



<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Helda

---

## Risks of miscommunication in various speech genres

Mustajoki, Arto

2013

---

Mustajoki, A 2013, Risks of miscommunication in various speech genres. in E Borisova & O Souleimanova (eds), *Understanding by Communication*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge, pp. 33-53.

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/39226>

---

submittedVersion

---

*Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.*

*This is an electronic reprint of the original article.*

*This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.*

*Please cite the original version.*

# CHAPTER TWO

## RISKS OF MISCOMMUNICATION IN VARIOUS SPEECH GENRES

ARTO MUSTAJOKI<sup>1</sup>

Almost all human activities, both in the professional world and in private life, are based on interaction between people. At the same time everyone is familiar with the problems that occur in human communication. One may even argue that one of the most serious problems of our world is that people do not understand each other. During the last few decades, a great number of studies have been carried out in order to analyse and classify communication failures. Zaefferer (1977) was one of the first researchers who tried to classify them by using a matrix with 3 x 8 theoretically possible types of misunderstandings. As Falkner (1997, 32–33) has shown, the systematization made by Zaefferer is interesting as such, but many important factors remain unnoticed. Bazzanella and Damiano's work (1999) is important due to statistical data on the frequency of different types of failures, though they deal only with failures based on linguistic features. This is an important point of view, but it ignores many other aspects of miscommunication. Unconventional, rather formal models are provided by Anolli (2001) and Adrissono et al. (1998). A new attempt to approach problems in communication is presented by Janicki (2010), who uses the methodology of folk linguistics (Niedzielki & Preston 2003). Overviews of Western theories and classifications of miscommunication can be found, among others, in (Dascal 1999; Tzanne 2000; Olsina 2002; House et al. 2003; Verdonik

---

<sup>1</sup> Helsinki University.

2010).

There are interesting studies dealing with the classification of miscommunication in languages other than English. The classification presented in (Ermakova & Zemskaja 1993) is notable for the amount of factual material and detailed analysis. Working on the Ukrainian material, Bacevič (2006) provides a detailed taxonomy of causes of miscommunication, differentiating three basic types: those caused (1) by the interlocutors, (2) by the speech situation, and (3) by the code (language). One of the most sophisticated analyses of types of miscommunication is Falkner's study (1997), where he differentiates a variety of causes: (1) articulative, auditive, or acoustic ("lautlich"); (2) cultural differences; (3) differences in knowledge; (4) intentional communication failures; (5) special expectations on the basis of "scripts"; (6) context.

Another approach to miscommunication is demonstrated by Linell (1995; see also Hinnenkamp 2001, 2003). While the researchers mentioned above classify its causes, Linell wants to clarify how communication failures occur in a flow of dialogue, how "visible" they are. He therefore divides them into three main categories: "overt," "latent," and "covert." We are thus dealing with the reactions of the interlocutors to the situation they are involved in. In overt misunderstanding, there is an immediate recognition of the misunderstanding. A covert misunderstanding takes place when the interlocutors gradually recognize that they have misinterpreted each other at an earlier stage in the conversation. A latent misunderstanding remains unrecognized, but an outside observer notices it, or the interlocutors themselves have a feeling that everything in the conversation was not as it should be.

Despite an increasing number of studies on miscommunication, little attention has been paid to the genre-specific nature of the phenomenon. The aim of this paper is to raise hypotheses concerning the differentiation of the risks of communication in various genres. In approaching this question, we will first consider the terminological and theoretical apparatus that will be used.

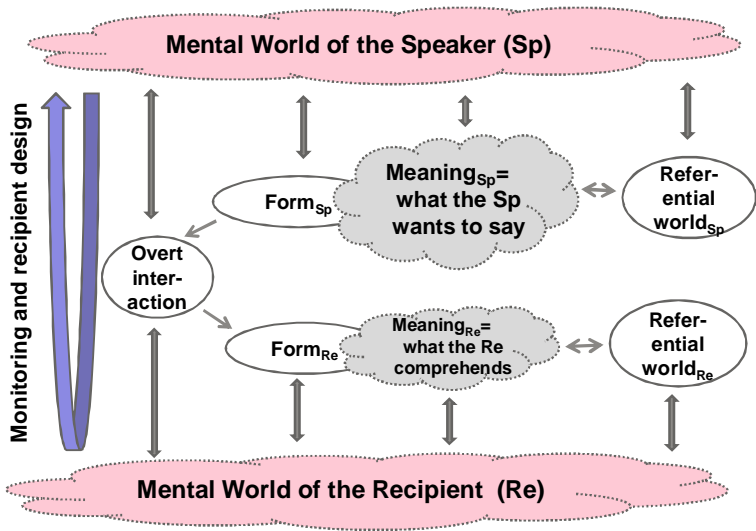
Miscommunication is used in this paper as an umbrella notion for different types of communication failures, such as: "misunderstanding," "non-understanding," "communication breakdown," "discomfort in communication," "misconception," "(wrong) reference identification," "mishearing," "non-hearing," "non-listening," "misperception," "communication disorder." Confusingly, researchers tend to use the same terms with different meanings (for reasoning about these and other terms,

see, Grimshaw 1980; Coupland et al. 1991; Foppa 1995; Weigand 1999; Tzanne 2000). Miscommunication is defined here in the same way as Ryan & Barnard (2009, 45): it refers to situations in which the recipient understands the message in a different way than it was intended by the speaker.

