

Advanced skills to solve misunderstandings

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Intermediate

NUMBER
EN_BE_3810X

LANGUAGE
English

lingoda





Goals

- Can identify what a complex misunderstanding is.
- Can recall and use more advanced structures to clarify the meaning and explain my real intentions to resolve the misunderstanding.







Preview

- In this lesson, you will learn **how to react when someone understands something slightly different from what you intended.**



Oops! Sorry, that's not quite what I meant.
What I meant to say was that I am coming, but I am going to be late.



Words of misunderstanding

to misconstrue

He **misconstrued** my meaning and we ended up having an argument.

to misinterpret

The whole debate was based on a **misinterpretation** of the law.

to presume

He **presumed** that I was gesturing to him, but I was actually trying to get the attention of my colleague across the other side of the room.

**to
overestimate**

He **overestimated** my affection for him, which broke our friendship apart.

Learning what to say when you have been misunderstood

In this part of the lesson, we will learn and practise using phrases you can use when someone has **misunderstood your meaning**.



Sorry, I think **you have misunderstood** what I wanted to say.
What I meant was...



Sorry, maybe **I didn't explain myself properly**. **What I meant was...**



Why misunderstandings happen

In your experience, what kind of things lead to misunderstandings when communicating in a foreign language?

What things do you do to overcome them?





Read the dialogue with your teacher. How would you react in this situation?



It would be great to see you again. When you are next in Paris, give me a call.

I just meant call me when you are there. Unfortunately, my flat is too small for guests.

Let me have a think about it. There are lots of small hostels around that are reasonably priced.

Thanks for the offer. I'll definitely contact you when I can make it to Paris.

Oh, I understand. No worries, mine too. Can you suggest anywhere nice to stay if I visit Paris?



Here are some phrases for clarifying your meaning. Can you think of any others? Practise saying them.

I think there has been a misunderstanding.

I don't think we are talking about the same thing.

What I wanted to say was that...

I am not sure we have understood each other properly.

My apologies. I think there has been some miscommunication...

What I meant to say was that...

Sorry, it was not my intention...

That's not exactly what I meant.

Maybe I didn't explain myself properly.



Social misunderstandings

What would you do to clarify this misunderstanding politely?

Ben is sitting at the bar of a restaurant, waiting to be seated. He is meeting a business acquaintance, Anna, for dinner. This is the first time he is meeting Anna in person, as all contact between them up until now has been via email and phone calls. He has never seen her before, but Anna told Ben what she looks like when they arranged to meet.

A woman, Carla, enters the restaurant and sees Ben sitting at the bar by himself. She sits down beside him and orders a drink.

Hi, nice to meet you.

Hi, I'm Ben.

Carla and Ben begin chatting. After about 5 minutes, Ben notices a woman looking around for someone at the other end of the bar. This woman fits the description of Anna much more closely than the woman he has been chatting to. He never asked Carla for her name because he assumed that she was Anna.

What should Ben say to explain that he thought Carla was Anna and that he should probably go and speak to the woman at the other end of the bar?





Misunderstandings

**Explain a misunderstanding
that you have had to your
teacher or classmates.**

What
happened?

Why did the
misunderstanding
occur?

How did you deal
with the situation?



Using clarifying phrases

Pick one of the examples below and role play a misunderstanding based around that situation.

Don't forget to use clarifying phrases.



1

a misunderstanding over the phone

2

a misunderstanding when ordering food

3

a misunderstanding when trying to meet another person at a particular location



Words of misunderstanding

faux pas

I kissed my colleague instead of shaking her hand at our work gathering – another **faux pas** that will never be forgotten.

scope for misunderstanding

The report was unclear in several sections and provided much **scope for misunderstanding**.

room for interpretation

The document left a lot of **room for interpretation** on the matter of how the policy would actually be implemented.

fundamental misunderstanding

Our disagreement was prompted by his **fundamental misunderstanding** of the report's intention.



