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Asymmetries of Knowledge in Intercultural
Communication: The Relevance of Cultural
Repertoires of Communicative Genres

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Asymmetries of Knowledge in Intercultural Communication: The Relevance of Cultural Repertoires of Communicative Genres

Susanne Günthner & Thomas Luckmann

1. Asymmetries of knowledge in communication

1.1. The reciprocity of perspectives and asymmetries of knowledge

What is intercultural communication or, more accurately, as cultures do not communicate with each other except in a vaguely metaphorical sense, what is communication between members of different cultures? Does it differ radically from communication between members of the same culture? Does it differ generically or is it a species of the one genus of human communication?

Consider the following transcript of a brief communicative episode which occurred during a longer sequence of social interaction. Consider it carefully. Similar episodes are so familiar to all of us that we hardly ever spend a thought on them. But if we stop and think for a moment, we see that, trivial as they are, they exemplify two fundamental principles of human interaction just as well as episodes in which weightier matters are decided.

DINNER AT BAO'S AND GUO'S

(Kurt and Uli were invited by their friends, a Chinese couple, to have dinner at their home. Guo, the husband, had lived in Germany for several years before he was joined there a few months ago by his wife Bao).

((Bao stellt einen weiteren Teller mit chinesisches Essen auf den Tisch.))

((Bao places another Chinese dish on the table))

1Bao: eß- essen Sie!

ea- eat!

2Kurt: hh' nein. hh' danke. ich bin sch' schon VÖLLIG. SATT.

hh' no. hh' thanks. I am totally full.

3Bao: ja. nehm- nehmen Sie.

well. tak- take some.

4Guo: du MUßT nicht I:MMER SAGEN. eh.

you don't have to keep on saying this. eh.

5 das NICHT notwendig bei DEUTSCHEN. ja?

this is not necessary when you are with Germans. right?

6Kurt&Uli: hihihhi

7Uli: eh: nein. VIE:LEN Dank. wir habn ECHT' (-) sind ECHT SATT.

eh: no. thanks a lot. we really had (-) we really have had enough.

- 8 aber s'hat ganz TOLL GESCHMECKT.=
but it was very delicious.=
- 9Kurt: = WIRKLICH.
= very.
- 10Guo ((zu Bao)): die DEUTSCHEN soll man n'nicht so DRÄNG?
you shouldn't urge?
- 11 DRÄNGELN ja. sie NEHMEN wann sie wollen. ja.
push the Germans. yes. they help themselves. whenever they like. yes.
- 12 macht mal keine SO:RGE.
don't worry about it.
- 13Bao: hihihihi
- 14Kurt: jaja. ich NEHM dann schon.
yes.yes. I will help myself.
- 15Guo: die Deutschen ja. (-) sind so nicht so sehr ja BESCHEI:DEN.
the Germans well. (-) are not so very shy
- 16 hahahah. SO. IST DAS. hihi[hihi]
hahahah. that's the way it is. hihi[hihi]
- 17Kurt: [hihi]hihi.

The slight problem concerning appropriate etiquette at table obviously arose because Bao assumed that what is demanded by Chinese good manners - urging one's guests to eat - is proper behaviour everywhere. Her husband, however, had been living in Germany long enough to learn that this is not the case. He therefore instructed his wife in the German version of table manners, thematizing the difference in terms of national character. - We shall not engage in a closer analysis of the management of the interaction sequence by all concerned, including Uli and Kurt. Our present interest in this episode is to show that two closely related principles underlying human action are at work here.

The first of the two principles - it was called the general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives by Alfred Schuetz - is the fundamental, though tacit, assumption built into the human perception of reality. It guides human action in the social world. Normal people assume that other people, if not apes and dogs, are basically like themselves. Under the same circumstances and other things being equal - so goes the assumption - they would feel, think, and act like them.

The second principle has a different status than the first. It is not a second tacit assumption added to the first. It takes the form of specific and explicit knowledge which modifies the concrete operation of the first principle. One soon learns that circumstances are rarely the same and that other things are hardly ever equal. This knowledge is marked by different degrees of explicitness, specificity - and accuracy. It restricts the indiscriminate working of the first principle by defining the conditions under which it can be applied. Adults, although

like children in many ways, are different in others. Men are both like and unlike women. Americans and Chinese have certain things in common but not others.

The first principle constitutes an elementary moral dimension of all social interaction; its adjustments by the second define the reach of the concrete versions of morality in different historical societies. Without modification, if such an extreme case were imaginable, the first principle would result in an inability to see in others anything but oneself. The much - and sometimes justly - maligned varieties of anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism represent less extreme collective varieties of such radical egocentrism. On the other hand, complete neglect of the first principle would blank out the perception of the common humanity of children and adults, men and women, Chinese and Americans. In the most extreme consequence it would lead to a soulless world for a solitary ego. The two extreme cases are rare, although they do occur in the pathology of the human mind. The "normal" (and the "moral") case consists in seeing the differences where the differences count while maintaining the basic assumptions of a common humanity.

The social stock of knowledge of various societies differ significantly in the degrees to which the first principle is modified by the second. They differ in the selection of the differences to which great weight is attached, and of differences which are considered negligible. Evidently, what a person knows about what is relevantly the same and what is relevantly different in the social world, is drawn only in small part from direct experience. The main part of such knowledge is derived from the social stock of knowledge of the society into which the individual is born and in which the person grows up. Some elements of this knowledge are transmitted early in life by parents and peers, and others later also by teachers and various media of mass communication. Such knowledge is brought INTO the situation, helps to DEFINE the situation, and - if the inclination to resist change is overcome - may be modified by experience drawn FROM the situation.

By definition, no interaction problems could arise in a closed society with a perfectly equal distribution of knowledge from disparities in knowledge among their members - whatever other causes might lead to them. Neither could specifically communicative problems arise in such a society because all knowledge pertinent to communication would be of course also shared by everybody. Needless to say, such a society never existed, and socio-logically, could not exist. But while imagining, one might as well continue to think not only of a single closed society but of an encompassing world society in which all knowledge would be equally distributed. At the end of this rainbow, there would be no problems either of "intracultural" or "intercultural" communication.

However, despite certain trends of globalization on some levels and some areas of socio-economic organization, there not only were but are and will be many societies. And these societies are and will be marked by a relatively high degree of inequality in the distribution of the social stock of knowledge. At best, one may postulate that - as no society can exist without a common core of knowledge, including knowledge pertinent to communication, which is shared by everybody - in societies of the same general type, as in modern industrial societies, there will be a common core of knowledge, possibly also of some knowledge pertinent to "intercultural" communication, shared by the members of these societies.

