Abstract

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This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the linguistic description of English as a lingua franca (ELF) by focusing on the description of code-switching in ELF talk. For this purpose, a small-scale corpus of ELF data was compiled, comprising highly interactive plenary and workshop discussions between proficient ELF speakers at two conferences.

ELF constitutes a relatively new area of study and little research has been conducted as regards the role of code-switching. This is why this study draws on several theories that derive from three different fields of study dealing with the use of more than one language in order to enquire into their relevance and feasibility for the ELF context. Research in the field of bilingualism views code-switching as a creative aspect of the bilingual speaker's linguistic performance. The field of communication strategies, on the other hand, regards code-switching as a strategy to compensate for language problems. The examination of the role of culture and identity when switching languages reveals that language is used to express a speaker's association with or dissociation from certain groups. As each research area focuses on different aspects of code-switching, it is impossible to only draw on one of these theories to account for all instances of code-switching in the ELF context. This is why a combination of different approaches is used when approaching the data.

The analysis of the data reveals that code-switching is an intrinsic element of ELF talk that forms part of the particular speech styles of ELF speakers. As the speaker grouping in each ELF interaction varies, the amount of code-switching and the languages switched into also vary from interaction to interaction. What can be observed in all the interactions analysed, however, is that speakers make use of more than two languages in a most creative way to fulfil certain discourse functions, to compensate for perceived linguistic 'deficiencies', and to signal group membership.