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## Understanding and Teaching Variations of Every-Day Business Language and Behavior in German-Speaking Countries

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# Understanding and Teaching Variations of Every-Day Business Language and Behavior in German-Speaking Countries

## Cover Page Footnote

1 The Language Guide for European Business: Successful Communication in International Trade, p. 7 [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/publications/european-business\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/publications/european-business_en.pdf) (accessed June 12, 2013). Some examples of Internet sites addressing “duzen” and “Siezen” are listed in the bibliography. Frankfurt Allgemeine, “Oberstaufer führt Duz- und Siezschalter ein.” July 12, 2011. Experiences with duzen- and siezen at City Hall Oberstaufer <http://www.oberstaufer.de/memo/deine-meinung-ist-uns-wichtig-a.html> (accessed Aug. 15, 2013. <http://german.about.com/b/2011/07/11/duzen-and-siezen-poll.htm> (accessed May 20, 2013). During the discussion after my presentation of the paper version of this article at the tri-continental Global Advances in Business Communication (GABC) conference at the University of Antwerp in May 2013, many German-speaking participants voiced their own ambiguity about when to use “Sie” and “du” in a business setting or when meeting new people. They shared many anecdotes of awkward situations and the French- and Flemish-speaking people added their consternation and uncertainty with the choices in their languages, and they also observed significant changes, especially among younger people who immediately address each other using the informal language patterns. At GABC conference 2013, several participants from German-speaking countries requested the questionnaire that they offered to send to their contacts in German-speaking corporations and businesses to help me with the collection of further data. The questionnaire does not include a question on shaking hands with customers/clients, but some answers included shaking hands in the answers In 1788, Adolphe Freiherr Knigge wrote an influential book *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (On Human Relations) on the fundamentals of human relations as a guide to behavior, politeness, and etiquette. The German word “Knigge” has become a metonym for “good manners” and is also used for books on etiquette. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolph\\_Freiherr\\_Knigge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolph_Freiherr_Knigge). See also: <http://knigge.com/main.html> (accessed June 10, 2013). The 5 Cs of foreign language teaching <http://globalteachinglearning.com/standards/5cs.shtml> (accessed June, 20, 2013). ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 <http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/> (accessed June 20, 2013). The phrases generally used are: “Du kannst mich XY nennen” (You can call me XY (first name) or “Lass uns duzen!” (Let’s use the “du-“form!). Sometimes, this change is offered during a toasting or a social employee gathering. A few respondents reported on occasional switching back to the formal “Sie”-form with co-workers/superiors during official meetings. One person responded that this behavior is known to her, but generally one does not go back to informal addresses once the informal “du” is used.

## 1. Introduction

We all know that English is the most important Lingua Franca in international business, also labeled as BELF (Business English as Lingua Franca). Yet knowing other languages and customs, even for every-day greetings and forms of addressing people in a business environment are crucial for successful communication. Forbes published an article in 2011, “Reducing the Impact of Language Barriers” citing studies that leave mono-lingual managers and employees ill-equipped to help companies to compete in a global environment, leading to miscommunication and inefficiency, and customer alienation. Greetings, addressing business partners and customers in their language are key elements of communication to foster trust and mutual understanding. The usage of formal and informal language occupies the intersection of language and culture, and it is a nexus for understanding the business environment and behaviors of (business) people.

German is the most spoken native language in Europe used in eight countries as an official language, also in Namibia where German is a national language. Besides the distinct regional linguistic varieties of the German language in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein, German is a national language in parts of Luxemburg and Belgium. In fact, German is an official language (“Amtssprache”) in Luxemburg based on the language law of 1984 and in nine counties in Belgium with approximately 78.000 speakers of German (2011). The “Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft” (German-speaking Community) of Belgium is situated on the Eastern border with Germany. Furthermore, German and Ladin are the official languages in the autonomous Italian province of South Tyrol with its capital Bolzano (or Bozen in German). People are proud of their minority language and use German as the norm in these areas. One of the oldest German-speaking minorities in Eastern Europe is in the Banat region of Rumania, also known as “Siebenbürgen Sachsen.” Over 95 % of the German-speaking population has left, but German companies offer now jobs to over 50 % of the people in this region using mostly Rumanian and English as business language of communication. Although Standard German or High German is the norm for written communication in the German-speaking countries, there are distinct regional dialects of spoken German in these areas – especially in the German part of Switzerland where there is a classic diaglossic situation; various Alemannic