## **Risk and Causes of Miscommunication**

We will use Fig. 2.1 below to explain the variety of risks and causes of miscommunication. The idea behind the picture is to describe different significant features of communication at the same time. In doing so, we expand the angle on human interaction by paying attention to factors which are usually ignored in linguistic research. Thus, it reflects real human interaction in a more detailed way than Shannon's (and Weaver's) famous information theory model or some newer variants (Dobrick 1985, 97, Falkner 1997, 88). Such a multidisciplinary approach enables us to obtain a more complete picture of this complex phenomenon. Kecskes (2010) speaks in this connection of a "socio-cognitive approach." Weigand mentions that linguistics moves from searching for "the simple" towards challenging "the complex" (Weigand 2004, 3), or from "reductionism" to "holism" (Weigand 2011). This is in line with the approach that is applied in this study.

**Figure 2.1. A multidimensional model of interaction (Mustajoki 2008, 2011b, 2012).**



To clarify the various elements of this model, we will assume that the Speaker wants to utter one of the following phrases.

- (1) John studies Chinese language and literature.
- (2) John studies Chinese language and biology.
- (3) John studies Chinese language and philosophy.

The starting point of a message is a certain meaning which the speaker wishes to express. In most cases the meaning is linked with a referential world, a fragment of which the speaker is referring to. In phrase (1) there is a certain John who is conducting an activity called “studying,” with the aim of learning more about a language and literature, in this case Chinese.

In choosing the form to express this meaning, the speaker has several options. Instead of saying just “John,” he or she may add some further details to help the recipient to recognize the person concerned, e.g. by saying “my friend John.” In selecting the predicate, one option is to say “is studying,” etc. When the speaker moves on from the form to overt interaction, i.e. pronounces the phrase, possible risks of misunderstandings can be caused by slips of the tongue, e.g. mixing up “John” and “Jim.” Further types of miscommunication appear at the stage of overt

interaction. The recipient may not hear the message properly (non-hearing), hears “Jim” instead of “John” (mishearing), or thinks of something else and fails to listen to the “speaker” (non-listening).

In the process of producing speech, the “mental world” (henceforth MW) of the speaker plays a crucial role. This starts with the way we in which we interpret the referential world: everything we see in it and want to say about it is somehow connected to our MW. Under a broad definition, adopted in Mustajoki (2008, 2012), the concept of MW includes people’s individual linguistic ability. In fact, everything we say is in one way or another based on speech in the language that we have heard before the moment of communication, including those elements that we create during the process of interaction (Gasparov 2006). The MW of the recipient plays an equally important role. Even during the initial phase, i.e. hearing and listening to the message, the recipient refers to her or his MW. Mishearings, such as “Jim” instead of “John,” are most likely to occur because a particular Jim stands at the forefront of the recipient’s MW, unlike anyone called John.

Before continuing the presentation of the inner part of Fig. 2.1, a clarification is needed. Although the figure gives a systematic description of the process of producing an utterance, there are moments of uncertainty at all its phases. For example, it is a well-known fact that, from the ontological point of view, various “worlds” can be differentiated. According to Mustajoki (2006a, 2007), there are three main types of “worlds”: the real world, virtual worlds (fiction, fairy tales, dreams etc.), and a person’s inner world (feelings, sensations, etc.). As to the “meaning” (what we are aiming to say), it is in many cases a rather sketchy plan for expressing something. As a matter of fact, there are more “meanings” than words in languages. Therefore, it is far from being the rule that a suitable “form” can be found for our “meaning.” “Every utterance is only an approximation to the very thought the speaker has in mind” (Junker et al. 2003, 1742). In addition to this, although the inner circle of Fig. 2.1 gives an impression that the process of producing and receiving speech consists of a set of consecutive phases, in real interaction these phases overlap and backward steps may also occur during the process.

When describing the role of the Recipient, the significance of the MW becomes even more evident. An important part of MWs is the cultural and intellectual background of the communicants. This issue has been a popular topic in the research literature on intercultural communication. The terminology and concepts vary. In the Western tradition, widely used terms include presupposition, stereotype, script, mental set, mental map, thought structure, scene, and schema. In studies on miscommunication, as

a basis of mutual understanding researchers refer to “common (or mutual) knowledge” (Stalnaker 1978, Clark & Brennan 1991, Clark 1996) and “shared beliefs” (Airenti et al. 1993). The terms mentioned above see the issue from different points of view, but as a whole all of them are connected to some parts of the MW. In Russian linguistics and ethnography, considerable attention has been paid to culturally dependent “concepts” and the notions of “kartina mira” (world picture) and “iazykovaia kartina mira” (linguistic world picture) (Stepanov 2001; Šmeljov 2002, among others; see also “images of the world” in Campos 2007). Studies on “cognitive basis” and “individual” and “collective space” (“*prostranstvo*”) by a number of scholars (Krasnykh 2002; Gudkov 2003, and others) adapt and develop the ideas of the Russian psychological school (Vygotsky, Luriya, Leontjev) in the framework of intercultural communication. In most cases, the notion of cultural and intellectual background is used to describe the differences between interlocutors in intercultural (interethnic) conversation. Less attention has been paid to differences between people within the same language community. Our everyday experience confirms that the role of differences in cultural background is extremely important even in interaction between native speakers.

To show the significance of MWs, we return to our examples. The first phrase is interpreted by most people in the sense that John studies the Chinese language and Chinese literature. The second example, by contrast, is taken to mean that John studies general biology, rather than something called “Chinese biology.” These interpretations are based on our MWs, where the notion of Chinese literature does exist, but that of “Chinese biology” does not. These phrases, despite their exactly parallel syntactic structures which theoretically admit two readings, generate no comprehension problems because people’s MWs give them similar interpretations.