Cultural differences

cultural differences

Cultural differences are the qualities or customs unique to each culture that may sometimes cause conflict between cultures. A common cultural difference is the way people greet each other.

intercultural differences

Intercultural differences are differences that occur between cultures when they engage with one another.

genuine misunderstanding

A **genuine misunderstanding** is a misunderstanding that was not intended. It was a product of an authentic difference in understanding.

not what was intended

An **intention** is something that is planned or aimed for. If a misunderstanding is not aimed for then it is **not what was intended** by the speakers.

explaining a cultural misunderstanding

All cultures have unique ways of greeting each other and customs about how to behave and what to say in certain situations. In this part of the lesson, we will **practise learning how to deal with situations** where there has been a **cultural misunderstanding**.

But first, are there any things you do to try and prevent cultural misunderstandings when you travel overseas?



Sorry, I think there has been a misunderstanding. I didn't realise I was meant to leave you a tip.



My apologies, I had no idea I was meant to take my shoes off before coming inside.



Role play scenarios where one person misunderstands and then tries to clarify the misunderstanding.

You are in New York and you have paid your bill, but not paid a tip. The waitress waits at the table for the tip and looks upset.

You are in Spain and your colleague introduces you to his sister who kisses you on the cheek. You offer her a handshake and she doesn't shake it.

You are on the train and have bought the wrong train ticket in a foreign country. You think you have the right ticket, but the conductor explains that you need to buy an additional ticket. She thinks you are trying to avoid paying the right fee.

You are in Germany and you have submitted an invoice in the middle of the month because that is usual in your home country. Your manager asks if you are having financial difficulties and if there is anything she can do to help.



Clarifying a misunderstanding politely

In English, phrases like *I'm sorry* and *my apologies* are used before a clarifying phrase as a sign of politeness to the other speaker when a misunderstanding has occurred.

If there has been a serious misunderstanding, how would you go about making sure your clarification was polite? Do you have similar customs in your own culture?



I'd like to explain what happened.

I'm sure you will understand that...

Sorry, let me explain what's happened.

I think I need to explain myself again to avoid misunderstanding.

dealing with misunderstandings in the workplace

Workplace misunderstandings are very common.

In this part of the lesson, we are going to practise clarifying a misunderstanding that has occurred in a workplace context.



Oh, I didn't realise you were still using the photocopier. My apologies. You can go in front of me.



Make notes

Your teacher is going to read out a complaint email. Note down as many details as you can.

When you are finished, think about how you would respond to the complaint in a polite way.

A blank sheet of lined paper with a spiral binding on the left side, intended for taking notes.



abc



Listen up!





Role play

Now role play a telephone call between David, the project manager, and Bob, outlining any misunderstandings that may have occurred.





Write an email to Bob

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□

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bob@bobbuildingconstruction.com

Smith Street Bridge Building Project Update

Dear Bob,

I appreciate your multiple attempts to contact me about the status of the Smith Street Bridge building project. Unfortunately, several of my messages failed to reach you...

As to the status of the project...

Now imagine you are the project manager. You have spoken to Bob, but now you need to put your explanation in writing. Write a professional email addressed to Bob that explains why there has been a delay and that reassures him that workers are following safety protocols.



Misunderstandings at work

Describe the last time you experienced a misunderstanding at work.



Were you able to
clarify the
misunderstanding?
How?

Now that you have
done this lesson,
would you do
anything
differently?



Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

no





Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again



Transcription

Exercise p.19

Dear David (Project Manager),

I am writing to lodge a complaint about the quality of works performed on the Smith Street Bridge building project. After several inspections of the site, I have noticed that several construction workers are not following safety protocol and that they are running behind schedule. I was told two months ago that delays were unlikely, but that there was still some uncertainty about when the steel would be delivered to the site and that I would be informed once it arrived.

I have called your office twice and spoken with your secretary. Both times I was told that the project manager was out of the office and will return my call later, but I am yet to receive a call back.

This project is worth a significant sum and any prolonged delays are likely to lead to a cost blow out. I therefore need immediate confirmation of the status of the project so that I can report on it at the next key stakeholder meeting in a fortnight's time.

Please get back to me as soon as possible.

