accepted with *Yes, please. (Thank you.)* or refused with *No, thank you*. For all positive things that others do to you you should say *Thank you* or—for relatively big positive things—*Thank you very much*.
  - (9) In a case of emergency you should shout *Help!* or *Fire!*.
  - (10) Small Talk: Safe topics for international small talk are the weather, (positive) travel experiences and sports. You should avoid religion, politics, sexuality and questions that are too private (asking for the professional position is okay, though). You should also avoid jokes. Humor differs a lot between countries. If you have made a joke or a funny remark, you can add the phrase *as we say in my country* or *as we could say in my country* as a "saver". You should also watch out when paying compliments: you can compliment a gift or the meal of your host; other things should only be complimented if you know that this is common in the host country. For international settings, you should say thank you for a compliment (and give back a similar one). (But in general, reactions to compliments vary from culture to culture.)
  - (11) You should seek that you and your interlocutor's share of talking should be roughly equal. If the interlocutor says too little, this may be due to the fact that you've given him/her not enough chances, e.g. because the pauses after your contribution was too short (in some cultures pauses after a conversational turn can be comparatively long).
  - (12) Finally, a remark on non-verbal conversational elements: Rules for body distance and eye contact can differ very much from culture to culture. Trained "international" speakers should make sure that the interlocutor does not feel uneasy.

Again, speakers must see that metaphorical politeness expressions, such as a Zambian's *I see you've put on weight* as a phrase expressing 'You're looking well' (cf. Berns 1990), are not misinterpreted. Further research in cross-cultural and intercultural speech-act analysis is needed to render these "rules" more precisely and offer more advice for intercultural communication at a more advanced level (cf. below).

## 5. Beyond Basic Global English

When they have mastered the level of Basic Global English, learners can develop their skills toward the level they strive for. This can be a near-native level or a focus on the development of the skills for international contexts. We may therefore also elaborate concepts of Advanced Global English, especially the following concepts: (1) Global English for Academic Contexts (GE-A), (2) Global English for Business Contexts (GE-B), (3) Global English for Casual Contexts (GE-C). For this advanced level the same basic pronunciation and grammar rules may be accepted as long as the focus is on spoken language; for written contexts, grammar needs to receive focus as everyone knows by experience that people's aesthetic expectations of native standard language are higher than. But the main focus on the level of Advanced Global English should still be on the expansion of a general and individual word-stock and also of communicative strategies for a larger set of situations.

### Rules for GE-A may look like this:

- Be aware that there are differences in the teacher-student relationship (in some cultures the teacher's word is taken for granted). Say that being a good teacher is very important to you and that in order to be a good teacher you need honest feedback from the students and active participation that you can see where you can still contribute to make students feel more comfortable.
- As an instructor be as concrete as possible when referring to requirements (precise date of handing in paper etc.: the more precise your information, the more literal students will take the information). Make sure that everybody understands when assignments are due; state the specific place, day and time, e.g. *Please give this to my secretary, Maria Colo, by February 12, 11 o'clock in the morning*). Abstain from saying *by the end of the week* (students may wonder: does this mean Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, or at some time in the near future?) or saying *in five days* (does this mean calendar or business days?).
- For technical terms, use multi-part definitions with rephrasing of the same content. Concerning definitions, we can, in principle, distinguish between the following types<sup>2</sup>:

(a) Aristotelian definitions	i.e. genus proximum plus differentia specifica (= generic term + differentiating specification)	e.g. "A blend is type of word-formation that is the result of crossing two words."
(b) explicatory definition	i.e. enumeration of [stereo-]typical features	e.g. "Blends are crossings of words; they are a modern type of word-formation often used for modern phenomena."
(c) exemplary definition	i.e. enumeration of particularly typical examples	e.g. "Blends are, for example, <i>smog</i> (< <i>smoke</i> + <i>fog</i> ) and <i>brunch</i> (< <i>breakfast</i> + <i>lunch</i> )."
(d) synonymic definition	i.e. giving synonyms	e.g. "Blends are also known as <i>word contaminations</i> ."
(e) operational/genetic definition	i.e. description of the process of how the definiendum can be produced or found out	e.g. "You create a blend by sticking the initial section of one word and the final section of another word together."

