

Second WU Symposium on  
International Business Communication

LINGUISTIC APPROACHES TO  
INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS  
COMMUNICATION

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**abstracts**

**Francesca Bargiela (independent researcher)**

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**Business discourse goes east: issues, challenges and provocations**

In this talk I wish to offer a personal perspective on a fairly recent phenomenon in intercultural business communication, the emergence of a growing body of discourse-based Asian scholarship, which is forcing 'western' researchers to re-think and re-evaluate familiar approaches to the study of 'language and culture' in intercultural business and professional contexts.

Taking the field of business discourse as a multi-disciplinary base and reference for my explorations, I would like to give some consideration to the issues that arise from research collaboration with Asian colleagues. In particular, I will reflect on the challenges raised by the need to develop a deeper understanding of the 'cultural Other' which goes beyond prescriptions and textbook knowledge.

From a dialogic engagement that places the East in the riding seat, new, thought-provoking suggestions for collaborative research can begin to emerge.

Francesca Bargiela's main area of research is business discourse, on which she has published widely. With colleagues from East and SE Asia, she has compiled an edited volume (2004) and a double special issue on *Asian Business Discourse(s)* (2005/6). She has a link with the Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and is facilitating the ELAB (English as a Language of Asian Business) network. She has been looking at developing a novel understanding of 'intercultural communication' through critical engagement with its conceptual core of 'culture', 'discourse' and 'communication' (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 2003, Bargiela-Chiappini 2004, Bargiela-Chiappini 2008a, Bargiela-Chiappini 2008b).

**Claudia Böttger (Hamburg University)**

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**The dynamics of language contact in intercultural business communication:  
The role of English as lingua franca in translations of German business texts**

Companies operating across language barriers are faced with the challenges of multilingual communication with a heterogeneous group of stakeholders worldwide. One way of managing multilingualism is by using a lingua franca. In global business contexts this is mostly English (ELF), into which other languages are translated.

The paper will explore the dynamics of language contact between source and target texts using German and English business writing. The focus will be on the changes that arise on the pragmatic and text conventional level by adopting a diachronic perspective. A discourse analytical approach will be applied to a qualitative translation business text corpus ranging from newsletters, annual reports, CSR reports, corporate visions to company emails.

The paper will conclude with an outlook on the applicability of research driven data in R&D as part of a collaboration of knowledge transfer between university and industry.

## **Selected Publications**

"Evaluating translations for multilingual work settings." In: S. Kameyama & B. Meyer (eds.): Theoretical and practical considerations. Mehrsprachigkeit am Arbeitsplatz – Forschungsansätze und -desiderate aus der Sicht einer empirisch-angewandten Linguistik. Frankfurt/M.: Lang: 77-89 (with I. Christner-Bendetti & K. Heininger) (2007)

Lost in Translation? Analysing the role of English as lingua franca in Multilingual Business Communication. Hamburg: Kovac (2007)

"'Look after your smoothie.' New trends in British and German drink packaging texts? A contrastive study on communication strategies in differing markets." In: C. Schmidt (ed.): Europäische Kulturen in der Wirtschaftskommunikation. Wiesbaden: DUV, 41-52 (with C. Janik) (2007)

"'We want you to love our product.' An English-German Translation Analysis of persuasion in packaging texts." In: M. Brandstätter et al. (eds.): Anspruchsgruppenorientierte Kommunikation. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 67-84 (with C. Janik) (2008)

Dr. Claudia Böttger has been a Post-doc researcher at the transfer project "Optimising Texts in Multilingual Business Communication", Research Centre 538 Multilingualism, Hamburg University since 2007. Her research interests include intercultural business communication, multilingualism, lingua franca English, discourse analysis, translation analysis, language change and language contact.

### **Anne Marie Bülow (Copenhagen Business School)**

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#### **Intercultural business negotiation – the evidence from sociolinguistics versus the evidence from business studies**

The study of negotiation processes shows ambiguous evidence. As for language, non-native speakers may damage their ethos inadvertently by incompetence, and native speakers may damage theirs by arrogance. Conversely, non-native speakers may engender good-will, and native speakers may (and usually do) set agenda almost unnoticed. Intercultural studies have found that a lack of sensitivity to matters like speaking rights, conflict resolution preferences etc. can undermine the entire process, but once the parties are doing business, the issues shift to concession patterns and decision structures, which are much less dependent on situation or culture.

