COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND VERBAL RESOURCES IN TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED BELF MEETINGS

Master's Thesis
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Abstract

Tämä laadullinen tutkimus tarkastelee kansainvälisen yrityksen sisäisiä teknologiavälitteisiä BELF-kokouksia (engl. Business English as a Lingua Franca) ja sitä, millaisia viestintästrategioita sekä verbaalisia resursseja kokouksissa vallitseva teknologiavälitteinen BELF-konteksti orientoi osallistujia hyödyntämään kokousten vuorovaikutuksen hallitsemiseksi ja edistämiseksi. Tutkimuksen aineistona käytetään ääninauhoitettuja autenttisia työkeskusteluja yrityksen etäkokouksissa, joiden avulla tutkimus pyrkii tarjoamaan tietoa BELF:in käytöstä viestintävälineenä nykypäivän yhä enemmän ja enemmän teknologistuvassa kansainvälisessä yritysviestinnässä. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys muodostuu aiemmista tutkimuksista (B)ELF- ja teknologiavälitteisen vuorovaikutuksen sekä sisäisen yritysviestinnän saroilta. Tutkimuksessa käytetty metodologia pohjautuu keskustelunanalyysin sekä lingua franca -englannin viestintästrategiaviitekehyksen kombinaatioon, jonka omaksumalla tutkimuksen on tarkoitus tuoda esille globaaleihin yritysdiskurssiyhteisöihin kuuluvien yksilöiden ammatillista viestintärepertoaaria kielellisten strategioiden ja resurssien muodossa. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat kuinka osallistujat hyödyntävät kokouksissa luovasti verbaalisia vuorovaikutuskeinoja organisoimaan toimintaansa haastavissa tilanteissa, sekä käyttävät niitä ennaltaehkäisevästi hyväksi mahdollisten vuorovaikutuksellisten haasteiden eliminoimiseksi sekä työ- ja viestinnällisten tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi.

Keywords ELF, BELF, technology, distant meetings, communication strategies, verbal resources
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1   INTRODUCTION

English is no doubt the lingua franca in the globalized world today. Every day, people from all over the world communicate with each other using English as a lingua franca (hereafter ELF) as the medium of communication in different international encounters. As a result of its dominant status on a global scale, English has become the language of international business and it is considered as the corporate language in most international organizations. English is used not only by the organization externally, but also internally by the individual communicators who work within the organization (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2012). As it is commonly acknowledged, successful internal communication has a very essential role in organizations' overall effectiveness today. It therefore seems relevant and meaningful to discover how it is, in fact, successfully achieved.

International business encounters, such as corporate meetings and events, are increasingly taking place online in different virtual environments due to the developed communication technology today. This has been a rising trend already before the COVID-19 crisis, which, in turn, has really pushed companies towards remote work due to the current restrictions to face-to-face contact. This phenomenon is becoming extremely common also within internal business communication, since organizations are increasingly recruiting employers for remote positions, allowing people to work together despite their geographical location (Cogo and Yanaprasart 2018). As pointed out by Jenkins et al. (2017), this practically means that nowadays business professionals do not even have to physically leave their houses to communicate in various international encounters using ELF.

Thus, technology-mediated business interaction has many benefits and is an extremely useful communication method for international firms these days, especially under the pandemic. However, technology-mediated communication is also considered in many ways less straight-forward compared to regular face-to-face interaction (Arminen et al. 2016; Oittinen and Piirainen-Marsh 2015). In order to successfully achieve communicative and work goals, technology-mediated interaction often requires additional interactional work from the communicators that is often not needed in face-to-face encounters. This challenge is very likely to become particularly visible within the ELF context of this study, where the speakers additionally need to cope with linguistic and cultural variety (Björkman 2014; Kaur 2011).

ELF is still a somewhat new research paradigm that has only recently been receiving significantly expanding scholarly attention, but it is overall relatively little researched given its global status, and is, therefore, still in progress (Mauranen 2009; Jenkins et al. 2017). In order to gain a better understanding of the sequentiality of ELF

interactions, there is a need for further empirical investigation on how English is used as a lingua franca in different interactional contexts (Björkman 2014). Empirical research into the pragmatics of ELF usage, especially in workplace settings, is still insufficient, partly because business interactions are often highly confidential and some companies may not be okay with having these interactions recorded for research purposes. As pointed out by Wolfartsberger (2009), this makes the data collection process of empirical ELF research from workplace settings a step trickier.

The present study contributes to this empirical ELF research by looking into the language use and discovering patterns of communication strategies that help speakers to achieve comprehensibility in technology-mediated internal business communication. The paper explores naturally-occurring work-related talk in a multinational corporation's remote business meetings, where participants, who represent various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, work and communicate together from all over the world using business ELF (henceforth BELF). BELF has its domain-specific focus on ELF interactions that take place in different work-related business encounters, and it is generally considered as a communication code for professionals who belong to the global business discourse communities (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005).

In order to gain a thorough understanding of how technology-mediated BELF interactions are successfully carried out, the study will draw on several research fields from ELF to BELF with a pragmatic approach, and from internal international business communication to technology-mediated communication. By combining relevant theories from each research field, the study adapts a CA based communication strategies framework as the analysis method to understand the phenomenon of communication strategies and discover how talk is sequentially structured and interactively managed in a technology-mediated BELF context. With this study, my aim is to demonstrate that successful technology-mediated internal communication of international organizations should not be taken for granted, as it requires speakers' creative employment of linguistic and interactional resources and is crucial to the company's overall effectiveness.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The study of English as a lingua franca

2.1.1 The role of English in the globalized world

It is common knowledge that within the past few decades, the use of English language has been spreading extensively all over the world due to the phenomenon of globalization. English is, in fact, one of the most significant symbols of the modern world along with globalization and its demographic and technological developments, such as networking, economic integration and the Internet (Mauranen and Ranta 2009). As pointed out by Charles (2007: 261), although globalization is often referred to technology, language is what enables communication between individuals, companies, and countries. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the developments through which global communication occurs, in order to understand globalization (Charles 2007).

Globalization has had a profound effect on the ongoing internalization of the English language, to the point where it has diversified into a global phenomenon – a global lingua franca that has changed the way English is used and conceptualized today (Cogo and Martin 2012). The global status of English has enabled communication between people from anywhere in the world, as it is considered the intercultural communication medium among speakers who come from different cultures and first languages (Wei 2018). In fact, people who speak English as a L2 (second language or "non-native" speakers) or as an additional language have evidently outnumbered its L1 (first language or "native") speakers (e.g. Jenkins et al. 2017; Mauranen 2006). Charles (2007: 262) states that in the 1990's, the estimated amount of L2 speakers was 80%, and in 2007, when Charles' article was published, the estimate was closer to 90%. The amount has certainly continued growing to this day.

At the micro level, English communication skills have become a requirement and an essential part of business knowledge to the individual professionals who seek to collaborate and have an influence in the globalized world nowadays (Cogo and Yanaprasart 2018). Therefore, advanced English skills are increasingly correlated to improved job opportunities and even standards of living at the individual level

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(Kantabutra 2018: 7-8). Moreover, as pointed out by Jenkins et al. (2017: 8), the global weight of English does not only affect professional and academic language use, as English is also used by individuals such as tourists, migrant workers, asylum seekers, and really anyone who, for example, wants to interact in social media.

At the macro level in a larger perspective, Kantabutra (2018) and Lee (2009) note that there is also a strong interrelationship between English proficiency and economic systems, for example, a country's gross national income. Lee (2009) also notes that English proficiency is related to the ability of absorbing knowledge and can, therefore, be considered a part of human capital in the globalized world. Moreover, Jenkins et al. (2017: 11-12) refer to English as a lingua franca communities as "a powerful type of social capital in a mobile world" and "a mesh of networks". By being a globalized and globalizing phenomenon at the same time, English is the channel and resource through which the world is interconnected in economic, political, cultural, professional, social etc. communities (Jenkins et al. 2011). It has evolved into the research paradigm of English as lingua franca, which I will conceptualize and discuss next.

2.1.2 Conceptualization of ELF

Generally, ELF is defined as "an additionally acquired language system which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages" despite the geographical location (Jenkins et al. 2011: 283). Any interaction can be regarded as ELF where English has been chosen as the communication tool in varying linguacultural settings where speakers often do not have another language in common (Cogo and Dewey 2012). Furthermore, as argued for example by Räisänen (2018) and Mauranen (2006), ELF is often, in fact, a communication medium of secondary socialization into discourse communities, where many of its speakers have a domain-specific ELF repertoire that they may not even acquire or need in their L1. A business professional, for instance, uses BELF as a communication medium at work and possesses a work-related communicative repertoire which the individual does not necessarily need at home or in other discourse communities.

The conceptualization of ELF is much debated when it comes to the L1 speakers of English. Some researchers exclude L1 speakers from the definition by arguing that ELF communication applies only to those who speak it as an additionally acquired language (e.g. Firth 1996). Most researchers (e.g. Jenkins et al. 2017), on the other hand, share the idea that ELF does not exclude L1 speakers as they are accepted as "part of

the mix" (Jenkins et al. 2017: 8), and they also contribute to its variability given that there are also a number of varieties of Native English (Mauranen 2018: 107).

I adopt this latter perspective in the present study that does not exclude L1 speakers. As a matter of fact, ELF has to be additionally acquired also by L1 speakers of English, because it does require additional linguistic work when one interacts in a multilingual context with a variety of native tongue representatives instead of with other L1 English speakers who share the same level of communicative style, culture etc., and thus the achievement of mutual understanding is often not a concern (Jenkins et al. 2011). Moreover, in the globalized world today it is commonplace that different ELF interactions between largely varying combinations of participants take place, including both L1 and L2 English speakers (Jenkins et al. 2017). Therefore, I see no reason for excluding L1 speakers from the definition of ELF interactions. Anyhow, the categorization of speakers into "native" or "non-native" is not ideal ELF research and it has also been challenged by linguists in the recent years. For example, Mauranen (2018: 106) states that there is a growing awareness among professionals that speakers, languages, and even nations are multiplex, heterogenous and changeable. This is exemplified by Charles (2007) from the ELF perspective:

> Although the NS >< NNS dichotomy seems, in many respects, to be common sense, it is inherently dangerous if used as a basis for communication studies: It divides the world of communication into "us" and "them," resulting in "linguistic ethnocentricity" comparable to Bennett's (1986) wellknown cultural ethnocentricity, where one particular way of "doing things" — in this case, the native speaker's way of communicating — is taken to be preferable to others... A reconceptualization of ELF is thus necessary. (Charles 2007: 264).

With this in mind, the present study does not divide participants into L1 or L2 speakers of English, but rather sees them as neutral communicators who use ELF as a communication tool for professional purposes (see more in section 2.2).

2.1.3   Previous research into ELF

As mentioned earlier, ELF is still a relatively new research paradigm that has recently been in a growing stage and studied extensively for the past couple of decades (Jenkins et al. 2017). Empirical ELF studies deal with naturally occurring talk through systematic empirical investigation with a set of theoretical assumptions and methodological practices, which have provided important descriptions of ELF usage in different interactional situations (Cogo and Dewey 2012). Two noteworthy corpus projects – VOICE and ELFA – are to be named, which have significantly contributed to the development of ELF research with their 1 + million word databases of transcribed spoken ELF interactions. As put together by Jenkins et al. (2011), ELF interactions have been researched at a range of linguistic levels, such as lexis,

lexicogrammar, pronunciation and pragmatics. The present paper takes a pragmatic approach towards ELF, which is discussed in sections 2.1.4 and 2.2.3.

Previous ELF research explores ELF usage also within particular domains of social interaction and discourse communities, out of which academic settings, particularly higher education (e.g. Björkman 2014; Kaur 2011; Mauranen 2006), and international business settings or BELF (e.g. Charles 2007; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005) have been studied the most (Jenkins et al. 2011). It is commonly acknowledged that empirical research on naturally-occurring BELF interaction is still a research area that requires more activity, since relatively little systematic research has been conducted to discover characteristics of BELF discourse (e.g. Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Charles (2007) demonstrates the most likely reason for the rarity of such research, which relates to the difficulty of recording and gaining access to authentic BELF interaction:

> …anyone who has been involved in trying to get recordings from companies will appreciate the enormity of the challenges presented by this kind of data collection. Research cooperation in the form of surveys and interviews is one thing; permission to record interactions is another. Questions of confidentiality loom larger than anywhere else, as also does individual trepidation, perhaps even fear of being personally exposed through recordings. In the world of spoken BELF research, the amount of our recorded data is actually substantial. (Charles 2007: 270).