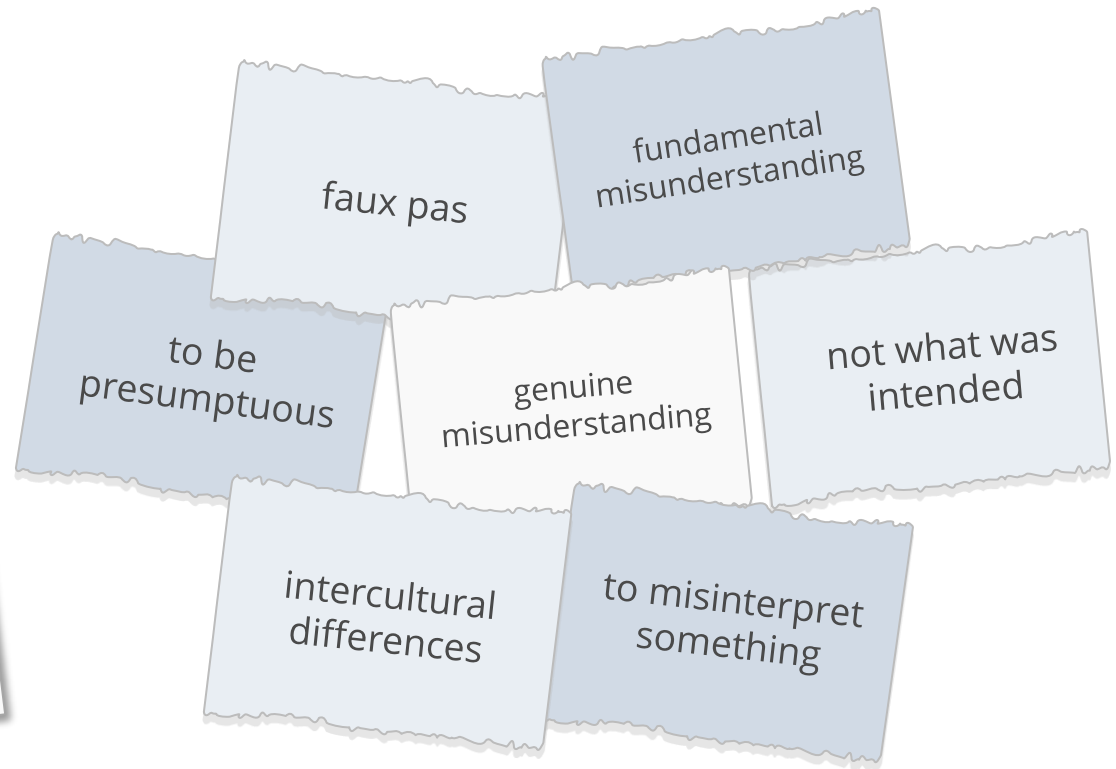
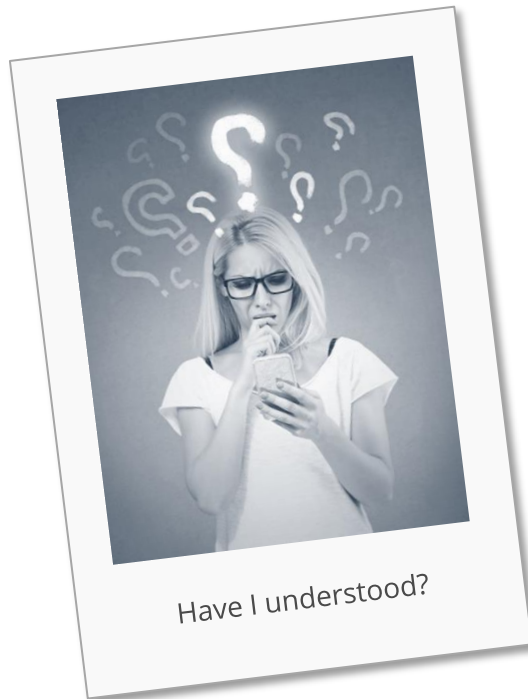
Regards,
Bob





Using phrases from the lesson

Put each of these phrases into a sentence.





Writing an apology

Imagine that a misunderstanding recently occurred between you and a colleague. Write an email apologising for the misunderstanding.

Think about the tone of voice you would use and which phrases from this lesson would work best.

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