However, although a certain amount of general and specifically communicative knowledge must be shared by everybody in any society, the amount of that knowledge may differ significantly not only from one type of society to another, e.g., from nomadic-pastoral to modern industrial, but even with the same general type, e.g., Japan and the USA. Even more significant than the differences in the amount of common knowledge is the variation in the extent to which specialized knowledge has evolved in different societies - and this holds, although to a lesser degree, even for societies of the same general type. The unequal access to specialized knowledge and the corresponding lack or possession of it need not have serious consequences in all areas of institutionalized as well as informal social interaction. But it does give rise to a variety of general interaction and specifically communicative problems in some areas of social life, as, for example, in professional-client relations, bureaucrat-citizen interaction etc. Such problems may be compounded in the case of "intercultural" communication.

In sum, social interaction in general and communication in particular require a definable (as to type and level) amount of shared knowledge. Much of that knowledge is derived from the same social stock of (unequally distributed) knowledge or, in the case of "intercultural" communication from different (but in some areas possibly similar) social stocks of knowledge. The KINDS of disparities and the DEGREE of disparity in knowledge pertinent to social interaction in general and to communication in particular determine the structural context of social interaction and communication. They are at the root of many problems of social interaction and of most problems of communication.

Evidently, there are not only structural inequalities of knowledge, participants in interaction and communication also have some - more or less accurate and possibly also asymmetrical - knowledge about the relevant disparities. Social interaction and communication not only require a minimum of shared knowledge, they also require a minimum of what is relevantly the same and what is relevantly different among the participants. "Anticipatory interaction

planning" (Goody, 1978) and "recipient design" in "intra- and intercultural" communication presuppose some symmetrical knowledge about the asymmetries of knowledge and the extent to which these may become relevant.

The line separating general interactional knowledge, e.g., table manners, from specific communicative knowledge, e.g., the meaning of words or the rules regulating their employment in different communicative situations cannot be sharply drawn. Both kinds of knowledge provide the "context" necessary to understand the "text". Gumperz called such knowledge "knowledge about the conventions of contextualization". Very often the two kinds of knowledge are incorporated into what we call communicative genres.

1.2. When joking is not funny

The following episode occurred during the latter part of an informal dinner to which Anna and Klaus were invited by their Chinese friend Hong. Hu, a friend of Hong's, was also present. Conversation was lively, mostly in a jocular mode. Hu was the "soul of the party", telling one joke after another and contributing witty observations to the general conversation. The episode transcribed below was preceded by a series of jokes, told alternatively by Hu and Hong, about Li Peng in which he was presented as "stupid" and "simple minded". After a few joshing remarks about Anna recording the conversation there was a shift to the topic of psychology and psychiatry which, in turn, led Klaus to the statement about the location of the psychiatric hospital of the district with which the transcript begins. Hu takes it up from there.

GEISTIG BEHINDERT (*MENTALLY RETARDED*)

- 1Klaus: die Klinik liegt eh aufm Weg nach Ahstadt.
the hospital is eh on the way to Astadt.
- 2Hu: ah: ja. (0.5) ich bin einmal zuFÄLLIG in dieses Gebiet geRA:TEN,
I see. (0.5) once I found myself in that area by accident
- 3 dann hat mich ge↑SCHOCKT.
I was very shocked
- 4 vie((hi))le Leute kucken mich SO: ↑KO((hi))MISCH hihhi an. hihhi
ma((hi))ny people stared at me in such a wei((hi))rd way hihihihhi.
- 5 (1.0)
- 6Hong: ↑<hihhihhihhi>
- 7 (1.5)
- 8Hu: bin hihhi SOFORT abgeHAUN. [hihi]
I hightailed it out of there [hihi]
- 9Hong: [hihi]hihhi
- 10 (2.0)
- 11Hu: weißt du ich HABE noch NIE so: eh also eh?
you know I've never before seen such eh well eh?

- 12 so MA:SSENHAFT eh g- geistig Behindert gesehn.
such a large bunch of eh m- mentally retarded people
- 13Anna: hm.
- 14 (0.5)
- 15Hu: eh: ja GUT. hh' der Minister-
eh: yes well. hh' I don't know the prime-
- 16 Ministerpräsident Li PENG kenne ich nicht hihihihhi
prime minister Li Peng by person hihihihhi
- 17A&K: hihihihihihhi]
- 18Hu: [hahahahaha]
- 19Hong: [hahahahaha]
- 20Anna: in China sieht man DIE nich so (-) oder?
in China you don't see them very often (-) do you?

Hu marks prosodically as well as by the formulaic "once I found myself ..." (line 2) the beginning of a story, first providing its setting and then (line 4) signalling by the series of giggles that the story to come was of the amusing, jocular kind. The lack of response for a full second, followed by a belated giggle by Hong (line 6) which is again followed by a pause of a second and a half augurs ill for the reception of the story in the intended mode. Hu continues with his story nonetheless but only Hong acknowledges its presumed comic character. After an even lengthier pause Hu begins to repair the situation with the explanation of his behaviour at the time (11-12). Anna barely acknowledges the attempt (line 13). Hu's situational wit, making use of the established butt of dim-wit jokes, Li Peng (15-16) is more successful and Anna and Kurt join in the laughter. He somewhat "saved" the situation. However, Anna not only returns to the topic of mentally retarded people (referring to them by the pronoun "DIE" (*them*), but also leaves the jocular modality: A "serious" sequence about mentally retarded institutions in China starts.

The episode illustrates the observation that the line between interactional and specifically communicative problems is often blurred. There may be areas of knowledge pertaining to interaction in which the lack of shared knowledge leads to problems that have little or nothing to do with communication. And there are areas of communication in which the lack of shared knowledge (of the meaning of words, of grammar) may lead to communicative problems in the narrowest sense of the term. But the above episode shows what is likely to be a frequent and often more than merely embarrassing problem is the asymmetry of relevant knowledge. It is the complex "ethnothereotical" knowledge about "language in use", knowledge about *communicative genres*, the styles of their employment and situational modalizations.