The present study contributes to this research gap exemplified by Charles 2007 above, as I have had the pleasure to collaborate with a company that has agreed to the data collection process despite the confidential and sensitive nature of the data type, and has thus allowed more research to be conducted on this area. Having access to this type of authentic data is extremely beneficial from both academic and practical perspective, because the data type allows a concrete examination of how BELF discourse is managed in real life situations, which is not possible with other data types, such as interviews or surveys. With this in mind, the present study also encourages all international companies and corporations to venture into empirical research collaborations and contribute to the process of developing a more thorough and detailed understanding of this research area that is extremely topical within today's globalized business. Some researchers have also managed to contribute to the field despite the complex data collection process by studying BELF pragmatics in authentic work contexts, including for example Firth (1996), Stark (2009), Wolfartsberger (2009), Kantabutra (2018), Wei (2018), Birlik and Kaur (2020).

2.1.4   A pragmatic approach towards ELF

When taking a pragmatic approach towards ELF, it is necessary to understand that one of the key features of ELF interaction is diversity (Kaur 2011). This is because ELF speakers must cope with a variety of different parameters, such as different accents, proficiency levels, communicative styles, cultural norms and references, due to the fact that the speakers come from a range of linguacultural backgrounds. In addition, ELF speakers are likely to have gained different experiences in learning and using the English language (Mauranen 2006), and may therefore display different degrees of lexical and grammatical knowledge, as well as interpret lexical items and pragmatic cues differently (Kaur 2011). Moreover, Meierkord (2002) among others state that the speakers who create the lingua franca do have a variety of cultural backgrounds which reflect the language and how it is used and understood.

First pragmatic ELF studies (e.g. Firth 1996; Meierkord 2002) discovered mutual cooperation and a strong orientation towards ensuring mutual understanding as a remarkable feature of ELF communication (Jenkins et al. 2011). The central research interest in many of the following pragmatic ELF studies was on how ELF speakers react to non-understanding, and what kind of strategies they use and how effective they are in terms of overcoming moments of non-understanding (Cogo and Dewey 2012). This somewhat corresponds to repair organization in Conversation Analysis (CA), as for example ten Have (2007: 133) refers to repair as "organized ways of dealing with various kinds of trouble in the interaction's process". However, from a pragmatic point of view, what makes ELF especially stand out from a regular interaction is actually speakers preparedness for interactional trouble, as discussed below.

As shown for example by Björkman (2014), the earlier focus on problematicity in the pragmatic approach towards ELF is outdated. Cogo and Dewey (2012) state that the central interest has turned more and more towards ELF speakers' preparedness for the asymmetries discussed earlier, and how ELF speakers use pre-empting strategies to increase the explicitness of talk and support meaning before a non-understanding can even occur. ELF speakers are observed in several studies to employ a wide range of pragmatic strategies to enhance intelligibility and to guarantee communicative effectiveness in ELF communication in different contexts (e.g. Birlik and Kaur 2020; Björkman 2011, 2014; Cogo and Dewey 2012; Hanamoto 2016; Jenkins 2011; Kantabutra 2018; Kaur 2011; Mauranen 2006; Wei 2016). As stated by Jenkins et al. (2011) instead of simply naming these language features, ELF researchers are notably paying attention to the pragmatic motives and funtions behind them. The present

study is committed to exploring the use of communication strategies (see more in section 2.2.3) and their pragmatic functions from a BELF perspective.

2.2   English as a Business lingua franca (BELF)

2.2.1   Internal business communication

As brought up by Cogo and Yanaprasart (2018), due to increased globalization, companies are expanding and internationalizing businesses around the world and operating in various countries. This process of internationalization often involves a growing mobile workforce and the development of international teams (Cogo and Yanaprasart 2018: 96). International teams, on the other hand, means that companies may have employees from all over the world representing different L1's and cultural backgrounds. As shown by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankankaanranta (2012), managing this kind of linguistic and cultural diversity at the workplace and achieving successful internal communication can become very challenging without a common communication code for all employees. In fact, organization's operational success and performance is strongly in connection with organization's successful internal communication, which in turn is correlated to employees well-being and productivity as well as organization's external public relations efforts (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012: 262).

As stated for example by Charles (2007), companies are increasingly making the strategic decision of using English as the corporate language to manage linguistic and cultural diversity at the workplace. This is due to the fact that the role of English has turned from being one of the major foreign languages of business among French, German or Chinese into a shared resource – BELF - that enables business communication of international companies and the professional communicators within the companies in everyday work situations (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011).

2.2.2   The conceptualization and nature of BELF and global communicative competence

The term English as a Business lingua franca (BELF) refers to a neutral and shared communication code used for professional business purposes among the members of the international business community (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005). What Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) mean by the word "neutral" in the definition is explained below:

> 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: 404).

Thus, with reference to Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), BELF speakers in this study are not categorized as L1 or L2 speakers of English, nor learners of the language, but rather as professional business communicators who make use of BELF as a means of communication in their everyday working lives.

Furthermore, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) point out an issue related to the role of culture within the definition of BELF that is also crucial to pay attention to. It is highlighted that BELF is, by no means, considered as cultureless, although the definition may at first suggest otherwise. It is considered rather culture-neutral, because seeing lingua francas as cultureless actually neglects the fact that its speakers come from a diversity of cultural backgrounds (Meierkord 2002). Therefore, similarly to any ELF interaction, BELF speakers do bring out their own cultural aspects and mother tongue ideologies in international business discourse practices as well, for example, in terms of how they think different encounters should be handled (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 404). However, BELF interactions are primarily conducted according to the norms of the organizational cultures as well as the global business discourse communities that BELF speakers are members of, as discussed below.

Although ELF and BELF are similar in many aspects, BELF is different from ELF in the sense that its domain-specific focus is solely business, and its frame of reference is provided by the globalized business community: "we can refer to the global business community as the "culture" that has created BELF, and within which BELF evolves" (Charles (2007: 264). The "B" in BELF, therefore, highlights the difference from ELF and refers to the shared context and culture of globalized business, where speakers have certain roles (e.g. manager, employee, buyer, seller) and duties (e.g. manage meetings and projects, teamwork, negotiate deals) within different work-related interactional situations (e.g. face-to-face or remote meetings, emailing, informal discussions at the workplace) that affect how language is being used to suit the purpose (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010: 205). However, at the end of day, the primary nature and function of BELF is simple – it is an instrument for getting the job done in an international business environment (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 400). As also shown, for example, in the study by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) that explored business professionals' perceptions of business communication in several globally operating companies, BELF is considered among the professionals as "simply work".

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Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) argue that an integral part of today's global business professionals' business know-how consists of their communication know-how, as also demonstrated in Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) model of Global Communication Competence (GCC) (Figure 1). Communicative competence involves interlocutors sharing similar repertoires and common sets of procedures regarding knowledge about language, context and the practices that influence the sequentiality and structure of any social interaction (Oittinen 2020: 16). As Oittinen (2020) exemplifies, this becomes especially important in a workplace setting such as an international company, where an individual's ability to perform daily tasks and achieve work and communicative goals is strongly connected to knowing how to behave in order to meet the structures, principles and expectations of being a member in the organizational culture of the workplace. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) GCC model shows the key elements that are required for global communicative competence, meaning successful communication in the global business context:

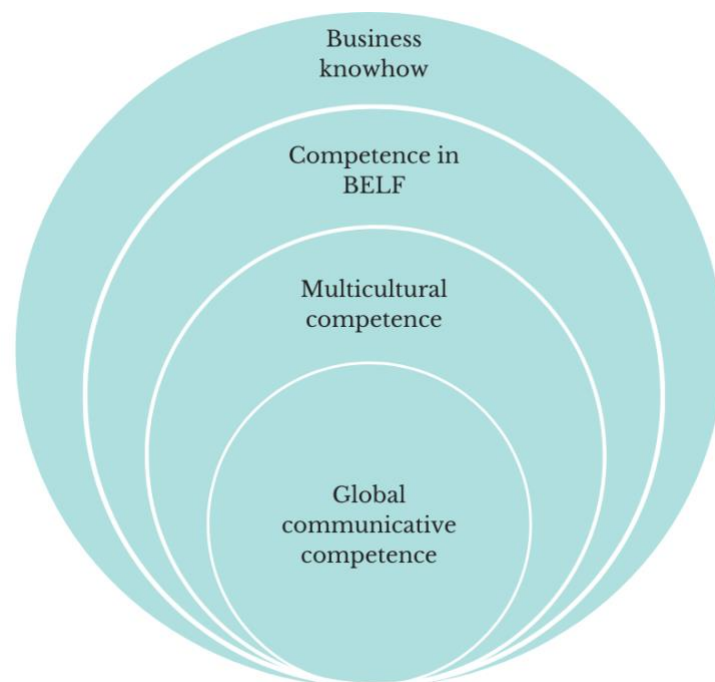Figure 1. Model of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011: 258).

In terms of multicultural competence, which often comes naturally from BELF speakers, refers to communicators sensitivity and flexibility towards the multicultural environment and factors related to it, such as corporate cultures within companies (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011). With regard to BELF competence, BELF

is generally characterized by its goal and content orientation. According to Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), instead of NS linguistic correctness or fluency, BELF competence requires clarity and accuracy of content, as well as knowledge of business-specific vocabulary and genre conventions. BELF speakers have a professional communicative repertoire that is modified and used in diverse ways in achieving goals and building relationships (Räisänen 2018). Thus, similarly to any ELF interaction, paying attention to the interlocutors and "making them feel good" has also been discovered as essential element in BELF competence:

> …because getting the core content across and being understood is paramount for BELF competence, a successful BELF speaker need not be highly fluent, produce grammatically correct language, or have a native English pronunciation. For our respondents and interviewees, reaching for NS criteria is not a prerequisite for success in BELF. Rather, being able to use the language strategically is seen as vital. The ability to convey business content unambiguously entails that the speaker needs to accommodate to the partner's knowledge level. Also, it entails being able to clarify information and check for understanding. And finally, it entails making the other party feel good, that is, being able to connect on a relational level." (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 403).

Moreover, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) highlight that BELF competence involves speakers awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity omnipresent in BELF interactions, and reacting to it by showing that they are aware of the need to explicate and ascertain messages, as well as use a variety of pragmatic communication strategies and channels to achieve shared understanding.

2.2.3   Pragmatic communication strategies within BELF interaction

As demonstrated in Björkman's (2014) communication strategies (henceforth CSs) framework, CSs are a pragmatic phenomenon within the study field of ELF used by speakers in spoken ELF settings. They have previously (more than four decades ago) been linked to study of Second Language Acquisition, and at that phase the definition of CSs was limited to a means of solving and overcoming crisis and problems within talk. As stated by Björkman (2014: 123), this focus on problematicity raised concerns among some researchers, who, on the other hand, considered CSs as a "spectrum of resources that speakers use to achieve their communicative aims".

Present-day definitions to CSs within ELF pragmatics, therefore, include also attempts to increase the explicitness and effectiveness of talk, instead of focusing only on practices involving difficulties and misunderstandings that ELF speakers face. Previous CSs studies show that ELF speakers are prepared for the asymmetries that are omnipresent in ELF settings as they are strongly oriented to mutual comprehensibility by doing so called "pro-active work". This means that ELF speakers

actively use a variety of CSs to both pre-empt and resolve communicative turbulence (Björkman 2014) and tailor the ways through which they communicate to suit the needs of a specific interactional situation involving a specific set of people, such as it is the case with BELF competence.

2.2.3.1 Corrective strategies

Corrective strategies are employed by ELF speakers in situations when a hearable error or mistake occurs in the ongoing utterance, which are then "corrected" by replacing the problematic word or phrase (repairable) with the correct form (Kaur 2011). These usually occur in the form of repair, which as reported by Kaur (2011: 2706), can be referred to as a self-righting mechanism that generally occurs very frequently in all kinds of interactions "as participants address the difficulties that arise in interaction in an ongoing manner". According to Kaur (2011) instances of repair can be frequent especially in ELF settings, where speakers need to deal with an increased number of asymmetries. As exemplified by ten Have (2007), a repair sequence, just as any CSs really, can be self- or other-initiated and performed by either party. In the present study, I expect to discover plenty of manifestation of self-initiated self-repair practices, which is a typical form of repair for maintaining and enhancing the intelligibility of ELF speakers' talk while achieving mutual understanding. I don't expect to discover other-repair practices nowhere near as much as self-repair practices, because as mentioned earlier, BELF speakers have a habit of making the interlocutors feel good, and correcting them for their linguistic errors is incompatible with this notion.

