VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH AS A BUSINESS LINGUA FRANCA (BELF)

SEVAL BIRLIK

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2018

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SEVAL BIRLIK

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2018

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

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VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH AS A BUSINESS LINGUA FRANCA

ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of English as Business Lingua Franca (BELF) and its impact to a successful and effective intercultural communication. This study argues that verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in BELF may contribute to the overall success in intercultural business interactions. To understand how BELF speakers manage to communicate successfully and effectively in intercultural business communication, the theoretical framework Community of Practice (CofP) was applied to determine the external context of the interactions. Conversation Analysis (CA) was used as the analytical framework. The study draws on a survey, audio recorded semi-structured interviews and video recorded meetings. The focus of the study lies on the meeting data. The findings of the study reveal four common verbal communication strategies (VCS) labeled as 'questioning, repeating, reformulating, and explaining' strategies and three non-verbal communication strategies (NVCS) categorized as 'head movements, hand movements and eye contact and gaze'. It shows that VCS and NVCS were employed as part of the meeting participants' shared repertoire and resources to manage intercultural communication successfully by facilitating negotiation of meaning and thus shared understanding. The study also reveals external factors that contribute to BELF success based on interview results. It was noted that developing a shared repertoire in the specific business community through the experience of working together, thus knowing the specific 'working culture(s)' and business context as well as considering the individual factors, played a crucial role in making the communication successful. The findings of this study provide an empirical basis regarding forms and functions of BELF and shed light on communicative competence and intercultural awareness of BELF users.

Keywords: BELF, VCS and NVCS, Intercultural Business Communication

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji penggunaan *English as Business Lingua Franca* (BELF) dan kesannya ke arah komunikasi antara budaya yang berkesan dan berjaya. Kajian ini berpendapat bahawa strategi komunikasi lisan dan bukan lisan dalam BELF boleh menyumbang kepada kejayaan keseluruhan dalam interaksi perniagaan antara budaya. Untuk memahami bagaimana penceramah BELF berjaya berkomunikasi dengan berkesan dalam komunikasi perniagaan antara budaya, kerangka teoretikal *Community of Practice* (CofP) telah digunakan untuk menentukan konteks luar interaksi. *Conversation Analysis* (CA) digunakan sebagai kerangka analisis. Kajian ini melibatkan kaedah tinjauan, penggunaan audio untuk merekod termubual separa berstruktur dan rakaman video mesyuarat. Tumpuan kajian ini adalah pada data mesyuarat. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat empat strategi komunikasi verbal (VCS) yang dilabelkan sebagai strategi 'mempersoal, mengulang, merumus semula, dan menerang dan tiga strategi komunikasi tidak verbal (NVCS) yang dikategorikan sebagai 'gerakan kepala, pergerakan tangan dan hubungan mata '. Ini menunjukkan bahawa VCS dan NVCS telah digunakan sebagai sebahagian daripada repertoire dan sumber yang dikongsi bersama para peserta mesyuarat bagi menguruskan komunikasi antara budaya dengan jayanya dan seterusnya memudahkan perkongsian serta rundingan makna dan pemahaman. Kajian ini turut mendedahkan faktor luaran menyumbang kepada kejayaan BELF berdasarkan hasil temuduga. Kajian ini mengambil maklum bahawa membina repertoire bersama dalam komuniti perniagaan tertentu melalui pengalaman bekerja bersama, disamping mengetahui 'budaya kerja' dan konteks perniagaan tertentu, serta mempertimbangkan faktor individu, memainkan peranan penting dalam mencapai komunikasi berjaya. Penemuan kajian ini memberi asas empirikal mengenai bentuk dan fungsi penggunaan BELF dan memberi penerangan tentang kesedaran antara budaya dan kecekapan komunikasi pengguna BELF.

Kata kunci: BELF, VCS dan NVCS, Komunikasi Perniagaan Antara Budaya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my special gratitude to the top management of the German organization who showed their sincere interest and gave me the permission to collect the data for this research, especially allowing me to record the meetings on video. Without their permission this PhD would have not been possible in the first place. Special thanks also to all the employees of this organization for taking their time from their busy schedules to participate in the survey and the interviews.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Ching Hei Kuang, and Dr. Francisco Perlas Dumanig, especially Dr. Francis who was always there for me to answer my questions across the time zones, for his continuous support and advice, encouraging me until the end of this journey. My sincere thanks also goes to my current supervisor Dr. Jagdish Kaur who was always there for me before and during my viva and helped me through the final phase of this thesis.

Special thanks to my friend and mentor Professor Emeritus Pauline Erera for her valuable advice and encouraging words when I needed the most. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my friends, Elena in preparing and Janice for helping me to submit the thesis for examination.

I am grateful to my family, my mum and my sister for their constant support, and especially my niece Sinem for her help. Last but not least, my very special thanks to my darling husband for supporting me all the way through. I dedicate this PhD thesis to my one and only son Mika who was born after I started this PhD. Many times, Mika asked me why I needed to go all the time. When I told him that I have to go to work and also study, he told me to finish it fast. Unfortunately, I could not finish it so fast but at least I finished it and did not give up despite all the challenges, especially as a working mum.

To **MIKA**

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BELF	:	English as a Business Lingua Franca
CA	:	Conversation Analysis
CofP	:	Community of Practice
DQ	:	Direct Questioning
EFL	:	English as Foreign Language
EIB	:	English for International Business
EIL	:	English as an International Language
ELF	:	English as a Lingua Franca
ENL	:	English as Native Language
IC	:	Intercultural Communication
IDQ	:	Indirect Questioning
LF	:	Lingua Franca
MNC	:	Multi-National Corporation/s
NNS	:	Non-Native Speaker/s
NNSE	:	Non-Native Speaker of English
NS	:	Native Speaker/s
NSE	:	Native Speaker/s of English
NVCS	:	Non-Verbal Communication Strategy
TCU	:	Turn Construction Unit
TRP	:	Turn Relevance Place
VCS	:	Verbal Communication Strategy

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Increasing globalization and growing internationalization of businesses is further intensifying intercultural communication across the world. Intercultural Communication (henceforth IC) occurs whenever people from different cultures come in contact. This has been the case throughout history but the interaction between different cultures was not as widespread then as it is today. Evolving and emerging political and economic alliances, hence the increasing number of international or multinational organizations and corporations, the advance of new information and communication technologies, such as the Internet as the most influential mass media, are some examples that have accelerated the contact and interaction between people of different background. However, the main reason for IC between people of various cultures and first languages then and now are economic growth and the pursuit of economic mobility. In fact, the trend towards global or international mobility in today's world economy is still on the rise where international workforce and professionals from different cultural and linguistic background working in international or multinational organizations and companies have become commonplace. In order to facilitate communication and to communicate successfully people of diverse languages and cultures use a common language.

Today, the common language worldwide used across cultures and social levels is English and no other language before has achieved the status of a global language to this extent. Crystal (2003) estimated the total number of English speakers to be 1.5 billion, consisting of 750 million first and second language speakers and the same number of English as foreign language speakers. Thus, approximately a quarter of the world's population is able to communicate in English. He further stated that a major shift has taken place where the majority of English speakers are now believed to be second language and many more foreign language speakers of English and not first language speakers as it used to be thought (Crystal, 2003). The widespread use of English especially among second language and non-native speakers (NNS) has naturally led to diverse varieties and accents of English spoken in different countries and by different individuals.

English has become the lingua franca (henceforth LF) of today's world that is mainly characterized by its function as shared language and its use by NNS of English. Charles (2007) actually estimates that 90 % of English speakers are NNS. English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) has become a reality in all areas of life, e.g. in social, academic and especially in business domains. Especially in the last two decades, English has emerged as the main working language in the global economy and is increasingly employed in different regions of the world, e.g. in the European Union (EU) labeled often as 'Euro-English' (Jenkins, Modiano, & Seidlhofer, 2001) and in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) where it was adopted as the official language in 2007 (Kirkpatrick, 2008). The trend towards English becoming the official global language of business is further accelerating since more and more multinational corporations (MNC) operating worldwide adopt English as their common corporate language 'to facilitate communication' as pointed out by Neeley (2012). She further states that English is used as an operating language and as 'corporate language strategy' for avoiding 'playing favorites', e.g. especially in company mergers, hence highlighting also its neutral function as shared language.

ELF is commonly seen as a facilitator for IC although often affiliated with some challenges and difficulties that seem to be generally attributed to IC. Since ELF is considered a 'medium of communication' for IC (see Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, & Pitzl, 2006), 'IC through ELF' has been a central aspect and runs like a red thread through

ELF research (see Lopriore & Grazzi, 2016). However, the intercultural approach taken in ELF research differs from the one traditionally taken, where much of the research concentrating on IC often focuses on communication difficulties and misunderstandings and attribute these problems mainly to cultural and linguistic differences instead of determining what might contribute to successful intercultural communication (see Poncini, 2004). Since much of the IC research, whereby IC is traditionally defined as face-to-face communication between people of different national cultures (Gudykunst, 2003), tends to focus on communication between two participants of different 'national' cultures, usually the language of either one participant is used and therefore one participant is always disadvantaged. Hence, IC research applies a problem-based approach where misunderstandings and miscommunications are highlighted based on lingua-cultural differences. ELF is seen as a special case of IC as ELF research concentrates on communication where NNS of English from varied cultural backgrounds are involved and therefore requires a different approach. As suggested by Baker (2011), in IC through ELF, cultures can be seen as 'dynamic and fluid resources' created in-situ and are "more or less relevant to creating understanding" (p. 5). Thus, this study takes a similar approach seeing cultural as well as linguistic differences in IC as resources assisting in understanding instead of considering these as causal factors of difficulties in understanding.

Even if findings in ELF list some difficulties due to lingua-cultural factors it also reveals that ELF is being successfully used by its NNS showing a "high level of cooperation and mutual support" (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 218). It also shows that ELF in business communication works and "business got done and conversational cooperation was achieved" (Charles, 2007, p. 277). ELF in business context also referred to as 'Business English as a Lingua Franca' (henceforth BELF) or short 'Business English Lingua Franca' (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaaranta, 2005) is increasingly used all over the world and seems to work well but there has been relatively little research so far in this fast-growing field compared to the actual global use (see also Murray, 2012). However, the importance of BELF for business communication is beyond question, as most of international businesses work with international partners and have an international work force. In fact, as Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) estimate, "70 %[1] of the English communication of internationally operating business professionals on average could be characterized as BELF as it took place between NNS" (p. 387). Therefore, there is a need to know more about BELF (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), the way it is used and what constitutes effective and successful communication in international business (see Rogerson-Revell & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). In BELF, the use of e.g. communication strategies differ from those in IC in the way that they are not as straightforward as in IC where, as stated by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), "either party's native tongue is used" and the respective discourse rules are automatically followed 'as the norm' (p. 403). According to their findings there are 'no rules' in BELF interactions and "no such strategies seem to exist - or they have not yet been systematically established" (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 403). They rather believe that strategies are being created.

Studies in BELF, mostly based on methods, such as surveys and interviews, found no major misunderstandings, despite linguistic irregularities and cultural differences of BELF speakers. The communicative success is being achieved, e.g. by jointly creating meanings and 'operational' cultures (see Charles 2007). Whereby the notion 'communicative success' as defined by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) is the achievement of goals of a particular communicative event. Communicative success as shown in BELF studies so far, could be based on two main categories of factors, the

[1]This result was based on an online survey with 987 respondents representing 31 different native languages, mostly Western European languages, in more than 20 countries.

extra linguistic contextual factors and linguistic factors. The first relates to e.g. shared business context or background where "it was not necessary to master the language perfectly" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 207) and also to 'personal experiences of participants'. The second refers mainly to 'communication skills' (see Charles 2007) or as put by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) "the message and the language of a particular event" (p. 205), more precisely, e.g. the accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness of information (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) and the way information is transmitted "effectively and efficiently across language boundaries" (Ehrenreich, 2010, p. 418). In business, as stated by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005) 'effectiveness and efficiency' rule language use and are essential for the communicative and business success. Hence, successful and effective communication is not based on the correct use of language and accurate grammar but rather on the clarity of information and its transmission through certain interactional practices and communication strategies. Therefore, successful and effective communication refers to communication skills and strategies rather than language skills or linguistic correctness (see Ehrenreich, 2010), which will be further discussed in chapter two (2).

These communication strategies can be best identified based on naturally occurring data and applying a micro-level analysis. Thus, BELF studies applying a micro-level analysis and/or a multi-method approach (e.g. Rogerson-Revell, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2010; Pullin, 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010) could reveal deeper insights into BELF communication. One general practice or commonly identified communication strategy to negotiate meaning and facilitate understanding is the 'accommodation strategy'. Furthermore, various other strategies have been identified, e.g. 'coping strategies' such as comprehension checks (Ehrenreich, 2010), depending on different situations and business context that will be further discussed in chapter two (2).

The use of communication strategies to negotiate meaning involves some awareness of BELF speakers of the ‘complex linguistic environment’ (Ehrenreich, 2010). However, to negotiate and construct meaning, and avoid misunderstandings, BELF speakers also apply semiotic resources, such as gestures, gaze and artifacts besides the linguistic repertoire since appropriate verbal and nonverbal behavior is significant for successful communication (see Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010). Compared to previous BELF research, Virkkula-Räisänen (2010) employs video-recordings to capture the nonverbal communication and to reveal the complexity of business interaction and communication. She points out that BELF is multifaceted and to fully comprehend the resources of successful and effective communication, it seems most beneficial to incorporate multiple research methods, e.g. observations of nonverbal communication and examination of the participants’ perceptions (see Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010). BELF research applying a multi-method and multi-modal approach and examining both the actual BELF verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as BELF user’s perceptions is still limited. Moreover BELF research to date as discussed above concentrates mostly on Europe therefore more in depth research is needed between people of different lingua-cultural background also in other parts of the world to determine how successful and effective communication is achieved.

Studies on BELF so far, mainly based on practitioners’ reported perceptions, have established BELF as successful facilitator in IC depending mostly on extra-linguistic factors, such as shared business context. However, there is more authentic data needed, especially of specific business interactions in different contexts to determine the communicative success in actual BELF interactions as well as the factors that influence BELF. Furthermore, to achieve a better understanding of the complex and multifaceted communication of business interactions multimodal resources need to be explored as well. Thus, this study takes a multi-method and multi-modal approach and combines both Community of Practice (CofP) as theoretical framework and Conversation Analysis (CA) as analytical framework. CA that focuses on naturally spoken data allows an analysis at the micro level to determine the use of BELF and the communication strategies for effective and successful communication where both the verbal and non-verbal communication and other semiotic resources can be analyzed. CofP is most useful on the macro level analysis to reveal the common practice of workplace interactions, taking especially the wider context of communication into consideration and helping to identify the factors that might influence BELF use and facilitate understanding. The key concepts of CofP and CA relevant to this study will be explored in detail in chapter two (2).

Hence, the objective of this research is to identify the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in BELF communication by non-native English speakers from completely different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and the underlying factors that might contribute to successful and effective communication. To know more about BELF use and users to better understand what constitutes successful and effective communication and how BELF can be seen as a facilitator in IC, the concept of 'Lingua Franca' (LF) shall be first clarified next.

1.2 The Concept and Purpose of 'Lingua Franca'

According to House (2003), the term LF originates from Arabic 'lisan-al-farang', an intermediary language used among Arabic speakers with travellers from Western Europe that was called later the 'language of commerce', originally considered rather a 'stable variety'. Today language of commerce is associated with e.g. preciseness and explicitness (House, 2015). Historically a LF was a common language consisting of various languages spoken in Mediterranean ports mainly for trade. As defined by Knapp and Meierkord (2002), it was a pidgin like lingua franca that possibly consisted of "some Italian dialects in its earliest history, and included elements from Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, and Persian." (p. 9) The main purpose of LF was then to facilitate trade through a common language used by speakers with different national and first language backgrounds. As opposed to a pidgin language, House (2003) notes, one 'natural' language could function as LF to facilitate communication with people who do not share a common native language for the use in different functional areas, such as business, trade, administration, science and diplomacy. As stated by Knapp and Meierkord (2002) the acquired status of a language as a LF "is never static, but bound to emerge and vanish" (p. 11), thus English gradually replaced e.g. German as a scientific language and French as a diplomatic language. However, Nickerson (2005) estimates that the status of ELF will take hold the next 50 years and continue to be of key interest. Hence, English is regarded as the LF of today's world and will sustain its position as "the currently most prevalent language for intercultural communication" based on "frequency and scope of use" (Hülmbauer, Böhringer, & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 26).

There are many terms in literature for English as a common global language similarly used in cross- and intercultural communication by speakers of different background: e.g. World Englishes, English as a world language, English as an International Language, short EIL (Jenkins, 2000) or English as global language (Crystal, 2003) are used as generic terms for English encompassing Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle as defined by Kachru (1992) and includes English within and across these circles for intra- and international communication (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339). Moreover, these cover terms, such as English as an international or global language are used in broader sense and can also include English native speakers whereas the term

ELF refers to non-native speakers of English only (see Rogerson-Revell, 2007). However, the widely used common term is ELF as a medium of intercultural communication among speakers of different lingua-cultural background. Hence ELF is the most suitable term and comparable to LF's original meaning as 'shared common language' except the association to 'pidgin language' historically.

ELF is commonly defined as a "contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication." (Firth 1996, p. 240) This definition is based on Firth's (1996) influential work conducted with ELF speakers on business communication and taken up by many studies in this field that followed. Seidlhofer (2001) similarly defines ELF as,

> An additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages, or a language by means of which the members of different speech communities can communicate with each other but which is not the native language of either – a language which has no native speakers. (p. 146)

In both ELF definitions the focus is on the functional aspect of intercultural communication. While Firth (1996) describes ELF as a 'contact language' with English as chosen foreign language, Seidlhofer (2001) eliminates 'foreign' and the association that could be made with language acquisition hence language proficiency and eventually language learner targeting English as native speaker norms and uses the term 'an *additional* language which has *no native* speakers' disconnecting it from English as normative target language. House (2003) also highlights ELF by its function as a language and further as an 'instrument' for communication;

> ELF can be regarded as a language for communication that is, a useful instrument for making oneself understood in international encounters. It is instrumental in enabling communication with others who do not speak one's own L1. (p. 559)

As with most definitions it is difficult to include all aspects to be able to give a complete definition especially in the case of ELF. As described above (Firth, 1996;

Seidlhofer, 2001; House, 2003) ELF is characterized as a language of communication by speakers of different native or first languages (L1). The difference is made when referring to ELF users' lingua-cultural background e.g. Firth (1996) with different '(national) cultures' although national put in brackets and 'English as foreign language' viz. targeting native speaker competence. Seidlhofer (2001) takes a different position and refers to 'members of different speech communities' as more appropriate description for ELF speakers. However, a speech community is rather seen as a stable variety (see House 2003) not fully describing various ELF communities that exist including a range of different cultures. In the light of the aforesaid, ELF should be defined "functionally by its use in intercultural communication rather than by its reference to native speaker norms" (Hülmbauer, Böhringer & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 27). However, the concept of culture in intercultural communication and BELF context needs to be reviewed and not purely based on national culture (see 1.4 in this chapter).

Alongside the common and general term ELF that refers basically to all domains of ELF research, e.g. the academic or higher education and business domain as the two main domains, other terms emerged in ELF research referring specifically to the business domain. One such term used by Rogerson-Revell (2007) is 'English for International Business' (EIB) that also includes 'English as a mother tongue' (EMT) speakers. She is comparing EIB to other broader terms such as 'English as an International Language' (EIL), discussed earlier in this section or 'International English' and 'Global English' where English native speakers (ENS) could be included. However, depending on the purpose of the study a distinction is crucial since in the presence of EMT or ENS communication processes could differ as well as the use of certain communication strategies. The other term that has emerged in the last decade and became the standard term is 'Business English Lingua Franca' (BELF) to stress the domain of intensifying ELF use in intercultural business situations (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005). Same as in ELF the new term BELF refers to non-native speakers of English with the reference to business domain exclusively:

> BELF refers to English used as 'neutral' and shared communication code. BELF is neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as her/his mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right - not 'non-native speakers' or 'learners' (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005, p. 404)

The concept of being 'not non-native speakers' in this definition is not to be interpreted literary but rather as such that the speakers should not be merely labeled as 'non-native speakers' or simply as 'learners' *of English* but as 'communicators in their own rights' not bound to certain norms and forms. They should not be referred to 'learners' with incomplete or deficient language skills measured by native speaker norms since "the term 'lingua franca' attempts to conceptualize the participant simply as a language user whose real-word interactions are deserving of unprejudiced description" (Firth, 1996, p. 241). As Ehrenreich (2010) rightly points out what matters "in the jungle of different varieties and proficiency levels of English is the language's function of transmitting information effectively and efficiently across language boundaries" and not the native speaker competence that is expected but rather good communication skills and the competence "to make oneself understood are regarded as essential" (p. 418). Therefore communication competence and skills rather than language competence and skills are important for the communicative success, especially in the business domain where success is measured by the operational function of BELF, namely as "an instrument for getting the job done in an international business environment" (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 400). This is also underlining LF's original function to facilitate trade or commerce through a common language, namely as a 'language of commerce' (House, 2003, 2015).

Although the concept of the term 'Business English Lingua Franca' (BELF) has been changed by Kankaaranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) to 'English as Business Lingua Franca' the definition and the abbreviation of BELF was retained. It was only changed to emphasize the business domain instead of the type of English. As Kankaanranta and Lu (2013) put it, "business is the purpose and domain" of BELF use as a "neutral resource that is shared with the members of the international business community in order to conduct business and work in multinational companies" (p. 292).

The concept of LF in its historical meaning, the different ELF definitions since the last two decades, as well as the co-existing alternative terms discussed above show the importance of considering the purpose and domain, and thus the wider context of its use in IC. In view of all these, consequently this study will use the term BELF guided by the two definitions given above to refer to BELF using the same concepts, namely, its function as neutral and shared language and its users as 'BELF users in their own right' and as members of an 'international business community' to conduct business and work in multinational companies. After having established the purpose of BELF in IC with its distinct concepts stated above, the next section will indicate the importance of this study and thus the need for more systematic research in this specific area.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Despite the fact that BELF is commonplace everywhere in the world hence the frequency of occurrence and its importance as a shared global language in international businesses with international partners and multicultural work force for IC, this phenomenon is still neglected in the vast field of IC research. Moreover, empirical research based on real-life interactions is lagging far behind the present reality of its global use. Even though ELF and BELF (henceforth (B)ELF) interactions could be investigated as part of the vast field of IC research, '(B)ELF in its own right' is basically still ignored in IC research. This might be due to two underlying concepts, one being the common concept of IC focusing on cultural and linguistic differences and the other what Seidlhofer (2001) calls the 'conceptual gap'. The assumption that "ELF as a use in its own right, and ELF speakers as language users in their own right, have not yet entered peoples' consciousness" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 137) instead ELF is still referred to native speaker (NS) norms. This conceptual gap could also be the cause for the challenges encountered in ELF. These challenges could be considered, as stated by Murray (2012) "for the development of learner's pragmatic competence and some of the strategies that promise to address those challenges" (p. 319), since pragmatic or communicative competence rather than language competence are crucial in business. However, the common central aspect of teaching e.g. English for specific purposes (ESP) or Business English is still mainly linked to NS norms and intercultural differences based on national cultures. Although an important shift from form to function of language took place more than a decade ago when both (B)ELF research started focusing on contextualized naturally occurring data, '(B)ELF in its own right' continued to be ignored. More empirical research in different contexts that reflect the actual practices and raise more awareness of the (B)ELF phenomenon might close this 'conceptual gap' among both researchers and practitioners.

There are numerous studies in the field of IC covering different cultures and languages in contact in various domains but usually involving two different national cultures (see Spencer-Oatey, 2000). However, the focus in IC on communication between two participants of two different cultural and linguistic backgrounds where normally two national cultures are involved and mostly the language of one participant is used as mentioned in section 1.1 is usually bound to cause communication problems and lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication as the norms and strategies of that chosen language are expected to be followed. Moreover, an intercultural problem-based approach seems to be deeply rooted in the common concept of IC where differences, specifically cultural differences are the focus of study. As stated by Ting-Toomey, (1999): “Intercultural communication is about the study of cultural differences that really ‘make a difference’ in intercultural encounters. It is also about acquiring the conceptual tools and skills to manage such differences creatively”. (p. 3) However, in most international business encounters where English is the medium of communication “none of the interactants using English to conduct business belongs to an English-speaking culture” (Poncini, 2004, p. 15). Poncini (2004) further states that problems in intercultural business settings are still mostly linked to cultural differences and linguistic difficulties. She further rightly points out that although analyzing differences is important, research should not be limited to problematic situations but should consider other factors that can contribute to successful intercultural communication (Poncini, 2004, p. 21). BELF as a special case of IC concentrates on communication where non-native speakers are involved and therefore requires a different approach away from the focus on cultural differences that ‘make a difference’ (see Ting-Toomey, 1999) to common resources considering cultural differences that establish a common ground or commonalities that lead to communicative success.

In the business world today successful and effective intercultural communication is the common goal and practice despite various linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors. However, there is not enough research done in this domain to describe BELF use and communication strategies that ensure successful communication. Therefore, more empirical data of naturally occurring interactions in business situations is needed to examine how successful communication is achieved. Firth (1996) provides some empirical evidence in the business domain that “lingua franca talk is not only meaningful, it is also normal and, indeed, ordinary” and how this normality is achieved and “sustained through locally-managed interactional, interpretive and linguistic work”

(p. 242). Interactional work refers here to the use of different conversational mechanisms and resources depending on the situation. English is “a fact of life for many business people” (Nickerson, 2005, p. 368). Professionals from a wide range of organizations and corporations are increasingly coming together to do business in the international workplace, particularly in meetings. Therefore intercultural communication codes need to be interpreted for better understanding of the key issues. There is also a need for intercultural competence among speakers so that they are better able to recognize and accept other cultural norms. Nickerson (2005) explains two trends of the last decade in the investigation of business language and the research focusing on English for specific business purposes (ESBP). Firstly, the shift from the analysis of isolated to contextualized speech events allowing for the organizational and cultural factors and secondly the shift from language skills “as driving force behind ESBP research” to language strategy, thus “identifying those strategies that can be associated with effective communication in business, regardless of whether the speaker/writer is native or non-native speaker (Nickerson, 2005, p. 369).

While research has been further growing in this field, especially since the last decade (see Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Charles, 2007; Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Pullin, 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010) with the majority of studies published in 2010, the focus is on European setting. This is mainly due to the fact that the researchers are from that part of the world where they had collected their data from companies also based there. Since their main findings show that BELF is highly context dependent it is necessary to conduct research in other parts of the world as well. Moreover most of the studies done so far on which their key findings rely on, namely, the key role of contextual factors e.g. shared business background and business communication competence are mainly based on surveys and interviews or observations therefore more naturally spoken data is needed including also non-verbal communication. This is partly due to confidentiality issues companies are faced with and thus the difficulty to obtain permission for recordings especially video recordings for research purposes. Furthermore, existing research on BELF is still limited and has to keep up with the status of BELF as facilitator in intercultural business communication of the globalized world. In particular, more systematic research is needed, as in some studies native speakers of English (NSE) are included or the data comprises different genres, e.g. written and spoken data that might require the use of different communication strategies. Therefore, more systematic empirical research may be able to provide more generalizable data on BELF. Nickerson (2015) even proposes a research agenda including a compilation of BELF corpus with different business interactions and genres from various contexts and different national cultures within IC "to establish the shared nature of BELF as well as any notable variations" (p. 396). She further suggests that this could help in developing teaching materials that could take BELF into account since "the majority of the globe's business transactions take place in BELF" (Nickerson, 2015, p. 396).

This study therefore aims to contribute to the vast field of intercultural communication and more precisely to BELF research and to the existing knowledge in this field. Since most of the empirical studies in this area so far concentrate mostly on Europe the place of this research is Southeast Asia. As Ehrenreich (2010) suggested, future research could be extended and should also include other countries and business areas. This study also has a practical goal to raise awareness of the BELF phenomenon in intercultural business communication and interactions by making the findings accessible to practitioners' as well as to future practitioners for training or teaching purposes and the development of new materials to raise intercultural awareness and help improve intercultural communication through BELF. Before outlining the objectives and the structure of this thesis the notion of culture in BELF context shall be explored first.

1.4 The Notion of Culture in 'BELF in its own Right'

One way of closing the 'conceptual gap' (Seidlhofer, 2001) and accepting the so-called 'BELF users and communicators in their own right' (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005) as mentioned in the sections above is conducting more research and raising awareness of BELF as facilitator in intercultural business communication. The other way could be the reconceptualization of culture in intercultural communication, especially in the domain of business. Since BELF is regarded as a successful facilitator, it is also important to understand the underlying factors that contribute to its success, such as the communicative competence and intercultural competence in BELF. First, as already highlighted in section 1.2 the concept of culture intercultural encounters needs to be reviewed and not simply based on national cultures. Second, as a result of the first, the definition of IC in the context of BELF needs to be reviewed as well. Traditional IC theories and the cultural concepts within might not be able to describe the BELF phenomenon fully. Therefore, new concepts and models might be a way to bridge the 'conceptual gap' in understanding the BELF users and their culture in their own right.

Jensen (2003) conceptualizes a new model that considers the complexity and dynamics of culture. He divides IC research into two main traditions, the first as seen from a functionalistic tradition predicts how culture would influence communication. He refers to Hofstede's groundbreaking and still influential work[2] and his theory of different cultural dimensions, such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism

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[2] Based on the outcome of a global survey conducted on IBM employees between 1967-1973 to help managers to understand the international market

(Hofstede, 2001). In this line of thought, competence research is based on different characteristics that are needed to acquire intercultural competence. However, Hofstede's theory was, as pointed out by Jensen (2003), "based on the idea that cultures are homogenous national cultures that do not change in time worth mentioning" (p. 3). Building upon the second tradition, the poststructuralist approach that takes the perspective of the individual into consideration, Jensen (2003) constructs a new IC model based on the concept of 'position of experience'. It focuses on individual differences where "understanding is based upon experience" (p. 6) and intercultural competence is then bound to professional knowledge about, e.g. the analytical tools in IC and the new concept of culture. Thus, his model is not constraint to race, ethnicity or nation but takes different kids of cultures into consideration including work culture. Similarly, Gullestrup (2003) also highlights the cultural complexity and dynamic as "a continuously changing unit" (p. 5) and defines it as 'co-incidence of culture' (p. 8) that refers to many different cultural categories at the same time, e.g. macro culture (European, East Asian, etc.), national culture, trade culture, occupational culture. He points out that culture is not static and "has to be understood individually" (Gullestrup, 2003, p. 15) in each specific intercultural situation that is complex and unique at the same time.

It is rather from the individual perspective that the diversity of culture and its complexity could be understood and best interpreted than just from the national perspective of culture. The interplay of different cultures on the macro as well as micro level is to be seen within the global business culture. Therefore, this study is guided by the following definition of 'BELF culture' given by Charles (2007);

> We can refer to the global business community as the "culture" that has created BELF, and within which BELF evolves. As with all cultures, the global business culture is diverse and dynamic; it also has groups who see themselves as its "owners". In the case of BELF, its owners are the "International Business Discourse Community", who have certain shared values (e.g. that of doing profitable business), and use it for a shared purpose (p. 264).

Hence, this definition sheds some light on the cultural background of BELF users and communicators in their own right that needs to be seen separately from national language and culture although certainly playing a role and partly influenced thereby.

Thus, these poststructuralist approaches that take the international business context into consideration are well suited for exploration of intercultural communication. As Piller (2011) rightly points out, “intercultural business communication is now an object in motion that can only be understood from interdisciplinary, context-sensitive and complex perspectives” (p. 94). She criticizes the basic assumption of Hofstede’s work that national homogeneous cultural values shape intercultural business communication. This assumption however “blinds you to the cultural variability in human practices, values and relationships” (Piller, 2011, p. 82). She further criticizes Hofstede’s quantitative methods of data collection and sampling leading to overgeneralization and promoting banal nationalism.

Especially in the business domain ‘national’ language and culture are no longer reference points for the shared purpose of ‘getting the job done’. The reference is rather the global business culture with its shared values, multi-facetted and consisting of various dynamic cultures that can be best understood from the individual perspective.

Thus, definitions of IC referring to national cultures mentioned in section 1.1, e.g. by Gudykunst (2003) are no longer encompassing the complexity, diversity, and dynamics of cultures that individuals acquired in the globalized business world. Intercultural encounters take place between different ‘cultural communities’, as defined by Ting-Toomey (1999); IC is “the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation” (p. 16/17). ‘Symbolic exchange process’ refers to verbal and nonverbal messages and their encoding and decoding process. ‘Different cultural communities’, described as a broad concept refers to “a group of interacting individuals within a bounded unit” (Ting-Toomey, p. 16/17), a cultural community that can refer to e.g. a national cultural group, an ethnic group or a gender group. She further states that objective boundaries of a culture may or may not coincide with its e.g. national or political boundaries. ‘Negotiating shared meanings’ draws on the general goal of IC that is the understanding of messages through the content meaning as well as identity and relational meanings. While content meaning is factual, the identity meaning involves e.g. facial expressions, selective word choices and relational meaning. As such, e.g. gestures can carry contextual information and at the same time vary depending on the individual. ‘Interactive situation’ refers to concrete and psychological features of an interactive setting, e.g. informal and formal dimensions, rules of behavior and roles, in general to context. Since culture is dynamic, changeable and not static, and influenced by both macro and micro level we have to look at interactive situation separately. As Ting-Toomey (1999) further points out: “In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the intercultural communication process, we have to mindfully observe the linkage among communication patterns, context, and culture” (p. 23). In other words, only by analyzing BELF use and users in their own rights and the specific cultures involved in context, we should be able to see the full potential of BELF and its success in IC.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In the view of the above, it is important to know more about the use of BELF in specific interactions and other contexts, such as different countries and business areas and BELF users from different lingua-cultural background. This research thus focuses on German-Malaysian BELF business interactions in a German organization situated in

Malaysia. BELF is thus the medium of communication used for IC in this organization, especially in formal meetings where it is used as common shared language.

Malaysia is a multi-lingual and multicultural nation in Southeast Asia. The multicultural society is made up largely of three ethnic groups, the Malay, Chinese and Indians. Thus, the 'Malaysian culture' is complex and diverse and as discussed earlier (see 1.4), one nation or national culture does not necessarily correspond to only one specific culture although often labeled as such. Malaysia is also a multi-lingual country, besides the respective languages or dialects of the different ethnicities, both English and the official language of Malaysia known as 'Bahasa Malaysia', play a fundamental role as shared language of communication among different ethnicities in 'all aspects of daily life' (Murugesan, 2003). The common language for conducting business however, is English especially among different ethnic groups (Murugesan, 2003; Bosrock, 2007) as well as in and among international or multinational organizations and corporations as stated by the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (MIDA), the principal government agency for the promotion of the manufacturing and services sectors in Malaysia. English is extensively used in Malaysia, especially in business among foreign and local investors and local personnel and suppliers (MIDA, 2011). This shows that BELF not only serves as a neutral shared language among different ethnicities but also with international work force from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds in IC. However, it is not the aim of this study to define Malaysian or German culture, neither to compare or focus on differences that certainly exist as reported by the participants themselves of this study but to show that despite participants' different lingua-cultural backgrounds, IC is managed successfully through BELF. Moreover, as discussed earlier (see section 1.4) the BELF culture is complex and dynamic and needs to be situated in context taking the individuals' perspectives into account.

Thus, the overall aim of this study is to complement existing research in BELF in different business interactions and contexts. As Charles (2007) points out: “Though globalization may well have reached Stage 3.0, BELF is only at the beginning of its development.” (p. 264) Moreover considering the fact that the main function of BELF has been established as facilitator in intercultural communication in business context, the question arises how business people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds manage to communicate successfully, e.g. by focusing on the strategies and underlying factors. Thus, the center of interest is how and in what way the use of BELF helps to communicate effectively and successfully in international business situations. As Nickerson (2005) proposed, a shift away from language skills to language strategies and communication skills that can be associated with effective communication in business could be the starting point.

Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate how NNS of English manage to communicate successfully and effectively using BELF as their medium of communication in meetings and on what resources do they rely on. Applying a multi-method analysis, within the frameworks of Community of Practice (CofP) and Conversation Analysis (CA), this study looks at intercultural business communication through BELF interactions in formal internal meetings to identify, describe and examine the communicative strategies in BELF as employed by German and Malaysian participants. At the same time a multimodal approach is employed to analyze both the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, and other semiotic resources. By analyzing the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in business meetings the wider context is also considered to reveal the underlying influential factors that might contribute to successful communication. As Virkkula-Räisänen (2010) points out “studies that look only at language may miss important issues” (p.527). Since her study focuses on one individual in one meeting, she further states that other studies could incorporate “all the participants’ nonverbal communication as well as the employees’ own perceptions of other situations” (p. 528) to understand more about business processes and the context in the company so that business communication research can benefit from these studies. Besides investigating the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies this study also takes the perceptions of the employees into account to determine the wider context since it was the discrepancy between BELF’s communicative success considering both verbal and non-verbal communication and some of the reported challenges in IC that inspired the objectives of this study. To understand the reasons for this discrepancy that exists among practitioners as revealed based on surveys and interviews and thus to know more about BELF use and users in IC, this thesis was designed with the intent to determine what actually contributes to BELF success in IC.

1.6 Research Questions

In the light of the above, this study sets out to answer the following questions:

1. How does BELF facilitate IC and what constitutes its success?

a. What are the common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in BELF to ensure successful and effective communication?

b. How are the common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in BELF employed to achieve successful and effective communication?

2. What are the factors that contribute to successful communication?

a. In what way do these factors influence intercultural business communication?

b. How do these factors impact the communication behavior of BELF speakers?

c. How are these factors reflected in the actual meeting data?

The answers to the questions above are provided through three sets of data collected from the German organization operating in Malaysia. First, the meeting interactions as the main data and focus of this study, second the interviews conducted with the employees of this organization and third the survey providing factual information on the diverse multilingual and multicultural background of the German and Malaysian employees. Further details referring to the data and data collection will be given in chapter three (3). The data was examined using the frameworks of Community of Practice (CofP) and the Conversation Analysis (CA). With the combination of CofP and CA different layers of communication could be uncovered. CA is most useful for the analysis not only of verbal communication but also non-verbal communication in (B)ELF context (see Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009; Markaki & Mondada, 2012), while taking the local and immediate context into consideration. In institutional interaction, such as business interactions CA takes into account "both the local context of consecutive utterances and the larger context of institutional framework" (Ten Have, 2007, p. 176). Moreover, CA provides an objective analysis of the BELF interactions in the meetings since the focus is on "people's own interpretation of on-going interaction as revealed in turn-by-turn unfolding of conversation" (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 35). As Kangasharju and Nikko (2009) put it, in the 'turns-at-talk', "the participants in a conversation at the same time display their analysis and interpretation of the prior talk. This turn-by-turn analysis by the participants is also available to the analyst" (p. 106). CofP on the other hand takes the wider context into consideration that cannot be detected on the surface layer of communication nor revealed through CA. CofP helps understanding the practices of people belonging to a specific community. It is used as a framework for the analysis of the interviews that are based on the individual perceptions of the meeting participants, their behaviors and subjective interpretations of meanings and understandings also partly reflected in the meeting interactions. This way the researcher's analysis of real-life data can be linked with the actual practitioners' perceptions (see Ehrenreich, 2010). In the domain of business, the potential of CofP framework for the analysis of BELF is still in its early stage and limited (see Ehrenreich, 2010). Chan (2007) has combined the CA and CofP in business context and analyzed native speakers of English not BELF speakers. Her findings show that CA constitutes an effective tool to study natural data at micro-level whereas CofP proves to be helpful for practices that are reflected in the interactions. Thus, CofP is useful to study the macro-level of interactions while CA can be used on the micro-level for analysis.

To identify both the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used for successful communication the meeting interactions were video recorded. Since the research data with its communication codes are expandable and unlimited, only the most common and salient communicative strategies were identified for the analysis. Especially for the analysis of non-verbal communication strategies only the most visible non-verbal codes were taken into consideration. The audio recorded interviews revealed in particular the wider and extra-linguistic context of interactions, such as different business practices, participants' own perceptions and experiences, and ways of communicating in specific situations. The analysis of the wider context revealed some factors that contribute to the overall communication success, e.g. understanding culture-specific aspects, including work and organizational and individual culture, and general business practices. The verbal and non-verbal strategies have been analyzed according to their salience and function in the meeting interactions. The verbal communication strategies were labeled as questioning, repeating, reformulating, and explaining verbal communication strategies (VCS) and the non-verbal communication strategies (NVCS) as head movements, hand movements, and as eye contact and gaze. These communication strategies and the influencing factors will be investigated in detail in the analyses chapters four (4), five (5), and six (6).

The findings of the study will not only contribute to the large field of intercultural communication but also the specific area of BELF and business communication research, with the aim especially as pointed out by Kankaaranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) to know more about the particular kind of BELF required in a particular environment. While there is a large number of research in the area of IC involving different countries, there is no specific research done with both Germans and Malaysians at the workplace using BELF. Moreover, combining CA and CofP frameworks and examining both verbal and non-verbal communication practices using natural real-life data will not only give insights in how IC is managed successfully through BELF but will also shed light on the communication and intercultural business competences of the BELF users. Finally, this study has a practical goal, to contribute to the area of intercultural business communication studies, help raise intercultural awareness, and integrate BELF for the development of new teaching materials. As Nickerson (2015) points out, no teaching material takes BELF into account "despite the fact that the majority of the globe's business transactions take place in BELF" (p. 396).

1.7 Organization of Thesis

After providing the background information with the necessary concepts and notions and having established the objectives of this study and set out the research questions above, the remaining chapters of the thesis are organized as follows. Chapter two (2) contextualizes the study based on relevant literature and provides a detailed discussion of the frameworks Community of Practice (CofP) and Conversation Analysis (CA) with focus on the key concepts relating to this study. CofP with focus on, e.g. the concepts of experience and learning, the negotiation of meaning, the specific context of meetings, and CA with its governing principles of, e.g. the turn design in sequence and overall structural organization in institutional interactions and business context are explored in detail. Further, the basic structure and concept of repair in CA are discussed with reference to its relevance to communication strategies in BELF meeting interactions. The driving concept of successful and effective communication guiding this study with reference to the strategies and competences is clarified by reviewing different approaches used in previous studies for the analysis of (B)ELF.

In Chapter three (3), different sets of data on which this study is based, e.g. the audio and video recorded data of meeting interactions, the audio recorded interviews, and the survey data are explained in detail. The research design and setting, concerning participants, data collection and transcription, and the analytical procedures are also explored fully. Moreover, further details are provided referring to context and setting of the data, e.g. the different types of meetings and meeting procedures.

The next three chapters contain the analysis of the aforementioned data. Chapter four (4) concentrates on verbal communication strategies where four main categories of verbal communication strategies labeled as questioning, repeating, reformulating, and explaining strategies were identified and analyzed. Each strategy is explained in detail on the basis of extracts taken from different meetings and linked to the reported interviews where possible. The analysis will show how the strategies in particular were employed and designed for the purpose of negotiating meaning and understanding the meeting interactions.

In Chapter five (5) the non-verbal communication strategies are examined. For the analysis of non-verbal communication strategies three main categories are chosen, the head movements, the hand movements and eye contact and gaze and explained in detail. Non-verbal communication strategies are linked to verbal communication and shed light on the understanding processes. Specifically, the analysis will show how the non-verbal communication strategies are employed to signal and enhance understanding by clarifying meaning or providing the context for interpretation.

Chapter six (6) provides the detailed analysis of the interviews describing the shared repertoire of BELF participants. As members of a community of practice, participants developed certain expectations and common practices, as well as some common communication strategies to ensure successful communication. Thus, in this chapter the factors contributing to successful communication are identified and their impact on the communication behavior is analyzed. Further, the analysis of the wider context provides the necessary information that is required in intercultural business interactions also shedding light on the competences of the participants.

Chapter seven (7) presents the findings in the specific BELF context in this study and discusses the contributions and implications of the study, as well as the implications for practice in informing and raising awareness for training or teaching purposes. It concludes by giving recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

There is a quite remarkable amount of research done so far in the fast-growing field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in various domains internationally since more than a decade ago. The two most researched domains emerged as being the academic and the business domain. Especially in the domain of business and since the term 'Business English Lingua Franca' (BELF) was first coined in 2005 by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta, there are a relatively large number of studies, particularly in the European context. However, to be able to keep up with the fast pace and reality of global use of BELF more research is much needed across different regions of the world and in various contexts of international business communication. Although some findings were already taken up by subsequent studies and further investigated some key issues still remain surrounding the concept and conceptualization of (B)ELF use and its users. In this sense, the notion of 'successful communication' in intercultural interactions, such as in BELF communication is still disputed. This might be linked to various underlying concepts and approaches, frameworks and methodologies, as well as different genres, data and contexts that have been used and investigated.

In this chapter, the 'conceptual issues' briefly outlined earlier in the introduction chapter (1) will be linked and explored in detail against the backdrop of previous research. In the first part of this chapter, the notion of successful and effective communication shall be discussed based on previous (B)ELF research findings particularly in the business domain in relation to the factors, competences, skills and strategies contributing to BELF communicative success. The second part is dedicated to the two frameworks of 'Community of Practice' (CofP) and 'Conversation Analysis' (CA) with their relevant concepts on which this study is based.

2.2 The Notion of Successful and Effective Communication

Research in (B)ELF up to date with the main focus on the 'notion of successful communication' in intercultural settings is not always clearly determined and is still being disputed. The first and foremost reason behind this is that native speakers of English are still the point of reference for the measurement of (B)ELF success and thus the cause for the so-called 'conceptual gap' (Seidlhofer, 2001) and of how (B)ELF for intercultural communication (IC) is perceived (see chapter 1.4). The dichotomy between native speakers (NS) and nonnative speakers (NNS) of English, although an inevitable and natural differentiation, is mostly equated with inadequate language skills of NNS and insufficient language competence thus bound to lead to misunderstandings and hence failure for success in IC. As Bamgbose (1998) already indicated "the success of NNS discourse tends to be judged not according to how well that discourse functions and 'gets the job done', but rather according to how well the speakers are able to emulate the language use of native speakers" (as cited in Charles, 2007, p. 263). Instead of focusing on the function and the aim 'to get the job done' (B)ELF is often referred to native speaker norms. This however is, as pointed out by Charles (2007) "not only in scholarly thinking but also in ELF speakers' minds" (p. 263). Seidlhofer (2004) believes, that "the notion of a language is so closely and automatically tied up with its native speakers that it is very difficult to open up conceptual space for ELF" (p. 212). Therefore, to be able to change this concept and attitudes towards ELF, and to open up a 'conceptual space' it is necessary to recognize ELF speakers as 'language users in their own right' as first step, secondly provide proof since as suggested by Seidlhofer (2004) "changes on the conceptual and attitudinal levels have to be substantiated by descriptive work" (p. 215).

However, the ELF concept is also closely intertwined with the research area or the domain, the interest and aim of research and the approaches used thereof. In the early stages of ELF research, ELF is commonly analyzed from two perspectives. On the one hand, researchers who are interested in rather the form than the function of ELF conversations compare ELF with English as a native language (ENL) forms and describe the linguistic processes involved. The focus on form can lead to two different interpretations where ELF is considered as being either negative or positive.

According to Jenkins (2009) the negative position taken towards ELF describes ELF as equivalent to English as a foreign language (EFL), as deviant forms from ENL and therefore considered as errors and described as deficient varieties or 'interlanguages'. Studies using the interlanguage approach with focus on NS-NNS communication consider communication between NNS as learner interaction and concentrate on misunderstandings and communication breakdown (Lesznyak, 2002). Although Meierkord (2000) describes ELF communication as displaying cooperation rather than misunderstanding, she interprets it as 'learner language interaction'. As indicated by Jenkins (2009): "No distinction is made between English learnt for intercultural communication (ELF) – where native English speakers may be, but often are not, present in the interaction – and English learnt specifically for communication with English native speakers (EFL)" (p. 202/3).

On the positive position towards ELF, it is non-controversial, accepted and taken for granted by many professionals working internationally such as business people, yet the positive orientation is rarely verbalized or published (Jenkins, 2009). The latter position that emphasizes the function instead of the form of ELF deals with the general question how successful communication is achieved among NNS rather than focusing on form and thus misunderstandings. Moreover, in global business context where ELF is used daily by NNS without usually the presence of NS, "the central concerns for this domain are efficiency, relevance and economy" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 414). Thus, especially in this domain it is the function and purpose of language that matter not the correct forms.

Successful ELF communication, for example, can be based on shared context where misunderstandings and conflicts are less likely to occur (Seidlhofer, 2001). Furthermore, the kind of English used for specific purpose helps participants achieve their goals "for doing the job they have to do" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 149). Successful communication means ultimately the achievement of the objectives for a common purpose. Consequently, the purpose and the context of (B)ELF use are crucial and the distinction whether as pointed out above by Jenkins (2009) used for communication with NS and thus as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or for intercultural communication and among NNS (ELF). The incorrect use of forms does not mean necessarily that the common goal cannot be achieved and that it automatically leads to misunderstandings provided that native speaker forms are not put as the benchmark for the communicative success.

In intercultural business interactions incorrect forms and norms do not seem to matter. Early research of lingua franca interactions in intercultural business settings by Firth (1996) revealed that despite diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the interactants lingua franca communication was "understandable and 'normal' – even in the face of misunderstandings and abnormalities" (p. 256). Firth (1996) used Conversation Analysis (CA) to analyze business telephone calls between ELF speakers of various linguistic and cultural origins and showed that the interactants concentrated on the 'message' and not on the form while trying to 'let it pass' and 'make it normal' despite what he calls 'infelicities and abnormalities' of language. He gave evidence of "people's often extraordinary ability to make sense in situ" (p. 256) despite taking the approach of NS reference, viz. with the participants' "non-native status, and lack of competence" (p. 254).

Concentrating on the form with the point of reference to native speaker of English (NSE) is always tied to language skills and competence. Inadequate language skills of

NNS therefore are believed to cause misunderstandings and result in communication failure. Considering the large number of international business conducted between NNS, ELF should be re-conceptualized and not be based on NSE. As Charles (2007) points out,

> The inclusion of the words international and business implies a shift in the way language is conceptualized. International takes English away from the sole realm of native speakers, and business gives it its domain of use, as well as indicating the discourse community whose terms of reference should be used in any judgment of efficiency or success. (p. 264)

Although, this shift has already taken place, certain research findings in the business domain still report some communication difficulties, misinterpretations and misunderstandings even communication failures. However, these difficulties are not based on language skills per se despite being described as such in several cases by the participants themselves in the interviews.

Henderson (2005) investigating English as international business language in international management teams in MNCs in France with mostly French, German and British participants bases her findings both on interviews with the participants and draws also on published research findings. She argues that English as a medium of business communication, although facilitating exchange across cultures, could be challenging as individuals use different interpretation mechanisms from their own language system. Due to different interpretation procedures based on different underlying concepts and expectations, these differences in interpretation can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. One major problem being the "false impression that they are sharing the same context and the same interpretations (…) that the same practices and routines are valid, and that, in short, they are all inhabiting the same mental space." (Henderson, 2005, p. 75) She also states that the causes for these difficulties or challenges linked to 'communication' and 'sociolinguistic competence' are not visible or less obvious unlike the visible causes for lack of 'language competence', e.g. unfamiliar vocabulary, speed of speech, strong accent, etc. The basic challenge of using ELF, in her case EIB since NS are included is described as being twofold, first the recognition of "diverse expressive and interpretive mechanisms derived from their respective language systems, and second, mutual adjustment to each other's ways of interacting is required to enable them to negotiate strategies in order to work together successfully" (p. 75).

Ehrenreich (2010) similarly states, to overcome communicative challenges the 'ability and willingness' is required to adapt 'to each other's ways of interacting' as well as the 'awareness of complex linguistic context' (p. 426). In similar vein, Huttunen (2005) basing her findings on observations of ELF meetings highlights the challenging characteristics of ELF use and shows that communication failure is common and attributes it to differing understandings between ELF speakers. The reasons for communication failure however are not due to the lack of language skills but rather can be attributed to other sources such as the subject matter of the meeting, e.g. new or not established concepts and different understandings as per definition and meaning (Huttunen, 2005). She also mentions cultural reasons that might cause misunderstandings, such as the use of non-universal metaphors tied to a specific culture.

Other challenges, linguistically and culturally, that are uncovered are presented by Rogerson-Revell (2007) in her preliminary research, part of larger scale study, investigating the use of EIB in meetings and the perceptions of NNS and NS of English (NNSE and NSE). The communication difficulties that are referred to are in general the participants' different working styles, professional background, and language proficiencies, the latter drawing mainly on understanding different accents, the volume and speed of interactions and vocabulary limitations. Moreover, the difficulties as perceived by NNSE range from comprehension and production, e.g. understanding quiet speech, vocabulary limitations mostly for low proficient speakers to managing interactions, e.g. trying to interrupt or express a point of view in high-speed interactions. NNSE have especially difficulties understanding NSE from whom they would like to see more effort, NSE on the other hand are often aware and appreciate NNSE whom they describe as EFL speakers and some show some sensitivity to modify their language in international contexts (Rogerson-Revell, 2007).

Charles's (2007) summary of findings, based on a large research project involving four MNCs through mergers and acquisitions, similarly show language and language skills as a challenge that often involves difficulties in understanding each other English especially in oral interactions. Other challenges that were mentioned e.g. mainly stressed in the interviews of one MNC by BELF speakers referred to informal oral chats and problems in multicultural meetings and the way decisions were understood. However, her findings from the interviews when combined with the analysis of business meetings also revealed that despite BELF speakers own 'socio-pragmatic assumptions and conversational expectations', "business got done and conversational cooperation was achieved" (Charles, 2007, p. 277).

The challenges and difficulties of communication in BELF in these studies as described earlier (e.g. Henderson, 2005; Huttunen, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Charles, 2007) depending on various reasons are usually based on the perceptions of participants gathered through surveys or questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, the presence of NSE seems to cause an additional challenge (see Henderson, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2007). However, despite the challenges that were raised in the initial study of Rogerson-Revell (2007) based on perceptions of interviewees and some awareness of how to overcome these, the subsequent study of the analysis of meeting data also part of the broader study (Rogerson-Revell, 2008) reveal an "overall positive linguistic performance of speakers in the meetings themselves" (p. 338) by employing "a variety of interactive resources and strategies to achieve substantive goals and establish a sense of normality in situ despite generic and linguistic constraints" (Rogerson-Revell, 2008, p. 338). The findings from both studies by Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008) show that positive results may be achieved if perceptions are combined with the analysis of actual meeting interactions. This result calls for a multi-method analysis (see Charles, 2007) where reported challenges are mastered with various interactive strategies to achieve communicative success.

