Abstract


This paper is concerned with ‘miscommunication’ in ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF). As a qualitative study, it aims to create an initial picture of what ‘miscommunication’ looks like in an ELF context and how it is interactionally managed by ELF speakers. The data examined for this purpose consists of two business meetings among ELF speakers.

Chapter 2 surveys some of the literature on ‘miscommunication’. It critically examines several theoretical approaches, such as pragmatics, intercultural communication research and dialogical theory, with regard to their positions concerning ‘miscommunication’. Chapter 3 then sketches an ELF perspective on ‘miscommunication’. It reviews ELF findings and provides the central definitions, models and theoretical assumptions which guide the analysis of ‘miscommunication’ in this paper. Afterwards, chapter 4 is dedicated to the central characteristics of the recorded ELF interactions. The two business meetings are briefly discussed with regard to features such as structure, formality, objectives and participant relations.

Chapter 5 presents a qualitative analysis of the types of ‘miscommunication’ which were found in the ELF business data. Relying on a model for the ‘negotiation of meaning’ and on a continuum of indicating procedures, it examines many instances of ‘local non-understanding’. It shows how such ‘local non-understandings’ are interactionally managed and resolved by ELF speakers in negotiation sequences of varying length. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates how ‘strategic miscommunication’ and unintentional non-understanding may be indistinguishable for the analyst at some occasions. In addition, it examines how sustained misframing may cause an instance of ‘global misunderstanding’ among ELF speakers.