As for definition type (c) we may especially think of prototypical members; actually, however, there is a better understanding of a category if peripheral members are included as well (provided they are marked as such). Thus, an exemplary definition of *bird* could read: "Typical examples of birds, in North America and Europe, are the robin and the sparrow; a less typical example is the penguin." Such aspects can also be integrated in explicatory definition, e.g. "Birds lay eggs and they normally fly (although this is not a necessary feature)."

- With every aspect (content-wise or procedure-wise) ask international students to compare things to how these are in their countries. This way you show the students that they are valued in your class and you can again focus on the different habits in your country. Find a midway that both the teacher and the students feel comfortable with (some sort of "contract" may be agreed on at the beginning of a course). However, keep this in mind: whenever you give students options and you hear a "yes", check whether it is actually a "yes, but...", because this means "no" in many societies).

### Rules for GE-B may look like this:

- If you are asked for your opinion on a political topic concerning the country of your business partner, say that you don't know enough about the other country to judge the situation.
- In group discussions where you finally have to make decisions use an integrative style, i.e. a style where group members clearly value objects higher than personal objectives, where group members eliminate personal tensions, and where all group members are allowed to have their ideas and opinions discussed and respected.
- Before writing a job application make sure (a) you include the elements this commonly consists of in your target country, (b) you use a form for these elements that is common in your target country, (c) you present the elements in the correct order. The website <http://www.jobera.com> may be helpful.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Grzego 2006c.

## 6. Some Questions to Be Answered

### 6.1. How Do I Get More Knowledge on the Acceptability of Communicative Strategies?

As already said, the pragmatic side of lingua-franca communication still requires more attention. So far, studies have been predominantly based on the observation of naturally occurring corpora (cf., e.g., House 1999, Lesznyák 2004, Meierkord 1996, Thomas 1983, Varonis/Gass 1985, Yule 1990) and on discourse completion tasks (DCT's) (cf., e.g., Kraft/Geluykens 2006). For the 2008 special issue of the *Journal for EuroLinguistiX* I have designed a new ethnographic method (SICS = semi-expert interview on communicative strategies) and shown the conclusions one can draw for lingua-franca teaching (Grzega/Schöner 2008, Grzega 2008b, Grzega 2008c). We should not forget to expand DCT's to written contexts (we could then speak of text creation tasks, TCT's) and subsequent meta-pragmatic judgement tasks (MPJT's) (cf. Hinkel 1997) with international groups of informants. In the frame of a methodology session in a seminar "Language Structure and Language Use" I had my students (consisting of German, Italian and Russian native speakers) carry out the following task via e-mail:

*You want to spend your Christmas vacation in X together with a friend. You have chosen an inexpensive hotel that also offers rooms without breakfast. Write to the e-mail indicated above and make a reservation for such a double room at this hotel.*

X was Florence (Italy) for one half of the German informants, St. Petersburg (Russia) for the other half of the German informants and Munich (Germany) for the Italian and Russian informants. All informants were given the text in their mother tongue.

I have then converted some answers into an MPJT, i.e. informants are to judge the appropriateness of utterances on a Likert scale. Such a test, as developed, for instance, by Olshtain/Blum-Kulka (1984), Chen (1996) or Hinkel (1997), aims at finding out whether certain national prototype answers are actually more or less advisable in lingua franca communication, in other words: we want to see which strategies may work transculturally. Informants shall be gathered from a broad range of European countries. Evaluating sentences on an "appropriate—inappropriate" scale may not be meaningful enough, especially since different things can be understood by *appropriate*, e.g. 'grammatically correct' or 'polite'. This scale should therefore be replaced by a set of evaluation parameters (parameter A: "very appropriate/rather appropriate/rather inappropriate/very appropriate" [+2/+1/-1/-2], parameter B: "overpolite/polite/impolite" [+1/0/-1], parameter C: "rather common phrasing/uncommon phrasing [+1/-1]", parameter D: "meaning clear/meaning unclear [+1/-1]"). In addition, with lingua-franca situations and non-native source material such a MPJT has to be designed in a way that deviates from the usual MPJT also in another way. This is rooted in the fact that a prior DCT will not only yield different pragmatic variants, but also several lexical and grammatical variants that may not be standard English. It will be interesting, though, to find out whether such non-native forms will be interpretable by other non-native speakers. Therefore I collected the most frequent type(s) of answers as well as rare, but standard English answers as well as rare, but very eye-catching answers. Then I had my students answer the MPJT. In addition, I handed out a reduced form of the MPJT to a group of international (mostly Austrian) students on the occasion of a guest lecture in Innsbruck. I will now reproduce the reduced MPJT, give the figures for the German informants (20), the Austrian informants (29) and the Italian informants (5)<sup>3</sup> and add some comments:

<sup>3</sup> All other nationalities were represented by less than 5 informants. The German informants' major is English (most of them want to become teachers of English), the Austrians' major is Interpreting and Translating (Translation Studies), four of the Italian informants major in English, one informant majors in Translation Studies.