Therefore, the 'notion of successful communication' in international business context has to be reevaluated and neither compared to NS standards or competence as done by some researchers (e.g. Firth, 1996; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008) nor based solely on subjective perceptions of practitioners themselves revealed through surveys or interviews that rather uncover the challenges as shown above although the overall communication being successful. As Charles (2007) also pointed out, despite some frequent syntactic and lexical irregularities no major misunderstandings were found and mutual understanding was achieved by jointly creating meanings and operational cultures. This communication success was partly attributed to the BELF speakers shared business background and shared purpose that helped 'discoursal interpretations' (Charles, 2007).

Thus, it is the function, purpose, and goal as well as the shared context not the form of BELF use that matters in the business domain and leads to communicative success. In the assessment of successful communication in business context, another recurrent notion besides 'efficiency' (Seidlhofer, 2001; Charles, 2007) as mentioned above, is 'effective communication'. While successful communication refers to the overall communicative success and also comprises effective and efficient communication, the 'notion of effective communication' refers mainly to the communication process itself and shall be discussed in in the following two sections, where the communicative success is further elaborated.

2.2.1 The 'Nature of BELF' and BELF Competence

In contrast to earlier research discussed above, subsequent research in BELF (e.g. Rogerson-Revell, 2010; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaaranta & Planken, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2009, 2010; Pullin, 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010) reveal further insights into BELF use and users that lead to communicative success. The term 'communicative success' as defined by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) is the achievement of goals of a particular communicative event, which in their study is based on the perceptions of business professionals. They thus link 'success' to "personal experiences of the participants, the context, the message and the language of a particular event" (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 205). It is also highlighted that the shared business context (see also Charles, 2007) serves as the basis for communicative success. Therefore, "it was not necessary to master the language perfectly; rather, mastering the business-related issues" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 207). Furthermore, they state that the 'nature of BELF' helps in achieving successful communication, referred to as part of business communication competence by the informants of the study, e.g. "knowledge of grammar less important than knowledge of particular genres of their own business area" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 207). Whereby the 'nature of BELF' or BELF as such can be characterized as a mixture of features partly based on speakers' native languages with culturally hybrid discourse rules where utterances are jointly co-constructed with their interlocutors (see Ehrenreich, 2010; Pullin, 2010) thus also highlighting the cooperative nature.

Pullin (2010) points out that the 'nature of BELF' described linguistically and socially as flexible, tolerant and having the ability to co-construct and negotiate meaning may also "provide useful insights for awareness raising among native and non-native speakers concerning effective business communication and the concept of international communicative competence" (p. 472). She describes 'effective business communication' between business people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds as based on factors such as being flexible and resourceful to negotiate meaning. Furthermore, she states that the data would show that effective communication depends not on 'languages skills' only but on 'the willingness and ability to adapt to others' (Pullin, 2010, p. 470).

Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) found three fundamental components that lead to communicative success as perceived by survey and interview participants: accuracy of information, clarity and appropriateness. Clarity and accuracy of content referring to getting the facts right and clarifying discourse instead of linguistic correctness including "business-specific vocabulary and genre conventions" (Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010, p. 380), and "making the recipient feel good" (p. 397), e.g. softening direct requests as relational orientation or form of politeness. All three components are also defined as BELF competence, an essential part of business knowledge for communicating successfully and getting the job done. Ehrenreich's (2010) study supporting key empirical findings of BELF similarly found that rather than linguistic correctness, the communicative effectiveness of transmitting information is important. With communicative effectiveness she is referring to communication skills and thus "the ability to make oneself understood" (p. 418) by avoiding "BELF-induced loss of information" (p. 425).

The factors that contribute to the communicative success and effectiveness are diverse and could be referred mainly to two categories that make up the BELF competence: First, linguistic factors such as communication skills rather than correct language use or 'language skills' (Charles, 2007; Ehrenreich, 2010) and the three components referring to the message delivery (Kankaaranta and Planken, 2010). The second category is mainly attributed to extra-linguistic factors, in general the shared business context, where certain awareness of 'differences in linguistic repertoire' (Rogerson-Revell, 2010) and awareness of 'complex linguistic environment' and personal experience (Ehrenreich, 2010) form the basis for the use of various practices or strategies in facilitating understanding depending on the context.

Ehrenreich (2010) referring also on previous research findings states that business discourse is ruled by various business related and extra linguistic factors, such as "participant's professional roles, the extent of shared knowledge and differing expectations, as well as time constraints" (p. 411). The factor 'time constraint' also related to 'efficiency' has relevance generally for all business context and may also influence interactions, such as employing a 'direct communication style' where e.g. the main point is mentioned first (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010) also shedding light on communicative effectiveness. In the study conducted by Kankaanranta and Lu (2013) among Finnish and Chinese professional, the findings show that 'directness and clarity of information' could also contribute to communicative effectiveness and thus to get the work done. These extra-linguistic factors can also be referred to as simply 'context' providing insights into BELF competence. As stated by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013),

> BELF competence, involving both knowledge and skills, was perceived as a dynamic construction heavily dependent on the context of its use and the users. For example, it did not seem to have any absolute requirements as to its discursive forms as long as it was sufficient for getting the work done and creating rapport – no matter how limited the English proficiency of the users. (p. 27)

Some of the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors have been identified applying different approaches and methodologies which range from surveys and interviews based on socio-constructivist theory or the Community of Practice (CofP) framework to micro-level analysis applying Conversation Analysis (CA) or Discourse Analysis (DA) with the focus on different types of BELF interactions, e.g. formal or informal meetings, and with different interlocutors depending on data and context of the data. However, since BELF competence is highly context dependent, it is important to differentiate between the approaches and analytic tools used, as well as the different types of interactions, considering the interlocutors, the processes and practices that might differ in certain contexts and therefore not applicable in other as discussed in the following subchapter.

2.2.2 BELF Communication Skills and Strategies

BELF communication skills, which form part of BELF competence, entail certain communication strategies or 'strategic skills' (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Some of the practices or strategies to facilitate understanding and negotiate meaning are BELF speakers' use of accommodation practices to adapt to the level of proficiency of their interlocutors when required, e.g. simplifying language use when proficiency level is weaker (Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) state that during the negotiation of meaning grammatical inaccuracies are ignored or 'passed over' (cf. Firth 1996) as long as the message is clear. While these accommodation practices are based on survey and interview findings, Rogerson-Revell (2010) taking a micro-level approach and CA tools to analyze international meeting discourse with NNSE and NSE states similar accommodation processes. She presents various interactive strategies, such as 'normalization mechanism' through 'let it pass' (see Firth, 1996) and lack of other repair of linguistic errors, as well as 'making linguistic limitations explicit', e.g. telling what was not understood or even code-switching as well as the use of 'convergence processes' depending on formality and size of meetings modifying message, e.g. using simple words, speaking slowly referring to accent and delivery of message.

Tsuchiya and Handford (2014) in their corpus-driven discourse analysis (DA) of professional ELF meetings and retrospective interviews have shown that contrary to the ‘let it pass’ practice (cf. Firth, 1996; Rogerson-Revell, 2010) other repair and other formulation was common in their data and therefore redefining it as ‘not let it pass principle’. This ‘not-let-it’ principle could be used to avoid what Ehrenreich (2010) calls ‘BELF-induced loss of information’ and thus ensure communicative effectiveness.

Pullin (2010) in her study investigating BELF small talk within meetings in an international company based in Switzerland and focusing on rapport building, shows the awareness or willingness to adapt to others when levels of linguistic proficiency differ and to use similar accommodation practices as discussed above. She also identifies clarification and repetition practices to avoid misunderstanding and to jointly construct utterances. Her method of analysis includes ethnographic methods and DA of audio recorded meetings, which was part of a larger research. Her subsequent study (Pullin, 2013) focusing on ‘comity’ and linguistic stance markers while e.g. negotiating tasks, dealing with disagreements, and clarifying understanding confirms previous findings (e.g. Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) of the importance of clarity and explicitness in business context, whereby explicitness requires directness in some context.

Other strategies reported by Ehrenreich (2010) based on interviews in a German MNC of a larger scale research using the CofP framework are context-sensitive ‘coping strategies’ described as ‘comprehension checks’, such as clarification requests and repetition, as well as ‘attention to facial expressions’. She also points out that strategies depend not only on linguistic considerations but ‘situation-specific and task-specific factors’ where “issues of face may sometimes rule out making use of these strategies” (Ehrenreich, 2010, p. 422). The use of certain strategies is context dependent and influenced by specific factors, such as the ‘coping strategies’ that are based on perceptions of four interviewees from the top management embedded in large observational data, such as observations of internal and external meetings, recordings of phone conferences and meetings (see Ehrenreich, 2010).

In contrast to studies discussed above where general findings and those regarding the use of certain practices and strategies refer mainly to verbal communication although some of them taking an ethnographic, multi-method approach with even video taped meetings (e.g. Charles, 2007) and observation of meetings (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2010), none of these studies state explicitly the investigation of non-verbal communication in BELF. However, both verbal and non-verbal communication are significant for successful and effective communication especially in business meetings. Virkkula-Räisänen (2010) analyzing a multilingual meeting between two Finns and two Chinese participants in a small company in Finland focuses on one participant's communicative practices and his role as a mediator or as language expert when language skills differ considerably. It is highlighted that language is seen as a broader part of semiotic resources where language use is closely connected with body language. By describing one individual's non-verbal communicative practices, e.g. using pointing gestures and gestures to clarify referent or action, and monitoring other's behavior with gaze, she states, "language proficiency may well need support from other resources, other modalities, such as gestures, if individuals are to function successfully in intercultural business communication" (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010, p. 528).

Mondana (2012) analyzes embodied participation in one single case episode of a multilingual meeting where a language shift from ELF to French takes place to enable participation of one person who doesn't speak English fluently. She shows the multimodal dimension of social interaction, consisting of gaze, facial expressions, gestures, and body language, applying CA and multimodality to demonstrate the change of participation during a meeting through embodied practices. It is also shown that embodied demonstration of understanding takes place through, e.g. continuers and nods. Nods or head nods also described as nonverbal 'backchannelling' or 'listener feedback' by Bjørge (2010) found to be the most frequent nonverbal strategy used in spoken interactions. Moreover, effective communication is also facilitated through backchannelling. However, her findings are based on video-recorded simulated business negotiations among students of management and business studies. Studies investigating nonverbal communication (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010; Mondana, 2012, Bjørge, 2010) show that non-verbal communication is crucial in the analyses of business interactions especially in meetings and thus in achieving successful and effective communication. However, the analysis of both aspects of verbal and nonverbal communication has been generally neglected in previous research. Research that takes both into consideration are usually based on single case studies or limited in scope.

The overall findings of previous and subsequent research discussed above highlight the necessity of context-sensitive analyses of professional business interactions to determine the concept of 'successful and effective communication' and the various factors that could lead to BELF success. There has been a general agreement that successful communication is achieved despite inaccurate language skills through the cooperative and skillful use of some practices and strategies. It has been also revealed that BELF communication competence and skills as essential part of business-specific knowledge are important (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Moreover the need for communication competence is highlighted rather than language competence, which is usually gauged against native speakers' competence therefore Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen (2013) suggest "no more benchmarking to native speakers but rather to an effective business communicator no matter what his/her native tongue" (p. 22).

While different approaches have been used in the last two decades so far, most studies concentrate on one or more methodologies, such as survey questionnaires, interviews, corpus analysis, and observations. Most of the findings however were based on interviews in which the BELF users' perceptions and expectations are described. As House (2003) rightly points out relying on interviews only from the perspective of practitioners on 'what they think they do' does not "reflect genuine practices in the business world" (p. 66). However, research based on naturally occurring data using audio and video data is still limited since "gaining access to the field in domains such as international business can pose an enormous challenge" (Ehrenreich 2009, p. 127). This is mostly due to the confidential nature of BELF data and the unwillingness of companies despite confidentiality agreements. As pointed out above, empirical studies investigating BELF use through multi-method and/or multi-modal analyses have proven to be most fruitful in describing what practitioners actually do but are still scarce. The importance of combining micro and macro level analysis is undeniable, where real-time interactions can be investigated providing detailed information on how successful and effective communication is achieved, e.g. through certain communication strategies while also drawing on context specific information based on e.g. surveys or interviews. On the macro-level, Community of Practice (CofP) is most appropriate for analyzing the extra-linguistic factors within a specific business community providing the wider context while CA serves best on the micro-level for the analysis of spoken business interactions. The next subchapter will discuss the two frameworks employed in this study, namely CofP as theoretical framework and Conversation Analysis (CA) as analytical framework with the emphasis on relevant concepts.

2.3 The Frameworks and Key Concepts

As seen from previous research discussed so far, the 'nature of BELF' and the re-conceptualizing of 'BELF in its own right' sheds new light on BELF use and users. This requires a shift on several conceptual levels: From form to function, from language competence to communication competence, and away from the 'interlanguage' concept and thus insufficient native language competence to the emphasis on BELF competence, as well as taking the 'effective business communicator' *not* the native speaker as the benchmark. BELF as hybrid specialized code, highly 'dynamic and idiosyncratic' has to be seen in context where regardless of the lingua-cultural background of speakers "each new contact situation will need negotiation of shared discourse practices in situ" (Kankaanranta-Planken, 2010, p. 402).

BELF culture encompassing diverse and dynamic shared values and shared purposes of the global business culture (see Charles, p. 207) signify a new reality where "established notions and frameworks may no longer be able to capture the new (socio-) linguistic realities of ELF communication adequately" (Seidlhofer, 2007, p. 310). One such established sociolinguistic framework that no longer is able to reflect the world-wide use of BELF in different intercultural business encounters is the 'speech community' defined through the notion of stability and relative homogeneity (see House, 2003). Therefore, a shift in the theoretical framework needs to take place as well. Community of Practice (CofP) as suggested by House (2003) is seen as a theoretical alternative to speech community. CofP is more adequate to describe, explain and understand the diverse and dynamic BELF phenomenon. This theoretical framework helps in identifying and specifying the key influencing factors for a better understanding of this phenomenon and how these factors might differ under which context. This way the hybrid and dynamic nature of the BELF that has often been experienced by the practitioners can be revealed and explained based on the knowledge and understanding gained from a specific CofP.

2.4 Community of Practice

The conceptual framework CofP developed by Wenger (1998) as a social theory of learning is used to take the wider context of social actions into consideration. Wenger explains learning and knowing as a social participation that is made up of four components, namely meaning, practice, community and identity. He believes that meaning, the kind of meaning that signifies an experience, is situated in a process what he calls ‘negotiation of meaning’ as meaning is always produced through its negotiation: “Meaning is not pre-existing, but neither is it simply made up. Negotiated meaning is at once both historical and dynamic, contextual and unique” (p. 54). Therefore, it is important to consider contextual and unique information in its historical and dynamic environment. To be able to understand business communication and interaction it is important to look at the negotiated meaning in its development and unique use, namely, the process and the product in its historical and dynamic context.

Participation involves action and connection, an active involvement of competitive as well as cooperative nature as member in a social community. Moreover, participation shapes our experience and also that of the communities (Wenger, 1998). In connection with participation the notion of reification, “giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’”, is used (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). According to Wenger (1998) all communities produce e.g. symbols, terms and concepts that stand for something of that practice what he calls ‘reification’; “reification always rests on participation: what is said, represented, or otherwise brought into focus always assumes a history of participation as a context for its interpretation” (p. 67). In this sense reifications are reflecting these practices and indicating the wider contexts of meaning. We learn and acquire knowledge through participation including ‘negotiation of meaning’ and ‘reification’ that forms our experience and that of the community. In other words: The concept of CofP helps in understanding the practices or activities of people or individuals belonging to a specific community. Participating e.g. in a work team “shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Belonging to a community of practice forms our identity through participation and experience. As Wenger states, identity is “an experience and a display of competence" and as a member of a community of practice "we are recognized as competent" (p. 152), hence:

> We know how to engage with others. We understand why they do what they do because we understand the enterprise to which participants are accountable. Moreover, we share the resources they use to communicate and go about their activities (p. 152).

These dimensions of competence through mutuality of engagement, accountability to an enterprise, and negotiability of a repertoire are further explained in the following section.

2.4.1 Negotiation of Meaning and Learning

A CofP is defined by three dimensions, namely mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Mutual engagement, a fundamental part of any practice, needs interactions where people negotiate meanings, in particular cases with mutual support. Joint enterprise shows the interconnection of the participants, their mutual accountability in

> What matters and what does not, what is important and why it is important, what to do and not to do, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, what to talk about and what to leave unsaid, what to justify and what to take for granted, what to display and what to withhold, when actions and artifacts are good enough and when they need improvement and refinement (Wenger, 1998, p.81)

Shared repertoire refers to the resources for the negotiation of meaning that a CofP has produced and became part of their practice comprising routines, words, ways of doing things, gestures, actions or concepts. Whereby linguistic and non-linguistic elements such as words and gestures can be 'reengaged' in new situations. In this context, effective communication does not denote literal transfer of meaning since it is impossible to remove all ambiguity it rather locates the ambiguity in the context (see Wenger, 1998). As Wenger states, "the real problem of communication and design then is to situate ambiguity in the context of a history of mutual engagement that is rich enough to yield an opportunity for negotiation" (p. 84). The negotiation of meaning is a process that constitutes meaning as a product of negotiation of meaning. This process entails interpretation and action, such as understanding and responding. Furthermore, this process creates what Wenger calls "a continual process of renewed negotiation" (p. 54). It is then through renegotiating of meanings that shared repertoires are developed and learning in practice is achieved. Thus, learning follows negotiation of meaning.

As suggested by House (2003), ELF interactions are joint negotiated enterprises where participants collaboratively negotiate meaning on "the content plane (reach a common goal) and on the level of linguistic (English) forms" (p. 572). She further points out that the development of a joint communicative repertoire, consisting of English linguistic resources, depends on the contexts, "both real and in the minds of interactants" (House 2003, p. 573). She points out "the activity-based concept of community of practice with its diffuse alliances and communities of imagination and alignment fits ELF interactions well because ELF participants have heterogeneous backgrounds and diverse social and linguistic expectations" (p. 573).

(B)ELF interactions can be interpreted as product and process of negotiation of meaning in the framework of CofP and thus can be explained best based on 'the concept of CofP'. However it should not be applied to (B)ELF speakers in general since a community of practice is rather seen as a constellation of different community of practices. The concept of CofP, as stated by Ehrenreich (2009), "unfolds its analytical potential when applied to particular CofPs in which ELF is used for communication" (p. 131). As Wenger (1998) points out: "Some configurations are too far removed from the scope of engagement of participants, too broad, too diverse, too diffuse to be usefully treated as single communities of practice." (p. 126/7). Large companies could be treated as such configurations and be viewed as 'constellations of interconnected practices' and a specific community "can be part of any number of constellation" (p. 128). As Wenger further mentions, we are all members of different communities of practices what he calls as 'nexus of multimembership'. In this regard, (B)ELF users also belong to different community of practices that are interconnected and where negotiation of meaning and learning take place.

2.4.2 Organization as a Specific CofP

Taking the three dimension of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire into account that constitute a CofP, an organization or a company can be considered a CofP where BELF users form different communities of practices meet and interconnect, and form the 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998). As Handford (2010) explains, a company or even a part of a company "is a collection of regularly interacting, goal-oriented people who share routines and practices, and can therefore be interpreted as a community of practice" (Handford, 2010, p. 34). He further states, in companies, these three dimensions of a CofP are displayed in meetings, especially in management meetings, because "meetings embody and provide a platform for various practices" (p. 34). In meetings, the company as a CofP can e.g. set a goal and develop a project using shared resources.

The German organization in Malaysia with many other locations worldwide can be considered a CofP whereby the entire organization can be seen as a "constellation of interconnected practices" (Wenger, 1998, p. 127). The three dimensions that constitute a CofP are in this particular CofP firstly mutual engagement when members, here employees from different departments interact with each other e.g. face-to-face on a daily basis in various settings such as during meetings as a 'platform of this mutual engagement' (see Handford, 2010). Secondly, joint enterprise referring to a common goal or purpose with mutual accountability in "what matters and what does not", (Wenger, 1998, p. 81) the so-called set goals and objectives of the company or organization. In this sense, the general goal of the meetings in this particular CofP is among others to inform about the on-going projects of each meeting participants and share information. And thirdly, shared repertoire including routines, actions, concepts in general 'ways of doing things' (Wenger, 1998) and also the distinctive ways of doing things using language, specifically BELF.

2.4.3 Meetings as Boundary Encounters

Community of Practices (CofPs) should not be seen as isolated or independent of other practices from the rest of the world since "the products of reification can cross boundaries and enter different practices" (Wenger, 1998, p. 105) and influence each other. Wenger (1998) introduces two types of connections, 'boundary objects', e.g. concepts through which a CofP shows interconnection and 'brokering', a multi-membership of people allowing them to transfer elements between practices. He argues that, meetings, for example, are considered as boundary encounters that can have different forms and various purposes and managers could be considered 'brokers', enabling new connections across CofPs, e.g. coordination and new options for meaning:

> The job of brokering is complex. It involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives. It requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, mobilize attention, and address conflicting interests. It also requires the ability to link practices by facilitation transactions between them, and to cause learning by introducing into a practice element of another (p. 109).

Thus, meetings as boundary encounters can be considered a nexus of different practices, where practices can be linked or introduced to one another enabling learning from each other and development of common practices. Moreover, the multi-membership of people allows them to facilitate, coordinate, transfer and align between different perspectives, viz. establishing interconnection or 'brokering'. The special role of managers as 'brokers' that entails legitimacy may further influence the development of such practices.

Wenger (1998) further states that being a member of a community facilitates certain ways of engaging with each other by developing certain expectations "how to interact, how people treat each other, and how to work together" (p. 152). Hence being a member of a community of practice draws on 'common practice' developed in mutual engagement.

2.4.4 Notion of Common Practice

The notion of practice is fundamental and governing principle for understanding interactions and members of a CofP. As discussed in the previous section (see 2.4.3), practices are not isolated or independent and can be influenced by each other, also enabling interconnections across boundaries within a CofP. The framework of CofP helps to reveal the common practices in a specific CofP consisting of multi-memberships of people. In a CofP they learn, "how to modify their linguistic and other behaviors, in such a way as to feed perceptions of self and other" (Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999, p.175).

As Wenger (1998) points out, practices are created over time as resources for negotiating meaning viz. the shared repertoire as part of the practice of a community. The developed repertoire of a specific community is heterogeneous consisting of e.g. specific activities or routines, words and gestures. The shared repertoire includes actions and concepts, "the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members" (Wenger, 1998, p. 82).

The CofP framework is useful to reveal these common business communication practices including the shared repertoire of a certain community of practice and to explore the wider context in which BELF is used. The notion of CofP and its usefulness has only been explored in a few workplace studies so far (e.g. Chan, 2007; Handford, 2010; Ehrenreich 2009, 2010). While Chan (2007) studied meeting interactions of only native English speakers as part of the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) in New Zealand, Handford's (2010) analysis of the language of business meetings involved 'International English' with majority of native English speakers of the CANBEC (Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus) project. Only Ehrenreich (2009, 2010) specifically investigated BELF in the context of a German MNC. Whether (B)ELF or NSE, there is unanimous agreement that natural interactions are complex and dynamic and this nature of interactions could only be revealed through a variety of research methods (see Chan, 2007, Ehrenreich, 2009; Handford, 2010) where the CofP theoretical framework could be used to connect the complex and dynamic interactions to the common practices of the specific community hence CofP. As Ehrenreich (2009) states "a detailed and empirically grounded explorations of the analytical value of this concept are still scarce" (p. 127). She suggests the CofP framework for the 'contextualized exploration' of ELF use that allows going beyond the exclusive focus on speech data. Thus, the framework of CofP provides a useful way to connect micro and macro level analyses. As suggested by Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999):

> The CofP inevitably involves micro-level analysis of the kind encouraged by a social constructionist approach. It requires detailed ethnographic analysis of discourse in context - to identify significant or representative social interactions, to characterize the processes of negotiating shared goals, and to describe the practices that identify the CofP. A CofP must, however, also be described within a wider context, which gives it meaning and distinctiveness. (p. 181)

To connect to the micro-level and to analyze 'discourse in context' by identifying the 'processes of negotiating' as well as the practices reflecting a specific CofP, the framework of Conversation Analysis (CA) is employed and discussed in detail in the following subchapter and sections.

2.5 Conversation Analysis

The framework of CA with both its ‘theoretical and methodological orientation’ (see Kaur, 2009; Kalocsai, 2014) provides the essential background as a guide and tool for this study. CA, the ‘study of social action’ (Antaki, 2008) is used as a basic and effective approach to analyze ‘conversation’ and in wider sense social action. It was developed in the 1960s primarily by Harvey Sacks and his colleagues Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, based on ethnomethodology as an approach to “describe the methods that people use for accounting for their own actions and those of others” (Hutchy & Wooffitt, 1998, p.31). CA, also called the ‘study of talk-in-interaction’, not only examines conversation but talk-in-interaction as a broader characterization of the phenomena of study (Psathas, 1995). The term ‘talk-in-interaction’, coined by Schegloff, as the object of study in CA is commonly used since it does not refer to the analysis of conversation alone but also “the body in gesture, posture, facial expression, and ongoing activities in the setting in all forms of talk in interaction” (Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002, p.3). The ‘talk-in-interaction’ is also a more accurate term since it refers not only to conversations in informal settings but also to formal conversations in institutional context.

The underlying assumption of CA is that social actions are meaningful and ordinary talk is naturally organized (Psathas, 1995). In CA, the analysis of talk-in-interaction should be based on naturally occurring data and “nothing should be dismissed as trivial or uninteresting” before analysis (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, p. 23). Furthermore, transcripts of actual recorded interactions in naturally occurring setting help to understand not only what was said but also how it was said (Psathas, 1995). Therefore, prior to analysis all interactions should be considered as significant. Hence, CA requires an *unprejudiced* way of looking at talk-in-interaction; it also requires repeated times of looking into data enabled through recordings before data can be analyzed and categorized.

In CA, utterances are seen "as objects which speakers use to get things done in the course of their interactions with others" (Psathas, 1995, p.11). CA is interested in the interactional organization of such utterances as social activities, not in terms of language structure but in terms of activities being negotiated in the talk, such as requests, proposals, accusations and complaints (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Based on transcribed recordings of actual interactions, CA can reveal how participants interpret utterances and respond to each other in their turns at talk and how sequences of actions are produced (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Thus, CA focuses on sequences in interaction as "speakers display in their sequentially next turns an understanding of what the prior turn was about" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, p. 14). This 'next-turn proof' procedure or the turn-by-turn unfolding of interaction serves as the most basic tool in CA that enlightens the process of analysis (Hutchy & Woofitt, 1998). Thus, the basic aspect of the organization of talk is that people use language not only to transmit information but also to do things (see Schegloff, 2000). Actions, as stated by Schegloff, Koshik and Olsher (2002) do not refer to physical actions but to the recognizable and describable actions accomplished by speakers through talk. The talk-in-interaction based on speakers' own interpretations of actions and understanding of meanings can be best unfolded through CA.

Although talk-in-interaction, as mentioned above, includes all forms of interactions as well as the analysis of body language, such as the non-verbal aspects of communication, Goodwin's (2000) 'theory of action' suggest looking at the details of language use, encompassing also the social, cultural, material and sequential structure of the environment as well as the applied embodiment. Thus, 'social action' is produced and interpreted by participants through the simultaneous use of 'multiple semiotic resources', such as the sequences of talk, posture, gaze and gesture and also the surrounding 'material structure' (Goodwin, 2000). In Goodwin's 'multimodal' approach, specific semiotic resources, e.g. the work-relevant fields with their distinctive institutional character are also important for accomplishing specific work "in a larger matrix of meaning and action" (p. 1518). The 'work-relevant fields' provide the institutional context on how interactions unfold. Thus, institutional interactions have to be examined in its specific institutional context.

2.5.1 Institutional Interaction and Context

The backbone of CA, as stated by Arminen (2005) is the sequential order of talk, the way turns are linked to each other, affected by inferential order that is based on sense-making about each other's talk. Since communicative actions are performed through talk in context, context plays an important role. Context in institutional settings is seen as dynamic considering the consecutive utterances of the local context and the larger institutional context (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Ten Haven, 2001). Unlike ordinary talk, there are more constraints in institutional talk, for example, in meetings with a chairperson, turns are partially pre-allocated (Ten Have, 2001). In institutional interactions, context is built both through interaction and 'institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction' (Heritage, 1998). Heritage assumes, that "institutional context and its associated roles, tasks and identities must be shown in the details of the participants' conduct" (p. 4). Drew and Heritage (1992) propose three basic features that participants orientate to in institutional contexts: specific goal orientations tied to institution-relevant identities, special constraints on allowable contributions, and inferential framework and procedures or actions particular to a specific context. How these specific orientations and contributions in institutional interactions are displayed, considering the particular constraints and procedures, has to be seen in the specific institutional context itself, such as in the context of different types of meetings in this study. This is a challenging task since only elements of institutional context that are displayed in the interaction itself can be analyzed. Consequently, how CA deals with the wider context and which aspects of the wider context are being subjected to analysis in CA is questioned. As suggested by Heritage (1998), besides CA's normal tasks of analyzing the organization of participants' conduct and their activities, CA has to additionally demonstrate the specific embodied institutional orientations of their conduct or at least show the conduct that is "responsive to constraints which are institutional in character or origin" (p. 5).

Context in CA is locally oriented in the sequences of interactions as context-shaping and context-renewing actions both of these being termed the internal context. This means that meaning is based on the context of the sequential order created through the talk. Talk is context-shaped when the next turn is determined by the preceding turn. At the same time, while the speaker is producing the next turn, a new context is created for the subsequent turn that follows. Thus in CA, context is non-static and continuously renewed at each point of the talk (Liddicoat, 2007). The external or wider context of the talk, on the other hand, comes from outside the interactions, in the form of 'social categories and relationships' and 'institutional and cultural settings' (Liddicoat, 2007). However, CA can only display the aspects of external context that is shown in the institutional conduct. As stated by Heritage (1998), context is considered 'project and product' of the participants' actions and through interactions "institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction are evidenced and made real and enforceable for the participants" (p. 4). To find out which aspects of context are relevant and displayed as relevant, participants' conduct and orientation to institutional interaction need to be investigated. The distinctive domains of investigation that are of relevance to the institutional interaction are identified as turn-taking organization, overall structural organization, sequence organization, turn design, lexical choice and epistemological and other forms of asymmetry (see Heritage, 1998). The latter mentioned domain is not necessarily linked to any specific action but could occur in 'any or all sequences', such as 'cautiousness in interaction', as pointed out by Drew and Heritage (1992), "professional participants in institutional interactions design their talk so as to maintain a cautiousness, or even a position of neutrality with respect to their co-participants" (p. 46/47) that could be expressed, e.g. through 'indirect way'. Although all domains of investigation play an important role, when analyzing institutional talk the focus can be set on different aspects of the domains, such as turn-design, sequence organization, overall structural organization, and lexical choice. Turn-design and lexical choice refer to action selection and how the action is to be verbalized, e.g. syntactic and lexical selection of a specific formulation (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Sequence organization can refer to opening and closing procedures, as well as the 'third turn' of three-part sequences. The overall structural organization relates to e.g. a formal agenda or locally managed routines.

Based on the definitions above, the main focus of this study is on turn-design and sequence organization. Both of them serve as part of the overall structural organization. The lexical choice is secondary to the analysis, it will be considered in terms of how actions can be designed and formulated showing also the interpretations and understandings of participants, such as lexical (ok, yeah) and non-lexical (hm, ah) items used for feedback. Moreover, some lexical choices can be significant for display of orientation to the institutional context. Conversation analysts have noted the lexical choice of the personal pronoun 'we' in preference to 'I', e.g. when speaking as member on behalf of an organization 'to evoke an institutional over a personal identity' (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

2.5.1.1 Business Setting and Meeting

Since the sequential order as backbone of CA is affected by inferential order and communicative actions in context, the institutional context is crucial when analyzing institutional talk-in-interaction. In the context of this study, the institutional setting observed represents the business setting of an organization which include different types of interactions, such as the informal conversations among staff, informal and formal internal meetings encompassing only staff, as well as formal meetings between management and outsiders such as with business partners, etc. In this study, it is deduced that the participants' conducts and actions reflect the institutional context or specific context originating from outside the interaction. Hence the sequences of actions or sequentially next turn designs noted in the interactions would reflect actions that have been manifested within the constraints by the institutional context, viz. business setting. These conduct and actions of the participants can be observed through formal meetings where participants interact within the constraints imposed by the specific business setting and context of formal meetings and also based on the wider context such as the organizational and working culture.

The three main types of features described in the previous section (see 2.5.1) that constitute institutional interaction as emphasized by Drew and Heritage (1992) could be displayed in formal meetings in the following manner: First the specific goal orientations tied to institution relevant identities could be based on the general position and specific role that the employees of an organization have as 'institution-relevant' identities. In formal meetings, for instance, the chairperson's specific role and goal may affect the interactions and actions. Second, the special constraints on allowable contributions could be imposed by the turn-taking organization, e.g. chairperson's role of allocation turns to individual participants. Finally, the third, the inferential framework and procedures in a specific context could refer to the type of meeting and the specific actions and procedures, e.g. the sequential order developed in such meetings.

When analyzing the sequential order or sequence organization in institutional context, the turn-taking procedure has to be considered first, which can be influenced by the business setting of a formal meeting, e.g. the turns are first allocated by the chair, and second it follows a certain procedure within the meeting agenda. These specific procedures will be further discussed in detail in connection with the meeting data in chapter three (3). The sequential organization of turns on which the understanding and interpretation of turns are based in general shall be explained first in the following section.

2.5.2 Turn Design in Sequence and Overall Structural Organization

The core assumption of CA is the ‘orderly nature of talk’, which is constructed by the participants themselves as ‘sets of practices’ in the aim to accomplish certain actions within certain contexts. This order is also recognized ‘as an appropriate action’ by other participants (see Liddicoat, 2007). Therefore, talk can be “strategically employed to achieve communicative goals” (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 4) since talk is organized in an orderly manner and this order is achieved as “the result of a shared understanding of the methods by which order is achievable” (p. 5). This means that talk-in-interaction is produced and understood as meaningful since participants share the same procedures for designing and interpreting talk. CA investigates the produced orderliness and tries to understand the shared procedures. Therefore, the key concept and the general principle employed is the ‘recipient design’, which refers to the notion that “participants in talk design their talk in such a way as to be understood by an interlocutor, in terms of the knowledge that participants assume they share” (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 5). This means that the analyst can discover and describe the orderliness and set of procedures that is deployed by the participants to achieve ‘ordered social interaction’. Bearing in mind that interaction has to be seen in context since “action is meaningful only in context” (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 7). The study of talk-in-interaction therefore requires the analysis of participants’ methods to structure talk, thus the system of structure and organization of turns at talk.

Turns are sequentially linked and to be able to interpret and understand talk, the system of organized talk viz. the turn design of sequences of actions and the sequential order need to be described in detail. Conversation analyst look at the turn-taking behavior, ‘the transition from speaker to speaker’ which is usually done fluidly with ‘few gaps and little overlap’ (Liddicoat, 2007) and where deviant behavior might be significant, such as e.g. an ‘appreciable pause’ that might refer to some ‘interactional difficulty’ or indicate simply a problem of hearing or a signal for speaker change. Further, turn length is variable and spans from one word to a long sentence called the turn constructional units (TCU) made up of grammatical units, such as words, phrases, clauses and sentences or any linguistic constituent. These TCUs are context dependent and its constituents can only be determined in context. Participants are able to determine the ‘possible completion’ of TCUs for the organization of ‘turn-taking’, which are called the transition relevance places (TRP). The completion can be done in different ways either grammatically, intonationally or as action, also called ‘syntactic, intonational and pragmatic completion’ and usually all three completions are involved during a speaker change (Liddicoat, 2007). However, ‘turn-taking’ can also be associated with non-verbal behavior, e.g. a combination of gaze and syntax in face-to-face interaction. According to Goodwin (1981) “securing a recipient’s gaze is implicated in passing a turn to a next speaker” (as cited in Liddicoat, 2007, p. 59). These TRPs are possible locations where ‘turn-taking’ can occur as appropriate actions central to turn-taking system. How ‘turn-taking’ occurs, is described by turn allocation and the turn allocation component.

Normally current speaker selects next speaker or a next speaker self selects. When current speaker selects the next speaker the component of turn must be designed accordingly, e.g. questions can select the next speaker but also be addressed to a group. However, a combination of question and name of recipient can precisely determine the next speaker. Moreover, context is important since a non-verbal cue, e.g. gaze direction is another technique to select next speaker. In institutional context, turn allocation is further restricted by the specific organizational constraints, such as in business meetings with a chairperson and an agenda.

The turn-taking system according to Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) is 'context-free and context-sensitive' (as cited in Liddicoat, 2007, p. 78) and as described above, constitutes the basis for the organization of conversation. Context-free means being applicable to all kinds of conversations, ordinary informal or formal institutional talk and context-sensitive means that the construction and the allocation of talk are linked together in the context of preceding talk. The way the 'turn-constructional and turn-allocational components' and the rules are linked are variable and "deployable resources which can be used to claim or demonstrate understanding and to organize participation" (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 78). The participants manage interaction locally by demonstrating their understanding in their respond or reaction displayed in the next action. As stated by Liddicoat (2007), transitions with little or no gap and overlap are common as participants can project 'possible completions' of turns. In this sense short overlaps can occur occasionally and reduce the transition space since the possible completion is projectable. This also shows speakers' 'shared understanding'. In fact, it could display a stronger understanding than a repetition would do after a possible transition place and indicates a stronger involvement of the recipient (see Liddicoat, 2007). Longer overlaps however can be interpreted as problematic as it serves as an action of interruption. On the other hand, considering the 'unmarked value of transition space' as 'one beat of silence' and organization of turn-taking procedure as 'one person speaking at a time' (Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002), the deviation from the norm, e.g. a long gap, could signal some trouble in understanding. However, ultimately it is the next action or next turn that will actually show whether and what kind of understanding problem it was. The significance of next actions can be best explained with adjacency pairs in the context of sequence organization, which is also directly relevant to the present study as shown in the following section.

2.5.2.1 Adjacency Pairs and Preference Organization

Adjacency pairs, a term coined by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) are paired utterances that form "the basic unit on which sequences of conversation are built" (as cited in Liddicoat, 2007, p. 106). Adjacency pairs usually occur immediately together whereby one pair is produced first followed by the second pair but could occasionally be separated by other talk in between. The first and second pair performs actions that are closely related in the sense that the second pair is constrained by the first pair, such as in question and answer. It is this basic structure that participants adhere to and organize their talk as adjacency pairs "set up expectations about how talk will proceed" (Liddicoat, 2007, p.107). The way a second pair is produced not only depends on the first pair but also on the 'preference', a term developed by Atkinson and Heritage (1984) giving alternative ways of conversational action (Liddicoat, 2007).

The concept of 'preference' signifies that "in a particular context, certain actions may be avoided, or delayed in their production, while other actions are normally performed directly and with little delay" (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 111). Routinely performed direct actions are 'preferred actions' while not performed or delayed actions are called 'dispreferred actions', e.g. the direct acceptance of an invitation is considered as preferred action while a direct refusal of an invitation is 'dispreferred' and considered as rude (Liddicoat, 2007). This shows that some actions are problematic and need some 'extra conversational work' to design the turn differently (Liddicoat, 2007). As stated by Liddicoat (2007), "the preference for agreement and 'contiguity' can be considered to be two basic organizing principles for sequences and there is a relationship between them which plays an important role in how turns at talk are designed" (p. 113). Thus, disagreements are not contiguous and are usually delayed in turns.

Basic adjacency pairs the so-called basic building blocks of sequences can be expanded. As stated by Liddicoat (2007), first and second pairs could construct different types of expanding sequences called pre-sequences, insert sequences and post-sequences in relation to the base sequence. Pre-expansions to first pairs, such as pre-invitation, pre-request and pre-offer, are used to gauge 'preferred or dispreferred' second pairs prior to their production and also to deal with potentially problematic responses (Liddicoat, 2007). Insert expansions are used between the basic adjacency and are relevant to this basic sequence 'to be accomplished successfully'. Both, pre-expansions and insert-expansions are positioned towards the second pair as a 'potential closing of a sequence' while post-expansions "do not have a projected completion point which can serve to constrain the trajectory of the sequence" (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 167). Post-expansion are followed after the completion of the basic second pair and function as the closing of a sequence thus the minimal post-expansions are called sequence-closing thirds. Sequence-closing thirds can also be used as assessment of evaluation of second pairs and the actions taken in the prior turn. All three types of expansions rely on the basic adjacency pair as core action and how the related talk is understood. Expansions as stated by Liddicoat (2007) deal with 'questions of preference' and are places where "interactional work of repair can be done" (p. 170). Repair would be then expanding sequences of turns that help understand prior talk, which will be discussed in detail in the next section (see 2.5.3).

As described above, turn design also called turn recipient design deals with the composition and construction of turns into sequences. The adjacency pairs being the basic and minimal unit that can be expanded further in sequences and the overall structural organization of talk-in-interaction show how participants achieve their communicative goal, which is primarily ‘to be understood’. Depending on their shared understanding participants might need to organize and structure their turns in talk in a certain way using common methods and procedures for talk to be understood and interpreted successfully. These methods or methodological and theoretical tools can be used strategically in both formal and informal talk and do not differ from each other (Liddicoat 2007). The central aspect is to link both meaning and context to the concept of sequence that is dynamically created. As stated by Heritage (1998), understanding of a prior action is shown by next actions “at multiplicity of levels – for example, by an ‘acceptance’, someone can show an understanding that a prior turn was complete, that it was addressed to them, that it was an action of a particular type” (p. 3/4). However, these understandings can be either confirmed or can be repaired at any third turn, creating ‘mutual understanding’ through a sequential ‘architecture of intersubjectivity’ (Heritage, 1998).

2.5.3 The Broad Concept of Repair Initiations

Repair as described by conversation analysts is a ‘mechanism of conversation’ and ‘conversation as a self-regulating system’ that deals with problems or difficulties encompassing all levels of talk, such as turn-taking and sequence organization (Liddicoat, 2007). The term repair is a broader concept involving not only corrections but dealing with conversation problems as an overall phenomenon. As stated by Liddicoat (2007): “In fact many cases of repair seem to involve situations in which there is no error made by the speaker at all” (p. 171) as in the case of a word search by the speaker who e.g. uses the strategy of sound stretches to gain time for retrieving the missing word. In general, repair 'aims at success' but could also fail in some cases. In fact, there is no clear-cut definition for repair distinguishing the nature of problems or difficulties of interaction as 'repairable'. The practices of repair, as described by Schegloff, Koshik, and Olsher (2002) is a resource that participants use to deal with problems such as speaking, hearing, or understanding. Svenning (2008) states that e.g. problems of speaking could include 'linguistic problems', such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax as well as 'acceptability problems', in the sense of saying something that is untrue, inappropriate or irrelevant. Thus, repair is defined generally and could be associated with errors and corrections also in their absence. CA refrains from distinguishing between the difficulties of interactions that repair performs although important especially in institutional context. Therefore, Schegloff, Koshik, and Olsher (2002) suggest three aspects that need to be emphasized in reference to 'CA's treatment' of repair in the area of applied linguistics. First, the practices of repair are treated as 'discursive and interactional not cognitive', e.g. "displaying a delay before a next word is a move in interaction, quite distinct from some delay in the speech planning process" (Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002, p. 7). Second, the repair without stopping 'en passant' is distinct from repair organization involving "stopping the course of action otherwise in progress – whether turn or sequence or activity – to address a trouble/problem of speaking, hearing or understanding the talk, and resuming that course of action upon completion of the repair segment" (Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002, p. 7). Third, the distinction between" understanding the talk (ordinarily the just-preceding talk) from other problems of understanding" as opposed to e.g. 'understanding the events, conduct, etc.', described by talk (Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002, p. 7) is to be distinguished. This shows the necessity to determine the source of problems, how it is displayed in the interaction, which repair mechanisms are employed, considering the specific context of the participants.

Central to the mechanism of repair is the distinction of who initiates and executes the repair, which leads to different types and position of repair, the self-initiated and other-initiated repair, and self and other repair. Further, the positions for repair are important as these types of repair coincide with sequential location of repair. Four positions of repair can be distinguished, same turn repair, transition space repair, second position repair, third position repair, and fourth position repair. The first opportunity to initiate repair is in the first turn itself as in same turn and transition space repair therefore self-initiated repair usually occurs first. However, it is the second position and the responses to turns that display understandings or misunderstandings (Liddicoat, 2007). A second position turn may show problems of an earlier turn that initiates repair in the third turn to the original turn. This means that the third turn is the location for other-initiated repair. However, in some cases, e.g. a misunderstanding although shown in second position may only become apparent later in the third position, which then may initiate repair only in the fourth position. Thus, it is the next turn that is the first possible other-initiation of repair, which may often be delayed (Liddicoat, 2007).

The distinction between self and other (intitiated) repair seems to be interactionally important, in the sense that either party can initiate repair that might be associated to problems for speaker, e.g. grammatical errors or problems of hearing for recipient. However, according to Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), self and other repair are not independent repair initiation and deal with the same source of problem and moreover these associations are not imperative in the conversational system (see Liddicoat, 2007). Moreover, the type of repair action, e.g. repetition or reformulation is the same whether self or other (initiated) repair and refers to the same ‘source of problem’. Therefore, this analysis concentrates on the communication process that is displayed in the sequential order and the communication strategies that are employed leading to successful communication without distinguishing between self and other (initiated) repair actions. However, to determine the communication strategies in this study the types of repair as central aspect to CA need to be clarified first in the next section.

2.5.3.1 Types of Repair vs. Communication Strategies

There are different ways how repair can be initiated and organized in relation to the four types of repair. These types of repair initiations are for the first type of same-turn and transition space repair, cut-offs, sound stretches, items such as 'uh' and 'uhm', and pauses or combination of these as a repair segment, as well as adding or changing of elements as 'I mean' and 'not X, Y' formats. Furthermore, other types are displays of uncertainty and requests, e.g. searching for names by speaker that is provided by recipient shows 'shared experiences in interaction' (Liddicoat, 2007). Moreover, repair can be organized through a series of repairs, e.g. turn restarts and gaze are related in such a way that restarts may be used to request recipients' gaze and pauses may function similar to restarts. For the second position repair types as first possible place for other-initiated repair, repair could be initiated through question words such as what, who, where, when, partial repeats also with question word, and correction. These repair forms can indicate and locate the trouble source of preceding turn, e.g. 'you mean' with a possible understanding of the prior turn element not only locates the 'trouble source' but also gives a 'try-marked' candidate correction, mitigating the 'force of the correction' (Liddicoat, 2007). As pointed out by Liddicoat, an actual repair is not completed until the speaker has accepted the suggested repair until then it is only a candidate repair. In the third position, repair is commonly performed through e.g. repeats with some modifications of prior turn or reformulations. The fourth position repair is rare as problems are usually addressed earlier. In general, a repair can be initiated by any participant of a conversation and is generally done in the first possible location. However, repair is also “an interactionally sensitive mechanism (…) constrained by social as well as linguistic considerations” (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 212).

Previous studies in (B)ELF dealing with repair and the various strategies involved (e.g. Firth, 1996; Kaur, 2009; Cogo, 2009; Rogerson-Revell, 2010) have shown that when actual or potential difficulties in understanding arises they could be solved with diverse strategies, such as accommodation strategies (Rogerson-Revell, 2010; Cogo, 2009) including repetition and code-switching (Cogo, 2009), normalization and convergence strategies (Rogerson-Revell, 2010), whereby the ‘normalization strategy’ includes the ‘let it pass’ strategy or the ‘lack of other repair’ based on Firth’s study with only few cases of other repair as ‘in making linguistic limitations explicit’ (Rogerson-Revell, 2010p. 444) and the convergence strategy referring to e.g. simplification strategies. Kaur (2009) has identified repair strategies that encompass repetition and rephrasing, mostly employed as self-repair to preempt problems of understanding. Firth (1996) who has conducted the first study on business telephone calls in business context using CA has found that ‘lack of other repair’ was common in his data that he called as ‘let it pass’ and ‘making it normal’ strategies. Recent study on BELF by Tsuchiya and Handford (2014) investigating business meetings however has shown the opposite of Firth’s (1996) findings, where other repair is the tendency with numerous uses of it, therefore using the term ‘not-let-it pass’ as discursive practice. Similar to the study of Tsuchiya and Handford this study also shows that ‘other repair’ in terms of CA can be found.

These findings show that the types of repair actions can vary according to the specific context and situation of the participants’ interactions and therefore the need to consider the wider context with its social and linguistic constraints, as stated above. Moreover, the type of repair practices or strategies might differ according to the source of problem, referring generally to e.g. speaking, hearing, understanding (Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002) and Svenning (2008) further including 'acceptability' problems. The strategies to overcome these problems as stated by Svenning (2008) occur usually in an order where the least complicated is employed first, e.g. the least specific query then repeating the repairable, followed by some reformulation are common. Although this tendency has been observed in some cases in the present data where question, repetition, reformulation also occur in this order, it would go beyond the scope of this study.

The term repair, commonly used by conversation analysts as a mechanism in dealing with 'overall' communication problems, will be kept only as a general term to refer to previous studies that have employed this term for conversational analytic purposes of interactional mechanisms and procedures. Hence, according to CA terms and as discussed in previous studies, the present study also shows the employment of repair practices consisting of e.g. 'repetition' and 'reformulation'. However, there are also other strategies that are commonly used, such as 'questioning', a term referring to interrogatives seeking for information (see Heritage 2002) and 'explanation' (see Svenning, 2008). For instance Svenning (2008), in his empirical investigation of other-initiations of repair among native and non-native Norwegians includes explanation under other forms of repair and calls it "producer's preemption of additional problems" (p. 347).

In the context of this study, the interactional repair practices and strategies to resolve problems of understandings also in the absence of problems and to achieve mutual or shared understandings will be addressed and referred to as 'communication strategies'.

The communication strategies employed in this study, such as questioning, repeating, reformulating and explaining indicate different problems of understandings that mainly involve 'understanding the event or conduct' described in talk (see Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002) or refer to 'acceptability' problems as opposed to 'linguistic problems' (see Svenning, 2008). Hence, prior to concluding this chapter the term 'communication strategy' used in this study is clarified first.

2.5.4 Communication Strategy Defined

'Communication' is described as the process of interchanging messages through shared meanings (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele, 2010). Communication takes place through the creation and management of meanings and shared understandings of social reality. Such a communication process involves using symbols "such as language in interpersonal, group, organizational, public, intercultural, and mediated context" (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele 2010, p. 4). They further point out that "the breadth of communication inquiry is universal and inclusive, and the contexts in which the communication is examined are diverse yet interrelated" (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele 2010, p. 4). Thus, the study of communication is universal but it is the context in which it is analyzed that differs. In this way, the term 'communication strategy' has originally been referred to language learning contexts (Khanji, 1996; Wagner & Firth, 1997). In these contexts, communication strategies were described as consciously applied by language learners to deal with problems or difficulties usually resulting from insufficient language proficiency. Khanji (1996) called it 'attempts to get a message across' which involved three basic components "a communicational difficulty owing to target language inadequacy, an awareness of this problem and finally a solution to overcome it by the use of various strategies" (p. 143). Wagner and Firth (1997) taking an interactional and applying a conversational analytic approach described them as strategies to create meaning in case of not fully developed or stable linguistic or pragmatic competence in foreign language. However, communication strategies can be used in the 'absence of problematicity' e.g. in the case of native speakers (Bialystok 1990) and 'enhances the effectiveness' (see Klimpfinger, 2009). This approach as stated by Klimpfinger (2009) has been applied by Hübner (2003) to the ELF context where ELF speakers do not use communication strategies 'as a solution to a problem' but 'as an effective way to reach a certain communicative goal and thus to successfully convey one's thought'. This study is in line with Hübner's approach and uses the term 'communication strategy' as a conscious and intentional display of how successful and effective communication is achieved through BELF.

The process of achieving mutual or shared understanding through negotiation of meaning is generally described as 'interactional practices', 'repair practices' (e.g. Kaur, 2011; Koshik, 2011; Kushida, 2011) or simply as 'repair' in terms of conversation analytical mechanism. The term 'strategy' can be applied as 'discourse strategies' (e.g. Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) or more precise as 'accommodation or convergence strategies' (see Cogo, 2009), and 'explicitness strategies' referring to self-repair practices (see Mauranen, 2007; Kaur, 2011). Communication strategies in (B)ELF as described in these studies can include a wide range of strategies with various actions, such as repetition, rephrasing, or code-switching (Cogo, 2009; Klimpfinger 2009). Klimpfinger (2009) calls, e.g. code-switching communication strategy an integral part of discourse practices in ELF. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish between 'practice' and 'strategy' since the latter is associated with intentional use or awareness. In this study, the awareness of the intercultural business situation with its different practices and the intentional use of some strategies have been reported in the interviews with participants who also attended the meetings. Therefore, this study applies the term 'communication strategies' in BELF context and refrains from using repair practices as labeled in CA for the reason that 'repair' is defined too broadly to deal with all conversational problems. Moreover, despite its origin in CA being rooted in native speaker talk, it may be easily associated with problems of understanding the language itself, e.g. due to inadequate or limited language skills or automatically connoted with increased effort to understand the language that is not the case in this study.

This study employs the term 'communication strategy' defined as "the conscious employment by verbal and nonverbal mechanism for communicating an idea" (Brown, 1987) to refer to the negotiation of meanings (as cited in Khanji, 1996, p. 34). To describe how successful and effective communication is achieved, both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are examined in BELF context.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, both frameworks CofP and CA and the key concepts relating to this study have been explicated. It has been also explained why the combination of these two frameworks provide the most practicable approach to analyze and understand BELF communication. The main reason that has been given is that the framework of CofP complements CA in providing the wider context and the necessary background in which the BELF interactions take place also taking the practitioners' perspectives and competences into considerations. It has been also explained that the combination of the two frameworks may allow a useful way to connect micro and macro analyses linking the reality of the practitioners with the actual BELF communication, which also requires a multi-method and multi-modal approach. As this study aims to analyze the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed by BELF speakers and the factors contributing to successful and effective communication, such procedures and related concepts within the frameworks of CA and CofP were discussed in detail. In addition, some of the findings from (B)ELF on the negotiation of meaning and the practices involved were examined. Similarly, based on previous research findings, the notions and concepts of successful and effective communication, as well as the communication strategies leading to communicative success have been clarified.