Communicative genres are historically and culturally specific, fixed solutions to recurrent communicative problems. On the one hand, they guide the interactants' expectations about

what is to be said (and done) in the pre-defined types of situations. On the other hand, they are the sediments of socially relevant communicative processes. Only those processes are likely to congeal into genres which are of some relevance to the social actors (Luckmann 1986; Günthner/Knoblauch 1994).

Knowledge about communicative genres not only includes the knowledge of elements constitutive of a particular genre, but also knowledge about the appropriate use of GENRES, i.e. when to use or not to use what genre.

"...the use of genres is normally linked to clearly defined types of social situations. A given genre may never appear in one type of communicative situation, rarely in another, frequently in still another, and always in some. From the point of view of the actor's knowledge there may be situations in which he is forced to use a particular communicative genre, others in which the matter is optional and he is merely likely to do so, and still others in which he will rigorously avoid its use." (Luckmann 1989:11)

Thus, whenever genres are employed, the production and interpretation of interactive sequences are not only constrained by the local linguistic organization of the utterance and the general etiquette of communication but are in addition prepatterned by the generic model.

As historical and cultural products, communicative genres are, however, open to change and cultural variation. If we take communicative genres as socially constructed solutions which organize, routinize, and standardize the dealing with particular communicative problems, it seems quite obvious that different cultures may construct different solutions for specific communicative problems. Moreover, whereas in one culture there may be generic ways of handling particular communicative activities, in another culture interactants may use spontaneous forms instead. Thus, the repertoire of communicative genres varies from culture to culture.

In situations in which members of different cultures communicate with one another, they "start" with different but possibly partly similar repertoires of communicative genres. They also enter the situation with some knowledge about such differences and similarities, and that knowledge may be more or less accurate - depending on the extent to which the basic principle of the reciprocity of perspectives was modified by adequate and pertinent experience. The DINNER AT BAO'S AND GUO'S example showed both an unmodified and a modified element of interactional knowledge. The MENTALLY RETARDED example showed that even in the case where two different cultural repertoires share, in general terms, the same element, the genre of jocular stories, they may differ with regard to some of the rules of employment of the genre - or more accurately, of some of its sub-genres.

More generally: a given communicative problem (e.g., lamenting for the dead) may be "institutionalized" as a communicative genre in some societies, but not in others.¹ Lack of knowledge about such differences may lead to problems in some situations. A good deal more treacherous, however, are situations into which the participants enter with repertoires of similar genres (scholarly discussions, sermons, jocular stories) or minor forms (greetings) with inadequate knowledge about the differences in the mode of employment of the genre, stylistic variations and subgenres etc.

2. Asymmetries of knowledge in communication between members of different cultures

2.1. Asymmetries in general knowledge

It bears repeating that asymmetries of knowledge are characteristic of all communication. Different kinds and levels of knowledge are involved. Beyond the amount of shared knowledge which is a minimal condition for any communication, there is asymmetry both in the general knowledge that may become interactively relevant, and in specifically communicative knowledge. Furthermore, communication would be difficult or impossible if the participants did not have some knowledge of these asymmetries, a knowledge which also tends to be asymmetrical. This cannot but add to the problems whose cause in communicative interaction are the basic asymmetries in general and specifically communicative knowledge.

These observations apply to communication among members of the same society. Does it need to be said that they apply, a fortiori, to communication between people of different cultures? First of all, the basic asymmetries are more pronounced. (One may postulate different combinations; e.g., good knowledge and command of the "foreign" language and little general knowledge of this society and culture; many similarities between the two societies and cultures and correspondingly weak asymmetries in knowledge but poor knowledge of the language and the use of language). In the second place, the knowledge ABOUT these asymmetries is likely to be (even) less adequate than in "intracultural" communication. In sum, most of the problems arising because of the asymmetries in the two kinds and on the two levels of knowledge in "intracultural" communication will be generally more severe in "intercultural" communication.

Our topic here is not the general one of all asymmetries of knowledge affecting communication between members of different societies and cultures. The focus of our interest is the nature of the problems which arise in "intercultural" communication because the persons engaging in it do not share the same repertoire of communicative genres, and because

their knowledge about similarities and differences in the use of genres is much less adequate than is generally the case among members of the same society. It will be helpful, however, to begin with a few brief observations on simpler asymmetries in "intercultural" communication. They may help to prepare the ground for the discussion of the more complex topic of communicative genres.

Until evidence to the contrary appears in interaction, members of the same society who engage in communicative interaction with one another tacitly assume that others share with them the requisite core of specifically communicative knowledge as well as a certain amount of general knowledge about physical and social reality, knowledge which may become interactively relevant. Usually they are able roughly to estimate that amount with the help of their awareness of the social distribution of knowledge in their society and of the typical social positions and social biographies associated with that distribution. "Reading" the social position of the persons with whom one interacts is thus an important part of the "contextual" knowledge which forms the unproblematic background of communication among members of the same society. The reciprocal "recipient designs" employed by them are more frequently than not adequate for the purpose at hand and are corroborated as interaction progresses. Should they turn out to be inadequate they can be usually modified by the "repair procedures" available in their communicative culture and therefore, even though unequally, shared with the others.

In "intercultural" communication, however, the participants know far less well how to modify correctly the general principle of the reciprocity of perspectives which underlies the assumption of shared knowledge. Their "recipient designs" must be even more tentative than in situations in which they could unproblematically assume that background knowledge is shared to a sufficient extent. If they at first naively presuppose that table manners which are proper in China are proper everywhere and that jokes that are funny at home will be funny in other places, they are soon shown the error of their ways. They cannot help but recognize that they are strangers.²

Moreover, not only must "recipient designs" be more tentative in "intercultural" situations, they cannot become automatic as they do at home in routine communicative situations. Still another circumstance adds to the difficulties. People engaging in communication with others who do not belong to the same society and culture are usually less likely to perceive that difficulties arising as interaction progresses may be due to their own "recipient design" and more likely to attribute them to other causes. (Stereotypes for such attributions are easily available in the respective "home" cultures). But even if they do recognize faults in the

"recipient design", they are less likely to have the resources to modify them successfully. "Repair procedures" may differ from one culture to another.