In contrast to phrases (1) and (2), problems may appear when the Speaker utters phrase (3), because here the interpretations may vary: in some people’s MWs, “Chinese philosophy” will sound like a plausible academic subject to be studied in conjunction with the language, while others will prefer the alternative interpretation, “Chinese language and general philosophy.” Such a discrepancy between MWs is not in itself a cause of miscommunication, but it does constitute a risk factor. This leads us to the next section, where the role of recipient design is described.

## Recipient Design and Egocentrism of the Speaker

When we speak, we conduct monitoring and recipient design. This viewpoint derives from Grice's (1975) idea of the "cooperative principle," according to which the speaker tries to make him/herself as understandable as possible by taking into account who (s)he is talking to. The term "recipient design" (or "audience design"; Sacks & Schegloff 1979; Bell 1984) reflects the speaker's way of conducting interaction. Within the "communication accommodation theory" (Giles 1973), the term "convergence" has been proposed; it refers to the speaker's strategy of adapting her/his communicative behaviour to the recipient. Supporters of the concept claim that there is a general propensity for communicators to converge along salient dimensions of speech (Ylänne-McEwen & Coupland 2000).

A wider concept in describing the behaviour of the speaker is "monitoring." In order to ensure correct reception of the message, the Speaker is constantly tracking the reactions of the recipient (Ferreira & Rogers 2005). Monitoring is a complex process consisting of various, usually unconscious, acts (Clark & Krych 2004) and can lead to minor or major readjustments in speech. If we notice that the recipient has not understood what we have said, we can repeat our utterance more loudly or slowly, or rephrase it.

Before having a closer look at the notion of recipient design (henceforth RD), it is worth launching another term, which is "genre design." It refers to our ability to accommodate our speech to various communicative situations. We automatically adopt different manners of speaking in a pub, at home, and in giving a public lecture. Such flexible use of our linguistic resources is an essential part of our pragmatic competence. In certain situations accommodation to the recipient's restricted linguistic ability leads to the use of a special language; terms such as "baby talk" (or "motherese") and "foreigner talk" refer to this (see Freed 1981). Genre design is thus a wider concept referring to a certain type of discourse, while RD deals with a concrete communication situation.

Conducting RD is often preferable from the point of view of the Speaker's needs and aims in interaction. When we are trying to gain something, it is especially important to be able to express ourselves in an effective way, so that the Recipient will be influenced by our words. Advertising is a good example of this. Firms aim to increase their sales by spending money on advertisements, and this leads them to use the services of specialists to maximize the impact of their campaigns. Another genre

where people try very carefully to accommodate their speech to the audience is political speeches. Readers of this text are very familiar with another genre where impressing the reader is extremely important: writing applications to research agencies with the aim of ‘selling’ our research plans to those who finance research. Thus, the egocentric goals of the Speaker are obvious when trying to gain something, but the need of RD is also evident in other situations where we have a clear communicative goal: teaching something in a classroom, trying to fix a time for a meeting, making a shopping list, asking how to find the railway station.

Coming back to our examples, we can now illustrate the role of RD by considering the problem which derives from the discrepancy between the communicants’ MWs with regard to the interpretation of phrase (3) above. If (and only if) the speaker foresees the possibility of a mistaken interpretation of the phrase, he or she may disambiguate it by saying “Chinese language and Chinese philosophy” or “Chinese language and general (world) philosophy.” If the speaker were always able to make such clarifications in producing speech, this kind (and indeed all kinds) of miscommunication would be avoided. If we were able to take into account all factors deriving from the recipient’s personality, background, emotional state, and physiological state, we would be able to choose our words in such a way that misunderstanding would be excluded (Günthner & Luckmann 2001, 58). As we can see, RD is a kind of superfactor in successful communication, and using it skilfully makes it possible to neutralize the influence of other risks of miscommunication.

Thus, the role of monitoring and RD in successful communication is evident. However, this does not mean that we take the Gricean view of the cooperative principle as a basis for explaining features of human interaction. Grice describes idealistic communication in the same way that Chomsky refers to an “ideal native speaker” in grammatical matters. These concepts are useful as theoretical positions, but as soon as we start dealing with real interaction, we face a totally different world. It is therefore no surprise that Grice’s cooperative principle has been heavily criticized (see Sarangi & Slembrouck 1992). Our everyday experience proves that people often fail to perform RD. During the last two decades or so, psycholinguistic experiments have established that the impression of frequent failures in RD has a solid foundation. Indeed, when taking the role of a speaker, people are much weaker at doing RD than was previously thought (see Keysar & Henly 2002; Keyzar 2007; Kecskes & Zhang 2009). As speakers, we sometimes even act against our own communicative goals.

The main explanation for people's inability to conduct proper RD is egocentrism (Barr & Keysar 2005, 23). People are inclined to concentrate on what they are saying without considering whether it will be understood or not—"When people communicate they do not routinely take into account the mental states of others, as the standard theory assumes" (Keysar 2007, 72). Having said that, it is important to take a closer look at the reasons for insufficient RD or total lack of it (for a more detailed analyses, see Mustajoki 2012). Factors causing insufficient RD may be classified into two major overlapping categories: (1) the speaker does not want to conduct RD, or (2) he or she fails to realize that a more appropriate RD is needed.

(1) Let us first examine situations where the communicants do not want to be cooperative. Such an attitude may exist even before the beginning of a conversation. It means that the communicants avoid interaction. People also report that occasionally, for one reason or another, they pretend to understand or not to understand what they hear during a conversation (Mustajoki 2006b, 61–65). In the case where a failure of communication is caused by non-listening by the recipient, it is due to a non-cooperative mode of the recipient. These are quite obvious cases. A more covert reason for reluctance to conduct RD is avoidance of cognitive effort. Psychologists (for example, Shintel & Keysar 2009) argue that a fundamental feature of human behaviour is the avoidance of extra cognitive and/or physical effort. As a consequence of this desire, people try to achieve their goals by using as little energy as possible. When monitoring and conducting RD we spend energy. This means that the easiest and the least energy-consuming way of speaking is to pay no attention to the recipient. There may also be some factors that decrease the speaker's ability to concentrate on interaction, such as tiredness, illness, or emotional overdrive.

