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Negotiating the meaning: BELF Pragmatics

in Thai international corporations

by

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Modern Languages

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Napatkamol Kantabutra

This research aims to explore the use of English as a lingua franca in business context (BELF; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta, 2005) between Thai business professionals and their business partners from other countries in Asian region in particular. Based on the approximately 9.30 hours of international business meetings and the semi-structure interviews with 23 meeting participants in three different international corporations in Thailand, the study seeks to find out how the participants achieve the successful communication through the use of English as a lingua franca.

The findings reveal a range of interactive strategies that were skilfully employed by BELF participants in their collaborative negotiation of the meaning. In addition, what emerged from the analysis were distinct from the deficit portrait of English, namely a call for (native) English competence, which has been extensively promoted in Thailand over the half decade in the wake of the inauguration of ASEAN community. In other words, the successful international meetings were achieved by the collaboration of BELF participants through a number of different discourse features; where English was perceived and used not as a language that they spoke but rather as a resource, or nearly a tool for the international meetings.

Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, Napatkamol Kantabutra, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Title of thesis: Reaching business plans and deals through English as a lingua franca: a resource for Thai business professionals

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

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Definitions and Abbreviations

ELF   English as a lingua franca

BELF   Business English as a lingua franca

EFL   English as a foreign language

ENL   English as a native language

ESL   English as a second language

ESP   English for specific purposes

MNC   Multinational Corporation

ASEAN   Association of Southeast Asian nations

AEC   ASEAN Economic Community

Chapter 1: Introduction: Aims and research questions

In globalization we see parallels with the rapid growth of international trades and the dominant role of English as the language of global business. What is remarkable is that over the past decade, more and more multinational and international companies across the world have explicitly expressed their view about the merits of having English as a working language (see e.g. Fredriksson et al. 2007; Björkman and Piekkari 2009; Angouri and Miglbauer 2014; Piekkari et al. 2014) and many, in a more implicit manner, promoted English proficiency as a prerequisite skill in recruiting staff or as a key relevant factor in career advancement (see e.g. Cameron, 2002; Crystal, 2003; Andersen and Rasmussen 2004; Harzing and Feely 2004; Exec 2011; McCormick 2013; The English empire 2014; Jarvis 2015).

In Thailand, while English has been the longstanding subject of constant debate (e.g. The Federation of Thai Industries 2006; Hart-Rawung and Li 2008), its role has even strengthened in the past recent years in the wake of the presence of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) community (see e.g. Draper 2012; English teaching 2015; Last chance 2015; Fredrickson 2016). It is widely acknowledged that the free trade area agreement amongst the ten member countries is likely to carry significant challenges in various aspects which has worried the Thai government (Association 2009; Wongboonsin 2011; Deerajiviset 2015). One of the most widely discussed issues was that the free flow of workforce could mean potentially communication hurdles. Thai government and authority voiced concern at the prospect of Thai workers being replaced by those professionals from the regional peers who possess higher level of English skills, the worst case situation that might emerge in the aftermath of the reshaped economy (The report Thailand 2011; Marukarat 2012; Takahashi 2012). While English has been hailed in recent years as the driving force in the competitive international business, there is little evidence to suggest that Thai workers would experience difficulties or substantial change due to the limited or insufficiency of the (native) English competence. In other words, it is not clear how much influence English will be wielded in the actual situations.

Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that successful business communication is by no means entirely dependent on the English competence

(Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010), not to mention that these international activities and interactions, for the most part, occurred among the non-native speakers of English, or NNSs (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013). This has given initiative to scholars in business communication area who argue that the language used in the international business is not English of native speakers (NSs), but the 'business English as a lingua franca" (BELF; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta, 2005). BELF concept was inspired by research into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF; Jenkins 2000; Seidlhofer 2000) which unprecedentedly set on exploring the situation where English is used as a common resource among L2 speakers, a substantial shift from the predominant L1 settings in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as Second Language (ESL) or English as a Language Teaching (ELT) research. The term originally implied the situations where "speakers of two different languages opt for a third that is not a first language for either one of them" (Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009: 181) but it was later widely agreed among ELF researchers that native speakers of English should also be included in this circle of interaction (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011). The trend has shed new light, in relation to the widely held assumption of the demographic change in English users, i.e. NNSs far outnumber the native speakers (Crystal 1997; Graddol 1997, 2006), into the new emerging phenomenon where ELF users can be entitled to English users in their own right, rather than learners of or failed NSs (e.g. Seidlhofer 2005; Cogo and Dewey 2006; Jenkins 2007).

While ELF has been productively and firmly developed in Europe (e.g. Jenkins 2000, 2007, 2014, 2015; Seidlhofer 2000, 2004, 2008; 2010; Dewey 2007; Cogo 2009; House 2009; Klimpfinger 2009; Mauranen 2009; Pennycook 2009; Cook 2012; Pitzl 2012; Baird et al. 2014) and extended to Asia (e.g. Deterding and Kirkpatrick 2006; Kirkpatrick 2010a, 2010b; 2012; Deterding 2013; Chan 2014; Sung 2015), the research of BELF, on the other hand, seems to have its boundary restricted in European context (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Pitzl 2005; 2010; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2007; Wolfartsberger 2009; 2015; Ehrenreich 2009, 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010Cogo 2012; Pullin 2013; Hua 2014;) and leaves Asian setting a largely unexplored field.

In the light of all the above concerns, this study attempts to narrow theses gaps by building on the conceptualizations and descriptive findings from the empirical BELF research to explore the actual scenario of the international business interactions between Thai business professionals and their business

partners, or colleagues, from other countries in Asian region, with particular attention on how they achieve the successful communication through the use of English as a lingua franca. I have developed an idea that a detailed investigation into ELF in business context in Thailand would be beneficial for a better understanding and an important step for a new perspective regarding the use of BELF in the Asian region. Accordingly, this research will explore business meetings where English is used as a common language in three international companies located in Thailand as well as conducting semi-structure interviews with the meeting participants. The objective is to find out how the business people who come from different countries and a variety of cultures, in Asian region in particular, achieve their business goals in the international meetings through English. It also aims at exploring participants' perceptions towards the use of ELF in their professions and in terms of what makes their business meetings successful when they are dealing with people who do not speak Thai and come from different culture. The context is worthwhile to investigate in a sense that it took place in two types of settings which enables us to look at the situation through different lens. That is, on the one hand, most of the observed meetings occurred in the Thai offices where English was not commonly used as the internal business language. So basically, what happened was Thai business professionals who used spoken mother tongue in their daily operations exclusively switched to English to deal with the foreign partners. While in another situation was the internal meetings held in the Singaporean office where English was an official language. The Thai staff here were then likely to be more familiar with English language than those in the first scenario and should accordingly provide different perspective. The relevant facts that also need to be mentioned are the business culture, to the extent that Thai culture is dominant in the companies and international culture does not seem to exist within the corporations themselves but purely comes in the meeting. It is therefore interesting to investigate the interplay between individuals' cultural values and the use of BELF in this particular situation. The study consists of two research questions. The first question deals with the actual analysis of what happens in the meetings. It seeks to find out how the participants ensure successful meetings through a variety of pragmatic strategies and how do they deal with the resources that they have in their negotiation of the meeting.

Question 1:   How ELF participants work together through different pragmatic strategies to reach successful international business meetings?

(1a): What pragmatic strategies are used in the business meetings?

(1b): How do the participants organize the interaction in the business
      meetings?

The second question would deal with the participants' perspectives of what makes their business meetings successful and how they feel about their use of English as a tool for international communication. The question is primarily based on the semi-structure interviews as well as some insights emerging from the meetings.

Question 2: What from the participants' perspectives contribute to successful
            communication in international meeting?

(2A): What is participants' perspective on their use of English as a
      lingua franca in international communication?

I have gained the access to three different international companies in Thailand through the assistance of my two personal contacts. To seek the answers to the three research questions, a combination of four qualitative methods have been employed in the study: audio recording, observation, field notes and qualitative open-ended interview. I have attended 9 of various types of business meetings lasting approximately 9.30 hours to observe the naturally occurring interactions. Also, I have conducted the semi-structure interviews with 23 out of the meeting participants lasting altogether around 3 hours to explore their perceptions towards the use of ELF in business settings. The majority of the interviewees were Thais while the nationalities of the active meeting participants included Japanese, Singaporean, Taiwanese, Indonesian, Indian, British and Australian. The results of the study can shed new light on the positioning of the English as a lingua franca and the necessary competences in the international business communication, in the context of Thai companies in particular.

In Chapter 1, a review of the development and the role of English in the global business is provided, with special emphasis on the significant differences which existed within the deficit portrait of English in Thailand and the rising of English as lingua franca (ELF) paradigm. The last section of the chapter briefly sketches the ELF approach which then pave the way to the thorough discussion on BELF, or ELF in business context, in the next chapter.

So, in chapter 2 the key concepts of BELF along with the review of empirical research and theoretical approaches like the 'community of practice' and 'intercultural communication' are discussed in detail. Acknowledging these BELF

concepts and approaches has contributed to the very significant part on which the research is based, namely the pragmatic strategies.

Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of 'conversation analysis', including 'theories of understanding' and critically examines several interactional strategies which are mainly employed in international business communication. The chapter illustrates a number of instances of how the participants strategically draw on these resources to achieve intelligibility. This consequently serves the theoretical foundation for the analysis of successful communication in BELF interactions in this thesis.

Detailed description of the methodological aspects of the data collection is presented in Chapter 4, and then in Chapter 5, the two analytical frameworks: the negotiation of meaning and the turn-taking models, where the subsequent analysis buils on are presented. The general characteristics of the recorded data are then outlined preceding the analysis in Chapter 6 to provide the overall picture of the data to be analyzed. The analysis of the negotiation of the meaning in ELF business meetings revealed how the participants worked together through a range of pragmatic strategies to reach their business goals in the actual meetings. The results also feature the collaborative and competitive functions of the simultaneous speech as well as some aspects of code-switching. Then, Chapter 7 deals with the discussion on the analyzed data obtained from the actual interactions which enhanced by major findings from the interview data to build up the answers to the research questions which are presented in the last section. The whole idea of the study is summarized in the conclusion chapter which also includes the implications of the study, limitation and further study.

1.1   Globalization and the role of English

Globalization has influenced a change to the world in a multitude of ways, from culture, social relations, mass media, economy to politics, etc. (Robertson 1992; Waters 1995; Appadurai 1996; Scholte 2000). It can be thought of as a historical process involving the intensification of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life (Held et al. 1999: 2). This growingly interconnected global system has "greatly facilitated new forms and possibilities of virtual real-time worldwide organization and coordination, from the operations of multinational corporations to the worldwide mobilization" (Held and McGrew

2007: 3). Whilst the world has become so-called smaller, it also comes the increased complexity. Appadurai (2001) noted that globalization can be a source of anxiety in both outside and inside the academic world. In social and economic world, it creates worries over increased social inequality, job opportunities or the ability of nations to regulate the economic outlook of their populations due to the deregulation of the world markets (Appadurai 2001: 2-3).

For linguistic scientists, this phenomenon has raised important implications concerning the linguistic situation globally (Dewey 2007). The accelerating role of advanced technology has bolstered cross-border activities and put new demands on people and organizations (Dunning 2014).That is so say, to communicate at an international level, people either need to acquire enough knowledge about the other party's language or to meet on common ground, i.e. using a common language (Lønsmann 2011). Undisputedly, English has hitherto remained its position as the global lingua franca with no real competitor even the most plausible contender, Mandarin Chinese, is very unlikely to be an alternative (Knapp and Meierkord 2002; Mair 2003; Seidlhofer 2004; Gunnarsson 2006; Jenkins 2006; Louhiala-Salminen and Charles 2006; Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009). The question of Mandarin comes up quite often whether it could one day take over in the language choice as to the rise of China as a global economic power (Peikkari et al. 2014) and that there have been an estimated 30 million people worldwide learning Chinese as a second language (Erard 2006). Neeley (2012) however, argued that this will not happen very soon. English has some advantages that Mandarin does not, that is, a massive head start that has been embedded around the world through the political and imperialist expansion of British (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1998) and the economic leadership of the United States and the spread of its culture in the twentieth century (Crystal 2003; Graddol 2006). Mandarin Chinese is on the other hand much more difficult for people to master (to the point that even more than 400 million Chinese do not speak it) and least computer-friendly, making English a more favourable choice (Needley 2012). At the present, English is spoken by an estimated 1.75 billion people globally at a useful level (The English empire 2014), in which the biggest proportion are people in formerly colonized nations.

1.2   Spread of English in international business

In business today, globalization is witnessed on most occasions to be "the dominant force", (Needle 2010: 11) driving the rapid growth in international trade

and leading to the proliferation of multinational companies (MNCs) (p.17). A growing number of studies have emphasized the importance of language diversity, whether explicitly recognized or implicitly implied, in MNCs' internationalisation process (e.g. BarnerRasmussen and Björkman, 2005, 2007; Harzing and Feely, 2004; Welch et al., 2005). It is obvious that conducting business across foreign markets involves a range of activities that require a language component e.g. from establishing or acquiring new operations, introducing new products or services to transferring technology, systems and processes (Piekkari et al. 2014: 51). There is no question that English has gained its place as a global business language and has influenced the international firms' operational systems in various ways. Ample evidence suggest that English is now used both for external and internal communication alongside with other relevant local languages in numerous MNCs in continental Europe, e.g. the German multinational conglomerate Siemens; the Swiss multinational food and beverage Nestlé or the Finnish food giant Fazer Group (Fredriksson et al. 2007; Björkman and Piekkari 2009; Piekkari et al. 2014).

Björkman and Piekkari (2009) investigated the impact of the varying levels of the shared language competence (notably in English) in foreign subsidiaries on the specific control mechanisms carried out by the headquarters in a sample of 119 Western-owned subsidiaries in Finland and China. Their findings highlighted that subsidiaries with low common language competence were controlled to greater extent by formal mechanisms, i.e. centralization—the location of decision-making (Child 1972), and formalization—impersonal formal rules, policies and procedures (Child 1973) than units with high language competence. As Ferner (2000) explained, the management procedures are not imposed through the unilateral order of the headquarters but rather involve consultation and personal interaction with subsidiaries. English language competence thus comes into play for subsidiary managers or staff to make proposals, negotiate or bargain with the headquarters regarding companies' policies or strategies (Ferner 2000; Luo and Shenkar 2006).

The assumption is often that English language competence marks a key competitive advantage for workers, corporations or even the entire economic systems (Cameron, 2002; Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). McCormick (2013) even argued that on a macro level, there is a strong correlation between English proficiency and a country's gross national income while on a micro level, the improved English skills means the improved job opportunities and standards of

living for individuals. *Audi*, a German carmaker, for example admits that the progress in its management ranks is unachievable without good English (The English empire 2014). Also, the low English competence reportedly barred staff from participating training programs or gave the senior management team difficulties in receiving executive development courses that are often offered in English (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999a; Andersen and Rasmussen 2004). As a consequent, these employees presumably had fewer opportunities to learn new insights or shared practices, or to network with colleagues than those who had higher English competence (Barner-Rasmussen 2003; Harzing and Feely 2004). For example, one manager in a French MNC who perceived himself as a low-fluency English speaker has described his job insecurity:

> It's embarrassing when [Frenchco] says, "We want to go international." … I'm out of the game because I don't have the language skills … There will be more reorganizations, and all the international jobs are going to be given to people … who can show that they can master both English and French, and I don't have these skills. (Neeley 2013: 488)

For internationalizing firms, communication and information flows are the key element to ensure the overall control and coordination of their global operations (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999a). While this is not a simple task as being exposed to multiple language environments can lead to communication challenges, using a common corporate language has then become a methodology of choice for many MNCs (Piekkari et al 2014).

1.2.1   English as a corporate language

The dominant position of English has been further strengthened by an increasing number of global corporations using English as their working language throughout the past decades (Feely & Harzing 2003; Tietze 2004; Bono & Vey, 2005; Needle 2010; Neeley 2012). There are many obvious reasons which accelerate the multinational companies' move for a common language or a lingua franca. A language strategy, as Neeley (2012) suggested, is almost imperative for companies that have any types of global aspiration. When a company is expanding beyond the domestic scale, they will confront with the multilingual reality—the need to deal with people from different linguistic backgrounds (Piekkari et al 2014). At this point, a common language could become a key in facilitating communication and enhancing the company's performance across geography and national boundary (Neeley 2012). Because doing business is

associated with social exchange, The Economist (2012a) has estimated that there could be up to 42 percent growth in trade between the two countries that share a common language.

The lingua franca mandate aims at consolidating the workforce who speak different languages to ensure a mutually accessible language (Crystal 2003). For example, a French high-tech MNC explains that the English language stipulation facilitates them in organizing dispersed employees to work more closely and in keeping up with their customers, partners, suppliers and competitors: "*our business was growing internationally very fast, and we needed to operate in the same language everywhere; we are not a French company— we are an international company*", said the company's executive (Neeley 2013: 480). Neeley also pointed that staff can access to more firsthand information through a better language comprehension, which is beneficial to good decision making.

In the meantime, while language strategy appears to be less significant for a company which focuses domestically solely, Neeley (2012) argued that customers are now spreading around the world. To level up the growth opportunities and to remain in business in an increasingly competitive world economy, she advised that attention should be paid to more diverse range of customers, suppliers including business partners. To provide a simple picture, Neeley recalled her own experience at a French company she worked with, where its targets are domestic customers and therefore commonly conducts a meeting in French. However, there was a case in which the potential customer brought in employees who did not speak French and what happened was the two companies could not close a deal due to a communication problem. As a result of the incident, the company later decided to adopt an English corporate language strategy. In this respect, she added that to survive and thrive in a global marketplace, it is necessary that companies overcome language barriers—and English always serves, at least for now, the common ground (Neeley 2012).

1.2.2   English for international business in Asian countries

In previous sections, the spread of English in global contexts as well as its dominant role as the main working language in a number of MNCs have been briefly discussed to provide the background of the study. In this chapter, I will review the use of English, particularly for business purposes, in an Asian context before directing attention specifically to Thailand, where my study is situated.

The role of English in Asia is quite distinct, according to the colonisation history of each country (Kirkpatrick 2007). In the ex-colony countries, English serves an official language or a second first language and has developed into varieties of English, such as in Singapore, the Philippines, and India (Foley 2006; Kachru and Nelson 2006). On the other hand, in countries that were not colonised it functions as a language of trade and tourism, such as in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam (Kirkpatrick 2007; McArthur 2003). The evolution of English has driven fundamental changes in education across Asia and the ASEAN countries in particular. It is a core subject from primary school onwards and is used as a medium of instruction in many schools (Kirkpatrick 2010). It continues to proliferate due to the rapid growth of bilingual and international schools in Asia.

In Singapore, for example, although the population is small, the country is the pioneer of the English-only-approach trend where English is commonly used in meetings and official documents (The English Empire 2014). Alsagoff (2010) argued that globalisation has played a key role in the Singaporean macro-discourses in which the government continually pushes Singaporeans to transform themselves into global citizens in order to be competitive in an increasingly internationalised economy and market. Bearing this globalised perspective in mind, importance has been placed on promoting proficiency in English – an instrument which leads Singapore to participate in global financial and economic markets (Wee 2003) and a global ticket to economic success (Chew 1995; 2006). English has been retained as Singapore's lingua franca since it left the British Empire in 1963 (The English Empire 2014) and is now the country's working language. However, it is reportedly characterised in rather utilitarian and pragmatic terms, i.e. as the "workhorse of economic capital" (Alsagoff 2010: 341). It is indeed the ethnic mother tongues, namely, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil as well as its own brand of English, Singlish (Katz 2006) that the Prime Minister of Singapore indicates are crucial parts of the country's values, roots, and identity, as well as providing access to their cultural heritage (Lee 2000). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the degree of proficiency in English is associated with job opportunities in almost all private and public sectors of business and commerce (Alsagoff 2010: 345). Thus, "speakers of 'good', 'standard' or 'proper' English are more likely to have come from more affluent homes, have better educational qualifications, and have access to better jobs" (Lim et al. 2010: 5). In this light, many scholars have called for a reconceptualisation that Singlish should be seen as a range of lingua-cultural resources that speakers rely on to appropriate English for particular purposes (Alsagoff 2010; Lim et al. 2010).

In China alone, the number of people learning English is now surpassing total native English speakers on the planet. This desire to learn English to ramp up employment opportunities has come in parallel with subjects the Chinese traditionally valued such as computer science and engineering (Jarvis 2015). Many Chinese executives might have strong academic backgrounds in computer science or engineering, but the English language seems to be major hurdle for them (Chen 2015; Dou and Xin 2015). Although only a few Chinese corporations are now adopting the English-as-corporate-language policy, due to the country's huge internal market, overseas expansion and the need to engage with global customers inevitably forces many Chinese senior executives to brush up, or even begin, English lessons in their middle or later years (Abkowitz 2014). The mastery of English language has recently sprung to the forefront for Chinese business elites, the CEOs in particular, who want to attract greater recognition and exposure in the international media (Chen 2015; Jarvis 2015). For example, Jack Ma, the founder and chairman of Alibaba, one of the world's largest tech companies, has impressively caught media attention and brought the company into the global spotlight using his charisma, strong bilingual skills, and business vision, despite the absence of technology in his background (Tran 2015; Clark 2016).

In contrast, the founder and CEO of Chinese smartphone giant Xiaomi sparked media interest with his so-called 'Chinglish' or media-nominated 'Awkward English' when he took the stage for the first international product launch held in India (Li 2015; Sciota 2015). While his heavily accented English and mistake-riddled sentences seemed to cause mocking laughter in China, he was clearly appreciated by the Indian audience for his earnest effort to speak in the language of global business (Jarvis 2015). Cluster (2015) has critically argued that the action deserves praise not criticism, in a sense that it showed his dedication and also courage to try to communicate directly with the audience in their language, in which he clearly succeeded. This is similar to the reaction Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook founder, received for his public Chinese-language forum in which some (mostly foreign) observers criticised his Chinese as 'terrible' (Stonefish 2014), whereas the Chinese crowd erupted in cheers and applauded supportively for his effort to impress them.

The dominant role of English has also invaded difficult territories, such as Japan, a country with strong monolingualism (Kobayashi 2013), as seen from an increasing number of Japanese companies adopting English as their working

language. Recently, Honda Motor has disclosed its plan to set English as its official work language by 2020 as part of efforts to attune to the increasingly globalised auto industry (Honda 2015). In this, it joins some other large Japanese corporations such as Nissan, a car maker, Bridgestone, a tyre maker, Rakuten, the nation's biggest online shopping site, and Uniqlo, a fashion retailer (Rakuten's 2012; Honda makes English official 2015). For these companies, English is apparently the language of globalisation and an indispensable component to boost their competitiveness in the global market (Takahashi 2010). Rakuten even coined the term 'Englishnisation' aimed at smoothing its international operation and encouraging employees to think within an international framework (Rakuten's 2012). They have also invested in English lessons to push this policy; for example, to motivate their engineers to learn the latest technology from English-written manuscripts rather than depending on book translations which could take over a year to publish (Al-Jamie 2012). Uniqlo's president, Tadashi Yanai, as even more blunt about the company's English policy in which he pointed out that, "If people cannot speak English in business in the future, it will be tantamount to not having a driver's license even though they have to drive" (Exec 2011). He further argued that although Japanese will remain the standard language for the company's thinking and culture, graduates who excel in all subjects except English are no longer embraced (Exec 2011). Rakuten likewise mandates its employees to demonstrate competence on an international English scoring system otherwise they might jeopardise promotion or even be dismissed (Needley 2012).

While the English-only approach brings a range of benefits, the public and scholars have cast doubt on the negative consequences it might carry. Debaters contend that the criteria for hiring and promotion should not include one's certifiable knowledge of English, judging from a number of studies showing that linguistic proficiency and professional proficiency are not necessarily related (Adopting English 2011; learn English or be left behind 2012). Academia, in the meantime, is concerned that the approach would undermine the confidence of workers whose English is not as good as others and have a negative impact on team dynamics and overall performance (Takahashi 2010; Needley 2012). For example, Piekkari et al. (2014) pointed that "those without a sufficient level of fluency in the common corporate language may be excluded from ready access to necessary information and can easily feel disconnected from the global family" (p. 54). Scepticism was also documented in Neeley's (2013) study of a French company which examined whether one's real value will be overshadowed by one's

value as an English speaker. What is worse, some native speakers of English have reportedly taken an automatic advantage from their English and mistakenly assumed that their fluency in meetings awarded them the actual accomplishments (The English Empire 2014). Criticism also emerges within the corporate world. For example, a former Microsoft Japan president argued that the proportion of Japanese who really need English is only about 10% and that the English policy of Rakuten and Uniqlo is making no sense (Adopting English 2011). Similarly, the former CEO of Honda strongly disagreed with the company's new policy (Lah 2010), asserting that to be competitive in the global market really means to be strategically flexible in all areas, including language use (English at work in Japan 2010).

This section has outlined some of the debates around the escalating use of English in the Asian business community, with an emphasis on Singapore. This is one of the research settings, together with Thailand and Japan, from where the majority of foreign participants come. In the following section, I will review the development of English in Thailand to illustrate the context in which the theme of this study is situated. Then, I will explore how English has been discussed recently in the country and how it has become the topic of nationwide debate in the wake of the inauguration of the ASEAN economic community, which will accordingly link with the phenomenon of the conceptualisation of English as a lingua franca in the last section of the chapter.