The two frameworks and related key concepts have revealed, that in order to explicate how participants achieve successful and effective communication, a detailed examination of the BELF interactions considering the internal as well external context is necessary. Before proceeding to examine the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, details pertaining to the present research setting and design as well as the data and its collection for this study are first outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology and design that have been adopted for this study as well as the research procedures for analyses based on the research questions set in the introduction chapter (see Chapter 1). Both, Community of Practice (CofP) as conceptual framework and Conversation Analysis (CA) as analytical framework outlined in the previous chapter (see Chapter 2), provide the essential background as a guide and tool for this study. While CofP takes the macro level, viz. the wider context, such as the business setting, the practices, and background of the BELF speakers into account, CA serves as the framework at the micro level to facilitate analysis of the naturally occurring meeting interactions. The analysis of meeting interactions takes into consideration the immediate and situated context, where meaning is negotiated based on the resources that a specific CofP acquired during their mutual engagement and joint enterprise. A combination of these two approaches as theoretical and analytical framework is most appropriate to reveal the complex, diverse, and dynamic nature of BELF interactions, which comprise multiple layers of communication: The salient verbal and non-verbal communication on the surface and the interpretation of meaning based on contextual factors, such as the situated factors of institutional setting and the socio-linguistic background, e.g. the shared repertoire developed based on the practices in a specific community. CA is most useful for making a close examination of such interactions and their immediate contexts that is visible and observable on the surface level. In CA, the analyst reveals the interpretations of participants' interactions and behavior (Wooffitt, 2005) for warranting analytic claims and empirical statements. However, on the wider context, CA may not be able to capture the meanings, which are hidden beneath the surface of the interactions.

Although CA has been criticized (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999) for being unable to provide guidelines for the wider context analysis (Chan, 2007), it is still a useful approach used by most studies when investigating spoken discourses in (B)ELF (e.g. Firth, 1996; Kaur, 2009). CA is also useful not only for the analysis of verbal but also non-verbal communication in (B)ELF context (see Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009; Markaki & Mondada, 2012). However, by considering both the immediate and wider context a better understanding and interpretation of the interactions as a whole can be achieved. Therefore, CofP may be able to complement CA and thus reveal the wider context by providing background information, such as the common practices in a specific business situation comprising the resources and the development of shared repertoire that could be mainly retrieved through the interviews and partly the survey. Thus, by applying both concepts of CofP and CA, a connection between the socio-cultural backgrounds and competences of BELF speakers and their specific language use can be established.

In the following sections below, this chapter will discuss the research methodology and outline in detail the research design and procedures adopted in the context of this study. Further, this chapter describes in detail the research setting and data sources or sets, how the data was selected and collected, transcribed and anonymized for analyses. It also shows how the analyses of data is structured and presented. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the research methodology and research design applied.

3.2 Research Design and Methods

This study qualitative in nature employs a multi-method and multi-modal research methodology as research design that is deemed appropriate to achieve a deeper understanding of BELF in the context of intercultural business communication. As discussed in chapter two (2), a qualitative multi-method and/or multi-modal research (e.g. Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010, Mondada, 2012) has proven to be useful for the analyses of natural interactions. Moreover, the CofP framework as stated by Ehrenreich (2009) requires a multi-method research design including e.g. interview and observational data other than the sole focus on speech data. The multi-modal approach (see Goodwin, 2000; Heath & Luff, 2013) enables to analyze both the verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as other aspects of interaction and their relationship in the negotiation of meaning processes. The multi-method research approach refers to the different methods of collecting data.

In this study, the data were gathered through a survey, audio recorded interviews, and audio-video recordings of meetings. These diverse approaches provide a triangulation of data, which helps to ensure validity and reliability of data sources. The qualitative analysis engaged in this study was based on the aim of this study, which was to gain a deeper understanding of how meanings are negotiated within a business setting that leads to successful and effective communication between different BELF speakers. The qualitative analysis and analytic procedures applied in the context of this study involve first the identification and collection of data for the specific objectives outlined in chapter one (1), second the coding and categorizing of multiple data based on setting and speakers, and according to the patterns observed. All these approaches were applied as a measure to ensure credibility and transferability of data.

3.3 Research Setting and Context

In this study, English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) was considered as the main medium of communication for intercultural business communication. As pointed out in chapter (one) 1, BELF globally used as the main working language and so far predominantly investigated in European context, the aim of this study was to gather empirical data of naturally occurring interactions in business situations in a different part of the world, namely in the Malaysian setting. At the time of selecting the data site for this study, the researcher living and working in Malaysia as a German citizen and belonging to the German community, had access to several German organizations and companies that were based in Kuala Lumpur. Germany, with the presence of more than 300 companies in Malaysia is the biggest trading partner of Malaysia in the EU. The motivation for choosing Malaysia as regional hub for South-East Asia is among others the widespread use of English in business interactions (MIDA, 2011). From the several German organizations and companies the researcher had contacted, only a few were willing to give access for the collection of only specific data, such as through survey or interview since it concerned subjective views and perceptions with less of a confidentiality issue. The majority rejected all types of data collection, particularly the access to naturally occurring business interactions. Collecting meeting data was completely denied disregard the confidentiality assurance of the researcher. This might explain the focus of existing BELF research being predominantly based on survey and interview data and viz. the perceptions of BELF speakers since gaining access to other data, such as recorded meetings, is perhaps the most challenging part to conduct BELF research.

Eventually, only through a personal contact access was gained to one German organization and a meeting could be arranged with the upper management concerning the research project and the legal arrangements for the permission of collecting various data also through audio and video recordings. The long procedure that followed after several email conversations and meetings with the upper management and the head of public relation (PR) whom the responsibility was passed over, was to meet up with the legal department and draft a confidentiality agreement. The confidentiality agreement specifically states that the researcher assures absolute confidentiality during and after the research project. Furthermore, the video and audio-recorded data could only be used in an anonymous form and shall not be disclosed to any other party except with prior written authorization. The researcher's obligation is to return all confidential information within ten days after publication of researcher's dissertation or any document or media containing confidential information to be destroyed by the researcher providing a written statement to the organization regarding the destruction. After signing the confidentiality agreement, the next step was for the company to inform all employees about this research project.

The German organization chosen for this research comprises an almost equal number of German and Malaysian employees. Compared to other companies or organizations this almost equal distribution of German and Malaysian employees is rather exceptional as in most German companies based in Malaysia only the upper management would be Germans whereas the majority of employees mostly Malaysians. Therefore, the research setting and context in this study with its rich data is well suited for investigating how non-native speakers of English (NNSE) manage intercultural business communication using BELF as their medium of communication. All of the employees of this organization were known to be NNSE from diverse lingua-cultural background. In the course of the data gathering process the researcher learned that one Malaysian employee's first language was English. However in a natural setting as this, the presence of first language speakers of English is unavoidable and subject to the condition that English first language speakers are in small numbers. The rest of the Malaysian employees speak English mostly as second language besides Malay, the national language of Malaysia and their first languages, depending on their ethnicities, e.g. a Chinese dialect or Tamil. The organization and thus all employees have a multi-cultural and multi-lingual background and use English as a common language.

Therefore, English is used for intercultural communication and as a Business Lingua Franca. Thus, when the management and employees of the organization were briefed about the research, the focus of research was described in general terms as being 'intercultural communication' so that they are not channeled in a specific direction and eventually creating greater awareness in their interactions since the research was aimed to be conducted in the most natural environment and business context possible. Only after the completion of data gathering process 'BELF' was mentioned to a few participants, who stated that they never heard anything about this before.

After having outlined the overall research design and setting in the previous two sections, the next subchapter explains in detail the research procedures and specifies the data employed for this study consisting of the main data with the peripheral data sources.

3.4 Research Procedure and Data

Research aiming to uncover the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in naturally occurring interactions, such as in business meetings and the factors contributing to successful communication and influencing certain communication behavior, requires different data sources. Thus, three different data sets were identified and collected through a survey questionnaire, interviews and video recordings of meetings. The collection of the data sets was done over a period of almost two years from end of 2009 until mid of 2011, while the whole transcribing process of verbal and especially non-verbal meeting interactions was only completed mid of 2014. The main focus of the research is set on the 'meeting data', which was gathered from the talk-in-interaction within an institutional setting, also taking the overall business context into consideration. Following this, a survey and an interview were conducted. The idea was to gather background information of the participants involved and the perceptions of the interviewees' own interactions and practices in this specific business setting. This is to triangulate the study thereby strengthening the study in itself as well as to ensure that the data, the analyses, the findings were well supported within the wider context of naturally occurring business interactions. However, there was no specific order in collecting the three data sets, the survey data, the interview and meeting data. In a busy business environment, everything had to be scheduled and prearranged, especially recordings of meetings, the appointments for interviews, as well as the distribution of survey questionnaires whereby confidentiality had to be preserved at all times.

Details pertaining the various data sets, the collection, transcription, and anonymizing, as well as the procedures for coding, categorizing, and the structuring for presenting the analyses will be described in the following sections under each individual data set. The order of the subsection is done according to the content information required for the analysis of the real-time business meeting interactions. It does not necessarily reflect the chronological order of data collection, in this sense some survey questionnaires were conducted and collected after interviews or meetings or some meetings were recorded before or after interviews. Thus the next section will describe the survey data first, followed by the interview data, and lastly the main meeting data.

3.4.1 Survey Data

The survey in form of a questionnaire (see Appendix A) was primarily conducted as mentioned above with the intention to get background information about the employees of the organization. Moreover, as observed on-site and from off-the-record conversations with some employees of the organization before the official data collection started, both Germans and Malaysians mentioned intercultural issues in their daily business communication. Therefore, the researcher decided to integrate one general question, which is the last survey question in the questionnaire regarding communication issues in intercultural communication as to whether they have encountered them or not and if the possible reasons therefore. The major part of the survey questions included, e.g. the nationality of employees, their position or area of expertise in the organization, their general experience in a MNC, and duration of employment in the current organization. Further, the survey asked about the different languages of participants and their self-assessed proficiency level in these languages, including especially English that was the focus of inquiry. The proficiency level was assessed in a scale from one (1) as excellent to five (5) poor.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected via email or by hand to each participant individually due to the researcher's obligation to keep confidentiality. The survey then was analyzed by dividing participants' responses to each individual question so that only relevant information could be extracted and highlighted to serve as background knowledge eventually to be linked with the interview data and also in turn linked with the meeting data where needed and appropriate, thus providing some valuable information for the research. Interestingly, almost all employees agreed to participate in the survey. However, some permanent employees and some trainees who had taken part in the survey had left the organization soon after. In total 31 employees of the organization took part in the survey including those who left and also new staff members, who joined during the research project. Although the survey questionnaire is divided in general and specific information, which also contains particulars referring to age and sex of participants as well as information about other languages spoken, only relevant information to this study was considered and compiled. The table below (Table 3.1) summarizes the relevant background information that has been extracted from the survey questionnaire for this present study.

Table 3.1: Profile of Participants According to their Sociolinguistic Background (Nationality, Profession, Expertise and Experience, and English Language Proficiency Level)

No.	Nationality	Position- (Area of Expertise)	Experience in MNC	Duration of Employment in Current Organization	English Language Proficiency (Self-evaluation)
1	German (Indonesian)	A-HOD (PR)	No (prior experience)	< 2 years	1
2	German	Executive employee	No (German Companies)	< 1 year:6 months	2-3
3	Malaysian	HOD (PR)	Yes	< 1 year:3 months	1
4	Malaysian	Executive employee	No (Malaysian Companies)	> 7 years	1
5	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	< 1 year	1-2
6	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	< 1 year:6 months	1
7	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	< 2 years	1
8	German	Trainee	Yes	< 1 year:2 weeks	1-2
9	German	Trainee	No	< 1 year:2 weeks	2
10	German	Trainee	Yes	< 1 year:2 weeks	2-3
11	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	< 2 years	2
12	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	(no info given)	3
13	Turkish (German)	Trainee	Yes	< 1 year:2 weeks	2-3
14	German	Deputy HOD	No clear info	< 1 year	1-2
15	German	Trainee	No	< 1 year:4 months	1-2
16	German	Top management level	Yes	8 years	2
17	German (Malaysian)	Trainee	Yes	< 1 year:3 weeks	1-2
18	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	> 10 years	1
19	Malaysian	PA to top level management	No	< 1 year	2
20	Malaysian	Executive employee	Yes	< 1 year:6 months	1
21	Malaysian	HOD Finance	Yes	17 years	3
22	German	Executive Employee	Yes	< 1 year	2
23	German	Top level management	German companies/ government	< 2 years	1-2
24	Malaysian	Executive employee	No	No info given	2
25	German	Trainee	No	< 1 year:3 months	2
26	Malaysian	PA to top management	No	5 years	3
27	Russian (German)	Trainee	Yes	< 1 year:2,5 months	2-3
28	German	Deputy Head	Yes	1 year	2-3
29	Malaysian	A to HOD PR	Malaysian companies	6 years	2
30	Malaysian	HOD PR	Yes	> 9 years	1
31	German	Trainee	Yes	< 1 year:3 months	2

[Acronyms in this table: HOD-Head of Department, (P)A-(Personal) Assistant, , PR-Public Relation, > more than, < less than]

As can be seen from Table 3.1, from the total of 31 employees, who participated in the survey, 16 were Germans and 15 Malaysians, which also represents the almost evenly distributions of nationalities in the organization. The English language proficiency level as indicated by participants themselves was self-evaluated as either one (1) for excellent, two (2) for good or three (3) for satisfactory. In fact the majority of participants that is 23 indicated the proficiency level with (1) or (1-2), five participants with (2-3) and only three participants with (3). This shows that the overall English proficiency level of all employees were excellent and good or at least sufficient enough. This suggest that based on the proficiency level of English used for intercultural business communication, language should not be a challenging factor. However despite English proficiency levels being in general very good almost half of the survey participants indicated communication issues based on language or both language and culture in response to the last question of the survey. The reason for this discrepant information could not be found through the survey but only be further investigated through the method of semi-structured interviews. Hence, a survey is appropriate to get factual background information. However, it is not sufficient to provide further valuable information or insights concerning the complex intercultural communication. Therefore, further detailed information could only be gathered through other methods and data, such as the semi-structured interviews. The next section provides information about the interview data concerning data collection, transcription, context and participants.

3.4.2 Interview Data

Interviews as a research tool are a widely used method of data collection especially in this domain of research. As already outlined in previous chapter (2), most of the BELF research relies predominantly on interviews besides surveys. This might be mostly due to the highly confidential interactional data in the business domain.

Interviews, in particular semi-structured interviews focus on qualitative data and rely on the reported experiences and perceptions of participants. In this study, the purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to get more detailed information on BELF use and users, their personal experiences and perceptions in intercultural business communications that a survey in form of a questionnaire could not provide as discussed in the previous subchapter.

Taking the Community of Practice (CofP) as framework, the interview data is aimed at the three dimensions the joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire of this specific organization. The focus is on how they engage with one another, their practices and activities and above all how they negotiate meaning and achieve successful and effective communication. Therefore, guided by the research aim and purpose the following interview questions were developed and set out to capture the experiences of working together and their expectation and perceptions of successful communication.

1. What is it like to work with Germans/Malaysians?
2. What are the similarities or differences?
3. What is successful communication?
4. How do you make sure what you said is understood?
5. How do you deal with communication difficulties and ensure successful communication?

These questions were employed to conduct the interviews and formed the basis for the interview data. However, they were not fixed and were changed slightly and asked in various ways or in different order based on the previous answers of interview participants and also depending in general on the course of the interview and interviewees. The first two questions were considered as warm-up questions, an icebreaker, and as open questions to allow interviewees to speak about what comes to their mind first and also openly express their opinions and any concerns working together if they are any and the reasons for that or what matters to them or not. The focus was on the last three questions regarding the ways to ensure successful communication.

All employees were invited to participate in the interviews and had the choice to be interviewed as a group or separately. A total of 20 research participants were willing to be interviewed; 13 Germans and seven (7) Malaysians, were interviewed and audio-recorded. All seven Malaysians wanted to be interviewed separately whereas most of the Germans did a group interview, except two participants from the upper management who did a separate interview. The interviews were all conducted face to face with participants from different professional categories, such as upper and middle management, and other employees. The average length of the audio-recorded interviews lasted from 10 minutes to almost one hour depending on the interviewees. The total time of recorded interviews amounts to 372 minutes and 392 seconds corresponding to 6 hours 18 minutes and 52 seconds. Before the interviews were recorded the researcher explained to the individual participant the subject and aim of the research, as well as the format and estimated length of the interview recordings, which was set to be approximately 20-30 minutes considering the interviewees' time allocation as well. Moreover, the researcher assured that all information given by the interviewees before, during and even after the interviews were to be handled anonymously and with strict confidentiality. However, despite the assurance of confidentiality some interviewees asked to stop the audio recordings when giving certain information.

The collected interview data was transcribed verbatim, using standard orthography and without using any transcription conventions despite e.g. different accents, some variation of speech sounds and dropping of word endings, and despite some overlapping speech, since it was only the content that mattered in this case. The background of the researcher being a German and having lived over a decade in Malaysia was helpful in understanding different accents. The transcription of data was then followed by the data anonymization. For reasons of confidentiality, the German organization was abbreviated with 'OX' for Organization X, the German and Malaysian interview participants with 'G' for German and 'M' for Malaysian and to avoid abbreviating the real names of participants or using pseudonyms instead, a simple alphabetic order was used, e.g. A_OX_M, B_OX_G, etc. as illustrated in the following table (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Audio Recorded Interviews of Participants

Date/Group/Individual	Number of Participants	Participants/ Anonymization	Duration of interview
20.12.10 Group: German Trainees	1	F_OX_G	17:51
	2	G_OX_G	
05.04.11 Group: German Trainees	3	H_OX_G	22:34
	4	I_OX_G	
	5	J_OX_G	
05.04.11 Group: German Trainees	6	Started working for the organization 2-3 days ago: not considered in the data	10:18
	7		
	8		
19.04.11 Group: German Executives	9	E_OX_G	42:27
	10	C_OX_G	
	11	D_OX_G	
19.04.11-G	12	A_OX_G	48:08
19.04.11-G	13	B_OX_G	50:01
05.04.11-M	14	A_OX_M	16:21
19.04.11-M	15	E_OX_M	31:33
20.12.10-M	16	F_OX_M	41:52
05.04.11-M	17	B_OX_M	25:09
05.04.11-M	18	G_OX_M	30:58
19.04.11-M	19	C_OX_M	28:41
19.04.11-M	20	D_OX_M	12:39
Total number of participants: 20 (13 Germans/7 Malaysians) Total time: (372 min+392 sec) 6h 18 min 52 sec			

After collecting, transcribing, and anonymization of the audio-recorded interviews, the interview data was prepared and organized for the analysis. To begin the analysis process, the responses of the semi-structured interviews were first divided into five (5) interview questions to get all the responses from each German and Malaysian participant separately. The interviewees' responses were then assigned to a variety of topics and possible categories. By analyzing the responses, only relevant information was identified, coded and categorized. The interview data was mainly used to investigate the wider context and to reveal the external factors that contribute to successful intercultural business communication in BELF. The meeting data, that is the main data of this research is described in the following sections.

3.4.3 Meeting Data

This subchapter first explains the context for the selection of the meeting data, also describing the different categories and type of meetings where various kind of interactions might be involved and therefore of relevance for this study. Second, it outlines the detailed procedures of the collection, the preparation for analysis, such as the transcription and anonymization of this data, as well as its preparation and presentation for the analyses.

The present meeting data originates from formal internal meetings of this organization where BELF is used for intercultural communication. The reason for choosing this specific business setting to collect real-life interactional data is that formal meetings are held in English to which all meeting participants had to adhere as in many MNCs and organizations all around the world. Moreover, since formal meetings are prescheduled in advance (Asmuß & Svenning, 2009) and held at specific times the researcher could preplan and make the necessary arrangements prior to the scheduled meetings. Furthermore, meetings as boundary encounters (see Chapter 2.4.3) are considered the platform, where organizational goals are accomplished through various practices and actions. In the meeting interactions within the specific business context, different verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are displayed for the management of intercultural communication through BELF.

3.4.3.1 Categories and Types of Meetings

Meetings can be categorized in relation to its purpose, goal or function (Hanford, 2010). In meetings, managers meet up regularly with subordinates to review, check, delegate, and plan tasks and duties. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) distinguish three categories of meetings, first 'forward oriented meetings' that are mainly planning or perspective meetings, second reporting or retrospective meetings which are 'backward-oriented' and third task-oriented or problem-solving meetings that are 'present-oriented'.

All categories can be found in the course of one meeting but one usually dominates depending on the type of meeting as also observed in the present data. This meeting data mostly consists of the second category and can be labeled as reporting or retrospective meetings. It is suggested that the category of meeting might influence the type of interactions between the meeting participants, and the kind of involvement of meeting participants in their specific roles. This means that the second category meeting interactions usually involves superior and subordinate and focus mainly on information transfer or sharing. Similarly, in this meeting data the interactions mostly take place between the chairperson and the meeting participants concerned. Moreover, the general content of this data comprises mainly reporting of accomplished or ongoing projects and tasks and the discussions and review thereof, besides planning and arrangements of future events, further projects, and tasks. Therefore, it is also important to consider and provide the relevant context information on meetings, such as type of meeting and the roles of interacting meeting participants for the analysis of the meeting data. As

Handford (2010) states, "differences are apparent in the actions business people are sanctioned to perform, and the language employed to perform them, which can be interpreted from a relationship perspective" (p.10). Thus, the chairpersons' task to check on the projects and their progress in specific ways could mean using certain communicative strategies that require mostly asking for information and clarification, as well as evaluating, acknowledging and agreeing or disagreeing. Moreover, as there are various practices involved in meetings, to understand these practices Hanford (2010) claims that ethnographic data, such as field notes and interviews are essential. Thus for the analysis of the meeting data, to be able to reveal the processes of the meeting interactions and the practices that are usually hidden beneath the surface of interactions, the context of the business setting was taken into consideration, drawing also on the interview data together with the survey as wider context information where suitable.

Right from the outset, it was important to select and collect several different types of formal meetings, making sure the meeting data is sufficient and diverse, considering also the purpose and size of meetings as well as the number of participants. However, this could not be determined in advance and the researcher had to get prior information regarding the different formal meetings held in this organization. Thus, this data comprises three different types of meetings, namely the general staff meeting, the interdepartmental meeting that usually consists of participants from two different departments, and the department meeting. These different types of meetings involve different participants and agendas and have different purposes. The purpose of the general staff meeting is to inform all employees from different departments about the general activities of the organization and to give an overview of what has been done and will be done, including upcoming events.

The general staff meeting usually has 19 to 20 participants where less interaction is recorded among participants. The interdepartmental meetings usually comprise 11 to 12 participants and are also considerably high in number but more interaction is recorded compared to the general staff meetings. The smallest number of participants, usually five, is recorded in the department meetings with probably the highest interactions. It is suggested that the type and purpose of meetings might also influence the type of content and amount of interactions. In the general staff meeting with the highest number of participants and according to the observations made, only the upper or top management and middle management, e.g. head of departments, usually talk and the rest of the participants only listen whereas in the other two types of meetings all participants are obliged and get the chance to talk. Since the purpose of such general staff meetings is mainly to inform all employees about past and current activities of the organization in general, this is mainly done by long stretches of monologues by the upper management of the organization and the input of middle management upon request. In these cases the middle management informs other employees only about general news or announcements concerning all staff, such as updates, improvements, reminders. Although, the main purpose in all types of meetings is to share information, in the interdepartmental and department meetings other actions, such as discussing and reviewing tasks, and planning and arranging further projects, and tasks are also performed. However, the type and amount of interactions could only be revealed and noted after the selecting, collecting and transcribing process of all meeting data was completed. Thus, the general staff meetings were at the later stage of the research project excluded from the analysis of the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. This was only done when the analysis process began, since according to CA nothing should be dismissed as unimportant prior to analysis (Hutchby & Woffitt, 1998). The other two types of meetings, such as the inter-department and department meetings were then determined as the focus of the analysis. Since, these meetings although mainly categorized as report-oriented also consist of the forward and task-oriented meeting category. These meetings have the purpose of mainly sharing information and knowledge also discussing ideas or initiatives, and resolving problems when they occur. All participants of the meetings take turns and report one by one on the current projects and tasks in their work, called the 'round-the-table' procedure (see Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009). This round-the-table procedure gives participants an equal opportunity and duty to take the floor (Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009). Moreover, since the category of meeting is mostly report-oriented, the content of interactions is mainly based on information transfer and knowledge sharing.

3.4.3.2 Meeting Data Collection

At the beginning of the data collection process, the researcher had to make appointments in advance for scheduled meetings and set up the recording equipment in the meeting room and ask one of the meeting participants to turn on and off the video and voice recorders for the start and end of the meeting. This way the researcher tried to capture naturally occurring meeting interactions in its usual environment and without the meeting participants possibly being disturbed by the presence of the researcher.

The meeting data comprises a total of eight internal formal meetings with only employees of the organization. The meeting participants are Germans and Malaysians using BELF as their common language. All eight meetings consisting of two general staff meetings, two department meetings and four inter-department meetings were video recorded during the time span of one year from the end of 2009 until the end of 2010. Four of the recorded meetings in 2009 were collected using only one video camera with a mini cassette tape, called also digital videocassette camcorder (DVC), whereas the other four meetings in 2010 could be recorded with two video cameras and an additional voice recorder. This research project started with limited resources for recording, only later in 2010 a second digital video recorder, a voice recorder and tripods could be purchased and used. The last meeting could be even recorded with two digital video recorders replacing the one video tape recorder that was still used for all other meetings. The new equipment facilitated considerably the recording and thus the transcribing process later, since it could provide an overall better quality of recordings.

The duration of video recordings ranged due to some technical problems from 24 minutes up to 63 minutes. In total the meeting data comprises 366 minutes of video recordings from the angle of one video camera and with the second camera employed in 2010, the duration of video recordings made up 546 minutes in total. The general staff meetings were abbreviated as GE, the inter-department meetings as IDE, and since the department meetings referred to only the public relation department, the acronym PR was used. The number of participants varies as mentioned above between 5 to 20 participants according to the type of meetings they attended. The details of the meeting data recordings are summarized in the following table (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Video Recordings of Meetings

Number/Type of Meetings	Date of Recordings	Mode of Recordings/Number of Devices	Duration in Minutes	Number of Participants
1 IDE	30.11.09	1 DVC Camcorder	62	12
2 IDE	07.12.09	1 DVC Camcorder	38	11
3 GE	07.12.09	1 DVC Camcorder	24	20
4 IDE	14.12.09	1 DVC Camcorder	61	12
5 PR	21.06.10	1 DVC Camcorder + 1 Digital Camcorder+	39/39	5
6 GE	05.07.10	1 DVC Camcorder+ 1 Digital Camcorder	49/49	19
7 PR	05.07.10	1 DVC Camcorder+ 1 Digital Camcorder	30/30	5
8 IDE	20.12.10	2 Digital Camcorders	63/63	12
Total time			366/547	

Since most of the meeting data as outlined above was mainly recorded with DVC camcorders, the mini cassettes had to be converted to CDs to be able to watch the recordings repeatedly. However, transcribing data from CDs was challenging especially for detailed transcriptions after the initial rough transcription was completed. For this reason, the CDs were then transferred as digital data directly to the computer to begin with the detailed transcribing and the anonymization process, described in detail in the next section.

3.4.3.3 Transcription of Meeting Data

This research aiming to uncover the verbal and non-verbal strategies employed in meetings using CA analytic procedure is based on real-life talk-in-interactions captured through video recordings and the transcripts thereof. By presenting the transcripts of real-life interactions the research outcomes can be made available in an objective and transparent manner since transcripts largely reflect the interactions as they are. The repeatedly watched and listened recordings of meeting data was first transcribed verbatim, then transcribed in detail using generally the notation system developed by Gail Jefferson since most of the researchers working in CA adhere to this standard transcribing system (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). For embodied actions, since Jefferson's original transcription system was based on audio data and did not include visual data, most researchers follow the transcription system developed by Charles Goodwin (Goodwin, 1981).

The details of transcribed interactions generally depend on the research interest and the aim, as well as the limitation of research and could vary accordingly. Therefore, the researcher had to decide in advance, whether some details should be considered in the transcriptions at all, such as speed and the pitch of the voice, different accents or different pronunciations, and stresses in words. There were also other decisions to be made on how detailed it should be relating to which length of pauses to consider, or which aspects of non-verbal communication to transcribe for the analysis from the ones that could be captured in the video recordings of all meetings. Although facial expressions seem to be relevant when captured through a specific angle of the camera in in a few cases, they were excluded since this specific aspect required close up recordings for all the meetings.

Since in CA describing the sequential order of talk is essential, transcripts should provide a detailed description of all relevant features, such as the precise beginning and ending of the turns, duration of pauses, overlaps, etc. (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). It is also important that transcripts not only capture what was said but the way it was said (Wooffitt, 2005). Moreover, non-verbal aspects of communication are crucial, since they can provide the necessary context for verbal communication or in some cases even replace verbal communication. Therefore, a detailed transcription of both verbal as well as the non-verbal aspects of communication is considered essential. However, in the transcribing process, it is important to balance the details of transcription with the research purpose and aim to facilitate adequate analysis of the data and not to be lost in redundant details. Both, the transcripts together with the recordings at hand describe and reveal the procedures in talk-in-interaction.

In the light of this, the codes adequate for the transcription of meetings in the present research are taken from different transcription conventions: For verbal communication Jefferson's transcription notations are used, whereas the transcription symbols for non-verbal communication are taken partly from Goodwin, such as eye contact, gaze and gaze direction and partly from Rendle-Short (2002) for e.g. different types of hand movements as used in Liddicoat (2007). The transcription conventions used for the meeting data are shown in the following table (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Transcription Convention for Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Symbols	**Meaning**
?	Rising intonation
.	Falling intonation
[	The point overlap set
]	The point at which the overlap terminates
:	Indicates sustained enunciation of a syllable. Longer enunciation can be marked using two or more colons
=	Indicates the end and beginning of two sequential latched utterances that continue without an intervening gap
(1.0)	Pause, in seconds
( )	Text enclosed in parentheses represents transcribed talk for which doubt exists. Empty parentheses represent not transcribed talk or unknown speaker.
(( ))	Embodied action, such as ((nod)), ((cough)), ((smile)), ((laugh)), etc. Transcriber's comments and descriptions
((LH))	Left hand
((RH))	Right Hand
((BH))	Both Hands
((cccc))	Hands are clasped in front of the body
((oooo))	Hands are open, e.g. not clasped and moving in some way
LH →	Moves left hand to right horizontally
←RH	Moves right hand to left horizontally
↑	Up movement vertically (e.g. RH, LH, BH, and Gaze)
↓	Down movement vertically (e.g. RH, LH, BH, and Gaze)
↑↓	Up and down movement vertically (e.g. RH, LH, BH, and Gaze)
BH ← →	Moving apart
← →	Right and left movement (with RH or LH)
X________	Gaze of speaker above and utterance and that of the addressee below
….X	Dots mark the transition movement from non-gaze to gaze, and X where the gaze reaches the other
________,,,	Commas indicate the dropping of gaze

The transcription of the meeting data followed a three-step procedure: First the recordings were roughly transcribed, second verbal communication was transcribed in detail and third the relevant context information and non-verbal codes were added. Capturing all relevant context information and non-verbal communication codes for the analysis and interpretation of the research data was challenging, as communication codes are expandable and unlimited also depending on the quality of the recorded data. The quality of recorded meeting data depended on, e.g. the number and positioning of video cameras in the meeting room, the angle of video camera, and the seating arrangement. Therefore, the most visible codes from the video recordings were transcribed and taken into consideration for the present research. Facial or eye expressions for example that needed a close up recording of all meeting participants could not be captured due to positioning of the video recorder either on only one side or two sides of the meeting room. Thus, only head movements and hand movements, gaze and gaze directions as visible embodied actions were transcribed. After completing the transcription process the preparation of data for analysis came next with the anonymization of data as described in the following section.

3.4.3.4 Anonymization and Presentation of Meeting Data

The anonymization process prescribed in the confidentiality agreement began during and after the transcription of the meeting data. To protect all parties involved such as meeting participants and reference to other people or organizations and companies, the names of the meeting participants in the transcripts were simply abbreviated as (F) for female or (M) for male speaker, (CW) for chairwoman or (CM) chairman, and names of people or companies and organizations in square brackets as name of person [NofP] or name of company [NofC] and Name of Organization [NofO]. Moreover, each female and male participant was numbered consecutively according to who reported first and next, such as F1, F2, F3 or M1, M2, M3. This numbering of participants remained even when at a later time they took turns again.

For the presentation of the analysis of meeting data, the extracts that were selected and taken from the meeting data are introduced in a box. The box includes details, such as the name of meeting from which the extract is taken for analysis as well as the page of transcript for the selected extract of the specific meeting. The name of meetings consists of the abbreviation of type of meetings (GE, IDE, PR) as mentioned earlier in section 3.4.3.2 (see also Table 3.3) followed by the date of recording, e.g. for a interdepartmental meeting (IDE) recorded on 20.12.10 the name of meeting is indicated as IDE201210. Furthermore, the box contains the description of context of extracts, including the topic and content of the extract. Other details of meetings from which the extracts are taken, are referred to with an appendix (see Appendix B) and indicating the number of each of the eight meetings in the Appendix, as B.1, B.2, etc. Each appendix encompasses the name and duration of the meeting, the total number of meeting participants and details about the participants, e.g. CW (My), M1 (G), whereby G stands for German and My for Malaysian.

In interdepartmental meetings, where participants from two departments are present, the head of departments are also indicated as (HOD). Further, artifacts, such as positioning of the video camera and voice recorder, the seating arrangements in the meeting room are also included. The meeting room with its seating arrangements is especially important when analyzing and interpreting the non-verbal communication strategies, e.g. when pointing gestures, gaze direction and nods could be used for allocating turns or referring to participants, as well as signaling the beginning and end of turns etc.

The transcripts taken together with the context information of meetings, provides important insights into the researcher's analysis of meetings data. However, despite the detailed transcripts, the researcher had to repeatedly listen and watch the meeting recordings when analyzing and interpreting the meeting data since the main reference is always the actual recordings and not the transcripts thereof (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). However, this study cannot provide the full transcripts let alone the video recordings due to the absolute confidential nature of this data. Therefore, only the selected extracts of transcripts are provided in the analysis itself. The next section describes how the analysis of meeting data was structured to reveal the various communication strategies employed, as well as the interpretation of the selected extracts.

3.4.3.5 Structure for Analysis and Interpretation of Meeting Data

For the preparation of analysis and to answer the research questions regarding the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies as set out in chapter one (1) the detailed transcripts and the recordings of meetings were examined in depth to reveal the complex mechanism of natural talk-in-interactions using CA analytical procedures. The structure of analysis was governed by the aim to identify the common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used by meeting participants to ensure successful and effective communication. Thus, focusing on each meeting separately, first the salient and common communication strategies were identified. Then, the identified strategies were divided into verbal and the non-verbal communication strategies. All meetings showed similar types of interactions and strategies among participants, except the general staff meetings (see Appendices B.7, B.8), where interactions were limited to only upper and middle management (e.g. CM and HODs) as described earlier (see section 3.4.3.1) and therefore excluded for further detailed analysis of communication strategies.

Based on six meetings, four verbal and three non-verbal common communication strategies were classified. The common verbal communication strategies comprised mostly questioning, repeating, reformulating and explaining and thus were categorized and labeled as such. The common non-verbal communication strategies mostly employed in the meetings were categorized as head movements, hand movements, eye contact and gaze. Although multiple strategies were used at the same time, such as different verbal and/or non-verbal communication strategies, for the purpose of analysis, each communication strategy had to be examined separately. Thus, each verbal and non-verbal communication strategy employed in all six meetings involving various meeting participants were analyzed separately that lead to further categories and/or subcategories, e.g. the questioning strategy was divided into indirect and direct questioning strategy with further subcategories. Considering the vast meeting data and the multiple verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used simultaneously this was very difficult endeavor.

The structure of analysis of meeting data as described above was followed by the presentation of the analysis. During the analyses and interpretation of the data where each verbal or non-verbal strategy was dealt separately and put in respective chapters, subchapters and sections the next step was to select and prepare the extracts of diverse meetings that are representative for these strategies. In total 61 extracts displaying the different verbal and non-verbal communication strategies were selected. Since multiple strategies can be displayed in one extract, the focus is on one specific strategy in each extract. However other strategies will need to be considered, as they are part of the context that is crucial for the interpretation of the specific strategy concerned.

The presentation of analysis and interpretation is carried out as follows. The extracts chosen for each strategy are taken from different meetings and deemed to represent similar cases. Then, an extract is put in context, describing the type of meeting, the participants involved, and the topic as describe in section 3.4.3.4 with reference to the specific appendix of meeting. For the analysis and interpretation of each extract, the transcript details may vary depending on the investigated strategy that is marked with an arrow. For instance, an extract that describes a specific verbal communication strategy can also include selected non-verbal codes that facilitate the analysis and interpretation. In other words, the investigated strategy in an extract does not include the full transcripts as it is with all non-verbal codes. This is to make it easier for the reader to focus on one strategy in each extract and to follow the interpretations since a fully detailed transcript might be confusing. Moreover, some parts of extracts that are not relevant could be omitted. The omitted turns in the extract are then indicated with square brackets […] the omitted part of the turn with round brackets (…). The following extract (0) is illustrated as a sample to show how the findings of analysis and interpretation are presented. In this sample extract the focus is on e.g. the repeating strategy.

Sample Extract (0) 'Repeating Strategy'

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 17 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F2 is reporting to CW about her tasks

1 CW: You saw the email right ((Nodding))?
2 F2: But did they mention about being the last year for membership?
3 CW: Yeah they want to (   )
4 F2: resign
5 CW: (a)→they want to to resign.
6 F2: But did they want to settle the fee as well?
7 CW: ((Nodding)) Yep.
8 F2: Ok.
(0.9)
[…]
9 CW: I've sent you the email=
10 F2 ((Nodding)) yeah
11 CW: = ((Nodding)) to sent out the
12 F2: the letter
13 CW: (b)→the letter
14 F2: Get boss to sign=
15 CW: ((Nodding))
16 F2: in the afternoon and=
17 CW: ((Nodding))
[…]

As illustrated in this sample extract (0) several strategies are used here: In line 1 the indirect questioning strategy, in line 2 and 6, the direct questioning strategy, in line 5 the repeating strategy (a) as well as in line 13 (b) after the omitted part of talk […]. Both repeats are marked with an arrow. For the nonverbal strategy only the 'nodding' is considered here, although eye contact and gaze were transcribed as well. For instance, the head movement 'nodding' used in line 1, 7, 10 and 11, 15 and 17 have all different meanings. However, since the repeating strategy is the focus of analysis in the extract the nodding in prior and following turns would be important for the interpretation.

As illustrated here the employment of different strategies are complex and intertwined and dynamic in diverse contexts. At the same time taking nonverbal strategies into account when focusing on specific verbal communication strategies is crucial for the analysis, since they provide the context for interpretation. And vice versa the analysis of nonverbal strategies needs to be explained also based on verbal communication.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design and the research setting as well as the research procedures adopted for this study. Based on three sets of data, it informed in detail on the methods for data collection and the procedures, pertaining details on transcription and anonymization of various data sources, as well as the procedures for preparing and presenting the various data for analysis and interpretation. This chapter also outlined the overall research strategy and justified the choice of using different data sets to generate the findings of analyses. The following three analysis chapters (Chapter 4, 5, 6) comprise the findings of analysis emerged from the data.

CHAPTER 4: VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN BELF

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the common verbal communication strategies (VCS) that contribute to successful and effective communication in English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF). When analyzing BELF communication, the notion of communicative success, the use of BELF and BELF speakers in their own right are to be taken into account. Considering the resources that BELF speakers have and the norms of communication and practices that develop in a specific Community of Practice (CofP), various communication strategies can be employed by the speakers to achieve successful and effective communication. Moreover, the analysis helps to shed light on their communicative and professional competence. To understand better the highly complex communication process and whether a communication is successful, a link needs to be established between the communication practices and strategies, the internal context within the institutional setting at the micro level and the macro level, the BELF culture with its members of the international business community, and the global business culture from the individual perspective in each specific intercultural business situation. This way a connection can be drawn between what participants say they do to manage and achieve successful communication and what they actually do and how they interact during meetings using BELF.

Communicative success viz. the achievement of goals of a particular communicative event can be enabled through the use of various communication strategies where meanings are created, negotiated and managed considering the context that contribute to such success. Success is bound to communicative and professional competence as part of intercultural business communication competence. Various VCS are used to negotiate meaning in BELF and to understand each other's talk-in-interaction. The

Conversation Analysis (CA) of the present BELF meeting data shows four regularly occurring common VCS. These common VCS that have been identified in these meetings are labeled as questioning, repeating, reformulating, and explaining strategies. These VCS are salient communication strategies that could be revealed in the turn-by-turn unfolding of meeting interactions within the situated context. However, what could not be revealed is the wider context of interactions that could only be uncovered through the interviews with the meeting participants. Since CA can only consider the external context that is shown in the institutional conduct itself as discussed in chapter 2.5.1, the interviewees' responses displaying the wider context are also taken into account and in some cases where required illustrated and linked to the actual interactions to support the meeting data helping further interpretation.

The remaining subchapters and sections of this chapter explore all four salient VCS and how they are employed in the same order as mentioned above. These VCS identified for analysis will be explored in each subchapter separately. First the definition, the type and function of the VCS are clarified before focusing on the details and results of analysis, explaining how they were being employed based on extracts from several meetings. The next subchapter begins with the most employed common verbal strategy.

4.2 Questioning Strategy

Questioning is a regularly used communication strategy to achieve successful and effective communication in the meetings. This questioning strategy is mainly employed due to the nature and type of meeting interactions, the people involved, and the participants' roles they are assigned and authorized to perform. In a formal meeting as in this present study, communication usually takes place between the superior and the subordinate, e.g. the chairperson who is usually the superior belonging to the upper or middle management, such as the head of departments and other meeting participants as members of that department. As discussed in the methodology section (see 3.4.3.1), it is the chairperson's task to check on the projects and their progress, especially in formal meetings that are mainly backward-oriented where participants report on their projects in a 'round-the-table procedure' that means one by one in a specific order determined by the chair. Therefore, asking for information and clarifying are the most common practices, which involve different communication strategies. One of the most common strategies used by Germans as well as Malaysians is the questioning strategy. This is also evident in the interviews as one of the Malaysian interviewees and meeting participant puts it: "I will keep on asking until I understood" (B_OX_M, p. 8). However, the way of using the questioning strategy of seeking and clarifying of information might be different or have been modified to adapt to the other ways of doing things considering the framework of CofP. Before showing how the meeting participants employ the questioning strategy, the term 'questioning' shall be clarified first in the next section.

4.2.1 'Questioning' Defined

The term 'questioning' is derived from the grammatical form of a 'question' that Heritage (2002) defines as "a form of social action, designed to seek information and accomplished in a turn at talk by means of interrogative syntax" (p. 1427). The performed action is what he calls 'questioning' for the purpose of seeking information. However, the grammatical form of questioning does not always match with the function of seeking information as a social action. He states that questioning can be performed by declaratives with rising intonation instead of interrogative sentences. Thus questioning is not always performed by means of interrogative sentences and on the other hand interrogatives could accomplish something different than questioning in the sense of information seeking, e.g. one type of ‘negative interrogative’ could be understood as asserting a point of view, such as in interviews urging the interviewee to ‘take a position’ and expecting the response to be an agreement or disagreement (see Heritage, 2002). Hence, the design of questions and the actions they perform has to be looked at in the context. Koshik (2002) states that a type of yes/no question, e.g. affirmative questions conveying reversed polarity assertions display the ‘epistemic stance’ of the speaker and act more as an assertion than a question. Similar to the types of questions stated above (see Heritage, 2002; Koshik, 2002) that refer to native speaker interactions in institutional context, this study also shows actions performed by question design or questioning that do not necessarily correspond to the original function of seeking information. Thus the terminology of ‘questioning’ (Heritage, 2002) as used in this present study refers to all types of question forms, e.g. interrogatives and declaratives with rising intonation through which various actions and functions can be performed.

4.2.2 Types and Functions of Questioning

Questions in general can perform different actions and may function as seeking for missing or new information to understand prior turn or seek for clarity and confirmation of aforementioned talk. To accomplish the goal of seeking, clarifying and confirmation of information different types of questions can be used. The basic type of question as a form of social action is designed to seek information and is usually performed by an interrogative syntax, e.g. ‘Do you have time?’ and ‘What time is it?’ (Heritage 2002, p. 1428). These questions are also called yes/no questions and wh-questions in grammatical terms where form meets the function. Since these types of questions directly match with the standard function of seeking information, the term ‘direct questioning' (DQ) will be used in this study to refer to these types of questions. Other types of questions, such as 'declaratives with rising intonation' or its truncated versions, which do not correspond to the grammatical form of interrogatives as discussed in the section earlier will be termed as 'indirect questioning' (IDQ). While DQ is mainly designed to seek for missing or partly missing information, IDQ also perform additional actions other then just information seeking, such as clarifying and confirming of messages.

The questioning strategy as used in this study could be compared with Munter's (2009) communication strategy model and the 'message strategy', that signifies the direct versus indirect approach of emphasizing and organizing a message, in this case the way a question is designed or organized. In fact, considering the wider context of the meeting data, the directness and indirectness was noted to be a recurrent theme in the interview data. The majority of the Malaysian interviewees held the perception that Germans were very direct or straightforward unlike how they perceive themselves to be, the opposite. They depict themselves as "can't get to a point directly" (A_OX_M, p. 5) or to be "around the bush before we get to the point" (D_OX_M, p.1). Nonetheless, some Malaysian participants mentioned they prefer and appreciate the directness of their German colleagues, e.g. "no means no, that's it (…) the good part is that you know they will be honest, up front and direct" (D_OX_M, p. 1). As another participant points out, "you can always say directly what you want and expect to have it delivered to you on time" (A_OX_M, p. 2), unlike with Asians relating to Malaysians: "you need to ehm how do you say ehm being really nice to get the information" (A_OX_M, p. 2). On the other hand, some Germans state that they try not to be so direct or straightforward and as one puts it, "be more aware of what you say" (C_OX_G, p.5). Thus, in this working environment Malaysians and Germans alike seem to be aware of differences that are also reflected in the way language is used (see also Chapter 6).

In the light of this background, the analysis of the use of the questioning strategy illustrates that IDQ dominates as the preferred communication strategy by all participants in the meetings. The analysis will also present data revealing the use of the direct questioning strategy employed more often by the German chairman, compared to his counterparts, especially one of the two Malaysian chairwomen. This contrast between the German and Malaysian chairperson is also partly reflected in the interviews by the same participants.

In the following sections, the main distinction is been made between the indirect and direct questioning strategy and also categorized as such. This classification into two main categories was primarily done based on formal criteria as described earlier. The specific functions that could be attributed to each of these main categories will be outlined case by case in the course of analysis. In particular, the analysis of meeting data will address how the meeting participants employ these different strategies of questioning to achieve successful and effective communication since the function of questioning is in general to seek information to facilitate shared understanding in the BELF meetings.

4.2.3 Indirect Questioning Strategy

Questioning is a prevalent strategy in the context of formal meetings in this study, especially the indirect questioning strategy appears to be the preferred action. However, only those cases of indirect questioning that display a negotiation of understanding of prior utterances are significant for this analysis. Since question and answer is an adjacency pair that is designed to occur immediately together in two turns one after the other as a basic sequence structure, it is the deviant cases that are of special interest, e.g. when a question is not followed immediately by an answer or when this basic sequence is expanded as in insert- or post-expansions (see 2.5.2.1). The analysis is done by close and detailed examination of each case taking different extracts of various meetings with different participants. Given the multiple functions that questioning can have in institutional context, each case needs to be analyzed carefully also taking the distinction between 'understanding the talk' and 'understanding the event or conduct' described by the talk into consideration (see Schegloff, Koshik, & Olsher, 2002). The latter could also be described as referring to the content of the message. Of particular interest is the function of questioning that facilitates shared understanding in intercultural business communication through BELF.

The usual form of an IDQ found in this meeting data is a declarative sentence or main clause and parts of a main clause with rising intonation. Extract (1) illustrates a case where a request using IDQ is followed by a second IDQ. After a short answer, an expanded sequence follows with a repeat of the problematic item and additional explanation and reformulation by the speaker. Strategies other than the questioning strategies, such as other verbal or non-verbal strategies that are employed in the extracts will be separately dealt with in the respective sections or subchapters but are still mentioned and needed for the interpretation of the particular communication event.

Extract (1) IDQ: Declarative sentence with rising intonation

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 1 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F1=acting CW until CM joins the meeting and M1 (HOD) at the beginning of the meeting

[Participants of meeting are engaged in intelligible and/or inaudible conversation. The meeting has not started yet. F1 starts the meeting.]

1 F1: (a) → So [NofP-M1], you want to start first?

2 M1: … [x_____''
(b) →We [go ahead?
3 F1: Yeah, he said ok we go ahead yeah

4 M1: Ahm (seems to clear his throat)
5 F1: He said 5 minutes, then I said shall we start first he said yeah you go ahead.
6 M1: Ok (2.0) ahm:m yeah. I hand you over, [NofP-F2] I hand you over that list later on yeah.
7 F2: Yeah ((Nodding))
8 M1: Ahm
9 F2: I ((RH)) haven't done last week by the way [((Laughter))
10 M1: [Nobody recognized ((laughter)) so ah::m (4.0) ah: ( ) [Mr. NofP] doesn't want to=deal (…)

In this extract, it can be seen in line 1 that F1 starts the meeting with a request addressed to M1 to be the first to report. This request is made in the form of an IDQ (a), a declarative in rising intonation '(…) you want to start first?'. M1 directs his gaze at F1 and pays attention to what F1 has to say when he heard his own name being mentioned. Instead of accepting and starting as he was asked to do, he replies with another IDQ (b) 'We go ahead?' in line 2, indicating that the chairman (CM) has not arrived yet therefore probably wondering why the meeting needs to start. F1's answer in line 3 shows that she has understood M1's concern. Therefore, she assures him with 'yeah' that CM 'said ok' and then repeats M1's utterance "we go ahead yeah". M1 'ahm' in line 4 suggests a kind of hesitation, yet the attempt of clearing his throat also implies that he is about to start. F1 picks up this hesitation for a longer turn as seen in line 5 by explaining and reformulating what CM told her. Then in line 6, M1 accepts with 'ok' via a 2.0-second pause. This is followed by another 'ahm:m' suggesting that he is perhaps taking his time on purpose and expecting CM to arrive soon. M1 offers to give his 'list' to F2 who is most probably taking the minutes as seen later in the unfolding meeting talk. Only in line 10, after a joint laughter concerning a task that F2 did not do last week that M1 made a comment 'nobody recognized' (noticed), M1 actually starts his report again after another hesitation 'ahm' and delay of 4.0-seconds, followed by [NofP] that actually marks the start of the actual meeting, which was originally requested in line 1.

M1's failure to act on F1's initial question and request, instead his questioning strategy in line 2 could be a strategy to confirm the receipt and his 'understanding' of F1's request. However, M1's hesitation and F1's repeating and explaining in subsequent turns might indicate M1's attempt to the content of request, that could be interpreted as 'why should be we start now, the chair has not arrived yet'. In a way, M1 is hinting to the kind of 'acceptability problem' (Svenning, 2008) rather than simply a hearing or understanding problem (see chapter 2.5.3). F1's subsequent turns and actions could be an attempt to resolve this kind of problem M1 hinted to by repeating, explaining, reformulating and confirming the accuracy and validity of the information given to her, namely for her to commence the meeting before the CM arrives.

In general, IDQ require prior information that can be seen when analyzing case by case each communicative event and its context. In cases where IDQ reuses known information with rising intonation, it is usually employed to confirm 'understanding' of prior turns and for already known information thus accessing a shared knowledge. When taking up the aforementioned message in the IDQ, it is possible that at the same time the speaker is trying to ensure that the information does not get lost and is clarified in the way it is presented. The following extract (2) provides three other instances of IDQ in form of a full main clause with rising intonation. In this extract, it appears that the function of using the IDQ is more for the purpose of clarifying and/or confirming the content of information given.

Extract (2): IDQ: Declarative sentence with rising intonation

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 26/27 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: CW and M2 in conversation about the 'cooling period', which is a requirement set for foreign workforce by the Malaysian Immigration that visa holders changing employer have to exit and reenter Malaysia after 3-6 months of cooling-off period.

1 M2: (...) you can’t go from one company to the other because there’s a cooling period so
2 CW: (a) → You can’t go?
3 M2: <u>Right</u>, now we’re looking for=<u>Yes</u> ((Nodding)) you can’t go.
4 CW: When is the cooling period=cause the other day I met [NofC] (…)

[Long stretch of talk is omitted here. (1-2 minutes) End of omitted talk:
CW: So in ((LH directed toward M2)) this case, it will be the same right?
M2: Yes the (same) ((Nodding))]

5 CW: (b) →He has another something like that there must be a cooling period?
6 M2: <u>Yes</u> ((Nodding)). Between three months and six months
7 CW: This between.
8 M2: So we trying to ahm:m trying to (   ) establish a branch office which could
be legal solution
9 CW: ((nodding))
10 M2: Or they have to take other persons work for the different companies but
there’s not other solution to this case so=
11 CW: =But cooling period
12 M2: We are working on right now.
13 CW: (c) →Ok. Cooling period is between 3-6 months?
14 M2: <u>Yes</u> ((Nodding)). Actually like in general it’s around 6 months but in certain cases if it’s really urgent then you can apply for 3 months= (…)
15: CW: ((Nodding))

In the talk preceding this extract, M2 is reporting to CW about his project and task of advising a company with regards to professional visit passes for employing foreigners and the cooling period if you want to change employers or work for more then one company at the same time. In line 2, CW takes up what M2 says in line 1, that a foreigner working for one company cannot change a company without having a cooling period in between. Her first IDQ (a), ‘You can’t go?’ implies that this is not what she assumed to be the case and expects clarification. Further, her direct question in line 4 ‘when is the cooling period’ in her next turn, shows that she needs more information to understand the message or information given to her by M2. In the long stretch of talk (1-2 minutes), which is omitted in the extract and only the last two turns indicated in square brackets, CW presents her understanding in describing two cases of two different companies and what she thinks could be a similar case to the company which M2 is currently dealing with. In line 5, CW in her second IDQ (b) ‘(…) there must be a cooling period?' seems to have understood the procedure of 'cooling period' before changing to another company and thus the content of the M2 initial message in line 1. Her understanding is confirmed by M2 in line 6. The IDQ (b) in this case succeeds after a long negotiation of meaning where CW tries to compare to similar cases in two different companies and thus referring to the shared knowledge that has been established during this negotiation. CW now has received new information that is part of their shared knowledge, which can be evidenced in line 11, where she ends and completes M2's turn (see line 10). Similar to the second IDQ, the third IDQ (c) in line 13 is a request for confirmation of the aforementioned information about the length of the cooling period of 3-6 months in line 6 by M2, which is introduced by the particle 'ok' as a signal of understanding of the aforesaid in the previous turns.