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You are temporarily working for a hotel in your home region. On its website the hotel offers different types of rooms and even gives the choice between stays with breakfast and stays without breakfast. Your specific job at the hotel is to answer all kinds of e-mails. Most of the e-mails are reservations. In the following questionnaire it is your task to evaluate the forms of the single parts of such e-mails (salutation, preliminary remark, actual reservation, thanking formula, closing formula, signature) with respect to the categories A, B and C.

### (1) Salutation

Formulation	A				B		C	
	very appropriate	rather appropriate	rather inappropriate	very inappropriate	rather common phrasing	uncommon phrasing	meaning clear	meaning unclear
<i>Dear Sir or Madam,</i>	DE: 1.78 AT: 1.59 IT: 1.60				DE: 1.00 AT: 0.93 IT: 1.00		DE: 1.00 AT: 1.00 IT: 1.00	
<i>Hello,</i>		DE: 0.55	AT: -0.17 IT: -1.00		DE: 0.44 AT: 0.23	IT: -0.50	DE: 0.89 AT: 0.62 IT: 1.00	
<i>To whom of the Hotel XYZ it may concern,</i>			DE: -0.72 AT: -0.15 IT: 0.00		DE: 0.33 IT: 0.00	AT: -0.50	DE: 0.05 AT: 0.00 IT: 0.00	

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The phrase *To whom of the Hotel XYZ it may concern* was obviously based on the standard English phrase *To whom it may concern*. An expansion of the phrase which includes the addressed entity is uncommon in English, which Germans and Italians are averagely not aware of. The meaning of the phrase is obviously not clear to all informants. *Hello* is seen as rather inappropriate by Austrians and Italians, but rather appropriate by Germans. In standard English, *Hello* is definitely appropriate in the context given.

### (2.1) Actual booking request, Part 1: Reservation phrase

Formulation	A				B	
	very appropriate	rather appropriate	rather inappropriate	very inappropriate	rather common phrasing	uncommon phrasing
<i>I would like to book ...</i>		DE: 1.42 AT: 1.37 IT: 1.40			DE: 0.89 AT: 0.74 IT: 0.50	
<i>I would like to reservate ...</i>		AT: 0.74	DE: -0.52 IT: -0.25		AT: 0.13	DE: -0.37 IT: -0.20
<i>I would like to request a booking for ...</i>		DE: 1.32 AT: 1.29 IT: 0.40			DE: 0.78 AT: 0.48 IT: 1.00	

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It is interesting to note that, although the word does not exist in standard English, Austrians consider the use of *reservate* as rather appropriate and rather common and by far not all Germans and Italians regard the word as inappropriate or uncommon. Furthermore, the phrase *request a booking for*, which must sound rather clumsy and unidiomatic in standard English, is seen as rather appropriate and (wrongly) considered common by all three national groups of informants.

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**(2.2) Actual booking request, Part 2: Room type and date**

Formulation	A				B		C	
	very appropriate	rather appropriate	rather inappropriate	very inappropriate	rather common phrasing	uncommon phrasing	meaning clear	meaning unclear
<i>... a double room from December 25 to 27, without breakfast.</i>	AT: 1.77	DE: 1.28 IT: 0.60			DE: 0.78 AT: 0.90 IT: 0.00		DE: 0.53 AT: 0.78 IT: 0.00	
<i>... a double room with 2 sigles, from December 25 to 27, without breakfast.</i>		DE: 0.24 AT: 0.37	IT: -0.75			DE: -0.65 AT: -0.41 IT: -0.00	DE: 0.06 IT: 0.60	AT: -0.06
<i>... a twin room , from December 25 to 27, without breakfast.</i>		DE: 0.06 AT: 0.90 IT: 0.00			AT: 0.30	DE: -0.33 IT: -1.00	DE: 0.16 AT: 0.76 IT: 0.50	

The typo in *si[n]gles* obviously does not lead a majority of the German and Austrian informants to evaluate the form as inappropriate. The word *twin room*, a standard English word for ‘room with two single beds’, is considered uncommon by all Italians and by a majority of the German informants.