As in "intracultural" communication one of the main sources of faulty "recipient designs" is overestimating or underrating the amount of knowledge shared with the recipient. In "intracultural" communication there is a preference for overestimating, probably because underestimating usually gives the appearance of "talking down" to the addressee. We do not know whether such a tendency also exists in "intercultural" communication. If the addressee marks a lack of understanding, a "teaching" sequence is initiated.³ This form of "repair" is of course also available in "intercultural" communication. (An example is given in the transcript BU 12). As for underestimation of shared knowledge, it may be plausible to assume that it is more often used unwittingly in "intercultural" communication; it may be even a form of modesty to assume that foreigners need not know much about one's own society. The recipient, however, may nonetheless perceive the performance according to the standards of his own communicative culture as an instance of "talking down". (Consider the example presented in the transcript QIN 1 below):

BU 12

- 1A: ja, Wang Meng hat das auch gesagt.
yes, Wang Meng also said so.
- 2B: wer? WANG wer?
who? WANG who?
- 3A: WANG MENG, ein ganz bekannter Schriftsteller in China.
WANG MENG, a very famous writer in China.
- 4 er ist jetzt auch der Vorsitzende des chinesischen Schriftstellerverbands.
he is also the president of the Chinese Writers' Association.
- 5B: ahja.
I see.

QIN 1

- 14Qin: wirtschaftliche Reform, die politische Reformen auch die kulturelle Reform
economic reform, the political reforms also the cultural reform
- 15 auch die Studienreform.
also reform at the university
- 16M: mhm.
- 17Qin: ich glaube vor der Kulturrevolution´
I think before the Cultural Revolution´
- 18 =ja=Sie=wissen=sicher=die=Kulturrevolution´
=yes=you=surely=heard=about=the=Cultural=Revolution´
- 19M: haha[ha ein weit ((HI)) verbreitetes ((HI)) Thema ((HI))]
haha[ha very ((HI)) common ((HI)) topic ((HI))]
- 20Q: [hi hahahahahahahahahahhhhhahaha]
- 21M&Q: hahaahahahahahahhhahahahahah
- 22M: [wenn man]

- 23Qin: *[if you]*
 [ja vor] der Kulturrevolution ja,
[yes before] the Cultural Revolution yeah,
 24 dann werden ja auch die Absolventen aus der Mittelschule
then also the graduates from middle school
 25 ja direkt (-) zur Universität schick- eh GESCHICKT
yeah were sen- sent directly (-) to the university

2.2. Asymmetries in genre-related knowledge

2.2.1. The internal structure of communicative genres

Some preliminary remarks on communicative genres in relation to the asymmetries of knowledge in "intercultural" communication were made at the end of the first section. For our present purpose it is not necessary to expand these remarks beyond the observation that asymmetries characterize knowledge on all three levels which constitute the structure of communicative genres.

The internal structure of communicative genres consists of:

"overall patterns of diverse elements, such as words and phrases, registers, formulas and formulaic blocs, rhetorical figures and tropes, stylistic devices (metrics, rhyme, lists, oppositions), prosodic melodies, specific regulations of dialogicity, repair strategies and prescriptions for topics and topical areas." (Luckmann 1992:39; translated by S.G./H.K.)

Asymmetries of knowledge concerning elements of the internal structure often lead to misunderstandings. An example of how differences in **prosodic features** may lead to different interpretations, and thus result in miscommunication, is discussed by Gumperz (1982). Indian and Pakistani women working at a British airport were perceived as surly and uncooperative by British speakers of English. This interpretation was based on the Indian intonation patterns used by these women: When customers in the cafeteria had chosen meat, they were asked whether they wanted gravy. A British employee would utter "gravy?" using rising intonation, whereas the Indian employees used falling intonation: "gravy.". This prosodic difference turned out to be relevant for the inferences drawn by the British customers: "Gravy." with a falling intonation contour was "not interpreted as an offer but rather as a statement, which in the context seems redundant and consequently rude". (Gumperz 1982:173). However, for the Indian speakers, this falling intonation was their conventional way of asking questions in that situation and did not imply any sign of rudeness or indifference.

Differences in the use of communicative genres and patterns on the level of the internal structure also include **lexico-semantic elements**⁴, **phonological devices**⁵, **syntactical patterning**⁶ as well as the selection of specific **linguistic varieties**⁷ and **elements of facial expression and gesture**. For example, Gumperz/Roberts' (1987) study of counselling sessions between British and Indian counsellors and clients in British neighborhood centers offers an example of culturally different use of gaze: Whereas Indian speakers "use gaze to monitor interlocutor's reactions, to determine possible turn transition points or to ask for the floor and call attention to new information", British speakers "seek to meet the interlocutor's gaze when they are addressing them or listening to what they are saying". These nonverbal differences regularly lead to irritations between the clients and social workers in the analyzed interactions.

Also asymmetries of knowledge concerning **rhetoric figures** in communicative genres may create problems: Gumperz' (1982) study of political speeches reveals striking differences in rhetoric strategies used by Black and White speakers. Typical Afro-American rhetorical strategies, such as the metaphoric use of "to kill someone" for "destroying someone's political influence" may lead to serious disagreement on the interpretation of what is said.

Apart from prosodic and verbal elements, there may be differences in **minor forms** - such as **stereotypes, idioms, common places, proverbs, formulas, riddles and inscriptions** - especially differences in the rules governing their incorporation in larger communicative genres.

In argumentative sequences, Chinese speakers frequently refer to **proverbial sayings** (*cheng-yu*) in order to back up their arguments.⁸ Studies on Chinese rhetoric report that proverbial sayings are traditionally used to support one's argument, as the power to convince traditionally relies on analogies and on citations of recognized authorities, anecdotes and sayings (Granet 1985; Günthner 1991). By employing these communicative forms, speakers not only present their own assertions as being part of traditional and still valid collective wisdom but also demonstrate their good education and show their strong links with traditional norms and forms of wisdom. Instead of expressing individual opinions they quote socially approved ideas. The use of proverbs is not restricted to oral genres. Chinese writers (of, e.g. academic texts) often support their arguments by referring to traditional wisdom in form of a proverbial saying (Günthner 1988).

Seemingly similar communicative genres may vary in their **discursive organization**. As various studies show, unfamiliarity with the generic conventions of the co-participants often results in misinterpretations and inadequate attributions of motives. Kirkpatrick's (1991)

analysis of "information sequencing in Mandarin letters of request" reveals that Chinese letters of request reveal a preference for providing reasons first, before the main point (the request) is stated. The Chinese genre of request letters generally conforms to the following schema: salutation, preamble (facework), reasons, and then the request itself. Thus, in contrast to English request letters, Chinese not only produce extended facework which forms an integral part of the requests, but they also tend to place the reasons before the request itself.

