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BELF expert users: Making understanding visible in internal BELF meetings through the use of nonverbal communication strategies

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

English has now assumed the role of global lingua franca in international business, i.e., English as a Business Lingua Franca (henceforth BELF), as international partners and multicultural workforce rely on it for business communication. In spite of this development, BELF is still far from being sufficiently explored. Empirical research based on authentic business interactions is lagging far behind the present reality of the global use of English in BELF contexts (Nickerson, 2015). BELF meanwhile continues to expand rapidly with increased globalization, advanced communication technologies, and the global mobility of businesses and professionals.

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Since the beginnings of BELF research more than a decade ago when the acronym was coined (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaaranta, 2005), the focus has been on the 'B' - the business context - considered key in the evaluation of successful and effective BELF communication. More specifically, the business context is the general frame of reference, which determines and contributes to positive BELF outcomes. Ultimately, what counts in international business transactions and interactions, and defines success is the business at hand and 'getting the job done' (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). The principle goal of BELF research, therefore, has been to uncover how English is used as a communicative medium to achieve this aim, which has required the following shifts in perspective. First is the shift in focus from language competence to communicative competence, which means accepting the notion of 'BELF users and communicators in their own right' (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaaranta, 2005, p. 404). This has also meant moving the benchmark away from the native speaker to an 'effective business communicator' (Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Second, with the view of the 'nature of BELF' as hybrid, fluid, and idiosyncratic, created anew in situ (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), and 'BELF culture' as diverse, dynamic, and drawing on certain shared values of the global business community (Charles, 2007), BELF is situated and investigated in various contexts of use to determine what facilitates and contributes to successful and effective communication.

Given the foregrounding of context, findings from 'B'ELF research provide insights into BELF competence, which, together with multicultural competence and business knowhow, form the outer layers in the Global Communicative Competence (GCC) model proposed by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), and collectively contribute to the GCC at the core. To explain, communicative competence in global business contexts comprises three components: field-specific professional competence or business knowhow, BELF competence, and multicultural competence, which adapt to the 'particular circumstances of each business situation' (p. 259). Multicultural competence is defined as "the acknowledgement of factors related to national, corporate and/or professional cultures as fundamentals of any communicative event, and enables the flexibility and tolerance needed for GCC to succeed." (p. 259). This is in line with Baker's (2011) view of intercultural competence in the context of 'English in global lingua franca settings' (p. 23), where given the diversity of users and contexts, cultures are seen as emergent, 'dynamic and fluid resources' in-situ (p. 5) that may influence understanding.

Findings also shed light on the discourse practices and communication strategies participants adopt, which are known to be dependent on the situated and specific context of BELF interactions. While successful communication refers to the overall achievement of the goals of particular communicative events (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010), effective communication depends on the speaker's ability and willingness to accommodate (Ehrenreich, 2010; Pullin, 2010) the complex linguistic context and different working styles, and to negotiate meaning in order to effectively transmit information (Ehrenreich, 2010). Especially in business contexts, the accuracy of information, clarity, explicitness, and appropriateness (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), viz. getting the facts right, and using suitable genre-associated conventions, are paramount and constitute BELF competence.

Research on BELF communicative competence reveals the use of various practices and strategies, such as accommodation, clarification and repetition (Ehrenreich, 2010; Pullin, 2010, 2013; Rogerson-Revell, 2010; Tsuchiya & Handford, 2014). Other notable business communication skills include asking for and providing clarification, e.g., by checking and double checking, confirming and reconfirming (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Surprisingly, to date, relatively little attention has been paid to nonverbal resources in the context of BELF, with the exception of research based on single case studies or those limited in scope (Bjørge, 2010; Markaki & Mondada, 2012; Mondada, 2012; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010). Such research demonstrates the significance of nonverbal communication in the context of business interaction. To grasp its function in facilitating understanding, nonverbal (and verbal) aspects need to be viewed in context, e.g., head nods which signal active listening may also serve as the nonverbal manifestation of understanding (Bjørge, 2010). Moreover, as Passera, Kankaaranta, and Louhiala-Salminen (2017) point out, because shared understanding is not taken for granted, competent communicators in BELF contexts skillfully deploy several strategies using 'more than one channel or mode' (p. 124). This means that the key ability to continuously check for understanding, to explicate and confirm messages (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011) also draws on visualization skills as part of BELF competence and GCC. The present paper focuses on nonverbal communication strategies (henceforth NVCS) used as shared resources in formal internal face-to-face meetings. It seeks to demonstrate how these strategies are employed to ensure successful and effective communication, and consequently how shared understanding is made visible.

1.2. Nonverbal communication strategies in BELF

The use of NVCS in interaction has not attracted as much research interest as the use of verbal communication strategies. In the context of ELF pragmatics, for example, numerous studies have been carried out to investigate participants' skillful use of a range of verbal practices (e.g., repetition, reformulation, comprehension checks, clarification and confirmation requests etc.) to negotiate and co-create meaning (see Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012, for a review of these studies). There is, however, growing awareness of the need to examine 'how ELF speakers coordinate non-linguistic resources with linguistic ones to accomplish meaning making and other communicative goals in talk' (Kaur, 2018, p. 408). Meierkord (2000), in an early study of ELF, observed the strategic use of pauses and laughter by students interacting at a student hall of residence in Britain. While the participants in her study used pauses to indicate the transition between phases in a conversation, laughter was utilized in place of verbal backchannels, such as 'right', 'yeah' and 'mhm'. In more recent research, Pietikäinen (2018) investigated how cross-cultural couples use silence to communicate various meanings in conflict talk in ELF. Others like

Matsumoto (2018) and Mežek (2018) examined the use of laughter in academic ELF interaction, i.e., in the classroom and in PhD defenses, respectively.