I shall argue that the area in most urgent need of researchers' attention is the phase in the middle known as 'Information gathering' and 'Bidding'. Communication experts cannot (credibly) give tactical advice on the selection or sequence of offers, but it is actually a teachable skill to listen for underlying interests and to construct possible shared scenarios on the basis of the partner's contributions. Thus, different types of uptake, 'mirroring' and questioning are used to frame propositions as common ground. The less the parties have in common in terms of sympathy or a shared past, the more they need to rely on the rhetorical notion of *topoi*, the shared values that engender trust.

I have found that particularly with negotiations carried out over e-mail, the legitimation exercise is crucial, but often omitted. When negotiators question or bid without explaining their basis, the tone is perceived as curt and the experience is more competitive. I shall argue that the inherent nature of e-mail encourages competitiveness because it is easily shared with the negotiator's own constituents – a type of accountability known to hinder flexibility – and because courtesy comes easier to many people when they are face-to-face.

Professor Anne Marie Bülow teaches at the Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, in the Department of International Culture and Communication Studies. She is primarily interested in strategic communication, both in the interpersonal and organizational variety, and in negotiation studies. Her most recent publications concern crisis communication, corporate apology and negotiation discourse. More information at [www.cbs.dk/staff/bulow](http://www.cbs.dk/staff/bulow).

### **Mirjaliisa Charles (Helsinki School of Economics)**

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#### **Communicative success in globalized business**

This paper focuses on the role of language and discourse in achieving what is perceived to be 'communicative success' in the globalized business of today. It argues that discursal competence is an integral part of business know-how, and reports on an on-going research project which explores the links between communication know-how, business know-how, and discourse.

In the project, 'success' is approached from three perspectives. Firstly, a survey was conducted on the views of international business practitioners about experiences - successful and not successful - in their everyday communication. Secondly, practitioners were interviewed to provide more insight. The paper will present and discuss initial findings from both surveys and interviews. Thirdly, videorecorded data on intercultural meetings, conducted using English as a lingua franca, were analyzed. Here, the aim was twofold: on the one hand to provide discursal evidence - if any existence - of what business practitioners in the survey and interviews identified as contributing to communicative success, and on the other hand, to identify linguistic and discursal factors that, from an analytical and linguistic point of view, seem to achieve success. This analysis suggests that abundant, perceptive use of metadiscourse is important for communicative success, as also is awareness of cultural preferences and tendencies in discourse.

Mirjaliisa Charles, PhD (Birmingham, UK), is (as of April 1, 2009) Professor Emerita in International Business Communication, in Helsinki School of Economics (Finland). Her main areas of expertise are language issues in multinational corporations, intercultural business communication, and communication training for globalization. She has published widely, is a frequent speaker in international conferences, and serves on the Editorial Boards of several academic journals. She is on the Advisory Board of Corporate Communication Institute, and a Director-at-Large of the Association for Business Communication (ABC). She has also served on ABC's Publications Board and Research Committee, receiving the Distinguished

Member Award (in 2005) for her services to the organization. In 2005 she also received the ABC Outstanding Researcher Award for her work on business communication.

**Marie-Thérèse Claes (ICHEC Brussels Business School)**

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**Eastern and western business communication, more than communication styles: communicating logic and thinking styles**

Western managers in Thailand will say that Thais don't have the same logic, or that maybe they have no logic, that Thais cannot manage a project, that there is no critical thinking or argumentation amongst Thais. How for example can Thais block the international airport, knowing that it will probably have a negative impact on the tourism industry, the number one industry in the country?

This paper will examine critical thinking in Thailand, compared to what Westerners call critical thinking and logic. I will contrast cultural aspects of differences in values, and the impact Asian values in general, and Thai values in particular, have on thinking styles and business decision styles.

In order to work well with Thais, Western managers need to understand the relative importance of rational, emotional and spiritual values, in their own culture, and in Thai culture.