While the first IDQ (a) in this extract could be interpreted as a request to know more about this procedure, which seems to be new information that needed to be clarified by the recipient (CW), the second and third IDQ (b and c) could be a request to confirm understanding of prior turns and aforementioned information. All three IDQ in this extract could be an attempt to try to clarify understanding referring to the content of the message by accessing or establishing shared knowledge.

Instead of full declarative sentences with rising intonation as shown in the earlier two extracts, IDQ could also consist of parts of main clause or even just single words with rising intonation as shown in the next extracts (3) and (4).

Extract (3): IDQ: Single word/s with rising intonation

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 37 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F4 is reporting to CW about a company's event and their request to her.

1 CW: We can do the emails for them ((Nodding)).
2 F4: (a) →Today?

3 CW: Yeah ((Nodding))
4 F4: Because today ( ) because 29 is next Tuesday
5 CW: Ahm: ((Nodding))
6 F4: So we have to send.
7 CW: Yeah ((Nodding)). Send out the emails.
        …[x______________
8 F4: Do [you have any to [send? To [NofC]
                              ...[x______
9 F2:   Hmmm
10 F4: (b) →Mass mailing?
11 F2: No
12 F4: [Inaudible] has to send [inaudible] (2.0) So::: that's it (0.9) Yeah all others
        really need details

In the talk preceding this extract, F4 reports to CW about a company's event on a specific date namely on 29 of the current month that could be a client of hers and their request to the organization to participate at the event and to help them send out emails for that company. CW in line 1 agrees to the request made by the company F4 is dealing with. In line 2, F4 employs an IDQ, which consists of one word 'today?' that could stand for a proposal in the sense of 'shall we do it today?' or as a pre-assumed expected date by the CW meaning 'do you want me to do it today?' CW's answer in line 3 that confirms F4's IDQ however might not be what F4 expected as a response from CW. Since in line 4, F4 is trying to explain or understand 'why today' with 'because today (…) because 29 is next Tuesday'. This could imply that this could be done some other time. Later in line 6, F4 states 'so we have to send' confirming CW's decision in line 1, the personal pronoun 'we' could also relate to a collective decision that is accepted by F4 at the same time also referring to a shared responsibility.

After having confirmed the day, F4 then turns to F2 and asks whether she has to send emails to another company and specifies in her following turn in line 10 the kind of email 'mass mailing?' as a request using IDQ (b), perhaps implying whether F2 could help her to send out her emails as mass mailing as well. Since F2 answer is negative, F4 finishes her report after a 2.0-second pause with 'so that's it' and the conclusion that 'all others really need details' thus accepting that F4 herself has to do the 'mass mailing'.

The use of the first short IDQ (a) ‘Today?’ in this extract seems to be problematic as can be seen in the sequences of turns that follow. CW has to confirm three times before ordering F4 to send out the mails in line 7. This could suggest that F4 was expecting a different response from CW, either different time or perhaps help in sending out emails or even not accept the proposal from the company. A possible alternative could have been to simply accept CW’s decision. However, instead of accepting with ‘ok’ F4 is trying to explain with ‘because’ since perhaps a different response was expected by F4, which is displayed in line 4. The second IDQ (b) in line 9 ‘mass mailing?’ could be an effective way to use a short IDQ instead of repeating the full yes/no question posed in line 8 with adding ‘mass mailing’. At the same time, F4’s IDQ (b) provides a good example for an indirect approach of her request.

Similar to the truncated version of yes/no question in extract (3) in the case of the IDQ (b) ‘mass mailing?’ and instead of using the alternative answer yes or no, the recipient could also respond differently as shown in extract (4), namely with a tacit agreement or disagreement.

IDQ: Extract (4): IDQ: Single word/s with rising intonation

Inter-Department Meeting IDE 071209, p. 24 (Appendix B.2) Topic: M4 reporting to CW about a legal case, a Malaysian company owing money to a German company, M1 (HOD) steps in

1 CW: But they have the original contract to say every time you sell something=
2 M1: =Somewhere, somehow (…) So it’s not so easy. ((Laughter))
3 CW: ((Nodding)) (4.0) ((RH directed towards M4)) →Finished?
4 M4: Hmmm then there are two requests for the residence and working permit
in Germany and contacted the immigration authority and asked for documents that are required ((BH)). That’s it (2.0)

In the preceding talk of extract (4), M1 who is the head of the legal department has stepped in to give more background information about the case of a Malaysian company owing a German company that M4 was reporting about. CW, in line 3, now acknowledged the information given by nodding followed by a 4.0-second pause, which could signal the closure of the topic discussed. She then directs her right hand towards M4 with an IDQ whether he has ‘finished?’ his report. Instead of using a yes/no question, e.g. ‘Are you finished with your report?’ and adding the name, the non-verbal strategy of directing hand or pointing to the person and a single word with rising intonation is sufficient to convey the message effectively. M4’s turn in line 4 actually shows that he is not finished and he continues with his report, without responding with ‘no’ first before continuing with his report, which in this case is redundant as well and could also be interpreted as an effective way to convey the message successfully. He finishes his turn with ‘that’s it’, signaling that he now has finished.

As seen from the last two extracts (3) and (4) where IDQ in form of single words with rising intonation is used, some single word IDQ might need more negotiation and clarification to convey the message as in the example, ‘today?’, in extract (3a), whereas the example, ‘mass mailing?’, in extract (3b) and ‘finished?’ in extract (4) shows that a full question in these cases is redundant, the latter also considering the context of prior turns and the nonverbal pointing gesture to the recipient. Thus, depending on the context given by the prior turn/s employing a short IDQ might represent an effective way of successful communication.

Apart from IDQ that are designed as declarative full sentences and part of sentences or minimum constituents of single words with rising intonation, the data has shown that most of the instances of IDQ is used with initial ‘oh’, ‘so’ or ‘ok’ and with ‘right’ in final position, each analyzed separately in the following sections.

4.2.3.1 Indirect Questioning with 'oh' in Initial Position

The token 'oh', also called the 'change-of-state' token (Heritage, 1984) functions as a signal that new information was received and "that the recipient as a result of this has moved from the state of not knowing to a state of knowing" (as cited in Liddicoat, 2007, p. 152). Usually the token 'oh' as stated by Liddicoat (2007) occurs as a minimal post-expansion, following the completion of especially a question-answer adjacency pair, by registering and acknowledging the information that have been received in the question-answer.

In this data 'oh' is also used in initial position of IDQ as part of the question itself as shown in the next extracts. The following extract (5), 'oh'-IDQ signals the receipt of new information with the token 'oh' and serves as a confirmation request of the newly received information.

Extract (5) IDQ with initial position 'oh'

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 15 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F1=acting CW until CM joins the meeting. F3 is reporting to F1 about her translation project.

1 M1: (   ) It's ((RH)) your turn.
2 F3: So I finished the translations and now the [NofO] there's a new list of
    translators, some good translators.
3 F1: →Oh ((RH)) they already introduced? ((Nodding))
4 F3: Yeah ((Nodding))
5 M1: Yeah. ((Nodding))

In prior turns to this extract, M1, (HOD) had finished his report and it was F3's turn. F3 started her report with her task concerning translations but a specific topic initiated M1 to step in to give further information and explanation. After a long stretch of talk between M1 and F1, M1 (line 1) reminds F3 that it is still her turn to continue with her report. In line 2, F3 starts with 'so', which usually marks a shift in topic 'away from the correction talk to the prior telling' (Liddicoat, 2007). In this case, she is connecting to prior telling and resuming what she has said before and continues her report by informing about a new translator's list. F1, in line 3, begins her IDQ with 'oh' signaling the information given as new to her and seeking for confirmation of the new information she received. Her IDQ 'they already introduced?' displays her understanding of new information and her additional nodding enhances the understanding, which makes a confirmation in the next turn indispensible. Thus, she is not confirming her understanding, rather asking for confirmation of the new information that she has just received. F3 in her turn in line 4 is confirming with 'yeah' and nodding, followed by M1's turn of confirmation, which might be additionally validating F3's information here and confirming F1's understanding at the same time.

In the next extract (6), an IDQ with 'oh' in initial position is used to show a request for confirmation of 'new understanding' rather than for 'new information' as discussed in the extract (5).

Extract (6) IDQ with initial position 'oh'

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 28 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F3 (Assistant to CW) is reporting about her tasks, updating online and print publications and sending to clients.

1 F2: You actually ((looking at F3)) print for them?
2 CW: (   ) ((Nodding))
3 F3: Yeah
4 CW: Yeah
5 F2: Oh:: Ok I thought
6 F3: No these are the ones ((pointing down to the table))
7 CW: →Oh for (U-Mailing)?=
8 F2:   [Aha
9 CW: [=(U-Mailing) we send them the list.
10 F2: Oh ok.
11 F3: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
12 F2: Aha. This one ((LH pointing at the documents on the table in front of F3)) this one, you are talking about the one that went to U-Mailing.

In prior turns, F3 is reporting about some problems that she encountered, when some packages that she sent to clients didn't get delivered and returned. F3, CW and F2 are discussing what might have gone wrong. There seems to be a discrepancy between the list in the database and the list that was send to 'U-Mailing' and that 'U-Mailing' actually used to send out the packages. In line 1, F2 is enquiring about the printed list and whether they print for them, most probably referring to 'U-Mailing' with 'them', which is first confirmed by both F3 and CW in their following turns. F2's turn in line 5 however 'oh ok I thought' displays that she has understood differently in the prior talk. The next turn by F3 in line 6 'no these are the ones' however locates the problem that perhaps was a reference problem directed to different lists. CW in her turn in line 7 uses an IDQ and then in line 9 expresses her new understanding with 'oh for U-Mailing?'- 'U-Mailing we send them the list' implying 'we send we don't print'. This could be a request for confirmation of 'new understanding' and could be interpreted as 'you thought we print the list for U-Mailing'. Although F2 verbally acknowledges the receipt of new understanding in line 10 'oh ok', the nonverbal strategy of pointing at a file on the table brings in more clarity and eventually solves the problem of reference. The source of problem seems to be the lack of clear reference made by F2 with "them" in line 1, perhaps assuming it is understood that she is referring to U-Mailing. However, her second turn in line 5 where she reveals that she thought differently, 'oh ok I thought', locates the problem and is taken up by CW correcting and displaying the new understanding. The question that arises here is whether direct questions would have made the investigation of understanding the event 'what went wrong' more effective. However, direct questions might have run the risk to accuse somebody of some wrongdoing or would have been too direct thus perhaps impolite or would have been a face threatening act.

As seen in extract (6) 'oh-IDQ' can be used for requesting confirmation of 'new understanding' however usually it is used to request confirmation of 'new information' that is answered typically in the affirmative.

4.2.3.2 Indirect Questioning with 'so' in Initial Position

IDQ is commonly employed in this meeting talk with the token 'so' in initial position serving as a request of the understanding of prior turns in the form of concluding comment or as a recapitulating statement (as a result of prior talk). The extract below shows two examples of IDQ with so in initial position.

Extract (7) IDQ with initial position 'so'

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 2 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 is reporting about the new implemented job market on their website.

[Preceding talk:
F4: ……....[x______________________,,,,……………[x______
This job[market is for the ((LH)) trainees (0.6) from [abroad or:
CW: __________________
No:: ((head movement))
F1: Companies
F4: Companies
F1: (0.6) looking for staff
F4: =to: recruit ((LH)) candidates ((Nodding)) haah
F1: (   )**]**

1 F2: →So all the people who approach us for job positions we put them?
2 CW: They ((nodding)) can look at the website ((nodding))
3 F2: We put this people in the website?
4 CW: ((Head movement)) No, no only organizations who are actually looking for candidates who are looking for employees
5 F2: Okay::

In the talk preceding this extract (see 'preceding talk' in square brackets), F1 and CW, in response to F4's question whether the job market is for trainees, had clarified that the job market is for companies looking for staff. And right after, in line 1, F2 enquires whether as a result of that prior talk this means that they have to put 'them' referring to “all the people who approaches us for jobs” on the website. However, CW does not give a negative response instead she takes up the reference done to all the people with ‘they’ and gives an alternative perspective that “they can look in the website”. CW failing to give a clear answer, F2 asks again (line 2) with an IDQ still referring to the same people she mentioned in her previous turn. This time CW negates and clarifies whom to put on the website. This time the message is understood and accepted with “okay” by F2 in line 5. Since usually a negative response is a non-preferred action, CW might have tried to resolve it differently and but could not delay further since the information had to be clarified.

The next extract from the same meeting shows a different use of IDQ with initial ‘so’, which usually stands for a shift in topic (see Liddicoat, 2007). Here, ‘so’ might be a way to request topic shift and indicate a closure of previous sequence.

Extract (8) IDQ with initial position ‘so’

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 9 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 is reporting about the new additions to the website and launching of new website design.

1 CW: Yeah we can think that (0.9) okay (0.9) →So that’s for the website? ((looking at F1))
2 F1: (Aha) and for the layout we need to provide them pictures (0.9) and but then I think that we can discuss later=
3 CW: ((Nodding))
4 F1: =send them a small quote of what kind of pictures we want to provide (…)

This extract illustrates that in line 1 the chair (CW) wants to move on with the meeting and away from the current topic and prior discussion ((with F4)) about the website, shifting the focus with ‘okay’ and a small pause from the previous talk to the IDQ with ‘so’ proposing a closure of previous sequence and the topic ‘website’ in line 1. In line 2, F1 confirms with ‘aha’ but adds and shares another information concerning the pictures for the website. The short pause of 0.9-second during her turn in line 2 might indicate that she is aware of the need to move forward and that her turn might take longer. Therefore, she changes her mind with ‘but then’ and suggests that this topic could be discussed later, which is acknowledged by CW through nodding.

The particle ‘so’ as seen in the example above (see extract 8) with preceding ‘okay’, could be compared to the combination of ‘alright’ with ‘so’ the way it is employed, namely as a shift in activity and topic to re-establish the telling away from the previous talk (Liddicoat, 2007). Here in this data specifically ‘so’ often stands alone as in the previous examples in extract (7) where ‘so’ serves to signal the result or summary of understanding the prior turns or sequence and to request confirmation of that understanding in the form of question and to end the sequence.

4.2.3.3 Indirect Questioning with ‘ok’ in Initial Position

The token ‘ok/okay’ can stand in various different positions and is employed to e.g. register “acceptance of the stance taken by a responsive action” (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 155). In this data, ‘ok’ usually stands alone and is categorized as the so called ‘free-standing’ ok (see Beach 1995; Barske, 2009) and serves as back-channeling or feedback item, assessing or evaluating some aspects of previous turn. In some cases, it is observed in initial position of indirect questions often combined with ‘so’ as the following examples (Extract 9, 10) show.

Extract (9) IDQ with initial position ‘ok’

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 30 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F1 (HOD) takes the floor and self-selects as next speaker

[Prior talk:
M3: Ok for passes I’m working for three employment pass of [NofC] and working
for two professional pass for [NofC] and for [NofC] I’m working for one professional

…………...[x_______________,,,
pass and three social visit pass (2.0) [Another ((RH)) then ( ).
CM: _________,,,
((Nodding))]

(4.0)
1 F1: →Ok, so we go for marketing?
2 CM: ah:m ((Nodding)) ah:m
3 F1: Yeah. I report first.
4 CM: ((Nodding))

In prior turns (see prior talk in square brackets) one participant from the legal division (M3) just finished the report followed by CM's nodding. After a 4.0-second pause, F1 in line 1 takes the floor starting responding to the action with 'ok' to propose a closure for the prior sequence. She then continues with 'so' perhaps to mark a shift in topic and suggests continuing with the marketing division. CM acknowledges by 'nodding' and 'ahm', which gives her the green light to continue as next speaker. She then (line 3) proposes to report first. Although the chairperson usually selects the next speaker, F1 as a HOD of the marketing seems to have the authority to self select her turn.

Extract (10) IDQ with initial position 'ok'

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 7 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: F1 reporting to CW. F1 almost finished her report, mentioning what her next task will be.

1 F1: Monday yeah but that will be too late, that's what Mr. [X-NofP] say. So I have to get Mr. [Y-NofP] to get to ask (1.0) to follow up with the German side to make a payment.
2: CW: (a) →Ok so Mr. [Y-NofP] is to follow up with the German side to make a payment?
3 F1: Yeah
(3.0)
4 CW: (b) →Okay (2.0) So no more things then?
5 F1: That's all.

In line 1, F1 reports on her duty and her next task. CW, in line 2, accepts with 'ok' and presents her understanding in summing up what F1 said to be her next task in the form of a request for confirmation as IDQ (a). F1 in line 3 confirms CW's understanding. After a short 3.0 second pause, CW in line 4 poses another indirect question (b). She begins her IDQ (b) with accepting the previous turns with 'okay' followed by a 2.0-second pause, to perhaps re-confirm that this was not only a topic shift and the closure of a previous sequence but also the end of F1's report that was also signaled with a 3.0-second pause before CW's turn. To move on with the meeting, she then continues with her IDQ (b) puts it explicitly as 'so no more things then?' that is confirmed by F1 in line 5 with 'that's all'.

The above examples showing the composite 'okay and 'so' illustrate both interpretations responding to the performed action and the preceding talk through introducing a shift in topic and closure of preceding sequence. While 'ok' accepts and responds to preceding action, 'so' can be associated with the preceding sequence and marks the ending of such sequence under post-expansion, both providing a resource for understanding preceding sequence and as an IDQ used to for conformation of understanding that is followed by a confirmation.

4.2.3.4 Indirect Questioning with 'right' in Final Position

A very common use of questioning strategy in the form of an indirect question is with 'right' in the final position, functioning as seeking confirmation and expecting an affirmative answer as illustrated in the extract below.

Extract (11) IDQ with final position 'right'

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 8 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: It is F1's turn and she is reporting about the new website and blog. All participants are involved in this discussion about the blog. They have decided that members could send them information to be put on the blog.

1 F3: (a) →I think we are going to let them know in the quarterly, right?
2 CW: Ahm:: ((Nodding))

[…]
3 F3: And then if they have any updates they can just email me or [NofP-CW]
4 CW: There will be a lot I'm sure there will be quite a lot because you can see already from the quarterly itself (b)→we have really good response normally right?
5 F2: ((Nodding))
6 CW: So yeah. And then of course from there it's linked to the website=
7 F4: Yeah
8 F1: ((Nodding))
9 CW: =so you know try to see work hand in hand there and (c) →then we'll try to get the web banners onto the website again as an advertising portal right? Maybe that's how we should do it, I don't know. ((Pointing at F1)) (1.0) Right?
10 F1: Yeah ((Nod))

In the case above, the first use of IDQ (a) with 'right', in line 1 by F3, illustrates that F3 is trying to draw on shared knowledge. After having discussed in the preceding turns of this extract that members could send the updates for them to be published in the blog, they now talk about how to announce this news to the members. F3 assumes that it will be done in the quarterly, which is the usual platform to inform members. By adding 'right' with a rising intonation, F3 is requesting for confirmation of her assumption drawing on the shared knowledge, which is confirmed by CW. In line 4, CW produces a long turn with a similar IDQ (b) at the end of her turn "we have really good response normally right?" expecting a confirmation of what she assumes is usually the case, namely a good response from the members once it is announced in the quarterly, also drawing on shared knowledge. F2 confirms with nodding in line 5. The third IDQ (c) with 'right' is employed in line 9 by CW again and confirmed by F1 in line 10. In this IDQ (c), CW is proposing what could be done next, requesting confirmation of this proposal. With 'right' at the end, she expects a confirmation. However, she is not insisting and mitigating her proposal, since it is F1's project and ultimately her responsibility for the implementation of the website and blog. Therefore, CW is indicating her view again but asking F1 by pointing at her repeating the particle 'right' at the end of her turn.

As seen above in the examples, IDQ ending with 'right' displays that the speaker is certain about her/his utterance relating it to shared knowledge or understanding in a wider context how they usually do things, which is also signaled by certain word choice in the context of this conversation, e.g. using the pronoun '*we*' or certain words as in "you can see *already* from the quarterly itself" in line 4, "get the web banners onto the website *again* as an advertising portal" in line 9. In these cases, the expected response is a confirmation.

The following extract (12) shows that in some cases, the confirmation is not necessarily produced immediately after the IDQ with 'right' and needs some negotiation before being confirmed.

Extract (12) IDQ with final position 'right'

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 1 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: It is F1's turn and she is reporting about her project that involves some research.

1 CW: ((Nodding)) →You already did the offer right?
2 F1: ah::: (2.0) I haven't sent it ( ) the the offer request is from a:: [NofP]
3 CW: Uh huh ((Nodding)) A::nd?
4 F1: And he asked me to do the ((Nodding)) research.
5 CW: And relate to what the the ( ) (German business people)
6 F1: Yeah ((Nodding))

In line 1, CW is referring to a specific task that F1 was supposed to do, namely sending an offer, therefore employing 'right' at the end of her question and expecting an affirmative answer. F1 response 'I haven't sent it (…)', in line 2, is delayed by 'ah::' a stretched non-lexical item and a 2.0-second pause, which is typical for negative answers or dispreferred second pair parts (see Liddicoat, 2007). Instead of directly saying 'no' she delays her answer and tells CW that she has not yet sent it, but attaching the reason and informing that the offer request is internal by referring to the name of the person. CW in her next minimal turn with 'and?' IDQ (line 3) wants F1 to explain the negative response further, which F1 does in line 4 in starting her turn with ‘and’. CW’s turn in line 5 shows that she has understood F1’s explanation by accessing and referring to the shared knowledge with ‘relate to what the German business people’. F1 confirms CW’s understanding in line 6 with ‘yeah’ and ‘nodding’.

As seen from the examples above, the use of ‘right’ in the final position of IDQ implies a kind of certainty by the speaker and assuming that they share the same level of information, also drawing on their shared knowledge. Thus, an IDQ with right in the final position similar to a yes/no question requires an affirmative answer as response. In the case of a negative answer however a further explanation needs to be provided by ensuring or re-establishing shared knowledge and understanding which can yield the expected outcome but with some delay.

Particles like ‘right’ used in final position of IDQ as illustrated above, or the particles of ‘oh’, ‘so’, ‘okay’ or the combinations of these in the initial position as discussed in the previous subsections, can also be employed in direct questions with the same functions. However, since direct questioning is less evident in this data, the next section will demonstrate the two distinct types of direct questioning strategy without the use of particles.

4.2.4 Direct Questioning Strategy

The direct questioning strategy is a straightforward action seeking for missing or unknown information that is provided in the answer and not as discussed in previous sections of IDQ integrated in the question itself mainly to seek for confirmation of understanding of given information. In general, DQ is less common in the data compared to IDQ. While IDQ is predominantly used by Malaysian participants DQ is commonly used by Germans. This is mostly evident in the chairpersons' roles of employing questioning strategies where especially the German chairperson of meetings uses more DQ compared to his Malaysian counterparts. The two types of DQ that have been categorized as direct questions with question words, e.g. wh-questions and yes/no direct questions are discussed in the two following subsections.

4.2.4.1 Direct Questioning with Question Words

One way of receiving specific information is to directly target and obtain the missing information with question words, e.g. with wh-questions, which could be done in form of full sentences, part of sentences and abbreviated forms of single words as shown in the following extracts.

Extract (13) DQ with wh-question word

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 9 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: The German chairperson (CM) is chairing the meeting. It is F2's turn reporting about her task to do the promotion for a few upcoming construction fairs.

1 F2: And then ah [Name of Fair] ((Nod)) India [Name of Fair] India in Mumbai
(1.1) February
2 CM: ((Nod)) →When is that? [because I'm] in=
3 F2: [In February]
4 CM: =I'm in [Mumbai] (on the) second time there (0.8) a: third
5 F2: [(eight)]
6 CM: ((turns to F9)) [third ((Nod)) ((turns to F2)) yeah third]
7 F2: ((Laugh)) but you [can visit the fair]
8 CM: No no you go (…)

In this extract, F2 announces the upcoming fairs in Mumbai, India in February (line 1). CM's turn in line 2 and his direct question with 'when' shows that he is asking for the exact date in February as can be seen in the turns that follow his DQ. However, F2's repeat of 'February' in line 3 suggests that she assumed he has not heard it in her initial turn in line 1. However, when CM clarifies in line 4 that he'll be there the second or third she gives the exact date ‘eight’ in line 5 interfering with CM’ simultaneous confirmation of the ‘third’ (line 6) after he had first confirmed with F9 (his personal assistant). The message is however conveyed and understood since both are proposing attending the fair in their following turns (line 7 and 8). Although CM’s turn in line 4 and the use of the word combination ‘second time’ could have been problematic, F2 interpreted correctly from the situated context.

In the case above, the ‘when’-question posed by the German chairman targeted the precise date of the month that was revealed in his following turn when he mentioned the date he will be in Mumbai. The question that was posed by the speaker was first handled as a hearing problem since the recipient had already mentioned February in her first turn. It might also be treated as hearing problem because the answer ‘February’ overlapped with CM’s explanation “because I’m in” (line 2). Perhaps also because the question word ‘when’ is quite general and could in this case refer to both the month and the exact day of the month.

In the next example, two wh-questions in one turn are illustrated as DQ. The turn starts off with a direct question ‘who?’ followed by ‘who owes who’ and the speaker closes the same turn by providing the answer as it was understood from the preceding talk. Thus, the DQ is seeking for specific information and at the same time also for confirmation of given information.

Extract (14) DQ with wh-question word

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 22 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: CW is chairing the meeting. It is M4’s turn and he is reporting about some legal cases, one of them a case between a German and a Malaysian company over an outstanding bill

1 M4: Not organized. She sends over some contracts some bills (   ) put this together kind of puzzle.

2 CW: →Who? Who owes who, the the Malaysian company owes German company?
3 M4: Ahm:m that's what the German company claims
4 CW: Aha

In the preceding talk, M4 reports about a German company who claims that a Malaysian company has some outstanding bills that have not been settled. In line 1, M4 tells CW that the head of the German company is not organized and sends bills and contracts to the legal department to handle the case. Therefore, CW wants to know exactly 'who?' and 'who owes whom' in line 2. However, at the same time she presents her understanding of previous talk and wants it to be confirmed in the same turn since she provides the answer in her own turn. This could be an effective way of a DQ, instead of the recipient having to repeat what was said before. The response that follows in line 3 by M4 is indirectly confirming CW's DQ in line 2 and is labeling as the 'claim made by the German company'.

The examples above demonstrate that DQ with questions words are an effective way to seek for specific information. The data has shown that direct questions with question words are mostly used by the German chair and sometimes by one Malaysian chairwoman who is a long-time employee of the company and therefore perhaps adapted using similar strategies. The other Malaysian chairperson, who recently joined the organization, uses DQ very rarely, as illustrated in the following extract where she only used one DQ in the duration of chairing one whole meeting.

Extract (15) DQ with wh-question word

Department Meeting PR050710, p. 26 (See Appendix B.5) Topic: F2 reports about on a company that wants to end the membership.

1 F2: He said he wanted to discuss with me um:: he is thinking about persuading them to stay as a member so
2 CW: [NofC] → what is their=
3 F2: =Ahh magnetic control systems

The DQ with wh-word in line 2 by CW is used to know more about the ‘member’ company mentioned in line 1 by F2. The prompt and attached answer given by F2 in line 3, is an evidence of knowing and anticipating the ending of the question posed by CW that could be the field or area of expertise of the company in question.

These types of DQ with question words, particularly wh-questions, although rarely used by one of the Malaysian chairs as in the extract (15) above, is common practice by some Malaysian and German participants, but is predominantly used by the German chair. However, the second type of DQ the yes/no question seems to be more employed then the direct questions with question words, also by the Malaysian chairperson, who rarely used DQ with wh-question words.

4.2.4.2 Yes/No Direct Questioning

This type of DQ seeks for additional information to partly known information. The expected answer is usually affirmative. This meeting talk shows negative answers as well. However negative answers are usually followed by explanations as the following extracts illustrate.

Extract (16) Yes/No DQ

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 1 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: F1 is reporting about her tasks and research project given to her by the upper management

1 CW: →Did he say how much he is charging or something like that?
2 F1: No ((negative head movement)). We don’t know yet. It was a (   ) in January
3 M1: (Name of German Federal State)
4 F1: Yeah ((Nodding))
5 F2: Yeah. Ok.
6 CW: Normally he would inform that how much is the cost=
7 F1: Aha ((Nodding))
8 CW: =because now we are starting to (…)

In the preceding talk of this extract, F1 is reporting about her research project. CW in line 1 wants to know how much ‘he’ is charging for this project referring to the boss. The expected answer that would be affirmative and would include the price is not delivered by F1. After establishing who is involved in this project named by M1 in line 3 and confirmed by F1 and F2 in line 4 and 5, CW starts her explanation in line 6 with ‘normally he would’ suggesting a common practice that research projects are invoiced and the costs would be stated and she continues her turn in line 7 giving further background information. Her explanation to her question could be an attempt to reestablish the common practice as shared knowledge that F1 acknowledges with ‘aha’ and nodding.

The next extract is a similar example where direct yes/no questions are followed by negative answers. However, in this case more questions follow to understand the negative answer before an explanation is given.

Extract (17) Yes/No DQ

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 38 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F4 the last participant just finished her report. F2 takes the floor to ask about some task she had to do.

1 F2: I haven’t checked the EU questionnaire. a→Are we sending that one out?
2 CW: No I think it’s too late already. b →Did you check the date, [the deadline?
3 F2: [No I didn’t but I saw you ((RH pointing out with her pen)) put something you print that, the questionnaire?
4 CW: No I took it away, I don’t know who put it there but
5 F2: It wasn’t you ((pointing at CW)) who printed them.
6 CW: No, no I thought it was you
7 F2: Ohh
8 CW: wasn’t you?
9 F2 No:: ((negative head movement))
10 F3: Three stacks right, on the table outside?
11 F2: Yeah ((Nodding))
12 F3: I saw, I saw it.
13 F2: That’s why I kept quiet about the EU=
14 CW: Ah::

15 F2: = because I thought you asked me to hold on. Then when I saw the printed copy I thought oh maybe it's for walk-in guests.

Preceding this extract, F4 was reporting and just finished her report as last participant. Before CW closes the meeting, F2 takes the floor again and directs the DQ (a) in line 1 to CW asking about a 'EU questionnaire' and whether it needs to be sent out expecting an affirmative answer since she saw a printed questionnaire displayed (in line 3) for walk-in guests (line 15). CW replies with a negative answer that it is too late and asks with DQ (b) in line 2 whether she checked the date and deadline. F2 also gives a negative reply and indirectly asks CW whether she printed out the questionnaires pointing outside in line 3 trying to clarify why then the questionnaires were printed out. In line 5, F2 rephrases her indirect question perhaps to make sure CW did not mishear the question and to confirm, since she was convinced that CW did print them out. CW on the other hand thought that F2 printed them out (line 6 and 8). The explanation that is provided referring to the initial DQs in line 1 only follows in line 13 where she gives the reason why she asked in the first place.

The problem of understanding that arose here was the understanding of this specific situation of 'the printed questionnaire' assuming that it was done by CW and although F2 was told to hold on previously and not to send out the questionnaire. The clarification comes through a series of questions and an explanation at the end.

4.2.5 Indirect and Direct Questioning Strategy as a Resource

Indirect and direct questioning is both strategically employed in this data by Germans and Malaysian participants to achieve their goal of primarily information seeking. In formal meetings usually, it is the chairperson who ask questions to seek for or clarify information not only for the purpose of checking on the status of tasks and projects of each participant but also of sharing the information given by other participants of the meetings to establish a shared knowledge among all participants about the overall activities and goals of the organization. Since it is primarily the chairperson using the questioning strategy, it is here where variations and intercultural differences tend to emerge first. In fact, the obvious difference that was revealed in this data is between the German chairman using mostly the DQ and one of the Malaysian chairwomen, who recently joined the organization, generally employing the IDQ with just a few instances of direct questions thus perhaps avoiding DQ.

The difference that emerged in the meeting data in regard to the questioning strategy could be related to the interview data and the indirectness and directness that was reported by the interviewees when they talked about their perceptions they have about each other. Germans tend to be more direct in information seeking, whereas Malaysians are less direct and tone down to mitigate questions as could be seen in the meeting data. Thus, indirect questioning is the preferred employed strategy by especially Malaysian participants, perhaps not to offend recipients since 'directness' seems to be perceived as impolite or even rude to some participants. As one of the interview participants stated, as an Asian she expects somebody to be nice and pay attention at the wordings however she thinks "it's not as efficient as how Germans would work (…) but of course there is no need to be rude (…) you can be direct without being rude" (A_OX_M, p.3).

However, many participants are also aware that the German directness is not meant to be offensive nor rude but an effective way of conveying the message. One interviewee explains that it depends on the individual, "for me I think it's pretty polite, it's not instructing you directly but he wants the thing to be done" (C_OX_M, p. 3). While working together, they have learned from each other different ways of doing things and engaging with one another.

One way of adapting to each other is finding a common ground to accommodate differences. Thus, it was reported by some Germans to pay more attention and not to be too direct, as one put it: “(…) compared to Germans you cannot be straight forward as you are used to” (C_OX_G, p. 5). On the other hand, being direct as some Malaysians reported saves time but as one interviewee puts it: “You can be direct without being rude you can be professional and direct without being rude” (A_OX_M, p. 3).

Despite some intercultural differences that are stated in the interviews concerning directness and indirectness and partly reflected in the indirect and direct questioning strategy, the questioning strategy as used in the meeting data is considered as a resource helping to manage and achieve the communicative goals of successful and effective communication.

4.3 Repeating Strategy

This subchapter explores how repeating as a strategy is employed to achieve successful and effective communication in meetings. After the questioning strategy, the repeating strategy appears to be another commonly employed strategy in this meeting data. The data also reveals that the repeating strategy is frequently used after direct or indirect questions, similar to the order that was stated by Svenning (2008), namely ‘first query then repeating’ (see chapter 2.5.3.1). Therefore, the analysis of various verbal strategies follows this natural order of strategies that are employed in these meetings. The analysis shows that the use of the repeating strategy aims for the confirmation of specific information of prior utterance, namely the repeated items.

Prior to examining how the repeating strategy is employed by the meeting participants, the term ‘repeating’ as well as the form and function of repeating are clarified in the next section, focusing on the type and function of repeating that was identified in this data.

4.3.1 Type and Function of Repeating

Although repeating or repetition in CA falls under the broad concept of ‘repair’ that can refer to hearing or understanding problems but also be performed in the absence of such problems, this analysis refrains from linking ‘repeating’ to ‘repair’ for the same reasons as discussed in chapter 2.5.3. Further as mentioned in the same section (see 2.5.3), no distinction is made between self or other (initiated) repetition since both categories refer to the same ‘source of problems’ and ‘repeatable items’ and as revealed in this meeting data usually do not signify any difficulty of understanding. Relevant to this analysis is the different types of forms of repetition, namely the full and partial repeats (Liddicoat, 2007) and the actions and functions they perform. A partial repeat, for instance, can be employed to correct or modify the repeated item to confirm and clarify the message.

The term that is employed is ‘repeating’, meaning the ‘re-saying’ with the exact words of prior utterance, thus the focus here is on the action and its function rather on whether the ‘repairable’ or ‘repeated’ action is self or other initiated or resolved. The repeating strategy that is presented in the following sections are discussed under two types of repeating strategies, the full and partial repeating that is signifying the form of use of the repeating strategy generally employed in this data. The repeating strategy can be used as a single word, part of sentence or as full sentence with rising or falling intonation. The prior utterance can be simply repeated, here named as full repeating strategy, and corrected by replacing or modified by adding words, termed as partial repeating strategy. Both forms of repeating, full or partial repeating strategies have the same major function viz. confirming and/or clarifying candidate or recipient understanding through fully or partially accepting, or through partially correcting or modifying by replacing or adding further information and providing clarification. The analysis will be presented accordingly, the full repeating strategy first followed by the partial repeating strategy.

4.3.2 Full Repeating Strategy

Full repeating is generally used to confirm specific information but it can be also employed to seek clarification of prior utterance. It is the context and the sequences of turns that help to identify whether the repeating was used to confirm and/or clarify the message. The action of repeating strategy is employed first by the recipient when a prior utterance and thus information consisting of a word, part of a sentence, or even a full sentence is simply repeated, the latter usually rarely the case and second when the speaker is provided with the opportunity to confirm directly or by repeating followed by a feedback, e.g. with the tokens ‘okay’ or ‘yeah’ in the next turn. Thus the minimum sequence of repeating consists of two turns. To judge from the occurrences in the meeting data this type of repeating is frequently used to specifically confirm, the date or appointment, the location or place, and numbers, as well as names of people or companies as illustrated in the following extracts.

Extract (18) Full repetition of place

Inter-Department IDE201210, p. 9/10 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F2 reporting to CM about the schedule of events and fairs

1 F2: (…) and then we have also the toy fair (0.3) which falls exactly on the Chinese New Year day=
2 CM: ((Nodding)) =In Germany
3 F2: →In ((Nod)) Germany:: (0.2) okay and also this (   ) also in Germany ((nod)) start from sixth February to=
4 CM: Yes ((Nod))

This extract shows a simple repetition of a specific information, namely the location of the toy fair that is stated in F2’s turn in line 1 that CM completes in line 2 with statement of the location ‘in Germany’ illustrating the shared knowledge. F2 repeats the location to confirm CM's statement. The repetition here that clearly serves as a confirmation is also supported by a 'nod'.

The next extract taken from the same meeting shows a similar example where repetition is used to confirm specific information, in this case, the date.

Extract (19) Full repetition of date

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 23 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F5 ended her report to CM by saying that she is cleaning her room for the new office furniture

1 CM: Yeah okay when is the date when is that furniture coming?
2 F5: I heard this Wednesday
3 CM: →This Wednesday
4 F5: Yeah

In this extract, while the question of CM in line 1 clearly seeks for the specific date from F5 with 'when is the date', his repetition 'this Wednesday' (line 3) is used to confirm F5's response in line 2 followed by a confirmation token 'yeah' by F5 in line 4. Although CM was asking for the specific date he is also accepting F5's response and using the repeating strategy for confirmation.

Repetition to confirm information similar to the extract above can be also done with rising intonation as shown in the next extract.

Extract (20) Full repetition of number

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 11(See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 reporting about selecting pictures for the new website

1 CW: But depends how many pictures they need as well I think at the end ((thinking))
2 F1: I think four.
3 CW: →Four?
4 F1: Yeah
5 CW: We have six.

The repetition of F1 statement (line 2) of number 'four' in line 3 by CW, referring to number of pictures they need, performed with rising intonation seeks for confirmation of given information by F1. This repeat with rising intonation could have been triggered by F1's uncertain statement 'I *think* four' (line 2). In return the repetition of 'four' with rising intonation by CW gives F1 the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm her initial statement that she confirms with 'yeah' after the repeat. It could be also interpreted as stressing the item 'four' as a number that CW was not expecting, thus her reaction in line 5 with the utterance 'we have *six*' after F1's confirmation (line 4).

Full repetition with rising intonation, also called 'questioning repeat' (Jefferson, 1972) can be used for both, confirmation and/or clarification. In the case of the extract (20) above and in the context of confirming numbers, it is clearly a request to elicit confirmation of the accuracy of given information. CW's questioning repeat suggest that she is drawing on both the immediate and wider context, viz. the expected answer as being perhaps 'six' instead of 'four'.

The next extract, consisting of two repetitions from which the first is another example of repetition with rising intonation or 'questioning repeat' illustrates the case where it can be used to seek for clarification.

Extract (21) Full repetition

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 19 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: M1 talks about the offer they got from graphic designers for a trademark

1 M1: We got an offer from them and it's <u>overpriced</u>.
2 CM: (a) $\rightarrow$Overpriced?
3 M1: (b) $\rightarrow$It's overpriced. For a simple trademark
4 CM: Yes.
5 M1: They are charging 900 Ringgit
6 CM: <u>Just for the logo</u>? Creation of the logo

7 M1: (c) →Just for the logo and we just need the registration, it's not for great design or something (…)

In the talk preceding this extract M2 is reporting to CM about his project on trademarks and the graphic designers he personally knows and chose that are cheaper than the ones the company is already working with. CM is explaining that they have graphic designers the company is working with and that they should be contacted first. M1 (HOD) steps in for M2 and tells CM that they contacted them already. In line 1, M1 tells CM that they got the offer from them but the offer is 'overpriced'. The first repeating strategy (a) 'overpriced' (in line 2) with a rising intonation is used by CM. This repeat of CM could mean both first seeking to confirm the information he just received but was not expecting and therefore secondly seeking for clarification, thus requests a kind of explanation for the utterance 'overpriced'. M1's repeat (b) 'it's overpriced' in line 3 of his initial utterance in line 1 is followed by his explanation 'for a simple trademark', confirms CM request for confirmation and clarification. CM accepts in line 4 with 'yes'. M1 in line 5 continues his explanation by giving detailed information about the costs for further clarification. CM's response and question 'just for the logo?' in line 6 clearly underlines the accuracy of the initial utterance 'overpriced'. M1 repeating strategy (c) 'just for the logo' is used to confirm CM's correct understanding establishing a shared understanding.

The examples that are proffered in this section to illustrate the full repeating strategy as a common type are found in all the meetings and used by various participants. The minimum sequence of two turns, viz. the repetition by the recipient of the information given by the speaker in prior turn is an effective way to confirm understanding of the aforesaid. In most cases the repeated items are single words referring to specific information and enabling a quick checking of understanding thereof. In most of the cases full repetition is used to confirm understanding, however when used with rising intonation as in the last extract (21) of this section it could also be used to seek for clarification. Since most of the full repetition and thus confirmation or request for confirmation of understanding are accepted or affirmed, no further clarification, e.g. modification or correction is needed. The routinized confirmations through this type of repeating also show the lack of any understanding problems, such as hearing or understanding. This could be attributed to the shared knowledge of the participants about ongoing projects and tasks, events, facts etc. that help and prevent any problems of this kind from arising. In cases of missing shared understanding full repeating can provide an opportunity for the speaker to check recipient understanding also called 'candidate understanding' to disconfirm if needed and for the recipient to seek for clarification, in the form of questioning repeat so that shared understanding can be re-established. Another way of ensuring and possibly establishing or re-establishing shared understanding is through the partial repeating strategy.

4.3.3 Partial Repeating Strategy

Besides the full repeating strategy, partial repeating strategy also emerged in the meeting data. Partial repeating compared to full repeating strategy involves some kind of correction or modification of a part of a repeated item that can be either accepted or rejected and functions as clarification of received information. There are two subcategories of partial repeating strategy that have been found in the data. The first involves some correction in replacing one part of sentences or utterance with a new part where the latter is being repeated, the second modifies by adding further information to clarify understanding.

4.3.3.1 Repeating with Correction

In some context a correction is necessary to tackle the problem at source and avoid a problem of understanding from occurring, which is as revealed in this meeting data usually a problem of understanding the message that describes the content and not a linguistic problem, as discussed in chapter two (see 2.5.3). The basic sequential structure of 'correction' according to Jefferson (1987) consists of 'a speaker producing some object (X), a subsequent speaker producing an alternative (Y)', and the prior speaker by producing the alternative (Y)' accepting the alternative thus the correction. This 'XYY' trajectory (Liddicoat, 2007) shows that the prior speaker accepted the alternative given by the recipient by repeating it. Therefore, the correction can be done as early as in the next turn, namely, in the second position turn itself. The following extract (22) illustrates a typical repeating with correction of this kind.

Extract (22) Correction of Type XYY

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 22 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: M2 reporting to CM about helping establish companies and preparing company declarations and resolutions

1 M2: And ah::m so now ah:: the company's resolutions are signed by Mr. [NofP] and he the ah:: ( ) ah::m to [NofP] from the [NofC 'abc']
((looking at M1 for confirmation of most likely the name of company))
2 CM: → [NofC 'bac']
3 M2: [NofC 'bac'] ((Nodding)) and then (…)

In this extract, M2 seems to have difficulty remembering the exact acronym (here anonymized as 'abc') for the name of a company he is dealing with and for whom he prepared the company resolution since he is looking at M1 when telling the name of the company. Perhaps hoping for a reaction from M1. However, M1 does not react. The wrong combination of letters 'abc' that was produced by M2 was corrected (here anonymized as 'bac') by CM in the next turn (line 2) and accepted by M2 in line 3 by repeating the corrected name of company 'bac' and nodding. This action of correction is short and effective and does not need further explanations since CM obviously knows the company M2 was referring to due to their shared knowledge. After a quick clarification, M2 can continue his talk without any delay. The next extract, taken from the same meeting, shows a similar case, however the context of use is different.

Extract (23) Correction of Type XYY

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 42 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F4 is reporting to CM about the upcoming exhibition in Vietnam that she is going to attend the next day

F4: (…) I just had a briefing ah:: (   ) now we have fifteen people, fifteen people
CM: Going tomorrow with you to Vietnam yeah ((Nodding))
F4: Yeah ((Nodding))
[…]

1 F1: Fifteen visitors
2 F4: → Fifteen exhibitors ((Nodding))
3 F1: ((Nodding)) fifteen exhibitors

The talk preceding this extract involves F4 and CM, where F4 reports to CM about fifteen people going to Vietnam. After an expanding sequence, who else is going with F4 F1 takes the floor in line 1 and wants to clarify whether the fifteen people are 'visitors' since it was not specified in the prior talk (fifteen people). This could also suggest that F1 probably does not know the details about this event unlike CM, therefore assumes they are visitors. F4 in line 2 corrects by clarifying the fifteen people as 'exhibitors' not 'visitors'. F1 in line 3 accepts by nodding and repeating F4's correction.

These two extracts above show that these are not problems of understanding the language itself but the content of message that needed to be corrected. In case of extract (23) the correction could be rather referred to clarification of prior talk that might have been ambiguous or vague and if left uncorrected might lead to understanding problems. As illustrated in the extracts above, corrections employed through the repeating strategy are usually dealt within short sequences and without disrupting the talk thus leading to successful and effective communication. However, correction talk may be longer than in extracts (22) and (23) and be embedded in an expanded sequence as the next extract (24) will illustrate.

Extract (24) Correction of Type XYY

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 9/10 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: F2 is reporting to CW about new offices that the company is renting out. There are six offices in total from which three are rented out.

1 F2: We have two offices where one office is two offices so <u>in total</u> <u>three</u>
2 CW: →Three persons
3 F2: No, no, no, person is about twelve. Twelve ((nodding)) people will be come in but they will have (a)→<u>three offices</u>
(2.0)
4 CW: ((Nodding)) →<u>Three offices</u> in total meaning
5 M1: (b)→Three rooms
(1.0)
6 F2: Yeah (3.0) →Three offices we have six offices <u>in total</u>
7 CW: And they are occupying <u>three</u>

In line 1, F2 states ‘three’ at the end of her turn meaning three offices (two offices plus one office is divided in two). CW’s utterance in her turn ‘three persons’ (line 2) suggests that she might not have understood that F2 refers to three offices in total not person or she assumes that three offices are occupied by one person each. This might imply an attempt of clarifying the prior information given by F2 in line 1. However, CW’s display of understanding is rejected by F2 in line 3 with negation and corrected first by clarifying the number of people with ‘person is about twelve’ and second by employing partial repeating ‘three’ with the correct item ‘offices’ (a). In line 4, after a 2.0-second pause probably processing the information given, CW accepts by nodding and repeating ‘three offices’ but asking for further explanation to understand the whole context ‘three offices in total meaning’. In line 5, M1 (HOD) steps in and gives another alternative ‘three rooms’ by replacing the ‘word’ and simplifying ‘office’ with ‘room’. In line 6, F2 gives accepts the alternative given by M1 with ‘yeah’ but hesitates (3.0-second pause) and corrects to ‘office’ reformulating her initial turn ‘three offices in total six offices’ and adding the information that the total is ‘six’ not ‘three’ as stated in her initial turn. Finally, in line 7 CW re-states ‘they are occupying three’ clearly referring to three offices from six in total.

This extract illustrates that the talk is disrupted by pauses and corrections suggesting a problematic item which could be in this case ‘in total three’ (line 1) in F2’s initial utterance and the object of reference ‘office’ that needed to be negotiated by correcting and thus clarifying the information to establish or re-establish shared understanding between F2 and CW. However, this kind of situation as described through this extract (24) is very rare in this data. The scarcity of this kind of occurrences could be attributed to the shared knowledge among participants and its role of contributing to successful communication. Then again, if shared knowledge is only partially existing as in some context as described above it can be established or re-established by correcting and accepting through repeating the corrected item.

Although corrections are usually accepted by repeating the corrected item in almost all cases, they can also be rejected by repeating the original item, in form of a XYX trajectory (Liddicoat, 2007) as in next extract (25).

Extract (25) Correction of Type XYX

Department Meeting PR050710, p. 3 (See Appendix B.5) Topic: F2 is reporting to CW. She has changed a text for the company’s quarterly magazine that F1 is handling.

1 F2: So I’m just gonna change a bit of the text so that you can extract for your quarterly
2 F1: Okay you saved it under where?

3 F2: Ah:: <u>new members</u>
4 F1: Summer survey
5 F2: →<u>New members</u>
6 F1: Summer survey
7 F2: yeah ((Nod)) summer survey new members
8 F1: Okay ((Nod))

In line 1, F2 addresses F1 and tells her that she has changed the text for the 'quarterly' magazine. F1 in her turn in line 2 wants to know 'under where' she has saved the text, probably asking for the file name. In line 3, F2 gives the file name 'new members' and F1 (in line 4) states a different file name 'summer survey'. In line 5, F2 repeats her original utterance 'new members', thus not accepting the alternative given by F1. F1 on the other hand repeats the name 'summer survey' again. F2's turn in line 7 accepts the file name given by F1 as 'summer survey new members'. F1 accepts with 'okay' and a nod. It seems that both were giving the correct file name consisting of two names that was perhaps not in the right order. Therefore F2's rejection (line 5) of correction made by F1 (line 4) could be either interpreted as rejection or tacit acceptance as revealed in the sequence of turns in this conversation. However, until the correct name is determined some negotiation needs to take place that is done here in this context through the repeating strategy. The correction that is rejected through the 'XYX' trajectory in this extract could function as clarification of message while drawing on shared knowledge.

Corrections in general are however very rare in this meeting data, especially this type of correction where it is rejected is extremely rare, so that from six meetings only two occurrences where found, one of them being illustrated in the extract (25) above. However as in this case illustrated above it needs some negotiation to draw on the shared knowledge or establish a shared understanding. Shared knowledge plays an essential role in achieving communicative goals as illustrated in this section. One of the options to establish or re-establish shared understanding is through partial repeating and correcting the item that might be problematic if left uncorrected. Another option is provided through modification of the partial repetition discussed in the following section.

4.3.3.2 Repeating with Modification

Repeating with modification is characterized by adding, e.g. new words to clarify the original part or item of the prior message and to further define and clarify the message. In other words, modification is used to make sure the message is understood the intended way. Acceptance is shown through the repeating of the 'new understanding'. The following extract (26) illustrates, how modifying an item of the message by adding a word helps to clarify the precise meaning of this item.

Extract (26) Modification by Adding

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 7 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: M1 (HOD) reporting to F1 (HOD) and also acting chair until CM joins the meeting about BAFA (Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle – Federal Office of Economics and Export Control).

1 F1: The German company first when they send, sell to Malaysia, they have to get BAFA first?
2 M1: ((Nodding)) yeah →BAFA permission first yeah
3 F1: BAFA permission first, and when Malaysia wants to resell (0.8) another BAFA?
4 M1: Yeah that's the interesting part because (…)

In the preceding talk of this extract, M1 reports about a Malaysian company that wants to sell certain products that they bought from Germany to Singapore. The Malaysian company also wants them to get information from BAFA to be able to sell to a third country. This transaction needs a BAFA (German Federal Office) permission, which he explained to F1. F1, in line 1, requests for confirmation of her understanding of prior talk, recapitulating the aforesaid with 'BAFA first?' M1 confirms her understanding by nodding and repeating 'BAFA *permission* first' adding the word 'permission' to clarify the explicit meaning as BAFA stands for the institution not the permission. F1 accepts by repeating the modified item 'BAFA permission first' in line 3.

The next example illustrates the same function of modification, namely clarifying the part of message by adding a word.

Extract (27) Modification by Adding

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 9 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F2 reporting to CM about two different 'construction' fairs (construction - 'Bau' in German) for which she is doing the promotion.

1 F2: I'm actually doing the promotion more promotion for the (Bau) fair in January=
2 CM: Yeah ((Nod))
3 4 F2: =and also the (BC) India (Bauma) India
4 CM: Ahh can you (   ) (Bau) fair yeah
5 F2: →(Bau) fair <u>in Munich</u>
6 CM: Ahhh ((Nodd)) it's <u>in Munich</u> okay ((Nod))
7 F2: It's o::n (ruling) materials

F2 reports in her turn (line 1 and 3) about two different construction fairs, the first called 'Bau', the second 'Bauma'. While the first term is specified as being held in January the detail given for the second term is India. CM in line 4, reacts in asking for the first 'Bau fair' perhaps wanting to know more details. In line 5, F2 repeats in adding the location of the fair 'Bau fair in Munich'. CM's response in line 6 shows that he is received the new information 'ah it's in Munich' and is satisfied with the further information so he is perhaps able to distinguish between the two construction fairs that F2 is reporting on. F2 continues in line 7 with further details in relation to the Bau fair. Adding information helps to clarify understanding that is accepted through repeating the modified partial repetition.

Both full repetition and partial repetition as different type of uses of the repeating strategy are usually employed as single words or part of sentences. Thus targeted items of the message that can be either confirmed or further clarified effectively by simply using full or partial repeating strategy.

4.3.4 Repeating Strategy as a Resource

The repeating strategy employed by the meeting participants of this study were put into two main categories according to their regular occurrences in the meetings. Full repeating is mostly used to confirm understanding of the aforesaid while partial repeating through correction or modification is rather employed to clarify understanding.

The repeating strategy employed by the meeting participants of this study is probably the fastest and easiest way to confirm understanding therefore an effective way for successful communication. The trigger for the use of repeating strategy could be attributed to the need to confirm the correct understanding as shown in some cases through repeating of particular information such as time or dates, numbers or names of people, companies, and locations. However, in most of the cases it is linked to the confirmation of understanding in general, focusing on specific items or elements of the aforesaid. The speaker usually displays his understanding and confirms by repeating the same utterance of the original message instead of confirming with only verbal items such as ‘yes, yeah’ or non-verbal ‘nods’. This way it is made sure important information is displayed and does not get lost, thus an effective way to convey the message. Moreover, it gives the speakers the opportunity to correct or modify their message the intended way if needed.