dialects that are distinctly different from Standard German are used for all oral communication independent of social status – yet also this reality is not explicitly addressed in textbooks for Professional or Business German, although some use speakers with different, dialectal accents, including non-German natives, in the CD-listening exercises. Regarding exports, the EU reports that 51% of business is conducted in English by SMEs, 13% in German, 9% in French, 8% in Russian and 4% in Spanish.<sup>1</sup> This data indicates that not only English is used in international trade and that knowledge of German is a valid asset for employees in U.S. companies that import from and export to Germany. Ronald Cere (2012) argues for intensive foreign business language training of students in college programs for International Business.

As an example how foreign business languages are taught, I refer to Eastern Michigan University (with 22.000 students), where there is no general foreign language requirement, but three business-related degree programs are offered that require foreign languages and business communication studies in a selected foreign language. The College of Business offers a B.A. in International Business with a minimum of two years of foreign language proficiency and one introductory course in business language with a choice of Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. However, if a student is a fluent, native speaker of a language other than English, the requirement may be waived. The Language for International Trade (LIT) programs had been successful for over thirty years as a result of an innovative cooperative, interdisciplinary collaboration between the College of Business and the Department of Modern Languages in the 70s (see also Cere (2012)). Students completed a double major, one in a Business discipline, such as Management, Marketing, Accounting, Finance, Computer Information Systems, Entrepreneurship, or General Business and a second major in a foreign language (French, German, Japanese, or Spanish). Because of the extensive required credit burden of a double major with additional required area studies in history and geography, and an international internship, as well as the creation of a major degree program of International Business (IB) established a few years ago, enrollment in the LIT programs declined and it became necessary to revise the LIT program to Languages for International Careers (LIC) which now includes a minor in any subject, preferably a minor in International Business or in any discipline that has an international focus, such as Tourism, International Relations, Political Science, Journalism, Health Administration, Geography, ROTC, or any minor offered at the university is also acceptable. In this program, students study either, French, German or Spanish for four years, including two to

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<sup>1</sup> The Language Guide for European Business: Successful Communication in International Trade, p. 7 [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/publications/european-business\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/publications/european-business_en.pdf) (accessed June 12, 2013).

three semesters of Business Language courses, intercultural courses, and they complete a six week study abroad language program or an international internship. The Japanese section in the Department of Modern Languages opted to keep the original LIT program with a major in Japanese including three semesters of Business Japanese and 30 credits in a business degree program, besides required area studies. Graduates of these business-related programs find employment in international companies where they can actively use their foreign language, translation, and business skills and the intercultural communication competences needed in global enterprises.

## 2. Objectives and Research

The objective of this article (proceeding of a presentation at the GABC Conference at the University of Antwerp in May 2013) based on my ongoing research of German business communication is the understanding and teaching of every-day language and cultural behavior in a professional environment in the various German-speaking countries and regions to students in Business German classes. This topic is only addressed in a perfunctory manner in business language textbooks. Therefore, the goal includes the creation of a module for teaching linguistic and cultural differences of German Business communication to prepare our students for international internships and careers, e.g. in the 200 German-owned companies in Michigan or in American companies in German-speaking countries. These companies are specifically looking for employees with knowledge of German, even if the written language of communication is English and English is used in business meetings, because addressing a business partner in his/her own language shows respect and enhances interpersonal trust and understanding. The Germans are very impressed when they meet American business people who are proficient in German. One aspect of successful interpersonal communication includes: addressing co-workers, superiors, and customers using the proper formal and/or informal language patterns of the “Sie” or “du”-form and behaviors of shaking hands and complying to appropriate dress codes, all aspects that are mostly or even completely neglected or not updated in the textbooks for Business German to reflect current trends and realities.