Marie-Thérèse Claes Ph.D. has had an academic career as professor at ICHEC Brussels Business School, and at the University of Louvain in Belgium. Her fields of teaching and research include Intercultural Communication and Intercultural Management. She has widely published in those fields. She was the Dean of the Faculty of Business at Asian University in Thailand. She has worked with several companies on the issues of Intercultural Management and Diversity Management. Marie-Thérèse Claes is past president of EWMD (European Women Management Development) and of SIETAR Europa (Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research). A Fulbright and Japan Foundation Alumna, she has been visiting professor in several universities in Europe and abroad. She now divides her time between Europe and Thailand.

**Willy Clijsters (Hasselt University)**

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**From language learning to business communication competence acquisition**

For about thirty years, the foreign language class has been in continuous evolution: it has completely changed.

Big changes in the modern world as internationalisation and globalisation made aware that foreign language learning as the simple teaching of vocabulary and grammar was no longer sufficient, but that the so called "FL-learners", especially (future) business people demanded to acquire asap (a minimum of) new, but useful communication skills.

After a short overview of some aspects of this (r)evolution, this lecture will present the acquisition of the “cultural component” of business communication through a five year experience at the Hasselt (BE) University business faculty.

It will illustrate how the existing studies on intercultural differences don't deliver sufficiently concrete and detailed answers to composers of FL-methods, and how we've tried to remedy narrowing the covered geographic zone in binomial comparisons and concreting the cultural inputs by means of EU-wide surveys conducted throughout Leonardo da Vinci projects. Finally, it will deal with the UHasselt business faculty case. This university decided six years ago to completely rethink its teaching. It has been a unique opportunity for us, language teachers, to completely reorganise the FL-courses at the business faculty, i.e. course content and didactic tools, teaching-learning activities, the role of the teacher becoming a tutor, the task of the learners becoming constructors of their knowledge-competences, the evaluation. A provisional evaluation shows the benefits, but also the weaknesses and a real SWOT-analysis and/or comparison with experiences conducted elsewhere could help to be even more efficient. Indeed, international collaboration seems the key to adequate answers to the urgent present-day communicative needs.

**Marinel Gerritsen (Radboud University Nijmegen)**

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**Differences between cultures in suitability of communication channels for business communication**

In this paper we will report on experiments in which we have investigated whether cultures differ in the communication channels that they find suitable for different types of business communication. The hypotheses we tested depart from a combination of the Context Theory (CT) of Hall (1976) and the Information Richness Theory (IRT) of Daft and Lengel (1984). According to CT cultures differ in the extent to which they use context and situation for the interpretation of a message. In high-context cultures, most of the meaning of a message is deduced from the context in which the words occur. In low-context cultures, the meaning of a message is primarily deduced from the words. In IRT a distinction is made between media high in richness such as face-to-face-communication and media low in richness such as Tables.

The hypothesis is that high context cultures prefer media high in richness and low context cultures media low in richness. Hypotheses are tested by means of cases respondents from high context cultures (Morocco, France, and South Africa) and low context cultures (Germany, the Netherlands) had to solve.

Marinel Gerritsen holds the Christine Mohrmann chair at the Department of Business Communication Studies at the Radboud University Nijmegen. Prior to this she worked for the government and for several multinational organizations in Europe and she also held positions at a number of Dutch universities and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her business communication research is primarily focussed on the differences between cultures in communication and the impact that this has on intercultural communication, she has also published widely on the sociolinguistic in-bedding of language

variation and change, the use of English as a *lingua franca* in business contexts, and the interface between English as an international language and the local languages in use.

**Hans Jürgen Heringer (Augsburg University)**

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**Words come first**

My contribution presents a programme for a better intercultural understanding via so-called hotwords. Hotwords condense specific cultural knowledge. They are apt to elaborate, to deepen and to transmit pieces of culture in a controlled way and on an empirical ground. The method will be demonstrated with several examples.

Hans Jürgen Heringer has been professor of German as a Foreign Language at the University of Augsburg since 1981 (former professor of linguistics at the University of Tübingen). His main areas of interest are Intercultural Communication, Language Testing, Automated Essay Scoring and Corpus Linguistics.