"This appears to be a formalized way of framing requests. That is to say, native speakers are able to identify these requests as well-written, normal, and polite long before they come to the requests themselves, because they are familiar with the structure of requests and the sequence in which the parts of a request are ordered. Changing the order, by moving the request to the beginning, results in a letter or request being marked as direct and possibly impolite." (Kirkpatrick 1991:198).

Tyler/Davies' (1990) study of interactions between Korean teaching assistants and American students shows what they call **stylistic differences in the organizational pattern** of argumentation. When American students approached Korean teaching assistants by asking "How come I got such a low grade?", these used an "inductive/collaborative approach". They did not start by providing an overall statement but listed various errors, beginning with relatively minor procedural points. This strategy is considered by the Korean participants to be "less threatening and more face-saving" to the student. The American students, however, expecting a general statement of the problem, interpreted the strategy as a sign of incompetence. As Tyler/Davies (1990:402) point out:

"what from the Korean Teaching Assistant's perspective is a less confrontational discourse strategy, in this particular context, provides the framework for increased confrontation. The interlocutors appear to be operating from two different sets of expectations as to how the argument should progress. Each of the participants experiences the other's responses as jarring and irritating. As the exchange progresses, the discordant strategies, in concert with other mismatches, contribute to a reciprocal sense of non-cooperation."

A further example of cultural differences in the **discursive organization** of particular genres stems from Underwood/Gumperz' (1986/88) investigation of **interactive style** in courtroom testimony of American Indians: In answering the attorney's question, the Indian witnesses generally produce a narrative "which begins with a reference to how the knowledge was acquired and by whom the witness was told, as if the speaker needed to cite authority for each statement. Those parts of the answer that contain material relevant to the question that was

asked are embedded in the narrative, as if responsibility for the answer were not the individual's but the group's." (1988:6). As Gumperz (1988:7) points out, narrative forms here serve as a verbal strategy to conform to native American norms in producing statements that reflect authority of the group. The speaker foregrounds the fact that what is said reflects the tribe's position not any one person's belief or opinion.

Thematic features also represent elements of the internal structure of communicative genres. As our transcript MENTALLY RETARDED demonstrated, there may be cultural differences concerning the topics adequate for joking and treating in jocular stories. Kotthoff's (1991: 251-253) analysis of "toasts" in Caucasian Georgia shows, that these make use of a thematic canon: "peace, the guests, the parents, the dead, the children, friendship, love, the women whose beauty embellishes the table". Foreigners unaware of canonic themes may cause embarrassment by choosing for their toasts inadequate subjects.

2.2.2. Asymmetries on the situative level of genres in use

This level consists of those elements which are part of the **ongoing interaction**, i.e. the **interactive organization of conversations**, including **patterns of turn-taking, preference organizations, strategies for longer stretches of conversation** and the **participation framework**.⁹

In her study of dinner conversations among New Yorkers and Californians, Tannen (1984) shows that because of different ways of turn-taking management, misunderstandings arise. The New Yorkers have different **turn-taking rules** and conventions to show conversational involvement: they use much overlap and latching, a fast rate of speech and avoid internal pauses. The result is that the East Coast speakers continuously take the floor, the West Coast participants waiting in vein for a pause they deem long enough for them to start talking. Whereas the "fast" speakers think that the others have nothing to say, the "slow" ones feel that they are not given a chance to talk.

Various studies of intercultural encounters demonstrate differences in the **signalling of attentive listening**.¹⁰ Research in the organization of "backchannel" activities in different cultures¹¹ shows that recipients' reactions differ in at least two respects: the frequency of producing "backchannel" signals and the types of verbal elements employed in specific communicative genres. Erickson/Shultz' (1982) analysis of interactive strategies used by Black and White students and counsellors in counselling sessions in American colleges also demonstrates culture-specific ways of showing that one is listening attentively. White speakers employ specific syntactic and prosodic means to signal "listening-response relevant-

moments" and thereby demonstrate that they expect recipient reactions. Their White co-participants understand these contextualization cues and produce the expected recipient reactions at the "right" moments. Black speakers, however, who are not familiar with the White speaking style, do not understand these cues and refrain from producing recipient signals. The absence of expected reactions leads the White speakers to reformulate and recycle their utterances, give hyperexplanations and "talk down". (Erickson/Shultz 1982:132). White recipients also tend to show more explicitly than Black recipients that they are listening attentively by applying verbal and non-verbal cues. Consequently, White speakers do not notice the subtle signals of Black recipients and provide further explications, repetitions etc.

Concerning **preference organization** in communicative genres, various cultural differences are to be observed. Schiffrin's (1984) analysis of Philadelphian Jewish argumentative styles demonstrates that there is a preference for the production of disagreement. In German argumentation, direct disagreement also seems to be preferred (Knoblauch 1991; Günthner 1993; Kotthoff 1993b). In intercultural argumentation, however, different preferences systems may lead to irritation. As Naotsuka/Sakamoto et al. (1981: 173-174) remark, in Japanese direct confrontation is avoided in favor of communicative harmony. Europeans' way of showing direct opposition is considered to be "rude".¹² In informal argumentations between German and Chinese students, different preferences systems concerning direct oppositional moves clash (Günthner 1993): whereas the German participants signal their disagreement directly by using dissent-formats (with the utterance containing the disagreement repeating parts of the prior utterance and either negating it or substituting central elements through contradictory devices), the Chinese participants tend to temporarily signal formal consent and in the following turn indicate a discordant position without formally marking it as a disagreement. Thus, instead of signalling dissent directly by an explicit opposition to the prior turn, Chinese participants often use additive conjunctions ("and") which formally signal a concordant continuation of the argument but in the following utterance they provide a semantically discordant statement. Direct confrontation and explicit antagonistic argumentative strategies are thus avoided. The German participants who take the formal signalling of concordance at face value are confused when a disagreement follows.

Culturally different preference structures may also show up in reactions to compliments. As Pomerantz (1984) remarks, - in observation of the principle that self-praise is to be avoided - reactions to compliments usually down-grade the compliment, shift referent, return the compliment or use appreciation tokens (i.e. "thanks a lot"). Thus, the response to a compli-

ment for an excellent dinner may contain downgrading (e.g. "The vegetables were overcooked"), a referent shift (e.g. "It's a recipe John gave me") or by an appreciation (e.g. "Thank you"). In the Chinese context, however, accepting a compliment with *feichang xie xie* 'thanks a lot' would be considered inappropriate and be interpreted as a sign of arrogance. Instead, the receiver of a compliment for a meal is expected to downgrade extensively the assessment, e.g. by denying the excellence of the food or by refuting his or her capacity to cook (*wo zuo cai, zuo de bu hao, qing yuanliang*) (Günthner 1993). Thus, in intercultural contexts, asymmetries of knowledge concerning the preference organization of communicative forms may lead to misinterpretation.