2.2.3.2 Explicitness strategies

Explicitness strategies have been discovered to enhance the clarity, comprehensibility and effectiveness of ELF speakers' talk (Kaur 2011). The use of explicitness strategies is not, in fact, preceded by any hearable errors or mistakes within utterances, but are rather conducted as an attempt to make the ongoing or previous utterance more specific and understandable, and pre-empt possible turbulences or misunderstandings. These practices often include speakers' performance on rephrasing and clarifying the content, word choices, or grammatical structures of prior talk (Kaur 2011). The possible sources of motivation that often drive especially BELF speakers to the move to utilize explicitness strategies are formed by the need to make talk more clear, explicit and organized, which is integral in BELF competence: "The second component of successful BELF communication can be summarized in one word: clarity" (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 401). These practices are also studied

to function as a means to assist the interlocutors in the progress of understanding (e.g. Kaur 2011), which can be regarded as a form of BELF competence in terms of paying attention to the interlocutors and "making them feel good" (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 403).

2.3 Working remotely - technology-mediated BELF meetings

2.3.1 Technology-mediated BELF interaction

As mentioned earlier, BELF use is increasingly taking place across national borders and across cultures in global business, which is enabled by the highly developed present-day communication technology (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2012), especially under the exceptional worldwide COVID-19 situation today, which has also forced much of the communication that has previously been conducted face-to-face to take place remotely. Therefore, BELF continues to expand rapidly along with advanced communication technologies and the global mobility of businesses, enabling business encounters between business professionals despite their geographical location (Birlik and Kaur 2020). The present study focuses on company-internal technology-mediated BELF meetings.

Generally, the term "mediated" or technology-mediated interaction is used for interaction that takes place between people through the use of communication technologies. According to Arminen et al., technology-mediated interaction is often contrasted to more familiar interactional settings, prominently face-to-face interaction, to compare the interactional elements within these different settings and discover how technology-mediated interaction is "accomplished, enabled, constrained and inhibited" (Arminen et al. 2016: 293). Technology-mediated interaction is accomplished by orienting to affordances, which are the activity possibilities and distinctive features of the immediate sociomaterial environment (Arminen 2016; Oittinen 2020). Figure 2 demonstrates the three interactional spaces that speakers are involved in during a technology-mediated meeting, including (1) the local space, where the speaker is physically present, (2) the overall meeting space, where the speaker is present online through verbal and visual technology-mediated resources, and (3) possible adjoining space(s), including other interactional realities in addition

to the overall meeting space and the local space, such as via smartphone (Oittinen 2020: 23).
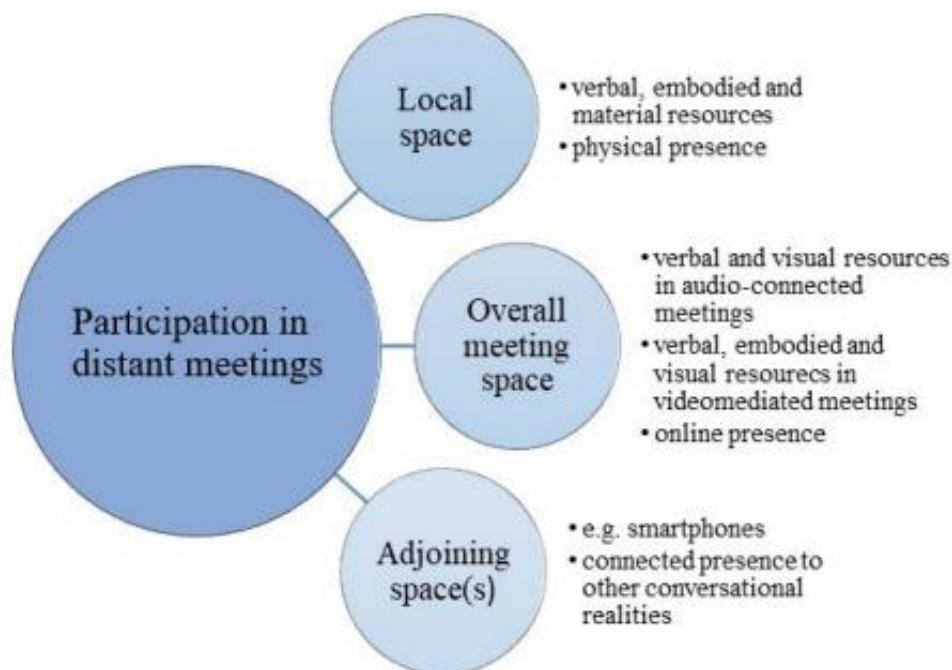
Figure 2. Interactional spaces in technology-mediated meetings (Oittinen 2020: 23).

Formal business meetings often have special routine-like patterns and characteristics that affect how meetings are arranged and implemented. They are typically prescheduled and follow specific agendas within specific timeframes, settings, speaker roles, communicative goals etc. However, in technology-mediated business meetings, these aspects are affected by social, visual and technical constraints (Oittinen 2020). Previous studies into technology-mediated interactions suggest that speakers have asymmetrical access to the shared interactional resources (Oittinen 2018: 33). As exemplified by Arminen et al. (2016), this is because speakers are often only able to observe the resources available within the overall meeting space, "with a good part of each other's immediate surroundings remaining off screen and unavailable to the distant coparticipants" (Arminen et al. 2016: 297).

As put by Oittinen (2018: 8), "advancing meeting progressivity and mutual understanding are affected by the participants' orientation towards both the affordances and constraints of technology". According to Arminen et al. (2016), much of the previous research into technology-mediated interaction has focused solely on the negative characteristics and impacts of the constraints of the technological side of the interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced people, now more than ever, to

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work with both the opportunities as well as the constraints of advanced communication technology, which do not exist in face-to-face communication. However, as pointed out by Arminen et al. (2016: 296), technology-mediated interaction does have the potential to go even beyond what face-to-face interaction would enable. As it is widely known, the pandemic has had devastating effects on many businesses along numerous other things in the society. Yet, advanced communication technology has enabled many companies to keep going and has made it possible for business professionals to keep working from their homes despite their locations geographically, such as it is the case with the company and its employees that this study has been conducted in collaboration with.

2.3.2   Strategies to manage technology-mediated aspects

Oittinen (2020) reports a variety of coordinating actions, affordances and multimodal resources that are used by interlocutors to coordinate, manage and overcome asymmetries in technology-mediated business meetings. Furthermore, Oittinen's (2020) study emphasizes that collaborative accomplishments are required by both the chair(s) and the participants in managing technology-mediated meetings. In the present study, I am expecting to discover CS-like patterns of interactional practices, strategies and affordances that not only overcome interactional trouble caused by the technology-mediated interactional setting, but also enhance and coordinate the management of the meetings and prevent interactional trouble from happening in the first place.

Both verbal and embodied displays of interlocutors have been discovered to function as important resources for the (re)organization of a technology-mediated business meeting structure when dealing with interactional trouble, due to the different forms of resources in technology-mediated interactions (Oittinen 2020). In a technology-mediated business setting, interactional trouble may be caused by problems in hearing, speaking and understanding, as well as difficulties in the sequential organizational of speakers' turns, including disruptions in turn-taking, ambiguous silences, delayed transmissions and reactions, overlaps and the like. In addition, concerns can also arise, for example, with regard to orientation of visibility, as speakers may wrongly assume that interlocutors share the same physical and visual access, although they do not often have mutual access to each other's interactional spaces, as discussed earlier (Arminen 2016, Oittinen 2020). It is noted by Oittinen (2020) that the contribution of chairs has been discovered to have an essential role in terms of progressivity of a technology-mediated business meeting during

interactional trouble, as they are often in charge of organizing and managing the meetings.

Arminen (2016) states that speakers find intelligent ways of countering and coping with the limitations, asymmetries and sources of interactional trouble that the technology-mediated setting brings upon, by utilizing a variety of strategies and affordances to ensure communicative effectiveness, similarly as BELF speakers typically rely on different pragmatic strategies to ensure mutual comprehensibility. Moreover, as noted by Oittinen and Piirainen-Marsh (2015), different forms of additional interactional work is required from the speakers in achieving mutual orientation towards meeting progressivity within the technology-mediated meetings, which is defined as securing progression of the interaction (Oittinen 2018: 9). The present study discovers how different situations in technology-mediated BELF meetings are managed and enhanced through speakers' use of verbal strategies. The data-type used in this study does not allow thorough examination of participants' embodied resources, since most participants actually have their cameras off during the meetings, and thus handle the meetings via an audio-connection only.

2.3.3 CA and technology-mediated (B)ELF interaction

As it is commonly known, CA is a qualitative method of analysis for empirical studies, which are often based on audio-recorded or video-recorded naturally-occurring interactional material. The analysis, on the other hand, is based on the theory of social action - the analysis examines the interaction in its natural contexts, with the purpose of finding out what something in a conversation is said or done, how it's done, by whom and why (ten Have 2007). In short, CA aims to discover different aspects and details in human communication, and find out how people organize their interactional encounters and accomplish interaction through talk and bodily conduct (Mortensen and Wagner 2013). CA provides a basic foundation for analyzing ELF interactions, but as discovered by Firth (1996) in one of the world's first ELF studies, ELF interactions are a data type that cast new light on some of CA's traditional methods and working assumptions.

CA is a data-driven research methodology, and it typically focuses only on what the data shows and what can be proven with the data (Mortensen and Wagner 2013). Thus, in CA studies, including the present study, researcher's arguments are supported with transcribed data examples. In this sense, a typical CA approach can be somewhat problematic in an ELF context, because if one relies only on what the data shows, one may completely disregard the influence of the social context within

the interaction (Cogo and Dewey 2012). In other words, CA does not typically consider sociolinguistic variables, such as participants' gender, age, ethnicity, relationship to each other etc., although it does not completely deny the relevance of them either, but only in case the participants themselves orient to those categories in their talk.

As mentioned earlier, ELF interactions often take place in various domains and functions between speakers from a range of different linguacultural backgrounds. Moreover, ELF involves speakers' pro-active modification of linguistic resources to suit the communicative needs of the particular interlocutors and the particular social context at hand (Björkman 2014) (see more in section 2.2.3). Therefore, paying attention to the sociocultural and linguacultural variety in ELF interactions seems highly relevant in discovering practices through which the participants manage complex ELF interactions (Cogo and Dewey 2012). In other words, by only looking at the data in a traditional CA-style and not having any background information about the participants or the interactional situation would not be ideal in a (B)ELF context. Naturally, these sociolinguistic variables are not as relevant in data types that involve "ordinary" conversations between "normal" people, referring to participants who are members of the same culture and share the same L1 (usually English), which is the case in majority of traditional CA studies (Firth 1996, D'hont 2011).

 However, according to D'hont (2011: 563), expanding the range of interactional data types allows researchers to identify the effects of speakers' linguistic and cultural variety on the organization of interaction. As noted by Mauranen (2018), the monolingual-normative assumptions in applied linguistics are gradually ceasing the same way with concepts such as "native" and "non-native", as explained earlier. Moreover, according Kantabutra (2018: 71), qualitative research is often multimethodological, and the use of multiple methods "displays an endeavour to elicit an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in inquiry". This is what the present study is aiming to accomplish with the methodological combination of CA and a CSs framework, because the combination is more beneficial than a traditional CA approach in gaining an in-depth understanding of a data type that involves multilingual participants who use BELF in a business context that is technology-mediated.

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Research questions

The following are the research questions of the present study:

1. What kind of pragmatic communication strategies (CSs) emerge in the BELF meetings and what communicative functions do they carry within?

2. What kind of verbal resources do the participants draw on to manage technological aspects of the technology-mediated BELF interaction?

The present study aims to contribute to (B)ELF research by looking into pragmatic CSs and discovering patterns of interactional practices that help speakers achieve comprehensibility in an internal and highly international business context. In addition, the study also aims to provide insights on speakers' use of verbal resources in technology-mediated business meeting interaction, which is becoming more and more common in a world of modern and advanced communication technologies, especially under the challenging COVID-19 pandemic times that restrict face-to-face gatherings. Moreover, the study intends to demonstrate the complexity of such interactions, as they do not only involve speakers' creative employment of pragmatic CSs and verbal resources, but also a shared communicative repertoire (Räisänen 2018), "where one's ability to carry out daily tasks as a member of an organizational culture depends on acknowledging the underlying structures, rules, principles and expectations, and knowing how to behave accordingly" (Oittinen 2020: 16).

3.2   Data

This study has been conducted in collaboration with a multinational educational technology company that provides language learning solutions to schools and language teachers globally. The data of this study consists of several recorded internal business meetings of the collaborative company. The meetings were held remotely around August and September 2020 with the Google Meet virtual meeting app.

Although the meeting app enables visual access along with audio-connection between the participants of the meeting through a camera lens, the data is still considered technology-mediated instead of video-mediated, because the participants mostly had their cameras off during the meetings. Thus, the meetings are considered as audio-recorded technology-mediated meetings. In addition to the audio-connection, the participants also shared and edited work-related materials in a private online workspace during the meetings. The meetings were, more specifically, internship meetings with a team of 19 participants, including 17 interns and 2 managers. The participants do not have a common L1, and because the organizational language of the company is English, BELF was used as a means of communication in the data. Altogether, the recordings are approximately 3 hours long, of which some parts will be manually selected and transcribed for display and analysis.

