

Joachim Grzega

### **Review on *Beyond Misunderstanding*\***

In 2006, Kristin Bührig and Jan D. ten Thije edited the book *Beyond Misunderstanding: Linguistic Analyses of Intercultural Communication*, at John Benjamins. The book is a 339-page collection of 11 papers on intercultural communication. They are preceded by an introduction by Jan D. ten Thije and supplemented by a list of short biographies of the contributors and an index of institutional constellations (e.g. business talk or counselling discourse), intercultural constellations, languages and keywords. The authors are Jan D. ten Thije, Georges Lüdi, Jochen Rehbein, Grit Liebscher, Jennifer Hartog, Martina Rost-Roth, Dennis Day, Claudia Bubel, Lise Fontaine, Helga Kotthoff and Shi-xu.

The contributors seem to agree that interculturality is not a concept that can be defined *a priori*; rather, interculturality is “negotiated,” as some of the authors put it, in the course of a conversation. Shi-xu even views interculturality also as a cultural-power practice. Moreover, the authors state that not everything is cultural at all times only because the interlocutors come from different cultures.

The theoretical frameworks that the authors have chosen as points of reference vary from article to article: they range from functional grammar to referential semantics, conversational analysis and others. The discourse situations dealt with by the articles are manifold: small talk, counselling discourse, medical communication, oral lamentation, telephone conversations, internet group discussions, talk shows, workplace communication, (socio-)political discourse, business negotiations, international teamwork. The types of dialog partners analyzed in the studies are diglossic-bilingual speakers, native speaker and non-native speaker, speakers with English as a lingua franca, and speakers of (national/regional) varieties of the same language. The book thus offers a broad range of perspectives.

The majority of contributions seems to have originally been written for a publication several years earlier, as can be deduced from the footnotes at the beginning of most articles. Thus they primarily address the results and data elicited by the year 2000; however, the articles have in part been updated by the authors for this publication. The contributions are fortunately now available to a larger audience as the articles surely raise the readers’ awareness of what interculturality is about and set them thinking. They include both empirical analyses and theoretical conclusions. However, the empirical parts of the articles are sometimes rather small and some conclusions and proposals for implementation in everyday work are only preliminary. The articles are thus not written for readers looking for an introduction or overview of the field of intercultural communication nor for readers seeking for quick professional and practical advice. They rather address the advanced student and researcher, for whom, however, they will be very fruitful.

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\* This text was originally a short review written for the journal *WORD* in 2006. As I have not heard anything from the *WORD* editors since then and as the issues seem to have ceased being published, I offer it here.

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