Philips' (1972) analysis of **participation structures** in classroom interactions in Warm Springs (Oregon) reveals striking differences between Indian and White children. Non-Indian teachers continuously complain that Indian children show a great deal of reluctance to talk and participate in various verbal activities in the classroom. As Philips points out, this "failure to participate" is based on the "social condition for participation" which exists in the class situation and which the Indian children are not accustomed to. In traditional Indian learning contexts, the use of speech is notably minimal, and one observes others and starts with private self-testing before one demonstrates one's skills. In Western classroom interactions, however, the prevailing assumption is that one learns more effectively by practising even if it involves making mistakes. As Indian children are neither accustomed to such public "exhibition" nor to the fact that they cannot choose the proper time for demonstration of their skills, they refrain from participating. A further reason for the absence of participation is that Indian children are not used to interactive structures in which one person (such as the teacher) overtly controls the activity of other people in the interacting group.¹³

2.2.3. Asymmetries on the level of the external structure of communicative genres and patterns

The external structure of genres consists of definitions of **communicative milieus**, **communicative situations**, the **selection of types of actors** (according to gender, age, status etc.), **the relationship between the actors**, and the **institutional distribution of genres**.

Asymmetries of knowledge about **communicative milieus** and **communicative situations** in which established communicative forms and genres are appropriately used or avoided may lead to serious communicative and interactional problems.¹⁴ These problems tend to be particularly severe in institutional contexts. In Chinese-German interaction, for example, Chinese speakers make significantly more frequent use of proverbs. They do so not only in informal

communication but also in academic discourse such as lectures, essays, theses etc. In China this is a mark of the well-educated person possessing good rhetorical skills. As Bao (cf. DINNER AT BAO'S AND GUO'S) originally did with Chinese table manners, Chinese scholars tend to apply their genre-linked knowledge to communication with strangers and to communication in the foreign language. When writing German, for example, they begin German lectures and written contributions with German proverbs (in many Chinese universities the teaching of foreign languages includes teaching of proverbs in the respective languages) such as "the first step is always the most difficult" (Aller Anfang ist schwer), "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" (Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr). (Günthner 1988).

Asymmetries may also exist in the knowledge concerning the gender-determined rules of genre-use. In Caucasian Georgia "toasting" is an important, ritualized male genre, its competent use a mark of masculinity. Those men who lack rhetoric abilities of toasting "are considered unmanly". If a foreigner refuses to offer a toast or if his toast appears "too modest", his "masculinity" is questioned. In informal situations, women may also occasionally take over the role of toasting-masters. In formal situations, however, the toast-master inevitably is a man. In intercultural encounters, when foreign women are invited to formal dinner-parties, they embarrass their hosts as they assume that toasting is expected from all guests and "usurp" the role of toast-master (Kotthoff 1991).

Asymmetries may also exist in the less easily definable knowledge of communicative styles and modalizations of genres. An example given by von Helmolt (1994) shows the differences between French and German engineers participating in a joint working session. The French participants repeatedly shifted from a serious task-oriented mode of discourse to a light-hearted jocular one (marked both non-verbally by facial expressions, gestures, laughter and by allusion to shared background knowledge, teasing etc.). For the French this was a phatic activity, "un clin d'oeil complice", for the Germans a sign of disinterest or misplaced frivolity. Miller (1994) describes intercultural problems arising between Japanese and American business people because of cultural differences in the **institutional organization of communicative forms and genres**. For American business people meetings are "thought to be the appropriate place in which to persuade people or try to change their minds" (Miller 1994:224). They expect decision-making and the resolution of conflict in the meeting. This contrasts sharply with the Japanese understanding of business meetings. Consensus is achieved before the formal meeting. The participants meet in bars, cafes etc., where they argue and try to iron out differences of opinion before the actual meeting. The formal meeting

itself is to bestow ritual approval to what went on before it. This kind of pre-meeting activity called "nemawashi" (spadework) does not have negative connotations in Japan. As Miller (1994:226) points out, "interactants often assume that the problem relates to fundamental differences in national character. As a case in point, we are constantly reminded of a difference between Japanese and Americans which is uncritically accepted and habitually repeated: Japanese, we are told, are always indirect and ambiguous, while Americans are presumably unable to be anything but direct and pushy (...)."

Misunderstandings and misapprehensions which result from asymmetries in specifically communicative knowledge, especially in knowledge related to communicative genres tend to have particularly grave consequences when they occur in "gate-keeping" situations of various institutions. Access to education, occupational career, health are affected by decisions in such situations. Substantial asymmetries of knowledge, when combined with maximal inequalities of power may become - to put it somewhat dramatically - a matter of life and death.

Scollon/Scollon (1981:180ff.) report that in Alaskan state courts, for certain classes of offences - gravity of offence and prior record being kept constant - jail sentences were consistently longer for Alaskan Natives than for Whites. On examining pre-sentence reports, the authors found that those for the Natives reported the absence of any plans for the future. White Americans, in contrast, regularly stressed their intention of returning to a job (or to school) and expressed their desire to improve themselves. This culturally approved way of "putting your best foot forward" most likely influenced the White American legal professional assessment of the accused.

These examples, among others, illustrate the proposition made earlier that asymmetries of knowledge or various kinds and on various levels, although constitutive of all communication, give rise to a variety of problems, and that most of these problems will be more severe in "intercultural" than "intracultural" communication. When members belonging to different societies and cultures communicate with one another they usually - at least at first - proceed on the assumption of shared knowledge, an instance of the general principle of the reciprocity of perspectives. If they have no difficulty perceiving that a foreign language is a foreign language in words and grammar, they have difficulty NOT extrapolating their knowledge of the rules of language-in-use and, especially of communicative genres, to the situation. For misunderstandings and misapprehensions and failures of communication, most if not all cultures offer stereotypical blame (e.g., in terms of national character) rather than structural explanations (e.g. in terms of asymmetries of knowledge).