Kretzenbacher and Wulf Segebracht (1991) and Besch (1998) extensively describe the history and changes of formal and informal language use in the post-war German-speaking areas. More recent studies and recommendations (Reuvid 2002; Schroll-Machl 2008; Keyton, J. et.al. 2013) report on changing patterns of formal/informal language use even in traditionally hierarchical industries and

settings. The websites on “Doing business in other countries” do not specifically address native language behavior in the country but rather focus on formalities and cultural sensitivities. But there are hundreds of websites<sup>2</sup> about the usage of the formal and informal conventions and practices, also called “duzen” (informal) and “siesen” (formal) and the implied meanings and interpretations, such as using the formal “Sie”-form for showing respect, whereas the trend to the informal “du”-form (formally not used at the work place) among co-workers and superiors is believed to increase teamwork and collegiality but business German textbooks do not include this sensitive discussion or not adequately neither in the grammar section nor in cultural description.

It was the custom to address people formally when meeting the first time, but young people have adopted the American way of informal greetings and the du-form. On the website of Italki.com, a person asks: “My teacher told to always use Siesen in the first time, but people use duzen. Is there any difference between the Internet and real life?” The answer states: “Yes, duzen is common on the Internet, as among young people below 20...” but the respondent urges to always use the “Sie”-Form with teachers and older people. Because of the Internet, the informal form of addressing people has a spillover effect and it becomes more prevalent in every-day communication and at the workplace, however, the polite “Sie”-form can still be found in the Internet. The renowned German daily newspaper *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) lists twelve recent articles about the ambivalence and sensitive issue of “Duzen” and “Siesen,” not only in an internship situation that the students face, but also in the areas of sports (coaches and players; players and referees), university (professors and students), nursing homes (care givers and residents), and it reports of a German city that introduced two different service counters in the city hall, one where clients are being addressed informally and one for formal communication usage, but no results of the experience are included.<sup>3</sup> However, the city of Oberstaufer posts remarks from citizens about the new practice on its website.<sup>4</sup>

Native speakers of English and speakers of other languages that do not differentiate between the formal/informal distinction might think this small linguistic difference is rather trivial, but it is indeed a significant issue in all business and professional environments in German-speaking areas – not only among employees and when dealing with clients and customers in a business

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<sup>2</sup> Some examples of Internet sites addressing “duzen” and “Siesen” are listed in the bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> Frankfurt Allgemeine, “Oberstaufer führt Duz- und Sieschalter ein.” July 12, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Experiences with duzen- and siezen at City Hall Oberstaufer  
<http://www.oberstaufer.de/memo/deine-meinung-ist-uns-wichtig-a.html> (accessed Aug. 15, 2013).

setting, but e.g. also for doctors and health care providers when communicating with patients or teachers with students, etc. An online poll<sup>5</sup> that includes “artistic circles” – which are by definition rather informal – shows the ambivalence of making appropriate choices in every interpersonal business situation and even among artists.<sup>6</sup>

*Do you support the growing “Duzen” trend in German business and artistic circles?*

*Yes (170) 43%    No (173) 43%    Not sure (52) 13%    Total Votes: 395*

For my research, I used a one-page questionnaire (granting anonymity) with ten short questions sent to 80 large and small companies in a variety of industries in all above mentioned German-speaking countries and regions, aimed at responses of formal and informal communication patterns, such as greetings, how co-workers, superiors, new and old customers, as well as women are addressed, when hand-shakes are used, and questions about dress codes and uniforms at the work place (see Appendix). Additional personal e-mail requests and phone calls produced adequate, preliminary data (the project is on-going and responses are still being collected as of the writing of this article).