The egocentric attitude of the speaker is also the ultimate motivation behind another, completely different phenomenon that poses risks to communication. In this case the speaker does not avoid cognitive efforts; in fact, he or she spends more energy, but the aim is not to ensure understanding. There are two main types of communicative behaviour of this kind. One type is linked to the need to be polite, which may lead to rather complicated speech that is not easily understood. In other words, the use of indirect speech and hints endanger the correct interpretation of the message by the recipient. Another communicative tactic which poses a risk to mutual understanding derives from our aspiration to be regarded as smart and intelligent. This leads to the use of expressions and words than are not ideal from the point of view of pure communicative goals. In

concrete terms, it means more metaphors, figurative expressions, and neologisms, which may make our speech less comprehensible (Montminy 2010, 318–319).

(2) When discussing those situations where the speaker is willing to conduct RD but is not aware of the need for it, we must pay attention to people's ability to take into account differences between individuals, especially the crucial difference between our own MW and the MWs of other people. Researchers who have studied this question argue that people are inclined to look at the world through their own experience and mental state. If we have no clear indicators for differences in the knowledge and background of the recipient, we use ourselves as the anchor and reference point (Schütz 1944; Keysar and Henly 2002; Kruger et al. 2005; Epley 2008; Todd et al. 2011). If the recipient differs from us clearly enough, we notice it, which is the case in many situations of intercultural communication. Nevertheless, awareness of the differences does not guarantee avoidance of misunderstanding (Banks & al. 1991; Krasnykh 2002; Leontovich 2007; Privalova 2005; Bührig & Luzio 2006). A kind of "intercultural" communication is also seen in interaction between native speakers of the same language whose backgrounds are significantly different. Examples would include conversations between an IT adviser and an IT user, a young heavy-metal enthusiast and his or her grandparents, or a fisherman and a person who has never fished.

In the situations mentioned above, the speaker, as a rule, realizes the need for not using his or her normal language, but nevertheless often fails to conduct sufficient RD. Quite another risk for communication is the "common ground fallacy" (or "false consensus effect," as Clark 1996, 111 puts it). The general rule is: the smaller the deviations between the MWs of the interlocutors are, the more likely they are to fall into the common ground fallacy. The mechanism we use in analysing the need for RD fails in situations where group boundaries are not so evident (Gallois & Giles 1988). This gives us an explanation for Ermakova's & Zemskaja's (1993) paradoxical claim that communication failures are as usual in communication between good friends and relatives as in intercultural encounters (for details, see Mustajoki 2011a).

## **Risks of Miscommunication in Various Speech Genres**

The way we speak in communication situations is determined by two major factors: (1) situational, where, on what topic, and with whom we speak, and what our role is in the speech act, and; (2) personal, what our linguistic background is (Mustajoki 2010). The first factor reflects the idea

of speech genres launched by Bakhtin (1996, 181); the second factor refers to the restrictions and opportunities based on our linguistic capacity. It is impossible to produce a complete list of different speech genres, but it is easy enough to name some examples of them, e.g. “public speech,” “small talk,” “flirting” “business negotiations,” etc. It is clear to everyone that we speak in a very different way in each of these speech genres (Dement’ev 2009). When entering a new communication situation we switch on the way of speaking needed. To be more precise, the decisive thing is not the situation as such, but our own personal interpretation of it, as emphasized by van Dijk (2006). In other words, we use a certain register of speech if we think that we are in a situation where this register is needed. In some situations, the interlocutors have to begin by choosing the language to be used (Alpatov 2000, 15–20; Mustajoki 2010).

We have to start our discussion on risks of miscommunication in various speech genres with a caveat: it is impossible to offer a detailed analysis of this issue because we still lack sufficient research on it. What is presented here is therefore not a conclusion based on the study of real communicative materials, but an attempt to put forward hypotheses that are mainly based on non-systematic observations and will need to be verified by further research. We first focus on the specific features of each speech genre and then present a table where the genres are described in a more structured way. To show the great variety of risks in communication, we will consider very diverse speech genres, namely: (1) everyday conversation at home; (2) shopping; (3) flirting; (4) the shouts of a football spectator; (5) regular work meeting; (6) international meeting in a lingua franca language; (7) a president’s address to the nation.

(1) Conversations at home involve a wide variety of topics for discussion. Nevertheless, there are some features which are typical of this genre as a whole. The communicants meet each other every day for years, the situation is part of their leisure, and they usually feel maximally relaxed. All these factors diminish the willingness of the communicants to make cognitive efforts while speaking. The circumstances are also favourable to the kind of communication on which the interlocutors do not concentrate: they are often engaged in some other activity at the same time. This leads to mishearings and non-listening. In addition, due to the very routine-like conditions, people are lazy in articulation, which increases the risk of misunderstanding. On the other hand, the communicants guess, without any hesitation, those parts of another speaker’s phrases that they have not heard. They do so because they “know” the others so well that it is easy to reckon what they want to say (or so they assume). The common ground fallacy is a frequent trap for

communicants because they are sure that the people they live with “must” think in the same way as they do and even think of the same thing at the same time. Generally speaking, while at home, we suppose that no RD is required except in those situations where we badly need to obtain a particular result.