**Holger Kusse (Dresden University of Technology)**

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**Slavic languages and law in an intercultural perspective**

The lecture gives an overview of basic areas of linguistics of law related to Slavic languages (in particular Russian). The importance of legal traditions and the rule of law for cultural development are discussed from a pragmatic point of view. It is shown, that the historical and cultural preconditions of law and its ideal of justice are expressed in written law as well as in the pragmatics of legal situations, the trial first and foremost.

In written law argumentation, syntax and terminology depend more or less on their specific historical and cultural frames, which are, on the other hand, influenced by law and the language of law itself.

It is the interaction between law, language and culture which produces the conditions of economics and business communication.

For to provide this interaction some examples from Slavonic historical legal texts and from present constitutions are analysed.

Born in Osnabrück in 1964, Holger Kusse studied Russian, Slavic philology, evangelic theology and pedagogy in Mainz, Vienna and Frankfurt/Main. His dissertation in 1997 was dedicated to the conjunctional co-ordination in Russian sermons and political speeches. In 2002 he wrote his habilitation on the meta-discursive argumentation in the Russian philosophical discourse from Lomonosov to Losev. In 2003/04 he was a guest professor at the Institute of Slavic Languages at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. Since 2005 he has been a full professor for Slavic linguistics and history of language at the Institute

of Slavic Languages at the Technical University Dresden and since February 2006 he has been the managing director of the Institute of Slavic languages.

**Eva Lavric (University of Innsbruck)**

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**How companies really handle the language issue: Evidence from qualitative case studies**

Language as an economic resource: How do companies and their employees deal with problems of linguistic variety and language choice in both external and internal business communication? These questions have only been dealt with until now on a quantitative, statistical level. In contrast this paper is based on a series of qualitative case studies, covering a wide area of sectors and business types.

The contribution gives an overview of these studies which allows us to draw more general conclusions about the specificities of code choice and language policies in business contexts, the mix between adaptation and standardization strategies, the special case of negotiations, the importance of market power and organization structures, the link with cost-benefit considerations and with the managers' personal language experiences. It touches on problems of survey methods as well as the dissymmetry between selling and buying and the frequent trade-off between internal and external business communication.

From 1983 to 2003 professor Eva Lavric worked as a research assistant and later as a senior lecturer at the Institute of Romance Languages at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. Since 2003 she has been professor of Romance Linguistics at the University of Innsbruck and director of the Centre for French Studies at Innsbruck University. Since 2008 she has been head of the Department of Romance Philology. Professor Lavric graduated sub auspiciis (with highest honours), received a Schrödinger research grant for Madrid, was awarded the Elise Richter prize of the German Association of Romance Studies for the best habilitation (= state doctorate) and honoured with the French "palmes académiques". Before going to Innsbruck she worked as a guest professor in Lublin, Trieste and Passau. The Romance languages she speaks are French (second L1), Spanish and Italian; her research areas include (contrastive) semantics, text linguistics, pragmatics, languages for special purposes, language acquisition and multilingualism.

**Květuše Lepilová (Masaryk University Brno)**

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**Dynamics of foreign language in business communication  
(Intercultural verbal and nonverbal area and multimedia area)**

1. Globalization, the growth of multimedia and "mobile mania" have caused rapid changes in ordinary speech. In addition, the increased tempo of business communication is also influencing the quality of written communication and creating communication barriers. In



the spiral of knowledge about the world to systematize communication processes, we find and create models of business intercultural communication. We must summarize the theoretical results of research and return to known facts on a new, higher theoretical level.

2. We need models of communicative business situations and communication barriers in our intercultural dialogue. I focused on the issue of adequate cross-cultural correspondence in business communication and on functional differentiation in ethnic languages as one of the key problems.

3. Business communication either crosses or ignores national borders, does not take place in any fixed place or any fixed time, and social communicative structures have undermined the correspondences between individual forms of social communication with many barriers (especially in non-verbal communication as a basis for intercultural communication). Actually problems in “dialogue of cultures” must prepare a basis from development of cognitive linguistics.