4. Asymmetries of knowledge concerning style and genre

When members of different cultures come to communicate with one another, they hardly ever do so without at least minimal knowledge of varying degrees of accuracy about the other culture and society and their features, including those (supposed) peculiarities which concern the rules of behavior and the etiquette of language use. They may know something about these features; just as often they merely think that they do. Some of their knowledge may have been acquired in previous experiences with members of the other culture. Other things (such as the resistance of stereotypes to correction) being equal, the more experience they have had with reasonable competent members of the culture, the better will be their knowledge of it. Some of their knowledge may have been acquired from other members of their own culture, and should they have no first-hand knowledge themselves, their knowledge will be just as reliable as that of their sources. Some of their knowledge may be even acquired in "official" instruction - which, as our next example will show, is no guarantee of its accuracy. Finally, much "knowledge" may have been picked up from vague hearsay.

In communicating with members of other cultures, one typically expects that they will act in a number of significantly different ways, and that they will expect that one should act accordingly. If one wishes to accommodate such expectations - which is usually the case in ordinary communicative situations - the accuracy of one's knowledge of the relevant features of the other culture will determine success or failure. Here one may say that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing!" Stereotypes of another culture tend to exaggerate (if not invent) certain features of other cultures and take them out of context. If accommodation in concrete communicative processes is based merely on such stereotypes as is not checked by experience or accurate information, it results in what may be called interactive hypercorrection. Hypercorrection may of course also pertain to the simpler features of communication, but it most significantly affects its higher stylistic and generic levels. Our first example amusingly illustrates how systematic misinformation leads to hypercorrection on the level of style and genre. In China, students are taught that Germans are very "direct" themselves and that they prefer "directness" in others. They are not told, however, what constitutes this peculiar German "directness" nor when it is to be used. In initial contacts with Germans many Chinese act upon this piece of "knowledge" in order to meet what they assume to be the expectations of the German addressees. They leave the safe ground of their own conventions and venture upon the thin ice of German "directness". No wonder that they

often break through and are considered impertinent by the Germans to whom their communications are addressed. This was amply demonstrated by a perusal of letters written by German students and scholars to German professors. Hypercorrection prevailed and produced something whose structural features were neither a German nor a Chinese genre, nor a pidginized hybrid - but still a kind of aborted genre whose regular structure bears the mark of an attempted solution of a communicative problem.

Customarily and expectedly, these letters begin with an address. No problem there yet. This is followed by an apology for "imposing" upon the addressee. So far, so good. But this is followed abruptly by a list of requests and demands. A typical example:

Sehr geehrter Herr Prof. Dr. Schmidt!¹⁵

Verzeihen Sie, daß ich Sie mit meinem Anliegen störe! Mein Name ist Liu Xiaobing. Ich arbeite als Dozent für Physik an der Hochschule in Nanjing. Ich möchte gerne bei Ihnen arbeiten. Ich brauche deshalb einen Laborplatz bei Ihnen. Können Sie ihn mir zur Verfügung stellen. Leider dauert mein Stipendium von der chinesischen Regierung nur ein Jahr. Doch ich möchte meine Doktorarbeit bei Ihnen schreiben. Bitte seien Sie so höflich und besorgen Sie mir ein Stipendium für die Doktorarbeit. Auch wichtige Forschungsliteratur ist in China nur schwierig zu bekommen. Deshalb brauche ich neuere Literatur von Ihnen. Schicken Sie die Bücher an meine Adresse in Nanjing.
Entschuldigen Sie meine Belästigung.

Dear Prof. Dr. Schmidt,

*Pardon me for troubling you with my problem. My name is Liu Xiaobing. I am working at the university in Nanjing as a physics teacher. I would like to work for you. Therefore I need a position in your laboratory. Would you be able to provide this for me? Unfortunately my scholarship from the Chinese government only last for one year. But I would like to write my dissertation with you. Please be so kind and arrange a scholarship for my dissertation. Important research material is difficult to come by in China. Therefore I need to get some literature from you. Please send the books to my private address in Nanjing.
Pardon me for my annoyance.*

A somewhat different problem concerning style and genre in intercultural communications is illustrated by the next example. As will be seen, this is not a matter of communicative style in any general sense. Nor is it a matter of knowledge concerning the internal structure of genre. The problem here is a strong asymmetry in the knowledge concerning the proper use of genres. The example is extracted from a transcript of table talk. The participants are two Germans, Anna and Bernd, and Bernd's Chinese girl-friend Zhao. Anna mentions a friend

who is about to visit China and who was advised by Chinese acquaintances of his to get himself vaccinated against cholera.

CHOLERA IN CHINA

- 1 Anna: und sie wurden auch geIMPFT,
and they were also vaccinated,
- 2 und HÄTTEN jetzt also ihm geraten
and would have also advised him
- 3 wenn=er=nach=Kina=geht==
that when he goes to China
- 4 er soll sich ≠IMPFEN lassen.
that he should get a vaccination.
- 5 Zhao: mhm.
- 6 Anna: die KÜSTE entlang,
along the coast,
- 7 also von Xiamen, Shanghai hoch sei [CHOLERA]
that is from Xiamen, to Shanghai there's supposed to be cholera
- 8 Zhao: [hm. hm.]
- 9 Zhao: das könnte ich mir vorstellen.
I can believe that
- 10 weil wir (-) weil Schina eben ja in diesem JAHR ziemlich viele
because China has yeah in this year rather a lot of
- 11 Überschwemmungen (.) HATTE,
flooding.
- 12 im NORden und SÜden,
in the North and South,
- 13 und man sagt normalerweise schon seit JahrTAUSENDE
and it's said that normally already for thousands of years
- 14 hatten wir NUR(.) entweder im SÜden (-)
we only have (.) either flooding in the South (-)
- 15 Überschwemmungen und im NORden dann Trok- DÜRRE.
and then in the North dry-drought.
- 16 Anna: mh[m]
- 17 Zhao: [o]der im Norden ÜÜberschwemmungen und im Süden ja
or in the North flooding and in the South yeah
- 18 Bernd: ja:h.
yes
- 19 Zhao: und diesmal haben wir im (-) im Nor-
and this time we have in the (-) in the Nor-
- 20 sowohl im Süden als auch im Norden
in the South as well as in the North
- 21 Anna: und dann meinst du daß dann?=
and then do you think that? =
- 22 Zhao: =es WIRD was passIEREN nach dem (-) e[hm]
something will happen according to the (-) ehm
- 23 Anna: [mhm]
- 24 Zhao: nach dem chinesischen Horos[kop]
according to the Chinese horoscope
- 25 Bernd: [HAHAHAHA][HAHAHAHAHAHAHA]
- 26 Anna: [HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA]