(2) In shopping situations, the roles of communicants are very different. The salesperson is a professional and takes part in such conversations several times a day, while the customer is involved in such situations only occasionally. For both parties, successful interaction is in itself desirable: the salesperson wants to sell something and the customer wants to find a maximally suitable realization for her or his needs. For the salesperson, the biggest challenge is to accommodate her or his speech to each customer, bearing in mind that different customers may have totally different amounts of background knowledge in the relevant field (think for example of electronics, wines, clothing). Another difficulty is choosing the appropriate register (on the scale colloquial–official) so as to make the customer feel comfortable and to avoid irritation. As to the customers, the main risk is that they may have problems in formulating their wishes, which may be unclear even to themselves.

(3) From the point of view of monitoring and recipient design, a challenging genre is flirtation. The person who starts it has their own egocentric goals in doing so. These vary from pure fun to an attempted conquest. In both cases, the flirter gains satisfaction from being able to conduct such a discourse (Henningsen 2004). The object of the flattery may feel uncomfortable or may, on the contrary, try by their own behaviour to urge the other party to continue flirting. For both communicants, the whole situation stands out from the normal routine of everyday communication. This may lead them to report such a conversation to other people afterwards.

(4) When a football spectator shouts to the referee, we are dealing with a rather frequent speech genre which, however, differs very much from normal face-to-face conversations between two persons. The main specific feature of spectator behaviour is the distance to the recipient, which in fact means that he or she does not hear what is said (shouted). The speaker (shouter) is in a very emotional mood, and it therefore makes no difference to him or her that the referee does not actually hear the effusion. In this respect, the situation somewhat resembles the scene where someone unburdens their heart after an unpleasant experience. In such a situation, the opportunity to speak is in itself the main reason of communication; transmitting pieces of information to the recipient is of secondary importance. An extra feature of the case of the shouting spectator is that

there are a lot of co-spectators around and they, in fact, become the unintended audience of the emotional outburst.

(5) Participants of a regular work meeting have, in principle, equal roles in the communication (apart from the chairperson). Nevertheless, they differ from each other as to their background knowledge, ability to express themselves, and motivation to influence the course of events. In a meeting there are always some rules and regulations which determine how it is conducted, so that people are not allowed to speak at the same time. In most cases, these rules are broken at least to some extent. In trying to reach their goals in the decision-making process, the participants may deliberately mishear and misunderstand each other's words. Eagerness in trying to say something may lead to unclear expressions. The common ground fallacy is also possible, because people at the same workplace tend to assume that everyone knows the same things and thinks along similar lines.

(6) There are, of course, various types of international meetings. To consider the specific nature of this genre, let us take the following scene: people from different European countries meet in Brussels to discuss an issue on which where they are specialists. They are native speakers of several languages and speak in *lingua franca* English. Such a meeting differs from a regular work meeting in two relevant ways. First, even in our days international encounters are something special. Travelling to a foreign country and having a meeting there is a much more remarkable event than attending a meeting during the working day with people you see every day. This makes the participants concentrate more intently on the course of the discussion. The second feature of such a meeting is even more significant. The use of a *lingua franca* language adds a paradoxical feature to communication: people understand each other better than in normal situations due to simplified language, a heightened motivation to understand, and concentration on the topic (Mustajoki 2011a). Studies on the use of English as a *lingua franca* confirm this observation (Mauranen 2006 and Firth 2009, among others). Of course, differences in geographical backgrounds constitute a risk for misunderstandings, but expertise on the topic of the meeting diminishes the significance of this factor.

(7) A president's address to the nation is a very special genre. The speech is important for the president, and he or she therefore tries to take maximum account of the large audience. This is not easy, because the listeners (spectators) are very heterogeneous, from political enemies to supporters. The main target is a large number of uninterested and passive citizens. The significance of the address leads the president to use a large

group of assistants in compiling it. So here we see an extremely careful audience design which has a clearly egoistic origin. Despite the major efforts, misunderstandings and misinterpretations are usual because of the possible unwillingness of the recipients to understand. A serious risk to the success of the speech is non-listening (non-watching), resulting from the feeling that the speaker is repeating the same thing as earlier.

**Table 2.1. Recipient design and risks of communication in different discourse types (Sp = the speaker, Re = recipient)**

	<b>Special features of the genre</b>	<b>Monitoring and recipient design (RD)</b>	<b>Main risks for miscommunication</b>
<b>Everyday conversations at home</b>	Communicants know each other very well; most relaxed situation; wide range of possible topics	Minimal monitoring and RD because there is no need to avoid risks in communication	Non-listening due to poor concentration on conversation; non-hearing and mishearing (e.g. due to a vacuum-cleaner or distance between the communicants); unclear pronunciations (due to fast speech); over-guessing of speech heard only partially; common ground fallacy
<b>Shopping</b>	Totally different roles of communicants (professional vs. layman), through a common goal: a purchase that makes the customer happy; for the customer, an important but not a usual situation	An experienced salesperson does RD all the time; the customer is weak at RD	Problems in finding a common language due to differences in knowledge level (especially as to complicated technology); inability of the consumer to express him/herself; the salesperson may get tired of repeating the same phrases all the time