The data has also shown, that the repeating strategy for confirmation of understanding is accompanied with non-verbal means, such as nodding and/or lexical items such as yeah, yes or ok. This could serve as an additional proof of understanding in form of a feedback or backchannel that the message was conveyed successfully. As stated by Bjørge (2010), "repetition of another speaker's utterance may function as backchannel" (p. 194) comparable with verbal 'backchannelling' items such as 'yeah' and 'mhm' including 'nodding' as non-verbal backchannelling. Full repeating is therefore not necessarily linked to an understanding difficulty, since the full repeat itself is a confirmation of understanding. As the data revealed it is the full repetition that comprises always the correct understanding. The use of partial repeating in contrast can indicate a potential understanding difficulty since correction may be involved or a modification can be made to clarify and secure it is understood the intended way. The correction made by replacing the potentially problematic part of message, which then is usually repeated the same way shows the acceptance of almost all corrections. In rare cases the correction is accepted with delay. Modification is usually used to clarify a message. As in full repeating non-verbal backchannels such as nodding are very common in partial repetition and serve as extra proof for acceptance.

The repeating strategy is an effective way to confirm understanding given that its use is simple, straightforward and quick, especially the full repetition of usually single words are an effective means to confirm specific information thus commonly used by all participants. As almost all repetitions are confirmed it suggests that the participants draw on their shared knowledge. However, when the shared knowledge is to some extent incomplete in certain context, e.g. specific information is missing or the information given is vague with regard to its meaning, partial repetition with correction or modification is employed to clarify meaning and re-establish shared knowledge. In this sense, partial repetitions are less commonly employed than full repetitions. Whether full or partial repetitions are employed they are all confirmed, establishing shared understanding and thus achieving successful and effective communication.

The repeating strategy has been mentioned by three interview participants as a useful means to secure and confirm understanding, as put by one participant, “I will make sure that I will tell you what you tell me and confirm” (E_OX_M, p. 6). Another strategy similar to partial repetition is reformulating that will be elaborated in the next section.

4.4 Reformulating Strategy

As with the repeating strategy, discussed in the previous subchapter, the reformulating strategy is a procedure that would also fall under the concept of repair in CA. The meeting data revealed that in comparison to the repeating strategy, the participants employ the reformulation strategy rarely. A possible explanation could be that employing the repeating strategy including partial repeating for clarifying the aforesaid and eliciting further information could be sufficient enough to confirm understanding or new understanding and no further clarification would be needed. This could mean that the repeating strategy is employed as the preferred strategy to confirm and clarify understanding before further strategies, such as reformulating strategy, are used. Moreover, since the action of ‘reformulating’ as claimed by Watterson (2008) is usually linked to comprehension or understanding problems, this could mean that such problems are rare in the present meeting data. Furthermore, the analysis of the data uncovered that the strategic use of reformulating is not necessarily linked to any comprehension or understanding problems as illustrated later in the extracts. Before exploring the use and function of the reformulating strategy as employed in this meeting data by various participants, the term ‘reformulating’ as employed in this study shall be defined first.

4.4.1 'Reformulating' Defined

The term 'reformulating or reformulation' (see Svenning, 2008; Watterson, 2008; Tsuchiya & Handford, 2014) is used besides other terms such as 'rephrasing' or 'paraphrasing' as subcategories of repair in related literature. These terms are used as interchangeable terms with no clear-cut definition. Liddicoat (2007) for example mentions both terms 'rephrasing or reformulation' in reference to repair. This study adopts the term 'reformulating or reformulation' based on the definition given by Tsuchiya and Handford (2014), "reformulate is specifically to rephrase or revise the term or phrases uttered in a previous turn" (p. 120), which not only refers to 'phrases' as in 'rephrase and paraphrase' but also to 'terms', viz. single utterances or words.

The analysis has revealed that the reformulation strategy can be employed at different locations of ongoing talk, first where the prior utterance is simply reformulated in the next turn and second when the reformulation is employed after a repeating sequence, thus in latter case reformulation is used as a second instance. However, in both instances the candidate understanding is displayed as shown in the following section.

4.4.2 Reformulating to Display 'Candidate Understanding'

The data shows just a few instances of the reformulating strategy. In these cases, a prior utterance is reformulated to check the understanding or accuracy of aforementioned information or message. Thus it is a 'candidate understanding' by reformulating and thus displaying understanding, as stated by Heritage (1984), "(…) in proposing a *candidate understanding* of what an earlier speaker had intended, the producer of an understanding check thereby invites that speaker to confirm (or disconfirm) the adequacy of that proposal" (as cited in Antaki, 2012, p. 531). Candidate understanding in contrast to the context of the repeating involves some transformation operation on prior utterance, which means, "saying what one understands in different words than those used in the prior turn" (Kushida, 2011, p. 2716). The following extracts illustrate one of the rare cases where reformulating of the prior turn is used. The strongest form to check understanding of speaker's prior turn is initiated by the 'you mean' (Liddicoat, 2007) format at the beginning of the turn as shown in the following extract (28).

Extract (28) Reformulating with 'you mean'

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 16 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: M1 reporting to CW about his projects and tasks in a long stretch of talk

1 M1: (…) ahm::m = we received ahm::m several requests form Mr. [NofP] attorney at law in Germany. One is a <u>debt collection</u> ahm::m for a (   ) company ah:: <u>from [NofC]</u>. So we are sending out those requests
(3.0)
2 CW: →You mean <u>[NofC] owe that other company</u> is it?
3 M1: Yeah. They lost the kind of ah:: ah::m (1.0) invoice in the accounting department so we are just reminding them and ask them if they can do something. Maybe just kind of shoot a reminder will help (2.0)

In this extract, CW is reformulating M1's last mentioned topic about 'debt collection' (line 1) of his long report of tasks as a list of duties connected through 'ahm:m' in the preceding turns. After a 3.0-second pause, CW starts her turn (line 2) with 'you mean' that functions here as a strong indicator for a candidate understanding in displaying what was said by the speaker in her own words thus reformulating and giving M1 the possibility to confirm or disconfirm her understanding from his prior utterance. Moreover she designs her turn as a question completing with 'is it' expecting M1 to respond adequately. M1, having understood the implication of her request, not just confirms with 'yeah' but also continues his turn by giving more background information about this specific case of 'debt collection' and the reason for it in line 3. Reformulating with 'you mean' in this specific context serves not only as understanding check but also as a request to elaborate more on this topic, possibly to clarify the accuracy and reliability of this message.

The next extract (29) also examined under IDQ (see extract (16)) and taken from the same meeting, is a typical example for understanding check, which does not require further clarification and is accepted in the next turn.

Extract (29) Reformulating

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 7 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: F1 reporting to CW about her project with Vietnam and the budget therefore.

1 F1: (…) So I have to get Mr. [NofP] to get to ask (1.0) to follow-up with <u>that</u>. But on my hand I will be pushing Vietnam.
2 CW: Ok so Mr. [NofP] is to follow up with <u>the German side to make a payment</u>.
3 F1: Yeah.
(3.0)
4 CW: Okay (2.0) so no more things then?
5 F1: That's all.

In the preceding talk of this extract, F1 reports in several turns about a project with Vietnam. In line 1, F1 gives a kind of summary introduces by 'so' and what she needs to do as a conclusion of the aforesaid to finish her report (see line 5). In line 2, CW displays her understanding by reformulating F1's prior turn starting with 'ok so' which suggest an acknowledgement and a recapitalization of the aforesaid. CW does not only reformulate the prior utterance of F1 but also replaces the word 'that' with a precise reformulation of it, namely 'the German side to make a payment' (underlined in the extract). Giving a perhaps better formulation with more detail, which is acknowledged and confirmed by F1 with simply 'yeah' (line 3) making further clarifications redundant. Moreover, it could be an attempt from the chairperson (CW) to clarify the content not only for herself but making the message more explicit also for the audience, viz. the other participants of the meeting.

This example serves also as evidence for not only displaying the correct understanding of the aforesaid from the immediate context but also drawing on the shared knowledge and common practices that e.g. the specific person mentioned by F1 (see line 1) is the one dealing with the German side (see line 2).

Both extracts (28, 29) above illustrate the reformulation strategy employed as understanding check by the recipient (here CW) that is in both cases confirmed by the speakers with ‘yeah’. As the reformulation of the aforesaid is directly employed in the next turn and is also confirmed, the reformulation strategy may not indicate an understanding problem. Instead, the reformulation strategy is simply used to ensure the correct understanding of perhaps relatively complicated message content relating to its context, and also to check the accuracy and reliability of the message that needs to be clarified and/or confirmed, as in e.g. extract (28).

In the case of extract (28), reformulating is also used as request for clarification with ‘you mean’ and the question format ‘is it’ because the case described by M1 might seem not reliable according to CW’s current or standard knowledge. M1 is the head of legal department and CW the head of marketing, therefore in many cases although related they might not share the same level of information. In extract (29) on the other hand, a further clarification is not necessary, since F1 is an employee of the marketing department and CW as head of marketing knows and monitors the projects and tasks. Thus CW can draw on shared knowledge, even if a message is not delivered in detail, CW can reformulate by giving more accurate information. The reformulating strategy might in this case besides her own understanding check serve to inform other participants of the meeting viz. the audience in a more detailed manner, which might not have been otherwise so clear to them. Whereas in the case of extract (28), CW’s reformulation primarily serves to first check her understanding and second to seek for clarification to be able to understand the case described by M1.

In contrast to the two extracts above, the next extract (30) describes the use of the reformulation strategy in two locations of the same sequence of talk. As discussed in the previous subchapter (see 4.3) the repeating strategy is employed to confirm understanding through the action of repeating and no further actions are needed to achieve mutual understanding. In rare cases, when other VCS such as questioning and/or repeating in the first instance does not yet lead to complete understanding, reformulating could be employed as a second instance or next step as illustrated in extract (30).

Extract (30) Reformulating after questioning and/or repeating

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 2/3 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 reporting to CW about the new website and implementation of the job market section on it. F4 and F2 want to clarify some information, which leads to all five participants of the meeting being engaged in the conversation.

1 F4: This job market is for the trainees ((looking at CW)) (0.6) from abroad or: =
[for others]
2 CW: [No:: ((negative nod))]
3 F3: [Companies]=
4 F1: =[Companies]
5 F4: Companies
6 F1: →(0.6) [looking for staff=]
7 F3: ((Nodding)) ( )
8 F4: (a) →[=to:] recruit candidates ((hand movement)) aah ((Nod))
9 F1: ( )
10 F2: So all the people who approach us for job positions we put them? ((Nod))
11 CW: They ((Nodding)) can look at the website ((Nodding))
12 F2: (b) →We put these people in the website?
13 CW: ((Negative nod)) →No, no only organizations who are actually looking for candidates who are looking for employees.
14 F2: Okay::
15 F4: (c) →Recruit ahh (0.6) ((looking up))=
16 CW: Yes
17 F4: =staff (0.6) So they post vacancy =
18 CW: Yeah ((Nodding))
19 F4: =available
20 CW: Yeah ((Nodding)

In preceding talk, F1 was reporting about the implementation of the job market section on the new website and had moved to the next topic that she just finished. F4 takes the floor and connects to the previous topic ‘the job market’. In the report of F1 it was not mentioned for whom the job market on the website is, perhaps assuming that all the participants know already. However, F4’s question in line 1, directed to CW, specifically seeks for this information whether it is for ‘trainees from abroad or for others’. While CW answers with ‘no’ and a negative head nod (line 2), F3 simultaneously answers that it is for ‘companies’ (line 3) and overlaps with F1’s same answer (line 4), which F4 repeats in line 5. To clarify more, F1 in line 6 after a 0.6-second pause adds ‘looking for staff’. This information is reformulated by F4 in line 8 (a) with ‘recruit candidates’, displaying her understanding with certainty by ‘ahh’ and nodding. Having settled this information, in line 10, F2 as a result of prior talk checks her understanding by requesting for clarification of another information in form of an IDQ that might concern her thus choosing ‘we’ as lexical item including her. This part is being discussed under indirect questioning (see extract (7) in 4.2.3.2). CW perhaps avoiding a negative answer, designs her turn differently in line 11. However, the answer CW gives does not help F2 to clarify her request thus she repeats the initial question in line 10 by reformulating (b) it (line 12). In line 13, CW negates and clarifies F2’s request by explaining ‘organizations (…) looking for candidates (…) looking for employees’ by giving a detailed information. In line 14, F2 confirms her understanding with ‘okay’. In line 5, F4 on the other hand checks and confirms her understanding (c) by reformulating CW’s utterance ‘recruit staff so they post vacancy available’ in latching turns (line 17, 19), confirmed by CW each time (line 16, 18, 20). In line 15, when F4 starts her reformulation she looks up and with two small pauses, perhaps trying to think of a ‘better’ formulation, in a way recapitulating what CW said in prior turn and what was said earlier in prior turns and also contributing or assisting with an alternative formulation to CW's utterance (line 13) which is meant for F2 who had already affirmed her understanding (line 14).

This extract is also a perfect example of cooperation among participants to establish or re-establish shared understanding. It also illustrates that F4 and F2 in this case and concerning this topic did not share the same information as CW, F1 and F3 did and therefore different communicative strategies were needed to confirm and clarify understanding and thus establish shared understanding. As shown in the examples (a), (b), and (c) in the extract above, the reformulating strategy is employed after various other verbal communication strategies, such as repeating and explaining of negative answer of prior questioning.

4.4.3 Reformulating Strategy as a Resource

The few occurrences of reformulating strategy in this data show that the employment of reformulating might be a rather dispreferred action although rephrasing as stated by Liddicoat (2007) can be used to produce an agreement and thus remove "the need for a dispreferred action" (p. 114). In this data, it seems that the employment of questioning and repeating strategy in the first instances could remove the need for reformulating strategy in the first place. The reformulating strategy does more than checking understanding by displaying candidate understanding in using other words than those in the prior turn and giving the opportunity to check own understanding and at the same time also inviting the producer of prior turn to recheck the accuracy and reliability of his or her message, especially when reformulation is designed in a questioning format with 'you mean'. Reformulating strategy can also be employed to assist or to contribute to a 'better formulation' to clarify the aforesaid or making it more explicit.

As can be seen from the extracts presented and discussed in the section above, reformulating strategy is not addressing any understanding problem per se based on, e.g. understanding the talk or language and thus the meaning of words since single words or terms are not reformulated in this data but rather understanding the case or content described by talk. Other terms used as synonyms such as rephrasing or paraphrasing in other ELF research, are usually associated with making a prior utterance more comprehensible by e.g. simplifying the lexis or syntax or for problem-marked or vague prior utterances with regard to the meaning (see Kaur, 2008) could not be found in this meeting data. However, one of the interviewees who also participated in a few meetings where she did not use any reformulating strategy mentions using 'rephrasing' as a remedial action when her message is not understood or revealed as not understood either through non-verbal means or explicitly stated by the recipient:

> Definitely once I deliver my message it would definitely be facial expression, facial expression and, eh, or else the other side, the opposite side would definitely act to me and say: "I don't understand, hence I would rephrase". When I have to rephrase, I would rephrase it using some other words, which to me will be a little simpler or more understandable to the other party, slower, yeah. (…) Or just repeat myself again. (C_OX_M, p. 7)

Later in the ongoing interview, it becomes obvious that she related the use of rephrasing to her subordinates, 'especially when I am working with my trainees' (C_OX_M, p. 8) thus in a different situation and not in the meeting context. This suggests that there was no need for reformulation or rephrasing by e.g. simplifying or changing speed of delivery in the meetings.

Another interview participant who also did not use any reformulating strategy in the meetings, implies that in case of understanding difficulties, reformulation would be useful to check understanding but would not be efficient, "because the best would be to let the colleague *repeat, and give it in his words*, what was the target given etc., yeah? And, eh, but this, like I just mentioned a minute ago, *would require nearly double the time*" (B_OX_G, p. 6). Thus, this statement would indicate that the reformulation strategy in the context of meetings might not be an efficient and effective strategy to be used.

In fact, the reformulation strategy was only used rarely by only few participants (see CW in extract (28) and (29), and F4 and F2 in extract (30)) suggesting that repeating is the preferred strategy and reformulating is not really needed, perhaps because repeating already functions as an effective way to confirm and clarify understanding based on their shared knowledge paving the way for successful communication. Moreover, as stated above by one of the meeting participants reformulating is less efficient. In this specific context of formal meetings with time constraints, it seems that reformulating is rather a dispreferred strategy.

4.5 Explaining Strategy

Among the four verbal communication strategies that have been identified in this meeting data, the explaining strategy is discussed as the fourth verbal communication strategy that has been employed by the meeting participants. Similar to questioning strategy, the explaining strategy is the most regularly employed common strategy. This could be attributed to the nature of data in such that in meetings, information seeking and giving further information is of utmost interest. Contrary to reformulation strategy discussed in the previous subchapter, where a prior utterance is 'reformulated' with different words to check and clarify understanding, explaining is used to clarify prior utterance by adding or giving further information.

Two types of explaining strategies were identified in this study of meeting talk. The first type consisting of two subtypes of explaining strategies, the first type is used after an explicit request and the other after an implicit request for explanation or after the request for further information has been already fulfilled but not yet accepted. The second type of explaining strategy is employed without any prior request.

Before further exploring the use and function of the explaining strategy as employed in this meeting data by various participants, the term 'explaining' as it is used in this study shall be defined first.

4.5.1 'Explaining' Defined

The term explaining as a communication strategy as defined in this data does not refer to explaining or explanation of non-understood items usually explored under the broad concept of repair to enhance intelligibility with e.g. synonyms, definitions, examples or paraphrasing (see Watterson, 2008) but relates to giving additional information or updating background information of the original message and could function rather as a means to "anticipate problems of understanding and acceptability" as employed by Svenning (2008, p. 333). However, the data revealed similar to what Yang (2009) found that the function of 'explaining' is to assist "in obtaining accurate information and building up or adding to the knowledge/opinions for ongoing discussion" (p. 329). Thus, the term 'explaining' as a strategy in this study refers primarily to providing further information either by adding or updating the background knowledge of meeting participants and thus enhancing their shared knowledge.

How they employ the explaining strategy and in which context shall be illustrated based on various extracts in the following sections. The first type of explaining strategy that can occur after an explicit or implicit request is discussed in the next subchapter.

4.5.2 Explaining Strategy after Explicit and Implicit Request

The request for explaining could be signaled explicitly through e.g. a statement that indicates that the information given in the previous talk has not been quite clear or in rare cases not understood. Therefore, clarifying by explaining and giving background information is necessary that often is used with the lexical item 'because'. The request however could also be initiated implicitly, e.g. after having received a response often referring to a negative outcome that might not have been quite satisfactory for the recipient the speaker might use explaining to justify this negative outcome. In these cases, the recipient uses some verbal and non-verbal feedback items, such as ‘aha’ or ‘ahm’ or nods as minimal response that signal to the speaker to continue with the explanation.

4.5.2.1 Explaining After an Explicit Request

The following extracts in this section illustrate, how various meeting participants employ explaining strategy triggered by an explicit request. The first extract (31) shows an explicit request for explanation stating that the information given in previous talk has not been completely understood.

Extract (31) Explaining after an explicit request

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 25/26 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: It is officially M3’s turn and he is reporting to CM about new immigration rules. M1 (HOD Legal) and M3 (Malaysian) his subordinate is dealing with immigration and is responsible for applications of work permits and employment passes

1 M1: yeah so in the first place ok the employment passes we are getting that’s easy that’s not affected but for the others bigger industries because
2 CM: Aha →<u>I don’t understand sometimes</u> the
3 M3: →<u>Because</u> for foreign works there are three part where Ministry of Home Affairs included
4 CM: aha ((Nodding))
5 M3: and Immigration and also the Malaysian Employment Federation
6 CM: ah:m ((Nodding))
7 M3: which is like three. Like for an expatriate you just deal with immigration
8 CM: yes ((Nodding))
9 M3: but for foreign workers you have to get approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs first so it’s quite
10 CM: ah:m ((Nodding))
11 M3: so
12 CM: ah:m ((Nodding))
13 M3: it’s quite tough to go through that (   )
14 CM: ah::m ((Nodding))
15 M3: that’s the reason behind that
16 CM: yeah

In the preceding talk to this extract, M3 and also M2 and M1 have been reporting to CM about some changes and new immigration regulations for expats and for foreign workers especially for unskilled workers. M1 is the head of legal department and M2 and M3 are working under him and both M2 and M3 attended an immigration seminar on new regulations. Although M1 and M2 had already given some information concerning these new regulations, M3 as a Malaysian is the one directly dealing with the immigration authorities. M1 was pointing out the effect of these new regulations on bigger industries that employ expats, skilled and unskilled foreign workers. He also talked about unskilled workers from neighboring countries and what that means for one big German company.

In line 1, M1 states that the employment passes are not affected. However, since the distinction that was made between expats and skilled or unskilled foreign workers was perhaps not very clear to CM in the previous talk and moreover since CM has no background knowledge about the new regulations, he states (in line 2) explicitly that he does not understand 'sometimes'. M3 then takes the floor and starts explaining in line 3 with 'because' with a sequence of turns (line 5, 7, 9, 11, 13) that ends with 'that's the reason behind that' (in line 15), which is already confirmed and accepted by CM in line 8 with yes and nodding after M3 has made the distinction between 'foreign workers' and 'expatriates' (line 7) clear. M3 gives further background information by connecting to M1's turn in line 1 why 'employment passes are not a problem' that might refer to expatriates but for foreign workers it is 'quite though' (line 13) and closes his turn with 'that's the reason behind' (line 15) which is affirmed and accepted by CM in line 16 with 'yeah'. During M3's turns CM listens and signals to M3 to continue with his explanation with non-lexical discourse markers such as 'aha, ah:m' and nods. Since M3 is the expert person directly dealing with the immigration he knows the regulations better than M1 or M2 and therefore manages to give a satisfactory explanation to CM distinguishing the different regulations for foreign workers and expatriates.

The next extract taken from the same meeting illustrates another explicit request for explanation but instead of a direct explanation in form of giving further information and updating the background knowledge as in extract above (31), a different kind of explaining follows by describing how an update of background information could be done since updating is not always possible.

Extract (32) Explaining after an explicit request

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 10/11 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F2 is taking the minutes in this meeting. It is actually F3's turn (from the legal department) and she is reporting to F1 (acting CW and HOD-Marketing) about a certain company for which they applied for employment passes. M1 (HOD-Legal) and M3 give more information about the company and the meeting with a person from that company. F1 did not have a meeting hence does not know the person nor the company and the specific case.

1 F1: I never had any meetings with him.
2 F2: →<u>I don't know ((RH pointing right and left)) what you guys talk about it</u>
3 F1: Yeah.
4 F2: [NofP] as well.
5 F1: Yeah.
6 M1: Thank you ((laughter)). No, no I think yeah I can send you the information on that
7 F1: Never mind
8 M1: From tomorrow on we will have two more trainees and then we will update ah:m the list of ah:m our, our critical cases list and ahm:m write down what ah: what business they are from and then we sent it to marketing and then maybe you can say ( ) the company is very interesting for us and so on
9 F1: yeah
10 M1: →<u>Because</u> from the daily business it's very difficult to always update you and so on. We try that and and an then ( ) too difficult.
11 F1: ( )
12 F2: Extra coordination.

In previous turns, F3 starts reporting and M1 and M3 step in when F1 wants to have specific information about the company. They both refer to a meeting with that company and a certain person that they assumed F1 (acting CW) knew which F1 denies. They then try to describe the person from another meeting where they thought F1 was present. F1 in line 1 assures that she never had any meeting with that person. F2 who is taking the minutes and therefore has to write down the information given regarding that company could not quite follow the previous talk since M1 and M3 where trying to re-establish understanding by trying to draw on shared knowledge in referring to a specific meeting with a certain person. In line 2, F2 therefore explicitly tells that she does not know what they were talking about, referring to M1 and M3 by pointing at them. She also mentions a name of a participant (line 4) who also could not quite follow the information given in the previous talk. After an initial funny remark (line 6) M1 admits that the information could not be conveyed clearly. He then tells F2 to send her 'the information on that'. F1 thinks however, that it is not necessary perhaps suggesting it is not important with 'never mind' in line 7. The actual explanation follows in line 8 and line 10 where M1 explains how he would update F1 and F2 and other staff who are from the marketing department (line 8) and justifies why it is so difficult to do (line 10). F2 accepts his explanation by giving her own opinion that it needs 'extra coordination' in line 12.

In this extract above, the explicit request for explanation from F2 is first attended by M1 by telling her to give her the information later (line 6) and by explaining why she might not have been able to understand the information because the necessary update of background information was not possible 'because from the daily business it's very difficult to always update you and so on' (line 10). This extract also shows clearly that shared background knowledge would have helped to understand the specific case. However, further information could not be given despite the explicit request, probably due to time constraints. Therefore, instead of explaining and giving further information on this specific case, M1 decides to give it to F2 in written and explains to update the other department with a list of critical cases in future and justifies why it was not done so far.

The last example of explicit request for explanation in extract (33) is done in form of a direct question, perhaps a kind of a background check that is necessary to understand the action taken in previous turns.

Extract (33) Explaining after explicit request

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 17/18 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F3 is reporting to CM. F3 is working under F5 (HOD) and collecting information on oil management systems

1 F3: Aam yes we got so many information from [NofC] and and they said that (…)
2 CM: this is the information we need (0.8) and then you call also please [NofP]
3 F5: →but why do you need [NofP] to ask him such kind of questions
4 CM: →No because [NofP] knows the industry he is technician=
5 F5: mmm
6 CM: = he is an engineer and he can consults on biogas and biomass an he is being with a lot of plantations doing a lot of consultancy work so as yoa:: I myself we don't know the details of the process flow=
7 F5: ahm
8 CM: = and he knows the process flow of of of biomass, of refinery of making oil and so he can say oh in that areas like we have it he can reconfirm of what just we have said
9 F3: okay give some information do you ask me to get more information in those areas
10 CM: Yes ((Nod)) and this is the good one then (…)

In line 1, F3 reports to CM where she already collected information on oil management systems. CM in the next turn acknowledges the information she collected 'this is the information we need' and gives her the additional task to contact a certain person (line 2). F5 in line 3 steps in explicitly requesting futher explanation for CM's proposal to contact the specific person for more information and perhaps implying that it is not necessary. Therefore, CM response starts his turn with 'no' and continues with explaining by giving background information about this person in a sequence of turns (line 4, 6, 8) and justifying his proposal. F5 acknowledges and gives feedback 'mmm' 'ahm' in between his turns.

All three examples illustrated in the extracts above however are rare. The explicit request for explanation as seen in the example above would mean that the participants would need to interrupt the flow of talk. Therefore, this action of explicit request is usually done by a person, as seen in the examples above, who either has the role of a chairperson (see extract 31), is taking the minutes (extract 32) or is a HOD (see extract 33), thus having a certain role or considered a kind of authority. The explaining strategy is usually employed as categorized in this data after an implicit request, which is discussed in the following section.

4.5.2.2 Explaining After an Implicit Request

The following extracts in this section illustrate how the explaining strategy is employed after an implicit request. The first extract (34) shows an implicit request for explanation by pointing at a specific person who could render the necessary background information.

Extract (34) Explaining after implicit request

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 22/23 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F2 reporting about the organization of board meeting that is held in a hotel

1 F2: But if there is more just accept them right?
2 CW: ((Nodding)) A:mm (2.0) for the hotel I think we asked about eighty right?
3 F2: Now we increased already to eighty?
4 CW: I think it was always eighty the quota
5 F2: → Seventy I think she said ((LH <u>pointing at F4</u>))
6 F4: (Can) →<u>because</u> I actually scaled it down to sixty previously. I think I mentioned earlier because normally we will go for the safer and I have informed [NofP] and she said ok so I said increase towards the day we will let you know (…)

In this extract, F2 is not sure about the maximum number of meeting participants for a general annual meeting that she is organizing and asks whether she can accept more (line 1). CW is also not sure and thinks that they asked the hotel for ‘eighty’ participants (line 2) since according to her knowledge the quota was ‘always eighty’ (line 4). In line

3, F2 is surprised since she expected the number to be ‘seventy’ (line 5) as told by F4. F2 then points at F4 as the person who determines and sets the number and implicitly asking her to explain. This could fall under an implicit request to explain, since information relating to the number differs according to F2 and CW, F2 gives the information that she heard from F4 by pointing at her implicitly asking her to explain. In line 6, F4 who is the person dealing with hotels and knows best about the quota, starts explaining by giving further information and thus updating the background information for all participants at the same time. Before the explaining she starts of with ‘can’ a typical Malaysian expression, meaning both numbers are possible, since she actually scaled down to sixty but it could be increased later. Here in this extract, the person (F4) who is explaining is implicitly urged to decide on the number of participants given since she is the only one dealing with the hotels and has the updated information.

An implicit request for explaining can also be done after a question has been answered but the recipient signals a request for further information, e.g. through verbal and non-verbal backchannels such as ‘hm’, ‘aha’ as non-lexical items or a short pause as shown in the next extract with three similar examples.

Extract (35) Explaining after implicit request

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 2/3 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F1 is acting CW until CM joins the meeting a) M1 reporting on new import regulations in the automotive industry and the feedback from the automotive industry affected b) M1 reporting about professional pass application for a company that (c) is mainly doing training for other companies

1 F1: So how many clients have you received lah?
2 M1: Two Mr. [NofP] and Mr.:: (2.0) ah:mm ((looking up thinking)) (   ).
3 F1: h::mm
(2.0)

4 M1: a) →<u>Because</u> (if) we ((laughter)) ah:m we didn't receive any feedback from [NofC] and we didn't receive feedback from [NofC Singapore] a::nd who else?
(2.0)
[…]
5 M1: ah::m (4.0) then [NofC-X] we are handling the professional passes for them.
6 F2: Who is this?
7 M1: [NofC-X]
8 F1: aha
9 M1: b)→German company sent two people here ah:m (4.0) they need professional pass actually working for [NofC-Y], they work for (   ) ah:m and then we suggested to open, to set up a branch office because otherwise you have to renew the professional pass again and again for all the project they are working on so it's better to have their own ( ) here and to ah:: have to apply for an employment pass directly so then they can handle their projects directly from Malaysia (   ) professional pass for a period of two months an another month and so on. They doing training for the engineers here (3.0) ah:m (   )
10 F1: ((Nodding)) (Excuse me) they are a ((Nodding)) training company?
11 M1: Training
12 F1: Yeah, ((Nodding)) they do training?
13 M1: c) →Training yeah for solar technology, photovoltaic
14 F1: aha
15 M1: I don't think the company the company is only training. I think they are just professionals in those areas (3.0) (…)

In this extract, three examples are illustrated of the same type of explaining strategy taken from the same meeting. In the first example (a) F1's question in line 1 is answered by M1 (line 2) but he is still thinking. F1 signals in line 3 to continue with 'ahm' thus implicitly requesting to explain his response. After a 2.0-second pause M1 continues in line 4, giving background information by explaining his response with 'because'.

In the second example (b) M1 starts reporting about another topic or case (line5), namely the application of professional passes for a company, initiated by short pause and 'then'. This time F2 the person who is taking the minutes is asking 'who is this' (line 6) as she might not have heard the name of the company. M1 repeats the name of company in the next turn (line 7). In line 8 F1's backchannel of 'aha' might be an implicit request to know more about this company. Thus, M1 starts with a long explaining by giving and updating the background information regarding this company and case followed by a short pause an 'ahm' perhaps wanting to introduce the next topic. This gives F1 the opportunity to ask further whether they are a 'training company' (line 10). After M1's confirmation by repeating in line 11, F1 wants to know more about this company (line 12) with a questioning repeat of probably implicitly requesting the kind or content of training the company does. In line 13, M1 starts explaining (c) and continues in line 15 after F1's implicit request (line 4) to continue with 'aha'.

The verbal backchannels consisting of non-lexical items, such as 'aha' that are employed here might also function as an implicit request that triggers explaining and could also have a similar function to what Bjørge (2010) describes as bringing 'conversation forward' and serves as 'turn-continuer', thus a means of backchannel to continue and elaborate, give further information or explain further.

4.5.2.2.1 Explaining for Negative Answer

In most cases in the data, a negative answer or outcome usually requires an explaining while a positive answer can stand free and does not require explaining. The following extract (36) also discussed under IDQ in extract (12), consisting of two examples shows that the expected outcome when checking on specific tasks would be affirmative but since it is the opposite case an explanation is needed to give the necessary background information.

Extract (36) Explaining for negative answer

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 1/2 (See Appendix B.2) Topic: F1 is reporting on a research where usually an offer has to be made in advance where it is stated how much they would charge.

1 F1: (…). So, I'm doing a:: the research now.
2 CW: ((Nodding)) You already did the offer right?
3 F1: a)→ah::: (2.0) I haven't sent it (   ) The the offer request is from a:: Mr. [NofP]
4 CW: Uh huh ((Nodding)) A::nd
5 F1: →And he asked me to do the ((Nodding)) research.
6 CW: Relate to what to the euh (German business people)
7 F1: Yeah ((Nodding))
8 CW: Did he say how much he is charging or something like that?

9 F1: b)→No ((negative head movement)). We don't know yet. It was a (delegation) in January.
10 M1: (Name of German Federal State)
11 F1: Yeah ((Nodding))
12 CW: Yeah. Ok. Normally he would inform that how much is the cost=
13 F1: Aha ((Nodding))
14 CW: → =because (…)

In this extract, in line 1 F1 after giving some prior information is about to complete her turn by stating that she is 'doing the research now'. CW is assuming that F1 did the offer for her research project and asks with indirect questioning and 'right' in final position. F1 in line 3, example (a) starts her turn with 'ah' and a 2.0-second pause that would suggest a small hesitation, perhaps trying to think how to put it since a positive answer would be preferred as signaled by CW with 'right' at the transition relevance place (TRP). F1 continues and states that she has not sent the offer thus giving a negative answer. She is at the same time explaining the negative answer and stating that the request is from their boss as a reason. In line 4, CW acknowledges F1's explanation but wants her to give further background information with a discourse continuer 'and' expecting further explaining. However, F1's further explaining in line 5 did not accomplish the result CW wanted and she herself adds on 'research that relates to German business people' (in line 6) perhaps checking on shared understanding and F1 affirms (line 6). CW then asks a further question (line 8), this time a direct yes/no question, related to this case since an offer is usually related to costs. This example in line 9 (b), similar to example (a) also projects an affirmative answer but F1 negates (line 9) trying to explain the negative outcome. M1 also steps in to add some information (line 10). In line 12 and 14, CW accepts F1's response first and in her attached turn explains how it is normally done and justifies her expected answer by explaining in giving background information.

The next extract (37), taken from the same meeting as extract (36), illustrates a negative answer with 'no' that usually needs explaining. In this case, if the explaining is not attached to the negative answer immediately, an implicit request for explaining can be made in the next turn with a questioning repeat.

Extract (37) Explaining for negative answer

Inter-Department Meeting IDE071209, p. 5/6 (See Appendix B.2)
Topic: F1 is reporting about the report of handover from a former colleague and a meeting that is set for January (next month) that is transferred to her.

1 CW: So, the setting up of appointment slot was not recorded right?
2 F1: You mean for Mr. [NofP-X]=
3 CW: Yeah ((Nodding))
4 F1: =to meet up new client? No.
5 CW: → <u>No?</u> ahmmm
6 F1: →<u>Because</u> he was, he was, he was there with one of the delegation right?
7 CW: Yeah was just that one.
8 F1: Yeah that was the one. So we we keep actually we are supposed to provide two, one was that (Name of German Federal State) delegation and another one previously there was (   ) he met up already one=
9 CW: aha
10 F1: =much much earlier I think.
11 CW: Ok ((Nodding))
12 F1: That's why we two (meetings) complete.
[…]
13 F1: and he and if he wants our services and an Mr. and if Mr. [NofP-X] wants our services then he has to pay:: (1.0) So:: that is not ah:: being conveyed to this message that he has pay extra kind of thing=
14 CW: ((Nodding))
15 F1: =so that's why the appointment. Hence the appointment in January to tell him about this together with Mr. [NofP-Y]

Preceding the talk of this extract, F1 has mentioned a meeting planned with a certain person in January and her former colleague from whom she took over, already submitted a request, most probably referring to a request to set up an appointment. In line1, CW is checking on this, assuming that 'the appointment slot was not recorded' yet with an indirect questioning and 'right' in final position. F1 is first clarifying her understanding in her latched turn (line 2 and 4) starting with 'you mean' by referring to what she said earlier before answering with 'no'. Although the expected answer is no, CW might have expected more information then just a 'no' therefore she repeats 'no' with rising intonation (line 5) which could stand for 'why not' thus requesting F1 to give more details. F1 starts explaining by giving some background information (line 8, 10). CW accepts in line 11 and F1 continues her explaining in line 12 with ‘that’s why’. The omitted sequence of turns following this extract is similar to the one discussed above until where F1 (see line 13, 15) continues further after having stated the background earlier to explain and give the reason for not yet having set up the appointment (see line 4) and thus her negative answer.

The next extract (38) similar to the extract above requires an explaining since the response to the question is negative. This is also done by a questioning repeat first before the necessary explaining can take place.

Extract (38) Explaining for negative answer

Department Meeting PR210510, p. 16 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F2 reporting and CW checking on F1’s tasks to meet up with a designer

1 CW: Ok::ay hmmm. Actually has your designer h::a:s ah::: he been coming in already to update?
2 F2: Not this week
3 CW: Not this week?
4 F2: →<u>Because</u> now the members are coming back to us=
CW: Ok
5 F2: =So he will come probably on Thursday so we will do the amendments together.
Yeah.

In this extract, in response to the indirect questioning in line 1 by CW, F2 designs the negative answer with ‘not this week’. CW repeats F2’s utterance, which could be interpreted here as ‘why not this week’ but probably would be too direct and thus the repeat might be used to ‘save face’ of F2. F2 understands that an explaining is requested by CW, she then starts explaining by giving background information in line 4 and 5 starting with ‘because’.

The two extracts (37) and (38) discussed above describe situations, where the two chairwomen, in these cases both Malaysians, implicitly request for explaining by repeating the answer when a negative answer is given without an attached explaining. The repeating questions function in these cases as implicit request for explaining. The German chairman on the other hand uses explicit request for explaining in case of a negative outcome as seen in the next extract (39).

Extract (39) Explaining for negative answer (explicitly)

Inter-Department Meeting DE141209, p. 24 (See Appendix B.3) Topic: M4 is reporting about his task of doing a research for a German company that wants to set up a business in Malaysia. CM asks M1 (HOD) instead of M4.

1 M4: Yeah she wants to set up a
2 CM: ((To M1)) Confirmed?
3 M1: ((Negative Nods)) No.
4 CM: Why not?
5 M1: →Taking some time, they want ah:: (   ) But what do we work then because I discuss with you (   ) Because we can't, we cannot really offer them anything as long as we don't know how they get their permissions for the business set up.

In this extract, M4 is reporting about a company, for which he is doing the research to set up a business (line 1). CM cuts in and asks M1 as a HOD whether it is 'confirmed' (line 2). After having received an negative answer from M1 in line 3, CM asks explicitly for explanation with 'why not' (line 4) since the negative answer given by M1 in line 3 is free standing. M1 starts explaining in line 5 by giving background information and the preconditions that are needed, e.g. the permissions for setting up a business before it can be confirmed.

As discussed so far the explaining strategy can be used after an explicit or implicit request for explaining. The explicit requests are usually made either by the person who chairs the meeting or the person who takes the minutes. The explaining strategy in these cases is used to give accurate information or additional background information for clarifying the information given in the prior utterance and hence for adding to the shared knowledge.

4.5.3 Explaining Strategy Without Request

The explaining strategy can also be employed without any request, which has the same function of adding to the shared knowledge and enhancing shared understanding by giving further information for the ongoing talk or discussion, illustrated in the following extracts.

Extract (40) Explaining without request

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 32 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F3 is reporting about editing and publishing write-ups sent to them by clients

1 F3: (…) Also starting to look at the new hmmm write-ups. [NofP-CW] ((pointing at CW)) is saving them on the server and I'm just reading through and see if they need to be edited. I think this time around (0.9) hopefully we won't have to do this much of editing because we give them the guidelines already.
2 CW: →This time they send anything that is above 250 words, I send back to them and I tell them you sent it back to me with 250 words or it's not accepted
3 F2: ahm::
4 CW: Very simple.
5 F3: →<u>Because</u> last time we had so much work=
6 CW: yeah
7 F3: =extra work to do because they did not
8 CW: hmm
9 F2: aha ((Nodding))
10 CW: It's just not possible anymore. (…)

In this extract, F3 is reporting about checking write-ups that have been sent to them most probably by members or clients after having given them the guidelines. She also gives her opinion in saying if they stick to the guidelines they 'won't have to do this much of editing' (line 1). To judge from F3's gaze, she seems to talk to the audience, viz. the other participants of the meeting but focuses on F2 who seems to be more involved. In line 2, CW takes turn, not to ask further but to add to F3's report and opinion, adding further information and adding accurate information for the audience about the guidelines of ‘maximum 250 words’. F2’s feedback ‘ahm’ (line 3) might mean to continue with explanation or showing active listening and interest in the talk. CW then completes her turn in line 4 with ‘very simple’. In line 5 and 7, F3 continues starting her latched turn with ‘because’ and explaining by adding on what CW said that they had ‘so much work’ and ‘extra work’. In line 10, CW closes this topic with ‘not possible anymore’.

This extract shows that after F3’s report in line 1, CW could have acknowledged F3’s turn and moved on checking on other tasks or to the next person to report. But instead she contributed to F3’s report on this specific topic also updating the shared knowledge and letting the audience know by explaining about the guidelines for ‘write-ups’ and how it is going to be handled ‘this time’ (line 2). F3 brings the discussion forward in adding further background information by explaining what that meant to them ‘last time’ (line 5) in contrast to ‘this time’.

The next extract (41) shows a similar case where a meeting participant takes the floor without any request and adding to the ongoing talk.

Extract (41) Explaining without request

Inter-Department Meeting IDE301109, p. 16 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F3 reporting about translation work they did for a client and mentioning a new translator they work with from the new translator’s list provided by the German Embassy

1 F3: And one of them we work together. Quite satisfying.
2 M1: (a)→It’s really [cheap compared to the other=
3 F3: [Really cheap.
4 M1: =translators so and then fast ( )
[…]
5 CM: We had one and I would like to see that add it up with your contact ((looking at F3 and M1)) there, maybe some remarks etc.
6 M1: (b)→And the special thing about the ah::m embassy list is only with those signatures from those translators we get the ((left hand movement like stamping)) certified true copy.
7 CM: Yes ((Nodding))

8 M1: →And ahm:m if they don't need certified true copy then we can translate on own
9 CM: yeah ((Nodding))
10 M1: →then we don't (need) professional translators.

In this extract, F3 is reporting about her task of providing translations for their clients or members and mentioning that they work with one specific translator from the new translator's list provided by the German Embassy (line 1). In line 2, M1 takes the floor without any request and starts explaining (a) and continues with an attached turn in line 4 that this specific translator is cheap and works fast compared to others on the list. In the omitted part of this extract, M1 gives further background information about how they profit from this translation service for their clients, which CM acknowledges and asks where the old list of translators is kept. In line 5, CM wants the old translator list to be added up or updated with the new list and looks at F3 and M1 to add up the old list with their 'contact' and put some remarks. In line 6, M1 again uses explaining (b) connecting to his prior turn with 'and' to add more information to update shared knowledge about the procedure of getting a certified translation and continues (line 8 and 10) otherwise they can do the translations themselves and won't need professional translators.

The following extract (42) illustrating another example for the use of explaining strategy without request is taken from the same meeting above and is a continuation of extract (31) that has been discussed in previous section 4.5.2.1. Similar to the extracts above (40) and (41) explaining is employed primarily to give further information and also as a means of giving opinions and discussing certain topics that need some background information and add up to their shared knowledge.

Extract (42) Explaining without request

Inter-Department Meeting DE301109, p. 26/27/28 (See Appendix B.1)
Topic: It is M3's turn and he is reporting about new regulations for foreign workers. CM, M1 comment on these new regulations and M2 joins the discussion.

1 M3: Minimum I mean (maid) even the rate is like 600.
2 CM: Aha I don't feel like that is good for Malaysia because a lot of ( )
3 M3: Yeah ((Nodding))
4 CM: I don't know what it's for and restrictions.
5 M1: (a) →( ) this meeting with you ( ) they said ah::m which plans Malaysia has to become a high income country which means 15000 USD annual salary up to 2020 or whatever plans they have like growth of 6% GDP and so on. Just all the positive thing but they also want to increase the foreign investment but the foreign investment needs ( ) lots of foreign investors are happy if they have cheaper players otherwise they go to Indonesia and so on.
6 CM: Malaysia ( ) The point is they should set ( ) which is education for example. But you want us to pay more if he doesn't have somebody who is qualified. This is at the moment two things, we have a shortcoming of ( ) for a lot of workers=
[…]
7 CM: =because you can't say we want 17 or 15000 US from 7000 something. You have to come above on the quality level.
(3.0)
8 M2: (b) →Actually that's another ( ) with [NofP-M1] we went to the Ministry of Justice and was that's another field but it's still has the same problem, education. Because the courts have too much work but just because of a lack of qualified judges
9 CM: ah:m
10 M2: So it's really like in a lot of parts.

In the preceding talk of this extract, M3 explained the differences in new regulations for expatriates and foreign workers (see extract 31) after CM had explicitly requested for explaining. In line 1, M3 gives a further example for new immigration rules, e.g. a 'maid' as unskilled foreign workers and the minimum salary. In line 2 and 4, CM comments and gives his opinion on these new regulations, which he interprets as 'restrictions'. In line 5, M1 takes the floor explaining without a request (a) from the perspective of the Malaysian government and their plan to increase foreign investment by referring to the meeting where CM was present as well and giving his opinion by also highlighting from foreign investors point of view. In line 6, CM connects to what M3 and M1 said by adding his point of view and emphasizing the need for 'education' (line 6) hence more qualified workforce for higher salaries. In the omitted part CM is explaining the situation and the need for more qualified technical workers, engineers in a long sequence of turns ending with line 7. After a short 3.0-seconds pause, M2 also takes the floor (b) and contributes to the ongoing talk or discussion, by connecting to

CM's opinion with the importance of education (line 8). M2 continues explaining by giving a different example from the Ministry of Justice and the lack of enough qualified judges and ends his contribution in line 10. In the following talk of this extract, the discussion continues and CM closes the topic after a long stretch of talk referring to the global situation and M3 continues his report.

The explaining strategy without request as discussed in the extracts above is usually employed by German meeting participants, e.g. in the extract above (42), M3 who is a Malaysian employee from the legal department and in charge of immigration matters and therefore probably the expert in this area and knows best about the new regulations and has the background knowledge, did not give his opinion in the ongoing discussion. As one of the Germans from the upper management stated in the interview, "most of them feel comfortable just reporting with what they're doing and not so much becoming really active in this discussions" (A_OX_G, p. 9). As he further points out, meetings are not only to report but to discuss certain issues therefore he tries to involve the staff in the discussions.

4.5.4 Explaining Strategy as a Resource

The explaining strategy seems to be commonly used by all meeting participants especially when used after implicit request. Explaining after implicit request is usually designed according to the verbal or nonverbal backchannel or feedback in the previous turn. The main function of explaining is to provide further information or background information so that accurate information can be obtained either to perhaps anticipate problems of understanding or acceptability or add to the knowledge or opinions for ongoing discussion. The latter is usually the case when the explaining strategy is used without request as described in the previous section. However, not all meeting participants use the type of 'explaining strategy without a request'. The meeting data revealed that this type of strategy is more preferred by certain individuals, particularly by the German chairman, and the German head of legal department and in general by more Germans than Malaysians. Similar to the type of explaining strategy without request, the explaining strategy after an explicit request is also more employed by German than by Malaysian participants and generally quite rare. This might be due to the overall face concerns or issues that an explicit request for explaining could cause, especially to Malaysians and might be therefore avoided to 'save face'. In this sense, on the other hand explaining strategy without request could be also a preemptive action to save someone's face. As the German chairman (B_OX_G) in the interview pointed out, "somebody in a group wouldn't understand, he would be afraid in front of others to say 'I don't get it' or 'I don't understand you' (…) 'you didn't explain well' (…) because of the face issues and others (…) that's why management in Asia takes more time" (p.15) referring to 'more time in explaining projects and tasks, etc.' (p. 8) although he encourages what he calls the 'open discussion culture' even encouraging the employees to say 'hey boss you are wrong' (p. 10). Another German meeting participant who consciously applies the explaining strategy states that "first instance, before explaining into detail, I would give general, eh, (…) general goal where are we heading to and why (…) because I think for general understanding it is important to know why" (C_OX_G, p. 16). Thus, the explaining strategy is primarily employed to give background and also detailed information depending on the context of use.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the meeting participants' use of common verbal communication strategies (VCS) in BELF to ensure successful and effective communication were identified and examined. Considering the notion of BELF use and user in its own right, and the concept of communicative success, viz. the achievement of goals of a particular communicative event were enabled through the use of four common VCS where meanings were negotiated and managed in the framework of CofP. Thus, the attempt to link the internal context within the institutional setting at the micro level and the external context at the macro level, more precisely connecting the verbal communication strategies used in the meeting talk with related information given in the interviews could give further insight in the analyses of the highly complex communication processes.

The four common VCS were identified and analyzed in the order of questioning, repeating, reformulating, and explaining strategy. In this specific interactional setting of meetings, all four VCS were generally used to understand the information given in the meeting talk and not the language per se. Furthermore, due to the nature and type of formal meetings, that are mainly reporting or backward-oriented meetings, the participants' roles and round-the-table procedure, VCS that involve requesting and clarifying information were the most common strategies used by both German and Malaysian meeting participants. In fact, the common VCS are used as resources regardless of the participants' lingua-cultural background in BELF meetings.

The most common regularly employed VCS is questioning strategy, mainly used due to the nature and type of meeting for the purpose of requesting and seeking for information to facilitate shared understanding and establish shared knowledge in the BELF meetings. As such a chairperson uses the questioning strategy to check on tasks and projects of the reporting participants and also to clarify the reported information if needed. A close and detailed examination of the data revealed two main categories of the questioning strategy that occur with regularity in this specific meeting interaction:

The indirect questioning strategy (IDQ) is pervasive in the meeting data and appears to be the generally preferred questioning strategy by all meeting participants while the direct questioning strategy (DQ) is generally less preferred and depends on the individual participants. However, in some context, DQ is necessary to acquire specific information. In general, IDQ require prior information based on common shared knowledge that can be seen when analyzing each case and its context. It appears that much of IDQ is designed in the form of a declarative clause or performed through part of main clause or single words accompanied by rising intonation. The tokens ‘oh, so, okay’ in initial position, and the combination thereof, as well as ‘right’ in final position add extra meaning to the IDQ, such as new information and new understanding or confirmation of prior turns. The DQ designed in form of yes/no question and wh-question is usually employed for additional, missing, or unknown information. Although the questioning strategy can be designed differently and depending on the immediate and wider context have various specific functions as summarized in the table (4.1) below, the outcome or result of the communication process is to achieve successful and effective communication and to establish or re-establish shared knowledge among all meeting participants.

Table 4.1: VCS-Questioning Strategy in BELF Meetings

Questioning Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
IDQ	Most common Generally preferred	Declaratives, e.g. (main) or part of sentence, single words with (rising intonation)	To request confirmation of understanding and clarification of information	Establishing or re-establishing shared understanding and knowledge in intercultural business communication through BELF = Achievement of successful and effective communication
		Declaratives (with rising intonation) 1) Initial position ‘oh’ 2) Initial position ‘so’ 3) Initial position ‘ok’ 4) Final position ‘right’ (expected answer usually affirmative)	To request confirmation of new information or new understanding of preceding talk or prior turn To request for confirmation of shared knowledge	

DQ	Less common	1) Yes/No Question (expected answer usually affirmative)	To seek for additional information to partly known information	
	Less preferred	2) Wh-Question	To seek and request for specific missing or unknown information	

The second common VCS identified and analyzed is the repeating strategy. In general, the repeating strategy serves as an effective and efficient way for confirmation or clarification of understanding of prior turn. From the two categories identified, full repeating is more common and thus preferred strategy compared to partial repetition. While full repeating is usually employed to confirm specific information, mostly to confirm dates, numbers, names etc., partial repetition serves to clarify prior information by correcting or modifying certain part of information through replacing or adding and thus providing further information and clarification. As revealed from the meeting data full repeating comprises always correct understanding and is thus always accepted it might serve as a form of feedback acknowledging and confirming that the message was conveyed and understood successfully. The repeating strategy when used as partial repetition with modification or correction gives the producer or speaker of original utterance the opportunity to check and accept or reject the partial repeat, which is usually accepted and only in rare cases accepted with delay. This suggests that the action of repeating strategy relies strongly on shared knowledge. In cases of incomplete shared knowledge, such as missing or vague information, partial repetition with correction or modification can be employed to re-establish shared knowledge. These findings are summarized in the following table (4.2).

Table 4.2: VCS-Repeating Strategy in BELF Meetings

Repeating Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
Full	Common Preferred	Usually single words as declaratives or with rising intonation (questioning repeat)	To confirm understanding of specific information in prior turn To seek for clarification of repeated item	Establishing or re-establishing shared understanding and knowledge in intercultural business communication through BELF = Achievement of successful and effective communication
Partial	Less common Less preferred	1) Correction (replacing part of information usually single words)	To provide further clarification	
		2) Modification (adding further information usually single words)	To provide further information and clarification	

The least employed and thus rare VCS in this data, is the reformulating strategy, summarized in the next table (4.3) below. Since it is rarely used only a few single cases could be identified and analyzed. In these cases, the reformulating strategy serves as understanding check by the recipient or as an invitation to check the accuracy or reliability of aforementioned information or message by the producer or speaker, e.g. with 'you mean' in question format. The reformulation strategy can also be employed after prior use of other VCS, such as repeating or explaining strategy to further clarify and assist or to contribute to a 'better formulation' of the aforesaid. The rare occurrence of the reformulating strategy suggests that repeating is the preferred strategy in this meeting data and the reformulating strategy might thus not be really necessary since repeating already functions as an effective way to confirm and clarify understanding. Therefore, the reformulating strategy is only employed in context where it might contribute to further clarification and thus to achieve successful communication building up on shared knowledge or re-establishing it.