In the context of BELF or multilingual meeting settings, research on nonverbal resources affirms that language constitutes a larger part of a range of semiotic resources, and acts in concert with body language (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010) or embodied actions and orientations (Markaki & Mondada, 2012). Virkkula-Räisänen (2010), for instance, examined a participant's nonverbal communicative practices in his role as mediator in a multilingual meeting between Finnish and Chinese participants. The participant used pointing and gestures to clarify referent and actions, which Virkkula-Räisänen explains, provide support when language skills between participants differ considerably. In a study that examined a corporate meeting conducted by a multinational company with its European representatives, Markaki and Mondada (2012) observed that embodied actions, such as gaze and pointing, are used to allocate turns in order to facilitate participation. Mondada (2012) meanwhile analyzed the embodied orientation of participation in a single episode at a multilingual meeting where a language shift from English to French took place to enable the participation of a person with expert knowledge. She highlights the multimodal dimension of social interaction where gaze, facial expression, and gesture are used to signal a shift in participation during a meeting. Further, embodied demonstration of understanding may take place through the use of head nods. As affirmed by Bjørge (2010), head nods observed in simulated business negotiations among students of management and business studies serve as nonverbal backchannels or listener feedback, and are essential for effective communication.

The aforementioned studies underscore the significant role of nonverbal resources in contributing to successful and effective communication, particularly in business meetings. They also reveal the different NVCS deployed for specific purposes depending on the context of interaction. The use of these strategies, as pointed out by Kankaaranta, Louhiala-Salminen and Karhunen (2015), is context-bound and the BELF context is a 'moving target' that has yet to be fully explored. To extend our knowledge on the use of NVCS in BELF interactions, this study examines nonverbal communication as part of professional communicative competence embedded in its specific context, namely, the situated local context of BELF use, and the wider context of BELF users. The wider context, which includes the shared business context as well as the knowledge, expertise and experience of the participants (e.g., Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), constitutes an integral part of BELF competence and success. Thus, to investigate the use of NVCS in formal face-to-face meetings, we combined the theoretical framework of Community of Practice (CofP) and the analytical framework of Conversation Analysis (CA).

1.3. Community of practice framework

The CofP framework provides for a deeper understanding of business communication as negotiated meaning when it is examined in its historical and dynamic context. In the BELF context, the use of common business communication strategies by this specific CofP builds upon 'the notion of practice' (Wenger, 1998). The concept of practice is fundamental in understanding the CofP members' communicative behavior, which may be modified (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999) and adapted in the process of developing a repertoire of common communication strategies as shared resources. Based on this governing principle, in the context of the present study, the meetings and meeting participants constitute the wider context in which the shared practices and strategies are embedded. Thus, taking the contextual setting of meetings into account enhances the researcher's understanding of participants' own interpretations (Chan, 2007) as well as connects the findings with the practitioner's reality (Ehrenreich, 2010).

The specific CofP investigated is a German organization located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; it is defined by the following three dimensions (Wenger, 1998) as revealed in its meetings:

1. Mutual engagement: negotiation of meaning that takes place when members from different departments interact with each other face-to-face during meetings, which constitute a 'platform of mutual engagement' (Handford, 2010)
2. Joint enterprise: common goals or purpose with mutual accountability, that is, the set goals and objectives of the organization; in the internal meetings, the common goal amongst others is to convey and/or share information
3. Shared repertoire and resources: in this specific case, BELF constitutes the shared repertoire, while NVCS are the resources deployed to negotiate meaning.

To identify the shared NVCS of this CofP, and to determine how they are employed in internal meetings, a detailed analysis of the meeting interactions is necessary. While the CofP framework serves well for the contextualized examination of BELF meeting interactions, the analytical framework of CA is also adopted for this purpose, given its specific focus on the local and situated context of the interactions. Thus, it is through the combination of both frameworks that a thorough analysis of authentic spoken data and the use of NVCS is conducted.

1.4. Applied CA and multimodality

In applying CA to an institutional setting, a dynamic view of context is adopted, which encompasses both the local context of consecutive utterances and the wider context of the institution (Ten Have, 2001). Thus, context is not taken for granted nor regarded as predetermined or independent of participants' conduct (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Heritage (1998) explains that actions are both context shaping and context renewing. In formal settings, contributions are shaped by constraints (e.g., turn-taking system, discursive rights and obligations) and may be restricted to the business at hand (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Further, participants follow an overall structural organization that is standardized or shaped through locally managed routines. The social and cultural context in face-to-face institutional interactions may be reflected in the organization of verbal and nonverbal communicative actions (Drew & Sorjonen, 1997). Thus, interaction in general, especially face-to-face, is always multimodal (Hazel, Mortensen, & Rasmussen, 2014) and can be reconstructed using a multimodal approach. Goodwin (2000) asserts that the production and interpretation of social action relies on the simultaneous use of multiple semiotic resources, including the social, cultural and material structures of language use, viz. the work-relevant fields with their institutional character, that "cannot be understood without more detailed knowledge of the setting and activities in progress" (p. 1507).

Interest in multimodality in interactions has been growing, particularly because an exclusive focus on verbal communication fails to provide a complete picture of human interaction. As Wagner, Malisz, and Kopp (2014) point out, multimodality increases communicative efficiency by 'simultaneously transporting complementary information' and 'providing redundant information in various modalities' (p. 209) (e.g., one modality transmits the information to disambiguate, while the other reinforces this information). Studies adopting CA and multimodal approaches have analyzed the use of various modes: open palm gestures in political and conversational speech (Ferré, 2011), pointing gestures in an experimental setting (Cochet & Vauclair, 2014), and body movement as well as the use of space and objects in university help desk encounters (Mortensen & Hazel, 2014; see also; Hazel & Mortensen, 2014). More recent research has examined gaze (e.g., Vranjes, Brône, & Feyaerts, 2018; Weiss, 2018) captured through eye tracking glasses. All the modalities examined perform specific functions, depending on the context of analysis, and demonstrate 'interactional competence beyond a single modality' (e.g., Hazel & Mortensen, 2014).

The present study seeks to further the inquiry into multimodal communication in a BELF context by examining the interplay of verbal and nonverbal resources, specifically looking at how participants use these resources strategically and skillfully to convey and interpret meaning. The focus is on shared NVCS, namely, head nods, hand pointing gestures, and eye contact and gaze, used in a formal business meeting setting for the purpose of achieving successful and effective communication.