<b>Flirting</b>	A marked game element; important for Sp's self-esteem	Constant monitoring and RD in order to decide whether to continue flirting or not;	Total lack of interest by Re; gushiness of Sp
<b>Football spectator shouting</b>	Addressee (Re) is far away and does not hear the speech; real Re's are co-spectators; channel for emotional eruption	Totally egocentric; Sp does not think of Re at all	Understanding or even listening by Re (the referee) is not expected; co-spectators may be irritated
<b>Work meeting</b>	Participants of the meeting know each other quite well; the topic of discussion is planned beforehand; not a free discussion but regulated by the chairperson; goal orientation; MWs of participants have much in common	For a skilful participant RD is a necessary element of speech	Emotions may hinder RD; deliberate misunderstandings; frustration of participants if the discussion veers off course
<b>International meeting in a lingua franca language</b>	All participants speak in a non-native language; strong motivation for understanding; otherwise as in work meetings	Communicants automatically conduct RD by using a simplified language and by trying to be understandable	Differences in cultural (geographical) background; deficiency in language skills; otherwise as in work meeting
<b>President's TV-address to the nation</b>	Very significant for Sp; reactions of the audience (media) have influence on the planning of the next address	Professional RD before the presentation with the help of experts	Very heterogeneous audience with different expectations; most spectators listen only superficially; prejudices towards Sp

## Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate the differences in the risks of communication in various speech genres. In discussing the topic, a multidimensional model of communication was used. This helps us to take into account divergent factors influencing the course of interaction. It was shown that besides purely linguistic factors (such as syntactic ambiguity), the mental worlds of interlocutors play an important role in reaching mutual understanding. A further factor, the speaker's ability to conduct recipient design, has an even greater significance because it is able to neutralize other risks of communication. However, this factor materializes only if the speaker is aware of the risks and is able to formulate his or her speech in an appropriate manner. Both observations of real communication and psychological experiments show that recipient design often fails.

The theoretical framework was applied to some speech genres in order to discuss the risks of communication that occur in them. It was shown that speech genres differ very much from each other in this respect. The results are still partly hypothetical and need to be verified by further research, but even on the basis of this analysis it is possible to conclude that risks of miscommunication are very speech-genre specific, so this factor cannot be dismissed in research on them.

## References

- Airenti, Gabriella, Bruno G. Bara, and Marco Colombetti. "Conversation and behavior games in the pragmatics of dialogue." *Cognitive Science* 17 (1993): 197–256.
- Alpatov, V. M. *150 iazykov i politika: sotsiolingvističeskie problemy SSSR i postsovetskogo prostranstva* [150 languages and politics: sociolinguistic problems of the USSR and the post-Soviet space]. Moscow: Kraft+.2000.
- Anolli, Luigi. "MaCHT—Miscommunication as CHance Theory: Toward a unitary theory of communication and miscommunication." In *Say Not to Say: New Perspectives on Miscommunication*, edited by Luigi Anolli, Rita Ciceri and Giuseppe Riva, 3–43. Amsterdam: IOS Press. 2001.
- Ardissono, Liliana, Guido Boella and Rossana Damiano. "A Plan-Based Model of Misunderstandings in Cooperative Dialogue." *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 48 (1998): 649–679.
- Bacevič, F. S. *Osnovi komunikativnoi lingvistiki* [Foundations of communicative linguistics]. Kiev: Akademia. 2004.

- Bakhtin, M. M. "Problema rechevykh žanrov" ["The problem of speech genres"]. In *Sobranie sochinenij v pjati tomah, tom 5*. Moscow: Russkie slovari. 2006.
- Banks, Stephen P., Gao Ge and Joyce Baker. "Intercultural encounters and miscommunication." In "*Miscommunication*" and *problematic talk*, edited by Nicolas Coupland, Howard Giles and John M. Wiemann, 103–120. Newbury Park: Sage, 1991.
- Barr, Dale J and N. Keysar. "Making Sense of How We Make Sense: The Paradox of Egocentrism in Language Use." In *Figurative Language Comprehension*, edited by H.I. Colston & A.N. Kayz, 21–43. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.
- Bazzanella, Carla and Rossana Damiano. "The Interactional Handling of Misunderstanding in Everyday Conversations." *Journal of Pragmatics* 31 (1999): 817–836.
- Bell, Allan. "Language Style as Audience Design." *Language in Society* 13 (1984): 145–204.
- Bürig, Kristian and Jan D ten Thije, eds. *Beyond Misunderstanding. Linguistic Analyses of Intercultural Communication*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 2006.
- Campos, M. N. "Ecology of Meanings: A Critical Constructivist Communication Model." *Communication Theory* 17 (2007): 386–410.
- Clark, Herbert H. *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Clark, Herbert H. and Susan E. Brennan. "Grounding in Communication." In *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition*, edited by John M. Levine and Stephanie D. Teasley, 127–149. Washington, DC: APA Books, 1991.
- Clark, Herbert H. and Meredyth A Krych. "Speaking While Monitoring Addressees for Understanding." *Journal of Memory and Language* 50 (2004): 62–81.
- Coupland, Nicolas., John M. Wiemann and Howard Giles. "Talks as 'Problem' and Communication as "Miscommunication": An Interactive Analysis." In "*Miscommunication*" and *Problematic Talk*, edited by N. Coupland, H. Giles & J. M. Wiemann, 1–17. Newbury Park: Sage, 1991.
- Dascal, Marcelo. "Introduction: Some questions about misunderstanding." *Journal of Pragmatics* 31 (6) (1999): 753–762.
- Dement'ev, V. V. "Aspekty problemy 'žanr i iazyk: žanry rechi ' ' iazyk rechi'?" ["Aspects of the problem 'genre and language: speech genres' or 'languages of speech'."] In *Žanry rechi*, 6, 5–22. Saratov: Nauka, 2009.