**(3) Confirmation request**

Formulation	A				B	
	very appropriate	rather appropriate	rather inappropriate	very inappropriate	rather common phrasing	uncommon phrasing
<i>Please be so kind to confirm my reservation.</i>	IT: 1.60	DE: 0.16 AT: 0.68			IT: 0.50	DE: -0.05 AT: -0.18
<i>Please be so kind and confirm my reservation.</i>		AT: 0.22	DE: -0.26 IT: -1.00			DE: -0.47 AT: -0.22 IT: -0.50
<i>Please be so kind as to confirm my reservation.</i>		AT: 1.30 IT: 0.40	DE: -0.83		AT: 0.70	DE: -0.53 IT: -0.60
<i>I look forward to hearing from you.</i>		AT: 0.04	DE: -0.68 IT: -1.00		DE: 0.47 IT: 0.20	AT: -0.10
<i>I'm looking forward to hearing from you.</i>		AT: 0.83	DE: -0.32 IT: -0.60		DE: 0.53 AT: 0.40 IT: 0.00	
<i>I'm looking forward to hear from you.</i>			DE: -0.44 AT: -0.21 IT: -1.50		DE: 0.68	AT: -0.20 IT: -0.60

This part looks at variants of two types of phrases expressing that you expect a confirmation of your booking. The standard English expression is not *be so kind to* nor *be so kind and*, but *be so kind as to*. This, however, is considered the most appropriate only by the average Austrian informant. The average Italian considers it less appropriate than *be so kind to*, the average German even judges it as rather inappropriate. Both Italians and Germans, on the average, consider the standard English phrase as the most uncommon of the three variants. As to the second expression, the standard English variant would be *I'm looking forward to hearing...* Among the variants of this phrase, it is interesting to note that it is considered the least inappropriate by Germans and Italians, but that it is not considered the most common by Germans and Italians. The average German thinks it that *I'm looking forward to hear...* is more common, Italians think that *I look forward to hearing...* is more common; half of the Italian informants who answered this question even think that the actual standard phrase is uncommon.

**(4) Closing formula**

Formulation	A				B	
	very appropriate	rather appropriate	rather inappropriate	very inappropriate	rather common phrasing	uncommon phrasing
<i>Thanks in advance. Yours faithfully, ...</i>		DE: 0.06 AT: 0.73 IT: 0.60			DE: 1.00 AT: 0.26 IT: 0.33	
<i>Thanks in advance. Sincerely yours, ...</i>		DE: 0.89 AT: 0.57 IT: 1.20			DE: 1.00 AT: 0.10 IT: 0.00	
<i>Thanks in advance. Best regards, ...</i>	AT: 1.62	DE: 0.82 IT: 0.80			DE: 1.00 AT: 0.80 IT: 1.00	

In many dictionaries and style books you will find that *Yours faithfully* is used as a British valediction in formal letters where you don't know the addressee's name, *Yours sincerely* as a valediction in formal letters where you do know the addressee's name (with *Sincerely yours* as a variant in the US), and *Best regards* as a semi-formal valediction. Applied to our example, it would mean that *Sincerely yours* is the least appropriate. This is reflected by the results of the Austrian informants. However, it gets the highest rating of appropriateness by both the Italian and the German group of informants (although half of the Italian informants consider the phrase uncommon).

In sum: although more groups of informants are to be collected, this model study has already indicated that rules for communication in English differ among natives and non-natives—even if the non-natives are in highly frequent contact with English due to their profession. This difference does not only mean that non-natives may allow more variants than standard English (e.g. *be so kind to...*), but they may also regard standard native English forms as inappropriate (e.g. *be so kind as to...*). These facts should be integrated when you teach non-natives English as an international lingua franca; this should also be respected when you prepare natives to using English as a lingua franca.