2. Methodology

2.1. Business context and meeting setting

The data was collected at a German business organization situated in Kuala Lumpur. The organization, comprising an almost equal number of German and Malaysian employees, is a unique business setting that provides the context of BELF use and users. In German companies located abroad, Germans usually fill the top management positions. The working language of the organization is English, which is used to facilitate communication between employees of different linguacultural backgrounds. Since the institutional setting is seen as dynamic, context shaping and renewing (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Ten Have, 2001), both the local (with its consecutive utterances) and wider (with its external constraints) contexts (Heritage, 1998) are taken into account in the analysis of BELF meeting interactions. It is presupposed that the participants' communicative conduct reflects the institutional setting, e.g., the different types of meetings and the context external to the interactions. In other words, the overall sequential organization of actions is affected by inferential order and communicative behavior in context, that is, actions which are manifested within the constraints of the institutional context, viz. business setting and type of meeting.

In this study, only formal internal meetings were investigated. As these were held at specific times and scheduled in advance (Asmuβ & Svennevig, 2009), it was possible to arrange for recording prior to the meetings. Another reason for selecting formal internal meetings was that all participants use English as the common language. Furthermore, meetings as 'boundary encounters' (Wenger, 1998) are considered the platform where organizational goals are accomplished through various practices and actions that participants adopt, such as the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies as part of their shared repertoire. Moreover, participants also bring with them their multiple competencies in the form of general and specific business as well as multicultural knowledge and skills that may be reflected when they employ multiple resources to arrive at shared understanding in meetings.

In general, meetings may be categorized according to their goal or function (Handford, 2010). Managers regularly meet their subordinates to review, check, plan and delegate tasks and duties. With reference to the three categories of meetings proposed by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), i.e., forward-, backward- and present-oriented, the meeting data is mostly of the second type, also referred to as reporting or retrospective meetings. The category of meeting may influence the nature of interaction between participants, and the level of involvement according to their specific roles. Backward-oriented meetings focus mainly on information content and its transfer, and involve various actions, such as reporting, checking and reviewing. The interactions of this type in the data primarily take place between the chairperson and other meeting participants, while the actions comprise reporting on completed or ongoing projects and tasks, and the review and discussion thereof. This further characterizes the formal meetings as preplanned, where participants act according to their institutional roles while the chair manages the turn-taking and topic organization (Asmuβ & Svennevig, 2009).

From the regularly held formal internal meetings in this organization, two types of meetings were selected, namely, the interdepartmental (IDE) meeting involving participants from two departments (legal and marketing), and the public relations

(PR) department meeting. The choice of IDE and PR meetings allowed the shared NVCS used by various participants in different types of formal meetings to be determined. Observations based on the video of the meetings suggest that the type and purpose of the meeting may influence the involvement of participants, and the nature of interactions and communication strategies used. In the IDE meetings, comprising 11 to 12 participants, and the PR meetings, consisting of five participants, with one chairperson each, all participants have a duty and right to speak; however, the participants' contributions differ in length and content. In the IDE meetings, two heads of department (HOD) are also usually present and may contribute to the interactions as experts in their field. All meeting participants take turns to report to the chairperson the status of current projects and tasks. This 'round-the-table' procedure gives the participants equal opportunity and duty to take the floor (Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009). Given this structure, the turn-taking procedure is, on the one hand, predetermined, and on the other, influenced by the chairperson, as well as the content of participants' contributions, and the involved participants themselves.

2.2. Data collection

The meeting data used to investigate NVCS comprises three video-recorded meetings, i.e., one IDE and two PR meetings. By making personal contact with the management, access was obtained for the purpose of data collection as the recording of meetings needed special legal consent. Prior to each scheduled meeting, the recording equipment - two video recorders and one voice recorder - was first set up. A meeting participant was also asked to switch the recorders on and off at the start and end of the meetings. This approach captured real-life meeting interactions in their natural environment without the participants being distracted by the researcher's presence. All three recorded meetings amounted to a total of 264 min of data. Information on the wider context of the meeting interactions, i.e., on the different meetings and the participants' background, was also obtained from a member of staff prior to data collection.

2.3. Data analysis

The study adopted a qualitative research design and a multimodal approach to investigate the use of NVCS in face-to-face BELF meeting interactions. To closely examine the meeting data, CA was applied, as it is considered most suitable for the investigation of both verbal and nonverbal actions in BELF. The multimodal approach allowed the researchers to extend the analysis to include multimodal aspects of sequence organization. Meanwhile, the preliminary inquiries provided details on the type of meeting and the participants' background, such as the participants' position and area of expertise within the organization. The information allowed the researchers to determine the participants' affiliation to a particular department and their role and expertise within the organization and at the meetings. It also helped provide insights on the wider context not accessible from the meeting interactions alone.

2.3.1. Transcription of interaction data

The meeting data was transcribed according to Jefferson's (2004) notation system; in addition, the transcription conventions of Goodwin (1981), for gaze, adapted slightly for this study, and Rendle-Short (2002), for hand gestures, were also adopted (see Appendix A). While the extracts presented in the paper contain transcription details of all three NVCS, the analysis and discussion will focus on one specific NVCS at a time. For example, when analyzing head nods, the use of other NVCS is discussed only when relevant. As pointed out by Ferré (2011), various modes work together, but 'a mode may stand out as more prominent at a particular point in time' (p. 2). Although the meetings were video recorded from two different angles, it was difficult to capture and transcribe all participants' NVCS and actions. Thus, only the most visible NVCS were subject to analysis, such as head nods and hand gestures. To examine facial expressions, close-up-recordings are required. Thus, for eye contact and gaze, the analysis relies on approximate gaze direction captured through the two video cameras. However, only the gaze of the speaker and recipient/s directly involved was transcribed, and not that of all other participants. Similarly, only the head nods of the participants interacting were indicated. Further, the recipient's nodding, which usually occurred multiple times and simultaneously during a speaker's turn, was transcribed by only indicating the onset without marking exact overlaps.

In order to protect the identity of people or companies referred to in the meetings, acronyms are used instead of names (see Appendix A). Details of the meetings and participants (e.g., name and duration of meetings, seating arrangement, and the positioning of audio and video recorders) are provided in Appendix B. The information in Appendix B provides the context for the analysis and discussion of the NVCS observed in the video recordings, as photos and all other visual images are strictly prohibited due to the confidentiality requirement imposed by the organization.