1.3   English in Thailand

Whilst English permeated countries in the south-east Asia region through colonisation, it was introduced in Thailand due to people's awareness of the importance of modernisation and, as Kirkpatrick (2010) said, a drive to thrive in the global and regional competition. This uncolonised history thereby makes Thailand a unique context and a worthwhile field of study.

Over a number of years, Thailand has been making an attempt to raise Thai people's awareness of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community, which generates free trade area agreements (see Wongboonsin 2011; Deerajiviset 2015). Unequivocally, English has long played a significant role as a lingua franca in the Asian region and was also set as an official language for ASEAN and ASEAN +3 (Kirkpatrick 2010; Baker 2012). English has then been an

issue of interest and concern from which the Thai government and authorities have placed a strong emphasis on reforming the education system and language policy aiming to improve the level of English skills in the Thai workforce (see e.g. The Report Thailand 2011; Marukarat 2012; Takahashi 2012; Deerajiviset 2015).

The existence of ASEAN emphasises a call to reconceptualise the intrinsic role of English. It represents a tool for mutual communication for people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making the ENL norms an impropriety in the context where people are seen to accommodate each other to achieve the purpose of their communication. In other words, it would be better justified if ELT in Thailand be developed in directions that are relevant to the users' needs and their communicative situations (Baker 2012).

In fact, the use of English in Thailand's business and industry is not a new phenomenon for Thai people (see e.g. Foley 2005; Chakorn 2006, 2009; Baker 2008). Since 1960, Thailand has undertaken substantial changes in its economic structure from being an agricultural economy to manufacturing, trade, and the service industry, which has led to the country's continuous economic growth rate (Sheehan 1996). The boom appeared to reach a peak during the 1990s, empowering the country to catch up with the Asian Tiger economies such as Japan and South Korea, and to attract many foreign investors to acquire a firm footing in the country (Boode 2005). The amount of foreign trade and investment accelerated steadily as companies are welcomed by the Thai Government and are viewed as a means to promote the country's economic development and employment (Boode 2005; Rappa and An 2006). With solid support from the Government, i.e. a range of tax incentives, services, and import duty concessions, coupled with other advantages like cost saving, a number of multinational and international corporations and joint ventures became fruitful in Thailand (Rappa and An 2006; Chalapati 2007). This foreign trade and investments have encouraged the use of English in the workplace in Thailand, as witnessed from the increasing use of English nowadays in business correspondence in many Thailand-based offices, both local and international (Chakorn 2009). On the conceptual level, English was indeed recognised as a vital feature in Thailand's economy a century ago (Draper 2012). In the past, King Mongkut (1851–1865) appreciated the usefulness and value of the English language as a key to international connection with foreign powers and to promote the country as a civilised nation equal to the West (Rappa and An 2006). The result came to be

pivotal decades in which there were more effective communications on business and diplomatic matters with the West (Wyatt 1994).

Stimulated by the global business environment in this late modern society, Thai candidates with fluent knowledge of English seem to be more favoured and stand greater prospect of securing a job over those with limited English skills (Draper 2012; Fredrickson 2016). The ideology has also been reflected by the Royal Thai government which has designated six targeted industries to improve their personnel's competence in English language, as one of the main strategies to compete on the international stage (The Federation of Thai Industries 2006). Hart-Rawung and Li (2008), for example, noted that adequate English language competence is found to be "a global passport" and "a source of power to function competitively in international business" for the engineers in Thailand's car manufacturing industry (p.272). In this context, English is reported to be one of the top three priority qualifications in the recruitment process of the company. As the company has also invested in various countries, English plays a crucial role as a means of communication with multinational engineering teams and it is furthermore fostering the Thai staff's professional advancement, i.e. in learning and acquiring new knowledge such as new technology in production processes (p.275).

This finding is documented in several of similar cases. Boode (2005,) for example, observed that:

> If they would not speak up, or participate actively in the communication process in both formal and informal settings, this would have negative consequences for the locals as it made them invisible and susceptible to be undervalued in terms of their working capabilities. Language skills thus have a strong impact on the careers of the local workforce at BICHEM and create a barrier in reaching managerial positions. (Boode 2005: 14-15)

Nevertheless, whilst the use of English is increasingly more prevalent in government, commerce, and business circles in Thailand nowadays, it still appears to be at odds with the majority of Thais and "is frequently seen as peripherally relevant to Thailand" (Draper 2012: 11). It is important to note that the linguistic history of Thailand is unlike other neighbouring countries in south-east Asia, which could be described as using a 'nativised variety' of English through colonisation, particularly in the Philippines and Singapore where English is used as an official language (Kachru and Nelson 2006; Rappa and An 2006). In contrast, the independence from colonial powers tacitly made Thailand a distinct

unified country with its own linguistic homogeneity, i.e. the dominance of the Thai language (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Draper 2012).

In recent decades, English has been a matter under nationwide debate in which a substantial number of comments and concerns covered in the printed media and on the internet over Thai people's poor competence in English have been pouring in constantly. Criticism is often tied in with Thais' relatively low scores in internationally recognised proficiency tests. For example, a poll by the group Education First (EF) reveals that Thailand ranks at number 62 out of the 70 countries participating in the English test (Last chance 2015), and meanwhile half of all English teachers in the country scored under 50 percent in the national English-language test in 2007 (English teaching 2015). Often, the Thai education system is condemned for the country's very low proficiency in English. Typical comments, which are widely circulated by mass media, are that students learn by rote and teachers keep the focus on grammar rules rather than conversational skills (see e.g. Last chance 2015). This long-standing concern about English is especially worrisome when the ASEAN community (AC) is concerned.

1.3.1   ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

The ASEAN Economic Community envisages the promotion of greater social cohesion among ASEAN peoples (Association 2009). It is believed the economic integration project will result in the revitalisation of ASEAN countries' economies and a reduction in the loss of economic advantages to the major competitors like China and India (Hew 2008). According to Bhasin (2011), the amalgamation of the ten member countries of ASEAN into one grouping will collectively enhance a market in excess of 580 million people (p. 5). An attempt to create a single market and production base would clearly boost the free flow of goods, services, investments, capital, and skilled labour (Association 2009; Wongboonsin 2011; Deerajiviset 2015). English has thus been referred to as a critical part of AC to the extent that, as specified in the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Blueprint, it will be promoted as "an international business language at the work place", and that the citizens of member states will be endorsed "to become proficient in the English language so that they are able to communicate directly with one another and participate in the broader international community" (ASEAN Secretariat 2009: 3).

The ASEAN free trade area agreement has prompted fears that Thai workers could be replaced in the wake of the freedom of movement of skilled labour, especially

those who possess a higher level of English skills (Fredrickson 2016). There has been large-scale public scepticism about the Thais' performance in this upcoming event reflected through numerous governmental documents, media coverage, and discourses in journalism. The worry that a lack of competence in English would pose a hindrance and make Thailand less competitive in the global marketplace, particularly against the other regional peers has spiralled. Last Chance (2015) claimed that AEC will become involved in every facet of daily life and lead the country into a new era in its history, and that inadequate English proficiency "is holding the country back in many ways". Similarly, Asefeso (2012) commented that Thailand's English language readiness still trails regional competitors such as Malaysia, Singapore, or the Philippines. For example, there is usually a claim about English as one of major skills shortages of Thai workers, especially the lower-tier labour force, who are deemed to fall far short of expectations to some investors (Wongboonsin 2011; Marukarat 2012; Deerajiviset 2015). A similar argument has been made by Andrews and Siengthai (2009) who pointed out that Thai businesses are placed at a disadvantage, for instance, when starting subsidiaries in overseas markets, or when workers miss the opportunity to receive further training during employment due to their limited language competence, where a good command of English is required as a matter of course.

It is notable, as Kirkpatrick (2010) pointed out, that "this lingua franca role of English, coupled with its official language of ASEAN position has important implications for language policy and language education" (p. xi). Therefore, in an attempt to boost Thai workers' competitiveness, the government and the authorities have placed a strong emphasis on improving the education system and the language policy, in particular. Many supported programmes have been launched in recent years; for example, 'The English Speaking year 2012' which aimed to encourage schools and universities to provide academic activities that involved communication in English as much as possible; or a plan to increase the number of native English-speaking teachers by the then education minister:

> As we move towards greater ASEAN integration by 2015, we must focus on upgrading on foreign-language proficiencies, especially in English. We will be inviting more native English speakers to teach our students and raise standards. (The Report Thailand 2011: 211)

Similarly, the president of the top Thai university suggested that:

The competence that is always identified as the highest priority is communication—the ability to read, write, listen and speak fluently and effectively in different situations. Proficiency in both Thai and English must be required for all Thai graduates. Good command of at least one other foreign language, especially an ASEAN language, will be an advantage university for graduates. (The Report Thailand 2011: 212)

The above discussion has shown that the concern of country being less competitive in the international stage has been attributed to the citizen's incompetence in English language. In the meantime, the direction to prevent and resolve the problem seems to strongly base on the English as a native language (ENL) oriented policy regardless of the widely acknowledged status of English as a lingua franca in the global communication and specifically for the AEC itself. Section 1.4 presents the definition and the theoretical concepts of English as a lingua franca (ELF) from its empirical studies.

1.4   English as a lingua franca (ELF)

As previously discussed, English is undoubtedly served as a global lingua franca in international business encounters. Nonetheless, 'it has not yet rendered the world of international business monolingual' as language diversity still remains an important issue (Piekkari et al. 2014: 5). Indeed, the use of English within modern globally operating companies reflects its role as a 'contact language' between people from different first-language background (Seidlhofer 2005: 339) or a 'transit language' amongst other parallel local languages (Sørensen 2005). In this regard, it is worthwhile to note that interactions taking place in multinational settings are often between non-native speakers of English (Barner-Rasmussen 2003; Nickerson 2005). That is to say their use of English have established an important implication and robust stream of research for applied linguistics called English as a Lingua franca (Piekkari et al. 2014).

The status of English as a Lingua Franca, usually abbreviated 'ELF', has become more widely recognized and established during the past recent years. As witness more scholars from different fields of studies including linguistic, sociolinguistic, intercultural communication or intercultural business communication have provided a wide range of perspectives from diverse settings into it (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011; Jenkins 2015). It is particularly noticed

from the publishing of its own Journal of English as a Lingua Franca (JELF), the first journal devoted to the research in ELF particularly, the Development in English as a Lingua Franca (DELF), the first book series on ELF and a dedicated ELF conference series since 2008 (Archibald, Cogo and Jenkins 2011; Deterding 2013).

ELF is a more recent way of conceptualizing the global use of English and while ELF studies consider variability, it is in a sense of 'the variable use of English as inter-community communication, as communication across communities' (Widdowson 2015: 362). As such, ELF is not perceived as a variety of English nor does it exist as a 'thing' or 'system' out there (Firth 2009: 163). Rather, it is a sociolinguistic function, social practice or a set of linguistic resources used as a tool between speakers of different mother tongues to achieve different communicative purposes and contexts. In this respect, Deterding (2013) argues that the concept of ELF should not be represented as an impoverished code and a last-resort means of communication among individuals who do no share a common native language as it is in fact 'characterized by highly resourceful patterns of interaction' (p.5).

ELF studies provided empirical evidence that native speaker conformity is clearly not the key to the communicative success in ELF settings because it is not the same as native English. The idea of non-native speakers being equivalent to learners of English who have native speaker as their role model is not supported by ELF researchers. Jenkins (2011) strongly argues that ELF is not 'a deficient and failed attempt at native English', instead it is a way of users 'making full use of their multilingual resources to create their own preferred forms' (p. 283-284) which makes ELF fluid, hybrid, flexible and contingent in its nature (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). Widdowson (2015) has made a critical argument that non-conformity is in fact a source of effective communication in which it allows users to fully exploit their linguistic resources in creative ways to serve with multiple contexts of use. In this respect, native speakers' sense of owners of English only "arrests its development and so undermines its international status" (Widdowson 1994: 385). Generally speaking, the reconceptualization of English as a global lingua franca has made ELF independent of traditional rules and norms established by NSs and empowered the users to develop, adapt or change the language to meet with their purposes (Seidlhofer 2011). As she puts, ELF is guided by different needs and wants, e.g. in business settings, the main objective is to achieve a communicative goal, i.e. the task at hand. In such situations, ENL

conformity might be 'interactionally counter-productive', or even absurd when no ENL may even be present, for example, making a bid to use 'highly idiomatic language full of ENL cultural allusions' is likely to be perceived as a failure to adapt to the ELF situation (Seidlhofer 2011: 17-18).

In ELF interactions, there appear to be widespread agreement that intelligibility is of paramount importance in which speakers seek ways to communicate successfully and prioritize their attention toward 'getting the message across' rather than on trying to comply with traditional notions of 'standard English grammar' (Cogo and Dewey 2012) or the norms of other variety of English (Widdowson 2015). The concept is in lines with Hymes (1971) who contends that the mastering in grammar and syntax is not adequate for meaningful interaction, which is culturally embedded and therefore highly context-specific. In this sense, as he goes on, accomplished speakers refers to those who possess the communicative competence, that is, the knowledge and ability to use language culturally appropriate to the particular context.

Munro et al. (2006) has made a useful insight showing that having reasonable knowledge in a variety of English does not always promote the intelligibility. Holding the notion that misunderstandings occur more frequently in ELF interactions is simple a vague assumption. In reality Mauranen (2006) argues that ELF speakers are likely to be adept in handling with and avoiding misunderstandings which usually results in a successful communication. This might be attributed to the fact that ELF interactions are not shaped by the norms of standard English but observed to be goal-oriented. So, to accomplish the communicative goals, ELF users are seen to be remarkably collaborative and accommodative in their interactions (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). For instance, House's (2003) study finds fewer cases of misunderstandings in ELF settings comparing to the interactions of the native and non-native speakers, or among native speakers themselves as noted in Shaw et al.'s (2009) study where different pronunciations between Americans and Australians can lead to understanding problems. Indeed, what is clear from the ELF empirical works in various aspects and contexts is that accommodation skill, the ability to adapt one's speech patterns to the needs of the interlocutors, e.g. to modify the pronunciation, speaking rate or using frequent pauses to make them more intelligible (Giles et al., 1991), is hailed as the significant successful ELF characteristic.

By looking back at early ELF studies, they focus heavily on identify forms, linguistic features and characteristics of ELF discourse (e.g. Hollander 2002; Meierkord and Knapp 2002; Breiteneder 2005; Jenkins 2002, 2005; Deterding and Kirkpatrick 2006; Ranta 2006; Dewey 2007, 2007b, 2009; Hülmbauer 2007; Rajadurai 2007) in relevant to the three predominant pronunciation and lexicogrammar corpora, i.e. a Lingua Franca Core or LFC (Jenkins, 2000), Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English or VOICE (Seidhofer, 2001) and Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings or ELFA (Mauranen, 2003). However the emphasis of a wealth number of recent and current ELF research have been more concerned with the communicative processes (e.g. Pitzl 2005, 2010; Mauranen 2006, 2009, 2010; Klimpfinger 2007; Kaur 2009; Seidlhofer 2009; Pickering 2009; Cogo, 2009, 2010; Ehrenreich 2009, 2010; Björkman 2009, 2011; House 2009, 2013; Baumgarten and House 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Pullin 2010, 2013;) in which Seidlhofer (2009a) claims as a more vital aspect to be investigated rather than trying to identify the individual linguistic features. In this respect, pragmatics strategies (which is also the main focus of this study) have been under spotlight to provide insightful data in terms of what seem to be necessary and enhancing the international intelligibility. It sheds light on the communicative practices and characteristics which lead to the successful ELF communication; as well as identifying what seem to be the cause of the misunderstandings and how ELF users manage to adopt those features and skills to communicate successfully in ELF settings. For example Deterding (2013) observes how the misunderstandings in ELF spoken interactions, in South East Asia context in particular, are dealt with in order to maintain the flow and smoothness of the conversations. The salient strategies that are adopted by the users include 'backchannels', 'asking for clarification', 'let it pass', 'repairs', or 'code-switching' which help them to continue with the communication with no apparent problem. Such above strategies are some of the very common pragmatic strategies in ELF discourse which will be discussed in detail in the chapter 3.

Alongside with the recent growth in the area of pragmatic skills, an increasing amount of ELF research has explored in the cultural and intercultural communication dimensions. As discussed, ELF involves diversity in multiple aspects e.g. linguistic, nationality, identity or culture. It, of course subsequently requires speakers to develop the understanding and awareness of cultural differences. Ehrenreich (2012) agrees that ELF is not only governed exclusively by the shared goal of ensuring mutual intelligibility, but it is also relevant to other social and contextual factors. For this reason, Baker (2011) proposes that the

relationship between language and culture in ELF setting should be conceptualized as "fluid, emergent and liminal with no a priori specified target community" (p.212). In this sense, he underlines the importance of intercultural awareness, which is the ability to apply those conceptions in such diverse situations, as a crucial part for the successful communication in ELF setting. The detailed discussion will be presented in the next chapter under the section of intercultural communication.

1.4.1 ELF in Thailand

Referring to Kachu's circle, the use of English in Thailand, which is categorised as in the Expanding Circle, is defined as a foreign language and is perceived as norm-dependent where the development of own-variety English is non-existent. The idea seems to be simplistic and does not appear to hold true through the lens of ELF scholars. From the ELF perspective, Baker (2009) argued that countries in the Outer and Expanding Circles do not refrain themselves from developing their own norms as presumed. In other words, speakers can in fact communicate across all circles, making the communication dynamic and fluid and blurring the geographical boundaries. This leads to the fact that conformity to the Inner Circle is not necessarily adopted (p. 17). For instance, in his study conducted in Thailand, Baker (2011b) observed that the use of English as a lingua franca does reflect the users' linguistic identity and resembles those from the Outer Circle. The phenomenon of favouring the native speaker in Thailand, particularly in English language teaching (Anchimbe 2013; Foley 2007), is problematic in many respects. The native-like proficiency model appears to be over-represented against the backdrop of English being employed primarily in communication with non-native speakers. Trakulkasemsuk (2016) argued that Thais literally use English for global communication, and foreigners with whom they engage are largely non-native speakers of English.

Considering this important fact, one could argue that the ELF approach would be the most appropriate in the investigation of the role of English in Thailand and that its implications would be beneficial to the Thai educational policy, as well as to the business sector. However, while English is increasingly recognised as "an essential lingua franca which links Thailand culturally, intellectually and commercially with other ASEAN countries and the rest of the world" (Baker 2012: 19) very little research has been conducted from this ELF perspective, not to mention in the business context, which seems hitherto to be non-existent.

While promoting English as an international language in the ASEAN community, the government's relentless attempts to revamp English education in reference to NES, e.g. to recruit NES teachers sometimes regardless of other necessary qualifications as teachers (Kirkpatrick 2010; Baker 2012), is arguably contradictory. Viewing English as a de facto lingua franca, there have been calls for a reconceptualisation of English proficiency in Thailand (ref). Placing English proficiency at the forefront of the nation's competitiveness is not responsive to globalisation. The curriculum should not be based on such a negative evaluation of ELT, which overly relies on a specific variety of native English speaker and/or the native English speakers' model (Baker 2012) but should rather be developed from a more multilingual model of communication, namely the ELF approach. ELF represents an appropriate paradigm to the extent that it shifts from the traditional foreign language concept measuring against NES and views users as communicators in their own right. Applying this ELF concept as a baseline would offer a different perspective on the ongoing situation with regard to the role of English in Thailand. In reality, Thais would encounter a various range of Englishes, as a focus on American or British varieties of English is misconceived. Linked to this, the claimed incompetence of Thais' English proficiency is questionable against the backdrop of English as a lingua franca in Thailand.

The above discussion has shown that the country's concern about being less competitive on the international stage has been attributed to the citizens' incompetence in the English language. In the meantime, the direction to prevent and resolve the problem seems strongly to be based on the English as a native language (ENL) oriented policy regardless of the widely acknowledged status of English as a lingua franca in global communications and, specifically, for the AEC itself. Section 1.4 presents the definition and the theoretical concepts of English as a lingua franca (ELF) from empirical studies.

1.4.2   The Asian Corpus of English (ACE) Corpus

It is relevant to refer to the ACE corpus to better clarify the concept. The ACE corpus is inspired by the VOICE corpus with much of the same methodology and transcription conventions. It contains a million-word corpus of naturally occurring spoken features and uses of Asian ELF. It also includes the communication strategies and the non-standard forms, and specifically indicates those which cause problems for communication by adopting Jenkins' concept of the lingua franca core (LFC). This can provide guidance on what forms impede intelligibility

and need to be corrected and what do not hinder intelligibility and can be ignored. It is hoped that it helps "identify if and how the speakers' pragmatic and cultural norms are transferred from their first languages and cultures to their ELF usage". ACE also uses the same transcription software as the VOICE corpus, which allows the two corpora to be compared in terms of their linguistic features and the cultural and pragmatic norms between Asian ELF and European ELF.

Drawing on the Asian Corpus of English (ACE), Kirkpatrick (2018) reflected on the use of English by Asian multilinguals, focusing on the unproblematic communication resulting from its primary function, which is for communication. In other words, it elaborates on the speakers' use of code-mixing and selection of non-standard morpho-syntactic forms. Whereas ELF proves to be characterised by its supportive and collaborative nature of interactions (Archibald, Cogo and Jenkins 2011), Kirkpatrick suggested that context is all important, particularly when the stakes are high and saving the speaker's face might be of little interest (p. 143).

Compared to the VOICE corpus, Kirkpatrick found that the use of code-mixing, representing a marker of identity commonly used in a variety of world Englishes, is far less adopted in ACE ELF data. This could be due to the fact that Europeans share many cultural values and many of them have the same language family. South-east Asia is, on the other hand, more culturally and linguistically diverse (p. 142). Within the ASEAN context, where English primarily serves as a lingua franca, Kirkpatrick argued that an appropriate linguistic model should be fellow Asian multilinguals, as the native speaker is not the linguistic target here. Rather, the situation here is that speakers are not striving to become native speakers of English but are adding English to their linguistic repertoire. Along the same lines, the culture of native speakers is by no means set as the target culture. To harmonise the diverse communities of ASEAN, a focus must be placed on the intercultural competence, i.e. the importance of the linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity of ASEAN (p. 145).

This chapter explored the development of the global spread of English, specifically on the business domain from the academia and public perspectives. It highlighted how English has recently been discussed in Thailand following the presence of ASEAN economic community. The chapter ends with the review of ELF approach which stands as a basis for the 'Business English as a lingua franca' or BELF, a primary theoretical framework of my study.

Chapter 2: Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

2.1 From ELF to BELF

On countless occasions, ELF has been correlated with intercultural communication and has usually been referred to as an intercultural phenomenon (Cogo, 2015a). By saying that, Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken (2013) argued that the most pertinent analysis of intercultural discourse tends to be found in the area of business communication. Over the few past decades ELF has been studied and investigated in diverse contexts and has also gained access to the domain of international business. Ehrenreich (2009) pointed out that a clear conceptual analysis of ELF-speaking business communities can enhance the understanding of the divergent phenomena of ELF. As she added, not all situations in ELF are informal and consensual, 'competitive talk' emerging in business communities would provide ELF scholars with different, yet interesting and useful insights on linguistic behaviour and social characteristics (p.146). The emerging works on ELF in business contexts have shown that BELF (Business ELF) communication is indeed intercultural and an essential aspect of global ELF use (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Kankaanranta and Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta, 2011).

It has become clear that English has increasingly been a primary code for business for global contacts, be they large international or multinational companies, or small firms. Its dominance has also permeated the world of business language research over the past two decades, as observed in various works of different disciplines; for example, international business management and communication, English for specific purposes (ESP), and intercultural communication (IC), where the focus is specifically on English alone or together with other languages in business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2013). However, it is apparent that the English that has appeared in the fields of international management and corporate communication has been traditionally conceptualised as English as a native language. For example, concerns are expressed around the imposition of English as the common corporate language for MNCs, proposing that this might pose a challenge to the development of internal interactions and relationships (see e.g. Blazejewski 2006; Fredriksson et

al. 2006). As they argued, the varied English skill-levels of employees is likely to harm the information asymmetries and increase misunderstandings. A case example was given with an email written in 'rather poor English' (Piekkari 2009: 273). In other words, although the concept of BELF has been addressed in many other disciplines, such as sociolinguistic, English for Specific Purposes, business communication, or international management (as featured in the Handbook of Business Discourse), this concerns primarily the language issues.

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2018) argued that the epistemological grounds of the 'B' have not intrinsically been touched upon (p. 309). For example, scholars in international management reflect on BELF in terms of how the language has been managed in different operations in multinational companies. Their research does not make any particular contribution to 'English', either in terms of its usage, discourse, or conceptualisation (see e.g. Piekkari et al. 2014). Ehrenreich (2010) presented a relatively similar argument that the significant aspects of ELF – fluidity and emergence – are not intrinsically touched upon in business communication research. Nonetheless, the empirical research into ELF has attracted some attention in the field of applied linguistics, which has begun to investigate the role of English in the business domain through the concept of ELF (e.g. Poncini 2002, 2003, 2004; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Nickerson 2005; Planken 2005; Pitzl 2005; Rogerson-revell 2007; Ehrenreich 2009, 2010; Cogo 2009; Du Babcock 2009; Pullin 2009) and define this phenomenon as business English as a lingua franca or 'BELF' (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005).