Table 4.3: VCS-Reformulating Strategy in BELF Meetings

Reformulation Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
Single cases in different context	Rare and Dis-preferred	Usually full sentences or part of sentences	For checking candidate or recipient understanding or accuracy and reliability of producers' message or information in prior turn For assisting or contributing to a better formulation to clarify the aforesaid for all meeting participants	Establishing or re-establishing shared understanding and knowledge in intercultural business communication through BELF = Achievement of successful and effective communication

The last VCS, the explaining strategy is a very common strategy. Two major types of explaining strategy were identified and analyzed, one used after request that can be explicit or implicit, commonly used by all meeting participants especially when used after implicit requests, the other type without any request is generally preferred by Germans as well as the explicit request. The main function of explaining is to provide background information so that accurate information can be obtained and prior utterance be clarified to anticipate problems of understanding or acceptability from arising. At the same time the explaining strategy updates the background knowledge thus enhancing shared knowledge by adding to the knowledge or opinions for a possible ongoing talk or discussion. These findings are summarized in the following table (4.4).

Table 4.4: VCS-Explaining Strategy in BELF Meetings

Explaining Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
After explicit or implicit request	Very common Explicit request less common (rare) less preferred Implicit request common and preferred	Full sentence/s or statement/s with the lexical item ‘because’ At least one sentence or more then one sentence (especially without request)	To clarify prior utterance by adding or giving further information To update background knowledge (especially after explicit request)	Establishing and Re-establishing shared understanding and knowledge in intercultural business communication through BELF = Achievement of successful and effective communication
Without request	Less common Less preferred		To assist in adding to and enhancing shared knowledge by giving further information or background information for the ongoing talk or discussion	

The close and detailed analysis of all four verbal communication strategies shows that each verbal strategy is selectively and purposefully used in the context of formal meetings to achieve successful and effective communication. Although all four VCS are common strategies employed by all meeting participants the analysis reveals that certain strategies are more common or preferred than other strategies. What is obvious from the analysis is that these VCS in BELF ensure successful communication in intercultural meetings and each VCS has its specific functions to generally facilitate the understanding of information or message content and not the language itself. In other words, the participants show awareness of the intercultural communication context and use BELF and the VCS as a resource to achieve their communicative goals.

CHAPTER 5: NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN BELF

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the common non-verbal communication strategies (NVCS) that contribute to successful and effective communication in BELF. The importance of non-verbal communication is undeniable for effective communication and successful business interactions. Therefore, non-verbal aspects for communication should be simultaneously considered in order to understand talk-in-interaction in the workplace as pointed out by Ten Have (2001). In fact, nonverbal communication, also referred to as 'embodied action' (Goodwin, 2000) or generally as 'body language' is important for the reason that "non-verbal communication has a much greater impact and higher reliability than the spoken word" (Dumbrava & Koronka, 2009, p. 254) and as a consequence of this, they further point out that "an effective business interaction is conditioned by the proper interpretation and use of non-verbal cues" (p. 254).

In general, non-verbal cues can attribute meaning to words, e.g. by enhancing and clarifying their meaning, and by providing the context for interpretation and also giving feedback. Businesses are aware of the important role of non-verbal communication hence the significance of face-to-face communication for discussing important matters (see Hulea, 2010) rather than e.g. on the phone where the non-verbal communication is not visible to the interlocutors.

The non-verbal communication process of generating and interpreting meaning is complex and simultaneously accompanied by verbal communication and vice versa. The range of non-verbal communication clues or 'messages without using words' and the way it is used in this study thus the non-verbal communication strategies of BELF is broad including different NVCS, which define the varying roles and functions depending on individual and cultural factors. This study however focuses on common NVCS that have emerged during the BELF meeting interactions as frequently and to a certain extent purposefully employed. The meeting data revealed various NVCS that are used simultaneously alongside different verbal communication strategies.

However, to be able to analyze the process and function of each NVCS the focus will be on one specific NVCS at a time in different contexts. At the same time, by establishing and exploring the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication, a detailed analysis and interpretation can be ensured. As mentioned in the methodology section (3.4.3.3), only the most visible common body movements could be considered depending on the number of video recorders used and the size of meetings. Therefore, facial and eye expressions that seem to be an important NVCS as mentioned by some participants in the interview data could not be considered due to the need for close up recordings.

The following analysis of NVCS concentrates generally on three meetings where two video recorders could be employed thus the extracts are mainly taken from these meetings although occurring in all six meetings, thus representative for all meetings. The most common NVCS that were identified are head movements, hand movements, and eye contact and gaze, which are explored in this order in the following sections.

5.2 Head Movement as Non-Verbal Communication Strategy

The non-verbal communication strategy (NVCS) like the 'head movement' is easily captured by the video recordings unless covered depending on the video camera positioning and seating arrangement in the meeting room. There are two types of head movements that are commonly employed by all meeting participants: The first type refers to the horizontal head movement of turning head from side to side, called the 'negative nod' (see Heath & Luff, 2013), whereas the second type is the vertical up and down head movement, and refers to the 'head nod'.

Both head movements can signal some kind of feedback or 'backchannelling' (see Bjørge, 2010) on the part of the listener or receiver of the message thus defining listeners' understanding. The term 'backchannelling' as it is used by Bjørge (2010) can refer to verbal and non-verbal feedback in ELF context and pertain to various functions, such as support, attention, agreement, acknowledgement of current speakers' utterances when relating to positive 'backchannelling' (p. 193) and further to request for clarification, respond to new information, and for encouraging the speakers to continue with their turns. Feedback might involve some speaker shift unlike backchannelling that primarily functions as turn-continuer (see Bjørge, 2010). How these various functions of head movements as a feedback or backchannelling can be fulfilled in this specific BELF setting towards contributing and achieving shared understanding is explored by analyzing the meeting interactions and illustrating them based on the selected extracts. The most common non-verbal communication strategy employed in this study is the 'head nod' as head movement.

5.2.1 Head Nod Strategy as Backchannelling and Feedback

The most employed non-verbal communication strategy the 'head nod' as identified in this meeting data fulfill a wide range of different actions and various functions, e.g. from the one end active or attentive listening and acknowledging receipt of information to requesting further information, and confirming understanding on the other end. The head nod in the meeting data is transcribed as 'nod' or 'nodding', the latter describing the head nod used several times instead of once.

A head nod that has the function of attentive listening and acknowledging receipt of information may also express understanding but it does not necessarily guarantee nor prove understanding. However, all instances of head nods expressing perhaps a different degree of understanding contribute towards a common understanding and the achievement of successful and effective communication. Other occurrences of head nods that do not give feedback, e.g. used by the same speaker to close or initiate his/her turn or highlight certain lexical items are not considered. It is the use of head movements in the next turn that are relevant to this study.

In the following, head nods are analyzed and explained according to their different functions in various contexts that contribute towards a shared understanding. Since different head nods with various functions can occur in the same extract it is difficult to isolate and categorize those specific nods. Moreover, a categorization, e.g. in different sections would mean that the same extracts would have to be repeatedly discussed. Therefore, although the focus will be on one specific function the interpretation might include other functions of head nods as well.

The following extract (43) mainly illustrates the employment of head nods as NVCS to signal active listening behavior and/or to display receipt of information, often used either free standing or with the non-lexical items such as ‘hm’, ‘mhm’ and ‘ahm’ also called ‘turn-continuer’ (Schegloff, 1982) that contribute to shared understanding. As revealed in the meeting data, the head nods can be employed in between sequential latched turn/s as turn-continuers signaling implicitly understanding or explicitly through lexical items, such as ‘yeah’ or ‘yes’ and the like.

Extract (43) Nodding as active listening and display of receipt of information

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 4/5 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 is reporting about new additions to the organization’s website

1 F1: A::nd then (0.3) ah: we are planning to
2 F4: New additions ((low voice))
3 F1: Hah:m?
4 F4: New ad. New additions to our website and our services ((Nodding)) lah
5 CW: (a)→((Nodding))
6 F1: Yea::h actually I think ((RH)) it was already mentioned b:y:: [NofP] in the staff meeting.

7 F4: (b)→Hmmhmm ((Nodding))
8 F1: A:::nd then Mr. [NofP] said yeah ok=
9 CW: (c) → ((Nodding))
10 F1: =you are free to do so if you know how=
11 CW: →((Nodding))
12 F1: =therefore he came up with the idea how=
13 CW: →((Nodding))
14 F1: =we could implement what's the pricing
15 F4: (d)→Hmmmhmm ((Nodding))
16 F1: =and how would it look=
17 F4: →Hmmmhmm ((Nodding))
18 F1: =nice to bring=
19 F4: →((Nodding))
20 F1: =it up to our website =
21 F4: →ahmm ((Nodding))
22 F1: =because there are different ways of doing it.
(0.9)
23 CW: And there is a demand for it
24 F4: (e)→ahmm ((Nod))
25 CW: So I think why not?
26 F4: Yeah.

In this extract, there are ten instances of nodding used by the participants, CW and F4. It is F1's turn and she is reporting while alternating her eye contact between other meeting participants but mostly keeping eye contact with F4 and CW since they are involved in the conversation. Therefore, the action of 'nodding' is mostly employed by F4 and CW as recipients' feedback or backchannelling. While CW is the chair and hence always involved, F4 took an active part in the talk as shown in line 2 by anticipating the new topic from F1 who was continuing her report and about to introduce a new topic (line 1). Since F4 states the topic in a low voice and F1 probably did not understand acoustically and she thus requests F4 to repeat with a non-lexical utterance 'hahm?' in line 3. Following this, F4 restates the topic with modification, as shown in line 4. This is followed by the first head nod (a) by CW (line 5), which could be interpreted as a display of receipt and perhaps in this case acknowledgement of correctly anticipating the topic.

In line 6, F1 then starts with her pre-sequence that it was 'already mentioned (…) in the staff meeting', which might explain F4's anticipating the topic followed by F4's ‘hm’ and nodding (b) in line 7 not just acknowledging the receipt of information but also affirming the content of F1’s message. The type of nodding considered as active listening is employed in between F1’s sequences of latched turns by CW (c) in line 9, 11, and 13 and F4 (d) in line 15, 17, 19, 21. F4 and CW use the head nods in between F1’s utterance (line 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21) to signal active listening.

Nodding to signal active listening can be done either alone viz. ‘free standing’ as employed mostly by CW (c) here in this extract (line 9, 11, 13) and once by F4 in line 19 or combined with non-lexical items, ‘hm’ or ‘mhm’ (line 15, 17, 21). Nodding is employed seven times during F1’s sequential latched turn signaling active listening and receipt of information simultaneously. After a 0.9-second pause CW closes the topic by adding her point of view concerning the topic (line 23 and 25), which is acknowledged by F4 with ‘ahm’ and a nod (line 24), and further accepted in line 26 explicitly with ‘yeah’. Although the extract seems long, the whole talk takes only 40 seconds in total.

This extract illustrates that the head nods employed in this specific context mainly signal active listening and display of receipt of information and hence function simply as ‘turn-continuers’ without any evaluation or assessment of the aforesaid. This function of nodding also contributes to common understanding that is revealed at the end of the sequence when implicitly accepted with a 0.9-second pause and no request for clarification is made by CW or F4. Moreover, CW gives a final comment to close the topic, which is acknowledged with nodding and explicitly accepted by F4 with the lexical item ‘yeah’.

The function of nodding might always be associated with active or attentive listening and receipt of information as discussed above. However, depending on the immediate context nodding can do more. For example, in contexts where it is used with certain tokens like ‘ah’ and ‘oh’ nodding can signal the receipt of new information and simultaneously serve as 'turn-continuer' for a talk to proceed in a way requesting for more information, as is illustrated in the subsequent extract (44).

Extract (44) Nodding as turn-continuer and acknowledging receipt of new information

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 3/4 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F1 is reporting about her projects and tasks

1 F1: = (And) yeah then next one is umm this week will be (la) the final week for application for (NofC) (0.1) [so]=
2 CM: (a) →((Nod)) *Ahh* [O::kay]
3 F1: =at the moment I only have about thirty-five
4 CM: (b) →Oh ((nod)) [Ohhkay]
5 F1: [Am] looking forward to more
6 CM: for technical person [what was it again]
7 F1: [yes it's for] technical sales engineer
8 CM: (c) →*Ahh* Okay ((Nod)) Okay ((Nod)) [hmm]
9 F1: [Yeah so they] are looking to come to Malaysia (0.3) end of February but I suggested to come in the middle of February (0.2) not end of February=

In this extract, F1 is reporting about her project concerning the receipt of applications for technical sales engineers. In line 1, she has just shifted to her next topic, 'and yeah the next one is'. In line 2, CM responds in his turn (a) with a nod and 'ah' during F1's 0.1-second pause and 'so' overlaps with CM's 'okay', which is stretched. The nod and 'ah' indicates that CM has received and acknowledged the new information 'final week for application' (see line 1) with a nod followed by 'ah okay'. In this context, the token 'ah' could also mark the importance of the topic and as combined with a stretched 'o::kay' could be considered not only as receipt marker and acknowledgement but also as a turn continuer, which would encourage F1 'to go on'. This was applied by F1 as she stated the number of applications she got (line 3). CM's response in line 4 (b) that began with 'oh' first followed by a nod can be interpreted as being similar to his earlier response. However, he was also expressing surprise about the new information. CM's 'okay' overlaps with F1's attempt 'am' to start of next turn (line 5). This shows that the 'okay' as a lexical item employed by CW may be redundant since F1 already understood the nodding as well as the non-lexical items as a request to continue and give more information. After CM had clarified the detailed information with F1 ‘technical person’ (line 6) as ‘technical sales engineer (line 7) he acknowledges in line 8 (c) the detailed information given by F1 by with ‘ah’ and ‘okay’ followed by a nod. In line 8, ‘okay’ followed by a nod was repeated, which could be considered as a double confirmation not only as receipt of information but also as confirmation to understanding of the aforesaid. In the next turn, F1 started with ‘yeah so’ and this suggests an attempt to resume and summarize, and close the topic.

The head nod noted in this extract above functions as a turn-continuer after new information was received. This is signaled by ‘ah’ or ‘oh’ tokens. Further, nodding when used with ‘okay’ as shown in this context was probably not used in the sense of evaluating what was said before like a feedback. It rather functions more as a receipt marker and turn continuer at the same time, closing the prior turn and requesting to continue with next turn.

The next extract (45) could be placed at the other end of the spectrum where nodding not just serves as acknowledging the receipt of information but also involves a kind of evaluation or contains assessment such as acceptance by confirming understanding of prior utterance.

Extract (45) Nodding for confirmation of understanding of prior utterance

Inter-Department Meeting DE201210, p. 5/6 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F1 is reporting about her project

1 CM: Okay good a::nd (0.3) ((Nodding)) okay
2 F1: Mmm Ah ah mm and also I met up the (oil well) gas conference organizer ahh last (1.1) Wednesday
3 CM: (a) →Yeah ((Nod))
4 F1: =Ah so I (brought up), I mean I we will see what we can do for (twenty) I mean for ((LH)) next year
5 CM: (b) →Yeah ((Nod))

6 F1: =but at the moment I really (pitch) what we can offer (1.3) so she get back to me
7 CM: Yeah but but as I mention, you make a short [email] saying=
8 F1: (c) →[Yeah] ((Nodding))
9 CM: =that we are very ((oooo)) positive=
10 F1: Hmm ((Nod))
11 CM: =but put all the points what our our ideas (0.1) member if she wants an event before members that would be [(   )]
12 F1: (d) →((Nodding)) [She (has to come up with)] a proposal [anyway]
13 CM: (e) →[yeah] ((nodding)) right yeahh make it a little bit of (buy) that she can answer what she wants a little bit which way
14 F1: (f) →((Nodding)) Okay
15 CM: Yeah ((Nod)) that would be perfect yeah
16 F1: (g) →((Nodding)) yeah

This extract (45) illustrates various instances and functions of head nods. In line 1, CM first gives a feedback concerning the prior sequences of turns 'okay good' and then requests F1 to continue with her report verbally with a stretched 'and' and nonverbally with nodding and the token 'okay'. After F1's first turn, CM confirms with 'yeah' and nod (a) in line 3, which could be interpreted as 'received and understood', as well as his second turn in the same way (b) in line 5. After F1 finishes her third turn (line 6) CM comments in line 7 referring to what they had already discussed and advising her to draft a short email, which is understood and confirmed by F1 in line 8 with 'yeah' as acknowledgement token and nodding (c). His further proposal about the content of the email is displayed as received by F1 first with nod and 'hm' (line 10) and in line 12 also marked as understood by nodding (d) and the verbal conclusion 'she has to come up with a proposal' relating to what she had said earlier in line 6. In line 13, CM confirms receipt and understanding not just by 'yeah' and nodding but also verbally 'right yeah' as seen in example (e). He also gives F1 some advice, which she accepts in line 14 by nodding and 'okay' (f) and also accepting CM's turn with nodding and 'yeah' (g) in line 16.

As illustrated in the extract above (45), it seems that confirming and signaling understanding by nodding is mostly done in combination with 'yeah' a form of 'yes', and also with 'okay' as further described in the following extract (46) from another meeting and with different participants.

Extract (46) Nodding for confirmation of understanding of prior utterance

Department Meeting PR050710, p. 2 (See Appendix B.5) Topic: F1 is reporting about her project concerning publication and asking F4 for a press release

1 F4: I try I will write to [NofO] […] for them to give to you directly=
2 F1: (a)→Okay ((Nod))
3 F4: =because we don't do the press release aha I will ((Nodding)) ( ) ((writing down))
4 F1: forward from [NofO] right?
5 F4: (b)→Yeah ((Nodding))
6 F1: So I can I will include [NofC] in our::=
7 F4: (c)→Okay ((Nod)) ((writing))
8 F1: =handbook right
9 F4: press release ((spelling in low voice while writing down))
10 F1: Should I also do the write up for the quarterly of ((NofC)) (0.5) ((looking at CW))
11 CW: ((Nodding))
12 F1: (d)→Yeah ((Nodding))
13 CW: (e)→((Nod)) yep
14 F1: So handbook and quarterly
15 F4: [NofC] ah ((Nod))
16 F1 ((Nodding)) (0.4) yeah because they change the speakers
17 F4: ahm:: ((Nodding))
18 F1: I don't know the ( )
19 F4: (f)→Okay ((Nod))
20 F1: Yeah okay that's all about it for now

In the preceding talk of this extract, F1 has asked F4 for a press release. In line 1, F4 responds to F1, that she will ask the specific organization to send it directly to her. The first head nod by F1 in line 2 is used with 'okay' and could be interpreted as 'noted' or 'received and understood' (a) as a response to F4 latched turn (line 1 and 3). However, F1 is still requesting for a confirmation in line 4, (see also indirect questioning with right in final position), perhaps a double confirmation to make sure that she gets the 'press release' she asked from F4. In line 5, F4 confirms F1's understanding with 'yeah' and nodding (b). F1 restates her task in a latched turn (line 6 and 8) linked to the press release, which is acknowledged by F4 as 'noted' and confirmed and understood in line 7 with ‘okay’ and nod (c) at the same time F4 is writing down what she has to do, namely ask for the ‘press release’ that she is spelling in low voice while writing it down in line 9 and thus literally noting it. In line 10, F1 then asks CW a specific question that could have been difficult to interpret clearly without video recording and the use of non-verbal communication. The question is addressed to CW who first responds only by nodding to affirm F1’s question (line 11). However, to be sure it is understood as ‘affirming her question’ F1 confirms her understanding and reconfirms CW’s response by ‘yeah’ and nodding (d) in line 12, which in return CW confirms with a nod and ‘yep’ (e) in line 13. Then F1 concludes her tasks once more (line 14) F4 nodding attentively (line 17). F1 addresses F4 in line 16 and 18 perhaps justifying her initial request to F4, which F4 accepts by ‘okay’ and a nod (f) in line 19.

This extract above shows how important non-verbal communication strategies are and the different nuances of head nods in this case, e.g. although a free-standing head nod is sufficient for confirming understanding (see line 11), participants look for clear signals and signs, which in this context is often employed in combination with lexical items, such as ‘yeah’ or ‘okay’, rarely ‘yep’. As already discussed in extract (43), free standing ‘nodding’ is usually employed for active or attentive listening and display of receipt of aforesaid and possibly could but does not necessarily guarantee immediate understanding. For confirmation of aforesaid however only nodding seems not to be sufficient and thus often requires a lexical item.

A negative head nod on the other hand seen as a strong and clear sign or signal could be free standing but is rarely observed and instead in almost all cases employed with its verbal equivalent ‘no’, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.2 Negative Head Nod Strategy

The term 'negative head nod' (Heath & Luff, 2013) involves a horizontal head movement from side to side and generally supports negation. This type of head movement is usually employed with the lexical item and verbal equivalent 'no' and forms part of the question-answer adjacency pair and constitutes the negative answer of direct or indirect questions discussed under questioning strategy in the analysis of verbal communication strategies. The negative head nod serves the recipients as a strong and clear sign that the speakers' understanding in case of e.g. uncertainty is not correct and helps identifying the problem source by correcting and negotiating meaning through verbal communication strategies, such as repeating, reformulating or explaining thus rectifying and clarifying prior information or message that might have been vague or not transparent enough. However, the negative head nod is quite rare in this data, which might prove that actual problems of understanding are uncommon and if they arise negative head nods together with the lexical item 'no' interrupt the flow of interaction pinpointing to the problem source as illustrated in the following extract (47).

Extract (47) Negative head nod as response

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 8 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: CW adding on F1's report about the set up of blog on a different domain

1 CW: But it's also, it's also for our members as well
2 F3: Yeah
3 CW: To ah let's say not yet advertise but to inform I think other members you know what [they are doing]
4 F4: [So other members] can also write on our blog?
5 F3: (a) →No ((negative head nod))
6 CW: (b) →No, no ((negative head nod))
7 F1: (c) →((negative head nod))
8 F3: Not directly, they can submit it to [us]
9 F4: [Our author]
10 F3: We are going to let them know in the quarterly, right?
11 CW: Ahm:: ((Nodding))

In the previous talk preceding this extract (47), CW following F1's report about website comments that the blog in process to be launched will have four authors, including herself and F3 and also naming the other two authors. In line 1, CW further adds that the blog is also for the members to inform other members (line 3). In line 4, F4 asks whether the members can also write on their blog? Although CW mentioned only 4 authors in previous talk, the additional information given in line 1 and 3 by CW might have confused F4 thus the question to clarify her understanding. Moreover, CW's additional information in line 3 is not clearly defined and could be interpreted the way F4 presents her understanding. The response comes from F3 (line 5) first in example (a) with a 'no' and negative head nod followed by CW's double 'no' and negative head nod (b) in line 6, and F1 with free standing negative head nod (c) in line 8. Although F4's question was primarily directed to CW, F3 reacted first, since she is also involved as one of the authors for the blog, F1's use of only the negative head nod might be showing passive involvement since it is still her turn to report and indicating active listening and also giving feedback. In line 8, F3 in her following turn explains CW's turn in line 3 that members can inform other members but through them, stating 'not directly, they can submit to us'. F4 accepts by displaying her new understanding by 'our authors' referring to CW's prior information in the preceding talk. In line 10, F3 reveals and explains further how the members will be informed. This information was perhaps clear to other participants but was not shared by F4 and thus might have lead to her misinterpretation in line 4.

As illustrated above in the extract (47) a negative head nod is usually accompanied with the lexical item 'no' (see example (a) and (b)) and the only exception of 'free standing' negative head nod might signal passive involvement and feedback as illustrated by F1 in line 7 example (c). Whereby in contrast, a 'free standing' head nod might not only show attentive listening but also active involvement of recipients as described earlier in extract (43) in section 5.2.1.

Generally, a negative head nod is not used ‘free standing’ and is in almost all cases employed with ‘no’ to perhaps support and enhance by disaffirming or disagreeing prior utterance. From the few instances observed in this data although the negative head nod seems redundant it is still employed in the context where a correction is important to avoid further problems of understanding. In other cases, negative head nods are not used and the verbal equivalent ‘no’ is sufficient enough. In contrast a ‘yes’ is in almost all cases accompanied by a nod. It seems that negative verbal feedback, e.g. disagreement or disconfirmation is basically a dispreferred action and only used if indeed necessary, and negative head nods even less due to its reinforced action. However, it demonstrates to the speaker verbally and non-verbally that his/her understanding is problematic and needs to be attended immediately that usually involves stopping the flow of conversation as shown above in extract (47) to achieve shared understanding and thus successful and effective communication.

5.3 Hand Movement as Non-Verbal Communication Strategy

The NVCS ‘hand movement’ in this specific setting of meeting talk is commonly used but seems to play a rather tangential role, depending on contexts. In other institutional contexts on the other hand, such as in an auction, hand movements can play an essential role (see Heath and Luff, 2013). Hand movements enhance and facilitate understanding through different actions and functions. This was noted by Virkkula-Räisänen (2010), who highlighted the significance of semiotic resources, such as pointing and other gestures to e.g. make a referent, an object or a movement clear to the audience, hence facilitating understanding. As observed in this study, hand movements can be similarly used to clarify a referent or an action, in general making an utterance more explicit and thus function as contextualization cues that contribute to understanding.

In most of the cases, it appears that the hand movements function as contextualization and visualization of the verbal interactions. They add or complement meaning to the verbal communication and thus help to make the utterance explicit and clear. Ekman and Friesen (1969) describe this as illustrator, shaping what is being said to enhance clarity (Hartman, 2004). In this study, it was observed that the NVCS of hand movements is highly context-sensitive as well as dependent on individual persons and their cultural norms. Since individual rather than cultural differences were observed in this context, it is suggested that participants are aware of the intercultural business setting and are consciously trying to follow the international business culture. Moreover engaging with one another in a specific CofP they have learned that specific hand movements might not be suitable or even impolite in certain context and employ hand movements as NVCS when and where it is appropriate.

Two types of hand movements are commonly employed in the meetings, the first type of hand movement referring to participants of meetings or other people and objects and the second to verbal communicative actions. Using hand movements to describe and explain verbal utterances or to refer and point to people or objects depend on the individual person, e.g. some meeting participants use less hand movements than others or employ them differently. However, there are similar hand movements employed usually using both hands when referring to e.g. personal pronouns ‘we’ and ‘you’ in plural, or when comparing things. Generally, hand movements complement or add to verbal communication and have a supportive function helping to convey the message more precisely. In the following section the type of hand movements describing verbal communicative actions is discussed first.

5.3.1 Hand Movement to Clarify Verbal Communicative Actions

This type of hand movement as NVCS is generally used when participants report and explain in detail about their specific tasks and projects, e.g. formulating and sharing their thoughts, describing actions and objects, etc. to make utterances explicit and help contextualize and visualize the verbal communication. As mentioned above the use of hand movements depend on the individual person, it might also depend on the type of meeting and nature of interactions within. It seems that the more interactive the message is the more hand movements are used. Hand movements show perhaps more involvement of the speakers. In the department meeting for instance with five participants in total, participants report more in detail about their tasks and projects and also make further suggestions that also depending on specific topics might trigger discussions involving other participants of the meeting, it seems that more hand movements are used when discussing projects and expressing ideas than e.g. in inter-department meetings where usually participants just report and the interaction usually takes place between the chair person and the reporting person. However, in some cases when e.g. a third person is consulted or referred to, such as the head of department, the speakers are more involved in e.g. discussing certain issues, thus more hand movements are used.

The following extract (48), taken from the department meeting illustrates how hand movements are used to enhance meaning of verbal communication. In this meeting with five participants in total, each participant uses hand movements with varying frequency but with similar hand movements relating to certain verbal communicative actions. In general, CW and F1 both hold a pen in their hands and use hand movements frequently, same applies to F3 who holds a pencil instead and most of the time shakes it while reporting, F3 and F4 use less hand movements to support their talk, e.g. F2 has her hand clasped together resting on the table most of the time while reporting and F4 sometimes takes notes or browses through the documents in front of her.

Extract (48) Hand movement to enhance verbal communicative actions

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 1/2 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 reports about uploading a list of publication on their website

1 F1: And ((RH↑)) not like before we had ((RH↑)) different sites ((RH moving horizontally from side to side drawing horizontal lines in the air)). Now ((RH↑)) everything ((RH↑↓)) is on one list. Maybe all of us can have a look=
2 F4 ahmm
3 F1: =and say whether ((BH)) we want to have ((oooo)) any changes or maybe ((BH)) ((oooo)) revise the pricing b:ecause (0.7) for the quarterly we still have ((oooo)) USD mentioned ((BH))
4 F2: HmmmHmm ((Nodding))
5 F1: and actually I think all the prices should be in::=
6 F3: ((Nodding)) Euro or Ringgit ((Nodding))
7 F1: =Euro or Ringgit, therefore that we fix ((RH –fingers touching table)) the pricing from USD to (0.8) actually I think Ringgit and then we (0.6) just mention ((RH↑-elbow resting on table – horizontal movement)) down at the bottom
8 F2 ahm:m
9 F1: that the daily conversion ((RH↑)) rate would be used would be applying cause ((turns towards CW))
10 CW: ((Nodding))
11 F1: =otherwise ((elbow resting on table, RH pointing up, twisting back and palm of hand)) we need to somehow convert it to Euro and then ((RH)) maybe we lose again

In this meeting, F1 is reporting about the list of publications she put on the website. The way she uses her hand movements might help the audience to visualize and contextualize her talk thus supporting her message or enhancing the information she is giving. In line 1, F1 uses hand movement with her right hand (RH) up making a horizontal movement when uttering the word ‘different sites’ and a vertical up and down movement when talking about ‘one list’. In her next latched turn (line 3) she uses both hands (BH) when referring to ‘we’ and moves both hands in a round shape back and forth to illustrate ‘changes’ and ‘revise the pricing’ which is currently in USD but she proposes Euro or Ringgit as the Malaysian currency (line 7). In line 7, she suggests to ‘fix’ the pricing to Ringgit while the little finger of her RH touches the table and 'down at the bottom' RH index finger and thumb together moving horizontally while elbow resting on the table to show where on the website. In line 9, she continues with the same hand movement while stating 'the daily conversion rate'. The word 'otherwise' in line 11 that shows the alternative is used while her elbow resting on the table and twisting the back and palm of her RH similar to 'changes' in line in line 5. The nodding and non-lexical items 'ahm' and 'hm' by other participants give feedback and signal understanding of F1's verbal and non-verbal communication.

The question arises here whether the other participants would have understood F1 the same way without the non-verbal communication of hand movements. In this extract (48) the use of hand movements by F1 seems to help contextualize and visualize the verbal communication. Since all participants use hand movements to a certain degree when formulating their thoughts, it seems to be a useful strategy to support their message and to enhance communicative clarity. The next extract (49) taken from the same meeting illustrates other hand movements to support verbal communication. This time employed by the chairwoman of the meeting.

Extract (49) Hand movement to enhance verbal communicative actions

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 11 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 and CW discussing about the layout and pictures for the new website

1 CW: I mean what we've been using on the blog is ((RH)) that <u>durian</u> and ((LH)) the <u>strawberries</u> you know.
2 F1: Yeah ((Nodding))
3 CW: the ((BH)) the <u>double picture</u> ((oooo))
4 F1 Yeah ((Nodding))
5 CW: So somehow it could be part of our branding as well when <u>we</u> ((BH)) use for our ((BH-fingers pointing down)) <u>blog</u> as well as for ((BH-fingers pointing down)) our <u>website</u>, then <u>people</u> ((RH)) actually you know it ((LH↑)) <u>captures</u> ((LH – fingers pointing up)) captures the people's =
6 F1: ((Nodding))
7 CW: =mind a bit you know. That this is ((BH)) [NofO] Malaysia=
8 F1: Aha ((Nodding))

9 CW: = I mean ((BH)) <u>we</u> ((oooo)) could yeah. And we already ((RH – pointing out)) have <u>that</u> ready so we don't have to pay actually for anything.

In this extract, CW is suggesting to use the same pictures they have for the blog as well as for the website. In line 1, she talks about the 'durian' using her RH open palm and the 'strawberries' using her LH (open palm) to put them in contrast as the 'double picture' using BH open and moving back and forth (line 3). In line 5, she further suggests that it could be part of their branding if they use the same pictures for the blog as well as for the website by using BH for 'we' with fingers pointing down for the 'blog' and same movements for 'website'. For the 'people' she uses her RH and 'captures' people's mind LH fingers pointing up and moving towards her head, which visualizes adequately the 'capturing of peoples minds'. In line 9, she uses BH open moving slightly for 'we' and the RH pointing out to refer to the pictures that they already have ready, perhaps pointing to the direction of her office and referring to the location of pictures with 'that'. Since CW is directly talking to F1 who is in charge of the website project, the feedback comes from F1 with e.g. 'yeah' and nodding confirming understanding and agreeing to CW's suggestions.

Although different hand movements are employed in extract (48) and (49) by two different speakers and concerning two different topics there are some similarities when referring to certain utterances: The use of both hands for 'we' or when comparing and contrasting at least two items. This has been observed throughout the meetings involving also different meeting participants. This type of hand movements as illustrated in these extracts is generally used to enhance communicative clarity of speakers' own verbal communicative actions. If the hand movements would be left out in these extracts or in other words if just the audio without the visual would be available the shared understanding would perhaps be not threatened. However, the recipients might have to put more effort in listening carefully to understand the speaker and the way it was intended as well as use their own imaginations whereas with the hand movements, recipients might be able to faster visualize and contextualize speakers' verbal communication. Thus, this type of hand movement is adding to verbal communication and supporting shared understanding.

5.3.2 Hand Movement to Refer to People or Objects

The second type of hand movement in this section in contrast to the first type of hand movements discussed above rather complements verbal communication by clarifying the referent that can be a person or an object. This type of hand movements involves mainly pointing gestures and seems to play an important role as a NVCS for making reference of verbal communication clear and unambiguous, thus leading to effective communication. In this meeting setting especially, this type of hand movements are used effectively and successfully to determine the referents in the interactions. This also might preempt potential problems from arising that otherwise would need be clarified afterwards and would be time consuming.

The following extract (50) illustrates how the hand movement could be used effectively to refer to people and clarify the referent effectively. It also shows that different hand movements are employed when referring to different people such as to the meeting participants present in the meeting room and people that are absent in the course of the interactions. In this context, two types of hand movements were observed, e.g. by pointing with the index finger or with the open palm of the hand, which basically depends on whom the speaker refers to as illustrated below.

Extract (50) Hand movement to refer to people

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 17 (See Appendix B.6)
Topic: It is F3's turn to report on market studies. CM includes F5 (HOD) into the conversation.

1 F5: But I'm thinking you know
2 CM: (a)→You you ((RH-pointing with index finger at F3)) come to in the afternoon please (once) to my room ((RH-index finger up)) because I give you one more contact on plantation business in ((Name of State of Malaysia))
3 F3: A:am yes we got so many information from (NofCx) and (NofCy) and and they said that they using pumps you know ((BH-like counting with RH touching LH)) at (three different areas) areas to sludge (1.0) for waste ((BH)) water and for something else
4 CM: This ((RH open palm towards F3)) is the information we need (0.8) and then →(b) you call also please ((RH-index finger pointing up ↑ towards to F5)) [NofP] (1.1) who is not in pumps he ((RH-open palm)) is from, → (c) you ((RH open palm pointing at F5)) know him yeah [NofP] from ((RH knocking on the table)) (1.1) from the exhibition ((RH index finger horizontally)) he is one of the exhibitors
5 F5: (From) [NofC]?
6 CM: yeah (1.0) [NofP] we did the presentations within the whole German group (2.0) yeah
7 F5: Aha
8 CM: So he is very knowledgeable he is doing (bio) gas ((RH fingers touching table)) but he knows the industry very well yeah ((Nod)) so you [NofP-F5] you provide [NofP]'s contact ((RH – index finger ↑ pointing to F5 first, then shifting to F3)) he is a member of us (d) →what is the member ((RH-pointing at F10)
9 F6: [NofC]
10 CM: [NofC] ((RH)), yes very ((RH index finger towards F6)) good (1.0) ((RH thump up sign))

In the preceding talk of this extract, F3 started reporting on market studies that she is conducting for clients. CM had asked whether a certain person has been contacted regarding this market study and gave further suggestions. F5 as the head of department stepped in to clarify some details concerning this project and CM gave his opinion, ideas and suggestions which other industries to involve.

In line 1, F5 is thinking about what CM suggested earlier while he already made up his mind in line 2 and instructs F3 'you you come to in the afternoon please (once) to my room' with the hand movement (a) RH index finger pointing at F3 making the meaning of his utterance 'you you' clear. Without the hand movement, this utterance could be interpreted differently and 'you, you' could either refer to both F5 and F3 or just to F5 since CM was speaking to her in his previous turn. However, the verbal and non-verbal communication together help interpret the real meaning of the verbal utterance, the first 'you' initiates the eye contact to F3 and the second you together with the RH index finger pointing at F3 clarifying the referent.

CM then moves his RH with the index finger up in the air to probably indicate the importance of the one contact that he wants to give to F3 '(once) to my room because I give you one more contact' or to indicate the exact number of 'one more contact'. From the wider context it is known that the hand movement does not refer to his room, as it is not upstairs and neither pointing to the direction of his room. In line 3, F3 is confirming first and then referring indirectly to the suggestion (contact) CM gave and the related industry in 'three different areas' they have already contacted and the kind of information they received. In line 4, CM takes up what F3 said and comments with RH open palm pointing at F3 'this is the information we need', thus relating to what F3 said. After a 0.8-second pause he tells 'and then you call please [NofP]' (b) RH index finger pointing up towards F5 when he tells the name of the person thus the pointing could refer to the person that F5 has to call and when talking about this person 'he is from' CM uses his RH with open palm. In the same turn, CM still uses his RH with open palm when specifically addressing F5 (c) with 'you know him yeah from' trying to remember from which company he is while knocking on the table with his RH, and after a 1.1-pause telling 'from the exhibition' with his RH pointing horizontally and referring to exhibition where F5 was involved.

In line 8, CM gives more information about the person 'he is doing bio gas' using his RH and touching fingers on the table, then CM tells F5 to provide the contact for F3 while he uses his RH index finger up (↑) when uttering the person's contact and shifts from F5 to F3, it is the 'contact' that he is referring to with his index finger that F5 has to give F3. At the end of his turn CM turns his head and body slightly towards F10 who sits next to him asking and directs his RH towards her (d) asking ‘what is the member’ inquiring about the person who is from a member company. However, F6 replies instead of F10 (line 9). Without the visual it could be interpreted differently CM’s question might have been addressed to F5 or F3 and a third person that the question was referred to might not even be registered in the transcript. Moreover, since the reply came from F6 who was not involved in the conversation at all CM’s question might have been interpreted as problematic for F5 or F3. The praise that CM gives in line 10 to F6 where he points at F6 with his RH index finger is clearly directed to F6 and his utterance of the word ‘good’ is supported by the use of ‘fist and thumb up’ sign.

This extract (50) illustrates how hand movement could be an essential NVCS to facilitate understanding of verbal communication. In line 2, 4, and 8 certain verbal utterance indicated here with a, b, c, d could have been difficult to understand without the use of hand movements. The hand movements are employed to clarify the referent by complementing the verbal utterance. As discussed above, other interpretations could have been possible without the use of hand movements, e.g. in (a) more than one person could have been implied with ‘you, you’, in this case F5 and F3, in (b) ‘you’ could have referred to either F5 or F3, and in (d) the question posed by CM could have been addressed to either F5 or F3 but in fact it was directed to a third person (F10) and moreover instead of F10 another person replied (F6). In this case, the next turn proof could not have determined the recipient. This shows that hand movements not only complement meaning, but also function as an important NVCS, e.g. especially in the context of meeting where hand movements are often used to refer to people without explicitly calling the name of the recipient, unlike in line 8, where CM used F5’s name ‘you [NofP-F5]’ to refer to her and in this case making the hand movement redundant. Thus, the use of hand movement as a NVCS can make the verbal utterance explicit.

Moreover, this extract also shows that the German chair (CM) avoids to point with his index finger at F5 who is the Malaysian head of department and instead uses his RH open palm. In contrast he uses his index finger when addressing F3 or F6 who are both Germans (see Appendix B.6). In Malaysia, using the index finger to point at and address people is inappropriate and can be considered as impolite or rude. In Germany however in general and especially in this kind of meeting context when used by a chairperson, it does not have necessarily a negative connotation.

The next extract (51) taken from the same meeting illustrates how hand movements can be used to refer to objects. Similar to the extract (50) discussed above, hand movements are an effective NVCS to make verbal utterances explicit and visible. The hand movement as a NVCS facilitates understanding by complementing verbal statements thus helping to make statements unambiguous. Hand movements can also make further verbal descriptions or assessments redundant as explained in the following extract.

Extract (51) Hand movement to refer to objects

Inter-Department Meeting DE201210, p. 26 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: It is F6’s turn to report and she is about to report her last topic.

1 F6: And then last thing the [NofC] introduction part for the marketing analysis I gave it ((RH-pointing at documents in front of CM)) is, it is on the table
2 CM: Yes it’s on my table (a) ((BH-touching some documents in front of him)) somewhere (b) here it is yeah this is for the [NofC] but that is by far not that important than the sheet (c) ((RH-index finger pointing at documents in front of F6)) yeah (c) this is hundred times more the other one yeah okay but this ((RH-on the document)) one I will also redo today yeah
3 F6: Okay alright okay
CM: Or latest on the flight (and have replied Wednesday then)
4 F5: Ye::ah because we need this ((RH- index finger pointing to the document in front of CM)) also for the (final) report
5 CM: (d) You see ((RH- index finger pointing towards documents in front of F6)) what other ((BH) points I have and invoice from (NofC) wrong and a couple ((BH)) of things otherwise we don’t get the funds ((Nod)) yeah okay ((Nodding))
6 F6: That’s it.

In the talk preceding this extract, F6 had reported about the tasks that she had, one was relating to a 'proposal' and second to a 'fact sheet' where she encountered difficulties updating and needs CM's help to complete and for it to be further processed. In line 1, she reports about the last topic of her report 'last thing the introduction part for the market analysis I gave it is, it is on the table' while uttering this statement she points with her (a) RH at the documents in front of CM. Without the hand movement the statement 'it is on the table' would be ambiguous and not be clear to which document and on which table she refers to. CM's next turn (line 2) where he confirms F6's statement 'yes it's on my table' could be interpreted as the document on his desk in his room however together with the use of hand movement (b) (BH palm facing down touching the documents in front of him) it becomes clear that CM's refers to the documents on the meeting table in front of him. This hand movement also shows that he is looking for the document that F6 referred to together with the verbal utterance 'somewhere here it is'. After finding it, he compares with 'the sheet' in front of F6 (c) while his RH index finger pointing at documents in front of F6 he states 'this is hundred times more than the other one' referring to the documents in front of F6. Then he does the comparison 'but this I will also redo today yeah' his RH on the document in front of him that he found earlier. Without the hand movements the deictic term 'this' and the referent in this case the different documents would have been difficult to understand and to interpret. In line 4, F5 refers to documents in front of CM (d) with her RH index finger pointing and the verbal statement 'we need this also for the final report'. Without the hand movement it would have been unclear to which documents F5 is referring to with 'this'. In line 5, CM points with his index finger to the documents in front of F6, this time referring to the importance of those documents and also to (d) 'other' and 'couple of things' that he needs to do using his both hands (BH).

This type of hand movement with the pointing gestures, as discussed in the extracts (50) and (51) helps clarify the referent, which can be a person or an object by making the verbal utterance unambiguous, clear, and explicit. It is noted that the pointing gestures of using the index finger or the open hand palm can differ depending on the context and the referent. The main function of the hand movements as illustrated in these two extracts is to complement meaning of the verbal utterances when referring to a person or an object, such as personal pronouns 'you' or deictic terms like 'this'. Although in general, the context might help to clarify the referent, in this specific meeting context, pointing gestures are necessary and an effective means to clarify the referent without using detailed verbal explanations. Therefore this type of hand movements as a NVCS plays an essential part in achieving effective and successful communication.

Hand movements usually accompany and support verbal communication in many ways depending in general on the individual person, his/her role and involvement in the interaction and the meeting although some common hand movements were observed among all meeting participants. In some cases however the hand movement can be used without a verbal utterance where reference is made implicitly, e.g. by pointing at a person. In these cases, non-verbal communication is crucial and the meaning can only be interpreted considering the wider context of meeting setting and other NVCS, such as the eye contact and gaze, which is an overarching NVCS and generally used simultaneously discussed in the next subchapter.

5.4 Eye Contact and Gaze as Non-Verbal Communication Strategy

Eye contact and gaze is an important element of non-verbal communication in business meetings. First and foremost, eye contact establishes a 'listener and speaker connection' (see Munter, 2009), such as also indicating the wish to communicate that can be done non-verbally only by establishing an eye contact first as evident in the meeting talk. Gaze as it is employed in this study refers to the act of keeping or maintaining the eye contact after obtaining the gaze or establishing eye contact. Establishing eye contact and maintaining gaze between the interlocutors is a basic prerequisite for successful and effective communication, as recipients show interest to what the speaker is saying and signal active listening often combined with the head movement nodding as feedback. Speakers are able to monitor recipients' feedback and check effectiveness of their own communication. It has been observed that eye contact and gaze in this specific meeting setting and context play an essential role and thus could be considered as an overarching non-verbal resource that is always mobilized accompanying verbal and other non-verbal communication in the interaction with each other and can be strategically used in meetings.

To transcribe eye contact and gaze in meetings is a very challenging task since gaze between interlocutors is not static and can shift constantly in interactions between other meeting participants and therefore very difficult to capture in detail. Moreover, the video recordings do not always show clear pictures of the face especially in meetings with many participants such as in inter-department meetings but still the eye contact and gaze could be revealed also from the head movement and the body posture. The best insights however could be achieved through rather close-up recordings in the department meetings with smaller number of participants and two video cameras. The non-verbal transcripts of meeting data for eye contact and gaze refer only to the gaze between the speaker and recipient in their turns, and does not cover all gazes, e.g. the gaze of speakers or recipients shifting to other meeting participants or vice versa while they are involved in the conversation. It is highly complex and would hinder the intelligibility of the transcripts if all gazes, e.g. from the audience while following the conversations would and could be captured in detail and are therefore put as comments in double brackets and set out in the general observations.

General observations of the use of eye contact and gaze in the meetings illustrate usually at least three parties being involved in the talk: The speaker reporting, the chairperson as the main recipient, and the other meeting participants also called the audience. All three parties are using eye contact and gaze simultaneously while alternating between speaker and recipient or listener showing involvement in the interactions by establishing rapport with each other and constantly monitoring their feedback. Therefore, the attempt to categorize 'eye contact and gaze' as a non-verbal communication strategy is not so straightforward since in this meeting setting it is used simultaneously and employed by at least three parties. Eye contact and gaze can have several functions in this specific meeting context, e.g. when looked at it from the perspective of the users, e.g. the person reporting, the chairperson and the audience. In the following sections the NVCS of eye contact and gaze is categorized according to its various function. Three categories have been determined explaining how eye contact and gaze can be used as a NVCS to secure successful and effective communication, namely monitoring interaction and feedback, regulating flow of conversation and turn-taking, and determining turn allocation and regulating participation.

5.4.1 Monitoring Interaction and Feedback

In the meetings, the round-the-table procedure provides the platform when and how meeting participants usually take their turns to report. The chairperson determines who starts first and who comes next, this way it is always one person after the next who is reporting while the other meeting participants or audience and the chairperson are listening. The chairperson is usually actively engaged in the interaction with the reporting person as the primary recipient.

General observations, e.g. of the department meetings with five meeting participants in total reveal that after an initial eye contact and gaze is established between the speaker and the chairperson as the primary recipient, the speaker starts reporting while looking at the chairperson and the audience and vice versa. Although the audience refers to all participant in the meeting, the gaze of the reporting person tends to be directed to participants sitting in the line of sight which usually excludes the one/s sitting next to the speaker (e.g. appendix B.4, B.5) unless it is the chairperson as observed in most of the inter-department meetings (e.g. appendix B.6). In these cases, when the chairperson is not sitting at the head of the meeting table, an effort is made to adjust, e.g. to turn or lean forward to be able to gaze at the chairperson. While the audience is usually signaling active listening by gazing at the speaker, the chairperson also signals active listening to the speaker as well as monitors both the speaker and the audience. The speaker on the other hand usually shifts the gaze, monitoring constantly the feedback of the chairperson and the audience when reporting. This way the speaker gives the opportunity to every person in the audience including the chairperson to give their feedback as shown in the following extracts.

The first extract (52) below illustrates the gaze between the speaker that is marked above an utterance and the recipient below. The line shows the gaze toward each other, the absence of a line means lack of gaze between the two but not lack of gaze in general since the speaker is either looking at the audience or at the documents in front of her/him. The eye contact is marked with an X, the movement from non-gaze to gaze with dots, and the dropping of gaze with commas (see also table 3.4 for transcription convention).

Extract (52) Eye contact and gaze to monitor feedback

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 1 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 just started reporting about her first topic.

1 F1: We want to implement the job market section for our website and↓ its already
……………..[x___________________________
done. Just↑ the layout is done by me. [NofP-CW]→[has sent us ((RH)) hm::m
2 CW: ………….. [x__________________
3 F1:___,,,.……………[x_________________
pricing (0.10) ah:: [I think we discuss later=
4 CW: __________
((Nodding))
5 F1: _____________________,,,
=about the pricing because I've=
6 CW: ____________
Aha ((Nodding))
7 F1: = just quickly printed it out ↓ (0.1) a:nd a:s w:ell on the we::bsite the publication ahh:: ((hiccup)). Now I put there ((RH↑)) a list of publications.

In this extract, F1 starts reporting her first topic 'the job market' where she first looks quickly at her documents in front of her on the table then alternately to F4 and F2 sitting in front of her and with her utterance 'it's already done' she looks down (↓). In her second sentence she looks up (↑) and again looking at F2 and F4 and then at CW when mentioning her name in line 1. In line 2, CW directs her gaze to F1 when she hears her own name and both sustain the gaze towards each other until line 3 where F1 drops her gaze towards CW, looks at the audience and shifts back to CW when uttering 'I think we discuss later' since this utterance is meant for CW and her gaze is maintained until line 5 and the utterance 'about the pricing because I've'. In line 4 and 6, CW gives a feedback without interrupting verbally by nodding and combined with the turn-continuer token 'aha' (line 6) and sustaining her gaze towards F1 until line 7. In line 5, F1 drops her gaze towards CW when she begins her sentence with 'I've' and after having received a feedback from CW (line 6), and continues her latched turn in line (7) 'just quickly printed it out' looking down. After a 0.1-second pause, which could signal the start of next topic, she looks again at the audience and continues with her second topic ‘the publication’.

This extract shows how the speaker is shifting the eye contact and gaze to different addressees, alternating between the chairperson and the audience. When reporting generally she looks at the audience and when talking about certain details, e.g. about CW who has done the ‘pricing’ F1 shifts her gaze towards her and again when she proposes to discuss this matter later ‘I think *we* discuss later about the pricing’ she directs her gaze to CW as ‘we’ refers to CW and her, implicitly awaiting CW’s feedback. In the subsequent report, F1 continues reporting alternating her gaze between CW and the audience to monitor their feedback. On the other side the recipients, the chairperson and the audience signal active listening by gazing at her as a form of feedback, and also sometimes combining their gaze with nodding and/or or non-lexical items. The signaling of active listening as a form of feedback also enforced by nodding shows that he speakers’ message has been conveyed and that the speaker can move on with the reporting.

The speaker can also target a specific person from the audience by making eye contact or directing the gaze to that specific person while reporting concerning certain topics in which the targeted person may be involved and giving him/her the right and opportunity to react or comment if desired without explicitly asking as illustrated in the next extract (53).

Extract (53) Eye contact and gaze to monitor feedback

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 24 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F3 just started reporting about her first topic.

1 CW: ….[x__________,,,
Ok uhmm [NofP-F3].
2 F3: Yeah ((gaze alternating between F2 and F4)) uhmm this morning=
3 F2: Yeah ((Nodding))
4 F3: = I was looking through all the [NofO] guys. So far I only found one=
5 F4: aha
6 F3: =which is the deputy minister of defense ((CW gazes at her quickly and drops it down)). That, ((LH)) one VIP luncheon that I have booked=
7 F2: aham
8 F3: = So I made a short summary a:::nd I saved it in the folder=
9 F4: yeah ((Nod))
10 F3:= ((LH)) and I also emailed to you. ((gaze directed to F4))
11 F4: Yeah, yeah ((Nodding))
12 F3: Yes. So that one=
13 F4: ((Nodding))
14 F3:= done ((LH)) The others we:: really do not have hmmm ((gaze directed to F2))
15 F2: I think we just scrap the others 'lah' [=Malaysian colloquial expression], we just grab this one.
16 F3: That one? Ok.
17 F2: ahm ((Nod))

In this extract, F3 starts reporting after CW chose her as next speaker while making eye contact calls her name and drops down her gaze and writing down something (line 1). In line 2, F3 looks first down quickly at her documents in front of her and then gazes alternately at the audience to F2 and F4 sitting in front of her while reporting. Her first topic consists of five latched turns (line 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). In between F2 and F4 react by giving some feedback, F2 in line 3 reacts with 'yeah' and nodding when F3 says 'this morning' in line 2. This might be a reference to perhaps F3 and F2 having already talked about this topic in the morning before the meeting, and therefore F2 knew already what F3 was going to say. In line 4, F3 continues and F4 also reacts with 'aha' (line 5) when she says 'I only found one' as well as in line 8 ' I saved it in the folder' with the feedback 'yeah' and nodding (line 9), and at the end of her turn 'and also emailed it to you' (line 10) this time directing her gaze deliberately to F4. This time F4 gives feedback with double confirming 'yeah, yeah' and nodding (line 11). This report of F1 shows that both F2 and F4 probably received an email from F3 and therefore had prior knowledge regarding this topic. In line 6 when F3 reports that she found one 'the deputy minister of defense' CW looks up and gives a quick gaze at F3 and drops it down again, probably to signal her attention and the importance of the person mentioned, and at the end of this line 'that I have booked' F2 responds with 'aham' which might be referring to prior information and signaling shared knowledge. In line 12 and 14 of two latched turns, F3 finishes the topic with 'that one done' followed by the utterance 'the others we really do not have hmm' and purposely directing her gaze to F2 who probably is involved and implicitly inviting her to give her feedback which F2 does in line 15. F3 then request for confirmation in line 16 from F2, which she does by affirming in line 17.