### 3. Results

Preliminary and provisional results of twenty returned questionnaires (as of the writing of this article) and nine phone interviews<sup>7</sup> representing 29 different companies, industries in the various German-speaking areas, show that today women are always addressed as “Frau” in all German-speaking countries. “Fräulein” (for young or unmarried woman until about Second World War) is no longer used (as “Herrlein” never was). The literature and websites report on mixed forms, using the formal address of “Frau” with the consecutive personal

<sup>5</sup> <http://german.about.com/b/2011/07/11/duzen-and-siezen-poll.htm> (accessed May 20, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> During the discussion after my presentation of the paper version of this article at the tri-continental Global Advances in Business Communication (GABC) conference at the University of Antwerp in May 2013, many German-speaking participants voiced their own ambiguity about when to use “Sie” and “du” in a business setting or when meeting new people. They shared many anecdotes of awkward situations and the French- and Flemish-speaking people added their consternation and uncertainty with the choices in their languages, and they also observed significant changes, especially among younger people who immediately address each other using the informal language patterns.

<sup>7</sup> At GABC conference 2013, several participants from German-speaking countries requested the questionnaire that they offered to send to their contacts in German-speaking corporations and businesses to help me with the collection of further data.

pronoun “du,” or first name with the formal “Sie”-form. There is an increasing trend towards the informal “du-“ form and first names, more and more also used with superiors; academic titles are less used, yet sometimes still with CEOs. Less hand-shaking becomes the norm, but daily verbal greetings are customary among co-workers and superiors who only shake hands with each other on special occasions. However, customers and business partners are mostly greeted with a handshake and the polite “Sie”-form is used. No official dress codes and language prescriptions are given by companies to their employees; some respondents wear uniforms at work depending on the industry and work (e.g. in construction and laboratories). Employees generally dress casually, business casual when meeting with customers who are generally actively addressed first when meeting, with friendly greetings and questions. Some long-time customers/clients wish to be addressed informally. Co-workers and superiors only use handshakes at special occasions, such as birthdays.<sup>8</sup> The following table illustrates the results of the current usage of informal (blue) and formal (brown) forms of address, customs of handshaking, and dress codes at the workplace. Although it can clearly be seen that the informal behavior has won over the traditional formal forms of etiquette of everyday interaction at the job, this does not mean that the formal forms of Siezen is a derelict. The formal form of Siezen is still the absolute norm when addressing and conversing with authority figures, government officials, teachers and professors, doctors, and clients, as well as when meeting older people for the first time.

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<sup>8</sup> The questionnaire does not include a question on shaking hands with customers/clients, but some answers included shaking hands in the answers