3. Analysis and discussion

The analysis of the BELF meeting data reveals three salient NVCS employed as resources to achieve shared understanding, hence, successful and effective communication. The three NVCS observed are head nod, hand pointing gesture, and eye contact and gaze.

3.1. Head nod

Head nod in the context of the study refers to the vertical up-down movement of the head; it is transcribed as 'nod' or 'nodding', whereby the latter describes the nod when sustained. The head nod may be employed as a backchannel, viz. nonverbal listener feedback, without a speaker shift (Bjørge, 2010). Bjørge found that the head nod was used to signal attention, agreement and understanding in her data comprising simulated ELF negotiations. Given the BELF context and the meeting setting, the head nod fulfills a wide range of distinct functions that contribute to shared understanding.

The head nod performs two major functions at opposite ends of the spectrum with a combination of various actions and functions in between; at one end, it conveys active or attentive listening and receipt of information, to responding to new information and requesting further information, while at the other end, it confirms understanding. While a head nod that signals attentive listening and receipt of information may also suggest understanding, there is lack of concrete evidence of this. Nevertheless, all instances of head nods express various degrees of understanding and contribute towards mutual understanding. Head nods may also occur multiple times in a sequence of several turns on the same topic where the boundaries of functions are not always clear-cut.

Extract (1) below illustrates the use of head nods to display active listening and/or receipt of information, and is used either alone, viz. freestanding, or with non-lexical items such as 'hm', 'mhm' and 'ahm', referred to as 'turn-continuers' (Bjørge, 2010). Continuers (Schegloff, 1982) display understanding in progress or 'continued states of recipiency' (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 294), where the action of listening becomes audible and/or visible. Employed in between sequential latched turn/s, they may also implicitly signal understanding (see Appendix A for a description of the transcription conventions used).

Extract (1) PR1

1	F1	A::nd then (3.0) ah: we are planning to
2	F4	[New additions ((low voice))
3	F1	[x((F1 ->F4)) Hah:m?
4	F4	…[x((F4->F1)) [x((->CW))
		New [ad New additions to our website and our [services ((Nodding)) lah
5	CW	(a) ((Nodding))
		[x((F1->CW, F4))
6	F1	Yea::h actually I think ((RH)) it [was already mentioned b:[y:: NofP in the staff meeting
		…[x((F4->F1))
7	F4	(b) Hmmm ((Nodding))
		[x((F1->CW)), mainly but also gazes to F4))
8	F1	A:::nd then Mr. [NofP said ok 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 ((oooo)) 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.
		(1.0)
23	CW	And there is a demand for it.

In the extract, F1 is reporting to the chairperson (CW), who is also the head of the department (HOD), about the new additions to the organization's website. While alternating her gaze between other meeting participants, she mostly maintains eye contact with F4 and CW, as they actively participate in this segment of the interaction. As such, the action of nodding is mostly employed by F4 and CW. While CW is involved due to her role as chair of the meeting and her position as HOD, F4 takes an active part, as shown in line 2, by anticipating the new topic introduced by F1 and restating it in line 4 upon F1's request. This is followed by the first head nod (a) by CW (line 5), which may be interpreted as signaling receipt and perhaps in this case acknowledging F4 for correctly anticipating the topic. F1 then restarts her report (line 6) with a 'pre-sequence' or preliminary (Liddicoat, 2007) - 'already mentioned (…) in the staff meeting' - which may explain F4's earlier anticipation of the topic followed by the 'hm' and nodding (b) in line 7; the nodding not only indicates receipt of information but also affirms the content of F1's message. Nodding that signals active listening is employed in between F1's sequence of latched turns by CW (c) in lines 9, 11, and 13, and by F4 (d) in lines 15, 17, 19 and 21. These nods also display receipt of information and function as continuers without providing any evaluation or assessment of the aforesaid. Nodding is employed seven times during F1's sequence of latched turns, simultaneously and freestanding (lines 9, 11, 13 by CW, and line 19 by F4) or combined with non-lexical items (lines 15, 17, 21 by F4). Nodding also contributes to common understanding as revealed at the end of the sequence when F1's report is followed by a brief 1-s pause with no request for clarification made by CW, F4 or other meeting participants; the topic is then closed by CW (line 23).

Depending on the immediate context, for example, when combined with change-of-state tokens such as 'ah' or 'oh' (Heritage, 1984), or verbal backchannels (Bjørge, 2010), nodding may also display the receipt of 'new' information, thus simultaneously acting as a turn-continuer to request further information, as illustrated in extract (2).

Extract (2) IDE

		[x((F1->CM))
1	F1	(A::nd) then [next one is umm this week will be (lah) the final week for for application for NofC. (1.0) [so] =
2	CM	(a) ((Nod)) [Ah:] 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] (1.0) technical sales engineer.
8	CM	(c) Ahh okay ((Nod)) Okay ((Nod)) [hmm]
9	F1	[Yeah so they] are looking to come to Malaysia (…)

The interaction takes place between CM and F1, who reports on the status of applications received for the position of technical sales engineer. The nods employed by CM as chairperson of this meeting serve to provide feedback. The first nod (a) followed by 'ah' (line 2) suggests that CM has received and is acknowledging the 'new' information, that it is the 'final week for application' (line 1). 'Ah' could also mark the importance of this information and combined with a stretched 'o::kay' represent a request for further information, viz. a turn-continuer, thus encouraging F1 to go on with her turn (see line 3). CM's response in line 4 (b) seems similar to (a). However, the 'oh' suggests surprise at the number of applications received, while the nod and 'okay' signal receipt and acceptance of the information, and an expectation of further details from F1. F1's attempt to take up the next turn (line 5) overlaps with CM's 'okay', which suggests that F1 has understood the nod and the preceding token to be a request to proceed with more information. After F1 clarifies the position in question (line 7), CM in line 8 acknowledges receipt of this information with 'ah' and 'okay', followed by a third nod (c). The subsequent repetition of 'okay' and 'nod' may serve to reconfirm the receipt of information and display understanding of the aforesaid, a sort of double confirmation which also indicates that the information received is sufficient, and the topic may be closed. This is understood and executed in the next turn (line 9) by F1.

