

## 53-522 Language and Culture

### Seminar III

Dozent: Prof. Peter Siemund

[ENG-10, ENG-11, AA7, AA9, LAA8, LAA11, ENGAGE-M4, ENGAGE-M6]

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Not observing the cultural conventions associated with various utterances can bring you into serious trouble. For example, if your cultural code says that offers must be declined on their first voicing and may only be accepted in a second turn, this may leave you starved in a culture that expects to accept offers right away. Similarly, if the use of certain linguistic procedures – say, the imperative form – is barred from certain contexts of use in culture A, but permitted or even required in culture B, this is bound to cause misunderstandings. To add yet another example, making appointments is highly culture-specific with there being diverging assumptions about what it means to meet at, say, five o'clock tomorrow. The fundamental problem here is that while we all readily concede that languages are different, we are usually less aware of the fact that the cultural scripts behind these languages may also be quite different.

This seminar offers you the opportunity to explore cultural conventions in relation to their means of expression. We will be examining a number of basic cultural frames that can be expected to occur in practically all cultures, though they may follow radically different conventions, such as, for example, seeking information, requesting, commanding, offering, promising, reprimanding, warning, greeting, service encounters, making appointments, raising complicated topics, circumnavigating taboos, transporting bad news, proposing, and so on and so forth.

The seminar falls into two parts. It begins with several sessions dedicated to settling important theoretical and methodological issues. Following that, we will be exploring a number of case studies illustrating cross-culturally divergent background assumptions and strategies of encoding.

Course requirements: Presentation + term paper

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, Juliane House, and Gabriele Kasper (eds.). 1989. *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Brown, Penelope and Stephen Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals of Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clark, Herbert. 1996. *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gass, Susan and Joyce Neu (eds.). 1996. *Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Levinson, Stephen. 2003. *Space in Language and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Siemund, Peter 2018. *Speech Acts and Clause Types*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sharifian, Farzad. 2017. *Cultural Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Wierzbicka, Anna. 2009. *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics. The Semantics of Human Interaction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.