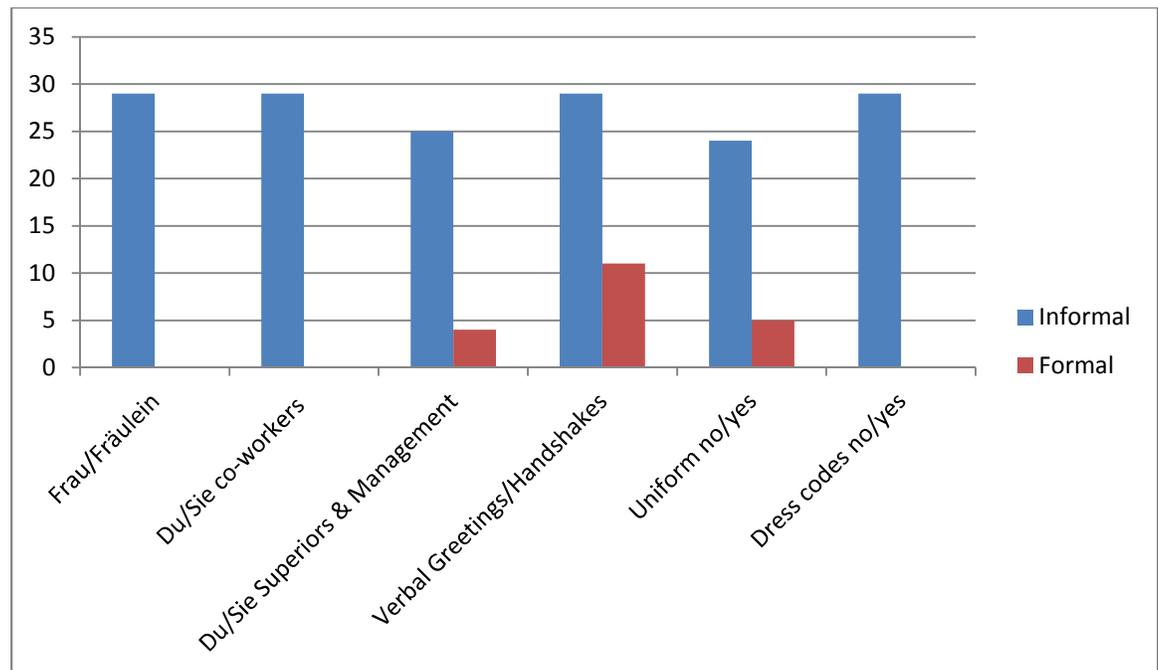


Figure 1: The usage of formal vs. informal language and interpersonal behavior in professional settings

Preliminary results of the breakdown of data by countries and regions show: German-speaking companies in Belgium (2), Lichtenstein (2), Luxembourg (2), South Tyrol (2), and Switzerland (7) mostly use informal language among co-workers and superiors using the “du”-form. This is also an increasing trend in Germany (7), but here academic titles and more hand-shaking are still used, especially in upper management and the banking industry. In Austria (6) more formal addresses are used, including academic titles, since hierarchical thinking and behaviors are more prevalent in Austria than in any other German-speaking country. I called the “Allgemeine Zeitung” in Namibia (1) where people daily communicate informally in three languages, one of them is German. Academic titles are never used in this office which is the norm in this country as the employee told me. One response from a large German insurance company states: “Co-workers first use formal language until the higher ranking individual – or the older when on the same level – offers to use the informal “Du”-form. If employees use formal language, they also include the academic title, such as Dr. XY.” An employee from an export organization in Bozen, South Tyrol, reports: “We all use “duzen” in our company, also with our superiors. Hand-shakes are rather used at formal events. Sometimes, we use academic titles in communication. We use “Sie” for customers.”

The mixed form is also being used in certain settings, first name combined with the “Sie”-form – as I do with students at Eastern Michigan University. I address students with their first name, but I always use the formal “Sie“- form, so that the students constantly hear and learn these grammatical forms in all grammatical cases.

Yet, as a matter of fact, there are no official, nor industry related rules about informal/formal language use. References are often made to “Knigge,”<sup>9</sup> the unofficial authority of behavior in Germany, listing customs of who is entitled to offer the “du” as a form of address (older to younger, higher to lower ranks, woman to man independent of age and rank, etc.).

#### 4. Implications for Teaching and a Teaching Module

Foreign language teaching in the U.S. is based on the National Standards in Foreign Language Education, the so-called 5 Cs<sup>10</sup> (by The National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education or NCATE for foreign language teachers) and the Proficiency Guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The Five Cs are defined as elements that need to be included in the communicative teaching of a foreign language, and they prescribe methodological approaches accordingly. Foreign language teaching must focus on:

- Communication: teaching should use real life language patterns
- Culture: it addresses the relationship between language and culture
- Connections need to be made with other subject areas and disciplines (e.g. to marketing, accounting, etc.)
- Comparison of similarities and differences (e.g. the comparison of formal with informal language patterns in the various German-speaking countries and regions as discussed in this paper)
- Community: foreign language teaching involves communities beyond the classroom (e.g. the Internet community, expatriates and heritage speakers in the community, etc.)

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<sup>9</sup> In 1788, Adolphe Freiherr Knigge wrote an influential book *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (*On Human Relations*) on the fundamentals of human relations as a guide to behavior, politeness, and etiquette. The German word “Knigge” has become a metonym for “good manners” and is also used for books on etiquette. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolph\\_Freiherr\\_Knigge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolph_Freiherr_Knigge). See also: <http://knigge.com/main.html> (accessed June 10, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> The 5 Cs of foreign language teaching <http://globalteachinglearning.com/standards/5cs.shtml> (accessed June, 20, 2013).