While the combined oh/ah and okay usually signals receipt and acceptance of new information, it can also display understanding of this information (Liddicoat, 2007), which the nod reinforces. When nodding is used with the tokens 'ah' or 'oh', combined with the lexical item 'okay' which is stretched as in (a, b) above, the nodding functions as a receipt marker and continuer. In this specific context and combination, the nodding simultaneously conveys acceptance of the new information, and a request that the speaker continues with his/her turn. The same combination in (c) minus the stretching of 'okay' seems to signal closure. The further repetition of 'okay' with nod (line 8) confirms and displays understanding of prior talk, and thus may be placed at the opposite end of the spectrum.

The second major function of head nods, at the opposite end of the spectrum, is to indicate shared understanding. In this case, the head nod does not merely signal receipt of a message, but also confirms it, in short demonstrating that the message is both received and understood. Nodding in such instances may be combined with lexical items such as the various forms of the affirmative or with 'okay'. The functions of head nods are not always transparent and depend largely on the context of the interaction. In the data, a head nod showing agreement and understanding usually follows the current speaker's request for confirmation in the form of a direct or indirect question; this causes the recipient in the next turn to respond by agreeing and confirming understanding through nodding, as demonstrated in extract (3).

Extract (3) PR2

		[x((F4->F1))
1	F4	(…) 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))
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 ((low voice - writing))
		[x((F1->CW]
10	F1	Should I [also do the write up for the quarterly of NofC? (5.0)
11	CW	((Nodding))
12	F1	(d) Yeah ((Nodding))
13	CW	(e) ((Nod)) yep
14	F1	So handbook and quarterly
15	F4	NofC ah ((Nod))

,,, [x((F1->F4))
16 F1 ((Nodding)) (4.0) yeah because [they change the ((LH)) speakers
17 F4 Ahm:: ((Nodding))
18 F1 I don't know the ( )
19 F4 (f) Okay ((Nod))
[x((F1->CW))
20 F1 Yeah okay that's all [about it for now.

In Extract 3, it is F1's turn to report on the status of a publication for which she had asked F4 for a press release. F4 meanwhile had requested the release from the organization concerned. In line 1, F4 explains that the organization ('them') will send the press release directly to F1. In line 2, F1 responds with 'okay' (a) and a nod, which may be interpreted as 'noted' or 'received and understood'. However, after F4 finishes her explanation in line 3, F1 in line 4 checks her understanding of 'give to you directly' (line 1) to mean that F4 will forward it to her, thus to confirm that she will receive the 'press release' she requires. In line 5, F4 confirms F1's understanding with 'yeah' and nodding (b). F1 then restates her task in a latched turn (lines 6 and 8), which is acknowledged, and confirmed through the use of 'okay', a nod, and in writing (c) by F4. In line 10, F1 addresses a specific question to CW by looking at her, who first responds only by nodding (line 11). To confirm that CW's nod is to be understood as an affirmative answer, F1 responds with a 'yeah' and nodding (d) in line 12; CW in turn responds with a nod and 'yep' (e) in line 13, thus providing unequivocal affirmation compared to the freestanding nodding in line 11. F1 then restates her tasks once more (line 14) while also addressing F4 by gazing at her (lines 16 and 18), perhaps to justify her initial request for the press release. F4 first nods attentively (line 17) then accepts and shows understanding with 'okay' and a nod (f) in line 19. F1 then turns to CW (line 20) to close her turn.

The extract above illustrates the different nuances of head nods; while a freestanding nod may suggest understanding (see line 11), participants do seek clearer evidence of understanding, such as nods employed in combination with lexical items like 'yeah' and 'okay'. As discussed in Extract 1, freestanding nodding usually signals active or attentive listening and receipt of information, and could but does not necessarily indicate recipient understanding. To confirm and display understanding of the aforesaid, stand-alone nodding seems insufficient and often requires a complementary lexical item.

3.2. *Hand pointing gesture*

In the meeting data, hand gestures function mainly to contextualize and to provide a visual form of verbal communication; they also add or complement meaning, which helps to clarify a verbal utterance. The overall function of hand gestures, also described as 'illustrators' (Ekman & Friesen, 1969), is to enhance the speaker's clarity. One hand gesture that facilitates successful and effective communication is hand pointing with an open palm or index finger. The pointing gesture complements verbal communication by identifying or clarifying a referent or reference (Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000). Especially in the meeting context, pointing constitutes an effective strategy that facilitates understanding; it precludes the need to name people or objects explicitly, or to provide detailed verbal explanation, thus making further verbal descriptions or assessments unnecessary.

In extract (4), the pointing gesture is effectively employed by the chairperson to refer to different meeting participants and an absent person. Opting for the open palm hand gesture when referring to the Malaysian participants, the chairperson reveals awareness of the culturally sensitive nature of hand gestures, and his ability to accommodate his interlocutors. In Malaysia, pointing at someone with the index finger is considered impolite, unlike in Western cultures; instead the open palm hand gesture is widely used (Evason, 2019).

Extract (4) IDE

1 F5 But I'm thinking you know
[x((CM->F3))
2 CM [You, (a) you ((RH-index finger at F3)) come to in the afternoon please
3 (once) to my room ((RH-index finger ↑ up)) because I give you one more
4 contact on plantation business in ((State of Malaysia))
5 F3 A:am yes we got so many information (…) they using pumps (…)
[x((->F5))
6 CM This ((RH open palm to F3)) is the information we need and then [you (b)
7 call also please ((RH-index finger ↑ up towards F5)) NofP who is not in pumps
8 he ((RH-open palm)) is from you (c) ((RH open palm at F5)) know him yeah from (…)
9 F5 (From) NofC?
10 CM Yeah NofP we did the presentations (…) yeah
11 F5 Aha
[x((CM->F3))
12 CM [So he is very knowledgeable (…) knows the industry very well yeah so
[x((CM->F5))
13 [you, NofF5, you provide NofP's contact
((RH-index finger up ↑ pointing to F5 first, then shifts to F3))
14 he is member of us (d) what is the member ((RH directed to F10 sitting next to him - his head and body adjusted))
15 F6 Nof [P
[x((CM->F6 ,,,
16 CM NofP ((RH)), yes ((RH index finger towards F6)) very good. (1.0)