## 6.2. How Do I Get More Information About Connotative Meaning?

Some of the limitations, or at least obstacles, of lingua franca communication are “hidden”. One form of hidden misunderstandings may come up due to different connotations with words of the same denotation. Learners need to be aware that different nations or social groups categorize the world in different ways. It should not surprise that the word *family*, for example, is interpreted by Americans as ‘parents + children’, by Europeans as ‘grandparents + parents + children’ and by Arabs as ‘everyone that is only remotely related to him/her’. Likewise, *old* will have positive connotation in Chinese and other Asian cultures (due to their orientation toward ancient authorities), while it will have mostly negative connotation among North Americans and Europeans (due to their orientation toward innovation). I am therefore preparing, together with colleagues from different countries, a study that is to find out, by way of a semantic differential (a method developed by Osgood/Suci/Tannenbaum 1957), to what extent selected English words, which are considered to be “hot” words, or key words, for self-identification of Europeans, trigger the same connotations among people from different European countries. Osgood/Suci/Tannenbaum had performed an analysis of many semantic differential scales and found three recurring aspects that people use to evaluate words: evaluation, potency, and activity. Evaluation loads highest on the adjective pair ‘good—bad’. The ‘strong—weak’ adjective pair defines the potency factor. The adjective pair ‘active—passive’ defines the activity factor. These three dimensions of affective meaning were found

to be cross-cultural universals in a study of dozens of cultures. In addition to this, the semantic differential shall consist of a list of four opposites that go back to the universal anthropological model by Jean-Pol Martin (1994) (“chaos-order”, “freedom-restrictions”, “individuality-community”, “emotion-reason”). All these opposites shall be designed as four-step scales (“Do you associate the word *democracy* ‘strongly with chaos’, ‘rather with chaos’, ‘rather with order’, ‘strongly with order’?” etc.). An entry looks like this:

(1) I connect/associate ...	... <b>democracy</b> ...				
	strongly with	rather with	rather with	strongly with	
good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	bad
strong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	weak
active	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	passive
chaos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	order
freedom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	restrictions
individuality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	community
emotion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reason

Tests with preliminary questionnaire designs (cf. Grzega in print and [http://de.wikiversity.org/wiki/Projekt:European\\_Sociolinguistics/Connotations](http://de.wikiversity.org/wiki/Projekt:European_Sociolinguistics/Connotations)) have shown that, for instance, a Hungarian informant group associated *democracy* “rather with chaos”, a Spanish informant group associated *work* “rather with emotion”, an Australian informant group associated *taxes* “rather with emotion” and “rather with individuality”. Also a group of Brazilian informants also associated *taxes* “rather with individuality”. In a questionnaire study where informants could freely fill in associations, a third of the Danish informants had positive associations with taxes (this was a much higher degree than among other nations). When I did the test with a group of 18 German informants and a group of 28 Austrian informants, there were no very prominent results, but we can mention that the Austrian group associated *democracy* “strongly with democracy”, the German group “rather with democracy” and that the Austrian group associated *work* “strongly with good” and “strongly with strong”, the German group “rather with good” and “rather with strong”. It is, of course, the juxtaposing differences that a concept of lingua franca should prepare learners for.

### 6.3. How Should We Design Self-Study Material?

The composition of material for self-educated BGE is maybe the most challenging task. Since the goal is to provide all people around the world with a tool for a relatively rapid acquisition of BGE, it may be suggested that the material consist of (1) an English book as a “necessary and sufficient” basis and (2) a book with the metalinguistic explanations of the basic book in various the learner’s language, an audio CD and an exercise CD-Rom as “luxury equipments”. The material should respect learner autonomy, the combination of transcultural and cultural information, reasonable pronunciation training, “interactivity” and “feedback”.

Marion Schöner and I try to combine transcultural words and knowledge with cultural examples through presenting the BGE words both in an isolated way and in a few cultural contexts. The section on breakfast is therefore presented like this:

### Drinks and Food



**water**



**coffee**



**tea**



**milk**



**juice**



**bread**



**sandwiches**



**eggs**



**fruits**



**vegetables**







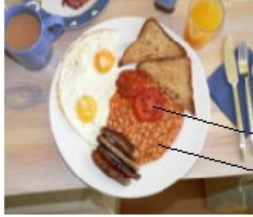




**cheese**



**honey**

This is then followed by a list of examples from various cultures (we consciously do not start with the example from a country where English is official language):

Breakfast		
 (J)		☹ tea, (coffee) ☺ soup, rice, fish, egg, vegetable
 (EU)		☹ tea, coffee, juice ☺ fruit, bread, cheese, honey, ...
 (UK)  (AUS)		☹ tea, coffee, juice ☺ bread, eggs, sausages, tomatoes, beans
 (IND)		☹ tea, milk ☺ bread, vegetables, rice

In the accompanying material for different mother tongues each English utterance shall be supplemented by a literal-formal translation and an idiomatic translation. An example for German, French and Italian

*Can I help you?*

“Kann ich helfen dich?”