The Five Cs offer a perfect platform to address formal versus informal German language use and behavior of handshakes and dress codes in a variety of interpersonal situations because of the socio-linguistic implications and perceptible relations of practices in business communication. The proficiency guidelines by ACTFL help to determine the foreign language competence and the evaluation of communication skills at a variety of levels (Beginning – low, mid high; Intermediate – low, mid, high; Advanced – low, mid, high; and superior).<sup>11</sup> Students in the LIC program at EMU are expected to demonstrate an oral proficiency of “Advanced Low” in the chosen foreign language which often can only be obtained if students complete an internship or a study abroad program; an option that is included in the LIC program requirement. Two standardized diagnostic tests in reading, writing, and speaking (STAMP-Test) are administered in the third and fourth year. The argument that students in lower level tend to use the du-form and that for students in the advanced level the du- and Sie-forms are a mere “formality” is missing the point, since even native speakers in their own German-speaking countries are ambivalent about the everyday usage of formal vs. informal language in a professional setting, this issue is not contingent on proficiency level, although the formal form is more difficult to learn and to apply correctly for English-speaking students or non-natives. Beginners and intermediate, and often also advanced students fall back to the du-form in the middle of a conversation.

It is important to determine what existing knowledge students have, what is the gap between what they know and need to know for their international internships, jobs, and careers and how we can best design and implement exercises and tools of assessment. The problem with the du-Sie dichotomy is indeed bifurcated, on the one hand it is a grammatical issue and on the other hand it is a cultural and transnational discourse that is not or inadequately addressed in business German textbooks. Therefore my teaching methods address the following modules after the students have already mastered the basic grammatical verb conjugations and the different pronoun applications:

- Presenting the results of the survey and other sources (e.g. websites) focusing on formal/informal language.
- Class discussions: we compare the German and US-Model of business communication and industry related differences, as well as the quotes from the questionnaire responses.
- In a small group or with a partner, students complete worksheets with grammatical exercises of grammatical formal/informal language patterns

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<sup>11</sup> ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 <http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/> (accessed June 20, 2013).

(verb endings, pronouns in different cases) in different grammatical modes (indicative, subjunctive, conditional, interrogative, and imperative). The focus is on instilling the ability for easily and comfortably switching back and forth (as is the norm in the German-speaking workplace; the du-form for co-workers/superiors and the Sie-form for customers and clients, as well as with top management and figures of authority (government officials, teachers, etc.). Such systematic “drill-skill” exercises on duzen and Siezen have not been used in German language or business German textbooks.

- Role play, using specifically the existing role play exercises from the textbook and reversing the form of address (e.g. using the informal “du”-form in dialogues among interns instead the formal “Sie”-form) and vice-versa in dialogues of co-workers and superiors.
- Analyzing the du/Sie dilemma used in textbook DVDs, videos, and YouTube.

Here is a summary list of recommendations for students of Business German:

- Learn and practice formal language patterns and use the formal address with co-workers and superiors until the individual of higher ranking or the female co-workers offers the informal “du”-form.<sup>12</sup> Then, do not switch back to formal “Sie”-form<sup>13</sup>
- Use formal language and academic titles with upper management and customers unless they offer the informal address of “duzen”
- Observe company and office practices and comply (when in doubt, ask questions about formal/informal language usage)
- Never use the “du”-form with teachers, government officials, and other authorities
- Dress according to company standards

What needs to be added based on this research is that duzen nowadays is more and more common among co-workers at the workplace in German-speaking countries, even when interacting with superiors, a custom familiar to students in the U.S. However, whereas in English, one just uses mister and misses or academic titles for a formal mode address, the pronoun and the verb endings

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<sup>12</sup> The phrases generally used are: “Du kannst mich XY nennen” (You can call me XY (first name) or “Lass uns duzen!” (Let’s use the “du-“form!). Sometimes, this change is offered during a toasting or a social employee gathering.

<sup>13</sup> A few respondents reported on occasional switching back to the formal “Sie”-form with co-workers/superiors during official meetings. One person responded that this behavior is known to her, but generally one does not go back to informal addresses once the informal “du” is used.

change accordingly in German, and often also the case endings and one needs to understand the sometimes contradictory rules and changes of everyday practices as well as the social implications.