In this extract, it is F3's turn to report on market studies, but CM also includes F3's HOD (i.e., F5) in the conversation. The references made to specific persons in (a) line 2, (b) line 6, (c) line 8, and (d) line 14 would have been difficult to understand without the use of the pointing gesture. In line 2 (a), CM addresses F3. The first 'you' establishes eye contact between CM and F3, as in the previous turn (line 1) CM had been conversing with F5; the second 'you', together with the RH index finger pointing at F3, clarifies the referent, viz. F3. Without the pointing gesture, more than one person could have been implicated by 'you, you', i.e., both F5 and F3. CM continues his turn, in which he instructs F3 to come to his room to get a contact, while pointing RH index finger upward (line 3). Based on information obtained during on-site visits, it is clear that the pointing up gesture does not indicate the direction of CM's room. Rather, the gesture most likely refers to the absent contact person, while simultaneously signaling the importance of this 'one' contact. In line 6, CM, while referring to the information from F3, as indicated by the RH open palm pointing at F3, shifts his gaze to F5 and instructs her to call the contact with RH index finger pointing up (b) when uttering the contact's name. CM then switches to open palm when giving further details of this contact, and points to F5 (c) with open palm to directly address her (line 8). Without the gesture, the referent and recipient in (b) and (c) would have been less clearly defined and could have referred to either F3 or F5. In line 13, the first 'you' is clearly defined by F5's name and thus precludes the need for CM to point; CM continues to refer to the person that F5 is to contact and put in touch with F3 as he points his index finger up to F5 and then shifts to F3. In line 14, the question posed by CM at the end of his turn (d) is addressed at F10, who is sitting next to him (see Appendix B), as he directs his RH to F10 while turning his head and body slightly towards her. However, it is F6 who responds in line 15. In the absence of the visual, it would seem that CM had directed his question to F6, and not F10.

In the context of meetings particularly, hand gestures are often used to refer to people without explicitly naming them. The extract above also shows that the German CM consciously avoids pointing with his index finger at F5, who is Malaysian, and instead consistently uses his RH open palm. In contrast, he uses his index finger when addressing F3 or F6 (line 2, 16) who are both German. CM displays cultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity through his consistent use of appropriate pointing gestures in the interaction above and throughout the entire meeting.

The hand pointing gesture is also employed to clarify verbal utterances which include deictic words like 'this' and 'that'. Hindmarsh and Heath (2000) explain that, while deictic expressions can act as pointers (e.g., 'this' to refer to an object in immediate proximity to the speaker), they do not necessarily pinpoint the specific placement of objects; the use of various non-verbal resources, however, can clarify meaning in such instances. The pointing gesture is able to render the reference visible and explicit, making further explanations unnecessary as illustrated in extract (5).

Extract (5) IDE

1	F6	And then last thing, the NofC introduction part for the marketing analysis, I
		,,,
2		gave (a) it ((RH- pointing at documents in front of CM)) is, it is on the table.
3	CM	Yes it's on my table ((Gaze↓ BH - touching some documents in front of him))
		[x((CM->F6))
4		somewhere (b) here it is yeah this is for the NofC [but that is by far not that
		,,,
5		important than (c) the sheet ((RH - index finger pointing at documents in front of F6))
		[x((->F6)) ,,, [x((->F6))
6		yeah [this is 100 times more the other one yeah ok but (d) [this one ((RH- on
7		the document)) I will redo today yeah.
8	F6	Okay alright okay.
		,,,
9	CM	Or latest on the flight ( ).
10	F5	Yeah because we need (e) this ((RH- index finger pointing to the document in front of CM)) also ( ).

In the talk preceding the extract, F6 had reported on the status of her tasks; the first, concerned a 'proposal', and the second, a 'fact sheet', in which she encountered difficulties updating and requires CM's assistance to complete, as discussed here. In line 2, F6 specifies 'it' (a) by pointing with her RH at the document in front of CM, while saying 'it is on the table'. Without the pointing gesture, the object and its location would have been ambiguous. In CM's next turn (line 3), he confirms F6's statement with 'it's on my table', while looking down; this combined with 'here it is' (b), and the use of the hand gesture (i.e., BH palms facing down touching the documents in front of him) locates the object in question (see line 4). He further distinguishes the document in front of him, first referring to it as 'this', and then as 'that', from 'the sheet' (c); the latter refers to documents in front of F6, which he points at with his RH index finger while referring to it as 'this' (line 6). In the same turn, 'this' (d) is then used to refer to the document in front of him as he has his RH placed on it. In the next turn, F5 follows suit and refers to the document in front of CM as 'this' (e) as she points with her RH index finger at it (line 10).

As illustrated in extracts 4 and 5, the hand pointing gesture is employed to enhance the meaning of verbal utterances when referring to persons or objects, i.e., specifying the deictic words for better orientation and understanding. Although in general the context can help to clarify the referent, in this specific meeting setting pointing is a necessary and effective means to clarify the referent without going into detailed verbal explanations. In some cases, however, the pointing gesture may be used in place of a verbal utterance where reference is made implicitly, e.g., by simply pointing at a person. Here, meaning can only be interpreted by taking into account the wider context of the meeting setting and the use of other NVCS such as eye contact and gaze, which is discussed next.

3.3. Eye contact and gaze

The third and arguably most essential NVCS, eye contact and gaze, is employed by all participants, whether as speaker or recipient, in either an active or passive role in the meeting interactions. Eye contact establishes a listener-speaker connection and can indicate the wish to communicate (Munter, 2009). Mutual gaze serves as a “prerequisite for communication, opening or closing the communication gate for other modalities”, e.g., head gestures to provide visual feedback (Wagner, Malisz, & Kopp, 2014, p. 214). Speakers alternate gaze between their interlocutors and the last gaze at the end of the turn selects the next speaker (Auer, 2017; Weiss, 2018). Gaze, as employed in this study, refers to the act of maintaining the initially established eye contact. By maintaining gaze, the recipient shows interest in what the speaker is saying and signals active listening, often combined with head nods, while the speaker monitors the recipient’s understanding and also checks on the effectiveness of his/her own communication.