In the light of BELF research findings, the general characteristics of ELF, fluidity, hybridity, flexibility or emergence are visible likewise in other contexts of ELF studies. What makes it different nonetheless is the 'B' or business. That is to say BELF can be referred to as the situation where business people exploit their linguistic resources to achieve different communicative purposes in particular ways and settings in global business (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005). It is also noteworthy that BELF was originally coined and conceptualised as "Business English as Lingua Franca", which basically concentrated on the type of English and widely used in a number of research into ELF in business context. However, Kankaanranta and Luohiala-Salminen (2013) later changed the conceptualisation of the term to refer to "English as Business Lingua Franca" instead. As they remarked, the change was made in an attempt to emphasize the domain of use of ELF in the business realm which should lead to a better understanding of why BELF is goal-oriented and domain-specific.

In this section, I present and critically discuss empirical research into BELF and extend this to a review of intercultural communication perspectives including aspects of cultural diversity, which seem to be the challenges for the conduct of business in this globalising world.

2.2   Nature of BELF: Getting the job done

While ELF and BELF share some common ground in many aspects, the key distinguishing feature seems to lie in the domain of use in which BELF tends to contribute solely to the concerns and goals of business (Charles, 2007). Since BELF users are members of the global business discourse community who use English in their operations, they thus share the 'B' which implies the context and culture of business regardless of other different contextual factors (e.g. their position or line of responsibility). The 'B' is, in all these respects, regarded as of utmost importance for BELF (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010: 205).

A general consensus has been documented among BELF researchers that the primary role of English in international business communication is to 'get the job/work done' (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Charles 2008; Ehrenreich 2009, 2010; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Since ELF mostly occurs in interaction between NNSs, it is hence characterised differently from ENL in multiple aspects. It is plausible in this respect for one to conceptualize BELF as "an instrument for getting the job done in an international business environment" (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010: 400). It is noteworthy that the 'job' and 'work' in this BELF context particularly refers to the 'B', namely business. To put simply, the objective of other ELF interactions can vary from one to another (e.g. for socialising in casual talk or for learning purposes in an academic setting) while in the meantime, it is obvious that the target of BELF users is the completion of particular business goals. For example, in their meetings, business professionals exclusively draw on BELF to reach specific agendas, agreement or deals while creating or maintaining rapport at the same time (see e.g. Pitzl 2010, 2013; Poncini 2013; Rogerson-revell 2007, 2010; Wolfartsberger 2009). In multinational corporations, along the same lines, their use of BELF is directly driven by their daily work, i.e. to enhance the company's mission, vision and values, as well as in interpersonal engagement with colleagues (Kankaanranta et al. 2015). BELF interactions are therefore determined by the goal of getting the job done and a drive to maintain a good relationship with business partners or colleagues (Kankaanranta et al. 2015: 130).

2.3   Competence in BELF

With regard to the issue of what leads BELF users to achieve their task, a priori native-like proficiency in English is not suggested by scholars as a relevant component in this process. To reflect on the key drivers of success in international business communication, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) developed a model of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) (Figure 1) featuring business knowledge in the outermost layer overlapped with competence in BELF and multicultural competence in the inner layers.
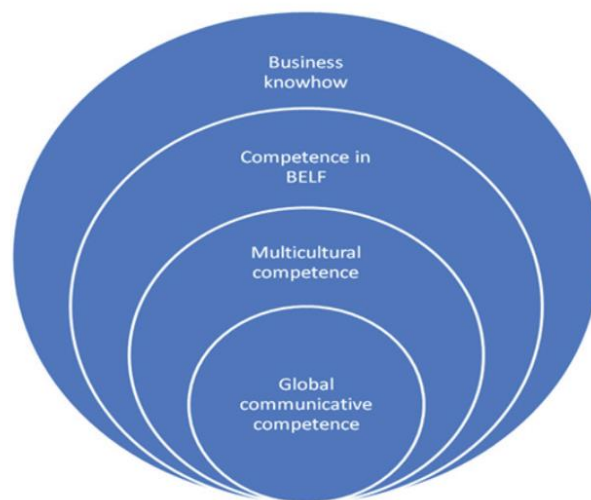
Figure 1 Model of Global Communicative Competence (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta, 2011: 258).

Multicultural competence refers to the capability of business practitioners to handle interactions involving people from different national, organisational and cultural backgrounds where the accommodation skill is a key enabler in this process.

Based on the answers of a good number of respondents, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2018) summarised three qualities which make communication succeed in the globalised business environment, namely (1) *shared understanding* (of the business, goal, terminologies, process and what is necessary to get things done); (2) *business mindset* (co-operation, trust, good relationships, willingness, openness); and (3) *win-win mentality* (helping the other party to reach their goal) (p. 314).

Competence in BELF is in fact a 'multifaceted notion' and obviously distinct from communicative competence in traditional terms (Kankaanranta et al. 2015: 129). Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) pointed out that a combination of business-related knowledge, strategic skills plus business communication skills – not referring to the NS role model "but a business professional whose (international) communication is clear" (p. 401) – constitute essential characteristics of BELF interactions and integral parts of today's business (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013). It is crucially important and almost imperative for business professionals to know what, why, when, and how to communicate when sharing knowledge and building networks (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010). In other words, BELF competence demands knowledge of lexis, business-specific vocabulary, and genre conventions, the ability to convey business content unambiguously, as well as to understand a range of different accents (Charles 2008; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Ehrenreich (2010), for instance, revealed that speakers can negotiate the meaning of discourse with interlocutors who have limited English on account of their shared managerial and technical knowledge. Other Finnish scholars, such as Nikko (2007) and Kangasharju (2007), also revealed a very positive picture of BELF communication in Scandinavian workplaces, where they credit participants' shared background information and experiences, and most importantly their robust commitment to their common interest in the company's goals, for the success of the interactions. This seems to be a reflection of what Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) have suggested when they noted that BELF communication is unlike standard English in which "it does not have any strict rules governing its grammatical form, structures, or correctness", instead, it functions well in its context of use where hybridity, variation, contextuality, and dynamism are primary (p. 267).

Business knowledge reportedly consists of both generic and specific business knowledge. According to Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen's (2018) study, informants indicated that to succeed in the conduct of business and communication, it is necessary that they know the principles of their professional practices and, specifically, understand the key indicators, enablers to growth and success, of the industry or company. As they progress, international business practitioners are required to know and understand (1) the goal of the business and discussion, (2) professional roles and related tasks of communication partners and measures for business success, (3) the crucial importance of interpersonal relationships, which can be accompanied by flexibility, respect, and

politeness, and (4) business processes and genres, e.g. methods, channels, or strategies (p. 315). Overall, it is the awareness of what is important and what is not in different business circumstances. This leads to the general consensus that BELF interaction becomes more effective "when the parties share the topic and the specific practices of their genre" (Cogo 2016: 367).

2.3.1 Shared business knowledge over nativespeaking ability

As already highlighted in previous chapters, native speaker fluency or grammatically correct language use are not prerequisite qualities for a successful ELF speaker. This has prevented BELF users from being regarded as language learners or compared with native speakers, but rather they are considered to be communicators in their own right (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta 2005; Nikko 2009). 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, Charles and Kankaanranta 2005: 404). This could be attributed to the fact that since most BELF interactions take place between English non-native speakers, NS competence does not therefore seem desirable (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010). The lack of any aspiration to achieve NS criteria appears to reinforce the perception that grammatically correct discourse is an unnecessary irrelevant component of successful ELF interaction. Pitzl (2015) argued that while the notion of 'mistake leads to misunderstanding' still prevails in language teaching, a case of miscommunication in BELF interaction is rarely associated with linguistic mistake (p.110). For example, Neeley (2013) illustrated that most of her NNS informants in an international French corporation reported that they concentrated more on their business imperatives rather than on language accuracy. As one high-fluency manager described, "It would be limiting to business if I think about my English …. I don't care about being perfect" (p. 486).

Generally, the function of English in an interaction is to transmit information effectively and as long as the message is understandable and the meaning is not distorted and is sufficient for getting the work done, the limited English proficiency of the users is less likely to be a matter of concern (Charles 2007; Ehrenreich 2010; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010). For BELF users, grammatical inaccuracies are recognised as commonplace and have only a slight

impact on communication (Kaur 2009; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Pitzl 2010). Instead, BELF researchers agree on the far greater important function of shared business expertise that contributes to the interaction. Cogo (2012), for example, concluded that staff in her case study of an international IT company prioritised IT knowledge over NS correctness in both written and spoken communication. She revealed that the domain knowledge was evidently predominant over the NS correctness, both in written and spoken communication. Her findings showed that the company's webpages were written and edited by NNS staff who were experts in the IT field, rather than by NS, and that the expertise in IT was often adopted as the main criterion in recruiting staff. Also, when dealing with written messages concerning IT knowledge, the staff would pay more attention to the content, the knowledge, and solutions of the IT problems rather than the form or correctness of the language: "a blog is strictly technical (.) there is a problem (.) we solve it doing this and this (.) in English the form of putting words was not that good? It doesn't matter" (p. 298). In the meantime, the linguistic norms would come into play, irregularly though, in other business activities of the company, as one informant added: "For this kind of work which is not core, not of the IT type [. . .] for the writing of advertising, to send letters offering our services, for this part it is more important that he spoke English well" (Cogo 2012: 300). Nevertheless, Cogo noted that the NS norms were exclusively associated with the location of the office, which was in London where their business counterparts were managed by NS. This "English external face" was subsequently the subject of dissent in the company's internal communications where non-native speaking ability prevailed (p. 300). Respondents discussed the fact that non-native pronunciation was preferable and better understood in such an international sphere, rather than native-like pronunciation. Interestingly, those trying to emulate NS would even be seen negatively by their colleagues, as being "pedantic". One member of staff commented, "when they showed they speak well it's like they were pedantic (.) the others would say come on (.) if we are all the same (.) if we are all between us" (p. 301). As Cogo further argued, a local accent was considered normal and comfortable for participants and entailed the sense of belonging to the multilingual group, where various linguistic resources were employed overtly. The participants reported making use of their multilingual repertoires, not only in their internal exchanges, but also in interactions with the clients. They called this linguistic practice "a kind of game" whereby the clients often joined in by using a few Spanish words they knew. As they suggested:

> With the clients in general we play a bit [. . .] and they … it's like there
> seems to be a kind of game with all of them (.) they say some words they say
> 'mucho gusto' 'hola' 'si:' (.) who knows what comes to their minds. (p. 301)

And:

> Conversations with many languages at times with some clients I noticed that
> they like it (.) because they are smaller clients and there is a certain degree of
> personal relation. (p. 302)

In business-related discourse, proficiency in general English is evidently not sufficient to enable understanding. People with a good command of general English may experience some difficulties in an in-depth business negotiation or profession-specific conversation (Xiaofei 2009). Ehrenreich (2010) advocated that words and language skills without the necessary professional profile are not sufficient for people to be successful in business. A similar argument was made by Hanford (2010), who asserted that language competence is not the most important issue in business, but "the experience and ability to dynamically maneuver within the communities of practice which business people inhabit" (p.145). For example, Thai engineers in Hart-Rawung and Li's (2008) investigation of the English communication skills in an automotive engineering manufacturer in Thailand unveiled the mismatch between the English training programmes provided by the organisation and the genuine needs for the job-related communication. The obstacles started to emerge when they found the course contents seemed to be limited to general English, which could not facilitate their actual working situation. In brief, Hart-Rawung and Li suggested that the English language knowledge and skills required by Thai engineers should be specific and connected to their day-to-day tasks.

2.4   Community of practice

To provide a clear explanation of the nature of (B)ELF, the concept of 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998) has been applied as an analytic tool in a number of (B)ELF studies (e.g. House 2003; Seidlhofer 2007; Breiteneder 2009; Dewey 2009 and Smit 2010 Ehrenreich 2009; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2018). Wenger (1998) argued that communities of practice (CoP) exist everywhere, and people belong to a number of them regardless of the different degrees of participation. In brief, Wenger and Synder (2000) described that:

[T]hey're groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise … Some communities of practice meet regularly—for lunch on Thursdays, say. Others are connected primarily by e-mail networks. A community of practice may or may not have an explicit agenda on a given week, and even if it does, it may not follow the agenda closely. Inevitably, however, people in communities of practice share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems. (p.139)

The concept defines itself as a process of social learning along three dimensions: (1) "its joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members"; (2) "the relationships of mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity"; and (3) "the shared repertoire of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time" (Wenger 1998: 2). In a systematic exploration, Wenger further argued that communities of practice move through multiple stages of development in response to things regarded to matter to the members. Within the communities of practice, these three core dimensions are under constant negotiation by the members, and consequently, they are rudimentarily self-organising systems and change over the course of our lives (Wenger 1998).

Taking a closer look at research into communities of practice in the domain of international business, it is apparent that mutual engagement is established among business professionals through multiple forms of encounters, locally and internationally, with colleagues, partners, or clients (see e.g. Ehrenreich 2009, 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Alharbi 2015). Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2018) made an interesting observation that mutual engagement does not necessarily emerge specifically from interaction, as previously addressed, but can indeed be produced by the business knowledge shared among internationally operating business professionals. As they argued, business knowledge is an essential element of the BELF concept connecting the members of the business community of practice together. They might gain parts of their ability from education and research and accumulate some other facets from work experience. Mutual engagement among business professionals is believed to make international business happen and is a driving force of the emergence of various aspects of business cooperation. The facilitation of such engagement requires conspicuous goal orientation.

Ehrenreich (2009) exemplified that the overall goal of a business community of practice, as observed in her case at a German multinational company, was

apparently the corporate objective of profit-making. The group of business executives in her study had a shared purpose and perspective on what mattered, what does not, or what was appropriate in their contexts. For example, it had been agreed that their prime concerns would involve the negotiation and procurement of both national and international contracts, as well as monitoring the delivery of high quality products to meet targets within a specified time frame. When taking into account the nature of this business community, Ehrenreich added that English by no means constituted the very core of the joint enterprise, but was used as a resource alongside other resources in their shared repertoires to negotiate the meaning within the community.

In theory, the application of the joint enterprise concept seems to pose a challenge to sociolinguistic and ELF research. As Ehrenreich (2018) commented, the concept raises two important questions: (1) whether the language is part of a given community's joint enterprise; and (2) how specific does a community's joint enterprise have to be in order to be analytically meaningful? Joint enterprise is related directly to the participants' mutual accountability, which presents a guideline to the goal and purpose of the community. The idea is, in fact, straightforward when applied to the domain of business, in which the goal of companies is profit-making and where all the respective parties contribute to this aim. In other words, this shared interest and goal bond the stakeholders across the company and form the community of practice, which subsequently defines the participants' everyday practices. Although these are non-language focused communities, this does not suggest that language plays no role. "The participants' mutual engagement and the negotiation of their respective joint enterprises are realized via language – in all its social and stylistic functions – and would, quite clearly, not be possible without it" (ibid p. 41). However, in the business community, participants are more content-focused contrary to the language-focused groups, such as linguists, language teachers, or students, where English seems to be a priority and plays a crucial role in the 'relevance systems' (Ehrenreich 2009).

This conceptual difference provides greater understanding of the varied attitudes among different ELF professional groups and delineates the confusion in the application of the CoP framework to general ELF interactions. House (2003), for example, suggested that the linguistic aspects (in this case English) come into play in the enterprise in the ELF talk. This holds true in the language-focused community but is not justified in other cases where English plays a secondary

role. In the latter case it probably constitutes a part of a community's shared repertoire rather than a joint enterprise. The specificity of the community's joint enterprise is another challenge to be aware of for ELF scholars. From a sociolinguistic perspective, shared enterprise should be reasonably specific, and not too general or abstract (Meyerhoff 2002: 528). Ehrenreich's (2009) study revealed that the issue leaves no impact on the business realm where the participants' joint enterprise in the multinational corporations arises from their responsibilities, which involve business matters. In other words, business matters are the centre of their community, whereas BELF plays a part in the communities' shared repertoire in fulfilling the purpose of doing business. This is an area where difference could be seen in the education domain, as found in Kalocsai's (2014) study, which showed that to a certain extent in the joint enterprise a link to the language-related goal of improving English proficiency will be visible.

In the business community, joint enterprise is reported to serve as the ultimate benchmark for appropriateness (Ehrenreich 2018: 44). It is linked with the members' understanding of their positions in the organisation, the roles of people in their business environment, as well as the ability to build interpersonal relationships. Enhanced by this shared knowledge, members of the community are able to identify what is important and what is not, and to comply with the prevailing norms and measures (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2018: 316).

When considering an ELF-based community of practice, scholars should bear in mind that ELF does not constitute the sole element in the shared repertoire. It is inevitably linked with the mutual engagement and joint enterprise of the members in the community. It is not fixed, but is flexible and adaptive, as Wenger (1998) noted:

In business communities these repertoires comprise, in addition to English, several other languages as well as documents such as drawings, charts, power point presentations or websites, also often models of different parts of technical products, and, on a more abstract level, certain ways of doing things (Ehrenreich 2018: 44).

In this respect, shared repertoire concerns the knowledge of business processes and genres, i.e. to know the procedures and practices which have been established and agreed upon in the industry and company. This includes knowing the business etiquette, such as how to treat fellow colleagues and partners. This implies that amid some differences in routines, activities, or practices, which

could vary from one environment to another, members of the overall business community have the capability to fulfil negotiation because they know the rationale, for example, the communicative patterns in different business situations (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2018: 318). In a similar vein, Cogo (2016) argued that on the basis of shared repertoire of resources, such as the creation and co-construction of business jargon, procedures, and policies by the members of a BELF CoP, communication is reported to be smoother and easier (p. 371).

As Wenger (1998) discussed, the shared repertoire is generated from the negotiable resources, therefore, the participants have to renegotiate the meaning of different elements, undergo the process of inventing, adopting, adapting, or importing new language, as well as developing or breaking routines (p.95). The process of communities of practice, as Kalocsai (2014) added, necessarily involves members' learning of social coordination in the context of communities to which the participants belong or want to belong (p.13). This learning "involves the construction of identities in relation to the group, meaning it is a form of becoming; and it involves the construction and internalization of meaning, which implies that it is a form of experiencing" (Kalocsai 2014: 14). Lave and Wenger (1991) delineated that learning in communities of practice is a process of changing participation and identity transformation through three core dimensions: from the periphery (community) to the core, from a novice to an expert, and from lack of expertise to a high level of competence (p.11). The approach manifests in the development of members of a BELF community of practice, through their mutual engagement (gained from shared knowledge of business fundamentals and essences) and joint enterprise (benchmark for appropriateness to achieve the shared goal), from EFL learners with ENL norm-based concepts into competent BELF users of their respective shared repertoires.

Ehrenreich clearly exemplified the case of a telephone conversation between a German project manager and a Chinese sales manager, where communicative challenges were visible but were mastered with remarkable ease. Although the Western listeners reported particular problems in understanding the Chinese manager's English, the issues concerning their joint enterprise were skillfully tackled within a very brief exchange. Some ambiguities emerging from several linguistic levels could be unfathomable for outsiders, however, they obviously did not disrupt the two participants. Mutual understanding here was constructed on account of their shared repertoire and due to the fact that they were both

members of a community with a long-standing working relationship. On the conceptual level, she suggested that professional background may influence speakers' perceptions and target model to a significant degree. For example, a great number of non-native speaking teachers who were her 2006 and 2008 students reported perceiving ELF communication as 'flawed' and were 'supporters' of ENL, despite their solid and first-hand experience in ELF interactions. By drawing on the concept of 'subjective relevances' of Hitzler and Eberle (2004), Ehrenreich explained that in this case a group of people such as this comprises only language-focused speakers whose perceptions are shaped by linguistic issues, which is a core of their particular relevance system. On the other hand, for business professionals, the matter of most concern is related to the knowledge of business, whereas language skills serve as a subordinate function to perform their work. Their particular relevance systems are context- and task-specific. Therefore, it is not surprising that members of a business elite of this kind who are non-linguists recognise the importance of English proficiency, but in a more relaxed pragmatic way (Ehrenreich 2009). These accounts have been attested in Ehrenreich's 2010 study, which showed that staff at all levels of her case company were eager to develop their language skills but in a way they saw as appropriate for their roles.

The community of practice in (B)ELF-based research yielded an interesting demonstration of the 'socially embedded and dynamic' nature of (B)ELF (Ehrenreich 2018). As she further argued, the framework clearly portrays that (B)ELF is often domain-specific, and that the individual linguistics and communicative elements are shaped by some parameters which range from, for example, power issues concerning hierarchies of speakers to face-related aspects to social distance (p. 46). The concept also supports other qualities of (B)ELF previously recognised and sheds new light on the communicative strategies that reflect not only a sense of cooperative work, but also speakers' choice of strategies which are socially governed. For example, business practitioners occasionally assign importance to issues of power over their communicative needs or issues that lead to uncooperative behaviour.

The BELF communities of practice also highlight the occurrence of pragmatic hybridity, in which participants in the community develop interculturally mixed communicative conventions as their shared repertoires to negotiate the emerging differences (see e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Ehrenreich 2009). Ehrenreich (2018) encouraged the use of the community of practice approach in the ELF-

based study as it offered a platform to investigate the organisation of interculturally mixed repertoires; for example, the parameters that shape them, the state of the repertoire (stable or dynamic) once it has been negotiated, or the direction of the process (mono-directional or multidirectional).

2.5   The role of culture

In examining international business communication, culture often becomes a subject of interest for scholars. Though claiming BELF a 'neutral communication code' (to the extent that no one can claim its ownership), Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) are aware of the diversity speakers carry with them into the interaction and emphasize that BELF is by no means 'cultureless' (p. 404). Risager (2006, 2007) argues that the language does not portray a fixed culture, by contrast, it dynamically establishes different forms of culture as to the wish of the speaker in each communication. Similarly to ELF phenomenon in which speakers do not necessarily self-convert to the NS and their culture, but be able to form their own cultures through language use and other social means (Kalocsai 2014: 1). People in business may share a common interest in some aspects of business values, e.g. doing profitable business (Charles 2007; Wolfartsberger and Vienna 2009), yet, they hold different cultural and linguistic backgrounds which alluding to the fact that 'communication in a lingua franca involves interaction of more than just two cultures' (Meierkord 2002: 119). This implies that within such environment, it is not uncommon for individuals' cultural norms or values to be visible; which, in turn, leads to the hybridity or variation of the interaction (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). Bilbow (2002) investigates the use of commissive speech acts such as promises or statements of commitment between NS expatriates and local Cantonese-speaking Chinese in intercultural meetings. His study reveals that different pragmatic patterns on account of cultural predispositions can be a source of problematic communication between the two parties. Ehrenreich (2009) found, for instance, that the managers in a German multinational corporation were able to conduct business amid the cultural diversity by not leaving out their own cultural practices or norms. Interestingly, they expressed their national/ regional or business cultures in various different situations. For example, the forms of address were used in accordance with their own socio-cultural norms or as to what they have agreed as appropriate, (notably with great tolerance for the international colleagues). Overall, the majority of informants showed their preference towards such a multicultural combination of social deixis to a homogenized approach as she adds:

Also, as one manager put it, why should Germans give up their German approach in international interactions, after all, some of their business partners chose to do business with them because they value German 'virtues' such as efficiency, reliability and directness. Therefore, the fact that the use of ELF in this community does not defer to ENL cultural norms, by no means transforms these exchanges into cultural-neutral or culture-free interactions. (Ehrenreich 2009: 141)

To create a deeper understanding into dimensions of culture in BELF interaction, the discussion is extended to research on intercultural communication from recent perspectives.

2.5.1   Intercultural communication

As previously stated, it very seems that an investigation into international business discourse would contribute considerably relevant insights for the intercultural communication study (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken 2013). Baker (2015) argues that the issue of intercultural communication has indeed been touched upon in a variety of research fields which accordingly strengthens its interdisciplinary feature. The view is reinforced by Zhu (2015) who points that "IC studies are informed by multiple theoretical and disciplinary perspectives with an overall aim of facilitating understanding between different (cultural) groups" (p.65). Within the field of applied linguistics, Baker (2015) has underlined the distinction between the early and recent approaches in the intercultural communication studies. In his discussion, he proposes that the focus of many of the early studies have been usually on comparing and contrasting the communicative practices of distinct cultural groups which should be thus characterized as cross-cultural communication studies (see for example Tannen 1984; Moermann 1988; Matsumoto 1988; Lakoff 1990; Hofstede 2001) The studies of this kind would see and view cultures at a national level, as bounded entities, somewhat homogeneous as well as having a priori assumption about grouping behaviours (Scollon and Scollon 2001). While on the contrary, the term intercultural communication, as Baker suggests, is rather referred to the more recent approaches which has taken a critical shift by attempting to establish a deeper understanding into the 'interaction' between people from distinct cultural groups. These studies "put the idea of cultural differences and similarities as changeable and negotiable at the centre of inter-cultural communication" (Baker 2015:21) and in contrast to the cross-cultural studies, cultures in the concept of intercultural communication are seen as heterogeneous, fluid and dynamic,

without a presupposition about the community discourse or behaviours as a result from a vast variety of its members (Scollon and Scollon 2001).