Dr. Lepilová’s research has focused on Foreign Language and Speech Communication. She has been an author of 215 articles, textbooks (e.g. *Speech communication verbal and non-verbal*, 1998), video-diagnostic research (*Let us a Story*, 1986 - 2004), and 10 monographs, e.g. “Dynamics of Speech and Literacy Communication. “Multimedia reader” (2002), “Text, picture, and sound” (2003), “Text and dialogue” (*Foreign Language Speech Communication*) e.g. She is a member of scientific associations.

Dr. Lepilová is currently an associate professor at the Department of Slavonic Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno (Czech Republic). In 1991 – 2005, she was the Head of the Department of Russian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, OU Ostrava. She was a principal investigator of a research project „Foreign Language Business Communication“(1999 – 2004) and an organizer of many international conferences in 1993 - 2005 (memorial volumes 1999 – 2004: “Lingua et Communicatio in sphaera mercaturae (Bohemica, Britannica, Germanica, Rossica)”, 2005 “Lingua et Communicatio in sphaera Culturae”).

### **Martin Nielsen (Aarhus School of Business)**

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### **Health in Danish and German employee magazines: The textual balancing act of promoting healthy lifestyles without meddling in**

The tendency to obesity in large parts of the population is both one of the serious challenges of western societies (Gostomzyk 1996), and at the same time creates problems in terms of sick leave, early retirement, health problems, quality of life of the employees and thus – allegedly – motivation (Roehling 2002). On that account, employee magazines (seen as management tools, cf. e.g. Bischl 2000) address the health issue, particularly obesity, in some articles, where this issue is treated with delicate balance: on the one hand, it is legitimate to address the societal problem of obesity, both because a company also in its internal communication should express CSR (Nielsen/Thomsen 2007) and because it is likewise legitimate to try to take care of its workforce; on the other hand, the lifestyle, eating and fitness habits of the employees should be their own business. Therefore, this paper explores how Danish and German employee magazines address the issue of obesity and fitness. Do they show genuine concern on behalf of the employees, is it an expression of

corporate social responsibility in terms of e.g. diversity (Pollitt 2006) or is it only a disguise for meddling in into the lifestyles of the employees in order to secure the productivity of the workforce? In a qualitative study it is among other things investigated if the different textual strategies are differing in Danish and German employee magazines.

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Born in 1967, Martin Nielsen studied translation (Danish-German). He is an associate professor at the Department of Language and Business Communication and the Centre of Corporate Communication at the Aarhus School of Business. He teaches in BA and MA programmes in international business communication and corporate communication. His research interests include text linguistics, corporate communications, organisational communication, advertising and German-Danish cultural comparison.

### **Irina Pshenichnikova (St.Petersburg University)**

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#### **In search for the “third culture” language: Communication challenges in global companies**

The paper addresses culture, language and communication issues in relations between a mother-company and a regional business unit. It is based on the author’s consultancy practice and involves ethnographic study of three different international companies. It analyses a process of introduction and integration of a mother company’s corporate culture and policies in local business units in Russia through corporate communication and internal communication systems. Various business strategies towards cultural differences are introduced and applied to the concrete business situations. Looking for the “Third Culture” as an idea of a compromise and a synergetic value of merging two different cultures into a common one, companies often face a challenge of establishing a “Third Language”: a linguistic code which can be successfully used to communicate “transactional” or “negotiated” culture for business results. An experience of companies in creating a third language as a common ground for understanding, integration and successful local implementation of core values and managerial concepts is analyzed and presented.

Irina Pshenichnikova is a specialist in cross-cultural management and intercultural communication. Her academic studies, as well as her teaching and consulting services focus on expatriate adjustment, local interactions, organizational communication, and national versus corporate culture.

As an individual consultant I. Pshenichnikova provides various programs and executive coaching to individuals and companies. In addition, she is a professor at Executive MBA Programs at Graduate School of Management, St.Petersburg State University. From 2005 to 2008 she was a Senior Lecturer of Intercultural management at the Academy of National Economy, Moscow. From 2000 until 2005, Ms. Pshenichnikova was an Associate Professor and Vice-Chair for the academic affairs of the Department of International Management, School of Management, St. Petersburg State University. During that period, she delivered a course for Cross-Cultural Management in English for the Master of International Business program, in addition to undergraduate coursework on Cross-Cultural Management and Intercultural Business Communication.

