

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

- Feifei:** Hello and welcome to another episode of 6 Minute English with me Feifei.
- Neil:** And me Neil.
- Feifei:** How are you Neil and what are we talking about today?
- Neil:** I'm very well, and today we're talking about misunderstandings. A famous French writer once said that "Language is the source of misunderstandings" and with me in the studio today are colleagues Conrado and Stephani, who have come in to tell us all about a misunderstanding they had recently. Conrado and Stephani, welcome.
- Stephani:** Thank you.
- Conrado:** Thank you.
- Neil:** So, tell us about your story.
- Conrado:** Well, we work in the same company, but in different offices. And one day I was speaking to Stephani on the phone, and I asked her a question, and she didn't know the answer, so she said "hang on".
- Stephani:** 'Hang on' means wait. I wanted him to wait while I found the answer.
- Conrado:** But I got confused, I thought 'hang on' was the same as 'hang up', and 'hang up' means 'put the phone down, finish the phone call'
- Stephani:** So when I came back with the answer, he was gone! So I called him back and told him the answer, then he asked another question, so I said 'hang on' again, and again he was gone! Three times I had to call him back!
- Conrado:** I didn't understand why she was getting angry with me. She got really angry actually, before we sorted it out.
- Neil:** Hang up, hang on... That's a really good one!
- Feifei:** If only you'd had Business Betty there to help...
- Neil:** Ah Business Betty. *(The door opens)* Ooh here she is now.
- Neil / FF:** It's Business Betty!
- BB:** Hello!
- Neil:** Hello Betty and may I say you're looking absolutely fantastic as ever.

BB: Thank you Neil and how can I help you?

Neil: We need some tips on avoiding misunderstandings.

BB: Certainly. If language is the source of misunderstandings, the best way to avoid misunderstandings at work is to check what people mean when they're talking to you. There are several ways to do this. You can simply say "What do you mean by that?"

Neil: What do you mean by that?

BB: That's right. Or you can tell the person what you think they mean, in your own words. Say "Do you mean...?"

Neil: Do you mean...?

BB: Or "So, are you saying...?"

Neil: So, are you saying...?

BB: Or "Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you mean...?"

Neil: Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you mean...?

BB: Good Neil. You can say "Sorry, I'm not sure if I got that. Are you saying...?"

Neil: Sorry, I'm not sure if I got that. Are you saying...?

BB: Or you can ask the other person to explain what they mean. Say something like "Sorry, what exactly do you mean by that?"

Neil: Sorry, what exactly do you mean by that?

BB: Or say "Sorry, could you go over that again?"

Neil: Sorry, could you go over that again?

BB: "Could you expand on that?"

Neil: Could you expand on that?

BB: And finally, another way to avoid misunderstandings is to check that the person you're talking to has understood you. Just ask them! Say something like "Is that clear?"

Feifei: Is that clear?

BB: Or, after an explanation, say "Does that make everything clear?"

Feifei: Does that make everything clear?

BB: And never forget the golden rule of avoiding misunderstandings – if in doubt, ask! It's better to ask now than make a mistake later.

Neil: Thanks Betty.

BB: You're welcome. Bye!

Neil/FF: Bye!

(Door closes)

Neil: She's so good... don't you think so, Conrado and Stephani? Don't you think she's brilliant - Business Betty?

C & S: Oh yes!

Feifei: Well that's very good because we're about to put it to the test!

Neil: Yes Conrado and Stephani. Let's imagine that you're back there now in your offices you're having this conversation that got you into so much trouble. But this time use some of Betty's tips and see if you can get it right.

Feifei: Does that make sense? Have another go at the hang on / hang up conversation, but this time do what Betty suggested. OK? Are you ready?

C & S: Yes, we are ready.

Role-play

Conrado: *Ring ring!*

Stephani: *Hello, Stephani speaking.*

Conrado: *Hello Stephani, it's Conrado. I just wanted to ask if the reports are ready.*

Stephani: *The reports... do you mean the monthly reports or the yearly reports?*

Conrado: *Oh sorry, yes, the monthly reports.*

Stephani: *The monthly reports. OK, just hang on.*

Conrado: *Sorry, I'm not sure if I got that. Are you saying "Wait a minute"?*

Stephani: *Yes, just hang on a couple of minutes please.*

Conrado: *OK.*

Stephani: *(A couple of minutes' later) Hello Conrado, sorry to keep you waiting. The monthly reports are nearly ready - the accountant is finishing them this afternoon.*

Conrado: *Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you mean they'll be ready by the end of today?*

Stephani: *Yes, they'll be ready by 5 o'clock today. Does that make everything clear?*

Conrado: *Oh yes, thanks, that's great. Thank you very much!*

Stephani: *You're welcome.*

Feifei: And that's the end of today's role-play!

Neil: How was it for you two?

Conrado: It was great, much much better.

Stephani: Yes, I wish we'd done it that way in the first place.

Neil: That's good and that's it.

Feifei: Are you saying that we've reached the end of today's programme?

Neil: Yes we have, so thanks for helping us out today Conrado and Stephani. It's goodbye from all of us. Join us again for another 6 Minute English!

All: Bye!

Misunderstandings: Key phrases

Checking what someone means	What do you mean by that?
	Do you mean...?
	So are you saying...?
	Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you mean...?
	Sorry, I'm not sure if I got that. Are you saying...?
Asking someone to explain what they mean	Sorry, what exactly do you mean by that?
	Sorry, could you go over that again?
	Could you expand on that?
Checking that someone has understood you	Is that clear?
	Does that make everything clear?