Scollon and Scollon's discussion contains crucial points regarding the concept of culture in such intercultural communication approaches indicating that cultural differences are not only the relevant category of difference that people experience in intercultural communication. Therefore, whereas a number of IC studies have often revolved around cultural differences and potential problems emerging from the interactions (e.g. Bailey 1997; Nishida 2005; Sharifian 2005, Sharifian 2013; Kecskes 2013), this is not to suggest that one should start the study with presumed cultural differences among group studies (Zhu 2014). The traditional assumption of cultural differences as a primary source of problematic intercultural interactions has increasingly been challenged and questioned by many scholars in recent years (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009; Kesckes 2012; Scollon et al. 2012; Zhu 2014; Baker 2015). Scollon et al. (2012) observe that on many occasions scholars pick an intercultural situation to study and find no evidence of failure in the interactions, or if any problems do exist, it is very difficult to judge whether those problems are driven by cultural differences. For example, if an Indonesian customer turns down a product of a Japanese businessman, the reasons are likely to contribute to the product itself rather than the differences between 'being Japanese' and 'being Indonesian' (Scollon et al. 2012: 4). In quite a similar vein, Baker (2015) also exemplified his miscommunication experience with a Thai manager when he worked as an English teacher in Thailand. From the incident, he had expected a different interaction from the manager regarding his complaint about the classroom organization and consequently misinterpreted the manager's reaction (smiled and saying nothing) as a disregard which immensely confused and upset him. While in fact the manager has acknowledged his problem and liaised with the staff to work it out promptly. To a certain extent, he believes that this misunderstanding might be linked to the difference in cultural practices, i.e. a distinct response to a problem between British and Thai people. However, having been aware that the practices which are shared among members of a community are not necessarily applied to every individual in the group concerned, Baker has raised the issues of class, identity, power relationships as well as linguistic competence as relevant factors to be considered in such intercultural interaction. Moreover, as he further argued, though he was left confused due to a distinction in communicative expectation and practice, it is important to note that the case communication went actually successfully as his problem has been resolved by the manager.

Along the same lines, Zhu advises that there are other influencing factors associating with the problems of intercultural interactions and by bearing this in mind, the issue of circularity and reification can be avoided. Rather, IC studies should forbear from the basis of these cultural account approach and "focus on not only how individuals make use of their different linguistic and cultural resources to negotiate understanding, but also the impact of perceived differences (be it socio-cultural or linguistic) on the process of interaction" (Zhu 2015: 66). While Zhu stresses on negotiation as a key part in engaging in intercultural communication, this is usually applied in collaborative engagement where each party is committed to and joins forces on the ongoing interactions to make each other understandable. Nevertheless, Kramsch and Uryu (2012) advise that there are also involuntary intercultural encounters where participants might not agree to negotiate, i.e. the situations where power structures come into play which allow the more powerful group to impose and dominate their cultural norms, linguistic, political and economical ideology, ect., upon the less powerful participants e.g. in war, colonization, immigration interviews. As they argue, IC in the era of globalization has become more complex and sophisticated in which scholars have brought to the fore not only just the culture and language as the core approach but also the issues of power, ideology and subjectivity within a poststructuralist perspective.

Similar points has been made by Holliday (2011) who strongly argues that culture is represented a movable concept with fluid and negotiable boundaries and that ideology of culture is a matter of significance to be explored. As he observes that common perceptions of culture are often ideologically constructed by political interest which subsequently provoke bias towards foreign cultures; it is therefore important to recognize individual capability to go against any prejudice created by such imagination. To reinforce a deeper understanding in terms of how the culture of the 'us'—'them' operates, Holliday proposes that an investigation into the relationship between culture and ideology should be conducted. While searching for an explanation of how people manage to handle with the complexity of the culture they participate, Scollon et al. (2012) have stressed that:

> The question of the relationship between the individual and the "cultures" or discourse systems he or she participates in is perhaps the most difficult issue we have to address in the study of intercultural communication. One reason for this is that none of us are members of only one "culture"; throughout our lives we are socialized into multiple discourse systems, and sometimes

mastering the face systems and forms of discourse of one of our discourse systems or upholding its ideology creates conflicts with other discourse systems that we participate in.

In other words, socialization into a particular discourse system is always to some degree partial, and participation in discourse systems is always to some degree peripheral. (p.161)

To navigate the complexity of culture, Kramsch and Uryu have advocated hybridity and third space as the essence in their poststructuralist approach. They underline the complex ecology of language, culture, and society where 'the problem is no longer a juxtaposition of various identities working in harmony with one another, but an entanglement of subjectivities, refracted in one another, historically interdependent, and morally accountable to one another" (p.222).

Bhabha's (2012), a poststructuralist cultural critic has referred to the hybridity as a contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation open for translation, negotiation, resignification and the power struggle to produce and obtain knowledge. In his sense, this space, or what he called a 'Third space' provides the productive capacities during the interpretation process which "represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot in itself be conscious" (p.53). It challenges the sense of "the historical cultural identity as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people" (p.54).

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (Bhabha 2012: 55)

The idea of cultural overgeneralization has been objected by much current IC studies which address cultural diversity as a rich complexity. For example, Hofstede's (2001) model of 'macro-level laws' which is influenced by the essentialism paradigm serves to illustrate culture "as a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p.9). His model aims to provide the precise behavioural principles on how to deal and interact with people from specific cultural groups e.g. how to greet a Swedish business man. In this regard, Holliday (2011) argues that in a practical level, the means to fix the nature of particular cultures and seek the best

effective ways to communicate with one another is very unlikely to be possible. Instead, she argues that the success of intercultural communication can be achieved by the potential to read and understand culture arisen from underlying universal cultural processes. Accordingly, she advocates critical cosmopolitanism paradigm which acknowledges that culture is complex with blurred boundaries, ideologically constructed and calls for a process of negotiation at every stage within an unequal world. While Cultural relativism contends that no judgement should be made on other culture and that we should respect them for what they are, critical cosmopolitanism requires a need to examine all claims made about particular culture including taking into account their instrumental efficiency or moral implications (Holliday 2011: 15). For example, in Holliday's case study of business meetings between British and Chinese colleagues, she insists that any traditional manner or practice perceived as counterproductive or discriminatory by either side of the parties needs to be addressed. As she further argues, the avoidance of criticizing can only evokes Othering and patronizing in a sense that individuals on either side are not able to let aside their particular tradition. In brief, she recommends that the problematic interactions which are prone to result from the different values and forms of communication can be somehow sorted out by a detailed investigation of these distinct characteristics and the subsequent education and training of the interactants. For example Thompson's (1994) earlier large-scale survey study of Australian business professionals' experiences with Asian associates in 163 Australian firms indicate that communication is the largest source of operational difficulty. What is of interest is a high proportion of respondents believe that more knowledge and understanding of the Asian environment, e.g. the priorities of Asian business people and how to communicate in Asian business circles could attribute to the more effective and successful business.

In summary, to achieve a smooth and effective international business communication, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) emphasise the necessity of multicultural competence, claiming it as one of the key elements in enhancing trust and building rapport (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). That is to say BELF users must take into account the dynamics of culture, intercultural sensitivity e.g. having the knowledge and respect for other cultures, accents or discoursal patterns (Kankaanranta 2012; Pullin 2015).

This chapter illustrated detailed theoretical frameworks of BELF and the significant findings from the empirical research conducted in European in

particular. I also review the role of culture as appeared in ELF and BELF studies, the recent perspectives from the research into intercultural communication, as well as some cultural aspects in the Thai contexts. In the following chapter, the concepts and findings on pragmatic strategies, in business context in particular, will be thoroughly discussed.

Chapter 3: Pragmatic Strategies

Trivial or simple misunderstandings could result in the loss of business, which on some occasions could be very costly, therefore effective communication is pivotal to the success of organisations. To meet the communicative goals in their international business interactions, BELF users are challenged by linguistic and cultural diversity. Amid these conditions, which reinforce the chances of misunderstanding, empirical studies have revealed that participants put considerable efforts into making sense of communication and constructing mutual intelligibility.

Despite globalisation and the advances in electronic communication, which seem to compromise face-to-face interactions, meetings are still widely recognised as the essence of organisational life (Boden 1994; Cooren 2007) and an essential requirement for organisations, such as in project development, building internal or inter-organisational rapports, etc (Handford 2010). One of the pioneering works on the discourse of business meetings is that of Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997). Their study of British and Italian business meetings provides a clear understanding of the structural and pragmatic properties employed in authentic intercultural business communication as well as countless of examples showing the mismatch between the language taught for business purposes and how it is actually used in an authentic situation. Their work has also influenced some other empirical research in this area (e.g. Charles 1996; Rogerson-Revell 1999; Bilbow 2002; Poncini 2003, 2004). Nevertheless, over the past few decades it has become noticeable that research on the multiparty interactions in business meetings, in which Poncini (2002) has underlined its value and defined it as an important and interesting area of investigation, has still been relatively scarce. Of relevance to this concern, Chapelle and Hunston clearly explained in Handford's (2010) book that:

> They are not the easiest of situations to study. Meetings are often confidential, may include a large number of people, and frequently involve discussion of people, events, and values that are referred to in inexplicit terms. … Obtaining recordings of meetings, then, necessitates a personal relationship with the organization concerned, both to establish trust and to gain an understating of the issues and relationships that are important in each meeting event. It is difficult to satisfy these requirements and still

collect the large quantity of varied data that a detailed study of business meetings needs. (p. ix)

With the passing of time, Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken (2013) argued that there are growing numbers of business discourse researchers who have vigorously sought ways to obtain permission from corporations to investigate their first-hand authentic communication in spite of some difficulties and hurdles they have had to face regarding gaining access to business organisations (e.g. Bilbow 2002; Poncini 2002, 2003, 2004; Pitzl 2005; Rogerson-Revell 2008; Du Babcock 2009; Pullin 2009; Wolfartsberger 2009). Obviously, these researchers have recognised the importance and benefits of authentic data, which result in invaluable insights into how the business interactions are actually carried on in organisations.

While the difficulties and breakdowns in communication have been the focus of many existing business discourse research studies, other researchers have placed strong emphasis on how business participants collaborate to find a solution and what might facilitate their communication. For example, Poncini's (2002, 2004) works contain interesting discussions on the matter of problematic communication in intercultural interactions in which she indicates that the specific focus on miscommunication is limiting researchers from discovering factors which contribute to successful business communication, as well as the ways language is used strategically by the participants to overcome the problems. In addition, in certain cases researchers seem to seek communication failure or breakdowns, which are, in fact, very few or may not necessarily occur, and if they actually occur, it is evident in most cases that participants can ultimately achieve their business and task-related goals. Her studies revealed three prominent linguistic features: personal pronouns, lexis, and evaluation. These validly exemplify the complex but successful communication in multicultural meetings. In her later study in 2013, she investigated the discourse and business relationship between an Italian company and its international distributors. Their interactions expressed during the meetings reflect the real-life interactional practices between business people from various cultures and impressively demonstrate how English as a means of communication is strategically used to establish and maintain business relationships. Along the same lines, Pitzl (2005) investigated the use of BELF in intercultural meetings and revealed how non-understandings emerging in the interactions are indicated and interactionally managed, negotiated, and skilfully resolved by the BELF speakers.

In the first section of this chapter, I briefly present the conversation analysis approach, then discuss a range of pragmatic strategies ELF users draw on in their interactions taken from the empirical research into ELF, BELF, and international business communication, to illustrate how they negotiate and accommodate the communicative/linguistic differences to facilitate understanding.

3.1   Conversation analysis (CA)

As Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken (2013) have discussed, scholars in business discourse usually rely on the multimethod approach in their investigation of the authentic data. Specifically, as they further argue, the analysis of these kinds of authentic data will enable researchers to choose the type of analysis they are interested in and regard as most appropriate for their data set. In this respect, not only they are not bounded nor driven by the theory, they are also able to make a contribution to the theory development. At the most basic level, the same approach is usually adopted to analyze data of similar types, for example, conversational analysis or discourse analysis have been advised as the most proper approach for the analysis of spoken interaction such as in business meetings while genre analysis have frequently been employed to analyze written business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2013: 15).

Conversation analysis is adopted as a methodological approach in this study due to its focus on the sequential organization and utterances in the naturally occurring interaction (Wooffitt 2005). As stated, conversation analysis (CA) is known for its "influential theoretical frameworks in the study of spoken interactions" (Wolfartsberger 2015: 254) and is also a frequent choice of method drawn on in an investigation of workplace interaction, such as organizational meetings (see e.g. Kangasharju, 2002; Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009). Its key insight concerns with variety of features of the delivery of talk and social practices in which it captures 'not only what is said but also details of how something is said' (Hepburn and Bolden 2013). In brief, CA looks at how participants organize their conversational sequences by orienting to particular persons or situations through adapted syntax, grammar or styles of specific languages in their turn takings (Schegloff 1986, 2006a; Sidnell 2007a). With the focus on talk-in-interaction, Maynard (2012) argues that CA is doing a sort of ethnography of communication in which it enables the particular social communities accessible to direct observation by others to look for the generic nature in interactional practices in which participants involve in their social

worlds. CA aims to describe the organization of social activities and interactions such as the turn takings in the ordinary social settings, it thus requires audio and video recording of spontaneous naturally occurring social interaction in order to describe the overall features and structure of interactions such as the 'indexicality, contingency and dynamic emergence' (Mondada 2012: 38; Sidnell and Stivers 2012).

With regard the issue of applicability into ELF research, Deterding (2013) reminds that the analysis of ELF interactions may not fit into the fundamental concept of CA which expects for highly structured and orderly conversations. In contrast, ELF interactions are commonly known for their flexibility than those belong to native-speakers due to the fact that ELF speakers do not share the same insight on the interactional practices (Firth 1996). Indeed, CA provides researchers with an extensive methodological framework for the analysis of conversational interactions of all kinds (Have 1999). Accordingly, Schegloff et al. (2002) propose that 'conversations' in CA sense is not limited only to the informal small-talk but extend to other forms of conduct e.g. body gesture, posture, facial expression, and ongoing activities in the setting. Once considering the fact that both ELF and CA share a prime interest in spoken language, though from different perspectives, Wolfartsberger (2015) points that "an intellectual exchange between these two areas of research might prove mutually benefitting in many ways" (p: 254).

My analysis will concern some aspects of CA regarding the naturally occurring data of the turn-taking systems, the organization of conversational sequences to investigate the pragmatic strategies employed by BELF users. However it will not go in strict compliance with CA conventions of analysis, e.g. the choice of audio data, for reasons of confidentiality, over video data which can result in the inaccessible for the analysis of CA non-verbal features, gaze in particular; and the use of VOICE transcription conventions rather than Jefferson's (2004a) CA traditional conventions. Detail of VOICE transcription conventions will be discussed in chapter 5.

3.2 Pragmatic strategies and negotiation of meaning in (B)ELF interaction

It is apparent that recent works on ELF pragmatics have revolved around how meaning and understanding are constructed and negotiated by the speakers as

well as how they manage to overcome emerging communication problems. This could be attributed to the flexibility and fluidity of ELF, which has become the centre of interest of ELF research in recent years. The shifting focus from systematic and recurrent features resulted in the growing number of research studies into pragmatic processes and accommodation (Cogo and House 2018: 221). The flexibility and variability of ELF's linguistic forms, which are shaped by the 'manifold contexts' of its use taking place around the globe (Pitzl 2012: 39), appears to influence the speakers' "essentially pragmatic attitude towards language innovation and variation" (Ehrenreich 2009: 140) and lead ELF to be generally successful.

The process of meaning making, as Thomas (1995) defined, is dynamic and involves "the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance and the meaning potential of the utterance" (p.22). The definition is in line with Cogo and Dewey (2012) who argued that the pragmatic strategies cannot be preselected but require a constant negotiation in the interaction instant to instant. ELF users therefore leverage the fluidity and flexibility of the language and exploit their linguistic repertoires with all their skills and knowledge by abiding by, and at times against, norms and standards to achieve understanding (Jørgensen 2008; Cogo and Dewey 2012). In this effort, ELF talk, say Cogo and House (2018), "was found to be a joint achievement of interactants, who successfully engage in their interactional interpretative work in order to sustain the appearance of normality" (p. 211). In other words, ELF users are keen on monitoring the interlocutor's moves which leads to the capability to acquire new items as they become more grounded in the ongoing interaction (ibid). This is a product of their joint work in finding common ground and establishing rules for the interaction in which they engage, which leads to the transition of divergent behaviour to convergent patterns (Lesznyak 2004). The impression that ELF interactions are "overtly consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive" (Seidhofer 2003: 15) seems to be attributed to the rare occurrence of apparent misunderstandings in ELF interactions. Mauranen (2006), in this respect, explained that participants are conscious of their sociocultural and communicative differences, thus coordinate to adapt their language to achieve mutual understanding.

> … one could claim that ELF communication has at least two dimensions to it:
> the language level, how speakers use ELF, and the content level, what

speakers want to convey with their utterances. Comprehension can sometimes be more easily achieved through collaboration and mutual help, and this cooperative tendency has indeed frequently been pointed out as a feature of ELF talk. (Wolfartsberger and Vienna 2009: 209)

However, once problems of understanding arise, notably when concerning the successful completion of the exchanges, various means are strategically employed to maintain the mutual intelligibility. In a more recent and relevant research, Pitzl (2010) examined the interactional management ELF speakers used to resolve, and in some cases, to prevent miscommunication in the international business setting. Her extensive pragmatically oriented analysis exhibites the structural and interactional development of the negotiation process, in other words, what procedures participants had at their disposal to indicate the non-understandings and how they interactionally managed these understanding problems. As she argued, while the attitude towards indication in some studies in CA is fairy rigid, i.e. those avoid (direct) indication are alleged to conceal something on purpose, indication in her study is more understood as adaptive from encounter to encounter. In her sense, the decision to indicate or avoid is influenced by the two prime factors: "activity-type and face considerations" (p. 36). For example, in the event where concrete and precise information is valued, there is hardly a room for a lack of clarity (Vasseur, Broeder and Roberts 1996: 71), whereas a casual talk among friends does not hold such requirement. Nonetheless, Pitzl reminds that "in interactions which feature a strong interpersonal component, face considerations may override the need for clarification" (p. 36). She further argues that the face-threatening which is an effect of an indication of non-understanding is not a matter of concern only in NNS and NS interactions, but is also relevant in ELF and NS-NS interactions. On the concrete level, "participants relative power and competence in relation to their co-participants are certainly variables at play here", rules of etiquette are therefore present as a mean to "mitigate or inhibit the direct indication of non-understanding" (Pitzl 2010: 36-37). In this light, Vasseur et al. (1996) suggest that as far as the shared understanding is concerned, it is crucial that participants find the "flexible, adaptive and effective use of the indicating procedures in an emerging context" (p.89). With regard her analysis, Pitzl has presented various strategic procedures, e.g. reformulation or reprise, that ELF speakers employ to indicate, more or less explicitly, the non-understandings and their interactionally management of these miscommunication, e.g. request for clarification, formulating response or hypothesis. As a whole, she observes that while some

negotiation of meaning could be resolved within short sequences, there are some other "high involvement sequences" where participants need to put an active contribution to the joint negotiation of meaning; or the complex sequences which exemplify how participants successfully manage multiple non-understandings.

The strategies used in the negotiation of meaning process have been examined in a considerable number of studies. These strategies could be found in different circumstances, that is, those employed regardless of any signal of understanding problem but likely to construct meaning and/or prevent non-understanding and the acts performed after the communication problem arises aiming to resolve the non-understanding.

3.2.1   Accommodation

Recent studies on ELF pragmatics have been dedicated specifically to the accommodation strategy, and how the users construct and negotiate understanding. Accommodation, a process whereby speakers tailor themselves towards discourse or practices they are not familiar with (Kankaanranta and Lu 2013), is the necessary communicative competence of ELF interactions that is generally agreed on by ELF researchers. For example, Pullin (2015) indicated that effective speakers of BELF are those who "have the ability to exploit their linguistic and cultural resources, in using communication strategies to accommodate and adapt to their interlocutors and negotiate meaning and understanding" (p.34).

The concept of accommodation was first discussed by Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991) who developed the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to account for a strategy whereby individuals "adapt to each other's communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic/prosodic/non-vocal features" (p.63) to modify the complexity of speech (e.g. to opt for simplified vocabulary and syntax) and increase clarity (by changing speech pitch, loudness, resorting to repetition, clarification checks, and so on; p. 88). For example, Indian global software development team members in Hinds et al.'s (2014) analysis of the interplay between a company's lingua franca policy and subgroup dynamics were observed to show adaptive and empathic responses when dealing with their German colleagues who were not fluent in English. They were reported to empathise with their co-workers' struggles with the language mandate and tried to alter their action accordingly by using easier words, speaking more slowly, as well as listening more carefully, for instance.

Giles, Coupland, and Coupland argued that the accommodation process involves both parties. Thus, whilst the speakers need to be able to adapt or adjust their speech to their particular interlocutors, the listeners, on the other hand, are necessarily called to have a sense of tolerance to the linguistic diversity of the speakers and be capable of adjusting their expectations appropriately. The significant role of accommodation in ELF interactions was first discussed thoroughly in Jenkins' work in 2000. As ELF scholars repeatedly highlighted, the three main characteristics of ELF: fluidity, flexibility, and variability are truly the assets in ELF communication which bring strength to international/intercultural encounters. In other words, ELF interaction is based on its inherent variability (Firth 2009: 162), which increases the repertoire of languages that users depend on. It is therefore essential for the users of any kinds of English to draw on their communicative resources and to adjust to the intercultural communication demands (Seildhofer 2011). As she elaborated, accomplished communicators are those who "regularly modify their language in different settings in order to accommodate to their interlocutors and to facilitate intelligibility" (Seidlhofer 2011: 81). The statement was strongly advocated by Cogo (2012) who observed that ELF is a social phenomenon which is shaped and shared through collaboration among users, "successful ELF communication thus relies on crucial adaptive accommodation skills along with appreciation and acceptance of diversity" (Cogo 2009: 270). For example, Darawong and Igel's (2012) research showed how the Thai employees in MNCs subsidiaries in Thailand adapted themselves to their multicultural team's working practice in an attempt to meet the project goals. For example, while the Thai's seniority values were likely to prevent them from making their own decisions but ensured they follow the instruction of their seniors, they opted to accommodate themselves to their foreign co-workers by participating in decision-making and freely and confidently expressing ideas regardless of age, gender, and position. The action was reported to have benefits on both their task performance (more effective results) and interpersonal relationships (a better coordination).

> American work values are very useful for me to perform NPD tasks. I have changed the way I work in NPD projects. I have more confidence in making decision and I am more creative in developing new product ideas. When problems occur I can find a solution in time. (Darawong and Igel 2012: 15)

In addition, their interpersonal relationships were reported to be stronger. They had positive feelings and higher job commitment and satisfaction in working with

both Asian and Western expatriates, as confirmed by a Thai manager in a Japanese firm as follows:

> When I can adjust myself with a Japanese boss, we have a good relationship that makes my boss treat me well and support me in all matters. It makes me feel secure and confident in expressing my own opinion in regard to NPD tasks. I can openly talk to him about any problem at work. As a consequence, all NPD tasks can be accomplished well. (Darawong and Igel 2012: 16)

Conversely, difficulties are often visible in situations where NS or speakers from the Outer Circles try to adhere to the same language paradigm they use for local domestic purposes and do not recognise the necessity of adaptation in the international sphere (Guido 2008; Wright 2009; Seildhofer 2011). The important point to be stressed here is that accommodation is not solely a reserve of NNS, as Jenkins (2011) argued, since NS are not excluded from ELF communication, they are therefore forced to be using ELF "as an additionally acquired language system" like NNS to achieve successful ELF interactions, "rather than assuming their traditional role as norm providers" (p.927). There is evidence, although very little, that native speakers are aware of the need for accommodation in their international business encounters; for example, Rogerson-Revell (2010) suggested that some NS participants from her study seemed to intuitively recognise the need to adjust their language to accommodate to the NNS, such as speaking slowly and loudly or using simple words as seen in some extracts from survey responses below:

> I try to speak slowly and clearly and avoid nuances, metaphors or unusual words (but don't always succeed)

> Yes, choose simpler words, shorter sentences

> Yes. It is necessary to 1) speak quite slowly 2) speak clearly 3) avoid jargon 4) repeat ideas more than once in different ways 5) relate what you are saying to other people's culture and situation

> Yes – for some who are less fluent in English. Usually speak a little slower, take care with articulation, try to avoid idioms or colloquialisms which might not be familiar to non-native speakers (p. 442)

Nonetheless, this was not always the case from Rogerson-Revell's study, as some NNS argued that the accommodation practice was practically non-existent on the

part of NS participants and this often led to linguistic difficulties, as one explained:

> Of course, I think I should improve my English, especially in international business contexts but I also think that native English speakers should make greater efforts (actually, most of them do none) in order to be properly understood by non-native English speakers. (Rogerson-Revell 2010: 441)

A similar account is also presented by Frankin (2007) who reported on the German managers' complaints about their British colleagues' lack of lingua-franca skills, i.e. the inability or unwillingness to take account of the fact that the German managers did not have a native-speaker competence in English. The British did not adjust their use of their mother tongue to the lower level of competence in English of their German colleagues. For example, one German manager noted of his British colleagues: "The English aren't always sympathetic to Germans when they speak English. To begin with, the English speak slowly, but then fall back into speaking the same speed and slang as if the listener is a native." (2007: 273)

Many studies have documented that an absence of accommodation on the side of NS can lead to communicative difficulties as well as trigger suspicion and resentment among the NNS. For example, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) revealed that participants in their study felt unequal and uncomfortable seeing native speakers able to fully exploit their mother tongue and thus gain the upper hand. These findings are in line with Ehrenreich (2010) who reported on the majority of informants' frustration about NS's frequent use of their native competence as an instrument of power, a fact they found extremely irritating. They also described NS as fairly inconsiderate interlocutors with apparently little accommodation skill which frequently caused problems, especially in a situation of conflict.