3.3   Data collection

The recordings have been collected from the same private online work environment, where the participants shared their work-related material. Only the company staff have access to it. The recorded meetings that I, on the other hand, have manually selected as a part of the data are stored safely on my laptop. In fact, I have a personal connection to the collaborative company as I was originally one of the interns, and due to this personal relationship I have gained access to the otherwise private data with the permission of the company and all of the participants. I have not counted myself as one of the participants in this study, as I have chosen those recorded meetings for my data where I personally did not participate in. Having such a personal connection to the company helped me in the analysis process of this study, because I was already familiar with the company's working methods. Moreover, I had detailed information about the participants as well as the dynamics between the participants, the company culture, and the topics and contents discussed in the meetings etc., which, according to Oittinen (2020: 60), are all relevant background information in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the interaction.

As a matter of fact, the meetings were first recorded solely for the reason that if, for example, one of the interns could not attend a meeting, they could catch up later on by watching and listening to the meeting from the recordings. As we have agreed on a research collaboration with the company, I have gained permission to use the recordings as my data after they had been recorded in the first place, so originally they were not recorded for this research. I find this intriguing and fruitful from my research point of view, because the data can be considered very much naturally occurring, as

the participants do not know at the time of the meeting taking place that they would be participating in a research, to which they have agreed to afterwards. One of the most important methodological issues in ELF research and CA is, in fact, the use of naturally occurring data (e.g. Cogo and Dewey 2012).

3.4 Participants

The interns are students from various higher education institutions who represent different fields of study and who are mostly doing the internship as a part of their studies. The interns are also from varying linguacultural backgrounds, as demonstrated in Table 1, and they participate remotely in the meetings from different physical locations around the world. All, except two interns, are L2 speakers of English. The managers, who are referred to as chairs, as they are in charge of organizing the meetings, are also operating from different countries remotely and do not share a common native language. Both of them are also L2 English speakers. The participants have different levels of competency, but all of them are able to use English fluently enough to get the work done. The two participants, who speak English as a L1, are in no way distinguished from the rest, because all participants are equally considered as BELF speakers. In the results and analysis section of the present study, the two managers/chairs are referred to by using identification codes S1 and S2, and the rest S3-S19 stand for the interns.

L1s	Number of representatives
Finnish	2
Russian	2
English	2
Chinese	2
Spanish	2
German	1
Portuguese	1
Serbian	1
Lao	1
Greek	1
Hindi	1
Hungarian	1
Yoruba	1
Italian	1

Table 1. The variety of first language (L1) backgrounds of the participants in the present study.

3.5   Research ethics

Ethical aspects under EU's General Data Protection Regulation (Article 6, Paragraph 1) are concerned when human beings are used as research subjects and personal data is being processed. I have created and delivered a privacy notice and consent forms to the participants, and gained legal permission to use the data and agreed on a research collaboration with the collaborating company. Moreover, the data is processed confidentially in compliance with EU's General Data Protection Regulation. Thus, any confidential information that could anyhow identify or otherwise harm the participants will not be used in the study. The only reference to the participants will be identification codes in the transcripts, such as S1, S2 and so forth. Furthermore, the participants have understood that participation in the present research is voluntary and that participation can be cancelled at any time.

The data is stored in accordance with the University of Jyväskylä's data security practices for processing research data, and once the research has ended, the data will be discarded. The parts of the data that I do not pick for analysis, on the other hand, will not be used at all. In addition, the data used in the present study neither includes information related to specific personal data groups, nor does the study handle criminal offences or penalties.

3.6   Method of analysis: Applying a CA based communication strategies framework

As mentioned earlier, my purpose is to manually select some parts of the approximately 3-hour-long data, which I am going to transcribe for qualitative analysis. I will choose those parts for the analysis which best demonstrate the use and functions of communication strategies and linguistic resources in managing internal technology-mediated meetings from a BELF perspective. My focus is going to be on participants' verbal strategies and resources, because as explained earlier, most participants have their cameras off during the meetings. Consequently, the participants have an audio-connection to each other in addition to the shared work-related materials on their screens, such as Excel files, but for the most part, they are not able to visually monitor each other's embodied practices, such as facial or bodily expressions.

Along with the manual data selection, the method of analysis of this study has been chosen in line with previous research and theory on communication strategies within

(B)ELF (e.g. Björkman 2011; Hanamoto 2016; Kaur 2011; Mauranen 2006; Wei 2018). The study adapts a CA based CSs framework as a method of analysis, which is introduced by Björkman (2014), whose study is based on face-to-face ELF interaction in a higher education setting. The implementation of Björkman's (2014) framework into a technology-mediated BELF setting should be theoretically unproblematic, since ELF speakers share the same habit of doing proactive interactional work in terms of ensuring mutual comprehensibility despite the interactional context (Björkman 2014). In the analysis, I will also be drawing on BELF-specific literature (e.g. Charles 2007; Cogo and Yanaprasart 2018; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011; Räisänen 2018) as well as literature on technology-mediated interaction (e.g. Oittinen and Piirainen-Marsh 2015, Oittinen 2018, 2020, Arminen et al. 2016) and internal business communication (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2012; Nielsen 2013; Stark 2009) in order to gain a thorough understanding of the context of this study and provide a detailed analysis of BELF speaker's use of CSs and verbal resources in technology-mediated meetings.

Moreover, I have chosen to use a CA based CSs framework as a method of analysis instead of a traditional CA approach, because the way I am going to manually select my data samples is usually not the way that they are selected in a traditional CA study. The data of a traditional CA study is often fully transcribed before actually beginning to look for patterns from the data. This is because CA is often based on so-called "unmotivated looking" (see more e.g. ten Have 2007); however, the present study is particularly motivated to look into the phenomenon of CSs and verbal resources . On the other hand, CA does provide a basic methodological foundation which the present study is able to utilize to discover communicative practices and how they are manifested and organized in achieving a shared understanding and successful communicative outcomes (Firth 1996). By adapting a CA based communication strategies framework, my aim is to shed light on the phenomenon of pragmatic communication strategies and verbal resources emerging in the naturally-occurring technology-mediated BELF meetings.
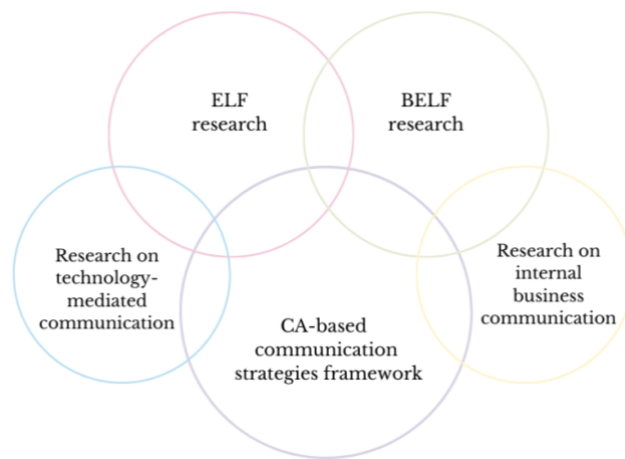
Figure 3. Illustration of the method of analysis used in the present study and the theoretical framework guiding it.

4   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The findings have been provided with transcribed extracts from the data, which, as mentioned earlier, have been manually selected in terms of their relevance and fruitfulness with regard to the research questions of this study. In other words, those parts from the data that efficiently demonstrate the communicative use and functions of CSs and verbal resources in managing technology-mediated BELF meetings have been picked out for analysis. The results have been analyzed using a CA based CSs framework as well as relevant literature to give detailed descriptions of the participants' verbal efforts in achieving mutual comprehension and work-goals in the meetings. The transcription symbols and conventions follow the "Jefferson Transcription System" developed by Gail Jefferson, (see Appendix 1) which is widely used in CA research. Additionally, I have marked the key parts of each transcript in bold, in order to make their reading easier for the reader and to highlight the occurrences of CSs and speakers' use of verbal resources.

4.1   Pragmatic communication strategies in a BELF interaction

This section will cover the first research question of this study by presenting and analyzing pragmatic CSs that emerged in the remote BELF meetings. The first research question is the following:

1. What kind of communication strategies emerge in the BELF meetings and what communicative functions do they carry within?

The results of this first section are divided into two different categories - corrective strategies and explicitness strategies. As mentioned earlier, the instances of corrective strategies are preceded by speakers' hearable errors or trouble within talk at different linguistic levels, which are then repaired by the speakers according to what they think is correct. I focused only on self-initiated self-repair practices in this section, because instances of other-initiated or other-performed corrective strategies were very rare in the meetings. This is presumably for the reason that BELF speakers are used to different fluencies, and grammatical correctness is not seen as a requirement for BELF competence (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Moreover, it is generally not considered very polite to correct an interlocutor for a linguistic error, unless it is somehow necessary for the meeting progressivity. Interestingly, corrective strategies

were mainly performed in situations where clients were discussed, which revealed that the company most likely emphasizes that clients are central within the company's culture, and this ideology guided the speakers' communicative repertoires in order to meet the requirements and expectations of being a member of the company's organizational culture (Oittinen 2020).

Explicitness strategies, on the other hand, are usually not preceded by any trouble in speakers' talk, since they are rather used as proactive strategies for pre-empting possible trouble and enhancing the comprehensibility and effectiveness of the interaction (e.g. Kaur 2011). The speakers oriented to explicitness strategies mainly as a means for getting work-related content accurately across, for example, when work-related materials were discussed. Both types of strategies are illustrated with several transcribed data samples that demonstrate the pragmatic phenomenon of CSs from different linguistic levels and interactional point of views of BELF usage. Each data sample is analyzed with the aim of discovering interactional motives for the manifestation of each CS by looking closely into their communicative functions and how they, for instance, contribute to the achievement of successful communicative and work goals in the distant BELF meetings.

4.1.1   Corrective strategies

4.1.1.1   Phonological self-repair

At the phonological level, self-repair has been discovered to function as a means for correcting phonemic slips or articulations of mispronounced words in ELF interaction (Kaur 2011). Phonological errors were often immediately followed by a repair sequence as presented in the following examples, which can be considered an embodiment of BELF speakers strong self-righting mechanism, especially when it comes to important work-related content.

This first extract has been taken from a situation where S2, who is one of the chairs, is giving the participants instructions on how to interact and activate the company's clients on social media.

Extract 1

```
01  S2:   their name e- is in it
02        and there ha- they has been tacked to the post
03        so they get nof- a notification
```

Phonological self-repair occurs in this example at lines 02 and 03. In line 02, S2's phonemic slip on "there ha-" is cut off, and then immediately repaired with "they has", which the speaker thinks is the correct form here, although the verbal phrase still, in fact, ends being used in the wrong tense, since the speaker is likely more focused on correcting the slip with regard to the subject from "there" to "they". Another phonological self-repair sequence is followed by the first one in line 03, where the phonemic slip "nof-" is cut off by S2 and immediately repaired with the correct form of the word "notification" with an addition of the article "a" in front of the corrected word.

In this extract, the chair (S2) is, again, giving guidance to an interlocutor with regard to what information should the interlocutor include in a message when answering a client in social media in case they are asking for more information on the company's products.

Extract 2

```
01  S2:   I- I- I think you can say him that (.)
02        basically its obvious to share the webpage
03        wish- which has (.) ehh description
```

The example demonstrates another immediately repaired phonemic slip in line 03, where S2 accidentally pronounces the word "which" at first as "wish-", which is actually a regularly performed phonemic slip in any ELF interaction. Here, as well as in the example above, the immediate phonological repair sequences demonstrate the chair's increased self-righting mechanism in situations where the chair is giving the interns instructions on important work-related matters that involve clients.

4.1.1.2   Lexical self-repair

At the lexical level, self-repair may emerge in the form of a speaker correcting a lexically incorrect word choice with the correct word. Similarly to phonological self-repair, these occurrences are often slip of tongs that are immediately repaired by the speakers after the incorrect lexical units, as discovered by Kaur (2011). Self-repair at the lexical level also occurred mainly when relevant work-related content was discussed, demonstrating BELF speakers' orientation to accuracy and clarity of content.

The extract here shows a speaker's turn from a conversation where the participants have been talking about a certain client of the company.