This extract (53) shows how the reporting person, in this case F3 can use eye contact and gaze strategically not just to monitor feedback but also target specific people implicitly for feedback. When alternating her gaze in the audience she informs them about her tasks giving them equal opportunity to respond and react but when she directs her gaze to one specific person concerning a certain topic, she implicitly requests and expects the feedback from that specific person. Without the video recordings and the visual one would assume that e.g. F3 is talking to CW exclusively until line 11 when F4 responds with 'yeah, yeah' still explicable from the context as 'you' could have referred to F4 but later in line 15 F2 gives her feedback by suggesting what to do and this might raise questions on why CW is not responding instead and could probably be interpreted as an problematic part of conversation on the part of F3 that perhaps needed support from F2. However, it was revealed that in this case F3 was targeting F2 implicitly for feedback and facilitating her turn. Thus, not only the chair but also a speaker can facilitate a turn and regulate the conversation, which is discussed in the next section.

5.4.2 Regulating Flow of Conversation and Turn-Taking

Eye contact and gaze can also be employed by the speaker to implicitly ask somebody specific to take turn and comment and/or explain further, in other words, it can be strategically used for seeking for further information. This often happens in cases when support is needed to clarify certain topics or when more background information is required usually targeted to people involved or in charge of as well as responsible for certain projects as a kind of seeking for expertise knowledge.

Extract (54) Eye contact and gaze to ask implicitly to take turn

Department Meeting PR210610, p. 12 (See Appendix B.4) Topic: F1 is reporting about a certain topic and she is responding to CW's question while trying to ask F3 to comment.

1 F1: ________,,, ………… [x____________________________
Ham (0.8) then for the [publication [I'm actually almost done with those=
CW ……………..[x_____________________________________
2 F1: _________________,,,……………....[x____________________________
=[Title of publication] and I ((RH))[send it to approval for to Mr [NofP]=
CW ____
=and waiting for his approval and then I catch up with the sponsor seeking
CW ____
3 F1: ……….[x_________________________,,,,………………………
=((LH))[their approval to finally to print (it out then) (0.9) Actually
CW ____
4 F1 …[x____________
= [((Nodding)) done.
5 CW: ______,,, …………………………….[x_____________
O::kay. Just one question. We ((RH)) have this '[Title of book in German]=
6 F1: _____________
aha ((Nodding))
7 CW: ____
=are you thinking of updating that as well from the German
_____,,,
=side or does that ((BH)) has to be passed on now to [F3]?
8 F1: →________,,, ((gaze at F3, F3 slight negative nod))……...[x ______________
Actually, [I don't know why we updating the other one. I think that was an=
CW …………[x____
____
9 F1: =idea from [NofP]
CW: ____________
((Nodding))
10 F1: →___,, …………………………((gaze to F3)) [x___________

and (1.0) ((slight negative head nod))[right (4.0) now
F3 x_,,,
11 CW: ____,,,
No ((negative head nod)) no there's nothing ((Nodding))
12 F1: ____
the last [one which I'm working on. I don't know.

In this extract (54), F1 is reporting about one of her tasks the topic 'publication' gazing alternately to CW and audience (F2, F4 sitting opposite of her) in her first turn, which is a stretch of latched turns (line 1-4). While F1 is reporting CW gazes at her most of the time. In line 1, F1 makes several times eye contact with CW when she utters 'I'm actually almost done' as well as in line 2 'send it to approval' and in line 3 'their approval', and the end of her turn while nodding 'done' (line 4). In line 5, CW acknowledges with 'okay'. Then CW starts asking through a small introduction of the subject 'we have this' and continues her turn in line 7 'are you thinking of updating that (…) or does it have to be passed on now to F3' pointing with both hands to F3. In line 8, F1 responds while making eye contact with F3 slightly turning her head towards her and while uttering 'I don't know why we are updating the other one'. F1 is gazing at F3 and F3 gazing back at F1 with a slight negative nod, refusing to take turn. Here F1 is implicitly asking F3 to take turn but F3 rejects, perhaps because she has nothing to say about this matter. Therefore, F1 gazes back at CW giving her opinion 'I think it was an idea from [NofP]' after F3 did not respond. In line 10, F1 gives it another try to involve F3 by trying to facilitate a turn while gazing at F3 and waiting in total 4-seconds while F3 makes eye contact with F1 and drops her gaze immediately. This might show that F3 does not have anything to say and avoids further eye contact. F1, in line 12 closes her turn with 'I don't know'.

While a speaker might facilitate a turn by implicitly asking for support and thus further information, the addressee can also decide not to take the floor as illustrated in this extract. The eye contact and gaze from the speaker as well as from the recipient as

NVCS speak for themselves and without the visual F3 would have not been even registered as part of the interaction.

In the next extract (55) a similar case is observed where the speaker asks implicitly for support by trying to make eye contact and gazing at a specific person to take turn. The person, in this case is the head of department of the person reporting. However, the person is not reacting, probably not aware since sitting next to speaker and was not looking in the direction of the speaker at the moment thus an eye contact was not established. At the same time another participant from the audience sitting right opposite steps in immediately who actually is from the same department and was involved in the same case the speaker was reporting about.

Extract (55) Eye contact and gaze to ask implicitly to take turn (gazing for support)

Inter-Department Meeting DE301109, p. 9 (See Appendix B.1) Topic: F3 is reporting about her translation task for a company and gazes at M1 (HOD) for support when F1 asks about the company. M3 steps in instead.

1 F3: ….[x____,,,
Ok so [I'm quite new here, I'm not involved in so many cases yet. My first
…...[x___________,,,   ……...[x___________,,,
and [ah::m [NofC-Acronym] we finished the translation and [decided to a new
………[x____________
translator [from the embassy.
2 F1: _____________
What is [NofC-Acronym]
3 F3: →_________,,, ((gaze towards M1))
I cannot explain
4 M3:   ……..[x____
[NofC-Acronym] [applied [for three employment passes. It's ((LH)) a German company=
F1   ……....[x____
=((LH)) [unintelligible]
5 F1: ____
Aha
6 M3: ______________________________,,,
= applying for three employment passes.
7 F1: [NofC] is a company ((Nodding))?
8 M1:[It's a company]
9 F3: [It's a company]

In line 1, F3 starts reporting about her task translating for a German company (name as acronym). F1 who is acting CW asks in line 2 about the company in question (line 2) as she seems not to know this company. In line 3, F3 says that she cannot explain and gazes at M1 (HOD) who is sitting on her right next to her (see appendix B.1) and tries to make eye contact and implicitly inviting him to take turn and explain. However, M1 did not react, probably not aware since he was not looking in F3's direction but straight to the opposite site of the table or less likely but also possible, he might be looking at M3 who is sitting on the opposite site of the meeting table to step in. Since this meeting is not a close up recording the detailed eye direction is not that clear. M3, who is also from the same department and involved in the same case reacts and gives further information about the company (line 4 and 6) as requested by F1. In line 7, F1 asks for confirmation and probably for further information about the company as the subsequent talk of this extract shows. This time M1 and F3 take the floor at the same time and confirm (line 8, 9). It is not clearly visible here whether F1 was looking at M3, F3 or M1 while asking for confirmation in line 7 since her head was turned away from the camera and therefore difficult to determine.

Here in this extract, the speaker F3 tries to establish eye contact and gazes at M1 requesting him to take turn and thereby support her in giving further information about the company similar to the extract earlier. However, in extract (54) the targeted person sitting next to the speaker is aware since her name was mentioned in the related turn and both also made eye contact, here in extract (55), on the other hand, M1 might not been aware therefore did not react. As mentioned in the general observation in the earlier section (5.4.1) the audience sitting right next to the speaker are not in the line of sight of the speaker and usually the speaker does not gaze there unless deliberately needs to and vice versa.

Therefore, active and attentive listening is always connected to eye contact and gaze since implicit turns can be requested just by the NVCS of eye contact and gaze. During the speaker's turn while reporting the speaker can also explicitly ask a certain person from the audience to take turn by telling the name and/or directing a question without naming the recipient just by gazing at the person as illustrated in the next extract (56).

Extract (56) Eye contact and gaze to ask explicitly to take turn

Department Meeting PR050710, p. 1 (See Appendix B.5) Topic: CW asks F1 to start. F1 starts reporting and poses a question at the end of her turn directed to F2 and F4

1 CW: ……………..[x__________,,,
Okay I think we start ((RH))[with (NofP-F1)
2 F1: ……[x__,,,
Eh okay ah:: basically (1.0) at the moment am mostly working with the quarterly (1.0) the:: deadline for the articles has passed ((LH)) and now we are getting the:: (approval) from the members ((LH)) for the layout and ((LH)) everything (1.2) so::: yeah (0.8) slowly summing the approvals and also working on (trade) fair section (1.5) ummm =
………[x____((gaze at F2))
= other than that, I just sent an email to (NofP-F2) and (NofP-F4) [have you received?
3 F2: …[x______________
______________ mmm
4 F1: the for the [Acronym]
____
5 F2 ((Nod))

In this extract, F1 is requested to take turn by CW with RH hand pointing at her and establishing eye contact (line 1). CW drops her gaze when F1 starts reporting (line 2) and after hearing her name and making eye contact with CW, F1 drops her gaze towards CW as well. F1 reports on what she is working at the moment. At the end of her turn in line 2, she tells that she has sent an email to F2 and F4 and whether they have received it. Here F1's utterance can be ambiguous and the utterance 'have you received' could be interpreted as directed to both as plural meaning of 'you' but it is the eye contact and gaze that determines clearly who is meant by 'you', namely F2 only since F1 directs the question to F2 by just making eye contact with F2 who is sitting opposite of her and not looking at F4 who is sitting on her left next to her (see Appendix B.5). F2 responds only when F1 establishes eye contact with her and not earlier since F1's utterance could be generally meant for both F2 and F4. However only when F1 asks 'have you received' and establishes eye contact with F2 thus targeting this part of her question to F2 only. Since F2 reacts with a non-lexical item 'mmm' in line 3, F1 tries to clarify that both are referring to the same email and continues with 'the for the (acronym)' in line 4, which F2 answers with a nod only (line 5). In the subsequent talk following this extract the clarification by F1 continues, as F1 wants to be sure that F2 received the correct email she was referring to since F2 just gave a minimal response.

As illustrated in this extract, the request to take turn can be introduced by mentioning the name first and then directing the question to the person by establishing eye contact and gaze. However, since the speaker mentioned two names here, it is the eye contact and the sustained gaze that determines clearly whom the speaker targeted for the next turn. This way any speaker during his/her turn can regulate the flow of conversation and implicitly or explicitly request a person to take turn. Otherwise, it is the chairpersons' right and obligation to allocate turns and regulate participation in general as explained in the next section.

5.4.3 Determining Turn Allocation and Regulating Participation

In a formal meeting it is the chairperson who determines the allocation of turns by selecting the initial as well as the following next speakers in the round-the-table procedure. The turn allocation can be done in many different ways by just calling the persons' names or nonverbally by a hand movement that is pointing with the hand to the person or by a head movement this means by nodding or various combinations of these NVCS. In all these cases, the basic NVCS is to establish eye contact with the next speaker first. Therefore, once the next speaker is evident from the preceding turns the turn can also be allocated by the chairperson, just by establishing eye contact. In these cases, the use of other verbal or non-verbal communication is not necessary and would be redundant. Before the chairperson allocates the turn to the next speaker, the current speaker signals verbally and/or non-verbally to the chair that his/her turn is completed. Thus, once the current speaker indicates the end of his/her turn or marks the end of his/her report, e.g. verbally with expressions like, e.g. 'that's all, that's it' and/or nonverbally by dropping eye gaze towards the chairperson after the last sentence, the chair has the right and obligation to choose the next speaker, viz. enabling the transition from one speaker to the next speaker that is signaled mutually as illustrated in the following extracts.

The extract (57) illustrates how the chairperson allocates the turn to the next speaker, namely by dropping the gaze from the current speaker and establishing eye contact with the next speaker in combination simultaneously with the hand movement of one hand pointing at the next speaker.

Extract (57) Eye contact and gaze for allocating turn combined with hand movement

Inter-Department Meeting DE201210, p. 14 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F2 finished the last topic of her report and CM confirms and instructs her to handle it this week

1 F2: ______________________
=but she wrote back today.
2 CM: ____
Ahhh ((Nod)) Okay (0.5) yeah go behind [we can] handle this week (when I'm around)
3 F2: ______________________
[Yeah, I will] ((Nod)) okay ((Nod))
4 CM:__,,, [x__________________
Okay good. →((LH pointing at F3))
5 F3: [x______________________________
[I work on ((BH)) on market studies=

In line 1, after F2 finishes her turn CM comments on what F2 is instructed to do 'go behind' (influenced by a German way of saying, meaning 'to follow up') ending his turn with 'when I'm around' (line 2). In line 3, F2 shows that she has understood and confirms with 'yeah I will', which overlaps with part of CM's utterance 'we can' then she says 'okay' and nods to complete her turn at the same time signaling the end of her report. In line 4, CM drops his gaze while reconfirming 'okay good' and then pointing with his left hand to F3 who is determined as the next speaker while establishing eye contact. The eye contact is established simultaneously between CM and F3 when CM points at F3. This means that F3 was monitoring the conversation and was ready to start reporting which she does in line 5.

Another quite common NVCS to allocate the next turn with the combination of establishing eye contact is using the nod as head movement simultaneously as shown in the extract (58) below that is a continuation of extract (51) discussed in the section of hand movements (see 5.3.2).

Extract (58) Eye contact and gaze for allocating turn to next speaker combined with head nod

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 26 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F6 just finished her report

1 F6: _______
That's it.
2 CM: ___,,, [x ___ ((Nod and gaze at F7))
Good
3 F7: [x____
[Ahh so I'm doing the environmental market watch and (…)

In this extract, the current speaker F6 completes her turn with 'that's it' signaling verbally to the chairman the end of her report and thus to him with allocating the next speaker. CM in line 2 gives a feedback with 'good' and drops his gaze from F6 and establishes eye contact with F7 combined with a slight nod. In line 3, F7 starts reporting once the eye contact and gaze is established with CM.

The extracts (57) and (58) above are quite common in these meetings, especially in inter-department meetings where two departments are present and usually one department reports after the other but participants from different departments not always sit together next to each other. Therefore, besides eye contact and gaze, hand and head movements are an additional signal to effectively allocate turns. Moreover, the seating arrangement does not always allow a clear sight to only use eye contact and gaze to determine the turn allocations. Moreover, names can be called out besides the NVCS of eye contact and gaze and head or hand movements to introduce the next speaker.

In smaller meetings such as the department meetings with only five participants including the chairperson the round-the-table procedure is a strong indicator who comes next after at least the first two speakers had their turns (see also appendix B.4. and B.5) and therefore the NVCS eye contact and gaze is sufficient to determine turn allocations as illustrated in the following two extracts.

Extract (59) Eye contact and gaze for allocating next speaker

Department Meeting PR050710, p. 6 (See Appendix B.5) Topic: F2 finishing her last topic of her report

1 F2: ____
(0.8) yeah I think he just want to give a courtesy visit (0.5) and to ((LH)) one of =
CW _______________________________,,,,
2 F2: ____
=tha:: the potential member I mean the: have informed us that they will not sign [up=
CW …..[x_
3 F2: ____
=as a member but he wants to visit them anyway (0.5) yeah (0.8) →a:nd yeah
((nodding))
(1.8)
4 CW: __________________,,,

((Nodding)) Okay
F2 ____________________,,,
→ CW ((eye contact and gaze at F3))
5 F3: ……[x_____________ ((gaze at F2))
A:nd [for the hand[book
F2: …..[x___
aha

In the preceding talk F1 sitting opposite of the table to F2 finished her report already. Thus, according to the round-the-table procedure the next speaker after F2 is F3 who is just sitting next to the F2 (see appendix, B.5). In line 1 until line 3, in her attached turn F2 is reporting and marking the end of her turn with a 0.5-second pause followed by 'yeah' and another 0.8-second followed by 'and yeah' and nodding. During F2's latched turn CW was gazing at F2 and also monitoring the gaze of the audience. After a 1.8 second pause CW perhaps waiting for the audience to eventually give a feedback gives her own feedback 'okay' with nodding and dropping her gaze from F2 and F2 simultaneously from CW. In line 4, after dropping gaze from F2, CW then establishes eye contact with F3 and gazes at her to start her turn. In line 5, F3 starts her turn with 'and for the handbook' but gazes at F2 when referring to her first topic 'handbook' connecting to what F2 said earlier in her report about this topic.

Here in this extract the next speaker was evident thus F3 was waiting for CW's signal to establish eye contact with her to be able to start her report. In this context, further additional nonverbal signals would have been redundant. However, this kind of turn allocation with only the eye contact and gaze needs mutual monitoring by gazing at each other and active and attentive listening. Since F3 is sitting next to F2 she was gazing at CW while monitoring and waiting for the signal to start. The signal was F2 signaling the end of her report marked here mainly by short pauses and CW's eye contact and gaze at F3.

The next extract is taken from the same department meeting and illustrates the transition from speaker F3 to F4 who is the last participant to report in this meeting. As in the extract above (59), the next participant knows when he/she can start with the report and therefore waits for the signal of the chairperson as shown in the next extract (60).

Extract (60) Eye contact and gaze for allocating turn to next speaker

Department Meeting PR050710, p. 10 (See Appendix B.5) Topic: F3 finishes her last topic of her report.

1 F3: m:: yeah then I'm currently working on the a::m website design on the new (header) and the pictures we want to choose to had a look at the other countries =
2 F4: ahmm
3 F3: = which are ((RH)) already following the new ((RH)) design and how ((RH)) =
4 F4: mmm
5 F3: = is a:: the what kind of pictures they have chosen and (0.9) roughly ((RH)) what
6 F4: mmm
((gaze at CW))________,,,
7 F3: = what the design to follow (0.9) actually →that's mainly it ((Nodding))
→(2.0) CW ((smiling and nodding to F3 then looking down first then gazing at F4))
8 F4: ((looking down at her documents on the table in front of her)) →okay so my turn (0.6) am:: okay (…)

In this extract (60), F3 finishes her last latched turn in line 1, 3, 5, and 7 with the end of her utterance 'that's mainly it' and nodding. Meanwhile F4 is monitoring and giving non-lexical feedback in line 2, 4, 6. F3 is looking at the audience and alternating her gaze between F1 and F4 who are sitting opposite of her and CW at the head of the table but when completing her turn she only gazes at CW and drops her gaze by nodding (line 7). CW after a 2.0-second pause smiles and nods at F3 then looks down first and gazes at F4. In line 8, F4 monitoring F3's turn and after F3 marks the end of report and the short pause, without any eye contact and gaze towards CW she looks down at her documents on the table in front of her and says 'okay so my turn' signaling verbally that she is aware and starts her report after a 0.6-second pause with 'am okay (…)'.

The same way as illustrated in the extract above (60), the NVCS eye contact and gaze can be employed by especially the chairperson to also encourage and regulate the participation of the audience. This is mostly observed in the inter-department meetings where two head of departments are present and where the chairperson eventually wants further details or information from the head of department (HOD) as the person overlooking and in charge of the projects of their subordinates and has quasi the expertise knowledge. The following extract (61) shows how the chairperson can employ the NVCS of eye contact and gaze to request the HOD to participate during the turn of one of her subordinates in this case a trainee.

Extract (61) Eye contact and gaze for regulating participation

Inter-Department Meeting IDE201210, p. 27 (See Appendix B.6) Topic: F8 reporting about her task referring to a request sent by a European institute

1 F8: Ahm yes so (I'm mainly assisting) and preparing the work permit (…) and ahhh started working a little bit on the questionnaire that was sent by us by an European institute they are doing a request about the Malaysian mh (0.2) legal terms and all that stuff aah so I started a little bit because it's hard they wanna know a lot of
CM ____,,,
2 CM: [x________________________ ((eye contact and gaze with F4))
[It's from the Malaysian European
3 F4: No, no =
4 F8: [No it's from] European
5 F4: =[it's from] a:: Professor of a University of [Name of German city]
6 CM: ((Nod)) Okay
7 F4: ____________________________,,, ((gaze at F8))
and he is doing like a comparison of ((BH)) I think Asian countries
CW_______________________________,,, ((gaze at F8))
8 F8: Yeah I guess it's not only Asian it's like a whole ((RH)) comparison of all yeah different legal
9 F4: ____
and he is comparing ammm ((gaze at F8)) *Justizunabhängigkeit*
10 CM: ______________________________________
Oh the inde independent of the legal system let's say=
11 F4: ____
yeah=
12 CM: _______________
= or the court system
13 F4:__________________________
= a:: and he is focusing on a high court
14 CM: ((nodding)) okay

In this extract, it is F8's turn to report (line 1). However, CM instead of requesting F8, who is a trainee from the legal department for clarification about the second topic she mentioned he drops his gaze away from her and transfers it to F4 who is the HOD of the legal department and directs his questions to her (line 2) as the person in charge and overlooking the tasks and projects of this department and probably a more effective way to get some background information for better understanding. F4 replies in her latched turn (line 3 and 5) that overlaps partly with F8 utterance in line 4. However, since CM's gaze is only on F4, F8 does not continue with her turn in line 4. F4 continues to give further details until line 7 where she drops her gaze from CM and turns her gaze at F8 saying 'I think Asian countries'. This shows that F4 is not sure about her statement and turns to F8 for confirmation. CM also gazes at the same time to F8 and maintains it during F8's turn in line 8. His gaze shifts back to F4 when she continues in line 9 although her gaze shifts shortly to F8 again when she has a problem finding the accurate translation for German '*Justizunabhängigkeit*' (in English: independent judiciary) CM's gaze still remains on F4 while CM himself explains what this German word means (line 10 and 12). F4 confirms in line 11 and continues to give further details in line 13 that is accepted by CM in line 14. The following talk about this same topic continues mainly between CM and F4 before he makes eye contact with F8 again and gazes at her to continue her report.

Without the NVCS of eye contact and gaze this extract could be interpreted differently, e.g. it could mean that F4 is taking the floor and stepping in to support assuming CM's question was directed to the reporting person F8. As explained above, it is the chairperson that requested F4 to answer his question by shifting his gaze towards F4 when posing his question. Thus the NVCS of eye contact and gaze is an important and effective strategy to regulate participation in meetings and determine turn allocation. As illustrated in this last extract above (61) the NVCS of eye contact and gaze could work both ways the chairperson as well as the second selected speaker can request the current speaker to take turn. The basic principle between speaker and recipient while communicating with one another is thus the establishment of eye contact and the maintenance of mutual gaze.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the meeting participants' use of common non-verbal communication strategies (NVCS) in BELF to ensure successful and effective communication were identified and examined. In general, the non-verbal communication process is highly complex and may depend on individual and cultural factors. Usually NVCS are accompanied by verbal communication and/or together with other non-verbal communication strategies, and only in rare cases non-verbal communication strategies can be used 'free standing' that is determined by the context. Generally, NVCS enhance and clarify meaning of verbal communication and also provide feedback. The common and frequently used NVCS that are shared among all the participants and emerged during the course of BELF meeting interactions were identified as first head movements, second hand movements, and third eye contact and gaze. Regardless of the meeting participants' lingua-cultural background and individual differences these three NVCS are commonly and frequently employed as resources helping to manage and achieve their communicative goals of successful and effective communication.

The first NVCS that was identified in this meeting data is the 'head movement strategy' further categorized into two types the 'head nod' and the 'negative head nod'. The common and preferred head movement strategy frequently employed in this meeting data is the 'head nod' or 'nodding' that has mainly two major types of functions regarded from both ends of the spectrum. The first major function of head nod refers to active listening of what the current speaker says by supporting and thus signaling attentive listening as a means to respond and display or acknowledge the receipt of message or information, often combined with e.g. non-lexical items such as ‘mhm’, ‘hm’, etc., or to respond to ‘new’ information combined with acknowledgement tokens such as e.g. ‘oh’, ‘ah’ that implicitly request for further information, supporting and encouraging the speaker to continue with his/her turn as a turn-continuer at the same time acknowledging the receipt of speaker’s message. Thus, seen from one end of spectrum the head nod might serve primarily as feedback strategy that includes the function as turn-continuer and displaying and acknowledging receipt of message.

The second major function seen from the other end of the spectrum relates to head nods that signal common understanding by not just acknowledging the receipt of message but also confirming understanding, in short demonstrating that the message is not only delivered but also guaranteed to be understood. This type of function is usually used with lexical items such as various forms of ‘yes’ or with ‘okay’ combined with ‘nodding’.

However, the functions are not always clear cut as the combination of verbal item ‘yeah’ or ‘okay’ with head nod can also just serve as acknowledging receipt of information and turn-continuer depending on the context of interaction and the individual. A head nod that is used to show agreement and signal understanding is commonly used after current speaker’s display of understanding either in form of a direct or indirect question. The recipient in the next turn context gives feedback by agreeing and confirming understanding through nodding. Both general functions of head nods lead to common understanding and thus to successful and effective communication while only the latter function immediately guarantees understanding.

The negative head nod as second category of head movement observed and analyzed in this data reveals the opposite, namely disconfirming understanding of prior turn/s. This type of head movement is in almost all cases used with the verbal expression ‘no’ forming part of the question-answer adjacency pair and constituting the negative answer. Although usually affirmative answers are expected, the negative head nod combined with the verbal equivalent ‘no’ might be an effective way of displaying that there is a problem of understanding that needs to be dealt with and rectified or corrected to avoid further difficulties even if the flow of conversation has to be interrupted by this action. However the negative head nod showing rejection, disagreement or disconfirmation by the recipient is quite rarely used in this data and thus considered a dispreferred action. In the rare cases where the negative head nod was used, it helped to identify the problem source that pointed usually to vague or inaccurate prior talk perhaps due to assumed shared knowledge. However, both type of head movements contribute and lead to shared understanding and thus to successful and effective communication as summarized in the table (5.1) below.

Table 5.1: NVCS-Head Movement in BELF Meetings

Head Movement Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
Head Nod	Common and Preferred Feedback or Back-channelling	Free standing or with non-lexical items, e.g. ‘mhm’ ‘hm’ in between sequential latched turns (with proof of understanding displayed at the end of the sequence)	Signals active listening (also display of support and attention) Display of receipt of information or message (without evaluation) Turn-continuer	Shared understanding and successful and effective communication
		Nodding combined with receipt or acknowledgement tokens ‘ah’, ‘oh’ (and with lexical item such as ‘okay’) signaling	Acknowledgement of receipt of new information/message (with certain evaluation or assessment) and	

		usually receipt of new information	implicit request to continue turn Turn-continuer	
		Combined with lexical items, mostly ‘yeah’ in next turn After speaker presenting his/her understanding After completion of latched sequential turns mostly with ‘okay’	Acknowledgement and confirmation of receipt of information (message received and understood) Confirmation of understanding and agreement Signaling understanding and closing turn and topic (with evaluation of prior turn)	
Nega-tive Head Nod	Rare and Dis-preferred Feedback or Back-channelling	Combined with lexical item ‘no’	Disconfirmation of understanding Identification of problem source	

The second NVCS that was identified in this meeting data is the ‘hand movement strategy’ categorized into two types according to their functions. The first type refers to the function to clarify verbal communicative actions and the second type to refer to people or objects. In general, the hand movement strategy functions as contextualization and visualization to verbal communication, adding or complementing meaning to verbal communication and thus making an utterance explicit, clear, and unambiguous. Hence, the overall function is enhancing communicative clarity of speakers. The first type is employed when speakers usually describe their tasks and projects also expressing their ideas and thoughts. In these cases, hand movements support and enhance the meaning of verbal communicative actions by visualizing and contextualizing the talk. Although the employment of hand movement depends mostly on the individual, some similar hand movements relating to certain verbal communicative actions were observed, e.g. the use of both hands (BH) when referring to personal pronouns ‘we’ or ‘you’ in plural and comparing or contrasting items. Similarities could also be observed in the second category hand movements referring to people or objects, namely the pointing gestures, mostly using the right hand (RH) with open palm to point at people or the index finger to point at objects with deictic terms, such as ‘this’ or ‘that’. The second type has proven to be an important NVCS especially in the meeting context as it is an effective strategy that facilitates understanding by complementing verbal communication to clarify the referent without naming people or objects or without using detailed verbal explanation making further verbal descriptions or assessments redundant. Thus, especially in the meeting context this type of hand movement as a NVCS plays an important role in achieving effective and successful communication. Depending on the individual and the meeting context discussed in the respective subchapter (see 5.3) the hand movement as NVCS is a common strategy used for facilitating and enhancing communicative clarity to achieve shared understanding and effective and successful communication as summarized in the table (5.2) below.

Table 5.2: NVCS-Hand Movement in BELF Meetings

Hand Movement Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
To clarify verbal communi-cative actions	Common but also depend on individual meeting participant, their role and involvement in meetings Employed when especially formulating and sharing thoughts	Accompanies verbal communication of speakers in their turns Simultaneously used with certain words, e.g. use of BH for ‘we’ and comparing and contrasting at least two items	Support and enhance meaning of verbal communication, Making utterances explicit and clear Contextualization and Visualization	Enhancing communicative clarity for shared understanding and effective and successful communication

	Describing actions and objects			
To refer to people and objects	Common Clarifying referent (people or objects)	Complementing verbal utterances of speakers in their turns Pointing gestures (RH, LH, index finger) simultaneously used with, e.g. deictic terms ‘this, that’ (objects) or personal pronouns	Complementing meaning and making statements unambiguous To determine and clarify referents in the interactions	

The last and the most common NVCS is the ‘eye contact and gaze strategy’ employed by all meeting participants, whether as speaker and/or as recipient being actively involved, or as part of the audience passively involved in the meeting interactions. The NVCS eye contact and gaze seems to be the basic prerequisite for successful and effective communication. It also plays an important role as an overarching non-verbal resource, viz. simultaneously used also with other NVCS that can be always mobilized and strategically employed as revealed in the meeting data. In fact, the importance of eyes belonging to facial expressions also encompassing lips has been mentioned by one of the interviewees as an essential part of body language that can tell the speaker whether the message was understood by the recipient, “the eyes is not looking at yours because the person is thinking a little bit ‘what was she just saying, do I really understand what she is saying’, the eyes and eyes lips in terms of the body language (...)” (C_OX_M, p. 8). Thus, the NVCS of eye contact and gaze is crucial for monitoring feedback.

Eye contact and gaze was categorized into three types according to its functions, for monitoring interaction and feedback, for regulating flow of conversation and turn-taking, and for determining turn-allocation and regulating participation. The first type refers to its function and use for monitoring interaction and feedback. In general, the speaker after first having made eye contact with the chairperson chooses to direct the gaze to the primary recipient, the chairperson or to the audience, that is the other recipients or participants of the meeting and might shift at any time during the turn. This way the speaker can basically monitor the recipients' overall reaction or feedback. The general form of feedback given by the recipients is signaling active listening and understanding by gazing back at the speaker often combined with nodding. Moreover, when reporting or mentioning certain topics where a specific recipient from the audience is referred to and involved, the speaker might strategically target the gaze to that specific recipient and could thereby also implicitly ask for feedback. This way the speaker gives the selected recipient the opportunity to give feedback and depending on the context also expects a feedback without explicitly asking, e.g. in form of nodding thus acknowledging the information.

The second type is for regulating the flow of conversation and turn taking. A speaker can implicitly ask for support or seek information or explanation and this way might facilitate a turn by e.g. directing the gaze to the person mentioned in the previous turn or without any prior reference just by trying to establish eye contact. The speaker might be able to also regulate the flow of conversation explicitly, e.g. by mentioning or calling the name first and/or by posing a question and simultaneously establishing eye contact and gaze with a specific recipient or addressee from the audience. However, while the speaker might try to facilitate a turn implicitly or explicitly by using eye contact and gaze, the addressee can also refuse to take the floor unless asked explicitly.

The third type of eye contact and gaze of determining turn allocation and regulating participation mainly refers to the chairperson since it is his/her primary role in formal meetings. Determining turn allocation is typically done in a round-the-table procedure and signaled mutually: First the current speaker signals verbally and/or non-verbally the end of his/her turn, e.g. non-verbally usually by dropping gaze towards the chairperson often also combined with nodding and vice versa and second the chairperson after acknowledging verbally and/or non-verbally shifts his/her gaze to the next speaker. This mutual signal is important and generally once the eye contact between the chairperson and the next speaker is established, the next speaker can start his/her turn. Turn allocation by only eye-contact needs mutual monitoring, in this case, the next potential speaker monitors the end of current speaker's turn and awaits the chairperson's signal and the chairperson monitors the end of current speakers turn to shift his/her gaze to the next speaker. To regulate participation the chairperson can at any time during a speaker's turn shift his/her gaze away form the current speaker to another participant of the meeting and request participation, e.g. by posing a question and as often observed in the inter-departmental meetings where the request for participation is mostly directed to the head of department of the current speaker. The findings are summarized in the following table (5.3)

Table 5.3: NVCS-Eye Contact and Gaze in BELF Meetings

Eye Contact and Gaze Strategy				
Type	Action	Turn Design (TCU+TRP)	Function of Communication	Result of Communication
Monitoring interaction and feedback	Most common Preferred	Eye contact and gaze may shift at any time during the turn	Speaker monitors recipients' (chair and audience) feedback The audience monitors speaker and recipient interaction The chair (primary recipient) monitors speaker and audience Speaker can direct the gaze to a specific recipient mentioned in the interaction and also specifically target a	Basic prerequisite for successful and effective communication

			recipient and ask implicitly for feedback	
Regulating flow of conversation and turn taking		Establishing eye contact and directing gaze with certain participants when further information is needed	Implicitly or explicitly request a person to take turn for support for further information etc. Implicit request gives the addressee the option to respond while explicit request signifies an obligation	
Determining turn allocation and regulating participation		Chair allocates turn at the end of current speakers' turns or regulates participation at any time during a current speaker's turn but generally at the end of turn by dropping the gaze from current speaker and shifting to next speaker	Turn allocation and regulating participation only by eye contact and gaze needs constant monitoring from chair, current speaker and next (or selected) speaker	

The three non-verbal communication strategies (NVCS) that could be revealed through a close and detailed analysis as far as the video recordings could capture and provide are to a certain extent purposefully used and show some intercultural awareness on the part of the meeting participants. NVCS are mainly used for contextualization and visualization of verbal communication thus used alongside and accompanying verbal communication and adding or complementing and enhancing meaning of verbal utterances. However, NVCS can also be used free standing and in these cases could replace verbal communication in certain context therefore seem to be employed as an effective means of communication. In general, meeting participants employ NVCS as a resource that contribute to successful and effective communication in BELF.

CHAPTER 6: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

6.1 Introduction

After having explored the common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used in intercultural business communication in Chapter 4 and 5, this chapter sets out to analyze the wider context on the external factors that influence the use of communication strategies to achieve successful and effective communication. Considering the external factors this chapter links the analysis of natural meeting interactions with the practitioners' reality (see Ehrenreich, 2010) viz. connecting the reported perceptions in the interviews about successful and effective communication and the way it is achieved with what they actually do, as revealed in the analysis of the meeting data. While examining the influencing factors, this chapter also investigates the participants' perceptions in intercultural business communication and sheds light on their intercultural communicative competence. Based on the off-record meetings with some participants and the outcome of survey it was revealed that half of the participants still perceived intercultural communication as challenging due to linguistic and cultural factors. However, only through the interviews more insights about these factors were disclosed.

To explore the external factors on the macro-level analysis, two sets of data were used as outlined in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 3). The survey questionnaire is useful to get the general and specific background information of the participants and the semi-structured interviews are appropriate to examine the participants' perceptions of successful communication and in identifying the external factors. The first set of data analysis was extracted from the survey and linked to the interviews to capture the perceptions of intercultural communication. The second set of analysis focused especially on the interview data and explored the influential external factors based on the framework of community of practice (CofP) (see Chapter 2). Before exploring and categorizing the interview data based on the CofP framework, the first data set referring mainly to the last question from the survey (see Appendix A) concerning the different perceptions of intercultural communication on the external factors ‘language and culture’ was examined first and linked to the interview data.

6.2 Contradictory Perceptions on Language and Culture

In view of the off-record conversations with some employees of the organization and based on the responses given to the last question of the survey, there seems to be a conflicting view of the participants that intercultural communication is perceived as problematic due to linguistic and cultural factors. However, the meetings did not show any communication issues in intercultural business meetings. These reported perceptions of linguistic and cultural factors causing communication issues could be attributed to the general assumption of the underlying concept of intercultural communication focusing at cultural and linguistic differences that is often connected to communication issues. Moreover, the conceptual gap (Seidlhofer, 2001) concerning (B)ELF has not yet reached awareness to people. Furthermore, as Charles (2007) pointed out the reference of non-native speakers of English to native speaker norms can also be found in BELF speakers minds that could also partially explain the outcome of the survey. Interestingly, as pointed out in the methodology section (see Table 3.1) none of the participants have insufficient English proficiency levels since the majority has indicated their self-evaluated language skills as excellent and good, and only few as at least satisfactory. Although the language proficiency level is mostly evaluated as excellent, almost half of the survey participants indicate the factors language and/or culture as possible causes for communication issues in intercultural communication. To investigate this subjective view or assumption in the survey and the conflicting outcome of successful communication in meetings, the survey was analyzed first before linking it to the interviews to get more in-depth information and to bridge this divide between BELF users perception and their actual BELF use.

6.2.1 English Language Proficiency and Communication Issues

As indicated in the survey the following table shows the outcome regarding communication issues (CI). Despite the English proficiency levels generally evaluated as very good, more than half of the participants indicated CI due to language or both language and culture.

Table 6.1: Participants English Language Proficiency Level and Communication Issues

No.	Nationality	English Language Proficiency (Self-evaluation)	Communication Issues (CI)	Reason given for CI
1	German	1	No	
2	German	2-3	Yes	Difference in understanding/ conclusion
3	Malaysian	1	Yes (Malaysians)	Culture
4	Malaysian	1	Yes	Language
5	Malaysian	1-2	No	
6	Malaysian	1	***No***	Language and culture
7	Malaysian	1	Yes	Language and culture
8	German	1-2	Yes	Language
9	German	2	Yes	Language and culture
10	German	2-3	No	
11	Malaysian	2	No	
12	Malaysian	3	***No***	Language and culture
13	Turkish-German	2-3	No	
14	German	1-2	No	
15	German	1-2	Yes	Language and culture
16	German	2	Yes	Language and culture
17	German (Malaysian)	1-2	Yes	Language
18	Malaysian	1	Yes	Language especially culture
19	Malaysian	2	No	
20	Malaysian	1	No	
21	Malaysian	3	Yes	Language and culture (the Education system)
22	German	2	Yes (Germans and Malaysians)	Language and culture
23	German	1-2	Yes	Culture (misunderstandings/ sensitivity)
24	Malaysian	2	No	
25	German	2	Yes	Language and culture
26	Malaysian	3	No	

27	Russian-German	2-3	No	
28	German	2-3	No	
29	Malaysian	2	Yes (German and Malaysians)	Language and culture
30	Malaysian	1	No	
31	German	2	No	

As illustrated in the table above (6.1), intercultural communication is generally perceived as problematic by slightly more than half of the participants: 17 out of 31 survey participants indicated issues in communication with Germans and/or Malaysians from which 15 were clear 'yes' answers and two put 'no' but indicated reasons for communication issues (see table no. 6 and 12). The reasons given are mostly based on language and culture, with some giving additional information, such as 'different understanding and conclusion', 'education system', 'misunderstanding and sensitivity' (see table no. 2, 21, 23). Furthermore, it shows that some information were not accurate enough as in the case of giving 'no' answers and at the same time indicating reasons for communication issues as mentioned earlier. However, half of the survey participants perceive intercultural communication as challenging. This was also reflected in the off-record conversations with some of the employees but it could not be linked to the level of English proficiency level.

In the attempt to find possible links in the survey responses regarding communication issues, e.g. the duration of employment could not be established either. Contrary to the common perception that the longer duration of working in the specific organization would improve intercultural business communication, e.g. participants who were employed for 6, 7, 8, 10, 17 years, indicated communication issues as illustrated in bold in the table below (see Table 6.2). However, there seems to be a link between experience in MNC and the lack of communication issues as shown in italic in the following table below (see Table 6.2). Out of 18 participants with experience working in MNC, 11 perceive intercultural communication as not problematic and did not encounter any communication issues as shown in the following table (6.2).

Table 6.2: Participants' Duration of Employment and Experience in MNC and CI

Number	Experience in MNC	Duration of Employment in Current Organization	Communication Issues (CI) or lack of CI (with no)
1	No (prior work experience)	< 2 years	No
2	No (German Companies)	< 1 year (6 months)	Yes
3	Yes	< 1 year (3 months)	Yes (Malaysians)
4	No (Malaysian Companies)	**> 7 years**	**Yes**
5	*Yes*	< 1 year	*No*
6	*Yes*	< 1 year (6 months)	*No*
7	Yes	< 2 years	Yes
8	Yes	< 1 year (2 weeks)	Yes
9	No	< 1 year (2 weeks)	Yes
10	*Yes*	< 1 year (2 weeks)	*No*
11	*Yes*	< 2 years	*No*
12	*Yes*	(not provided)	*No*
13	*Yes*	< 1 year (2 weeks)	*No*
14	No clear info	< 1 year	No
15	No	< 1 year (4 months)	Yes
16	Yes	**8 years**	**Yes**
17	Yes	< 1 year (3 weeks)	Yes
18	Yes	**> 10 years**	**Yes**
19	No	< 1 year	No
20	*Yes*	< 1 year (6 months)	*No*
21	Yes	**17 years**	**Yes**
22	Yes	< 1 year	Yes (Germans and Malaysians)
23	German companies and German government	< 2 years	Yes
24	No	No info given	No
25	No	< 1 year (3 months)	Yes
26	No	5 years	No
27	*Yes*	< 1 year (2,5 months)	*No*
28	*Yes*	1 year	*No*
29	Malaysian companies	**6 years**	**Yes** (German and Malaysians)
30	*Yes*	> 9 years	*No*
31	*Yes*	< 1 year (3 months)	*No*

As seen in the both tables above (see Table 6.1 and 6.2), the survey in form of a questionnaire as a research method might or might not be able to establish links but it cannot deliver further background information regarding the reasons and therefore also shows its limitations. A survey is appropriate to get factual background information. However, it is not sufficient enough to provide valuable information that could refer to the reasons and influencing factors of intercultural communication as perceived by the participants. Therefore, further detailed information could only be gathered through the semi-structured interviews.

6.2.2 Perceptions on Communication Issues

There were 18 out of 31 who took part in the survey and also participated in the interviews. From those 18 surveyed and interviewed participants 13 had stated communication issues (CI) in the survey including the two participants who checked the no-answer but provided reasons for communication issues. This means, that 13 (7 Germans and 6 Malaysians) interviews could be further investigated to know more about the nature of perceived CI and the possible reasons. This allowed to check and connect the results of the survey with the 13 interviews to find out more in detail what is meant by CI and to what it was related to.

Most of the communication issues mentioned by the interviewees as 'language' were concerned with written communication, e.g. referring to email conversations as well as to telephone conversations as spoken language. However, in the course of the interviews these CI were revealed as usually relating to external communication with clients in Germany or in general with other companies or authorities in Malaysia but not to internal communication viz. with their colleagues. For instance, four German trainees indicated the difficulties understanding the different English or accents at the beginning of their stay in Malaysia outside the organization but not with their Malaysian colleagues. Only three (3) interviewees refer to CI based on language referring specifically to their colleagues: One German from the upper management level relates it only to written communication therefore not allowing some of his subordinates to write to clients because of contractual or legal implications that might arise because; "written English in some cases is not up to the standard, the oral English is usually always up to this level at least" (B_OX_G, p. 4). One Malaysian head of department (A_OX_M) refers to emails and especially written texts from the German management for publication purposes that might be perfect in grammar but the sentence construction needs to be changed in order to make it easier to understand for Malaysians. Another Malaysian participant refers to emails and phone calls with some of her colleagues:

> I have to go back and forth, so when I feel like ok, she doesn't understand me by email, she doesn't understand me by telephone, I would, I am gonna go to her place, I'm gonna sort of explain to her so she would understand (D_OX_M, p. 5).

These results based on survey and linked to interview suggest that the factor language given as one reasons for communication issues between Malaysians and Germans refers to written communication or telephone conversation and not to face-to-face communication. In fact, as mentioned by the interview participant (D_OX_M) above and similarly by other participants, face-to-face communication as perceived by German and Malaysian employees in internal communication does not cause any communication issues instead it rather facilitates successful and effective communication.

As far as the cultural factor is concerned, the interviews could not directly establish a link to what was indicated in the survey as one of the reasons for CI. The interviewees being aware of the intercultural setting were mostly highlighting the cultural differences in intercultural communication based on the national culture, generally referring to the Malaysian or German culture and also to the macro culture Asian and European respectively. However, there were also emphasizing the cultural differences among the three ethnicities in Malaysia as Chinese, Malay or Indian and some also referring simply to individuals. The common cultural differences pointed out in the interviews were the directness and indirectness and also referring to clients and their particularities in the way of doing business in general. Germans would get straight to business while Malaysians would need to build up a good relationship first. With colleagues in internal communication, it is the German directness that was reported as a possible cause for CI, since some Malaysians might feel offended. However, three Malaysian interviewees like the German working culture describing it as being direct and open and comparing to their own working culture as being the opposite. As one puts it: “You know (with) a German don’t ever have to worry about being very polite and beating around the bush (…) you can always say directly what you want and expect to have it delivered to you on time” (A_OX_M, p. 2). Germans usually refer CI based on culture to differing expectations, i.e. one interviewee (D_OX_G) mentioned that a German would expect to be understood without having to provide every single step to be done in advance. In this context, the German upper management expects more involvement and openness from their Malaysian colleagues who are rather used to receive directives. Although the cultural differences that were mentioned in the interviews mostly concerned the directness and indirectness as well as the differing expectations based on national cultures, some Malaysian and German interviewees state further differences among the three different Malaysian ethnicities as well as individual differences among their German and Malaysian colleagues. When ethnicities are compared with each other, Chinese are described as more direct and more like Germans unlike Malay and Indians who are described as being similar: “Normally Chinese are bit more blunt or outspoken, directly to the point, Malays and Indians are little bit more soft outspoken, not so directly, not so offending” (B_OX_G, p.7). However, it is difficult to generalize as individual differences are mentioned among the different Malaysian ethnicities as well as among Germans, e.g. as one German participant (A_OX_G, p. 9) puts it,

> There are also within the Malaysian groups clear differences, but again there’s no relation to an ethnic group because some of the outspoken belong to the Malay, some to the Chinese, ehm to the Indians they are also there’re not so many, I would say only maybe 20% are really those who might than take out their stands and argue certain point eh offer a different opinion and amongst those we have members of all ethnic groups (….) It’s more a question of individual personality and the same goes through with the Germans.

Cultural differences that might cause CI as stated by the survey participants and further elaborated in their interview are generally based on different perceptions and expectations from both sides. Germans as described by Malaysians for being direct or straightforward and open or outspoken that might in some cases be perceived as too offending to Malaysians, in extreme cases even as rude or impolite. However, these are precisely the German attributes that some Malaysians value and prefer as it is efficient and saves time. Some Malaysians prefer working with Germans rather than with Malaysians. Malaysians describe themselves as “beating around the bush and can’t get to a point directly” (A_OX_M, p. 5). They expect Germans to be direct without being rude or “stepping on other people’s toes” (D_OX_M, p. 3). Germans describe Malaysians as being comfortable with receiving directives and looking for clear instructions that needs more time in e.g. explaining tasks (B_OX_G). One German interviewee describes Malaysians as not being open and not telling directly when the message is not understood and rather simply saying it is, and Germans on the other hand assuming and expecting “that the other person would know what to do” (D_OX_G, p. 8) without having to explain.

The overall response referring to the factor culture, seems to come down to one widespread cultural difference, namely, the directness-indirectness as cultural difference, that is stereotypical between Asian and European or Western cultures also mentioned as such by some interviewees, in this case referring to Germans and Malaysians. The German directness and Malaysian indirectness and other differences resulting and arising from this, such as being open and outspoken or the opposite that were reported as challenging in intercultural communication are not necessarily causing any CI since the majority of participants are aware of the differences and know how to manage intercultural differences to achieve successful and effective communication. In fact, some Malaysians like the directness of Germans but criticize the ‘degree of directness’ and expect to consider the Malaysian culture and the ‘face issue’.

The first set of analysis above discussed the common factors named in the survey as language and culture that still seems to be present in participants' mind and perceived as obvious reasons at least by half of the survey participants for causing communication issues. However, the interviews give further insights and prove that regarding the lingua-cultural factors, it is not the face-to-face communication that participants refer to rather the written communication or telephone conversations that seem to be challenging sometimes but rarely referring to internal communication among the employees but rather to communication with clients or other organizations or authorities. And although difference in common national cultural are stated, such as the typical cultural difference directness vs. indirectness and related culture-specific preference in conversation, it is also mentioned that it could depend on the various ethnicities or simply on the individual culture of participants and further on the degree of directness in conjunction with politeness employed by individual participants.

The second set of analysis explored in the next section is focusing on the last three questions of the semi-structured interviews outlined in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.3), namely what defines successful communication for the participants and how they make sure what they had said is understood and how they ensure successful communication. At the same time, the external factors based on the responses that contribute to successful and effective communication are determined and categorized. Moreover, where the interviews can be linked to the meetings, it is further elaborated how these external factors are reflected in the meeting data, and moreover how these impact on their communication behavior.

6.3 Development of Shared Repertoire and Resources

As explained in the previous section, the cultural difference directness vs. indirectness and other related differences that were mentioned by various participants coming from different lingua-cultural background seem to be a general perception shared by almost all participant despite the individual differences. Further it has been also illustrated that these lingua-cultural differences do not necessarily lead to communication issues in internal communication based on the reported interviews although half of the participants in the survey indicated communication issues based on the factors language and/or culture.

The interviewees' responses also highlighted more differences than similarities, e.g. when participants were asked for similarities they had problems stating any but the reverse was the case with stating differences. As one interviewee stated: "Similarities hmm… I think in terms of similarity no I wouldn't say this much but differences yes, a lot of differences" (A_OX_M, p. 1). Differences might be more striking than similarities. Moreover, this is probably due to the general conception of intercultural communication that is focused on differences and usually associated with communication issues, in this case relating to the different perceptions and expectations of one another. However, the responses given in the interviews also revealed that the participants learned to manage and deal with the differences skillfully once they are aware of them and from the experience gained in working together. As one interviewee reported:

> I would say like communication doesn't take down to the culture, but to the individual person. So I would later, once after few months, I sort of know how they function, so I put myself around it. First I feel no good, as much as I get upset and then "Oh, my God, doesn't this person get it?" like, but I will be like ok, that's what works with her, what works with him, then I work around it. (D_OX_M, p.7)

As stated by the interviewee above and similarly by other interviewees, working experience as background knowledge of participants seems to play a major role and helps to be aware of the intercultural differences and develop certain practices and strategies to deal with these differences. Experience (see also Table 6.2), especially in MNC and other German companies, gained in working in an international and multi-cultural environment as in this German organization in Malaysia representing a specific CofP also helps to develop a shared repertoire and shared resources.

The interviews could give some insights in this specific CofP of the German organization consisting of almost equal numbers of German and Malaysian employees that is formed and defined through the three dimensions, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. All three dimensions are displayed in the internal interactions such as in formal and informal meetings as a platform of mutual engagement where employees exchange ideas, inform others about their on-going projects, develop and discuss new projects, and set goals using shared repertoire or resources. Whereby the joint enterprise of every organization or company is that business runs smoothly and the employees work successfully and effectively to achieve the set goals at the same time considering the overall goals of the organization.

Therefore, successful and effective communication is the key to success of all businesses. Yet it is the shared repertoire or the shared resources produced by the employees in their mutual engagement and thus became part of their common practices and strategies for negotiating meaning and thus facilitating and ensuring successful and effective communication. This specific CofP has also developed a shared repertoire through 'negotiation of meaning' that is understanding and responding in engaging with colleagues followed by learning, enabling a joint communicative repertoire and shared routines and practices considering contextual and unique information in its historical and dynamic environment (see Wenger, 1998).

In the following section, the responses to the interview questions are categorized according to the shared repertoire of this specific CofP comprising mainly ‘the way of doing things’ including routines, actions and concepts to negotiate meaning using linguistic and non-linguistic elements. To be able to determine the shared repertoire and the ‘way of doing things’ using verbal and non-verbal communication and considering contextual factors, the interviewees’ concepts of successful and effective communication was analyzed first.

6.3.1 Concepts and Expected ‘Ways of Doing Things’

From the answers provided concerning the interviewees’ concepts of successful and effective communication two general statements could be captured, one referring to the understanding of the culture-specific and general business practices and principles, the second understanding the message and information in the course of communication. In other words, based on the interviews successful and effective communication depends on communicative competence considering the culture-specific and general business practices in an organization. In the context of this specific intercultural business setting these culture-specific business practices could be generally subsumed as ‘work culture’[3] and as ‘organizational culture’. Both concepts of culture refer to employees’ beliefs and behavior within the principles of an organization whereby the organizational culture also underlines the common thought processes defined as: “A set of *shared* mental assumptions that guide interpretation and action in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for various situations (…) expressed and manifested in a web of

[3] (See “Work Culture”, mangementstudyguide.com, retrieved 19.01.17)

formal and informal practices and of visual, verbal, and material artifacts" (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 437). One of the interviewees (A_OX_M, p. 4) puts it as 'working culture';

> I think it's about *understanding each other's culture* and you have to be sensitive to each other's culture, <u>*working culture*</u> I mean by in that sense ehm… Also, the way the *other person thinks*, the *other culture* I mean the other *nationality thinks* and trying to respect and understand that, (…)

Besides the working culture the interviewee also mentions the national culture that other Malaysian interviewees also refer to as background knowledge, e.g. 'understand the culture (…) the background knowledge of the culture' (D_OX_M, p. 2). Since work culture deals with employees' beliefs, thought processes and attitudes it naturally encompasses the national and individual culture interrelated with the organizational culture that guides appropriate behavior in situation-specific context.

Moreover, both Germans and Malaysians report the need for certain behavior and attitudes described as being sensitive and aware towards 'other' cultures, and being friendly and respectful in general. However, being friendly and treating people respectfully refer also to general business principles and have been stated as e.g. "general world-wide rules" (B_OX_G, p. 8). One German interviewee expressed successful communication in general as follows: "Two things eh, one if both parties feel comfortable while the conversation and the second one if they understand each other very general speaking" (A_OX_G, p. 4). Making each other 'feel comfortable' during the conversation has also been similarly reported by Western European professionals as 'making the recipient feel good' (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) and "in a manner appropriate to the context and in line with the expectations of the recipient" (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 397). In this context, making each other 'feel comfortable' could be also related to the expectations of being polite and considering the ‘face issue’ that is explained by one Malaysian participant (F_OX_M, p. 3/4) as ‘saving face’:

> Sometimes in Malaysia context, sometimes, certain things you know very well but you don’t want to say it yeah, so in order not to hurt other people I guess. (…) If you are talking about the conduct of the other person especially if there are things about the other person that contra or something like that, you try to *save face* of the other person by not telling it in front of others, yeah then you should talk to the other person privately about what you are not happy (…).