‘Kann ich Ihnen helfen?’

*Can I help you?*

“Pouvoir je aider te?”

‘Puis-je t’aider?’

*Can I help you?*

“Potere io aiutare te?”

“Posso aiutarti?”

#### 6.4. How Can We Assess Intercultural and/or Transcultural Competence in English?

In 2007/08 I gave two optional courses “International Business English” at a German senior high-school (Gymnasium) in Bavaria. Participants came from grades 10 to 13, i.e. they were between 15 and 19 years old. In the first session, each group decided which countries they want to get to know in more detail. Both groups chose the US, Canada, China and Russia; in addition Group A chose Australia and Japan, Group B the UK and India. After four lessons for training basic pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and politeness items, we started to deal with business-specific issues:

- What is the elementary business vocabulary?

- How do we greet and address people?
- How do we apply for a job?
- Why do we have to know about gestures and other forms of body-language?
- How is small talk done in business situations?
- How is “big talk” done in business situations?

In each lesson we had a look at the conversational patterns in the selected countries and tried to define conversational strategies that may work transculturally. In these summaries, the strategy of raising people’s awareness that they are in an intercultural situation and that this may cause some irritations played a salient role. But how could the competences be tested? I would like to suggest a dialog completion task, which worked pretty well for me.

The text of the test on the session on “big talk” (face-threatening acts) was as follows<sup>4</sup>:

**Complete the following dialogs in the way that seems most appropriate for you.**

1. You work for a German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers and is now looking for a Czech language institute for cooperation. Your company has sent you to Prague. The flight was okay and so was the trip from the airport to the hotel. The food in the hotel restaurant was fine and the bed in the hotel room is comfortable, but the water in the shower is only iccold and two of the three lamps don’t work. You’ve told the hotel receptionist, but he didn’t fix it neither the evening of your arrival nor during breakfast the next morning. After breakfast, you meet your business partner, Pavel Smetana, in the hotel lobby. You introduce yourselves. Pavel seems to be a very nice guy:

Pavel: *Nice to meet you. So how was your trip? Are you satisfied with the hotel?*

You: .....

2. You work for a German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers. You meet in Ingolstadt with representatives from other companies specializing in language trips for teenagers. Your group consists of a boy from Helsinki/Finland, a girl from Madrid/Spain, a boy from Geneva/Switzerland, a girl from Amsterdam/Netherlands and a boy from Rio/Brazil—all about five years older than you. The plan of which all participants were informed is to use the afternoon from 2 to 6 to discuss how the various companies might work together; for the evening you have organized some entertainment for the international guests. When you meet, everybody introduces themselves first. You ask your partners how theirs trips were; the girls from Madrid and Amsterdam, Maria and Mareike, as well as the boy from Rio, Paolo, have quite a lot of funny anecdotes to tell from the trip. You see that the boy from Geneva, Pierre, and the boy from Helsinki, Ville, are rather quiet, look very serious or disinterested or feel a little uncomfortable. You want them to get better involved in the conversation and so you address them directly.

You: *So your trips seemed to have been rather without any problems.*

Ville: *Yes.*

Pierre: *Yes. But I think I have some interesting ideas for teenager language trips we may want to discuss.*

Maria: *Hey, don’t get nervous, guys, cheer up!*

You: .....

3. You work for a German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers. Your company is now looking for a cooperation with a Chinese company that has specialized in the same field. You meet your Chinese partner, Lili, in Eichstätt. It seems that you understand each other quite well, but the plans that your Chinese partner describes are not all what your company wants: the Chinese company wants to use your network, but doesn’t want to reveal its own network in China; the Chinese company asks for financial support in Germany, but says that it doesn’t have the financial means to support you in China. At the end, Lili offers you an exclusive way to get to know Chinese aspects that foreigners normally don’t get to know, but still it is clear that you can’t make a deal because the potential profit for your company is much too small.

Lili: *So my company thinks that this could be a fair way to start a cooperation.*

You: .....