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Extract 3

```
01  S1:  umm
02       (1.5)
03  S1:  yah because I heard that
04       somebody: had an interview
05       from: for a f- with a ( x )
```

In the example, the speaker struggles to come up with the correct preposition for the phrase "had an interview with", and slips two incorrect lexical items "from" and "for" before finding the correct lexical item "with" on line 03. The slip of tongs are immediately repaired one after another without causing any major disruption to S1's ongoing utterance. As mentioned earlier, many of the instances that showed BELF speakers' accuracy towards work-related content dealt with matters related to the company's clients, as it is also the case in this example in addition to the examples on phonological self-repair. This demonstrates BELF speakers' use of their communicative repertoires in line with the company's organizational culture. However, this phenomenon could also show evidence of those BELF speakers' cultural backgrounds, who think that a client-centric approach is the correct way to handle internal business interactions, as I have earlier argued in line with Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) that BELF speakers do also occasionally bring out their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds in BELF interactions.

In extract 4, the speaker is proposing an opinion with regard to a work-related material which the participants share in their online workspace, since the interlocutors have been talking about developing the material into a more functional format before the speaker's turn visible in the extract.

Extract 4

```
01  S9:  I also think that
02       we are eh missing this column
03       for- about the follow up email
04       cos we really dont no
05       who has been- who has sent
06       e:hm emails
```

The example shows another instance where an accidentally slipped incorrect lexical item "for", according to the speaker, is immediately repaired in line 03 with "about",

although the first "incorrect" lexical item "for" would have actually been the correct word choice here. This is shortly followed by another lexical repair in line 05, where the speaker corrects the verb phrase from "who has been" to "who has sent" by repairing the incorrect word choice from "been" to "sent". Speakers often made sure with the use of CSs that mutual understanding was achieved when contents associated with work-related materials were discussed, most likely for the reason that although the materials were shared for each participant in an online work-space, but the speakers did not have visual access to each other's screens and they could not physically point out which parts of the materials they were talking about, which meant that they had to communicate this information verbally effectively across (see more in 4.2.1.1).

4.1.1.3 Morphological self-repair

At the morphological level, Kaur (2011) has reported self-repair to appear in several forms, including changing the tense of a word, correcting a word from singular to plural, revising the inflection of a word and such. Oftentimes morphological errors were actually left uncorrected in the meetings, which could suggest that BELF speakers do not consider those errors to risk the meeting progressivity or achievement of work and communicative goals, as grammatical correctness is not a requirement for BELF competence (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010).

In extract 5, in which a morphological self-repair practice does occur, the chair is opening the meeting (see more about meeting openings in 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.2.2), as the speaker is giving the interlocutors instructions on a warm-up task in order to get the meeting interaction properly started.

Extract 5

```
01  S1:  it would nice to summarize that every team summarizes
02       for the rest of the teams
03       what has been done ehh dur↑in the week
04       and what has been like the mai- main highlights
05       a:n aspects a::n to share with th- with the: other team
06       emm with the other ↑teams
```

The morphological self-repair practice in this example is visible at lines 05-06 as the speaker changes the phrase from "with the other team" to "with the other teams", by correcting the tense of the previously used singular form "team" to the plural form "teams". The repair seems useful in this case, because the speaker is able to clarify that instead of summarizing the past week's highlights in detail to one specific team, the

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speaker is rather aiming to get the participants to generally share work-related updates to the whole group.

4.1.1.4   Syntactic self-repair

Self-repair at the syntactic level differs from the other linguistic levels above in the sense that it is often more extensive and may involve substantial changes to a speaker's utterance, such as abandoning the previous syntactic sentence construction or modifying the sentence structure, clause type or order of words (Kaur 2011).

In extract 6, the speaker's utterance is preceded by a conversation with regard to a client case, where the participants are trying to find out the current status of the clients in question, as the speaker here is responsible for interacting with these clients.

Extract 6

```
01  S9:   hopefully if (0.5) I have receiv- ↑if I receive
02        eh responses from them then hhh (.)
03        I'll keep you updated
```

In the example, S9 cuts off and abandons the ongoing syntactic sentence construction and immediately modifies the clause from "if I have received" to "if I receive" in line 01, which allows the speaker to highlight the fact that the speaker has not yet received any responses from the clients, but is going to keep the recipients informed in case the speaker does receive responses from them. The prior clause "if I have received" would have perhaps given a false impression to the interlocutors that the speaker might have already received responses, although this is clearly not the case, and the speaker here is able to clarify that. Again, the example shows an instance of a BELF speaker's accuracy of content when clients are being discussed.

4.1.2   Explicitness strategies

4.1.2.1   Lexical replacement

Lexical replacement differs from lexical repair, where the speakers replaced incorrect lexical units with correct ones, in the sense that with lexical replacement the speaker rather decides to use a more suitable lexical unit with regard to the context at hand. According to Kaur (2011: 2709), lexical replacements often narrow down the range of possible meanings of an utterance to a more specific one. In other words, the strategy allows speakers to modify the content of their utterances by replacing a vague or otherwise unsuitable term to a more precise and specific one, and thus communicate the message effectively across while avoiding possible misunderstandings that the use

of a vague term could potentially cause. These practices demonstrate the context-sensitive nature of BELF, as speakers modify their language use to suit the purpose of the particular work-related situation.

The speaker's turn visible in extract 7 is preceded by a chair's move of welcoming the speaker as a new intern to the team. The extract below is a part of the speaker's self-introduction to the other meeting participants.

Extract 7

```
01  S3:  I'm really looking forward to (.) work for you
02       (1.0)
03  S3:  work ↑with you
```

In the example, the speaker is expressing one's excitement for beginning to work in the internship team as a new intern by stating "I'm really looking forward to work for you". There is a small, approximately 1.0-second break after the utterance, after which the speaker, however, changes the phrase of the previous utterance from "work for you" to "work with you" by replacing the pronoun "for" with "with". This lexical replacement of the pronoun slightly changes the meaning of the utterance and enables the speaker to highlight the concept of working together as a team "work with you" instead of an individual working for a boss, which the phrase "work for you" would have emphasized. This is most likely the reason that drove the speaker to carry out this practice here, although the replacement would not have been necessary in terms of mutual understanding. However, the replaced phrase does fit the social context better, since the internship meeting is all about working together as a team.

In the extract here, the speaker is talking about a job task that relates to sending a follow-up email to the clients, and the lexical replacement used here has to do with the speaker's effort of being more precise in terms of scheduling when this particular job task is supposed to be done.

Extract 8

```
01  S9:  What we have to do as the support team right now
02       is to sent the follow up email
03       which (0.5) usually happens
04       (2.0)
05  S9:  ehm withi:n eh ↓not within but ehm (.)
06       a:fter three days at least
```

In line 05, the speaker is clearly first about to state that the proper time for sending the follow up email is within three days, but immediately after the word within the speaker takes it back by saying "eh not within but". After this, there is a minor break which is then quickly followed by the replacement from "within" to the correct lexical item "after". This is another example of a speaker displaying BELF competence, which according to Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) is strongly associated with getting the job effectively done, which the speaker here is clearly trying to accomplish by being precise with the scheduling and thus preventing possible misunderstandings.

4.1.2.2　　Qualifying lexical item(s)

Another explicitness strategy on the lexical level that was regularly performed in the meetings involved speakers modifying their utterances by inserting qualifying lexical items as a means to increase the clarity of talk and pre-empt situations where a recipient would need to ask a speaker for additional clarification (Kaur 2011). Instances, where qualifying lexical items were added to an ongoing utterance, were often preceded by vague and general word choices, as demonstrated in the extracts 9 and 10 below. The instances show BELF speakers ability of using the language strategically by clarifying information and pro-actively accommodating to the interlocutors' level, which is seen as essential to BELF competence (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 403).

In the extract here, the speaker is giving an opinion with regard to certain roles that those participants are supposed to cover who belong to a written content team, as there are several different teams specialized in different areas that each of the meeting participants have been divided into.

Extract 9

```
01  S1:  Ye eh I think thats a good umm (0.5)
02        idea that em everybody: (0.5)
03        emm ↑each te:am member in the written content team
04        has a: (.) a list (.)
```

S1 initially uses a rather vague term "everybody" in line 02, which is then shortly followed by qualifying lexical items "each team member in the written content team" in line 03. This allows S1 to specify which individuals the speaker is referring to, as the ongoing utterance seemingly does not concern "everybody" present in the meeting since the speaker is only referring to those participants who are a part of the written content team. On the other hand, the qualifying items used here might not have been absolutely necessary in case the context and the recipients of the utterance

were already obvious to the interlocutors. However, the manifestation of the strategy here again demonstrates the BELF speaker's efforts of being clear and accurate, especially since this speaker in question is in the role of a chair, who is primarily responsible for the meeting's progressivity and overall communicative effectiveness.

Extract 10 shows another instance where a speaker is talking about a work-related document, and the speaker's turn in this case contains a difficult term that may not be a part of every BELF speakers' vocabulary.

Extract 10

```
01  S8:  I tried to implement the: ↑list
02        tha:t the support team is using
03        which is the teacher eligibility list (0.7)
04  S1:  [I see]
05  S8:  [umm] I tried to implement that
```

The example demonstrates S8 adding qualifying lexical items "the teacher eligibility list" in line 03 to the ongoing utterance that refer to the speaker's previously used rather vague term "the list" in line 01. In this case, the qualifying lexical items here include quite a difficult term "eligibility", especially for someone whose first language is not English. It could be the case that the speaker was first struggling to remember the term and, therefore, initially went with the vaguer term, and once having come up with the term the speaker then adds the qualifying lexical items to the utterance. However, if that were the case, the transcript would most likely include a break in line 03 right before the qualifying lexical items, which would suggest that the speaker is trying to think of the term. Yet, there is none. This could suggest that the speaker is actually one step ahead in their utterance by acknowledging that the term they are about to use is difficult, and may, therefore, potentially cause trouble within understanding among some of the interlocutors. In other words, the speaker may be doing additional pro-active work by clarifying the term first with a preface at lines 01-03 "the list that the support team is using which is the…", which can be regarded as a form of preventing possible misunderstandings (e.g. Björkman 2014, Kaur 2011) and paying attention to the interlocutors as a means of BELF competence (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010).

4.1.2.3   Confirmation check

According to Mauranen (2006: 136), confirmation or comprehension checks are a well-used pragmatic strategy in (B)ELF interactions that function as efficient pre-emptive "guards against misunderstandings". There are two major ways how confirmation

checks have been discovered to function. It has been reported for example in Mauranen's (2006) study that confirmation checks are manifested by ELF speakers as explicit requests of clarification with regard to a previous turn performed by a speaker, which the recipient then wants to clarify whether they understood the speaker correctly. These confirmation checks may take place in the form of minimal single-word checks, such as "yeah?", but they can also be used in more extensive forms, such as "are you saying…" (Mauranen 2006: 136). On the other hand, for example Björkman (2014) refers to confirmation checks as a more pre-emptive way for a speaker to see if the recipient is following the speaker. According to Björkman (2014: 131), these may also appear as short single-word utterances, such as "understand?", or as more extensive stretches, for instance "you know what I'm saying?".

In extract 11, the speakers are talking about the contents of a work-related Excel sheet, which, according to Oittinen's (2020: 23) figure of interactional spaces in technology-mediated meetings (Figure 2), is an example of a visually shared resource within the overall meeting space.

Extract 11

```
01  S13: umm (1.5) like sh- they are interested in the program yes
02       but then you just put in betwee:n umm tho:se
03       eh ↑I don't know the name of those things
04       but you know (.) ehh you know what I'm say↑ing like
05       I-I have that in-interested in the program
06       but stopped replying
07       so I can know whe:re in the process this person is
08  S8:  [okay] yeah that works
09  S13: [ehh]
10  S8:  and thereby we save a column ↑yeah
11  S13: yeah
12  S8:  okay
```

Lines 02-03 indicate that S13 is clearly struggling to remember the term "column" by expressing "then you just put in between those...I don't know the name of those things". Right after this in line 04, the speaker confirms whether the recipient (S8) nevertheless got the message across with an extensive confirmation check "but you know you know what I'm saying like", even though the speaker could not come up with the term. As the conversation proceeds, line 08 suggests that the recipient (S8) did in fact understand what S13 was talking about: "okay yeah that works". However, S8 still takes action to confirm this with a minimal confirmation check at the end of the utterance in line 10: "and thereby we save a column yeah", to which S13 gives a

positive response "yeah" in line 11. This is a good example of demonstrating how NS linguistic correctness is not necessary in a BELF interaction (Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), since BELF speakers find intelligently other ways to communicate a message effectively across.

In this extract, the speakers are discussing and working on the same Excel sheet as in the previous example above.

Extract 12

```
01  S13: eh so interested in the list ↑right
02       ((typing on keyboard))
03       (2.0)
04  S8:  ↑yeah exactly
```

The example demonstrates a minimal pre-emptive confirmation check, as S13 concludes the utterance in line 01 with a single-word check "right" with a rising intonation there. The transcript suggests that S13 is actually filling in information to the Excel sheet, since a keyboard typing sound is also present in the interaction in line 02. S13 thus uses the minimal check "right" to confirm from the recipient whether S13 is filling the information in the correct column. There is a small, approximately 2.0-second break after the confirmation check at the end of S13's turn, which suggests that the recipient (S8) has a visual access to the same Excel sheet and is, in fact, doing a quick check whether S13 is typing the information in the correct place before giving a positive response "yeah exactly" in line 04.

