

Abstract

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The present paper deals with aspects of the so-called inter-culture in English as a lingua franca. This inter-culture could be regarded as a set of shared conversational rules which participants develop on an ad-hoc basis in the course of communication. Ideally, due to the establishment of an inter-culture in ELF communication the communicative process among interlocutors of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds is facilitated.

The shared set of conversational rules constituting the inter-culture in ELF conversations is multifaceted and relates to a variety of different aspects. This paper focuses on the aspect of conversational strategies as part of ELF inter-culture. Occurrence, role and function of five selected conversational strategies (other-repair, repetition, completion, let-it-pass principle and self-centredness) are taken into consideration and analysed in the data. The analysis of these five strategies provides one way to investigate the inter-culture of ELF communication and to characterise this spontaneous conversational construct. A central issue in the analysis of the strategies in question is their role as either co-operative or non-involving devices of conversational technique.

Whereas the short introduction provides a general overview over the importance of English as an international lingua franca and considers the status of studies in English as a lingua franca in the field of linguistics, chapter 2 is devoted to a characterisation of language and culture and their relationship to one another. In the last section of this chapter, the concept of inter-culture – a crucial aspect of this paper – will be explained.

Chapter 3 might be regarded as the core of this paper. It focuses on the definition and description of the selected conversational strategies and their analysis in the data.

The paper concludes with the most relevant findings of the small study. It is argued that in the data analysed, the occurrence of engaging and co-operative conversational strategies prevails whereas less participating techniques of conversational behaviour are not as common. Generally, therefore, the material recorded could be regarded as a rather active and involving type of communication. Moreover, it is argued that the conversational strategies used by the participants in the data do not always occur as a means to overcome or prevent misunderstandings but may also serve to develop conversational harmony, solidarity among interlocutors and mutual support. However, special emphasis is also put on the assumption that the findings of the study are probably valid only for the specific type of conversation the data analysed consists of, namely multi-party informal talk. Therefore, the findings provide insight only into the inter-culture of the special type of talk represented in the data and might have little relevance for different types of conversations in English as a lingua franca.