The data reveals that eye contact and gaze is significant as an overarching nonverbal resource that is always mobilized in both verbal and other nonverbal actions. It is this NVCS in particular that makes understanding visible through mutual monitoring of interaction and feedback which facilitates shared understanding. In the meeting context, the eye contact and gaze strategy may be categorized into two types according to their functions from the perspectives of the three parties involved, i.e., the person reporting, the chairperson and the other meeting participants, viz. audience. In the first category, eye contact and gaze serves to monitor interaction and feedback, and in the second, to regulate interaction and participation; both are discussed in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, respectively.

3.3.1. Monitoring interaction and feedback

Monitoring interaction and feedback are generally triggered when the speaker makes eye contact with the chairperson, who controls the round-the-table procedure. The speaker who begins reporting directs his/her gaze at the chair, as the primary recipient, and the audience sitting in the line of sight. Those seated next to the speaker are generally excluded, unless it is the chair in which case effort is made to adjust (e.g., to turn or lean forward in order to gaze at the chairperson). At any time during the speaker’s turn, his/her gaze might alternate between the chair and the audience. In this way, the speaker is able to monitor the recipients’ overall reaction or feedback, and thus their understanding. The recipients’ return gaze demonstrates active listening and understanding, often reinforced through simultaneous head nods. Moreover, while reporting, and when touching on topics that involve a specific audience member, the speaker may strategically target his/her gaze at the person concerned and in doing so implicitly request feedback. Thus, with this NVCS, the speaker gives the audience and selected recipients equal opportunity to provide feedback, and depending on the context, may elicit feedback without explicitly asking for it, as illustrated in extract (6).

Extract (6) PR1

```
1   F1   We want to implement the job market section for our website and ↓((Gaze)) its
                                                            [x((F1->CW))
2        already done. Just ↑ the layout is done by me.[NofCW [has sent us hm:m
    CW                                                      [x((CW->F1))
           ,,,              [x((->CW, CW->F1))
3   F1   pricing (1.0) ah:: [I think we discuss later=
4   CW   ((Nodding))
                                         ,,,
5   F1   =about the pricing because I've=
6   CW   Aha ((Nodding))
    F1   ((continues with her report looks at the audience))
```

In this extract, it is F1’s turn to report. While doing so she shifts her gaze, alternating between the chairperson and the audience seated in front of her (Appendix B). In line 1, F1 shifts her gaze to CW as she names her and gives specific information involving her. CW returns her gaze, which is sustained until line 3 when F1 shifts her gaze to the audience. The second shift takes place after a 1-s pause, when F1 proposes to discuss a certain matter (line 3) and directs her gaze at CW again until the end of line 5. The direction of her gaze also specifies ‘we’, i.e., CW and herself, implicitly awaiting CW’s feedback which she provides by nodding (line 4), and then re-confirms with ‘aha’ and further nodding (line 6). CW’s return gaze demonstrates that F1’s message has been received and also understood as the simultaneous nodding indicates.

3.3.2. Regulating interaction and participation

The second function of eye contact and gaze is to regulate the interaction and participation. The speaker during his/her turn uses eye contact and gaze to implicitly or explicitly invite a member of the audience to participate by providing further information or clarification on a matter. In meetings, selecting particular members and giving them access to the floor can be done tacitly through gaze and the use of contextual resources (Markaki & Mondada, 2012). In these meetings, the targeted person is usually involved in or responsible for the projects or tasks the speaker is reporting on, and thus is able to make a contribution. However, while the speaker may attempt to give access to the floor implicitly by establishing eye contact and maintaining gaze, the addressee can also refuse to take the floor by gazing away, viz. dissolving the mutual gaze (Weiss, 2018).

The following two extracts 7(a, b) demonstrate the second function of eye contact and gaze. In extract 7(a), the speaker implicitly seeks further information and explanation by directing her gaze at the person concerned.

Extract (7a) PR1

		[x((F1->CW))
1	F1	=[((Nodding)) done.
		,,, [x((CW->F1))
2	CW	O::kay. Just one question. We ((RH)) have this [German book title =
3	F1	Aha ((Nodding))
		,,,
4	CW	=are you thinking of updating that as well from the German side or does that
5		((BH directed to F3)) has to be passed on now to F3?
		,,, [x((F1->F3)) ((F3 reacts with a slight head shake))
6	F1	Actually, [I don't know why we updating the other one. I think that was an
7		idea from NofP=
8	CW	((Nodding))
		,,, [x((F1->F3))
9	F1	=and (1.0) ((slight head shake)) [(4.0) right now=
	F3	,,,
10	CW	No no there's nothing

F1 has just finished reporting (line 1), and by gazing at CW hands her the floor. In line 2, CW acknowledges with 'okay' as she drops her gaze. CW then switches to a related topic, looking at the audience first and then establishing eye contact with F1 again when she asks her a question about a German book title (line 4); she also involves F3 when she directs both hands towards her (line 5). In line 6, F1 responds, while making eye contact with F3, turning her head slightly as F3 is seated beside her (Appendix B). Here, F1 appears to be implicitly asking for support by inviting F3 to comment. F3, however, returns F1's gaze with a slight head shake, which suggests that she has nothing to say and does not wish to take the floor. In line 9, F1 tries to involve F3 again by gazing at her during a 4-s pause. However, F3 drops her gaze immediately after making eye contact with F1, again refusing to take the turn by avoiding further eye contact. Without the visual, F3's involvement in the interaction and the nonverbal understanding reached between F1 and F3, i.e., F3 declining F1's invitation to comment, would not have been detected.

Extract 7(b) illustrates how interaction can be regulated explicitly by naming the person first and/or by posing a question, and simultaneously directing one's gaze at the targeted person.

Extract (7b) PR2

		...[x((CW->F1))
1	CW	Ok I think we start ((RH)) [with Nof[F1.
		... [x((F1->CW)),,,
2	F1	[Eh ok ah::: basically at the moment am
3		mostly working with ( ) and also working on (trade) fair section ummm
		[x((->F2))
4		Other than that, I just sent an email to NofF2 and NofF4 [have you received?
5	F2	[mmm
6	F1	The for the (Acronym)?
7	F2	((Nod))

In this extract, CW establishes eye contact with F1 and simultaneously calls upon her to report. In line 3, F1 refers to an email she had sent to F2 and F4. At the end of her turn, she asks, 'have you received?'; the pronoun 'you' renders the question ambiguous as it could be directed at both F2 and F4. However, it is the eye contact and gaze that clearly determines who is meant by 'you', namely, F2, as F1 makes eye contact only with F2. In line 5, F2 reacts with a minimal response 'mm' which elicits a specific inquiry from F1 (line 6). F1 also clarifies that both she and F2 are referring to the same email by maintaining mutual gaze, which F2 confirms with a nod (line 7).