In the extract here, an intern, who only recently started working at the company, seems to be uncertain about which role and job task the speaker is supposed to cover by being a part of a digital marketing team.

Extract 13

```
01 S11:  so the thing is I don: no eh
02       what (.) is (.) you know digital marketing
03       ehh (.) eh digital marketing team (.) to do fo:r (.)
04       project promoter or list promoter ( x )
05     (4.0)
06  S1:  well I did not (0.5)
07       clearly understand the question
08       ↑your asking what is the digital marketing team (.) do↑ing
09       like are they project promoters or list promoters↓
10 S11:  ↑yeah yeah yeah
```

At lines 01-04, S11 is trying to formulate a question in order to express the speaker's uncertainty and to get some clarity on the matter. However, the speaker is clearly struggling to get the message across as there are multiple signs of hesitation and trouble within the speaker's utterance, such as small breaks between words, as well as several expletives "eh". There is approximately a 4.0 second break after the end of the utterance in line 05 before the speaker receives a response, which is also a sign of the interactional turbulence there and suggests that the recipient (S1) is having trouble in making sense of what the speaker is trying to ask. The recipient then uses the next turn to what is described by Mauranen (2006) as an explicit request of clarity with a visibly more extensive confirmation check in comparison to the ones in extracts 11 and 12 above, as shown at lines 06-09. As a response to S1's confirmation check, S11 repeats "yeah" three times in line 10, which suggests that the speaker is highlighting that S1 hit the spot with what S11 was trying to ask in the previous utterance, and the repetition there perhaps even shows that S11 is relieved that mutual understanding was successfully achieved despite the turbulence.

4.1.2.4 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a common example of a clarifying strategy, which, according to Björkman (2014), is used in ELF interactions to modify a speaker's previous utterance, although providing the same content as provided in the previous utterance. BELF speakers manifested this type of strategy similarly to Björkman's (2014) demonstration in order to highlight certain work-related aspects in longer turns and to pro-actively make sure that the key message gets across.

In this extract, the interlocutors are talking about an upcoming interview with a client, which S7 has been tasked to handle. The chairs (S1 and S2) are trying to figure out if S7 needs one of the chairs to accompany the speaker in the interview for support.

Extract 14

```
01  S2: wou-would you need S1 to be in the: (.) in [the calls or
02  S7:                                            [ehh I]
03      ehh I
04      (1.5)
05  S7: iz-iz not compulsory:
06      ehm I-I can handle it by myself
07      if he wants to drop in to the first one to make sure that-
08      I mean I've not managed to interview anyone yet
09      t-to this mornings one will be my first
10      if he: wants to come to this mornings one
```

```
11        to: (.) make sure that you know I'm handling it okay
12        then thats fine by me but ehh
13        I know that I am mo:re than capable of umm
14        of the interview process (.) umm
15  S1:  yeah [I agree with you]
16  S2:       [yeah thank you]
17  S1:  (h) yeah definitely agree with you
```

This example demonstrates a rather long paraphrasing sequence from S7 which starts from line 05 and is ended only in line 15 as the first possible TRP (Transition Relevance Place, a point of a possible end of a turn and where the turn may go to another speaker) seems to be only at the end of the speaker's paraphrasing sequence in line 14. In line 01, S7 is being asked whether the speaker needs one of the chairs to join S7 in the calls. In the bolded paraphrasing sequence after this, S7 expresses being capable of handling the interview process alone although it will be the first time for the speaker to do it, but the speaker does not mind either if the chair is there to make sure that everything is going as planned. At lines 13-14, the speaker is able to highlight that the speaker is anyhow more than capable of doing the interview process alone, since the recipients, which are the two chairs in this case, only react to this part of the paraphrased message by responding that they agree with S7 and thank the speaker for taking care of the task independently. S1's small laugh in line 17 perhaps even indicates that S7 would not have had to make such a long statement about being capable of doing the interview process alone, as it seems obvious for S1 that S7 is capable of doing that. The laugh, as well as S1's repetition of the phrase "I agree with you" and the addition of the word "definitely" there in line 17 show S1's confidence in S7, which can also be regarded as a form of BELF competence by making the interlocutor "feel good" (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010).

4.2 Verbal resources to manage technology-mediated aspects in a BELF interaction

This section will cover the second research question of this study by focusing into verbal resources that are used to manage the technological elements of a technology-mediated BELF interaction, which are omnipresent in the remote BELF setting of this study. The second research question of the present study is the following:

2. What kind of verbal resources do the participants draw on to manage technological aspects of the technology-mediated BELF interaction?

Similarly to the previous section that focused on pragmatic CSs, this section is also divided into two different categories. The first category focuses on strategies that speakers used in overcoming moments of interactional trouble that are caused by the technological elements of a technology-mediated setting. The results demonstrate that the technological constraints that caused interactional trouble functioned actually also as resources that pushed BELF speakers to utilize their communicative repertoires verbally in order to get the meetings back in control.

The second category, on the other hand, illustrates other types of verbal strategies that speakers manifested in situations that necessarily were not preceded by any kind of interactional trouble. The use of these strategies rather displayed BELF speakers' strategic use of language in preventing turbulence from happening in the first place and/or making the ongoing interaction within the distant BELF meetings more efficient by enhancing the meetings' progressivity as well as connecting with the interlocutors on a relational level. Speaker's BELF competence is highly visible in the examples of this section as well, although this section of the analysis has more emphasis on the technology-mediated side of the BELF meetings. However, the strategies presented in this section are, in fact, considerably similar to the patterns of CSs use, and the difference between the two categories in this section is much like the difference between "corrective" and "explicitness" strategies.

4.2.1 Overcoming interactional trouble

4.2.1.1 Overcoming lack of mutual visual access

As discussed earlier, lack of mutual visual access is one of the most common constraints that speakers must deal with in technology-mediated meetings (e.g. Oittinen 2018, 2020). This issue was omnipresent in the meetings of this study, since the speakers, in fact, had restricted visual access to each other even in the overall meeting space, as most participants' cameras were turned off. As pointed out by Oittinen (2018), not being able to observe interlocutors embodied cues (to which speakers are used to in face-to-face meetings) can easily lead to interactional trouble, and it therefore often requires speakers' additional verbal efforts to prevent and overcome trouble due to the lack of mutual visual access.

The extract below shows an instance where one of the chairs is asking the interlocutors about a work-related document. However, since the interlocutors do not have visual access to the speaker's screen, they are most likely unsure which document the chair is talking about, and the situation thus leads to a silence in the conversation.

Extract 15

```
01  S2:  ↑was there a tracking document (.) a tracking sheet of
02        (3.0)
03  S2:  I-I ca- I can have a look on
04        an understand the big picture (.)
05        where the list creating is going
06        (6.0)
07  S2:  °umm°
08        (2.0)
09  S2:  I'm searching drive at the moment
10        (2.0)
11  S2:  yeah list creation tracking so ↑is this document updated
12        ((chat notification sound))
13        (3.0)
14        ((chat notification sound))
15  S1:  Thank you ( x )
16  S4:  Yeah my part as well
17  S2:  °Tha:nk y-°
```

In the beginning of the transcript, the formulation of S2's question in line 01 is cut off by the speaker, which is followed by a 3.0 break in line 02. After the break, the speaker basically abandons the previous syntactic sentence construction and begins another sentence in line 3. The lack of the other party's visual access to S2 computer screen then leads to a long ambiguous silence, which can be noted at lines 06-08, where the conversation is not going anywhere for approximately 8.0 seconds in total. There is a clear TRP in line 06; however, S2's previous turn is most likely a little confusing to the interlocutors with the sudden syntactic change, which is most likely another reason for which the next turn is not taken by another speaker, as the interlocutors are supposedly simply waiting for S2 to continue. In line 09, S2 finally does continue the turn by explaining the reason behind the earlier silence: "I'm searching drive at the moment", which the speaker would not have had to explain unless the other party would have had visual access to S2's screen. This utterance is important for the continuity of the conversation, because now the interlocutors are aware of the fact that S2 is trying to find the document, which is located somewhere in their shared online workspace ("drive"). As noted by Oittinen (2018), a moment of silence caused by the lack of visual access can be tricky in technology-mediated meetings, because the reason behind the silence can often be unclear to the participants and it may require additional linguistic work from a speaker to clarify the situation, such as in this example.

The rest of the conversation in this example, especially lines 11-15, are also interesting, as they demonstrate an element of technology-mediated interactions that does not exist in face-to-face interaction. In line 11, S2 asks the interns whether the work-related document has been updated. Right after, there are two chat notification sounds from the Google Meet -app that the participants are using as a conversation tool. In line 15, S1 (the other chair) joins the conversation by suddenly stating "Thank you". By only looking at the transcript, this turn by S1 looks a little odd in this context. However, the sounds indicate that at least two of the interns actually answered S2's question by typing the answers in the chat instead of speaking the answers aloud through their microphones. This demonstrates the usefulness of the chat element in a technology-mediated interaction - instead of multiple people answering S2's "yes" or "no" question in overlap through the microphone, it is much easier for the managers to see the interns' answers from the chat, which most likely does not lead to the use additional linguistic work, such as sorting out who answered and what.

Extract 16 here shows a somewhat similar instance as extract 15 above, demonstrating another 8.0-second silence due to the lack of interlocutors' mutual visual access while a speaker is proposing an idea with regard to another work-related material.

Extract 16

```
01  S12: I-I think it should be separate
02       like two columns only for that ehh
03       interviewed and thank you notes and like together
04       and published on the list
05       (8.0)
06  S13: eh can you edit it so we can see whachu mean maybe
07       (3.0)
08  S12: yeah sure
09  S1:  yeah thank you
```

At lines 01-04, S12 is talking about the details of a work-related material and proposes an idea of how the material should be edited. At the end of the utterance, there is an 8.0-second break before the speaker gets a response. The example, again, demonstrates the unpredictability of silences due to constraints in mutual visual access, because the silence here could have potentially been interpreted by S12 in the sense that the interlocutors do not agree with S12's proposals. The latter part of the transcript, however, shows that this is not the case. S13's response in line 06 indicates that the interlocutors did not quite understand what S12 was trying to propose, and thus, S13 asks the speaker to edit the material in order for the interlocutors to gain a visual access to what the speaker is talking about. This is another example that mirrors

BELF speakers' orientation to accuracy when work-related content is being discussed, which is considered integral for BELF competence, as mentioned earlier (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010).

4.2.1.2   Overcoming trouble in turn-taking

As explained for example by Oittinen (2020: 29), the adjacency pairs of speakers' turns are used in CA research to understand paired actions in the sequentiality of turns that are connected together by recognizable patterns and practices in human interaction. The first pair part initiates the nature of the practice, and the second pair part is expected to respond to the action initiated by the first pair part. However, as it is commonly known that interaction does not always go as planned, there were multiple instances where, for example, the second pair parts were not successfully produced due to interactional trouble in turn-taking within the meetings, for a number of different reasons. These instances drove BELF speakers to utilize a variety of verbal practices in order to achieve meeting progressivity, as shown in the example below.

Extract 17 demonstrates a part of an opening of a technology-mediated meeting, which is regarded as one of the specific meeting activities in technology-mediated meetings that are performed by drawing on various verbal resources, especially from the chairs, who are in charge of opening the meetings (e.g. Nielsen 2013; Oittinen and Piirainen-Marsh 2015, Oittinen 2020). In the example, the meeting opening is clearly not transitioning as planned, which pushes the chair (S1) to try several methods in order to overcome the situation.

Extract 17

```
01  S1:   so: it would be nice to start(.) doin that(.)
02        ehh maybe digital marketing or written content
03        or yeah please help us doin that
04        so that the the rest of th- of the team members
05        can know what happened this week
06        both positif and not so positif
07        an if we can help
08        (12.5)
09  S1:   so [yeah]
10  S4:      [umm I'm]
11        not sure if S5 is here yet (.)
12        umm she's our team leader
13        ((someone joining the meeting sound))
14        for this week (.) umm (.) but
15        ↑oh shes here now
16        so she might want to ehh take over
```

```
17        (9.0)
18  S1:   alright S5 umm or somebody else
19        would like to start maybe (h)
20        (1.5)
21  S1:   S5 if you have ↑any anything to shared with us
22        with the whole team about what happened
23        during this week in your team
24        it would be nice
25        so that all of us know what happens in (1.0)
26        what happened this week basically (.)
27        so (.) ↑please
28        (7.5)
29  S13:  ehh I can g- I can go first
30  S1:   yeah
```

There are major distractions in the progressivity of this meeting opening, such as visible trouble in the sequentiality of speakers' turns that lead to multiple awkward silences. Usually, any type of interactional trouble was relatively quickly solved in the meetings of this study, but this example demonstrates a rare instance where it takes an unusually lot of time and effort from multiple participants to overcome the situation. However, as stated by Nielsen (2013: 42), sometimes meeting openings are not successful at first attempt and need several attempts in order to be successfully accomplished, which is the case in this example. In other words, the speakers' BELF competences were really put to the test in this particular situation.