Ms. Pshenichnikova brings international work experience and perspective through her work in South Korea at Pusan Song-Sim University of Foreign Languages, as well as in the United States at the University of Iowa. She is an invited lecturer at Reims Management School, France, and at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, leading coursework titled, "Doing Business in Russia: Cross-Cultural Focus". She also takes part in joint research of cross-cultural issues in Russian-Finnish business contacts funded by the Finnish Academy of Sciences, in addition to her research on cultural adjustment of the expatriate business community in St. Petersburg granted by Wenner-Gren Foundation.

Ms. Pshenichnikova received her PhD in Russian linguistics from St. Petersburg State University, where she also earned her Master of Arts degree in Russian Linguistics and English.

**Renate Rathmayr (Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration)**

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**Intracultural intercultural communication: Russian business communication at the beginning of the 21st century**

The speaking of a common mother language doesn't exclude intercultural problems in communication. Political and economic transformations in Russia have brought about a change not only in the economic system, but also in economy related genres like public relations texts, advertisements and in job-interviews. The "cultural crash" concerns the communication practices as well as the attitudes towards the new prescriptive norms of verbal and nonverbal behaviour. This will be shown by the example of job-interviews on three levels:

- The level of social roles: Both interviewers and interviewees deal very differently with the new genre.
- The level of interview macrostructures: Especially the dealing with topics concerning privacy will be investigated.
- The micro-structural level: I will investigate two kinds of phenomena: the use of address terms and features of “Russian conversational style”.

My overall results show that at present traditional features of Russian discourse style and role conceptions co-exist with new characteristics of a Western style economic discourse and role concepts, thus reflecting the pragmatic tensions between traditional “Russianness” and the demands of an innovative “corporate etiquette” of business enterprises. They produce misunderstandings that otherwise are typical for intercultural communication.

Prof. Rathmayr graduated from the University of Graz. She earned her PhD degree and postdoctoral lecturing qualification (Habilitation) for Slavic Linguistics and Cultural Studies at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. Since 1989, she has been a full professor and head of the Institute of Slavic Languages at Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. Main research interests: Russian linguistics and pragmatics, discourse analysis, cultural studies, Russian oral intern and extern business communication.

### **Helen Spencer-Oatey (University of Warwick)**

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#### **Communication in international projects:**

#### **An evidence-based framework for conceptualising intercultural competences**

This paper presents a theoretical framework for conceptualising the key competences needed to handle international projects, with special reference to communication. The framework is based on the findings of the *GlobalPeople* project, which examined the authentic experiences of a major Sino-UK collaborative programme, the eChina-UK Programme (<http://www.echinauk.org/>).

The paper starts by giving some brief background to the programme and the aim of the *GlobalPeople* project. It then lists the data that we analysed (which included video recordings of meetings, interview data and project reports) and briefly overviews the conceptual frameworks that we reviewed initially, including those by Byram (1997), Chen and Starosta (2005), Gudykunst (2004), INCA – Prechtl and Davidson Lund (2007), Ting-Toomey (1999) and WorldWork (<http://www.worldwork.biz/>). Then the core of the paper is presented – an explanation of the framework we have developed for conceptualising competence in intercultural communication. The framework is evidence-based in that it emerged from analyses of our research data, including examples of authentic discourse. The paper explains and illustrates how the competence categories were identified, what the competences entail, and why they are important for effective intercultural interaction.

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Dr Helen Spencer-Oatey, Professorial Fellow, is Director of the Centre for Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK, and manager of the *eChina-UK* Programme, a £4 million inter-governmental (Sino–UK) set of e-learning projects on teacher training (<http://www.echinauk.org>). Her research interests fall into two main areas: (a) rapport management, face and identity, and (b) intercultural interaction, intercultural discourse, cross-cultural pragmatics, and cross-cultural psychology. She is editor of *Culturally Speaking* (2000/2008, London: Continuum) and *e-Learning Initiatives in China* (2007, Hong Kong University Press), and co-editor of the *Handbook of Intercultural Communication* (2007, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter). She has published articles on pragmatics and intercultural communication (including intercultural business communication) in a wide range of journals, including the *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *Multilingua*, *the Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* and the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. She is co-author of *Intercultural Interaction*, to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2009.