Neeley (2013) has portrayed similar conflicts arising in an international French high-tech corporation in which the vast majority of NNS expressed their resentment and distrust of their NS counterparts who seemed to exploit their linguistic advantage unfairly. The following quotes illustrate their subtle pejorative attitudes towards the NS:

> In short, NNS are irritated that NS show no accommodative effort in the interactions, and that for them, "business was still business as usual" (p.485).

It's not fair that we adapt to native speakers and they don't have to adapt to anybody.

Working with natives from UK is sometimes stressful, as they don't predict that others may not speak so fluent English. They often don't care to use simpler English or to speak a bit slower to be better understood. (p.487)

Interestingly, much of the empirical research has revealed that communication among linguistically and culturally diverse NNS themselves is reported to be easier and more comfortable. The plausible delineation, as Seidlhofer (2011) described, is "people from the Expanding Circle, for whom the language is not so intricately bound up with communal significance, usually find it easier to employ it as a lingua franca resource" (p. 81). Neeley (2013) advocated that NNS employees share compassionate feelings and perceive a sense of parity in the communication in which they experience commonality of being a second-language users of the lingua franca. In this sense, they have defined their interactions as "a cooperative effort among equals", as one informant concedes that he and his colleague in Poland speak 'broken English' and both make a lot of mistakes but "that's OK because we manage together" (p. 486).

Lexical innovation in ELF (words that are not affirmed in ENL) is perhaps the most salient process of enhancing clarity that ELF users rely on (Seidlhofer 2011). Its process, as Seidlhofer argued, carries the same principle as ENL, i.e., new words arise and are flexibly exploited in response to the communication need "whether or not this results in codified and accepted words/forms" (p. 102).

When we are talking English with Spanish, Italian, and German people, we are creating our own language in a way, for the intonation, the grammatical rules … in a way, we are emerging a new kind of English. (Neeley 2013: 486)

In short, the empirical studies in this section have shed new light on the re-conceptualisation of 'pragmatic fluency' and found that the term fluent speakers means those who are capable of accommodating to their interlocutors and successful interactions require the collaboration of both speakers and listeners.

3.2.2   Let it pass

Among the earliest studies of ELF pragmatic strategies was Firth's (1996) investigation of international business telephone conversations. The general findings of his study revealed that successful and meaningful interactions were achieved through various strategies. For example, it manifested the frequent use

of 'Make-it-normal' where the hearer skilfully focuses on the content and "make the other's abnormal talk (e.g. the non-standard usage) appear normal" (Firth 1996: 245); or the 'Let it pass' strategy, which identifies the case in which the hearer allows the unclear utterances or grammatical infidelities pass "on the (common-sense) assumption that it will either become clear or redundant as talk progresses" (p.243). The 'Let it pass' strategy has been documented in a number of studies as a commonly-employed resource in ELF interactions.

Deterding (2013) confirmed the function of the strategy in his study where participants let the problematic messages pass hoping they would become clear later. The strategy was described by Meierkord (2012) as a means to make the interaction normal and achieve successful communication. Meanwhile, Mauranen (2006) argued that speakers in her case study of academic discussions did not let vague messages or potentially incorrect understanding pass (p. 135). The concentration on task/content over form is more prevalent in business situations. It is suggested that BELF participants appear to be less interested in the 'form' of the other's talk, given the rare use of resources such as 'other-repair' and the strong focus on communicative effectiveness (Gramkow Andresen, 1993; Firth 1996). Firth (2009) provided evidence of interactional supportive behaviour in his investigation of ELF in the international business-related telephone calls where interactants skilfully demonstrated their effective communication, whereby the focus was on 'task-as-target' rather than '(standard) linguistic-form-as-target'. By concentrating on the message, they could produce fluent discourse with an orderly turn-taking, i.e. no evidence of overlaps and relative few gaps, regardless of their 'non-standard' language forms such as omission of 's' on the third person verbs singular, etc. Obviously, the non-conformities or linguistic infidelities do not prevent all parties from accomplishing their duties. Instead, what happens is the interactants tolerate the emerging non-standard production while co-constructing meaningful interactions, which were the quality of their "interactional work" as he termed it (Firth 1996: 256). In SLA or EFL studies, such non-standard forms might be described as deficiency or 'unstable' competence, by contrast, the linguistic variety and diversity in the analysis appear to be normal and routine processes. Firth (2009) argued that ELF users are influenced by local interactional exigencies and requirements to accommodate or attune to their co-interactants in a bid to avoid ambiguity or miscommunications which appears to be particularly crucial in business communications. Indeed, ELF participants make use of their multilingual experiences to deal with variable forms of language. Consequently, they are able to share each other's language forms.

3.2.3   Code-switching

Although English is the main language in ELF interaction, items from other languages are not necessarily absent. Users' mother tongues are most often found where participants share L1 resulting in the common occurrence of code-switching. Code-switching is a phenomenon in which a bilingual speaker shifts from one language to another in the course of a conversation (Auer 2000; Harzing, Köster and Magner 2011). While its perceived function is often associated with a restricted code, (signalling the speaker's linguistic deficiency), a great deal of research has presented it as a much more positive phenomenon, namely "an expression of the bilingual or multilingual competence of the participants being able to draw on their multifaceted linguistic repertoire" (Cogo 2009: 263). House (2016) showed how a German professor switched to his L1 automatically and subconsciously to resolve his limitation in ELF, knowing his two interlocutors knew the language. This is in line with Cogo and House (2018) who observed that code-switching "usually occur as second-pair parts of an exchange, often expressed with reduced monitoring of one's own production, i.e., automatically and with little conscious control" (p. 219).

Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) noted that code-switching is particularly visible as one of the communication strategies in multinational workplaces where language choice is dynamically negotiated between the interactants to successfully carry out job-related tasks. Participants therefore perceive it as a bilingual communication strategy enabling them to cross linguistic borders which are a part of their daily life at work. For example, Nikko (2007) observed that code-switching was a common practice in all meetings of a Finnish–Swedish merger and served as a natural tool to overcome language problems. Wolfartsberger and Vienna (2009) indicated, similarly, that code-switching was an apparent choice in their study where the meeting participants drew on their multilingual resources at their disposal to ask for help in word-searching situations. As they suggested, the strategy reportedly received effective collaboration from other interlocutors who immediately offered help and suggestions. Similar observations were made by Poncini (2003) who showed how participants used language switching to ensure there was pertinent and accurate information or to increase common ground and build relations in their international business meetings. Her analysis illustrated instances of participants switching language to remind the speaker to provide the missing issues, or to suggest a term if the speaker seemed hesitant. On other occasions, Poncini observed that code-switching could fulfil a face-saving function

where a team member used mother tongue to address the speaker to re-clarify the issue when noticing that understanding was not reached by the customers. By doing this, he could avoid drawing attention to the distributors' lack of understanding or to the speaker's inability to deliver a clear explanation.

This also suggests that although English is commonly used as a lingua franca in international business, other languages are not necessarily completely left out from the context. Multilingual communicative competence, as argued by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012), can enhance communicative success where individuals who know or choose to learn other languages spoken within the organisation are perceived as more cooperative communicators than monolinguals. Although the actual use of other languages might be small, its significance is highlighted as a tool to learn new cultures, new ways of seeing things, and help creating rapport with the communication partners (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Piekkari et al. 2005; Ehrenreich 2010; Angouri 2013). Cogo (2009) advocated that code-switching can indeed encourage cooperation; for example, by converging to use the interlocutor's mother tongue to express the willingness and enthusiasm to cooperate and engage in the interactions. She also observed that it can be used to signal speakers' views, values, and identities. In addition, Cogo noted that ELF speakers sometimes use a third language code-switching, which is a 'normal' and 'unmarked' practice of language choice in the multilingual and multicultural community, as a tool to signal solidarity and membership of the same community. Indeed, trust is reported to be established through a speaker's effort to speak the language of other team members in certain situations or in small talk (Ehrenreich 2010; Pullin 2015). Ehrenreich's (2010) study, for example, showed that the choice of using the Russian language in slides over English to support Russian visitors' comprehension or using clients' mother tongue for greeting and small talk in the meetings was not only beneficial for the sake of understanding, but also exhibited consideration and an attempt to maintain relationships with the business partners. In a similar vein, Sriussadaporn (2006) indicated that while Thai employees in her study were required to enhance their English competence, expatriates were also encouraged to learn some Thai language as it would impress Thai employees and be especially beneficial in the manufacturing plant where most Thai workers cannot speak English.

In short, it is apparent that the multilingual strategies have served various ends: sharing users' sense of non-nativeness, collaborating on meaning construction, and creating a sense of intercultural community membership or identity (Cogo

and House 2018: 219-220). In other words, multilingual resources enhance the accommodation practices to the extent that they provide speakers with an opportunity to demonstrate their cultural identities, and create a sense of community membership while adapting their linguistic repertoires to ensure effective communication.

3.2.4   Signaling non-understanding

Pitzl (2005) indicated that when a non-understanding occurs at least one interactant notices that there is a lack of shared understanding. Essentially, this interactant then has two immediate choices: s/he can indicate the non-understanding and possibly initiate a negotiation of meaning or s/he can avoid indication and adopt a 'let it pass' strategy (Firth (1996). Cogo and Pitzl (2016), however, highlighted that the crucial point, which is often overlooked, of the clarification of the distinction between non-understanding and misunderstanding. As they described:

> A non-understanding refers to those instances in communication where one or more participants in a conversation realize(s) that there is a gap in understanding, i.e. someone notices that understanding is not shared by all participants. Since at least one participant in an interaction is aware of this, speakers have the choice to indicate a non-understanding at the time it occurs, a fact that is vital from a language teaching perspective, as we shall discuss later. A misunderstanding, in contrast, usually refers to an understanding problem that only surfaces retrospectively, by accident (if at all). It cannot be indicated or negotiated immediately because no participant is aware of its existence when it happens. (p.2)

3.2.4.1   Repetition

When participants opt to signal a problem with understanding, they use different kinds of questions namely, direct/indirect questions or a repetition (Mauranen 2006a). The indication could range from the indirect and minimal question such as 'hm?' to a more explicit and direct question. Self-repetition and other-repetition, either word-for-word or rephrasing, can serve multiple functions, i.e., to put a spotlight on and pre-empt the potential non-understanding and to resolve emerging communication problems (e.g. Cogo 2009; House 2002, 2010;

Mauranen 2012). Its explicitness-fostering function has stood out in a number of studies (e.g. Kaur 2012; Gotti 2014; Lichtkoppler 2007). Repetition is seen to be frequently employed, aiming to either check comprehension or to request a clarification, e.g. of the term's meaning which is, in both cases, generally accompanied by rising/interrogative intonation (Pitzl 2013). For example, in Mauranen's (2012) study, the repetition utilised by the participants demonstrates its various functions, e.g. emphasising the agreement, fostering the explicitness of the message. She further argued that some specific types of repetition can provide 'added value' to the extent that it underlines the speaker's stance which contributes to the increased level of clearness and explicitness.

3.2.4.2   Asking explicit question

The indirect question and repetition do not, however, always complete their jobs due to their minimal incomprehension signals. While the minimal and unfocused signal 'hm?' might be effective for the non-understanding which is on a very small scale, one could argue that it seems to provide little indication of what is unclear to the speaker, (the same goes with repetition). Although its signal is more informative in the sense that the source of the problem is indicated, it leaves interlocutors with alternative interpretations in which the clarification might not match the need. In brief, Mauranen advised that despite participants' attempts to not let potential misunderstanding pass, these seemingly redundant questions reflect the need for greater specification, which subsequently prompts speakers to expand it into a direct question, i.e. an explicit request for clarification. Repetition can serve this purpose by using slightly adapted crucial words (e.g. 'you mean …?'), or alternatively, speakers may opt to reformulate the question (e.g. 'are you saying…?' or 'did I understand right?') or to submit a hypothetical meaning (Mauranen 2006a; Pitzl 2013). By doing the latter, Pitzl (2013) stated this points towards the participants' considerable part in the joint negotiation work where they choose to shape the negotiation sequences rather than simply request an explanation.

In other situations, such as a word-search moment, speakers might pose an explicit question like appealing for help. Wolfartsberger and Vienna (2009) found that this particular strategy was mainly employed in their investigation of the internal meetings in a large Austrian bank. The form of appeals for help could be unspecific such as 'please help me', or 'now how could I say that' or by addressing one person (individual) or several of them (collective), e.g. 'Sophie please help me' (p. 58).

3.2.4.3   Interactional elements

ELF pragmatic research also shows ELF participants' discourse skills, such as discourse markers or back-channel items serving different functions in managing information and marking interpersonal relations. Referring to her ELFA corpus, Mauranen (2009) observed that interactive elements have been used for various purposes, e.g. organising topics, managing turn sequences, or showing speaker's stance. For example, House (2009) noted that the expression 'you know' is interpreted in ELF talk as a strategic way of highlighting difficulties in turn formulation and coherence marking, signalling own speech repairing, and preparing ground for processing output. It represents more of a focusing strategy rather than interpersonal function; the adversative phrase is expressed on its own or sometimes co-occurs with conjunctions but, and, because. The function of 'I mean,' along the same lines, in ELF talk is a focalizing device to present the weight of the speaker's subjective opinion over its main role of clarification in NS interaction. In the meantime, the marker 'so' is used differently in ELF interaction as a speaker-supportive device rather than an interpersonal marker, helping the speaker prepare ground for the coming turn as well as looking backward at previous discourse (Cogo and House 2018: 216).

Although early work of intercultural pragmatics showed limited use of back-channelling items by NNS speakers, backchannels commonly occur in recent studies (e.g. Cogo 2009; Kalocsai 2011) as a strategy to indicate turn support, signal attentiveness, or a face-saving device. For example, there is a difference between the markers 'yes' and 'yeah'. In Thai, 'yes' suggests an agreement while, on the other hand, 'yeah' indicates attentiveness and time gaining when it occurs at the beginning of the turn, and signals positive emphasis when used at the end of the utterance (Baumgarten and House 2010a).

3.2.5   Responding to the understanding problem

There are various ways exploited by ELF participants in response to an indication of understanding problems. This section is, however, largely based on the findings of Pitzl's (2013) investigation of ELF business meetings. Pitzl observed that for problematic issues, notably, those of a relatively small scale, a minimal affirmative response (e.g. 'yeah') or a reprise of the crucial word seem to be sufficient, while an alternative term is adopted for a related-semantic non-understanding. If the non-understanding might still exist, a reformulation of the response, which can account for two possible interpretations, will be skilfully

constructed, or the speaker might opt to re-clarify the issue to provide a more elaborate answer. For the interest of preciseness of the information, a high involvement strategy was always shown in the analysis. Pitzl illustrated how participants did not hesitate to enter into the re-negotiation process in order to achieve greater understanding. This could be done by providing further explanation despite the non-appearance of the request or by providing a re-elaboration of the other's discourse when noticing that those answers were not precise and elaborate enough (ibid).

3.2.5.1   Pre-Emption

In attempts to negotiate meaning, moves are found to take place both before and after the communication problems arise, i.e. pre-emption signals, such as comprehension checks and paraphrasing, which act as a proactive step to prevent any non-understanding problems that might arise (Cogo and Dewey 2012). This is for the benefit of increasing explicitness, which serves an important source of other emerging strategies, resulting in improved understanding (House and Lévy-Tödter 2010).

Pre-emption can come into play in a conversation related to idiomatic expressions. This was exemplified in Cogo and Dewey's study in which a Japanese idiom "stepping on the stones" (p. 131) was introduced. The speaker seemed to be aware that this was culturally bound and might appear strange to the interlocutor from a different cultural background. (S)he hence opted to provide a cue prior to the expression and was ready to engage in a pre-empting work, yielding a confirmation and additional explanation of the interlocutor's comprehension check. This is to note that comprehension checks and paraphrases prove to be useful pre-empting strategies in checking, and elsewhere in enhancing or securing participants' understanding by drawing speakers into a constant collaboration, particularly when an explicit signal of non-understanding does not appear (Cogo and House 2018: 213).

Another important pre-emptive strategy is self-initiated repair. This is used in the pursuit of meaning negotiation where speakers undertake a 'repairing' of their own speech as soon as they spot a potential problem (Cogo and House 2018). The strategy showcases the users' self-awareness and self-monitoring of the competence of their own speech production which they perceive as in error and requiring a repair (House and Lévy-Tödter 2010).

3.2.6   Simultaneous speech

More recent studies have reflected a growing consensus on the positive aspect of simultaneous speech in ELF interactions to which its traditional uncooperative and problematic characteristics have become the collaborative overlaps. Wolfartberger's (2011) analysis of forms and functions of simultaneous speech in ELF business meetings corroborated these findings, suggesting its supportive functions, such as 'pre-emptive completions' or assistance in word-searching situations where listeners notice some lexical gap the speakers are experiencing and immediately offer help.

Nevertheless, it is evident that not all instances of simultaneous speech serve collaborative functions, particularly in business meetings where purposes and goals of interactions are different from those of ELF small-talk. She argued that participants at times exploit simultaneous talk for more competitive purposes rather than for interactional collaboration. Their interruptions illustrated strong disagreement and even dispute, which led to the assumption that in an ELF business context such as meetings or negotiations, potential face-threatening or controversial topics are least likely to be avoided, therefore, participants seemed to be aware of being confronted with conflicts.

One of its forms could appear through the use of backchannels, e.g. 'mhm', 'yeah', 'absolutely', which seem to function as both supportive and interrupted (Wolfartberger 2009). On the one hand, speakers use them to signal listenership and encourage the current speaker to continue, on the other hand, they serve to prepare the ground for an interruption and claim of ownership of the turn or to express one's impatience.

The literature review ends in this chapter, which has illustrated the significant and relevant pragmatic strategies in ELF business interactions in particular. This therefore forms a basis for the analysis of this study. Next, the methodological framework will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 4: Methodology

What have been presented so far were the rationale and background of the study and a detailed discussion of the relevant literature. This chapter will then illustrate the research methods employed in the study. I will first outline the objectives and the research questions, then, discuss the overall methodology. The explanation of data collection methods, research instrument and data collection procedures will be thoroughly discussed.

4.1   The aim of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore how the Thai business professionals achieve successful communication with foreign partners/colleagues, from the countries in Asia in particular, through the use of English as a common language by observing a number of business meetings in three companies located in Thailand and its international office in Singapore. To gain a deeper understanding, semi-structure interviews were also conducted with a good amount of the meeting participants. My research questions revolve around two primary issues.

The first research question is: *How ELF participants work together through different pragmatic strategies to reach successful international business meetings?* It aims to explore how the multilingual-cultural participants negotiate the meaning, how they manage to reach the successful communication through the use of English language, e.g. how they construct mutual understanding or deal with understanding problems when it emerges. It therefore gives rise to another two sub-questions: (1a): *What pragmatic strategies are used in the business meetings?*; and *How do the participants organize the interaction in the business meetings?* To seek the answer, I would attend and observe a number of international meetings in three different international companies in Thailand to see how the participants ensure successful meetings through a variety of pragmatic strategies and how do they deal with the resources that they have in their negotiation of the meeting. The types of the meetings are not specified to ensure the proper sampling number and to encourage the variations of the information obtained. So basically, it should consist of either, or both, of the formal and informal meetings from different department concerning different subjects within the area of business.

The second research question concerns the participants' perspectives of what makes their business meetings successful and how they feel about their use of English as a tool for international communication. The research question is: *What from the participants' perspectives contribute to successful communication in international meeting?*, with one sub-question: *What is participants' perspective on their use of English as a lingua franca in international communication?* The purpose is to find out how the participants perceived of the use of ELF in business context in general (e.g. what characteristics regarded as important or unnecessary in the authentic business interactions) and how they perceived their own performances in particular (e.g. what they perceived as enhancing the successful communication). This question would be based on the semi-structure interviews as well as some insights emerging from the meetings. By doing this, it would help promote the deeper insights into participants' opinions and perspectives which subsequently widen the scope of understanding.

4.2   Research resign

4.2.1   Qualitative research

Qualitative approach is adopted as my primary approach to enter the research settings and investigate social and communicational practices of the business people in the case companies. Qualitative research is widely adopted in a number of separate disciplines. It is "an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field; crosscuts the humanities, as well as the social and the physical sciences" (Nelson et al. 1992: 4). These variations and multiple uses result in its state of non-occupied distinct theory or paradigm and make it a difficult task for researchers to provide a single clear definition (Denzin and Lincoln (2011). Still, many scholars have attempted to make a comprehensive definition to reflect the phenomenon and complexity of the qualitative study: Denzin and Lincoln (2005) put that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.3); the old but yet succinct definition of Maanen (1979) who states that qualitative research is "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (p. 520); or Merriam (2014) who argues that qualitative research concentrates on the meaning people

have constructed in the context, that is, "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p.14).

> Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences For example, rather than finding out how many retired folks take on part-time jobs after retirement, which could be done through a survey, we might be more interested in how people adjust to retirement, how they think about this phase of their lives, the process they engaged in when moving from full-time work to retirement, and so on. (Merriam 2014: 6)

While all types of qualitative research share common assumptions and characteristics in a multitude of ways, making them falling under the umbrella concept of 'qualitative', the designs, focuses or procedures of a particular study are still varied in the fields and disciplinary base (Merriam 2014). Cresswell (2007) discussed that many researchers have tried to classify the variations of forms, strategies or procedures to qualitative research, there is however no consensus as to how these classifications should be actually conducted. For example, Patton (2002) presents sixteen theoretical traditions in doing the qualitative research (some of which share common characteristics with ethnography and grounded theory, or some are similar to semiotics and chaos theory); Denzin and Lincoln (2005) propose six strategies as (1) case study, (2) ethnography, (3) grounded theory, (4) life and narrative methods, (5) participatory research, and (6) clinical research; or Cresswell (2007) who suggests five approaches as (1) narrative research, (2) phenomenology, (3) grounded theory, (4) ethnography, and (5) case study.

Nonetheless, Merriam (2014) observes that the most common type of qualitative research usually employed in applied fields of practice such as administration, health, business, or particular in education is a basic, interpretive study in which she labels as *a basic qualitative study* (p.22). *A basic qualitative study*, in her explanation, seeks understanding of "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p.23); in a nutshell its primary aim is to "uncover and interpret these meanings" (p.24). The collection of the data is typically carried out through interviews, observations, and documents in which the results are likely to be richly descriptive and manifested as themes or categories.

To delineate the nature of qualitative study, Merriam (2014) has identified four major characteristics agreed by most qualitative researchers. First is to focus on the meaning people attribute to their experiences and to achieve an understanding from participants' perspectives of the meaning-making and the interpretation process rather than looking at the outcome or product. As Patton (2005) has stated, the purpose of the analysis is to seek a depth of understanding in the participants' unique situations and contexts, the nature of that setting, not to predict what may happen in the future. "The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" serves as a second key characteristic of all forms of qualitative research (Merriam 2014: 15). This means that the human's ability to conduct an immediate response and adaptation can be ideal tools for the data collection and analysis where the researcher can work out, clarify and summarize the information instantly as well as verify the accuracy with the respondents and so on. Regarding the biases or subjectivities that might arise on a basis of this human instrument, Merriam suggests that the researcher identifies and monitors them as to how they may be influencing the interpretation rather than trying to eliminate them. The third crucial characteristic contributes to an inductive process; the process in which the researchers collect data from the fieldworks through the observations, interviews or documents and take those bits and pieces of information and intuitive understandings derived from the particular situation and practice to build concepts, themes, theories and so on. However, as Merriam points out, this is not to suggest that qualitative researchers will enter the fieldwork with a blank mind, instead they are designated by a discipline-specific theoretical framework. Likewise, Schensul et al. (1999) argue that the formative theory will help researchers to pinpoint the initial direction and focus of observations and interviews early in the research; as not everything could be captured in the field notes and records, theoretical framework is thus helping in determining what should be included and what should be ruled out in observation. Still, as they further argue, in spite of the well-developed formative theory and questions, researchers should keep an open mind for the generation of new hypotheses during the course of field site and be aware to modify the theory to serve with any new directions the research might lead to. The last major characteristic introduced by Merriam is the rich description of a product of a qualitative inquiry, including quotes and excerpts collected from documents, field notes, interviews or other electronic devices which enhance the findings of the study.

4.2.1.1   Using multiple methods

It is of great importance to have some idea of what you want to discover and a plan for carrying it out when starting a research study (Merriam 2014). As Brewer (2000) defines, research design is 'the strategic plan of the project that sets out the broad structure of the research' and a requisite for all kinds of research (p.57). It is "a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions" (Yin 2008: 26). A good research design enhances the data collection process in several ways, such as helping researchers in identifying research site, participant sampling or the proper methods to be used in each stage as well as overriding inevitable contingencies occurring in the field (Johnson and Hruschka, 1998).