- 27Anna: ((lachend)) [<so was ÄHNLICHES dacht ich mir jetzt schon]
 ((laughing)) <I was just thinking something like that >
- 28Bernd: [ha]
- 29Anna: [wie sie das erzählt hat hahahahahahahahahahaha]
how she told that hahahahahahahahahahaha
- 30Bernd: [ha]
- 31Bernd: ((lachend)) <(für mich) ich hab immer noch geglaubt>
 ((laughing)) <(for myself) I was still assuming >
- 32 ((lachend)) <es kommt [rationalen nachvollzieh- (.)>
 ((laughing)) <there's a rational reconstructable- (...)>
- 33Anna: [(.....)]
- 34Bernd: ((lachend)) <[es kommt ein rational >
 ((laughing)) <there's a rational reconstructable >
- 35Zhao: [(.....)]
- 36Bernd: nachvollziehbarer Zusammenhang[(.....)]
connection coming
- 37Anna: [(.....)]
- 38Zhao: [man hat]
they have
- 39Zhao: sogar gesagt [man hat sogar VORHER]
they even said they even forecasted
- 40Bernd: [aber NEIN. NEIN.]
but no no
- 41Zhao: schon vorausgesagt, jetzt wird eben (.) der ehm (-)
it ahead of time now it will (.) the ehm (-)
- 42 Ende des Jahres auf=jeden=Fall (-)
the end of the year in any case (-)
- 43 wird dann (-) eben (.) dann Persönlichkeiten sterben [die]
then some (-) well (.) then some personalities will die who
- 44Anna: [ahja]
really
- 45Zhao: die Weltpolitik oder die Welt (-) die Welt eben =
primarily have a strong influence
- 46Anna: =mhm
- 47Zhao: vor allem (-) stark beeinflussen.
on world politics or the world (-) well on the world
- 48Anna: naja Deng wär ja jetzt dran.
well it would be Deng's turn by now.

Zhao offers a possible explanation for the outbreak of cholera by reference to the recent floods (lines 9-12): "das könnte ich mir vorstellen. weil wir (-) weil Schina eben ja in diesem JAHR ziemlich viele Überschwemmungen (.) HATTE, im NORden und SÜden" (*I can believe that because China has yeah in this year rather a lot of flooding. in the North and South,*) The ubiquitousness of the floods is unusual (13). Anna cuts in to ask what the consequences might be (21). Zhao's answer ("es WIRD was PASSIEREN nach dem (-) ehm nach dem chinesischen Horoskop" (*something will happen according to the (-) ehm*

according to the Chinese horoscope)) provokes loud laughter from the two Germans. Whereas Anna situates her laughter as an appropriate (appropriately superior?) response to the "irrational" folk beliefs expressed in the prophecy (in the form of a Chinese *ziran guilü* ; i.e. a 'rule of nature') and/or to Zhao's use of such a proverbial prophecy where a "reasonable" answer was to be expected?), Bernd does pretty much the same with the opposite method. He did at first expect, or so he says, a "rational" answer. Nothing loath, Zhao does not surrender. She does not thematize the unkind reception nor does she defend her position explicitly. She simply continues. But all that follows the original breach of expectation (a natural phenomenon such as floods and an epidemiological problem require a "rational" answer) and possibly of "intercultural etiquette" (not a very severe one among friends), is of no further interest here. Folk proverbial prophecies are known to Germans as well as Chinese. But whereas these are reasonable candidates for the explanation of cosmic (natural as well as political) affairs, they are placed in the realm of superstition in most contemporary German milieus.

Knowledge of genres and of their proper use forms a central dimension of the knowledge required for competent communicative interaction. All sorts of asymmetries in relevant knowledge can be "locally" repaired, if and when they are perceived as such. This is true of intra- as well as *intercultural* communication - in principle. For obvious reasons, asymmetries are both more pronounced and more frequent in intercultural communication. Where asymmetries are pronounced and where there is little willingness to perceive them as a consequence of "structural difference", they are taken to reflect individual incompetence or malice.

Such things are of passing interest in informal individual encounters. They may have grave consequences, however, when they appear in institutions in which decisions about access to social resources are made on the basis of the communicative skills and the effectiveness of self-presentation. Disturbances, breaches of expectation and the like in communicative interaction are often objectively attributable to "structural differences", but are in fact almost as often attributed individually to the member of the other culture who appears as client, petitioner etc. in an institutional context.

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¹ Cf. Feld (1990) on ritual lamenting among the Kaluli, Caraveli-Chaves (1980) among Greek women, Urban (1988) and Briggs (1992) among Warao women, Sherzer (1987) among the Kunas and Kotthoff (1993a) among Georgian women in the Caucasus.

² "... the cultural pattern of the approached group is to the stranger not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of investigation, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master." (Schuetz 1944:104)

³ Cf. Keppler/Luckmann (1991).

⁴ Cf. Gumperz (1982) on differences in Black and White political speech styles; and Gumperz/Aulakh/Kaltman (1982) on the different use of particles in Indian and British English.

⁵ Cf. Gumperz (1982) on phonological differences in Black and White American English; and in Indian and British English.

⁶ Cf. Günthner (1993) on syntactic features used by Chinese and German participants in intercultural argumentations.

⁷ Cf. Gumperz (1982).

⁸ See Günthner (1991b) on the use of proverbial sayings in Chinese interactions.

⁹ Cf. Luckmann (1992) and Günthner/Knoblauch (1994) on the "intermediate structure" of communicative genres.

¹⁰ Cf. Erickson/Shultz (1982) differences in White and Black American English; Maynard (1986) on differences in Japanese and American ways of backchannelling; Tao/Thompson (1991) on Japanese, Chinese and American differences; and Günthner (1993) on Chinese-German differences.

¹¹ For cross-cultural differences in recipient reactions see Günthner (1994).

¹² The same holds for argumentations in Thai culture (Richards/Sukwiwat 1983).

¹³ Cf. Erickson/Mohatt (1982) for similar findings on cultural organization of participation structures in classroom situations with Indian and White teachers.

¹⁴ Cf. Auer (1994) on West and East German conventions of handling job interviews.

¹⁵ All names are changed.