### **Hanne Tange (Aarhus School of Business)**

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### **Corporate language, social interaction and the problem of ‘dilute’ communication**

The paper presents a particular communicative practice that seems to emerge in response to the management decision to introduce English as a common language within multilingual and multicultural organisations in Denmark. The rationale behind linguistic standardisation is that a shared medium will strengthen corporate communications, employee networks and informal knowledge-sharing (Feely and Harzing 2003). Yet our research suggests that the implementation of English as a corporate language can result in less rather than more communication, and that a lot of messages simply go missing when employees are

requested to work in a second language. (Lauring and Tange 2009). Drawing on qualitative data collected in business and educational organisations, I shall present a sociolinguistic interpretation of the phenomenon of thin or “dilute” communication. The analysis will look in some detail at the messages that disappear within the English-speaking workplace, asking what motivates employees to withdraw from certain exchanges because they request the use of a second language. In conclusion, I shall discuss the implications of such behaviour for trans-organisational networks and information transfers, emphasising the need for communication managers to deal with the matter.

Associate professor Hanne Tange, Ph.D. (Glasgow 2001) is currently working in the Research Unit for Culture, Department of Languages and Business Communications, Aarhus School of Business/University of Aarhus.

**Jan D. ten Thije (University of Utrecht)**

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**Beyond misunderstanding. Linguistic analysis of international business communication**

This paper challenges traditional presumptions in the field of intercultural communication: the focus on intercultural misunderstanding. In contrast, the analytical purpose of this paper concerns the reconstruction of intercultural understanding linguistically (Bührig & ten Thije, 2006). Linguistic research on intercultural discourse that focuses on beyond misunderstanding reflects on the questions as to what extent different linguistic means and processes contribute to intercultural understanding as they enable the interlocutors to reflect on ongoing intercultural discourse and to deal with potential conflicts or to benefit from the synergy of the language and cultural contact. This paper will discuss data from various business settings.

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**ELF (English as a *lingua franca*) as an intercultural platform: observations on business meetings**

It is almost a truism these days to say that English is the language of international business and that English skills have become a prerequisite for almost any professional wishing to engage in our ever more globalizing business world. Equally well-known is the fact that non-native speakers nowadays outnumber native speakers of English (e.g. Crystal 2003). It is therefore surprising that empirical research on how English is used as a *lingua franca* in workplace settings is still scarce.

In order to start filling this gap, this paper presents findings from my doctoral research on two ELF business meetings which were audio-recorded in Vienna in 2007 and 2008 and comprise participants from a variety of European countries. The presentation will touch briefly on the general question of the (in)separability of language and culture in the beginning and address the role of culture, or rather cultures, in ELF settings.

In particular, my paper investigates aspects of interactional pragmatics related to turn-taking behavior in international multi-party conversations. I will discuss examples of collaborative as well as competitive speaker interventions found in my data, such as utterance completions, lexis help, and interruptions, and relate them to the specific requirements of ELF communication. Especially collaboration strategies involving overlap, such as supportive turn completions, are likely to be interpreted differently by speakers from different cultures and in different contexts. The analysis will show that interlocutors in my data use a variety of speaker interventions and display remarkable sensitivity to their mutual status as *lingua franca* communicators when doing so.

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David Crystal (2003): *English as a Global Language. Second Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anita Wolfartsberger was educated at the University of Vienna where she graduated with a degree (Mag.<sup>a</sup> phil.) in German and English language and literary studies in January 2005. During her studies she spent a year in the UK as an ERASMUS exchange student (2002-03) at the University College London (UCL) and the [NYU in](#) London. She joined the Institute for English Business Communication in October 2005.

Her research interests lie in sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, theater and drama studies, and the theory and practice of language teaching. She has recently published a book on the role of Viennese cabaret and political-satirical drama during the Nazi reign in Austria. Since 2006, she has been working on her doctoral thesis on the pragmatics of ELF (English as a *lingua franca*) in workplace settings.