Abstract

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English is being used as a means of international communication among an ever-growing number of non-native speakers around the world. However, this special type of English, i.e. English as a lingua franca (ELF), is still not fully acknowledged as a valuable kind of language usage. One of the major reasons for critical attitudes towards ELF is the fact that its shape sometimes differs fundamentally from English as a native language (ENL). Compared to ENL, ELF might be regarded as erroneous and not authentic. From a communicative point of view, however, it appears to be highly functional. A one-to-one correlation of correctness and effectiveness thus hardly seems to be possible. Taking this situation as a starting point, the relationship of lexicogrammatical correctness and communicative effectiveness represents a central aspect within the investigation of ELF talk. This is why the focus of this thesis is put on exactly this relationship.

In the theoretical part, an overview of the current situation of English worldwide is provided, touching upon current as well as on potential future norms for ELF. Furthermore, some criteria for successful communication as well as indicators for problems are presented. With these preconditions established, the study poses the question if correctness always brings about effectiveness and if incorrectness always brings about miscommunication in ELF talk, or if the relationship between these terms can have a different nature. For this purpose, a small-scale corpus of ELF data was compiled, containing conversations between international students. Within the analysis of the data, not only are the different resulting possibilities described, but also their reasons are investigated. Here, the findings of linguists' research so far are presented in connection to the corpus data. As a final step, some implications for a future ELF norm are discussed. Generally speaking, this thesis seeks to make a contribution to the linguistic description of ELF as a language in its own right.