Qualitative research is intrinsically multimethod in focus (Flick 2007); and the choice for multiple methods, or triangulation, displays an endeavour to elicit an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Brewer (2000) suggests that the research process can be effectively designed by carefully selecting from the range data collection techniques available or using triangulation and multiple methods. Although it is not unusual for researchers in every field to begin the study with biases and preconceived notions, Fetterman (2010) purposes that an openness to modes of thoughts and perspectives leads to richer exploratory and untapped sources of data which are not included in the research design whereas uncontrolled bias can undermine the quality of ethnographic research. The issues of bias and objectivity have long been the focus among critics of ethnography over decades (Murchison, 2010) and even though a complete avoidance of subjectivity is hardly possible in practice, it can be minimized by the use of constraints and guidelines of the methodology (Saville-Troike, 2008). Regarding the issues, Johnson (1998) advocates that researchers should aim to develop and implement measures that minimize bias and threats to validity by selecting appropriate methodological and analytical checks which implies considering using more than one investigator in data collection for factual accuracy and verifiable and reliable data, putting that 'the research design process is highly sceptical of meeting criteria stated above by relying exclusively on a single ethnographer and his or her memory or field notes as the single instrument of measurement' (p. 103). It is observable that selective observation or selective recording of information often induce bias which poses a great threat to research validity. Chatman (1992) also proposes that an additional

technique should be used in data collection to attain the findings accuracy, for instant in her study she uses notes and an interview guide to complement with the observational method which helps her reflect more accurate data. Similarly, Lonsmann (2011) chooses to use a combination of methods in her investigation of English as a corporate language in a Danish company. She found that participation observation and ethnographic interviews help her in gaining insight on the linguistic and social practices. At the second stage she uses self-recordings method and emails to study the language choice and lastly she opts for focus group interviews to look at language ideologies. She argues that the use of several methods helps feed into each other and increase the analytic value of the study, e.g. participant observation brings her important topics and hypotheses while focus group interviews are used to investigate those hypotheses further. The approach is strongly advocated by Rock (2001) who indicates that:

One must observe as many parts of the social setting and as many participants as one can. One must sample the world theoretically for its systematic contrasts. One must engage in what Denzin called triangulation, checking everything, getting multiple documentation, getting multiple *kinds* of documentation, so that evidence does not rely on a single voice, so that data can become embedded in their contexts, so that data can be compared. (p.34)

Qualitative research encompasses a wide variety of research methods and techniques to be applied in different circumstances for the effective results. To overcome the principle concerns over the insufficient validity of the research which is likely to be triggered by the use of single source of data, my study primarily employs a combination of four qualitative methods to work through different stages of data collection. The process would move in a cyclical pattern throughout the course my fieldwork i.e., during each meeting audio recording, observation and field notes are used as the initial stage to collect data on the linguistic practices, and after the end of each meeting qualitative open-ended interviews would be adopted as a later phrase to investigate participants' perspectives which helped increase the depth of understanding. While I choose audio recording to encompass the entire meeting interactions, relying on a single source of information does not allow me to explain things with a sense of clarity, but only what I have observed. It is necessary that I present at the meetings to witness the authentic situations and interact with informants. For this reason I opt for the method of observation to enhance more engagement in the fieldwork with participants so that I could see the true nature of their business interaction and

explore the phenomenon from different perspectives for a better understanding and more interpretation of the information obtained. Furthermore, whilst observing the meetings I also use field notes to jot down contextual information and unworded events as a complementary method. As concern the second research question, qualitative interview is adopted as a method of choice. I would carry out the interview based on semi-structure questions with the volunteers of each business meeting I have attended to broaden more intelligibility and gain the deeper insights into their opinions and perspectives. In all these respects, by using four different data collection tools, I could receive not only more data but also the data on the same subject from different perspective which in consequence increase the reliability and validity of the study. The details of each method will be thoroughly explained in the following chapters.

4.2.2   Sampling

Meticulous attention to sampling is essential in field research as a particular source of potential threats to validity is often due to errors in sampling and informant selection. The selection of study population is primarily guided by research objective and to do that, researchers, as Guest (2015) puts it, should put questions to themselves what scope is feasible within their timeline and the resources they have in hands; or in other words, staring from making a full lists of people who have potentiality to inform their research objectives and from there, expanding or whittling down the range of roles or stakeholders that are able to include in the study. While quantitative research often uses fairly large and random sampling, the choice for the sample in qualitative research is usually purposeful, small and non-random; moreover, qualitative researchers are often required to spend a substantial amount of time in the field with intense involvement with the respondents (Merriam and Tisdell 2015). Merriam (2014) clarifies two basic types of sampling as probability and nonprobability. As she goes on, probability sampling is more drawn on in a quantitative study as it can provide the generalization to the results whereas nonprobability sampling methods are widely chosen in most qualitative research. Nonprobability sampling is logical for the researcher who seeks to answer qualitative problems, such as the implications of the phenomena and the relationships connect with them (Honigmann 1982). Purposeful (Patton 2002) sampling, or criterion-based selection (LeCompte and Preissle1993) is seen to be the most common form of the method where the selection of the sample is based on the information-rich cases, i.e. those who can provide "a great deal about issues of central importance

to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton 2002: 230). LeCompte and Preissle argue that the establishment on the criteria essential in selecting the sampling, the people or sites, to be studied will directly reflect the goals of the study and help in identifying the information-rich cases.

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         │ Research question 1:│             │ Research question 2:│
         │ Pragmatic strategies│             │    Perspectives     │
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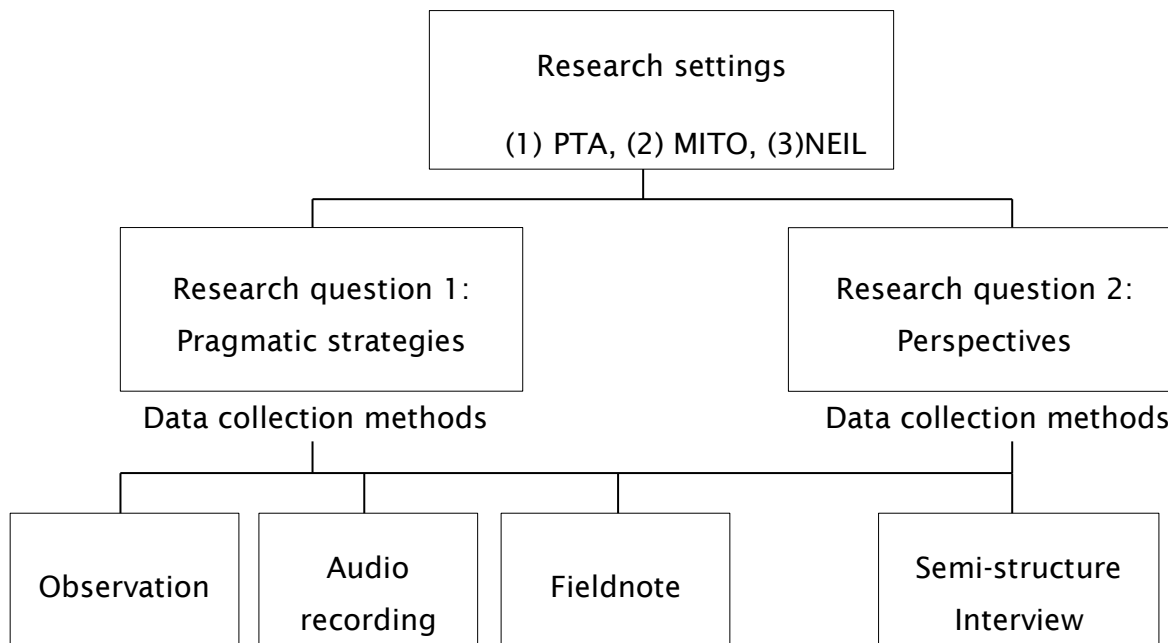
4.2.2.1   Research settings

As previously outlined, the study particularly looks at how Thais negotiate the meanings and construct mutual understanding with people from different countries/of different nationalities through the use of English as lingua franca in the business meeting. Hence, at the most basic criterion, the company chosen to conduct the fieldwork should be a Thai company which engages in international business, with (or without) subsidiaries in other countries or alternatively a Thai subsidiary of an international company. It is very likely that this type of organization would hold a number of, both internal and external, international business meetings.

My fieldwork was conducted during January 2015 – April 2015. In one sense, the site is fallen under a unique sample strategy (Cresswell 2007) in which the selection is based on the unique attributes of the phenomenon of interest. My data collection site was initially organized to be based only in 'PTA' (a

pseudonym), a Thai company situated in Thailand, as to its large scale with scores of subsidiaries both in the country and overseas. PTA is a Thai integrated energy and petrochemical company, one of the largest companies in Thailand with approximately ten thousands of employees and a number of subsidiaries across Thailand and in several ASEAN countries. The company have been engaging in international trading, foreign investments and were expected to continue this international expansion. Nevertheless, as Guest (2015) discussed, the nature of flexibility in qualitative research allows researchers to adopt an inductive sampling approach which approves changes and new leads emerging from new information obtained during the fieldwork; as he advocated that regardless of a well-designed and proper sampling plan, it is more advantageous to leave some room for new emergent data. In this case, the sampling procedures (e.g. types of participants or sample sizes) do not necessarily follow the original study design. At this stage, I then also applied the snowball, chain, or network sampling (Patton 2002) approach to my sampling selection. Patton explained that the strategy allows the researcher to build a bigger snowball by asking the key participants to locate or refer him or her to other participants. As I wished that I could carry out as widest scope of the data collection as possible, I want to gather data from a variety of settings to ensure that I could learn and observe the interactions under distinct situations. According to Adler and Adler (1994), the observations should be carried out systematically on varying time, place and conditions for the sake of the research reliability and consistency. With this in mind, although I have confirmed access to 'PTA' which is one of the largest companies in Thailand, I am still making an attempt to gain more access at other organizations. For these reasons, I can later on manage to expand my fieldwork to another country, Singapore where I have gained support from PTA's Thai and local sponsor, as well as having gained access to two more companies; (1) 'MITO' (a pseudonym), a Japanese international company, one of the largest trading and investment companies in the world with a large number of international office including Thailand and more than 40,000 employees worldwide; and (2) 'NEIL' a Thai pressure vessels manufacturer company exporting their products across the nation and overseas. These accesses are all granted through the adoption of the network sampling, that is my few key contacts make a reference of my research to their colleagues and business partners.

4.2.2.2   Selection of meeting and interviewee

With regard the types of the meeting, maximum variation sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967) is adopted as a method of choice. The strategy seeks out widely varying instances of the phenomenon because "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting of phenomenon" (Patton 2002: 234). I thus inform my contacts that I am interested in attending any kind of meetings from any department where English is used as a medium language so I could see widely different styles of language usage from different types of participants. Positively, the types of meetings such as the decision-making, problem-solving, brainstorming or negotiating would yield higher interaction which undeniably brought more benefits to my data collection since the interaction is central of my investigation. The above types of meetings would provide me a great deal of value especially when it came to the data analysis, rather than the report, information-oriented or training meetings. Still, I do not want to exclude any information at the early phase of my data collection and find it more advantageous to observe several types of meeting and narrowed the scope down at a later stage.

In terms of the selection of interviewees, being aware of the time constraints and the limited access I have granted in the company, I would not and could not carry out an interview with all participants in each meeting but only to select some of them, therefore it is important that I need to carefully locate the appropriate participants. Guest (2015) suggested that selecting specific individuals who are knowledgeable about the subjects of your research interest would make better and good informants. Anyhow, Handwerker (2001) reminded that everyone might self-define as an expert in their areas of interest or environment. For example, in my case everyone in the meeting room was considered businesspeople who have had experience in international business communication. Does it imply that any informant would make the same contribution to my interview? In reality, a number of people attended the meeting but not everyone took part in the interaction. They had different roles and their levels of working experiences also varied, that is to say, some might be in charge of the meeting so they took the role as a chairman or some were directly responsible for the project so they were actively involved in the negotiation or presentation, whereas the others might have less stake in the issue discussed then, took the roles as listeners. In case like this, Guest proposed that:

Generally, the longer and more intensely an individual is a part of something, the more enculturated they are likely to be with respect to that activity or culture. So, if you need to find experts in an organizational culture, you might consider locating individuals who have worked in that organization for a long time and who are actively involved in its organization. Being currently involved is another key dimension because cultures evolve and memories degenerate. (p.223)

In compliance with the idea, the selection of the participants in my interview would be based on the degree of involvement in the meeting interaction and their working experiences. Only few people would be chosen from each meeting or in a worse case the number might have to be decreased to one participant. To ensure the validity of the information, the persons should be the ones who are actively involved in the meeting conversation or having an extensive experience in working with foreigners. According to the consensus theory of Romney et al. (1986), experts tend to reach mutual agreement with regard to their specific domain of expertise than do novices. In this sense, huge samples are not always the case for the accuracy of the data, in contrast they found that very modest number of informants who possess a high degree of competence about the domain of inquiry can deliver extremely complete and accurate information. For this reason, I believe that a fairly small number of interviewees who are knowledgeable in the domain of my research questions would likely be sufficient to make a valid and useful data to my study rather than interviewing a large number of participants with less knowledge and experience in the field. In addition, as the purpose of my interview is to seek the shared perceptions among the meeting participants regarding the use of ELF in their international business meetings, in this respect Guest et al. (2006) noted that a fairly large sample is required if the researcher wishes to determine the variation between different groups or to assess correlation among variables but if the goal of the study is 'to describe a shared perception, belief, or behaviour among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve will likely to be sufficient' and that "the more similar participants in a sample are in their experiences with respect to the research domain, the sooner we would expect to reach saturation" (p.76).

4.2.2.3   At "PTA"

I learnt about PTA and the fact that they had international business meetings quite frequently through my contact who used to work for the company. She successfully negotiated access for me, although the number of meetings could

not be specified at the time. Primarily, I was trying to ensure the scope of my fieldwork was as wide as possible, so I believed it would be best to attend as many meetings as I could, or at the most basic level, I wanted the number of meetings investigated to be not less than six or seven. I was later put in contact with some of the members of the company to explain the purpose of my study in detail and to gain brief insights into the organisation. They welcomed my presence as an observer to their international meetings and also allowed me to look for volunteers to interview. I was granted permission instantly to use audio recording for their internal meetings, however, consent had to be sought from their foreign business partners on a case-by-case basis for any external meetings.

My plan was to complete the fieldwork within a period of three months. To my surprise, my fieldwork formally began not in Thailand, but in Singapore. Since there were no international meetings taking place in any of the company's Thailand-based offices for the first few weeks, I was offered the opportunity to visit the company's international offices in Singapore where meetings between staff of different nationalities took place on a regular basis. There, I met with the people in charge of two different units to introduce myself and discuss my research project, as they had only brief details about me. They were very helpful and agreed to let me observe their business interactions. I was granted permission to attend and audio record two annual general meetings of two units. Thus, Singapore was the setting where I gained my first insights of PTA and the first experience in my fieldwork.

4.2.2.4   At "MITO"

My attempt to extend the research setting was eventually successful. I obtained permission to work with two more companies as a result of the contribution of my PTA contacts. In an informal meeting in a restaurant between PTA and MITO, a Japanese international company, my contact requested access for me from a MITO employee with whom she had a good relationship. MITO has its international office in Thailand where meetings between Japanese and Thai staff took place on a daily basis. About a week later, the employee obtained approval from his Japanese director who allowed me to observe an external meeting of the marketing department. I was also permitted to record most of the interactions except the parts concerning the company's marketing strategy. Once I arrived at the company, I was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement promising not to reveal any confidential information about the company's operations.

4.2.2.5   At "NEIL"

The other setting was at NEIL, a Thai pressure vessels manufacturer. One of my contacts at PTA used to work for NEIL and he still had a business connection with the company. He knew that NEIL hired a small number of expatriates, so English was usually used in the internal company meetings as a common practice. He spoke to his former colleague, who was the person in charge of the marketing department meetings, to obtain permission for me to attend. The request was approved and I was allowed to carry out audio recording, attend the meeting, as well as conduct interviews.

To conclude, to grant a stranger access to attend and, what is more, audio record the company's sensitive meetings was by no means a straightforward procedure in which the contacts spoke to the person in charge and obtaining the approval of the other committees. On the contrary, it proved to be a time-consuming and demanding process. I would say that having extensive network of friends or knowing someone who had a good connection or authority in the organization might be a key necessity to achieve permission and facilitate access. Nonetheless, that was not always the case. In reality, it required mutual consent, coordination and a good understanding of the project from all individuals concerned. As previously outlined, a lack of comprehension or cooperation from a single person could leave an immense impact on the process of obtaining access. Either succeeding in it or not, I was very obliged to all of my contacts for their generosities and contributions. Though they had no stake in my project, they gave a full backing to my request.

4.3   Data collection methods

In this section, each of the data collection methods will be discussed in detail. I will explain why I choose to adopt these approaches and how I sort them out to collect the data at three different companies.

4.3.1   Observation

My study aimed to find out how meaning is negotiated through the use of English as a lingua franca in multicultural settings and what kinds of techniques or strategies participants use to help them construct mutual understanding. Thus, as my study focused on the naturally occurring interactions in business meetings, the data gathering was based only on the audio recordings. Although it would

have been more convenient for all parties involved if I had chosen to collect only audio files, which could be done by asking my contacts to carry out the recording of their meetings for me, I believed it was important that I witnessed and observed the actual situations myself. Hence, observation was adopted as my method of choice.

Observation is used as a primary source of data collection in qualitative research. It helps the researcher to capture a first-hand account of the naturally occurring phenomenon of interest (Merriam and Tisdell 2015). It is also one of the key ethnographic research methods which "permits researcher[s] to study people in their native environment in order to understand things from their perspective". To exercise the method, the researcher is required to play multiple roles, which involve a number of techniques, including the five senses (Baker 2006: 171-172). Patton (2015) suggested that to be a skilled observer, the researcher needs to learn to pay attention, to write descriptively, to practice the disciplined recording of field notes, know how to separate detail from trivia, as well as how to exercise systematic methods to validate and triangulate observations (p.331). As Merriam and Tisdell discussed, observation is often carried out "to triangulate emerging findings", i.e. to use in collaboration with interviews and document analysis to support the findings (p.139).

The degree of observation and participation to be employed in fieldwork is influenced by multiple factors; for instance, the issue to be studied, the informants' consent, or the researcher's prior insight of or engagement in the insiders' world. There are multiple roles to be chosen in observational data collection. Gold (1958) proposed four roles of researchers in field observations: as complete observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, and complete participant. When stepping into a new environment, not every researcher needs to adopt the role of a complete observer but, on the other hand, it is not feasible for all researchers to be allowed to fully participate. Some particular settings might restrict access due to, for instance, conditions of age, gender, class, ethnicity, culture, or confidential issues. Some types of studies require the researcher to adopt the roles of complete observer and observer-as-participant on account of limited access or the benefit of being detached from the group studied.

In my case, it was not plausible for the companies to allow an outsider to take part in the conversational content of the meetings, so I adopted the role of a non-participant observer. Still, I managed to speak with participants before, during

breaks, or after the meeting. My contacts consented to allow me to talk with anyone in the meeting room and did not try to separate me from others. Therefore, it was unnecessary and meaningless to refrain from any form of social interactions with the informants. In addition, observing them from a distance was insufficient for me to gain useful insights. The method adopted enabled me to witness and record information from the whole process of the interactions, as well as allowed me to have some interactions with the participants. Rather than relying solely on the audio recording, observation and discussion with the participants provided me with a clearer and tacit understanding and greater interpretation of the information obtained. As Cowie (2009) noted, a researcher can learn the participants' external behaviour through observation, which will prepare the ground for a further investigation of participants' perspectives. As I was interested in finding out how the participants perceived the use of English in a business context in general and how they perceived their own performance in particular, this observation and discussion with the participants during the meetings also prepared the way for the interview sessions which were the next step of my data collection. Thus, the information collected from my observations could be used as preliminary data for interviewing the informants.

It is not uncommon for observers to be hesitant about exactly what and to what extent they should observe or how to function appropriately during their first entry to the field. In addition, the events and situations which investigators find in the field are by no means predictable and may be hard to control. In fact, a direct observation (or interviewing) of the participants provides the researcher with an ability to be responsive and adaptive to the participants and the research setting and to start an exploration of any unplanned avenues of research (Heigham and Croker 2009: 11). To prepare oneself before beginning fieldwork, Cowie (2008) argued that awareness should be built into the observer's mindset. It is important that we describe in detail what literally occurs rather than judging the situation. The researcher should always treat everything as a new experience and avoid taking the situation for granted in order to see afresh (p. 171).

4.3.1.1   Explaining research purposes

Conducting fieldwork in different departments and companies provided me with very different experiences and, in many respects, it was essential for me to provide a sufficient explanation about my research to the informants. Schensul and LeCompte (2013) highlighted that obtaining consent to do research is an ongoing process, which requires the ethnographers to carry out a repeated

explanation and clarification of the purpose of the study on a daily basis. Besides the importance of the ethical issue, the process of building relationships at the study site is a complex enterprise in which unclear and vague information about the project could lead to misconceptions and trigger pressure or unsupportive attitudes among informants. Willigen and DeWalt (1985) argued that no matter the level of participation, it is very important for the researcher to identify themselves to the people involved; a complete acknowledgement of research purposes is not only an important ethical principle but, as they observe, the role of researcher tends to be facilitated by having recognition within the group studied. Developing rapport with the group studied appears to be an important element as well as a key to success in using participant observation. Having a good communication relationship with informants can promote various benefits to the study including enhancing the effectiveness and reliability of information obtained. To do that, DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) suggested that the researcher should provide, in a simple format, a clear explanation of the study and treat the informants' responses with respect, as well as devote attention to the protection of their rights (p.51).

In agreement with their argument, I encountered some misunderstandings while negotiating access, as a result of the lack of a good and clear explanation. From that incident, I learned to make my project explanation as clear and as understandable as possible to prevent any misunderstanding the informants might have about my study. After they gained a better understanding of the concept of my research, they became more cooperative and, as a consequence, helped me to expand the field site. Admittedly, I was not actually aware of the interpretation informants might put on my introduction until I talked with the members of the companies who granted me access. That is, they gained their first insights about my project from my relatives and, at this stage, I realised the importance of making my objective clear and accurate to everyone involved. The inadequate explanation revealed to me that I could have missed opportunities to observe several international meetings. My statement that I would like to 'observe the use of English as a business lingua franca in the meeting' had generated scepticism in those who heard it. One of my contacts responded actively and asked whether my study was aimed at English of any country in particular. In this case he meant native speakers of English from English speaking countries, which he literally named as the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Meanwhile, some of my other contacts were sceptical about whether their interactions in the meetings could genuinely bring any useful data to my

study, so they were reluctant to offer me access to their meetings. They tried to clarify the nature of their meetings, and highlighted the characteristics of the participants who were usually business people who might be adept and experienced in doing business but not in the English language. My contacts were not trying to reject my request; in contrast, they were very enthusiastic about supporting my project and promised to find a more appropriate meeting, which from their perspective was a meeting consisting of native speakers of English or NNS who were very competent in English.

In her study of English as a corporate language in an international company in Denmark, Lonsmann (2011) found it more advantageous for her to make an introduction of herself and her project in "suitably vague terms". She described that while observing daily interactions in the company, she had to constantly introduce herself and her project to hundreds of individuals. It was possible that, as she indicated, informants might, intentionally or not, adjust their language if learning that a researcher was observing their language use and language choices. In addition, leaving out some specific details often kindled their interest in the project. She discovered that people would approach her for more information and usually provided valuable data, ideas, and suggestions for topics to look into.

Conversely, due to the opposite nature of my fieldwork, I found that my brief introduction could raise ambiguity for the participants in the meetings. Lonsmann had gained access to the company premises as an employee for a period of five months in which she had received permission to approach people of different units and observe their daily interactions including a number of meetings. Generally speaking, the free access to the company and plenty of time to spend with the informants allowed her to work on a trial and error basis. This was opposite to my case where access and time were limited. In my context, a clear comprehensive introduction proved to provide more satisfactory results as I might not have had an opportunity to deal with informants' misunderstanding, even a slight one.

Most of the time, the participants in the meetings had been informed about my presence in advance from my contacts. Thus, they had some basic knowledge about who I was and what I was going to do in their meetings. According to the consent I had from my contacts, if there was enough time I might occasionally be asked to introduce myself to the meeting participants again. In this case, I tried to make it short and concise due to the time constraints. The introduction including

the term 'English as a lingua franca' proved to confuse most of the informants. ELF is a relatively new term for Thai people and perhaps for other Asian participants, particularly for people whose areas of interest are outside of linguistics. Having spotted these signs of perplexity, I later switched the term 'English as a lingua franca' to 'English as a medium of communication'. Presumably, the distinct reactions from participants were not solely a matter of individuals' particular attention, but rather attributed to a range of factors. In the formal meetings where the objectives and topics, including time duration, were pre-arranged, it was not uncommon that my introduction would be unanimously agreed by everyone. Questioning about my study, which was apparently outside of the subject concerns of the meetings, seemed unnecessary and somehow inappropriate. Therefore, I formally elaborated on the concept of my study only when I was requested to do so, and this occurred in informal meetings rather than formal ones. However, there were moments (during meeting preparation, breaks, or after the meeting ended) when I could approach informants to interact with them or provide further explanations when they seemed to be confused.