- . *Teoriia rechevykh žanrov* [Theory of speech genres]. Moscow: Znak. 2010.
- Dobrick, Martin. *Gegenseitiges (Miss-)Verstehen in der dyadischen Kommunikation*. Münster: Aschendorff, 1985.
- Epley, Nicholas. "Solving the (Real) Other Minds Problem." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2/3 (2008): 1455–1474.
- Ernakova, O. P. and E. A. Zemskaia. "K postroeniiu tipologii kommunikativnykh neudach (na materiale estestvennogo russkogo iazyka)" ["On Constructing a Typology of Communicative Failures on the Basis of Authentic Russian Material"]. In *Russkii iazyk i ego funkcionirovanie: kommunikativno-pragmatischekii aspekt*, 90–157. Moscow: Nauka, 1993.
- Falkner, Wolfgang. *Verstehen, Missverstehen und Missverständnisse: Untersuchungen an einem Korpus englischer und deutscher Beispiele*. Tübingen: Niemayer, 1997.
- Ferreira, Victor S, L. R. Slevc and Erin S. Rogers. "How Do Speakers Avoid Ambiguous Linguistic Expressions?" *Cognition* 96 (2005): 263–284.
- Firth, Alan. "The *Lingua Franca* Factor." *Intercultural Pragmatics* 6 (2) (2009): 147–170.
- Foppa, Klaus "On Mutual Understanding and Agreement in Dialogues." In *Mutualities in Dialogue*, edited by I. Marková, C. F. Graumann & K. Foppa. Cambridge: University Press, 149–175. 1995.
- Freed, Barbara F. "Foreigner Talk, Baby Talk, Native Talk." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 28 (1981): 19–39.
- Gallois, Cynthia and Howard Giles. "Accommodating Mutual Influence in Intergroup Encounters." In *Mutual Influence in Interpersonal Communication: Theory and Research in Cognition, Affect, and Behavior. Vol. 14, Progress in Communication Sciences*, edited by Mark. T. Palmer and Georg A. Barnett, 135–162. Stamford, CT: Ablex, 1988
- Gasparov, B. *Jazyk, pamjat', obraz: lingvistika jazykovogo sushchestvovaniia* [Language, Memory, Image: Linguistics of the Existence of Language]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie. 1996.
- Grice, Herbert P. "Logic and Conversation." In *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 3, edited by Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, 41–58. New York: Academic Press, 1975.
- Grimshaw, Allen D. "Mishearings, Misunderstandings, and other Nonsuccesses in Talk: A Plea for Redress of Speaker-Oriented Bias." *Sociological Inquiry* 50 (3/4) (1980): 31–74.

- Gudkov, D. B. *Teoriia i praktika mežkul'turnoi kommunikacii [Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication]*. Moscow: Gnozis. 2003.
- Günthner, Susanne and Thomas Luckmann. "Asymmetries of Knowledge in Intercultural Communication: The Relevance of Cultural Repertoires of Communicative Genres." In *Culture in Communication: Analyses of Intercultural Situations*, edited by Aldo di Luzio, Susanne Günthner and Franca Orletti, 56–85. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001.
- Henningsen, David D. "Flirting with Meaning: An Examination of Miscommunication in Flirting Interactions." *Sex Roles* 50 (2004): 7–8.
- Hinnenkamp, Volker. "Constructing Misunderstanding as a Cultural Event." In *Culture in Communication: Analyses of Intercultural Situations*, edited by Aldo di Luzio, Susanne Günthner and Franca Orletti, 211–243. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001.
- . "Misunderstandings: Interactional Structure and Strategic Resources." In *Misunderstandings in Social Life: Discourse Approaches to Problematic Talk*, edited by Juliane House, Gabriele Kasper and Steven Ross, 57–81. London etc.: Longman, 2003.
- House, Juliane, Gabriele Kasper and Steven Ross. "Misunderstanding Talk". In *Misunderstandings in Social Life: Discourse Approaches to Problematic Talk*, Juliane House, Gabriele Kasper and Steven Ross (eds), 1–21. London: Longman, 2003.
- Janicki, Karol. "Lay People's Language Problems." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 20 (1) (2010): 73–94.
- Jucker, Andreas H., Sara W. Smith and Tanja Lüdge. "Interactive Aspects of Vagueness in Conversation." *Journal of Pragmatics* 35 (12) (2003): 1737–1769.
- Kecskes, Istvan. "The Paradox of Communication: Socio-Cognitive Approach to Pragmatics." *Pragmatics and Society* 1 (1) (2010): 50–73.
- Kecskes, Istvan and Fenghui Zhang. "Activating, Seeking, and Creating Common Ground: A Socio-Cognitive Approach." *Pragmatics & Cognition* 17 (2) (2009): 331–355.
- Keysar, Boaz. "Communication and Miscommunication: The Role of Egocentric Processes." *Intercultural Pragmatics* 4 (4) (2007): 71–85.
- Keysar, Boaz and Anne S. Henly. "Speakers' Overestimation of their Effectiveness." *Psychological Science* 13 (2002): 207–212.
- Krasnykh, V. *Étnopsiholingvistika i lingvokul'turologija. [Ethnopsycholinguistics and Linguistic Cultural Studies]*. Moscow: Gnozis, 2002.
- Kruger, Justin, Nicolas Epley, Jason Parker and Zhi-Wen Ng.