## 5. Conclusion

Preliminary results of the survey of oral formal/informal language use in business settings confirm the trend toward more customary informal language and behavior in all German-speaking countries, areas, and industries among co-workers and superiors, but customers and clients are first still addressed formally. Less academic titles and less hand-shaking are used. Among young people, the informal “du”-form is established. Students of German and Business German must know both forms – the formal and informal forms of grammatical patterns – and apply them properly and according to etiquette. Generally, no dress codes are prescribed, but the norm is casual at work, business casual with customers, and business attire at formal business functions, as it is customary in the U.S., yet the conventions are defined slightly different in Europe. The rather complicated customs and unofficial rules (“Knigge”) about “duzen” and “Siezen” – that are so far not included in textbooks – must be taught in business language courses as cross-cultural differences that influence business relations.

## Appendix

Original German questionnaire:

Umfrage: Sprache im Geschäftsalltag in Deutsch-sprechenden Ländern

Bitte beantworten Sie die 10 einfachen Fragen und senden Sie dieses Dokument als e-mail Beilage an Frau Prof. Dr. Margrit Zinggeler, Eastern Michigan University, USA: mzinggele@emich.edu - Vielen herzlichen Dank fürs Mitmachen!

1. Wie reden sich die Mitarbeiter in Ihrer Abteilung an? Siezen oder Duzen? Brauchen Sie den akademischen Titel? Wie reden Sie Vorgesetzte an?

.....  
.....

2. Wann schütteln Sie die Hände mit Ihren MitarbeiterInnen?  
 Nie     Täglich     nur bei besonderen Anlässen     bei einem Vertragsabschluss
  
3. Anrede von Frauen: Wie reden Sie Frauen an?  
 Immer mit Frau     Fräulein für junge oder nicht-verheiratete Frauen
  
4. Verabschieden Sie sich täglich von den MitarbeiternInnen in Ihrer Abteilung?  
 Nie offiziell     selten offiziell     manchmal mit verbalem Gruß  
 täglich mit verbalem Gruss     mit Gruß und Händeschütteln
  
5. Tragen Sie Berufskleidung oder eine Uniform?     Ja     Nein
  
6. Wie kleiden Sie sich am Arbeitsplatz, wenn Sie keine Uniform tragen? Gibt es eine Kleidervorschrift in Ihrer Firma? Kleiden Sie sich anders, wenn Sie mit KundenInnen zusammenkommen?.....  
.....  
.....
  
7. Siezten Sie eine/n Arbeits-KollegenIn in einer offiziellen Sitzung, wenn Sie diese Person/en privat duzen?     Ja     Nein
  
8. Im Verkaufsraum oder am Messestand: Sprechen Sie eine/n KundenIn zuerst an oder warten Sie bis er/sie Sie anspricht? Welche Phrasen verwenden Sie zum Beispiel?  
.....  
.....  
.....
  
9. Wie begrüßen / reden Sie einen neuen / einen langjährigen Kunden an?  
.....  
.....  
.....
  
10. Gibt Ihnen die Geschaeftsleitung oder Personalabteilung Anweisung und Redewendungen, wenn Sie mit KundenInnen / Geschäftspartnern verhandeln? Welche?  
.....  
.....  
.....

English translation of the German survey:

Survey: Every-day language in a business environment in German-speaking countries

1. How do you address coworkers? Do you use formal or informal language? Do you use academic titles? How do you address your supervisor?
2. When do you shake hands with coworkers?  
 Never     daily     only at special occasions     only after contract agreements
3. How do you address women?  
 always with Mrs.     Ms     first name
4. Do you say daily good-bye to coworkers?  
 never officially     seldom officially     sometimes verbally  
 daily verbally     always with a greeting and shaking hands
5. Do you wear a work uniform?  Yes     No
6. How do you dress at the workplace if you do not wear a uniform? Are there any dress codes in your company? Do you dress differently if you have to meet customers?
7. Do you use formal language with a work colleague when in an official meeting, even if you use an informal address privately?  Yes     No
8. In sales or at the trade fair booth, how do you address customers first? Or do you wait until the customer addresses you? What phrases are you using?
9. How do you greet a new / a regular customer?
10. Does the management in your company give guidelines how to address customers / business partners? Which?

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