According to my contacts, having an outsider observe their meetings was unprecedented. There was also an impact of the connotation of the term 'English language' on NNS informants, especially the Thais. Hence, it was possible that my observations could, one way or another, provoke feelings of unease and uncertainty. Some participants had the wrong idea about my project, thinking that I aimed to see how to use 'English language' in a business meeting 'properly' and 'correctly', and that I sought to extract good examples from their usage. What was worse, some thought that I was evaluating their English proficiency and checking whether they were using it correctly. For example, Ehrenreich (2009) noted that her participants in a multinational corporation she was observing often came up with questions such as what made her interested in their 'bad English' or was she taking notes of the mistakes they made, when seeing her taking field notes during meetings (p.147). This is why it was crucially important that I provided them with sufficient details to generate greater understanding of the fact that I was looking at the construction and negotiation of meaning, not focusing on the form or pattern of the sentences, and that the multilingual participants – NNS – were my particular group of interest, as well as assuring them that their contributions would positively make the research valid. In addition, to mitigate any discomfort about being observed, I found it helpful to emphasise that I, myself, was a learner who sought to learn from them and I was looking for advice and suggestions, not judging or criticising their language use.

4.3.2   Audio Recording

Mechanical devices such as photographs, audio record, or video are also employed by ethnographers to complement their observation for the construction of interpretation (Arnoul and Wallendorf, 1994). Videotaping and audiotaping have long been recognized as crucial strategies in characterizing contexts of various uses of communicative events (Beating, 2001). In my study, audio recording was employed as a prime data collection method to help beef up sensual observations and ensure the greater accuracy of the information which would be used as the main source of the data analysis. It was used to record the interactions in the authentic face-to-face group business meetings and the interview. I opted for the audio recording over filming as it was more convenient and less intrusive, and most importantly participants are likely to be less hesitant to cooperate. I needed to seek permission from the persons in charge of each meeting to ensure that they acknowledged everyone involved and received their consent to be recorded. Most of my contacts agreed to have me record their interactions, only few external meetings that needed to wait for a confirmation from foreign business partners. The spot where the device was placed varied from meeting to another. Although everyone had acknowledged about the use of the device, I still wished that my data collection would be as unobtrusive as possible. I was afraid that participants might have felt uncomfortable to see a voice recorder in the middle of the table. Accordingly, I tried to put it where it wa as less noticeable as possible and over times it could be more practical to keep it close to myself so I could control it easier. This practice was facilitated by the small size of the room and the good position I was sitting as well as the high quality device which ensures that the whole interactions would be clearly audible. It neither caused me any problem in a large size meeting rooms as I was informed that microphones and loudspeakers had been installed, which meant that I could still choose to place the recorder close to me. The sound recording device was indeed a valuable method of choice to my study as I was offered by my contacts to provide me with the sound files in a meeting I could not attend due to the problem of timing. For the case of the interview, I also needed to obtain permission from each of my interviewee prior to the practice.

4.3.3   Field notes

Fieldnotes are a form of written record that ethnographers use to record events, people and places they have observed (Emerson et al. 2001) which turn the

passing event into an inscriptional account that can be reconsulted (Geertz, 1973). Polit and Hungler (1987) describe field notes as broad, analytic and interpretive which contribute to the successful observational study. In my data collection, field notes were very handy tool that I use in conjunction with my participant observation. While observing the meetings I always took my field notes with me to write down contextual information (any keys features I regarded as significant) unworded events and describing the scenarios. As Schensul and LeCompte (2013) note, observational skill is a necessary key to good ethnography and a good observer takes note of 'body movements, facial signals, and eye contact as signs of willingness to continue with a topic or a conversation, and also recognizes that these signals can vary from culture to culture' (p. 16). Field notes is an essential element for my data collection as the audio recording could not capture the whole activities occurring in the meetings such as facial expression, gesture or body language which might contribute to the interpretation of the data gathering. In addition, I would not use a voice recorder during casual talks with informants so normally I jotted down interesting perspectives and ideas I had received from my social interactions after the talks end. The notes were not carried out during conversations as I found it neither convenient nor practical to talk and take notes at the same time, moreover, I wanted the talks to be natural like the typical conversation so that my informants would feel comfortable and not dubious about what I was doing with the notes. In coincide with Schensul and LeCompte's (2013) argument, in the early stages of fieldwork, note taking could be a source of relationship building intervention in a sense that it potentially generates a feeling that the researcher is not completely focusing on the interviewee. To prevent this sort of situation, they suggested that the researcher make an initially careful observation and try to take mental notes ('to orient your consciousness to the task of remembering items' Lofland and Lofland, 1995) of conversational content in the field and later writing what they have observed down immediately after a session. Spradley (1980) purposed three principles in taking field notes as: (1) 'to identify the language used for each fieldnote entry' by using 'parentheses, quotation marks, or brackets' (p.66), (2) using a word for word record of the speech and be aware of the distinction of 'native terms' and 'observer terms' (p.67) and (3) using 'concrete language' to describe observations and provide as much specific detail as possible (p.68).

Furthermore, I needed to be critically aware of the limitation of using the mechanical recording device imposed by the issue of confidentiality, which it might be barred in some part of the interactions or, what is worst, the whole

meeting. The disapproval on audio recording means that the collection of the interaction in the meeting is significantly based on the field notes. As Atkinson (1992) argued that field notes is not a finished report which is comprehensible to others, but is purposely made for the writer herself as a reminder. So, although I tried to note down a series of conversational content as much detailed as possible, I bore in mind that using only field notes could result in the loss of certain important features of spoken interaction. In case like this, scores of exact quotes were necessarily included in my field notes. Emerson et al. (2001) warned that recording dialogue is not a simple task and requires the use of writing conventions. To transpose such real time speech events into written account, fieldworkers are advised to employ writing conventions, e.g. orthography, punctuation and type-setting (Atkinson,1992: 23) as well as deciding how to portray other non-verbal expressions (Fine 1984). Thus, for the optimal result, I prepared a code for some features (such as pauses or tone of voice) and created my own shortening words and phrases which I believed to be likely occur in the context to reduce the amount of language and save time. I also used numbers, letters or pseudonyms when mentioning companies or individuals to shorten time and to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Emerson et al. (2001) noted this style as follow:

> While some fieldworkers learn a formal transcribing system such as shorthand or speedwriting, many simply develop their own private systems of symbols and abbreviations. These procedures not only facilitate getting words on a page more quickly, but they also make jotted notes incomprehensible to onlookers who ask to see them and thus protect the confidentiality of these writings. (p. 356)

4.3.4   Interviews

As I am also interested in how the participants perceived of the use of ELF in business context in general and how they perceive their own performances in particular, I then adopted the interview method as a supplement to the input from the audio recordings and observations and to explore the interviewees' views and experiences in more depth. I would like to find out what they perceive as enhancing or hindering communication or what is regarded as important or not important in such multicultural interactions. The interview would help me gain the deeper insights into participants' opinions and perspectives and widen the scope of understanding. As for Agar (1986), the ample time dedicated in

observation and field notes seems to be less important in research than an in-depth interview.

In qualitative research, the interview remains the most common method of data gathering, employed in various forms by every main theoretical and methodological approach within qualitative applied psychology (King, 2004: 11). He argues that the interview itself can also be classified as 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' and that the types of qualitative interview are variously referred to as 'depth, exploratory, semi- structured, or un-structured' allowing researcher to reach the goal of any qualitative research interview, i.e. to elicit the perspective of the interviewees towards particular topics and to understand what influence their ideas, rather than 'abstractions and general opinions' (p.11). In my study, the interviews are based on the semi-structured questions and combined with the preliminary data collected from the actual meeting interactions to relate their performance characteristics to their perceptions. Bernard (2011) points that semi-structured interview is suit best for a researcher who usually has one chance to interview someone and it works exceptionally well in dealing with informants who are accustomed to efficient time management, for instance, 'high-level bureaucrats and elite members of a community' where the researcher can demonstrate his/her preparedness and controllability over the questions on one hand but still leaves room for new leads to follow on the other hand (p.158). Basically, I drew on an 'interview guide' (see King 2004) in developing the semi-structured questions. In this respect, the interviews did not precisely follow but were rather guided by the listed questions and topics that were essential to be covered and discussed. Also the topics were not necessarily carried out in a set order. Informants were allowed to add more information, new ideas or new topics as they wanted as I prepared to follow anything they might bring up in each interview to enhance the informal atmosphere and make it as natural as possible. The questions were enhanced by the use of 'probes' which worked to follow up responses and points of interest and elicit greater detail from participants. Schensul at al. (1998) exemplified some typical probes used in the interview as follows:

· Asking for more information

· Asking for clarification on internal differences in what the person has said

· Asking for an opinion

· Asking for clarification of the meaning of a term (p.127)

The topics were based on the research literature and some emerged during the observations in the meeting. As Merriam (2014) put, "getting good data in an interview is dependent on your asking well-chosen open-ended questions that can be followed up with probes and requests for more detail" (p.17). In this sense, the development of the interview would continue through each meetings and interviews. Its loose structure are not fixed but rather ready to be modified or reformulated at any time in the course of the interview as any information, insights gained from each meetings and interviews could be contributing to the new emerging topics, questions or probes. The development of the interview guide does not end at the start of the first interview. It may be modified through use: adding probes or even whole topics which had originally not been included, but have emerged spontaneously in interviews; dropping or re-formulating those which are incomprehensible to participants or consistently fail to elicit responses in any way relevant to the research question(s). (King, 2004: 36)

Below are examples of the questions used in the interviews. First of all, the interviewees were asked to give some basic information about themselves, i.e. national, linguistic and educational background, length of experience and position in the company. Then I continued with a set of questions regarding language issues, cultural aspects and their perceived successful discourse strategies respectively.

1. How do you perceive yourself when using English as a mean of communication in the international business arena?

   Probe: Do you perceive yourself as a business communicator to your own right or rather as a language learner? Why? What influences your idea?

2. Do you compare yourself with Native speakers of English for example, in terms of accent, pronunciation or grammar?

   Probe: if YES, are those characteristics regarded as the needed English competence in your actual interactions?? If NO, why not?

3. Did your cultural values, norms or corporate cultures play any important role in the communication?

   Probe: if YES, did they enhance or impede the operations in any aspects?

4. How did you perceive your own national working practices and those of foreigners?

Probe: Was there a major distinction in which you believe to affect the success of the interaction, if so how did you manage to handle it?

5. Regarding your recent meeting, were you satisfied with your performance?

Probe: what characteristics in your opinion contribute to the successful business communication (what do you perceive as enhancing and hindering the interaction) in a multicultural setting?

After the end of each meeting, the interviews had been conducted face-to-face usually individually and on some occasions in a small group. They normally lasted between 5 to 10 minutes each. In terms of the types of participants to be recruited to a qualitative interview study, it 'depended on the study's aims, and on its theoretical, epistemological and methodological position' (King, 2004: 16). On one level, the observation and audio recording enabled me to cover issues and aspects of interest i.e. the discourse and pragmatics strategies occurring in the business meetings. However, more understandings to the phenomenon can be broadened to another level by exploring the meeting participants' views and experiences in more depth. On this occasion, the criteria for recruitment was set on the range of participants sought in advance; people who were experienced within the chosen context, i.e. the participants who participated in the business meetings being observed. However, the number of participants taking part varied in each interview. Initially the appropriate number had been set at, at least, 2 to 3 interviewees from each meeting to ensure the variation. However, in practical there were some critical factors to be taken into consideration such as the time constraints which appeared to be the nature of business people. Typically I would inform all the details of my research to my contacts who were the persons in charge of each meeting in which they acknowledged my requests and informed the other participants about my project beforehand. However, they did not set up the particular participants to take part in the interview for me in advance, but they told me to freely approach anyone after the meeting. In some situations, I found it difficult to approach the participants after the meeting ended as they might be working against the clock, for example some could be in a rush for other businesses or some need to bandy about further with their colleagues on the issues discussed in the meeting. For these reasons, I might need to minimize the number of participants to only 1 person in some interviews.

I also agree with King's argument that the relationship factor is also presented as another key feature of the qualitative research interview. While the

interviewer in a quantitative study, as he points out, believes that information obtained from the interview should be 'untainted by relationship factors' for the accuracy of interviewees' accounts, in qualitative interview relationship is rather seen as a help to the research, not a hindrance. Not only building relationship with the interviewees encourages the flexibility and comfort in the course of the interview which boosts their confidence to talk, it could also provide me other benefits, for example indicating other potential informants or introducing me to them.

4.4   Trustworthiness

Since the issues of trustworthiness in qualitative studies is often questioned, a number of frameworks have been introduced throughout recent decades to ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Credibility is of the essence in establishing trustworthiness. In an attempt to address the credibility of the information, reports or findings of past studies using the same or similar methodology, or the same or similar phenomenon, can be valuable sources (Silverman 2000). This study has performed its investigation in juxtaposition with some similar previous studies to assess the comparable issues and relate the findings to this body of knowledge. The works of Pitzl (2010) and Wolfartsberger (2009) were influential, in particular in terms of the method of data gathering and data analysis, which proved to be successful. Details of the key strategies will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Credibility can also be enhanced by obtaining a certain degree of familiarity with the culture of the observed companies before entering into the fieldwork. Therefore, before entering into the field site, Murchison (2010) proposed that there should be critical reflection on aspects of the relationship between researchers and the field site, such as: why this particular setting is chosen, any particular reason or significance? What is your status, an insider or outsider? Do you need to establish rapport and acquire any basic local insight? Responses to these questions could help to build awareness about their actions and prevent them from making assumptions about the field settings that might thwart or limit the ability to conduct effective research. The settings in this study were chosen because of their engagement in the international business environment with the extensive use of English as a common language in daily operations and in meetings in particular. As suggested by Shenton (2004), the development of the relationship with the participants should be based on the purpose of gaining an

adequate understanding of the companies and building a relationship of trust between the parties while making certain that the knowledge obtained will not influence the researcher's professional judgements. Therefore, prior to the fieldwork, I paid preliminary visits to the companies to meet with the key persons and get a sense of the environment.

Shenton (2004) proposed that trustworthiness of the data can be achieved through the appropriate selection tactic, namely (1) multiple-method data collection; (2) site triangulation; and (3) diverse sampling. In this way, it could be justifiably demonstrated that the findings emerging from the study are not the researcher's own predispositions. Since a researcher's bias and preconceived notions can pose a threat to the validity and undermine the quality of research, triangulation is usually herein adopted to minimise its effect. Therefore, to ensure there was no likelihood of prejudice, this study primarily employed a combination of four qualitative methods to work through different stages of data collection. Audio recording, observation, and field notes were used as the initial stage to collect data on the linguistic practices, and to obtain a sense of the naturally occurring interactions, including witnessing the non-verbal events as complementary information. The data was then enhanced by the qualitative open-ended interviews which were adopted as a later phase to seek participants' viewpoints and experiences, which helped increase the depth of understanding. By doing this, I was able to ensure the reliability and validity of this study, as the data was gathered from different perspectives.

Site triangulation or an observation in different organisations is expected to reduce the impact that particular factors in particular situations might leave on the study. If the studies in different sites yield similar results, greater credibility can be constructed. The data collection of this thesis has been conducted in three different companies located in Thailand and Singapore. Based on a number of meetings that took place in two Thai companies and one Japanese company, the interactions under different environments and conditions have been observed for the benefit of the research's reliability and consistency.

Diverse sampling enables researchers to "obtaining a variety of perspectives in order to get a better, more stable view of 'reality' based on a wide spectrum of observations from a wide base of points in time-space" (Shenton 2004: 24). This study involved the interview of a number of informants in three different companies to observe and study their views in a comparable position, i.e. from one individual to those of the others, which might vary from location to location.

Under certain limitations, the selection was based on the active participation the participants displayed in the meetings or the persons who had extensive experience in working with foreigners to ensure the validity of the information. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted after each meeting, I also sought opportunities where possible to approach the participants before the meetings started or during breaks to have a quick chat with them. While a rich picture of the participants' behaviour can be constructed based on the observation and interview, these informal talks helped to aggregate small pieces of information across participants or discover other relevant resources (Maanen 2006).

4.5   Methodological limitations

While the most significant merit of my research is the accesses to the field sites, their limited accesses present the methodological limitations in my study. In General, the permissions being granted allow me to conduct the voice recording, present in the meetings and carry out interviews, but not to explore the other operations of the companies nor following around any participants in the office without receiving their consents. This lack of access is linked to a two major points of concerns. First, due to the time constraints which are the typical nature in the business atmosphere, I might not have the opportunity to introduce myself and my project clearly enough, or at all, to every participants. This could generate skepticism about my present or misinterpretation about the purpose of my study which might therefore somehow affect the interactions in the meetings or the degree of cooperation the participants will provide. Second issue regards the sampling in the interviews. Limited access means that I should manage to carry out the interviews with the appropriate number of interviewees within the appropriate time, as it is less likely that I could follow them to their desks or making an appointment in later days. And presuming the unlimited access is granted by the companies' executives, the data collection process may be too lengthy and involved for busy business elites who are unlikely to have enough time to devote to such an undertaking. In short, these limitations might restrain the rich detailed information I could have obtained.

4.5.1   Ethical considerations

It is vital that the ethical issues be taken into account in strict compliance with the Ethics and Research Governance Office (ERGO) over the course of the study.

Although it is not possible for the researcher to inform the participants about all details of the study, it is essential that the researcher provides a reasonable amount of information, areas of investigation, and data collection processes (Cohen et al. 2011).

Obtaining consent was a matter of the utmost concern to my data collection. Unquestionably, it was not possible for me to enter the settings and take a covert observatory role. Seeking permission represented the very first step to beginning my fieldwork. Although I received permission from the contacts to observe the meetings, consent from other participants also had to be sought. Schensul and LeCompte (2013) highlighted that obtaining consent is an ongoing process which requires the researcher to carry out a repeated explanation and clarification of the purpose of the study on a daily basis. I prepared the consent form outlining the purpose and brief processes of the study and asked the participants to sign it to indicate their agreement to take part in the observation and interview. I made clear from the outset to the participants that they had the right to decline their participation or withdraw from the study at any point, without having to disclose a reason, to ensure that the data was collected only from those who genuinely volunteered.

Another critical concern is anonymity protection. Shenton (2004) argued that participants must be encouraged to be frank and should rest assured of the independent status of the researcher. It was therefore very important for me to assure and guarantee them absolute confidentiality and anonymity. Business meetings could potentially contain more or less sensitive and confidential information. It was my responsibility to protect the participants' anonymity by changing all the names of those (individuals and companies) that appeared in the meeting data and interview data to pseudonyms.

In addition, participants might potentially have been dubious as to whether I was spying on their business operation, or that I was trying to monitor or evaluate their performance and report to their supervisor. To overcome or mitigate such concerns, I confirmed that the project was carried out for educational purposes only and that none of the research activities would interfere with the process of their operations or affect their business careers.

Chapter four has provided the describtion of the research methodology. The data collection methods and procedures, and research instrument which is based on

the qualitative approach using multiple methods, namely audio recordings, observation, field notes, and semi-structure interviews have been illustrated in detail. The next chapter will discuss the analytical frameworks used to analyze the data obtained.

Chapter 5: Analytical approach for the analysis of negotiation of meaning

In this chapter, I introduce the two main analytical frameworks: a model for the negotiation of meaning, and a turn-taking model, which will be drawn on to inform my analysis in the next chapter. I then explain the organization of the interview data and lastly discuss the VOICE transcription conventions.

The main material for my analysis is the audio recordings of the meetings and interviews. The meetings will be transcribed in full to facilitate the analysis of the analysis of negotiation of the meaning as well as the details of turns and sequences. To investigate how the participants of the present study manage to achieve successful and meaningful communication in the lingua franca business meetings, the analysis approach will be centred on two main models: "model of negotiation of the meaning" (Varonis and Gass 1985), and "turn-taking model" (Sacks et al. 1974). The data is transcribed by using a slightly simplified and adapted version of the VOICE transcription conventions (VOICE Project 2007) which is illustrated in detail in the appendix. The field notes collected during my observation will also be used alongside with the transcription in the analysis.

5.1   A model for the negotiation of meaning

A model for the negotiation of meaning is developed by Varonis and Gass (1985) to account for the form and function of meaning negotiation among NNS interactions. In their investigation on conversational interactions between NS/NS, NS/NNS, and NNS/NNS, Varonis and Gass suggested that the types of linguistic activities emerge in NNS/NNS interactions are distinct from discourse of NS/NS, NS/NNS, in which the function of negotiation is most apparent. The finding is supported by a number of ELF research which reveal that while the negotiation of meaning is seen as a typical practice of all spoken communication, it has been particularly documented in NNS-NNS, i.e. ELF interactions (e.g. Seidlhofer 2002; Pitzl 2005). In NS-NS discourse for example, Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) argue that self-correction is more preferred over other-correction as participants are supposedly on equal footing in the conversation. As they further point, other-correction can be embarrassing to interlocutors, so it is rather carried out in adult-child interaction or in interaction among 'not yet competent'

participants in certain domain (Schegloff et al. 1997). By extending this hypothesis, Varonis and Gass (1985) suggest that:

non-native speakers, being not yet competent in the domain of the target language, would thus also be more likely to respond to other- repair without embarrassment. Because the 'fault' of non-understanding may reside with either the speaker or the hearer or both, the interlocutors have a shared incompetence. Therefore, NNS-NNS discourse allows greater opportunity than NS-NNS or NS-NS discourse for the negotiation of meaning. (p. 71)

In general, the conversation will proceed smoothly in situations where participants share a common background and language, or what Jones and Gerard (1967) call a 'symmetric contingency', that is, interlocutors respond appropriately to each other's utterances while maintaining comprehensibility in the discourse. On the other hand, the turn taking sequence can be frequently interrupted when there is no shared background or some acknowledged 'incompetence' appears in the discourse. In this case, participants may "learn to compensate by questioning particular utterances and/or requesting conversational help," or in other words, to negotiate the meaning (Varonis and Gass 1985: 73). To delineate these sequences, Varonis and Gass therefore set up a model that participants draw on to tackle with the 'non-understanding routines' and regain their places in the interaction (p. 73). The model consists of two important functions termed 'trigger' and 'resolution' as shown in figure 1.
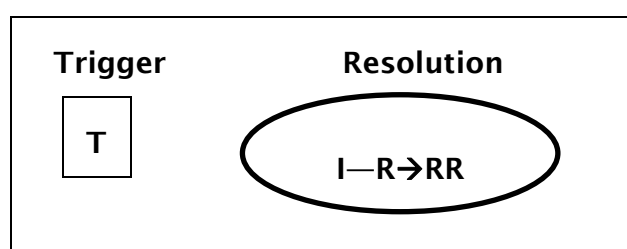
Figure 1: Model for the negotiation of meaning

(Varonis and Gass 1985: 74)

The first part is the *trigger* (marked by T), "the utterance or portion of an utterance on the part of the speaker which results in some indication of non-understanding on the part of the hearer" (ibid. p.74). It then followed by the

resolution which consists of an *indicator* (marked by I), a *response* (marked by R), and a *reaction to the response* (marked by RR) (ibid.). To simply put, the indications of non-understanding are traces that lead to the process of negotiation, which essentially provide the hearer two immediate choices—"to ignore the trigger or to react to it in some way" (ibid.). Below are examples from Varonis and Gass (p. 74) of these two options:

(1) *Ignore*

    a. hoping for more information

        NS: Do you think his research is monolithic?

        NS: Well, it's hard to say.

    b. considered irrelevant

       Julie: I'm sorry to have called you so early, but I'm just on my way out of

           the house for (indiscernible)

       Martha: no response

(2) *Comment upon it*

    a.   echo

       S: When can you go to visit me?

      → J: visit?

    b.   overt indication

       J: ...research

      → J: Research, I don't know the meaning

(Varonis and Gass 1985: 74)

In the first example, the respondent did not understand the word 'monolithic' in which he explicated later of trying to use every strategy to get him more contextual information so that he could avoid admitting that he had not understood the question. In (1b) Martha realized that the purpose of the call was not concerned with the indiscernible portion, she thus decided to let it pass and allowed Julie to go on with her talk. In option two, commenting on a non-understanding, Varonis and Gass have exemplified in two ways: in (2a), to echo the word the speaker had some question about; and in (2B), to directly appeal for assistance. However, as Varonis and Gass note, there is practically no chance to investigate whether a communication problem erupts in the interaction when a trigger is ignored. The model is therefore aimed at the conversational situations where non-understanding is overtly marked by the hearer, who then essentially

indicates an interruption in the horizontal flow of the discourse. The instances below are adapted from Varonis and Gass (1985: 75-76) to illustrate the sequence of T, I, R, RR from the naturally occurring interactions between Maria, a Spanish speaker and Meiko, a Japanese speaker.

(3) T→   J: Are you a student in your country?

      I→   S: in my class?

      R/T →   J: in your country.

      I →   S: Oh, I don't understand.

       R →   J: OK OK so what did you do in your country?

(4)   J: And your what is your mm father's job?

      T→   S: My father now is retire.

      I →   J: retire?

       R →   S: yes

      RR →   J: oh yeah

(Varonis and Gass 1985: 75)

As shown, *trigger* can initiate from any point of the discourse but is only located ahead of the 'indicator'. In other words, it is essentially recognized only when it is reacted to by the hearer. In example (3), the indicator '*in my class?*' serves, as Varonis and Gass call, an inappropriate response—a type of incorrect interpretations which can lead to a communication breakdown. Meiko responds by using a repetition and a reduction of her previous utterance. However, '*in your country*' still causes *trigger* which results in Maria indicating an explicit statement of non-understanding. Meiko then tries to rephrase the question as a response.