At lines 01-07, S1 is opening the meeting by giving the interns a warm-up task in which S1 is asking the teams to share the positives and negatives of what has happened in the past week with the rest of the participants. S1's turn can be regarded as the first pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair, however, instead of S1 receiving an answer, there is a 12.5-second awkward silence. Eventually, S4 breaks the silence by indirectly asking whether S5 is present in the meeting space. S4 does this, because S5 has the role of a team leader, who is mainly responsible for sharing the team's news in the meeting openings. Right after, in line 13, a sound of someone joining the meeting is detectable, and in line 15 it becomes clear from S4 initiation that the person joining was, in fact, S5. Therefore, in line 16, S4 politely gives the floor to S5. Yet, for some reason S5 does not take the turn, and this leads to another awkward silence that lasts approximately 9.0 seconds.

Between lines 18-27, S1 uses multiple strategies as an attempt to get the meeting opening back in control. On lines 18-19, S1 selects S5 as a recipient (see more in section 4.2.2.1), so in other words determines the next speaker, but also gives the opportunity for somebody else to take the next turn: "or somebody else". At the end of line 19, S1

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also laughs, which seems to function here as a form of humor to make the situation less awkward. At lines 21-26, S1 paraphrases the opening sequence from lines 01-07 as well as repeats the phrase "what happened this week" twice, which is the key message here. In line 27, S1 ends his turn with the phrase "so please", which could even indicate S1's frustration of the interactional trouble and functions as a polite way of encouraging the interns to start participating. However, even after all this linguistic work from S1, there is yet another awkward silence, lasting approximately 7.5 seconds. The silence is broken in line 29 by S13 taking the turn "I can go next". After this, the meeting ultimately begins properly after a long struggle.

4.2.1.3 Overcoming trouble in hearing

As mentioned earlier, interactional trouble can also occur due to technical disruptions within hearing, when the audio connection through the microphones between devices is weak or unclear. Hearing troubles are common in regular face-to-face interactions as well, and in some of the cases in this study, these had nothing to do with the technological side of the interaction, although it was interestingly always "blamed" on the technology. However, the participants in the meetings were located in various parts of the world, as it can commonly be the case in distant international business meetings. It is therefore evident that the audio connection was not always the best possible for all participants, for example because of the long distance, poor network connection and such. The participants also used different kinds of devices and microphones to participate in the meetings, so naturally other's audio connections were better than others. As shown in the example below, these situations were nevertheless easily dealt with through verbal efforts, and they therefore did not usually cause any major disturbance to the progressivity of the BELF meetings.

Extract 18 here shows a common situation where minor hearing trouble due to some overlapping and possibly a momentary poor audio connectivity causes a small distraction to the interaction. In the example, the chair (S1) is welcoming a new intern (S3) to the team and is expecting the intern to perform a self-introduction to the rest of the meeting participants.

Extract 18

```
01  S1:  today: umm
02       (2.0)
03  S1:  today we: a:re welcoming S3
04       eh S3 iz possible for you to
05       umm turn on your web [camera]
06  S3:                       [↑yeah] I did
```

```
07      (3.0)
08  S1: please (0.7) ((clears throat))
09  S3: can you hear me
10  S1: [yeah]
11  S2: [yes]
12  S1: hi
```

At lines 01-05, S1 is asking S3 to turn on the speaker's web camera in order for the rest of the participants to be able to see the speaker's face. It seems that S1 does not hear S3's response in line 06, where the speaker states that the camera is already on. S3's utterance ends up being partly in overlap with S1's previous utterance, which may be the source for the hearing trouble along with the possibility of poor audio connectivity in S1's end that cannot otherwise be detected from the transcript. Instances where interactional trouble, such as a silence or an unexpected response, was suspected to have been caused by trouble within hearing, BELF speakers often reacted to the situation by asking "can you hear me", as it is also manifested here by S3 in line 06. This way, the participants are immediately able to find out whether there is a technical problem in the audio connection to be fixed and thus prevent further disruption in the meeting progressivity. On the other hand, if they receive a positive response as S3 immediately receives in the example from S1 and S2 at lines 10 and 11, the situation is often effectively clarified from any misunderstandings. In fact, the phrase "can you hear me" or an equivalent is commonly used as a verbal strategy in technology-mediated meetings, for example by managers during the opening of a meeting in order to achieve participants' co-presence, as shown for example by Oittinen (2020: 69).

4.2.1.4   Overcoming disturbing background noise

In addition to the overall meeting space, participants are also involved in their local space as well as adjoining spaces during a technology-mediated meeting, as demonstrated in Figure 2 (Oittinen 2020: 23). In the meetings of this study, the speakers' local spaces caused some interactional trouble at times to the overall meeting space, mainly in the form of a disturbing background noise. Oftentimes these disturbing sounds were prevented by turning microphones off, because the speakers wanted to avoid any unnecessary disruption in the overall meeting space that would prevent getting the work effectively done, which is the BELF speakers' primary goal in the meetings.

This extract demonstrates an instance where suddenly in between a conversation a disturbing noise appears, and the microphone from where the noise is coming from is not turned off.

Extract 19

```
01  S4:  we  can constantly keep umm reviewing those
02       ((background noise))
03  S1:  ((clears throat))
04  S4:  theres lots to go over ehm
05       but we need like a fresh content as well
06       so yeah
07       ((background noise getting louder))
08       I'll be good
09       (5.0)
10       ((ambulance siren playing loud))
11       (7.0)
12       ((background noise fading))
13  S1:  alr↑ight (h)
14       thank you S4
15       there was ambulance passing by
```

In the example, S4 is giving one of the chairs (S1) a brief status update on a work-related task, during which there is a hearable background noise coming from the local space of one of the meeting's participants, whose microphone is on. The noise can be detected at first in line 02, at which point it is not yet too loud for S4 to stop the ongoing utterance, although its disturbing presence can be noted from S1's reaction on line 03. S4 continues with the turn until it is finished in line 08, all the while the background noise keeps getting louder. At this point, the noise is already extremely distracting, but the source of the noise is yet undetectable. In line 10, the background noise is at its loudest point, from where it can easily be confirmed that the noise is coming from an ambulance siren physically nearby one of the meeting's participants. There is approximately a 7.0-second break before S4 receives a response, simply because the background noise is too loud and disturbing for the interaction to proceed at this point. In line 12, the noise has gradually faded away, and it becomes clear from S1's response at line 15 that the noise had been coming from S1's microphone: "there was ambulance passing by".

As mentioned earlier, usually in these types of situations the participants, whose local spaces became a source for a disturbing noise to the overall meeting space, turned their microphones off in order to prevent any further interactional turbulence from taking place. Turning the microphones off in such cases can also be considered a polite act towards the interlocutors in terms of not exposing all participants to annoying and loud sounds, which can be considered as a form of BELF competence by paying

attention to the interlocutors. Although this example shows an instance where this, for some reason, does not occur, S1 does overcome the situation in a rather humoristic in line 13. The speaker begins the turn by saying "alright" and having a laugh, which in this case works well as an icebreaker after a small interactional trouble caused by S1's local space. S1 does also show politeness in line 14 by directly thanking S4 for the update.

4.2.2   Additional verbal strategies

4.2.2.1   Addressing a recipient

Oftentimes during the meetings, especially the chairs selected recipients as the next speakers by addressing them to take the next turn. According to Oittinen (2018), this type of strategy functions as a resource for ensuring progressivity of the meeting, and the motive for selecting someone as the next speaker is usually in achieving communication effectiveness rather than waiting for the selected speaker specifically to respond. In other words, it often did not matter if someone other than the selected speaker(s) took the next turn, as long as one of the meeting's participants did in order to get the meeting to move forward and thus get the work done.

As mentioned earlier, this strategy was mostly used by the two chairs, which is logical since they were mainly in charge of the progressivity of the meetings. On the one hand, addressing a recipient in technology-mediated meetings has the potential to effective outcomes, such as preventing silences. On the other hand, it can also become a trouble source for meeting progressivity and cause a silence instead of preventing one, when all participants silently wait for the selected speaker to take the turn, and for some reason (the reason cannot always be determined due to lack of visual access) it does not happen or it takes time for the selected speaker to begin the turn.

This extract demonstrates an instance where one of the chairs (S1) is trying to get a participant, who is a part of a support team, to tell a recently started intern what the team has been working on lately.

Extract 20

```
01  S1:   I don't know somebody: from the support team
02        would like to (0.7)
03        tell ( x ) what we have been doing (0.7)
04        maybe S9 or S10
05        (5.0)
06  S9:   Yeah sure (.) I can do that
```

In line 04, the chair addresses two recipients (S9 and S10) in this example to take the next turn in order to fill the new intern in. This is followed by a 5.0-second silence, which demonstrates the fact that addressing recipients as next speakers does not always function as effectively as it has the potential to. Perhaps, selecting only one speaker instead of addressing two speakers could have been more practical and the small break could have been avoided. On the other hand, addressing two recipients instead of one grows the chances of actually getting a response, if for example one of the two speakers had been unavailable to open their microphone, which was also sometimes the case in the meetings. However, in this particular case, the two recipients most likely politely waited a while to see if the other one takes the floor, but not too long for the silence to get awkward. Since S10 does not respond in the time frame, S9 breaks the silence in line 06 after 5.0 seconds by replying "yeah sure I can do that".

4.2.2.2 Verbal meeting opening techniques

As previously mentioned, meeting openings are seen as highly structured sequences in technology-mediated meetings that are accomplished through a variety of verbal techniques, where the chair(s) play an essentially important role (e.g. Nielsen 2013; Oittinen and Piirainen-Marsh 2015; Oittinen 2020). However, as stated by Nielsen (2013: 57), "it is only possible for the chair to succeed with an opening if the rest of the participants collaborate in letting it happen". In other words, the chair cannot succeed alone without participants' readiness to mutually orient to the meeting opening, as discovered earlier in example 17. The examples below, on the other hand, demonstrate how meeting openings were effectively conducted through a variety of verbal meeting opening techniques introduced by Nielsen (2013), which clearly illustrate BELF speakers ability of modifying their communicative repertoires to perform certain tasks and roles that they have in the meeting openings.

Extract 21 shows a meeting opening sequence that occurs at a rather fast pace and is successfully carried out in the first attempt. The opening follows several similar transition patterns and chair's meeting opening techniques as discovered in Nielsen's (2013) study, which function as effective verbal resources to prevent the kind of interactional trouble as discovered in extract 17.

Extract 21

```
01  S1:  alright e:n now
02       (4.0)
03  S1:  <lets see> hhh (.)
```

46

```
04        e:hm
05        S9 are you able to: (.)
06        to open your microphone (.)
07        iz it possible
08        (2.0)
09  S9:   ehh ye
```

In line 01, the chair (S1) begins the meeting with the particle "alright", which, according to Nielsen (2013: 43), is considered as a boundary marker that are used by chairs in meeting openings as a verbal strategy to direct the participants' attention from whatever preceding activity towards the beginning of the meeting. In other words, the chairs' use of particles such as "alright" or "right", "so" etc. give a clear sign to the participants that the meeting has begun. The boundary marker is followed approximately by a 4.0-second pause in line 02 and an expletive "e:hm" performed by S1 after the pause in line 04, which are also identified by Nielsen (2013: 56) as a common "stepping stone" produced by chair to signal that the floor is open for everyone. However, at this point, none of the participants usually take floor yet, as it also is the case in this example.

At lines 05-07, instead of using a preface, S1, on the contrary, selects the first speaker by addressing S9 and politely asks whether the speaker is able to open their microphone. According to Nielsen (2013), the chairs usually go either for a preface or they select a first speaker at this point of the meeting opening. The latter is in some cases arranged before the actual meeting between the first speaker and the chair, for example, if the speaker has been tasked to prepare and present something to the rest of the participants at the beginning of the meeting. S9's reaction in line 09 "ehh ye" and the 2.0-break beforehand, however, suggest that this comes as a surprise to S9 instead of it having been agreed upon in advance. Nevertheless, the meeting is successfully opened at a fast pace with S1's verbal efforts and S9's mutual orientation to meeting progressivity.