- “Egocentrism over e-mail: Can we Communicate as Well as we Think.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89 (6) (2005): 925–936.
- Leontovich, O. *Vvedenie v mezhkul'turnuiu kommunikatsiiu*. [Introduction to Intercultural Communication]. Moscow: Gnozis, 2007.
- Linell, Per. “Troubles with Mutualities: Towards a Dialogical Theory of Misunderstanding and Miscommunication.” In *Mutualities in Dialogue*, edited by Ivana Marková, Carl Graumann and Klaus Foppa, 176–213. Cambridge: University Press, 1995.
- Mauranen, Anna. “Signalling and Preventing Misunderstanding in English as Lingua Franca Communication.” *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 177 (2006: 123–150.
- Montminy, Martin. “Two Contextual Fallacies.” *Synthese* 173 (2010): 317–333.
- Mustajoki, Arto. *Teoriia funktsional'nogo sintaksisa: ot semanticheskikh struktur k iazykovym sredstvam* [Theory of Functional Syntax: From Semantic Structures to Linguistic Expressions]. Moscow: Iazyki slavjanskikh kul'tur, 2006a.
- . “The Integrum Database as a Powerful Tool in Research on Contemporary Russian.” In *Integrum: tochnye metody i gumanitarnye nauki*, ed. by G. Nikiporec-Takigava, 50–75. Moscow: Letnij sad, 2006b.
- . “From Meaning to For: An Alternative Model of Functional Syntax.” *Russian Language Journal* 57 (2007): 3–28.
- . “Modelling of (mis)Communication.” In: *Prikladna lingvistika ta ligvistitshni tehnologii: Megaling-2007*, 250–267. Kiev: Dovira. 2008.
- . “Types of Non-Standard Communication Encounters with Special Reference to Russian.” In *Language ideologies in transition multilingualism in Russia and Finland*, edited by Mika Lähteenmäki and Marjatta Vanhala-Aniszewski, 35–55. Frankfurt am Main etc: Peter Lang. 2010.
- . “Pochemu obshchenie na *lingua franca* udaetsia tak khorosho” [“Why Interaction in a Lingua Franca is so Successful”]. In *Iazyki sosedej: mosty ili bar'ery? Kommunikatsiia i samoidentifikatsiia*. St Petersburg . 2011a. 10-31.
- . “Prichiny kommunikativnykh neudach: popytka obshchei teorii” [“Causes of Communication Failures: Towards a Common Theory”]. 76–86. *Russkii iazyk za rubezhom* 4, 2011b.
- . A Multidisciplinary and Multidimensional Approach to Risks and Causes of Miscommunication. *Language and dialogue*..2(2012).216-242.

- Niedzielki, Nancy A. and Dennis R. Preston. *Folk Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Guyter, 2003.
- Olsina, Eva Codó. "Managing Understanding in Intercultural Talk: An Empirical Approach to Miscommunication." *Atlantis XXIV* (2) (2002): 37–57.
- Ryan, Jonathon and Roger Barnard. "'Who do you Mean?' Investigating Miscommunication in Paired Interactions." *The TESOLANS Journal* 17 (2009): 44–61.
- Sacks, Harwey and Emanuel A. Schegloff. "Two Preferences in the Organization of Reference to Persons in Conversation and their Interaction." In *Everyday Language*, edited by George Psathas, 15–21. New York: Irvington, 1979.
- Sarangi, Srikant K. and Stefaan Slembrouck. "Non-cooperation in Communication: A Reassessment of Gricean Pragmatics." *Journal of Pragmatics* 17 (1992): 117–154.
- Schütz, Alfred. "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology." *The American Journal of Sociology* XLIX (1944): 499–512.
- Shintel, Hadas and Boaz Keysar. "Less is More: a Minimalist Account of Joint Action in Communication." *Topics in Cognitive Science* 1 (2009): 260–273.
- Stalnaker, Robert C. "Assertion." In *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics*, edited by Peter Cole, 315–332. New York: Academic Press. 1978.
- Stepanov, Y. *Konstanty: slovar' russkoj kul'tury* [Constants: Dictionary of Russian Culture]. Moscow: Akademičeskij proekt, 2001.
- Šmel'jov, A. D. *Russkaja jazykovaja kartina mira* [Russian Linguistic World Picture]. Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskoj kul'tury, 2002.
- Todd, Andrew R., Karlene Hanko, Adam D. Galinsky and Thomas Mussweiler. "When Focusing on Differences Leads to Similar Perspectives." *Psychological Science* 22 (1) (2011): 134–141.
- Tzanne, Angeliki. *Talking at Cross-Purposes: The Dynamics of Miscommunication*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000.
- van Dijk, Teun A. "Discourse, Context and Cognition." *Discourse Studies* 8 (2006): 159–176.
- Verdonik, Darink a. "Between Understanding and Misunderstanding." *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (5) (2010): 1364–1379.
- Weigand, Edda. "Misunderstanding: The Standard Case". *Journal of Pragmatics* 31 (1999): 763–785.
- . *Sprache als Dialog. Sprechakttaxonomie und kommunikative Grammatik*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer (2. ed.), 2003.
- . "Emotions: The Simple and the Complex." In *Emotions in Dialogic Interaction*, Edda Weigand (ed.), 3–31. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John

- Benjamins, 2004.
- . *Dialogue: The Mixed Game*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010.
- Weigand, Edda. "Paradigm Changes in Linguistics: from Reductionism to Holism." *Language Sciences* 33 (2011): 544–549.
- Ylänne-McEwen, Virpi and Nicolas Coupland. "Accommodation Theory: A Conceptual Resource for Intercultural Sociolinguistics." In *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport Through Talk Across Cultures*, edited by Helen. Spencer-Oatey, 191–214. London & New York: Continuum, 2000.
- Yus Ramos, Francisco. "The 'What-do-you-Mean Syndrome'. A Taxonomy of Misunderstandings in Harold Pinter's Plays." *Estudios Ingleses de la Universidad Complutense* 6 (1998): 81–100.
- Zaefferer, Dietmar. "Understanding Misunderstanding: A Proposal for an Explanation of Reading Choices." *Journal of Pragmatics* 1 (1977): 329–346.