4. You work for Berlitz, the oldest German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers. You and a colleague, Hans, have to meet with John, the representative of a US company working in the

<sup>4</sup> For the results of the test in my own classes cf. Grzegza (2008b).

same business, to see how you can start a cooperation. Hans, longer a Berlitz employee than you, does the talking and tries to illustrate John, with many details, the many successful projects in the 1960's, in the 1930's and that Berlitz' success story goes back even to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

John: *Oh, only to the nineteenth century?*

You: .....

5. You work for a German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers. You and a colleague, Hans, have to meet with Ivan, the representative of a Russian company working in the same business, to see how you can start a cooperation. Ivan likes your presentation and would be willing to sign a contract with you, but only a very vague one. Hans fears that the Russians will not be willing to fulfil the contract if things are not written down in detail and suggests a few more concrete elements.

Ivan: *So you think these details are necessary for our cooperation contract?*

You: .....

For the evaluation of the solutions, violations against standard grammar and standard spelling affect the number of points only when empirical studies have suggested that a specific type of mistake endangers the communicative success. Apart from this, I had determined the followed grid:

Situation 1:

3p. = very good (VG) = (1) meta-cultural comment (2) positive sides as well as negative sides mentioned, but clearly without blaming the host, rather stating that the problems will surely be fixed or meta-cultural comment > gives the host the chance to take the next step himself and you a perspective to see the problem solved;

2p. = good (G) = no negative sides mentioned;

1p. = less good (LG) = (1) positive sides and negative sides mentioned, without blaming host explicitly, but also without seeing the problem being solved (> the blame is on the host implicitly, because he was the one who chose the hotel), (2) positive sides, but also negative sides mentioned, without stating explicitly what the problems are > unclear to host to what degree he is to blame for that, (3) positive sides and negatives sides mentioned explicitly, without taking the blame from the host at all, (4) positive sides and negative sides mentioned, without stating explicitly what the problems are, which leaves it unclear to the host to what degree he is to blame for that;

0p. = not good (G) = unintelligible utterance

Situation 2:

VG = giving a meta-level comment, raising awareness; giving the plan, but allowing alternatives; starting a soft transfer from small talk to big talk;

G = giving a compromise plan; have Pierre make suggestions if in the sense of having Pierre verbalize his problems more concretely;

LG = rejecting one person, although you give alternatives or although you say that the person's utterance was interesting/justified, or siding with one person;

B = (1) rejecting one person and siding with the other person, (2) unintelligible utterance

Situation 3:

VG = "thank you" + decision delegated to another person, openness/possibility for a change in conditions;

G = decision delegated to another person; "sorry", "but"; need for further discussion announced;

LG = yes/positive things + "but not this way", yes/positive things + "but we will HAVE TO change this";

NG = "I don't think so", "I disagree"

Situation 4:

VG = meta-cultural explanation of time concepts + talking about recent successes and further ideas for the future;

G = talking about recent successes, future with US company;

LG = (1) saying that future is also important without concrete facts, focussing of the profit over that long period without reference to the present/future, (2) saying that the past is not so important > face-threatening for Hans, (3) focus on the circumstances of past's success;

NG = (1) asking for US company's past, (2) unintelligible utterance

Situation 5:

VG = meta-level comment + putting the blame on the company/law + showing openness for suggestions;

G = putting the blame on oneself or on one's company; showing openness for suggestions; emphasizing that the contract should show the Russians' rights;

LG = it's my boss's wish/the tradition/important – period!;

NG = to avoid problems/to avoid quarrels/past has taught us > indicates the relationship (or a relationship with Russians) can't be trusted; this or that may be left out > face-threatening for colleague

Teachers may then define three levels of competence:

- high = 15-10 points
- medium = 9-5 points
- low = 4-0 points

## 7. Summary and Outlook

It has been shown that English as a lingua franca is more than thinking about the construction of a vocabulary. It has its own rules also in the use of words. The idea of Basic Global English and still unsatisfied desires related to transcultural and intercultural communication shows that onomasiology and linguistics in general can help improve the quality and quantity of the flow of information and the formation of knowledge. That is what I understand by socioeconomic linguistics and by applied eurolinguistics (cf. Grzega in print).

Every teacher of English as a foreign language is warmly invited to try out BGE and my concepts of Advanced Global English, to participate in one of the projects (<http://www.basicglobalenglish.com>) and to ask questions and discuss experiences on the discussion forum of *EuroLinguistiX* (ELiX) at <http://www.eurolinguistix.com>.

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