Extract 22 shows a visibly different meeting opening compared to extract 21 above, which, nevertheless, also displays identifiable patterns with regard to Nielsen's (2013) discoveries on meeting opening techniques and shows the chair's (S1) orientation to getting the meeting effectively started.

Extract 22

```
01  S2:   hello hello
02  S1:   good morn↑ing
03  S8:   morning e:veryone
```

```
04   S4:                        morn[↑ing]
05   several participants:      [morning] (0.7)
06   S3:  morning (4.5)
07   S1:  ↑alright so: umm (0.7)
08        okay eh first of all
09        I wish all of you eh all of us
10        a good start in the week (.)
11        thank you for joining us this morning
12        I am going to record todays meeting (h)
13        u:hm: today: u:h
14        today we are welcoming ( x )
```

At lines 01-06, the meeting begins with multiple friendly greetings from the two chairs and some of the participants, such as "hello", "good morning", "morning" etc., which is how the BELF meetings of this study usually began, unless one the chair's had a very crucial matter to discuss immediately in a fast and serious manner. The greetings can be considered an example of what Nielsen (2013: 56) refers to as verbalized displays of being ready to open the meeting. The greetings are followed by a 4.5-second silence, after which S1 uses the same boundary marker "alright" in line 07 as in the prior example, to signal the participants that the meeting has officially begun. At lines 08-10, S1 continues the turn with a start declaration "I wish all of you eh all of us a good start in the week", which is followed by a preface at lines 11-12, where S1 thanks the participants for joining the meeting and states that the speaker is going to record the meeting. S1's laugh at the end of line 12 is presumably S1's amused reaction to the fact that in every meeting the chair has the responsibility to declare that meeting will be recorded, although it is already obvious to the participants, as they are used to it being one of the practicalities within the meetings. At lines 13-14, S1 goes ahead with introducing the first topic of the meeting to the participants.

4.2.2.3   Nurturing workplace relations

Lastly, plenty of verbal practices involving supportive and polite talk were frequently performed by both the chairs' as well as the participants in the meetings. According to Stark (2009), the process of nurturing and shaping workplace relations as well as maintaining solidarity between team members within a workplace is considered to have major improving effects on achieving work-related goals. As mentioned earlier, solidarity and speaker's connectivity on a relational level have also been identified as central aspects within business professionals' BELF competence (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011). Moreover, putting additional linguistic effort in building and nurturing workplace relations becomes extremely important in a workplace such as the company that this study has been conducted in collaboration with, where the employees work distantly from each other,

without possibly ever meeting each other in person or having any sort of physical connection to one another.

Stark (2009) also emphasizes the powerfulness of humor in BELF meetings, as it is often positively associated with workplace relations. However, humor can also be tricky and cause negative outcomes in a BELF setting that involves multicultural individuals, because humor can be understood differently in different cultures - a joke that one participant finds hilarious may be experienced as offensive by another participant. Presumably for this reason, instances of humor were very minor in the interaction between the meeting participants, and for example darker forms of humor, such as irony, were not performed in the meetings at all. On the other hand, expressing solidarity and support as well as having a laugh every now and then were regularly performed practices and seemed to have visible impacts in terms of smoothening the work atmosphere in the meetings.

Extract 23 demonstrates an instance in the meeting where a good amount of relational practice is performed by several BELF speakers while they are having a discussion on work-related material. Relational practice is, for example, referred to as "collaborative and supportive talk that nurtures solidarity and improves productivity in the workplace" (Stark 2009: 153) and a form of BELF competence by "being able to connect on relational level" (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 403).

Extract 23

```
01  S1:   to hav mo:re information for the (…) list
02        [u:mm]
03  S4:   [that's great]
04  S1:   yeah (.) great
05  S4:   yeah
06  S1:   great [thank you S4 yeah]
07  S4:         [yeah I'll let S15] know
08  S1:   uhhuh (0.7) [alright]
09 S12:               [ehh]thats okey S4 because: ehh
10 S12:   I'm sending (.) S15 all the: (.) info on the teacher
11  S4:   o:kay thank you [yeah]
12  S1:                   [alright]
13 S12:                      [thanks]
14  S1:   tha:nk you S12 and S4
```

In the example, relational practice occurs in the form of several polite thank you's for one, as demonstrated at lines 06, 11, 13, and 14. Moreover, the words "yeah" and "great" are repeated multiple times in the conversation along with phrases such as
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"that's great" (line 03), "yeah great" (line 04), "great thank you yeah" (line 06). Oftentimes, the speaker that was performing relational practices was, in fact, one of the chairs (S1), which can also be noted from the example above, where half of S1's turns are marked in bold, meaning that they involve relational practice. According to Stark (2009), this can be regarded as strategic use of language in terms of creating solidarity and achieving work goals more effectively by balancing the power relations between the chair and the staff. In fact, S1's awareness of the potential of this "power relations balancing" strategy stood out in the meetings, because the speaker performed different forms of the strategy very regularly, and this was clearly not the style for the other chair (S2) to communicate with the interns as much as it was for S1. This kind of communicational style difference can also be potentially seen as an embodiment of cultural differences between the two speakers, because as mentioned earlier, BELF speakers occasionally bring out their own cultural backgrounds in terms of how they think certain interactions should be handled, although their actions are guided by the same organizational culture (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Oittinen 2020).

5   CONCLUSION

In the present study, I was aiming to identify different communication strategies (CSs) and verbal resources that BELF speakers draw on and discover their communicative functions in managing and enhancing technology-mediated workplace interactions. In order to examine the language use through which technology-mediated BELF interactions are handled, the study was conducted in collaboration with a multinational corporation, whose multicultural employees were located in various parts of the world. The participants worked distantly from their homes using advanced communication technology and BELF as a communication code to get the work done. The data of the present study was collected from naturally-occurring work-related conversations among the speakers who participated in the corporation's distant meetings. I approached the data with a CA based CSs framework to gain thorough understanding of how BELF professionals sequentially structure and organize their communicative repertoires in different real life company-internal interactions in a technology-mediated BELF setting.

The findings of this study were displayed with transcribed extracts from the data, which I manually selected for analysis in terms of their relevance and resourcefulness in distinguishing patterns of global business discourse in the form of BELF speakers' use of pragmatic CSs and verbal resources. In the analysis process of the different interactional practices picked out from the data, instead of concentrating on the amount of each of their appearances, I rather focused in a qualitative manner on their overall dynamics and impact on the meeting construction. I was then able to discover two separate categories for both CSs use as well as verbal resources in terms of their communicative functions and motives by taking into consideration the interactional circumstances that oriented speakers to take action in performing the strategies. The main difference between these categories was determined from whether the occurrences of the strategies were or were not preceded by interactional trouble.

To answer the first research question, whereby I looked into BELF speakers' use of pragmatic CSs practices, I detected two different forms of CSs use from the data, which I was able to categorize into corrective and explicitness strategies in accordance with previous CSs studies (e.g. Björkman 2014; Kaur 2011). Corrective strategies were performed by the speakers in situations that were preceded by hearable errors or mistakes in speakers' utterances. The errors were immediately self-repaired on the speakers' own initiative, after which the speakers normally continued with the rest of

their turns. The results demonstrate that speakers oriented to corrective strategies in order to resolve phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactic trouble, which allowed them to enhance the intelligibility of their talk and thus achieve mutual understanding. Explicitness strategies, on the contrary, were usually not preceded by any interactional trouble, as they were rather used in a pro-active manner to prevent possible trouble and to increase the clarity of content within speakers' utterances. The speakers modified their utterances by replacing vague lexical units with more specific ones as well as inserting qualifying lexical items to the utterances. Misunderstandings were also avoided by performing confirmation checks and paraphrasing previous utterances.

It could be said that the discovery of both corrective strategies and explicitness strategies was predictable in the sense that (B)ELF speakers have been seen to orient to both types of CSs in different spoken ELF settings in previous ELF studies (e.g. Björkman 2014; Kaur 2011), so it was anticipated that such practices would also be performed on a regular basis by the participants in this study. The speakers' use of corrective strategies in this study are much in line with Kaur's (2011) findings, but they do differ in the sense that the speakers' self-righting mechanisms were strongly connected to BELF competence and a client-centric organizational culture, as speakers mainly self-repaired when clients were discussed. With explicitness strategies, the fact that they occurred in situations that were not preceded by any real errors in speakers' talk made me question and investigate the reason for which they had nevertheless been performed. As mentioned earlier, BELF speakers' communicative repertoires are used in versatile ways to achieve work and communicative goals, of which the accuracy of work-related content is one of the most essential elements (e.g. Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Räisänen 2018). This was the most visible motive that drove speakers to perform explicitness strategies, because these instances were oftentimes preceded by speakers' use of vague and general terms when, for example, work-related materials were discussed (e.g. Extract 10), which the speakers' presumably saw as potentially problematic and pro-actively made sure that they did not lead to misunderstandings.

Continuing with the second research question, which concentrated on discovering verbal resources through which BELF speakers' managed technological aspects of the meeting interaction. Similarly to the CSs, I was able to categorize their occurrences into those that were used to overcome interactional trouble, and those that were used as additional verbal strategies to prevent trouble and enhance certain aspects of the technology-mediated BELF interaction. To begin with the first category, speakers oriented to the use of various verbal resources as a means for overcoming situations

caused by asymmetries in the meeting interaction, such as lack of mutual visual access, trouble in turn-taking and hearing, as well as disturbing background noise. As mentioned earlier, the asymmetries that caused these problematic situations are often only seen as constraints of technology-mediated interaction. However, in line with Oittinen's (2018) findings, the results showed that they also functioned as resources that drove speakers to intelligently utilize their BELF-competence in the form of verbal strategies to secure interactional efficiency in the meetings. In addition, the verbal strategies presented in the second category displayed BELF speakers' strategic use of their communicative repertoires in achieving work goals by ensuring meeting progressivity as well as nurturing workplace relationships through relational practice. The CSs and verbal resources reported in the present study are compiled in Table 2.

Reported communication strategies		*Reported verbal resources*	
Corrective strategies	**Explicitness strategies**	**Overcoming interactional trouble**	**Additional verbal strategies**
Phonological self-repair	Lexical replacement	Overcoming lack of mutual visual access	Addressing a recipient
Lexical self-repair	Qualifying lexical item(s)	Overcoming trouble in turn-taking	Verbal meeting opening techniques
Morphological self-repair	Confirmation check	Overcoming trouble in hearing	Nurturing workplace relationships
Syntactic self-repair	Paraphrasing	Overcoming disturbing background noise	

Table 2. CSs and verbal resources reported in the present study.

While looking at speakers' use of verbal resources and paying more attention to the technological aspects in the meetings within the latter section of my analysis, I noticed that the roles that speakers had in the technology-mediated BELF meetings (interns vs. chairs) made a difference in terms of which verbal resources were used by whom and when, although all participants showed BELF competence by sharing a mutual orientation to meeting progressivity. However, when it came to situations where the progressivity of a meeting was in trouble (e.g. Extract 17) or when a meeting opening was performed (e.g. Extract 22), especially the chairs' strategic use of language was central in gaining and maintaining control of the meeting interaction, even though its success naturally required collaborating actions from the interns as well. This mirrors the fact pointed out by (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010) that BELF speakers are capable of modifying their language use to suit the purpose within different work-related interactional situations, where the speakers have different roles

and tasks in order to get the work done, which is the ultimate purpose in BELF interactions.

This study has aimed to contribute to pragmatic BELF research by studying BELF speakers' language use in a technology-mediated business setting. I hope that the study offers practical information to companies that operate internationally and to BELF professionals who, perhaps, work distantly from their homes in a society shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. As modern communication technology is a part of the global business discourse communities today more than ever, perhaps the study has been able to provide an authentic example of how internal business encounters are handled distantly and how BELF speakers are able to achieve mutual goals through a wide range of verbal strategies in complex situations. The topic could be studied further by looking into BELF speakers' non-verbal and embodied practices in a video-mediated BELF interaction. It would be interesting to discover how the meeting dynamics change when the speakers are able to observe each other visually as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Transcription conventions

Symbol	Definition and use
`[yeah]` `[okay]`	Overlapping talk
`(.)`	Brief interval
`(1.4)`	Time (in seconds) between end of a word and beginning of next
`word` (underlined)	Underlining indicates emphasis
`wo:rd`	Colon indicates prolonged vowel or consonant
`( x )`	Unclear section or confidential item
`word-`	A dash indicates a cut-off
`<word>`	Left/right carats indicate decreased speaking rate
`°word°`	Degree sign indicate syllables or words distinctively quieter than surrounding speech by the same speaker
`↑word`	Rise in intonation
`↓word`	Drop in intonation
`(( ))`	Double parantheses contain analyst comments or descriptions
`(h)`	Indicates laughter
`hhh`	Indicates outbreath