As illustrated in the extracts above, it is the eye contact and sustained gaze that clearly determines whom the speaker is targeting. In this way, any speaker during his/her turn can regulate the interaction and participation by implicitly or explicitly inviting a person to take up the next turn. Otherwise, it is generally the chairperson's right and obligation to regulate participation. The chair may at any time during a speaker's turn shift his/her gaze away from the current speaker towards another participant to invite participation. This was mostly observed in interdepartmental meetings with the two heads of department (HOD) present, and employed by the chairperson to obtain input from the HOD, viz. the person overseeing the projects and having expert knowledge (see Markaki & Mondada, 2012). Extract (8) illustrates how the chair employs this strategy to invite the HOD to participate during the turn of one of her subordinates.

Extract (8) IDE

		((F8 <-> CM))
1	F8	(…) started working a little bit on the questionnaire that was sent by us by an
2		European institute they are doing a request about the Malaysian mh (2.0) legal
3		terms and those stuff aah so I started a little because it's hard they wanna know
4		a lot of
		„, …[x((CW->F4))
5	CM	[It's from the Malaysian European
6	F4	No, no=
7	F8	[No it's from] European
8	F4	=[it's from] a:: Professor of (…)
9	CM	((Nod)) Okay

In this extract, it is F8's turn to report. CM drops his gaze from F8 before she finishes her turn (line 4) and shifts it to F4 (HOD), while asking for clarification (line 5). It seems that asking the HOD, who is overseeing the task, is a more effective and efficient way to get the required information. F4 replies in her latched turn (lines 6 and 8), which partially overlaps with F8's turn (line 7). However, since CM only maintains gaze with F4, F8 stops her turn. In the absence of the visual, this segment may have been interpreted quite differently, e.g., F4 stepping in and taking the floor to help F8 on the assumption that CM's question was directed at the person reporting, i.e., F8. It appears then that a prerequisite when communicating with one another is the establishment of eye contact and the maintenance of mutual gaze.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the salient NVCS deployed by speakers in a BELF context to successfully and effectively communicate in formal internal meetings at a German business organization in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In this specific business setting, the use of NVCS, namely, head nods, hand pointing gestures, eye contact and gaze, was analyzed by drawing on both the local and the wider contexts of interaction that was made possible by combining the frameworks of CofP and CA. Being members of a specific community of practice meant that the participants developed shared practices and strategies which contributed to them becoming expert communicators in a BELF setting.

This paper also reveals the complexity of BELF, and the interplay of verbal and NVCS, and demonstrates the significant role of NVCS in BELF face-to-face interactions. The NVCS examined are designed to fulfill various functions. Head nods not only serve as continuers, making active and attentive listening visible, but also allow participants to confirm and acknowledge shared understanding. Hand pointing gestures increase communicative clarity by enhancing the meaning of verbal utterances and making them explicit. The core NVCS and a prerequisite for successful and effective communication however is eye contact and gaze; it is an overarching nonverbal resource that enables the monitoring of interaction and feedback, and the regulation of interaction and participation, thus making understanding visible from the outset. These NVCS are employed concurrently, and in some instances are freestanding, making verbal equivalents redundant.

The skillful use of the aforementioned NVCS by the meeting participants, however, is unlikely to be peculiar to BELF interactions. It is conceivable that native speakers of English in face-to-face communication in business settings likewise deploy these NVCS in similar ways to get various meanings across to their interlocutors. The difference, however, may lie in the extent to which these strategies are used in interaction. Björkman (2011), based on her observations of ELF interactions in an academic setting, attributes the 'ample use of [pragmatic] strategies' to the non-native speakers' 'preparedness for potential communicative breakdown, compared to more homogenous groups of speakers' (p. 961). Similarly, business communicators of diverse linguacultural backgrounds, who display different levels of competence in English, can be expected to rely to a greater extent on various strategies, both verbal and non-verbal, to enhance and facilitate communication in BELF settings.

4.1. Implications for research and practice

Despite the fact that the majority of international businesses conduct their business communication in a BELF context, there is still little awareness of this worldwide phenomenon among business people and future practitioners. By making empirical findings available to trainers and teachers working in the field of Business English, some important insights can be drawn, such as the types of communication strategies that contribute to successful and effective communication in different BELF contexts, as well as the complex nature of BELF competence that requires skillful use of these strategies. A research agenda to integrate BELF in teaching and training materials on business communication has been proposed by Nickerson (2015) and should be expanded to include nonverbal aspects of business communication. As she asserts, more authentic data is needed in order to identify the strategies that may be associated with successful professional communicators. Obtaining access to authentic data is perhaps the most challenging endeavor, particularly following the full implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation in May 2018. Pullin (2015) also points out that the interface between research on employers' needs and effective BELF communication can offer rich insights about international business communication, which could inform curriculum development and its implementation. Task-based approaches, which include replicating authentic communication, e.g., meetings (Pullin, 2015), are one way to acquaint multilingual students with BELF's complex and flexible nature, and the value of using communication strategies. Such tasks could simulate face-to-face encounters, while simultaneously raising awareness of the multiple resources used in the BELF context to negotiate meaning, effectively preparing students for the real world.

As this study has shown, the genre of face-to-face meetings, i.e., an aspect of the wider context, brings to light the importance of nonverbal strategy use. More research is needed that explores face-to-face communication in various business settings and situations, such as different types of organizations, with different management styles, different types of meetings in different countries and regions. Further, other modes of face-to-face communication may be included, such as video conferencing and Skype which allow communication to take place between people in different countries, but with immediate feedback similar to face-to-face communication in the same physical space. The development of new technologies in recent years has meant that distance is no longer an obstacle to conducting face-to-face interaction. In this regard, there is an even greater need now to study the nonverbal aspects of international business communication.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2019.10.002.

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