Above and beyond the understanding of cultural aspects, understanding each other depends also on understanding the message and information that was defined as successful communication. Understanding each other was explained by one of the interviewees as delivering and understanding the message as follows: “When A is able to deliver his message and B is able to understand and interpret it correctly. (…) If A was able to deliver, however B was not able to interpret and understand it that is definitely not successful (…)” (C_OX_M, p.6/7).

Further, as another interviewee stated the accuracy of information given in the message is also crucial: “For a successful communication, I think is the best thing is the message has been conveyed actually the most accurate as accurately as possible.” (B_OX_M, p. 7) Thus, this statement could relate to effective communication that is e.g. ensuring clarity and accuracy (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) also avoiding ambiguous messages or the loss of information (see Ehrenreich, 2010) as discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, several interview participants highlighted both the role of the speaker as well as the recipient, as one participant simply put it, “when other gets the point” (C_OX_G, p. 14). Thus, the recipient understanding as revealed in the meeting data is crucial to guarantee that the message was received the intended way.

In this context, listening and feedback were also mentioned as crucial for understanding each other thus facilitating and ensuring successful communication. One participant gave a concrete example concerning feedback that guarantees understanding:

"You know he say 'oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I know what you mean', then okay I think that is successful already, the message you know I want to convey to you, you can understand" (B_OX_M, p. 8). Listening, as one interviewee explains is an attempt to understand, also showing a 'certain reflection' that is visible through the body language that also contributes to successful communication, "(…) ehm, the *body language*, the both sides ehm have the *feeling* ehm that the other side is *listening*, trying to understand ehm there's a certain reflection on what, what party say from the other party ehm this is what I mean" (A_OX_G, p. 5).

Thus, not only verbal but also non-verbal communication is perceived as playing an important role and also contributing to successful communication. However, interviewees have difficulties in describing the body language accurately, as illustrated in the previous example (in italics: 'the feeling that the other side is listening'). Moreover, only few participants mentioned body language, also pointing out face and eyes, this could perhaps indicate that most participants are not aware or conscious of their body language or non-verbal communication. One participant actually stated that she became more aware and reflected about her own way of communicating during the course of the interview: "until you asked me, I didn't know" (C_OX_M, p. 12). She described the importance of body language as: "you yourself have to be always conscious about how, *the way you communicate* and *the way you speak* and bring yourself to intonation and your *body language*, your *eye contact*, it's very important as well as *who* you are talking to" (C_OX_M, p.7). Thus, being conscious or aware of as stated above 'the way you speak', 'body language' and 'eye contact' seem to be important as well as the recipient, viz. the person you are talking to. Thus, being aware of your own verbal and non-verbal communication and also knowing the recipient are essential for successful and effective communication.

How the interview participants actually 'do things' based on their concepts and expectations, in other words how they actually negotiate meaning and develop a shared repertoire and shared resources is discussed under the next section below.

6.3.2 Negotiation of Meaning

A shared repertoire can be developed and enabled through a learning process that in turn involves and requires negotiation of meaning considering contextual and unique information. From various responses given regarding the questions how successful communication is achieved and managed, different practices were mentioned in the way 'things are done' and the way meaning is negotiated.

The majority of responses given concentrated mainly on two major factors, one concerning the different ways in transferring information and structuring the message and second regarding various attitudes towards work and organizational culture. These two factors could be compared with the 'message and culture strategy' under Munter's (2009) communication strategy model. The message strategy explains how the message is structured in the sense of how to emphasize and organize a message, e.g. using direct or indirect approach and the culture strategy refers to cultural attitudes i.e. towards time, message structure and nonverbal behavior among others. However in Munter's communication strategy model the two variables are clearly distinguished from each other whereas based on the interview responses in this study, it is difficult to draw a clear line between the two factors since they are intertwined and affect one another. However, an attempt was made to classify the interview responses into two categories, first the information transfer and message structure and second the attitudes towards work culture, the latter category explored first in the next section.

6.3.2.1 Attitudes towards Work and Organizational Culture

Almost all interviewees, Malaysians and Germans similarly report that they like working together, some Germans describe the working environment as, e.g. a ‘friendly atmosphere’ (A_OX_G, p. 1) and as being ‘all over absolutely lovely’ (B_OX_G, p. 1). Many Malaysians prefer the German work culture and some even find it easier to work with Germans than with other Malaysians. One Malaysian likes the work culture of being structured, planned, and having an objective that can be not only related to the German culture but in general to an international environment (C_OX_M). Another Malaysian states that Germans are efficient and goal-oriented, and their main objective is to get the job done (A_OX_M). She further mentions, Germans respect deadlines and thus makes it easier for her to work with Germans than with Malaysians.

German participants report that Malaysians are in general more relaxed. One German states that Malaysians might not have “the same sense of, of urgency or punctuality or reliability as a German might have but in terms of understanding communication I don’t see ehm any deficits ehm which are created by the social or cultural background at least in this working environment” (A_OX_G, p. 10). One German participant gives the following example of a deadline set for Friday 12 pm by her German clients and describes the Malaysians’ reactions as, “Oh, we can do it Monday, Monday is fine, yeah? Monday also can, huh?” (C_OX_G, p. 6) This type of work attitude is also confirmed by one Malaysian who describes one group of Malaysians as such, especially those that she labels as ‘with no experience’ in working with multi-national companies, “If I can’t get to do it today, it’s ok, I can do it tomorrow that’s ok” (D_OX_M, p. 3). Moreover, the same German interviewee who mentioned that Malaysian cannot adhere to deadlines as stated earlier, further describes Malaysians as “not looking into future or future planning, it’s more like what I have to do today” (C_OX_G, p. 7), e.g. for planning way ahead as for e.g. fixing appointments well in advance that Germans would usually do.

Some Germans further report that Malaysians are personally less involved in terms of taking responsibility or making proposals as well as taking decisions instead, as one German interviewee pointed out they look for clear instructions and “ask for decision by the superior” (A_OX_G, p.1). Germans on the other hand are described as more confident and “more likely to voice their own views to make proposals” (A_OX_G, p. 2). It has also been reported that the directness and openness of the German work culture saves time and is thus more efficient and preferred by many Malaysians. However, the direct approach of Germans, by some Malaysians perceived as ‘too direct’, is also described as ‘still’ polite and as an effective way to get things done, as one Malaysian participant states: “Malaysians may think it’s very direct, it’s too direct for them. But for me, I still think that’s pretty polite, it’s not instructing you directly, but he wants the thing to be done. Hence, I say it in a subtle way” (C_OX_M, p. 3). The ultimate aim is to get the job done in an efficient way but also in a polite manner, as one Malaysian pointed out: “you can be professional and direct without being rude it saves everyone’s time it’s much more efficient you know” (A_OX_G, p. 3). One German participant confirmed the directness of Germans and expressed her view that “you cannot always, sometimes, we are just direct” (C_OX_G, p. 10).

The attitudes towards the work and organizational culture and the assessment of one another that have been expressed each on his own way by the interview participants and described above could also apply to the ultimate goal of a joint enterprise that business runs smoothly and the employees work effectively to achieve their own goals and that of the organization. However, for the business to run smoothly and effectively, the employees in an intercultural or multi-cultural environment have to consider each other's work culture. There is unanimous agreement between all interviewees that a certain adaptation is necessary. As one Malaysian participant puts it, "if you're in Malaysia then the Germans have to adapt to the Malaysian culture more or less" (A_OX_M, p. 4). Another Malaysian participant expressed the need to adapt "in terms of working in this environment also with the German concept" (C_OX_M, p. 12). Both Germans and Malaysians stress the need to compromise or find a middle ground by considering each others work culture that is often described by the interviewees as adapting to the local culture and at the same time fulfilling German expectations, as one German participant explains it: "Sometimes I have to shut down high expectations from the German side, eh, into, eh, what should I say, I have to bring more the Malaysian attitudes and, eh, ways of doing things into the German ways and the other way round" (B_OX_G, p. 13). Hence, almost all German and Malaysian interviewees express the need for changing attitudes or behavior and adapting to the work or organizational culture in this specific community of practice. As one Malaysian participant puts it: "(…) you adapt yourself. You in terms of working in this environment also with the German concept (…) adaptability with the language and with the people and with the culture is also very important" (C_OX_M, p. 12). However, as she further explains, "to get my message across in the correct way, in the way that I want it to be done, it takes time and it takes practice (…) it takes adaptability, it takes all what you have in order to know your surroundings (C_OX_M, p. 13).

Knowing the respective work culture in a specific environment or surrounding seems to be an important factor. Moreover, besides the general work culture knowing the individual person has been also highlighted by some interviewees, as one Malaysian interviewee states regarding some German colleagues "(…) to communicate with them efficiently is basically know them as a person. Know what makes them think, what makes them upset and what makes them happy (…) I used to see them as, more of the

German culture" (D_OX_M, p. 6). In a similar way one German participant says that knowledge of the person and situation are important, e.g. "know the person and the situation, circumstances other things, influence them (A_OX_G, p.15).

Knowing the work culture in terms of national, organizational and individual work culture entails also being aware of the intercultural or multi-cultural environment and the specific business situation and willing to adapt. According to the interviewees, adaptation to certain 'ways of doing things' seems to be the key for successful communication. This implies weighing each other's attitudes towards their work culture and deciding which works best to 'get the job done' that in turn requires mutual adaptation and should not be seen as a one-way street. That means, since this is a German organization located in Malaysia primarily supporting German interests besides promoting bilateral business relations, the upper management is German and the rest of the employees are Malaysians and Germans, consequently the organizational principles are dominated by the German management. Therefore, the upper management promotes and expects that all employees conform to the organizational culture viz. the German management principles as stated, "in terms of how you manage eh how human resources adapt with this management principals, leadership principals there we're still working on that" (A_OX_G, p. 12). Germans expect, e.g. more participation, involvement, and taking initiatives and responsibility by Malaysians (A_OX_G) and as claimed by one participant of the upper management since the primary business concentrates mostly on German businesses, the Malaysian employees are expected to follow German business principals which puts pressure on the Malaysian employees: "If we would have 95% by Malaysians then maybe days would be different, maybe more relaxed, the local, but if the Germans, then I have to claim as a German a stronger rule in understanding the German, how they want it, the clients let's say and this then to pressure the locals because there we don't have equal terms" (B_OX_G, p. 13). Thus, the organizational culture is rather governed by the German business principles.

However, adapting as mentioned earlier takes 'time and practice' with time they gain practice and experience in working together and eventually understand and adapt to each other's work culture. The answers regarding the concept of time or experience vary from few weeks, few months to a year or even years. Germans especially the German management uses following illustration concerning the factor of 'time',

> It takes time and it and then my feeling is they feel also comfortable within. Maybe not at the beginning but over time they realize it is more rewarding to be involved in what they do and the objectives (…) and in the project working together with others making this successful ehm, so I believe eh, it is, terms of positive and terms of motivating, yeah? (A_OX_G, p. 5/6)

As stated above, with time employees adapt to the expectations, when employees get more involved in the projects working together to make it successful. However, he further states that employees need to be led to, e.g. by encouraging proposals, showing alternative solutions. In regular meetings as he points out, employees are encouraged not only to report but also discuss certain issues: "So if any deficits in communication ehm… come up there then we can discuss them and try to come up with solutions eh, I try to involve our staff in the discussions are not only report in the meetings but also discuss certain issues" (A_OX_G, p. 7).

It is also alleged that management generally in Asia takes much more time, e.g. "in monitoring, not say controlling, (…) more difficult, responsibility and taking over is more difficult, etc., so that keeps much more time (…) on daily briefings" (B_OX_G, p. 16/17). There is no doubt about the fact that with time and by engaging with others at the workplace and gaining practical experience they can get to know and understand the respective work culture and the individual person and build up a certain work relationship that works best for each of them and thus achieve and ensure successful and effective communication. One Malaysian participant gives an example of how mutual adaptation can work out concerning the so-called Malaysian 'relaxed' attitude in meeting a deadline by people who have experience in working with international or multi-national companies and at the same time handling the German so-called ‘directness’ and the Germans considering the Malaysian culture respectively:

> They are like “no, you know, if you can’t do it, what’s the next solution? It’s always finding solutions. Stop looking at the problem, just go to the solution immediately”, you know? And also we have Germans, who have been integrated with Malaysian culture and they think that way. At the same time, considering the culture that they are working in, without stepping on other people’s toes, you know? Sometimes there is a reason why we can’t do something today, but then in order for us to overcome that obstacle we sort of work around it and make it happen today, but without stepping on other people’s foot. You know what I mean? (D_OX_M, p. 3)

One German interviewee concerning the same work attitude above states how she adapts, e.g. instead of instructing and just simply setting a deadline, she gives the background information in order to be understood by explaining why she has to set a specific deadline,

> Eh, but for him to understand why is it important to be done this week (…) Ok, client will be here until end of next week, after that his visa is expiring, so he has to leave the country. That’s expensive. […] We have to do it this week. Ok. […] If I just tell him: “Do it this week!” - “Yeah can, but also can next week. (C_OX_G, p. 18)

As seen from these two examples, understanding each other requires not only the knowledge of work culture of the individual and knowing the circumstances and specific situation but also learning from each other and adapting viz. changing certain behavior in the ways of doing things as well as modifying certain linguistic behavior to develop a shared repertoire. Therefore, it is important to explore how the message and information is conveyed, which is discussed in the following section under information transfer and message structure.

6.3.2.2 Information Transfer and Message Structure

In order to make communication successful the wider contextual factors discussed above have to be considered so that the linguistic behavior can be adjusted accordingly. Thus, developing a shared repertoire or resources for negotiation of meaning requires ultimately adapting to certain 'ways of doing things' as well as modifying certain linguistic behavior. The resources for negotiation of meaning refer among others to linguistic and non-linguistic resources that can be reengaged in new situations and used for the process of interpretation and action (see Wenger, 1998) in other words for understanding and responding. Negotiation of meaning is a process that speakers use to reach clear understanding of their linguistic and non-linguistic resources or ways of doing things, routines, actions or concepts. In this context, the linguistic and non-linguistic resources could also be referred to as verbal and non-verbal strategies as analyzed in the meeting data. German as well as Malaysian employees use common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies for the negotiation of meaning and to ensure successful and effective communication. However, the way of using certain strategies might be different or have been modified in their mutual engagement to adapt and adjust to the other ways of doing things.

Most of the common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that have been identified in the meeting interactions have also been reported by some interviewees in response to how successful communication can be ensured. However, these strategies do not necessarily relate to the formal meeting interactions unless it is specifically mentioned as such, they rather generally concern all kinds of workplace interactions such as mostly informal internal but also external formal interactions, e.g. such as with meetings with clients. Therefore, it is not always possible to link directly with the strategies used in formal meeting interactions.

Negotiation of meaning or understanding through 'asking' was one of the verbal communication strategies that was commonly employed, as stated in the following example by one of the Malaysian employees: "Sometimes I don't really get what he wants then I will keep on *asking* until I understood what he wants" (B_OX_M, p. 8). Asking to understand but also asking to be understood or to make sure it was understood the intended way helps to ensure successful communication as another Malaysian interviewee stated: "Yeah, we *asking* it, first checking on the expression and how response of the person, of the other party and also then, eh, *ask* again else then, then just do some follow up." (C_OX_M, p. 10) As mentioned in this statement, after asking the next step would be checking the expression (she refers here to facial expression) and the response and eventually ask again and follow up.

Although both Malaysian employees' statements above demonstrate that asking is a strategy they use regularly there is also a contradicting view from few German interviewees who mention that asking is rarely used by Malaysians, especially in meetings, as put by one German participant "for instance if somebody would not understand the task, it's very seldomly in meeting that they would ask" (B_OX_G, p. 12). In a prior statement however, he referred the use of 'asking' specifically to the 'subordinates' meaning to those employees working in these positions and generally to the Asian culture, stating, "a culture of the asking and feedback by let's say staff subordinates is wish thing" (B_OX_G, p. 10).

He further illustrates if recipients of the message do not ask nor give feedback, to make sure it is understood he uses the asking strategy himself and describes it as 'asking from different angles' and at the same time observing or monitoring the reaction especially in their face as put in the following example: "There is, eh, eh, *risk of not understanding* it fully the way the Westerner wants it, then you can prepare and try to come from a different angle and have *another question from a different angle*. Then, the other way is, eh, *looking at the gesture of the faces*. It has been understood" (B_OX_G, p. 10). Thus, probably using the questioning strategy as a precaution for the 'risk of not understanding' in addition to monitoring the non-verbal communication, the facial expressions put as 'gestures of the face'.

A Malaysian interviewee referring to both her Malaysian as well as German subordinates however tells it more directly, to make sure it is understood she gives the following example: "Ok, this is what I want. If you don't understand, come back and ask me." (E_OX_M, p. 6/7). In meetings, generally a platform for information gathering and transfer among others, subordinates or trainees are less involved and just report shortly and usually do not ask as observed in the meeting data. This is also confirmed by one of the German trainees from the legal department who states: "yeah, we only have meetings, but I am mostly there to listen and to, so that I get to know what the others are doing, so in case I have something that's related to, to to that task, I can go and ask them or the other way round" (J_OX_G, p. 1). Usually employees from the legal department mostly Germans except one Malaysian dealing with the immigration authorities only meet with their Malaysian colleagues in meetings and would only ask questions related to their task afterwards.

It seems that asking is similarly employed by both Germans and Malaysians as a means to understand and check understanding at the same time monitoring verbal and non-verbal response or feedback. However, referring to the statements above, while one Malaysian who is a head of department (E_OX_M) instructs 'directly' to come and ask her if not understood, the German interviewee from the upper management tells (B_OX_G) that he is asking from different angles in a way trying to be 'not too direct' and rather be cautious. To make sure it is understood, the Malaysian head of department (E_OX_M) would even ask the interlocutor to repeat, especially her Malaysian subordinates, "I think for especially Malaysians, it has to work this way that I give you something and you have to repeat what I want you to do. If you don't understand, I give you a chance to ask me", (p. 6) further giving specific examples how she would put it: "Can you tell me what I just told you?" and "I would like you to understand me fully, if you don't understand me, please get back to me" (E_OX_M, p. 7).

This is a concept that one of the Germans from the upper management believes would work to ensure what is meant is understood the intended way if the interpretation is based on the cultural factor or as he puts it 'what is culturally behind' but is not applicable, especially in meetings, due to the following reasons he gives: "

> The understanding of what is culturally behind, what was been meant could be different, (…) therefore it could be the good or best way to ask the colleague to repeat, what he should do, but number one, this wouldn't be a nice thing, because you can't ask somebody like a child, "please repeat, how you understand it?" because he would like look stupid. […] And if you would do that, you can't do that in the meeting (…). Everybody is reporting and then one hour is over. Eh, this is difficult or it would be very difficult, because of the person in front of others and what should I say then, "you didn't get it!"? You see, for the point of view and in terms of efficient getting the things over that would be a beautiful wish dream, but it's in reality, which is performance and result driven hardly possible then (B_OX_G, p. 10).

However, although 'asking to repeat' reported as one possibility to ensure understanding has not been observed in the meeting data, perhaps because of the reasons given above, e.g. the face issue and the non-efficiency of this possible action in meeting context. Another strategy that has been reported besides asking questions for understanding the message or information is repeating and rephrasing, as one interviewee illustrated:

> Once I deliver my message it would definitely be facial expression (…) the opposite side would definitely act to me and say: "I don't understand, hence I would *rephrase*". (…) I would rephrase it using some other words, which to me will be a little simpler or more understandable to the other party, slower, yeah. […] Or just *repeat* myself again (C_OX_M, p. 7/8).

However, the strategy of repeating or rephrasing in this case described as self-repeating or self-rephrasing after displayed non-understanding has only been reported once as illustrated above by only one interviewee.

To achieve and ensure successful and effective communication the second common strategy reported in the interviews besides ‘asking’ was ‘explaining’, as one Malaysian interviewee explains, if she wants to get information pertaining to e.g. legal matters, she will ask the person in charge who will then explain it to her (B_OX_M). Or as another Malaysian states, “try and explain further until I feel that, ok, she is finally getting it, yeah” (D_OX_M, p. 5). Apart from these statements above, mostly German employees report the strategy of explaining in form of ‘giving background information’ as a necessary action to guarantee understanding. The German upper management mentions that it is important to explain the objective of organization, the projects and tasks, which requires more time but ensures successful communication. Other German interviewees mention, before explaining in detail, explaining the target and the general goal is important, since “it’s important to know why” (C_OX_G, p. 16). She further states referring to her clients “everything is working out, but, eh, yeah, you have to explain and apologize and, but it works (C_OX_G, p. 8).

To ensure the information is not only transferred or transmitted but the message is also conveyed the intended way, interviewees also report to be cautious about the words or phrases employed. At the same time, they want to be perceived as professional and get the message across in a nice and polite way. As one Malaysian interviewee states, she wants to be perceived as firm and professional but friendly person (C_OX_M, p. 11) and getting the message across she further states you have to be, “careful or little bit more, eh, cautious about what words you use (…) in terms of phrases or terms that you use that has to be precise (…) you tend to be more aware (…)” (C_OX_M, p. 12). In an earlier statement she mentioned that being aware means also being aware not only of verbal but also non-verbal communication but also the audience, e.g. “the way you communicate (…) your body language, your eye contact, it’s very important as well as *who you are talking to*” (C_OX_M, p.7). Germans similarly stress the importance of being cautious and aware how to use words or sentences thus how to modify their message structure accordingly, e.g. taking a more indirect approach. As one German interview explains: "You cannot be as straight forward as you are used to. Never criticize, never, eh, everything is more sensitive" (C_OX_G, p. 5) She further gives an example how to avoid being too straight forward, e.g. "'Would you mind?' eh, it's more, yeah, don't be so straight forward (…) you have to be more aware of what you say" (C_OX_G, p. 5). However, depending on the situation and circumstances, e.g. in "daily operations with five or ten deadlines" (B_OX_G, p. 20), a more direct language is indispensible especially when the 'face issue' is used intentionally as one German interviewee points out,

> Sometimes you see that officers intentionally don't bring up things or you know they hide things and then you might end up in a more direct language even. Yeah, because you realize what is going on (…) losing faces has been used technically, so this is the other part. This is also in here, so, eh, that "don't offend before others" and all these ones are used to hide away, so people don't communicate (…) but it's also used as well as an instrument to hide away things (B_OX_G, p. 20)

Thus, some interviewee participants are also aware of the important role non-verbal communication plays in how to transmit the information or how to structure the message. Further as some interviewees reported, the body language and the facial expressions will show whether the information or message was understood by the recipient so that the speaker can take some action to make sure it is, e.g. using the questioning and explaining strategy. However, it is difficult for the interviewees to describe 'body language' and give concrete examples. Most of them just report that is it visible in the body language or face but have difficulties to explain. One Malaysian interviewee tries to give examples and illustrates it as follows,

> He takes time to react to me to what I have just said or just feel taken aback with a body language as well, will taken aback, like don't know how to react or feel shy to tell me that: "I don't understand what you are talking." Hence especially when I am working with my trainees, so hence then I would ask (C_OX_M, p. 8)

She further reports that facial expressions could also signal whether the message or information was understood, e.g. “sometimes your lips and and mouth would be towards one side and the eyes is not looking at yours, because you know the person is thinking (…) also maybe in terms of body language will definitely be a bit slouchy maybe” (C_OX_M, p. 9). Ultimately, she points out that she can see it in the face whether a message is understood (C_OX_M). Similarly, one German interviewee states that ‘reading faces’ is ‘a tool’ to understand the message (B_OX_G), he further states that he can see it in the eyes or what he calls “gesture of the faces” (p. 10). Although difficult to describe, he explains that it is visible after knowing the “personalities over the years or after few weeks even (…) somebody would *express in his body language is he with you or is he with others* or *does he have problems with understanding*, you know like, that is kind of visible” (B_OX_G, p. 12). Since non-verbal communication or ‘body language’ is mentioned by some interview participants but could not be further specified as illustrated above this might suggest that participants are partly aware of the non-verbal communication as feedback whether the message or information was understood. However, they might not be aware of their own non-verbal communication behavior since they only reported what has been observed and stated it as visible in the body language and face of the recipient, especially the facial expressions and the eyes of the recipient helping them to see whether their message was understood or not.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the wider context on the external factors was analyzed that influence the use of communication strategies to ensure successful and effective communication. The analysis established a link between the survey outcome and the in-depth interviews conducted with the employees of the organization and further tried to connect to the actual meeting interactions and the communication strategies employed therein. The common perception of half of the survey participants that intercultural communication is challenging due to lingua-cultural factors could not be confirmed since the interviews could deliver more in-depth information concerning external factors that could bridge the divide between BELF users perception and their reported as well as actual BELF use. Communication issues that have been stated by the survey participants and further elaborated by the interviewees were generally related to different perception and expectations from both sides concerning the cultural factor that interviewees referred to in general as national culture but also mentioned the differences between the three ethnicities as well as individuals. Language or language proficiency as revealed in the interviews was good enough and was not reported as a challenge in the interviews, in fact, face-to-face communication was actually perceived as a facilitator for successful and effective communication in BELF. The national and/or ethnical or individual cultural differences that have been highlighted as challenging were based on a stereotypical difference between Malaysian and German culture particularly the directness and indirectness and other related perceptions and expectations resulting thereof, such as politeness and the 'face issue'. Expectations involved general business principles, such as being friendly, sensitive and respectful towards other cultures, moreover being reliable, respecting deadlines, in general getting things done considering the time constraints in daily businesses.

The factors that contribute to successful and effective communication could be subsumed into two categories, the understanding of the culture-specific and general business practices and principles, and understanding the message and information, thus the understanding of context and content. The first refers to work and organizational culture that encompasses the national and individual culture as well as the organizational culture as a reference for appropriate behavior in situation-specific organizational context. The second relates to the shared repertoire that is developed and enabled through learning that in turn requires negotiation of meaning considering contextual and unique information. Developing a shared repertoire or resources for negotiation of meaning requires considering and adapting to certain 'ways of doing things' as well as modifying certain linguistic behavior. However, to be willing and be able to adapt, the following wider contextual factors needs to be considered: Knowing the intercultural environment, the surrounding and the specific situation, knowing the work and organizational culture and being aware of the attitudes towards each other's work culture are factors that help in weighing and assessing the different attitudes and concepts to be able to decide which works best for each individual.

The overarching factor is 'time' as with time a person can gain practice and experience in the specific CofP working in an intercultural business environment and also acquire knowledge how to adapt and change the communication behavior and develop appropriate strategies as resources to achieve and ensure successful and effective communication. Two common verbal communication strategies were reported by the interviewees as 'asking' and 'explaining' to achieve and ensure successful and effective communication. These two verbal communication strategies have also been reflected and revealed in the actual meetings interactions as the most employed common strategies, named as questioning and explaining strategies. Regarding non-verbal communication strategies, there is some awareness of the importance of body language, the face and eyes for successful communication, e.g. as a means of non-verbal feedback whether the message is understood.

In general, both Germans and Malaysians reported similarly to be more aware and cautious about the words and phrases they are using, e.g. some German participants reported the need to change their communication behavior and try not to be too direct and put it politely also depending on the situation. Malaysians on the other hand reported a preference towards being more direct and precise or accurate. There seems to be also unanimous agreement to the need to adapt to each other's culture and find a common ground, e.g. in respecting the local culture, thus the Malaysian culture and at the same time meeting German expectations since as a German organization the organizational principles are dominated by the German management.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore how speakers of English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) manage to communicate successfully and effectively in intercultural communication. The study identified common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that BELF users employ to achieve successful and effective communication. Besides demonstrating the internal and situated context of formal meeting interactions, this study also determined the wider context with external factors that help in developing a shared repertoire and resources to achieve shared understanding for successful intercultural business communication.

Despite the fact that BELF is used as a shared global language in international businesses with international partners and multicultural work force for Intercultural Communication (IC) everywhere in the world, this phenomenon is still neglected in the vast field of IC research and empirical research based on real-life interactions is lagging far behind the present reality of BELF global use. The use of BELF worldwide is even more accelerating with further globalization and global mobility of international businesses and intercultural workforce. Thus, communication in the business domain is becoming progressively more intercultural. However, despite the successful use of BELF for IC, IC is often still perceived as challenging based on findings of some previous research in this area and as reported in the initial stage of this study during off the record conversations with some of the employees as well as by some interviewees of the organization. This seemed to be contradicting since the first unrecorded meeting did not show any of these reported challenges but was observed and perceived as successful by the researcher as a meeting participant herself before the official collection of data for this study started. It is this discrepancy between BELF's communication success and some of the reported and perceived challenges in IC that inspired the objectives of this study. Practitioners still unaware of the BELF phenomenon and concept often perceive IC as challenging although BELF in its own right is used with success. To understand the reasons for this discrepancy that exists among practitioners and thus to know more about BELF use and users in IC this study was designed with the intent to determine what contributes to BELF success in IC. Moreover, this study was also stimulated by personal interest and experience gained from working for more than a decade as part of an international team in a foreign country as a (B)ELF speaker.

Combining the two frameworks of Community of Practice (CofP) and Conversation Analysis (CA) as well as taking a multi-method and multi-modal approach, first the common BELF communication strategies and second the wider context with the external factors contributing to the BELF success in IC could be revealed by shedding light on both the BELF communication competence and intercultural (business) competence in a specific CofP. In the analysis of the formal internal meetings four (4) verbal communication strategies (VCS) labeled as questioning, repeating, reformulating, explaining VCS and three (3) non-verbal communication strategies (NVCS) as head movement, hand movement, eye contact and gaze were identified. The analysis of interviews also taking into account the survey as background information delivered valuable insights and determined various external factors that contribute to the BELF success in IC, such as knowledge of specific work and organizational culture and the attitudes thereof, experience in working in intercultural and multicultural business environment or professional experience, and awareness of national as well as individual culture differences and similarities, further willingness to change attitudes or adapt to certain communication behavior.

In the preceding three analysis chapters, the meeting data was analyzed in detail in the context of six different meetings to show how each of the verbal and non-verbal common communication strategies were employed by various meeting participants to achieve successful and effective communication (Chapter 4 and 5). The last analysis chapter (Chapter 6) revealed the perceptions and expectations of BELF speakers and identified the external factors that contribute to successful and effective communication based on the survey and interview data, mainly focusing on the interviews. Here in this final chapter, the summary of the main findings of the analyses is presented and discussed next, followed by the limitations, contributions, and implications of the study. Before concluding the thesis some recommendations for future research are made.

7.2 Summary of Findings

The analyses of formal meeting interactions as well as the interviews with the meeting participants reveal that BELF is used successfully and effectively and it works well to facilitate IC. All meeting participants use BELF skillfully through the employment of various common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies as part of their shared repertoire to negotiate meaning and achieve shared understanding. Each verbal and non-verbal communication strategy and its function were examined in detail with extracts from six meetings in the preceding analysis chapters (see Chapter 4 and 5). The employment of the common verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in the context of six different formal internal meetings served to establish or re-establish shared understanding, the main purpose of communication being the transfer of information and knowledge and transmission of the message successfully and effectively in the business context. This is underlining LF's original concept and highly functional definition and purpose to facilitate trade or business through a common language, as a 'language of commerce' (House, 2003) here in this case BELF.

Therefore, what counts in worldwide international businesses is ‘getting the job done’ (Kankaaranta & Planken, 2010) and the achievement of communicative goals based on communicative competence that was demonstrated and proven through the use of various verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Moreover, the factors contributing to successful and effective communication could also be determined as shared repertoire and resources and subsumed under intercultural business competence, encompassing besides communicative competence the knowledge of specific work culture and organizational culture as well as the national and individual culture, thus the highly hybrid BELF culture. In the subsections below some of the main findings are further discussed.

7.2.1 Communicative Competence

The employment of various verbal as well as non-verbal communication strategies in the internal meetings of this organization as a specific community of practice has proven that communicative competence is crucial for successful and effective communication (see Chapter 4 and 5). This is consistent with previous research where communication competence and skills rather than language competence, skills or proficiency are highlighted and referred to as ‘business communication competence’ where knowledge of grammar is less important than business-specific knowledge and thus suggesting the benchmark of ‘an effective business communicator’ for BELF speakers (Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). The findings of this study also support this benchmark highlighting the importance of content and context of message. However, since BELF is highly context dependent, the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that were determined in this study may not be in line with those findings in some previous BELF studies or ELF in business domain, such as accommodation processes, e.g. ‘normalization mechanism’ (Rogerson-Revell, 2010), ‘let it pass’ (Firth, 1996) and lack of repair or convergence processes by modifying message in using simple words, speaking slowly (Rogerson-Revell, 2010) and other clarification and repetition practices (Pullin, 2010) or other repair practices that are referring generally to ‘linguistic problems’ used when levels of linguistic proficiency differ. The verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed in this study are mainly based on understanding the content and context of message or information. It is also difficult to establish possible links since communication practices or strategies are created anew and vary according to the specific context of interaction and interactants and are thus constrained by ‘social and linguistic considerations’ (Liddicoat, 2007). In fact, this study has revealed communication strategies that are not used to overcome or foresee ‘understanding problems’ based on differing levels of language proficiency or other linguistic problems and not as a ‘solution to a problem’ but rather for understanding the information or content of the message described through BELF to reach communicative goals effectively not different than in the case of native speakers (see Klimpfinger, 2009). Therefore, the suggestions made by Schegloff, Koshik, and Olsher (2002) concerning the treatment of so-called ‘repair’ in CA in the area of applied linguistics that is among others the distinction between ‘understanding the talk’ and e.g. ‘understanding the event described by talk’ was also crucial in this study when analyzing the specific verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. It is also for this reason that this study refrained from using the broad term ‘repair’ or ‘repair strategies’ despite its origin in CA being rooted in native speaker talk as in (B)ELF context it might easily be associated with problems of understanding the language itself, e.g. due to inadequate or limited language skills or automatically connoted with increased effort to understand the language that is not the case in the context of this study. The smooth flow of interactions within the context of formal meetings and with rare interruptions in cases where the shared background knowledge had to be reestablished by complementing content and context with new or missing information shows that the participants of the study manage to communicate successfully and effectively. This BELF success is attributed mainly to the employment of the shared repertoire and resources gained in the specific CofP.

Moreover, by taking the context of the institutional setting into account, the communication strategies employed in this specific setting were influenced by the internal context, e.g. the interactions as context-shaping and context-renewing actions of overall sequential order and external context that originates from outside the interactions, such as constraints of formal meetings and the wider context of other institutional and cultural settings. CA however could only display the aspects of the external context that was reflected in the meeting interactions. Hence, due to the nature and type of formal meetings, the round-the-table procedure and participants' roles, the most employed verbal communication strategy identified in the meetings was the questioning strategy that performed various functions, such as requesting confirmation of shared knowledge and clarification of new or additional information, etc. for the purpose of facilitating shared understanding and establishing shared knowledge for all meeting participants. All meeting participants used predominantly the indirect questioning strategy while the direct questioning was employed for the request of specific and explicit information also depending on the individual and his/her role in the interaction (see chapter 4.2). The importance of clarity and explicitness in business context whereby explicitness required 'directness' in some context as shown in previous research (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) could also be confirmed in this case. The repeating strategy especially as full repetition was also used for the confirmation of specific information and employed as a form of feedback, acknowledging and confirming the aforementioned information. Only partial repeating involved some correction with extremely rare occurrence or modifying certain part of information for further clarification and to determine the accuracy of information but was less commonly employed (see chapter 4.3). The least employed and rarely used strategy was the reformulating strategy that served as recipients' understanding checks for accuracy and reliability of aforementioned information. It is suggested that partial repeating is more effective and efficient for further clarification of understanding than reformulating in the context of formal meetings also due to time constraints. Moreover, considering the shared knowledge and resources among the participants, partial repeating and especially reformulating was less required since participants could draw on their shared knowledge (see chapter 4.4).

The importance of accuracy and clarity of information or content in the sense of getting the facts right, as well as professional appropriateness, e.g. softening direct requests that were found to be three fundamental aspect of communicative success and also define BELF competence (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) could be also confirmed in this study through the use of mainly the above-mentioned strategies. The explaining strategy similar to the questioning strategy depending on the type of meetings and meeting participants involved was commonly used to provide background information and to update background knowledge when and where required to enhance shared understanding and shared knowledge by e.g. adding to the existing knowledge or opinions. Although used by all participants, the distinct use whether used after implicit or explicit request, or without any request depended on the individual participants (see chapter 4.5).

Salient differences in cultural aspects, such as directness and indirectness as partly reflected in the questioning strategy and explaining strategy of the interactions and as also reported by the majority of interview participants drawing mainly on national or macro culture are not necessarily a dividing factor since some interviewees are aware that this could vary according to individual culture and use depending also on the context and content of communication.

Further, the importance of communicative effectiveness in transmitting information (Ehrenreich, 2010) could also be established through the employment of various strategies in this study, namely through the simultaneous use of verbal and non-verbal strategies. Head movement as NVCS, especially the head nod strategy used by all participants are very common in this study and primarily serve as feedback strategy, including the function as turn-continuer, making active and attentive listening visible and to confirm and guarantee shared understanding (see chapter 5.2). Hand movement as NVCS enhance communicative clarity as contextualization and visualization strategies in adding or completing meaning to verbal communication and making utterances explicit. However contrary to head movements hand movements depend on the individual use and are culturally sensitive, and thus skillfully used, such as certain type of pointing gestures. Nevertheless, some similar hand movements when clarifying verbal actions and people or objects could also be observed (see chapter 5.3).

Yet, the most common NVCS and basic prerequisite for successful and effective communication determined as the eye contact and gaze, is strategically employed by all meeting participants as an overarching non-verbal resource with varying functions, such as monitoring interaction and feedback, for turn-taking and turn-allocation, and regulating participation in meetings also in combination with other non-verbal strategies (see chapter 5.4).

The NVCS are also employed free standing and thus replace verbal communication in some contexts. Therefore, to be able to interpret face-to-face communication processes as a whole, NVCS are crucial and need to be taken into account when determining how successful and effective communication is achieved. Non-verbal communication is an undisputed important aspect of intercultural (business) communication and this study has delivered evidence that non-verbal communication strategies besides verbal communication strategies play a crucial role for the successful and effective communication in BELF (see Chapter 5). Shared understanding involves both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that constitute communication competence as revealed in this study.

7.2.2 Intercultural Business Competence

This study has revealed four verbal communication strategies and three non-verbal communication strategies that equip the participants with the communicative competence to achieve their communicative goals based on shared understanding. As stated earlier, both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are crucial for successful and effective communication in intercultural business communication.

However, what also contribute to the successful use of BELF are the external factors that could not be detected by conversation analytic procedures but through the theoretical framework of Community of Practice. In working together in this specific CofP the participants learned to understand each other's culture-specific and general business practices that form part of their intercultural business competence. Knowing the work culture as well as the organizational culture was of utmost importance. Moreover, being aware of the differences not only in national culture but also among ethnicities as well individuals helped understand certain practices as in 'the way things are done' as well as the concept of the 'face issue'. With time and experience in working in an intercultural business environment, participants gained knowledge how to adapt and change certain communication behavior and thus develop shared repertoire and resources to fulfill required expectations for successful and effective communication. Expectations involved general business principles, such as being friendly, sensitive and respectful towards other cultures, and getting things done within the time constraints of daily business (see chapter 6.3). The challenges that were reported based on the perceptions of the participants and their expectations were basically concerning the directness and indirectness and hence politeness and the face issue (see chapter 6.2). However, the study revealed that the 'directness and indirectness' issue was not necessarily based on the stereotypical macro and national culture, such as Malaysian/Asian versus German/Westerner but also depended on the individual participants as reported by the participants themselves. While directness and indirectness seem to play a role in (intercultural) business communication, it is not necessarily based on macro or national cultures. This matter was similarly reported, e.g. between Finnish as being direct and Swedish indirect (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta 2005) although both belonging to the same macro culture as Westerners/Scandinavians. Therefore, cultural dimensions and categories may or may not be able to explain certain communication behavior as reflected in the choice of certain communication strategies.

The factors that were determined to positively influence successful and effective communication required intercultural business competence comprising in general the knowledge of specific work and organizational culture and BELF culture encompassing diverse and dynamic shared values and shared purposes of the global business culture (Charles, 2007). This study is also in line with the key findings of previous studies about the essential role contextual factors play for successful communication, subsumed as e.g. shared business knowledge or 'business knowhow' and global communication competence including multicultural and BELF competence taking the business community cultures and individual cultural backgrounds into account (see Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

7.2.3 Understanding Content and Context for BELF Success

In the light of the above findings successful and effective communication depends on the two major prerequisites, first understanding the content and second the context of BELF interactions. Reaching communicative goals, here mainly understanding the content of message or information thus the subject matter through the use of BELF and this way getting the job done, requires on one hand the skillful use of various verbal and non-verbal communication strategies viz. communicative competence. On the other hand depending on the internal and external context of the communication, meeting expectations of one another based on the work and organizational culture as well as being polite and making the other feel good considering the face issue is also required. Thus, the latter refers to intercultural business competence and takes the BELF users and their cultures into account as an essential part of intercultural business communication. Further, establishing a link between BELF use and its users informs whether communication is perceived as successful and how external factors may influence certain communication strategies and hence contribute to successful and effective communication.

This way both layers of BELF communication can be uncovered shedding light on intercultural business communication and how it is managed. As initially claimed in this study (see chapter 1.4), IC and the concept of ‘culture’ has to be re-evaluated within each specific BELF context and can therefore no longer rely solely on macro and/or national cultural concepts and needs to include the individual perspective of culture as well as the dynamic and diverse BELF culture. This study provides support to validate the claims to view BELF use and BELF users in its/their own right within a diverse and dynamic BELF cultural context.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

This study determined not just common verbal strategies but also non-verbal strategies that are crucial for effective communication and the success of business interactions. Not considering non-verbal communication means missing out on fundamental aspects of communication. Face-to-face interactions involve the simultaneous use of verbal and non-verbal communication and thus need to be captured through video recordings. However, this study faced some issues during the data collection. In this respect, the study was not sufficiently equipped at the beginning of the data collection, e.g. the first meetings were recorded using only one video camera with cassette tape and without an additional voice recorder that made it hard to repeatedly watch and transcribe the data since it was not digital and also due to poor audio quality. Moreover, the positioning of the video recorder in the meeting room without a tripod and the large windows with day light facing the video recorder made it difficult to clearly capture all meeting participants. Only the last few meeting recordings were appropriately well equipped with two video cameras and tripods, as well as a voice recorder for an overall better quality of recordings. Therefore, only the most visible non-verbal communication could be analyzed, although participants in the interviews mentioned the importance of specifically the face with the eye and also the mouth movements. However, to be able to capture the facial expressions in detail close-up video recordings with a moving and zooming video camera would be necessary. Thus, not all non-verbal communication codes could be captured and analyzed.

Furthermore, the survey questionnaire provided a limited value of some background information and some requested information was redundant for this specific study, such as age and sex. In retrospect, the last general question concerning whether problems were encountered in intercultural communication could have been better formulated and enquired in detail. However, the last question was integrated later after the initial off the record meetings with some employees and their negative perceptions of intercultural communication.

Moreover, the first three interviews at the beginning of the data collection were less structured and mostly guided by the interviewees' themselves and their concerns and responses but could have been perhaps more actively led by the researcher. In general, the interview questions might have been more targeted towards the specific research questions regarding specific verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. However, the purpose of the interviews was to get information that reveal the wider context inaccessible in the meeting interactions and moreover to capture the authentic reality of participants 'as it is' perceived and without raising awareness with too specific questions.

Interviews could have been also conducted after the analyses of video recorded meetings. However, the plan was to collect all three data sets before analyses to capture the real-life business context. Moreover, it was difficult to schedule the interviews with the employees since not all of them were willing to take time from their busy schedules and to be interviewed.

7.4 Contributions to Research and Implications of the Study

The findings of this study demonstrate how the use of BELF facilitates intercultural business communication. The study and its findings are relevant to the vast field of Intercultural Communication (IC) and specifically (B)ELF, to Community of Practice (CofP) as a social theory of learning, and to Conversation Analysis (CA) in institutional context specifically.

First and foremost, the study represents a different approach from the one normally adopted in the vast field of IC where differences usually based on macro cultures, such as Asian and Westerner and/or national cultures are highlighted and thus considered as challenging or potential sources of communication problems. This study viewed from a different perspective and sought to reveal the communication strategies and external factors including cultural aspects that contribute to the success of intercultural communication through BELF. The nature of 'BELF culture' (Charles, 2007) as hybrid and highly dynamic culture and the poststructuralist concept of IC (Jensen, 2003; Gullestrup, 2003) also considering the individual and work culture among others shows the skillful translation of differences into resources for successful IC. Differences as well as similarities form part of BELF users 'culture' and is deployed strategically as shared repertoire and resources for IC. Therefore, IC through BELF should no longer be seen as a challenge but as a platform or common ground to develop shared repertoire and resources for successful communication from which participants can choose and use appropriately depending on the specific intercultural situation and context. Thus, since BELF is used for intercultural communication and both BELF communication competence and intercultural business competence are integral part for BELF success, the following model could be suggested as revealed from this study.

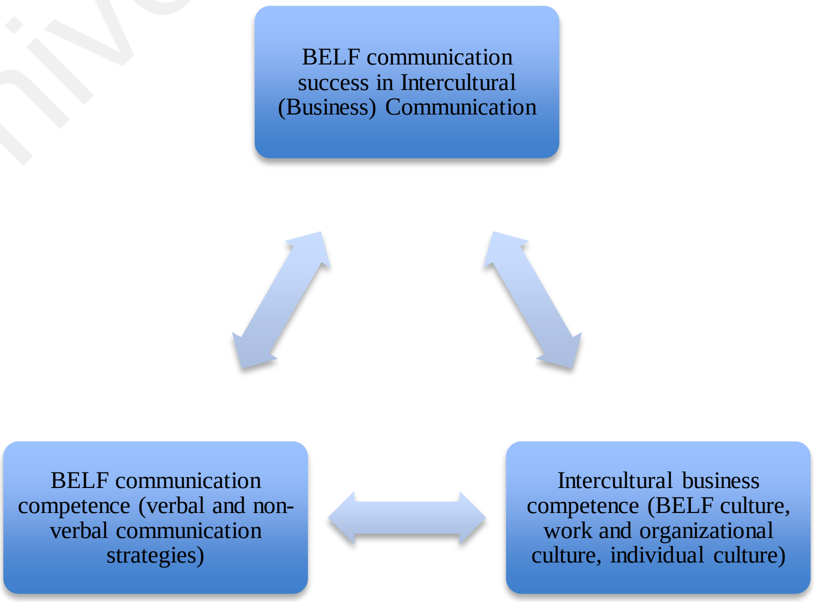

Figure 7.1 Model of BELF Success in IC

As can be seen in Figure 7.1, successful and effective communication in BELF for IC depends on two elements, BELF communication competence and intercultural business competence with their various components. While each element can lead to BELF success on its own, only through the interconnection of both the cycle can be closed showing the interrelation and influence of the two components for BELF success in IC and further connecting the actual BELF use with BELF users' reality. In this sense, cultural differences are no longer dividing factors and perceived as challenging but combined part of intercultural business competence mainly based on individual cultural backgrounds and work experience.

Second this study sheds light on the BELF communication competence, consisting of skillful use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies based on empirical evidence of real-life interactions. The importance of non-verbal communication in intercultural interactions as an essential component of face-to-face communication could be underpinned. The use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies were influenced by various internal and external factors that constitute the intercultural business competence. Both components, the communication competence and intercultural business competence, could only be exposed through a multi-method and multi-modal approach situated in CofP as theoretical framework and CA as an analytical framework and uncovered through the combination of micro and macro analyses. This approach has proven to be perfectly suitable to describe the shared repertoire and resources that BELF speakers use to communicate successfully and effectively. This way, the study determined how verbal and non-verbal communication strategies and internal as well as external factors facilitate intercultural communication through BELF. While CA on one hand could detect the BELF communicative competence, CofP on the other hand could shed new light on the concept of intercultural competence and discover the various components or external factors in a specific community of practice. However, it is the combination of CofP and CA that could give the bigger picture and render a holistic view of BELF success. CA allows the interpretation of actual data as displayed by the participants and CofP renders the background on external factors. Hence this study has implications also for the field of Community of Practice and Conversation Analysis.

Lastly the present study adds to the growing pool of (B)ELF research based on Community of Practice as well as Conversation Analysis. However, according to my knowledge the combination of both has not yet been applied to investigate BELF communication in business settings such as formal internal meetings but applied to describe the discourse strategies used in business meetings with native speakers of English based on their shared repertoire and resources (see Chan, 2007). As discussed in chapter two, CofP is the most adequate framework to understand the diverse and dynamic nature of BELF giving insights into BELF users shared practices based on their shared repertoire and resources that are acquired in a continuous learning process and the negotiation of meaning. The full potential of CofP could only be unfolded when referred to a specific community of practice (see Ehrenreich, 2010). By including CofP for the study of BELF, CofP is able to give more insights into other specific communities of practices in other business areas and regions where BELF is employed. The growing number of Conversation Analysis based studies in ELF shows that CA is most appropriate to reveal participants' own orientations displayed in the talk-in-interaction and the researchers' interpretation thereof. CA has proven to be an effective guide and tool in revealing the communication processes employed by the participants. Hence CA will continue to contribute to (B)ELF research. However, when CA is used to analyze BELF the notion of 'repair' could be re-conceptualized and adapted to BELF in its own right and with it the 'communicative competence' of BELF speakers thus using the benchmark of 'effective communicator'.

7.4.1 Implications for Practice

This study also set out a practical goal to make results of empirical research available to raise awareness of the BELF phenomenon among practitioners and scholars and at the same time to help improve IC trainings often provided by the companies for their international workforce. Therefore, to integrate BELF communicative competence as an integral part of intercultural business competence in the development of training materials would help improve IC through BELF. The participants of this study showed intercultural awareness and emphasized the importance of the wider context. While the majority focused on lingua-cultural differences based on national cultures, only few referred to individual cultures based on their work experience. However, none of them was aware of the existence of the BELF phenomenon and BELF in its own rights.

Other implications for practice would be to equip students as future practitioners from international business (communication) and management studies or from other disciplines in 'English for specific purposes', 'Business English' or 'Professional English' with communication competence based on real-life interactions in intercultural business settings and the research results thereof rather than focusing on business English language competence and traditional IC theories and concepts (see Hall 1976; Hofstede, 2001). However, to be able to fill this existing gap, more BELF research is needed to draw on findings and to create new teaching and training models for the development of BELF communicative strategies and competence rather than pure business English language competence that many working in this field might see as a dilemma of whether and how to integrate BELF although the majority of the international business transactions takes place in BELF.

A research agenda to integrate BELF for teaching and training materials in business communication has been already suggested by Nickerson (2015). Therefore, more authentic data is needed to be able to identify the ‘strategies associated with successful professional communicators’ (p. 393) underpinning the professional communicative competence that consists of both communicative and professional competence for effective communication to get the job done. At the same time, expanding the knowledge of cultural context besides the common macro cultural theories, such as high and low context (Hall, 1976) and collectivist and individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2001) and including BELF culture are indispensable. As Piller (2011) points out, basing intercultural communication on the nation for culture is “theoretically and practically inadequate” since “national identity has lost some of the sway it once held in an age characterized by globalization and transnationalism” (p. 68). Thus, to be able to understand the contextual factors that influence BELF use and to incorporate this information for teaching/training materials other cultural concepts need to be integrated as well, emphasizing BELF competence and BELF culture.

7.5 Recommendation for Further Research

Before concluding, future research into BELF as special case of IC should in particular focus further on face-to-face communication and also include the analysis of non-verbal communication since non-verbal communication is an essential aspect of business communication, in fact of all face-to-face communication. Moreover, in order to keep up with BELF’s expanding global use, further research could continuously incorporate other international business communities in different regions and contexts.

As the world becomes more interconnected, more BELF research in the vast field of IC is needed to better understand intercultural business or workplace communication and to supplement existing but fragmented knowledge in this area. Moreover, to gain more insight into practice and to know more about the successful impact of BELF on intercultural business as a powerful instrument of communication more awareness about BELF needs to be developed among practitioners and in related research areas and not just among researchers in this specific area of BELF research. At the same time, BELF research can profit from interdisciplinary research and approach drawing more on empirical studies from actual business interactions and connect to the experiences of professionals from the business world taking the BELF notion and BELF culture into consideration rather than referring to established or traditional IC concepts that are still mainly based on differences of national languages and cultures.

Since BELF strategies are created in each situation anew with a hybrid and dynamic BELF culture, BELF use and users have to be studied in their own rights in various business contexts and situations that are unlimited, such as different types of multinational companies, organizations or institutions and business areas, with different management styles and different types of meetings in different countries and regions. Further, more systematic research could be conducted in the business domain focusing on different types of communication media or communication channels and communication interactions, regarding face-to-to face communication, among others informal meetings, specific project meetings, team performance meetings and trainings. Future research could include other face-to-face communication as remote communication, through e.g. video conferencing where communication takes place between different countries but also enables to receive immediate feedback similar to face-to-face communication in the same physical space. Although other communication channels such as phone calls or (voice) conference calls and written communication is an essential part of business communication, e.g. email conversations, instant messaging or chatting, important business interactions still require face-to-face communication verifying the importance of non-verbal communication. Therefore, companies invest in expensive equipment and software for video conferencing and still further in business travel. Many organizations have realized the benefits of video conferencing in e.g. reducing business travel costs, enhancing efficiency and productivity and improved communication for especially internal company communication of multinational companies dispersed geographically in different countries. However, companies still invest in expensive travelling for especially external company communication, e.g. with key customers and for important business deals. Each type of communication medium has its own benefits, considering the purpose of communication, the audience, and type of information to be transmitted when determining the suitable communication medium. However, as this study has proven, face-to-face communication is the best strategic choice for BELF in intercultural business communication to get the message across effectively and to be understood successfully.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

In addition to some directions for future research, this study has made a major contribution to the vast field of IC and specifically to BELF research by combining the analysis of natural business interactions with the practitioners' reality not yet 'closing the conceptual gap' but putting the foundation for 'bridging' the conceptual gap that is still evidenced in practitioners' perceptions and similarly in some researchers' theoretical approaches and the concepts used to describe this world-wide phenomenon. This research could be an initial stepping stone towards understanding BELF and BELF users better and bridging the research and practitioners' gap in this vast field of Intercultural Communication.

Moreover, this research study provided some key ideas that helped me personally to examine my own professional and intercultural communication competence, and gave me some guidelines for possible changes to my own verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in intercultural situations at the workplace that is now commonplace everywhere in the ever-changing world across professions, sectors and regions.

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