The Reactions to Response (RR) are seen to be optionally adopted in this discourse routine, portrayed in examples (4) and (5). In (4), probably the word 'retire' serves as a trigger which urges Meiko to echo it with rising intonation. The response 'yes' is then reacted to by Meiko with 'oh yeah'.

(5) T → S: But he work with uh uh institution

      I → J: institution

      CC/R/T→ S: Do you know that? The name is… some thin like eh

              control of the state

RR →   J: aaaaaaaaah

CC →   S: Do you understand more or less?

I →   J: State is uh .. . what what kind of state?

R →   S: It is uhm

I →   J: Michigan State?

R/T →   S: No, the all nation

I →   J: No (back channel) government?

R →   S: all the nation, all the nation, Do you know for example is
a the the institution mmm of the state mm of Venezuela

RR →   J: ah ah

(Varonis and Gass 1985: 76)

In (5), the word 'institution' is apparently a trigger of non-understanding to which Meiko indicates by echoing. Maria then uses comprehension check: 'do you know that?' and extends with 'some thin like eh control of the state'. Despite the overt response 'aaaah', Maria recognizes that the comprehension is not virtually achieved in which she again offers another comprehension check: 'Do you understand more or less?' It turns out that Meiko still does not understand the meaning of the word, which leads to the multiple exchanges of negotiation. Meiko explicitly asks 'what kind of state' and continues with indicators in the form of guesses: 'Michigan State?', 'government'; while Maria tries to offers the word 'nation' which only causes the pushdown. She realizes that Meiko does not clearly understand what she means by 'all the nation'. As a result, she resumes with the repetition, 'all the nation all the nation', followed by a comprehension check, 'Do you know', and then extends the explanation by using example, 'for example is a the the institution mmm of the state mm of Venezuela'. At this point, Meiko reacts to the response with 'ah ah' which is very likely to be a true signal of understanding.

As can be seen, the length of negotiation sequences can vary significantly, ranging from brief exchanges to the more extensive stretches of negotiation loop which involves multiple sequences of T, I, R, RR (Gass and Varonis 1991: 128). In short, the model reveals the complexities of the occurring non-understanding

routines and allows us to measure and compare the depth of these complexities before they are resolved, or elsewhere abandoned (Varonis and Gass 1985: 81).

> While their approach is somewhat restricted due to the exclusion of the interpersonal dimension of interactions, its strength lies in its applicability in empirical research, because it allows a systematic structural analysis of how a non-understanding is triggered, indicated, negotiated and resolved.

> From a holistic ELF perspective which takes into account the interpersonal dimension of interaction, however, it is very well imaginable that successful negotiation of meaning may indeed contribute something positive to an interaction, e.g. to the emergence of rapport. (Pitzl 2005: 58)

5.2   Turn-taking model in multiparty interaction

Sacks et al.'s (1974) turn-taking system, as they propose, "favours, by virtue of its design, smaller numbers of participants" (p.712). As a matter of course, when tracing back the research into simultaneous talk in the past, almost all of which had been examined through the dyadic conversation (Kangasharju 1996); a choice of data in which Levinson (1998) describes as significantly confining the researchers from variability of verbal exchanges to certain specific settings and cultures (p.222). Multi-participant interaction can, on the other hand, provide the researchers with much more interesting and distinct aspect on the turn-taking phenomenon (Sacks 1967). It is challenging in the sense that the polylogues contribute to "variability in alternation patterns" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004: 4) which results in the "instability and flexibility" (Wolfartsberger 2009: 166) of the turn taking. In other words, interactions involving with four people or more are very likely to drift into multiple parallel conversations; turn-taking regulation is therefore come into the issue of discussion in terms of its "distribution of opportunities to talk among several participants" (Schegloff 1996, 21). Scepticism has therefore been raised over the applicability of the turn-taking concept into ELF context. For example, Meierkord (2000) has warned that insights into turn-taking from previous research were inconsistent with the unique nature of ELF, to the extent that its framework had been mainly developed with dyadic, L1 interactions. Worfartsberger (2015) similarly argued that the amount of participants engaging in the interaction yields important implication for the interpretation of simultaneous speech.

In this respect, one might contends that ordinary conversation constitutes a benchmark in CA (Seedhouse 2004) and that the original scope of Sacks et al.'s (1974) turn-taking framework is designed for conversations in the sense of informal small-talk. Schegloff et al. (2002) however discuss in their more recent study that the framework can intrinsically describe the phenomenon of turn-taking in all forms of talk in interaction. That is to say, the approach can unproblematically be applied not only in any investigation of institutional discourse but also in the intercultural setting just like in the previous studies on monolingual language use (ibid). It is therefore sensible to see more recent research apply Sack et al.'s turn taking model into intercultural workplace data (e.g. Asmuß and Svennevig 2009; Handford 2010; Pullin 2010; Wolfartsberger 2009, 2011a, 2011b; 2012). The prominent example could be seen in Wolfartsberger's (2009, 2010) analysis of ELF workplace meetings which contain the data of group interactions as well as institutional discourse in an intercultural setting. As she noted, it is not satisfactory to define the overlaps in such interaction as "violative" against the turn taking rule of one-at-a-time (Sacks et al. 1974: 724). She argued that the ELF participants in her study have proved to be expert-language users who are capable of drawing on multiple sorts of socio-pragmatic competence to reach successful communication (Wolfartsberger 2015: 255). In this sense, she then applied the turn-taking model of Sack et al. in search for an explanation of the occurrence and interpretation of overlap and its resolution in such multilingual/party communication; which could then lead her into a more insight of pragmatic strategies that BELF users use to make their communication meaningful. As she put:

> … the borders between what can be termed "casual" and "institutional" discourse are in many cases fuzzy to begin with. What is more, even if the model's scope of application was originally confined to casual conversations, Sacks et al.'s (1974) framework has since developed into a generic baseline for the description of turn-taking in all communicative contexts in linguistics. Consequently, whenever turn-taking in linguistics is analyzed, it is done with reference to Sacks et al.'s framework, regardless of the nature of the data. (Wolfartsberger 2015: 258)

Schegloff (1995) has made an interesting point that the model does not necessarily focusing on organizing the distribution of talk among "persons" but rather among "parties" (p.33). That is to say, multi-person parties can be visible in the turn taking and that the occurrence of simultaneous speech could possibly be

the case of the same party as well as across different parties (Wolfartsberger 2015: 255).

For these reasons, the present study will also rely on the framework to investigate how the turn-taking functions in ELF business group interactions. In a general concept of conversation, speaker change is perceived as a standard practice and the most apparent feature (Liddicoat 2011: 80). Usually, participants take turns by addressing their contributions and once the current speaker complete his/her turn, s/he then moves to the role of hearer and the new speaker take up the new turn (Watts 1991). Such turn allocations are referred to the concept of "one party talks at a time" (Sacks et al. 1974: 699) which typically take adequately slight time to prevent the occurring of prolonged silence or gaps, but also late enough to allow little or no room for overlaps. While the moment as such can be regarded as a default setting, this is not to suggest that gaps and overlaps do not occur (Liddicoat 2011). Liddicoat argued that the turn-taking system cannot be described by any set of pre-allocated rules but it is rather interactionally managed by the participants throughout the course of the conversation. Although people would often suggest there is actually such a set of rules—the rule of *speaker-shift-after-the previous-speaker-pauses-or-stops*, this is clearly not always the case (Liddicoat 2011: 81, emphasis mine). In actual conversation, as Liddicoat goes on, most speaker shifts take place without an appreciable pause between turn, and that the pause can be misinterpreted in different contexts. For example, the speakers, on the one hand, may pause after they finish the talk but the interlocutors, on the other hand, might have interpreted that space as some sorts of interactional difficulties of the speakers. They therefore wait for the speakers to continue the conversation rather than taking those pauses as the opportunities for speaker change (p. 82). There are also some other cases where pauses do not indicate a complete talk but contribute to other interactional significances. Taking the turn at talk in these particular situations can therefore be regarded inappropriate despite the silence after the prior speaker (p. 82). To conclude, by taking the virtual nature of actual conversation (which can be varied in the length of utterance or in content) into account, it is not possible to establish a set of pre-allocated rules for organizing speaker change because the action of turn-taking is locally managed by the participants themselves (Liddicoat 2011: 83). As he put:

> A model of turn-taking can only account for the facts of turn-taking if it deals with the 'randomness' of turn-taking in terms of what is said, for how long and by whom. In order to achieve this, a model of turn-taking needs to be

sensitive to each 'next bit' of talk, rather than trying to describe or prescribe behaviour over a whole conversation. Turn-taking works at the level of each next bit, not at the level of the whole conversation because speakers in a conversation only access to the conversation as it unfolds. (p. 83)

A turn-taking model of Sacks et al. (1974) is sensitive to the issue discussed to the extent that it accounts for the ways in which the turn at talk occurs and provides a systematic operation of speaker change accordingly. The model is based on a corpus of different conversations and comprises two central interrelated components to describe: (1) how turns are constructed, which is termed *turn constructional component* and (2) how turns are allocated, called *turn allocational component*. As they propose, these two components link with a set of rules which, in turn, make a smooth and orderly turn-transfer in conversation possible.

5.2.1   The turn constructional component

The turn constructional component accounts for "how people know when to begin a turn" (Garcia 2013: 49). It refers to an act in which listeners pay attention to speakers' turn construction or "unit-types" in order to predict the likely point where the speaker is done with her turn (Sacks et al. 1974: 702). As they explain, the turns can be made up of as various unit-types and lengths: from a word, phrase, clause to sentence. Hearers thus try to project the possible completion point of these units along the way in order to appropriately take the turn at talk. In other words, such projectability is of particular relevance for the so-called transition-relevance places (TRPs), the point where the turn-taking occurs (Wolfartsberger 2015: 259). In this sense, Sacks et al. argued that the turn transition is usually relevant to the end of each units depending on, for instance, unit construction, grammatical structure, or even the intonation and the timing of speakers' actions. That is to say, the turn can be constructed with either a complete sentence or incomplete sentence, e.g. phrases, clauses, or sentence fragment (Garcia 2013).

5.2.2   The turn allocational component

Sacks et al. called the second component as the turn allocational component, which explicates the turns allocation in a conversation where more than two persons are present. In two-party conversation, there is a full assurance for a listener to be the next speaker at some point, but with three or more parties

"differential distribution of turns becomes relevant" (Sacks et al. 1974: 712). Sacks et al. therefore proposed the "methodical procedures" (Hayashi 2013) to the achievement of the orderly turn-transfer in multi-party talk. That is to say, the turns can be allocated by two possible methods: (1) the current speaker selects a next speaker before the first possible transition-relevance place and (2) the non-speakers self-select at the first possible transition-relevance place. According to Sacks et al. (1974), the current selects next method can be exercised by a variety of techniques but the prominent ones are a combination of (a) using "first pair-parts" (e.g. a question affiliates to the next turn or a tag question) and (b) addressing someone particularly (e.g. using an address term or gaze direction) (p. 717). In the meantime, the next speaker selects self option is applied in cases where the current speaker does not select anyone. To claim the floor, the potential next speaker is driven to start as early as s/he can project a TRP in avoidance of coinciding with other party and be the first starter. Such motive is commonly subject to the occurrence of "terminal overlaps" (Jefferson 1984)—next speakers taking turn slightly earlier than the current turn completion, one of the most common types of overlaps (Hayashi 2013). Even though theses overlaps are usually brief, they might impair the hearing of the first parts in the next turn's utterance. To minimize the problem, Sacks et al. noted that appositional beginnings (e.g. well, but, and, so, etc.) "are extraordinarily common, and do satisfy the constraints of beginning" (p. 719). They, thus, are "turn-entry devices" or "pre-starts" preventing the revealing of too much constructional features of the turn which might affect the analysability of the sentence begun (ibid: 719).

In a nutshell, Sacks et al. have proposed "a basic set of rules governing turn construction" as follows:

> (1) For any turn, at the initial transition relevance place of an initial turn constructional unit: (a) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then the party so selected has the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak; no others have such rights or obligations, and transfer occurs at that place. (b) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then self-selection for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted; first starter acquires rights to a turn, and transfer occurs at that place. (c) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects. (2) If, at the initial transition-relevance place on an initial turn-constructional unit, neither 1a nor 1b has

operated, and, following the provision of 1c, current speaker has continued, then the rule-set a–c re-applies at the next transition-relevance place, and recursively at each next transition-relevance place, until transfer is effected (Sacks et al. 1974: 704).

5.2.3 Turn-taking in ELF business context

Quite notably, ELF workplace meetings display distinct features to a certain extent regarding the turn-taking from the casual ELF conversations (e.g. Cogo 2007; Asmuß and Svennevig 2009; Handford 2010). Wolfartsberger (2009) argued that the business meetings can "contain stretches of disagreement and dispute resulting in interruption and competition for the floor", which subsequently provide the researcher with pertinent data for "establishing the interactive function of simultaneous speech in ELF" in this particular context (p.169). It is important to note that in such "primarily outcome-oriented interaction" like business meetings where certain topics and problems are usually prearranged in an agenda (ibid: 172), clarity may be more desirable over interpersonal alignment (Firth 2009). For this reason, confrontation on difficult topics is something unable to avoid in this particular situation. The point is advocated by Ahvenainen (2005) who critically commented that whereas ELF small talk allows participants to evade from linguistically difficult topics, this would barely be the case in a business negotiation (p.26).

> It can be said that simultaneous speech in ELF communication is definitely a rewarding topic that calls for more empirical investigation. However, research should not be limited to investigating collaborative overlaps, as interesting they may be, but should in future also be extended to studying overlaps in conflictual situations, such as power struggles or disagreements, in order to shed light on how ELF is used by its speaker in these kinds of contexts. (Wolfartsberger 2009: 178)

As a consequence, it is very common to find simultaneous speech taking place in multi-forms and multi-functions to serve both collaborative and competitive purposes in ELF business context. However, as discussed, the decision rests with the researcher in categorizing whether the overlap emerging in the context is either collaborative or competitive. Though the choice is not an easy task and naturally based on analyst's subjectivity (Cogo 2007), Wolfartsberger (2009) suggested that there would usually be some cues from participants unfolded by a close analysis of the interaction. Similarly conclude,

Watts (1991) also stresses the significance of reflecting critically on "participants' overall behaviour for their own interpretations of events at or shortly after the point in time at which and in the setting in which they occurred" (p.91). One possible mean is to inspect the functions that the overlaps fulfil in conjunction with their surrounding sequence. This could be found in the so-called minimal responses or "backchannel" (e.g. "mhm", "yeah") (Yngve 1970). Numerous instances of backchannels from empirical research usually illustrate their role as a supportive form of overlap, i.e. to signal listenership and support the current speaker. It is however worthwhile to point here, as Wolfartsberger suggests, that the "form and function in simultaneous speech do not necessarily correspond to each other" (p.177). A close analysis in multiparty interactions reveals that participants also draw on backchannel as a common technique to prepare the stage for taking over the turn (Kothoff 1993). It further manifests that interventions which are traditionally labelled as interruptions may be used for cooperative purposes e.g. as lexis help in word search problems (e.g. Du Babcock 2009; Wolfartsberger 2009, 2015; Cogo 2011). This complex interrelation of simultaneous talk's form and function rightly bears out that the categorization of overlaps cannot solely rely on formal criteria as isolated incidents, rather it requires researchers to take into account contextual factors, i.e. the time and the context in which they occur (Wolfartsberger 2009). Another important aspect needs to be carefully examined is the potential cultural influences on ELF turn-taking. Previous ELF studies demonstrate that culture does play a role in speakers' choice of overlaps (e.g. Meierkord 2002, Ulijin and Li 1995). The difference in cultural background not only results in the differing in patterns of usage but can also touch on the interlocutors' conceptualization. That is to say, it is possible that some overlaps may be interpreted as collaborative by some participants, or invasive by the others from their particular cultural conception (Murata 1994).

5.2.4   Simultaneous speech

In CA framework, simultaneous speech has long been marked as uncooperative interruptions (Watts 1991), a deviation from the conventional concept of the turn-taking system where participants should have aligned to the basic rule of 'one party at a time' (Schegloff 1968: 1076). Schegloff and Sacks (1973) argued that in such a traditional view, the 'noticed event' of either silence or simultaneous speech had usually required a repair (p.293). Nevertheless, a fair number of empirical research has come to conclude that simultaneous speech or

overlapping talk should not always represent a problematic event (e.g. Tannen 1994; Makri-Tsilipakou 1994; Yule 1996; Langford 1994). Makri-Tsilipakou (1994) rightly contended that the concept needs to be refined, because "overlaps and interruptions are equally capable of instancing cooperation or dominance" (p. 403). In certain cases, simultaneous talk can serve for collaborative proposes and is not necessarily recognized as an interruption by the interactants (Oreström 1983, 147). The functions of such emergent collaborative overlap are indeed manifold. For example, it has been espoused as the turn completions whereby speakers predict others' utterance and cooperatively complete them or overlap as a mean to signal close attention and support (McCarthy 1991; Langford 1994; Lerner 1996). Yule (1996) also presents an interesting discussion that many speakers use overlapping talk to express solidarity or closeness—addressing similar opinions or values—a function which has crucial implications for the social aspect (p.74). These positive features are remarkably highlighted in the "overtly cooperative and mutually supportive" (Seidlhofer 2003: 15) ELF interactions. Similarly conclude, ELF users draw on the simultaneous speech on various occasions "to express solidarity and signal attention in support of the current speaker" (Wolfartsberger 2009: 162) as results in ELF's important features e.g. the joint utterance construction, turn completions (see e.g. Cogo 2007; Walenta 2007 more ref). In a nutshell, Wolfartsberger (2009) suggests that the hybridity function of simultaneous speech which serves both collaborative and competitive purposes relies on the particular context in which it occurs (p.165). In this sense, she further argued that:

> This of course leaves the researcher with the daunting task to determine whether a particular overlap is perceived by the current speaker as supportive or competitive. Situated, qualitative case studies are necessary, which take into account contextual factors when determining the discursive function of a given overlap, independent from its form. (p.166)

5.3   The interview

The analysis of the interview data will supplement the preliminary findings of the meeting data analysis and provide deeper insights and understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The interview data collected were both in Thai and English. They were transcribed in full, whereby those conducted in Thai involved two phases of interpretation, i.e. the data was first transcribed into text in Thai and later translated into English

to be quoted or referred to in the thesis. As Dörnyei (2007) noted, the transcription process allows a researcher to thoroughly see and learn the data. Therefore, at this stage, Flick (2002) suggested that the data should be transcribed with accuracy without any correction from the listener. However, it is notable that the conversational behaviour and verbal data (including non-linguistic behaviour) are integral parts of meeting data transcription, which aims to represent on paper as accurately as possible the characteristics of the conversation. Conversely, the analysis of interview data places greater focus on the content of the informants' responses, and the transcription therefore excludes the prosodic features.

Coding procedure

Once the transcription process was complete, an intensive and repeated reading of the material was carried out (Schmidt 2004: 254) to familiarise myself with the context and obtain a general sense of the whole idea (Dörnyei 2007). The coding categories in this study were based on a combination of inductive and deductive category approaches. It relied, however, on the theories in the literature review, research questions, and relevant findings from the meeting, rather than being purely derived from the content of the interview data itself. The inductive process involves open coding, which allows categories to be developed before narrowing down later once similarities and differences have been grouped (Mayring 2000; Patton 2008). Meanwhile, the deductive category assists with the consistency of the data within the themes and categories formulated, and is poised to generate new categorisations for the unfitted contents.

First stage: develop themes related to research questions, relevant literature, and findings of meeting data

On reading the transcripts, passages relevant to the topic of the study were highlighted, while the emerging topics and individual aspects which were related to the research questions were noted. At this initial step, Schmidt (2004) reminded that the aim is not to look for the same topics in each interview to be compared. The transcription reading process is time-consuming and important passages in an open semi-structured interview are not always visible in explicit response to the question, but seem to be taken up later in different questions. It is thereby necessary not to act hastily when seeking quotations that seem to be ideal and overlook passages which do not seem to be connected to the research questions on the first reading. Instead, one should be observant of parts which might be

interesting and linked to the focus area, e.g. aspects that informants supplement, or new topics that appear in the collected data (Schmidt 2004).

Categories were then formulated on the basis of pre-determined theories and findings of meeting analysis and partly arose progressively out of the interview data collected.

Second stage: coding

Each category developed was given detailed descriptions to serve as a guide for coding. The procedure was to Next, as second-level coding. This is suggested to identify similar codes or common categories or themes (Dörnyei, 2007) and later mark similarities and differences between the interviews while tagging some important key words before focusing again on a single case.

5.4   VOICE transcription conventions

As mentioned, the data in this present study will rely on the VOICE conventions instead of Jefferson's which are usually hailed as standard in CA research. Nevertheless, the VOICE conventions are widely recognized among readers who are familiar with ELF research and stand a prevalent choice of transcription conventions among ELF researchers. In general, they can act just as the one used in CA do, e.g. capturing simultaneous speech and rising and falling intonation and in particular, "they provide conventions for integrating features characteristic of ELF data such as pronunciation variations, coinages, or non-English speech" (Wolfartsberger 2015: 256). Whilst transcription, as she further argues, forms a fundamental step of data analysis, the conventions are not necessarily identical between research communities. In other words, the process can be creative and selective (Buchholtz 2000) and that "an analysis incorporating analytic concepts of CA is possible using other transcription conventions than those proposed by Jefferson" (Wolfartsberger 2015: 257).

What presented in this chapter is the discussions of the analyticals approach to be used in the analysis of the data. In the next chapter, the findings of the meeting data and interview data will be presented in detail.

Chapter 6: Data analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the data—(6.2) the business meetings among ELF users and (6.5) the interviews which reveal participants' perspectives—to illustrate the pragmatic strategies and characteristics that lead to the successful ELF business communication. I will critically discuss two core sections of the chapter: (1) the negotiation of the meaning among BELF participants using Varonis and Gass's (1985) model for the negotiation of meaning; and (2) a combination of the first model and a turn-taking model of Sacks et al. (1974) to include the analysis of form and function of simultaneous speech occurring in ELF group business meetings. The pragmatic strategies employed in the negotiation sequences can be of relevance to the practice of code-switching in which the respective features and quality will be analyzed in section 6.4. In the last section, data gained primarily from the interviews and some brief talks with the participants during the meeting sessions will be illrustrated in detail.

6.1   General information about the data

The data which are analyzed in this present study consists of 9 business meetings plus the interview data of 23 meeting participants from the whole set of the 9 meetings. However, this chapter is based on a detail analysis of 6 meetings which prove to provide sufficient length of data due to the fact that it gets to the point where the new data is reinforcing the old data but did not adding anything new. Out of the 9 meetings, 6 took place on the occasion of the business partners' visit, while the other 3 were internal meetings. All meetings were planned in advance and held in conference rooms. Meetings 1 and 8 were recorded at PTA's international office in Singapore. Meetings 2-5 were collected at the headquarter and branch offices of PTA in 3 different provinces of Thailand: Bangkok, Rayong and Ayuttaya. Meeting 6 was recorded at an international office of MITO in Thailand. Lastly, meeting 9 was collected at NEIL, a Thai company, in Thailand. The overall lengths of the meetings are 9.30 hours and 2.35 hours of the interviews. Details show in appendix B.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the purpose of this study is to investigate the interactions and their negotiation of the meaning, whereas the whole meeting interactions involve multi-layered datasets in which the analysis of

all would go beyond the scope of the study. Therefore, the parts concern a long monologue, i.e. a person giving a presentation, would not be transcribed and analyzed.

6.1.1 From straightforward to enlarged sequences

In this section, a number of instances of various types and lengths of negotiation sequences in the business meetings will be critically demonstrated and analyzed relying on Varonis and Gass's (1985) model of the negotiation of meaning. When the understanding problems surfaces, the sequences in which they are negotiated can vary in length and salience (Pitzl 2010: 35). Some negotiation of meaning can be resolved via simple sequences which could be as short as three turns – featuring only three components: trigger (T), indicator (I), and response (R) of the model of negotiation of meaning; or four turns by adding the fourth component, namely a reaction to response (RR). Though extremely basic and short in length, such negotiation sequences could function effectively in resolving the non-understanding (Pitzl 2010: 128). Still, the comprehension cannot always be reached via short and simple sequences but may lead up to stretches of exchanges. The excerpts elicited from the data mostly involve complex negotiation cycles which manifest "multiple layers of trigger-resolution sequences" (Varonis and Gass 1985: 78), i.e. different potential causes of non-understanding and various strategic I, R and RR (indicating, response and reaction to the response consecutively) procedures that participants draw on to negotiate the meaning. In these cases, the negotiation sequences could become a loop where, for example, a response could simultaneously represent as a trigger or an indicator. This thereby initiates another negotiation sequence (Pitzl 2010: 44) where additional information and explanations may be required. Examples 1-3 will outline how the BELF participants achieve the mutual understanding through certain common strategies such as comprehension check, clarification request, let it pass or formulating a hypothesis.

Example 1 (meeting 6)

```
233   S3:    i think er [org 6] korea will be more attractive er in the near <13>
234          future </13>
236   S5:    <13> if </13>(.) [org 6] can get the company in (privacy) it is highly
237          possible they talk to xxx
238   S3:    because er they are study to have three thousand ton er they study to
239          import three thousand ton cargo                                          T
```

240	S6:	mm	
241	S3:	per lot (.) in the near future	*...T*
242	S4:	their tank? that big?	*I*
243	S3:	er NOT YET not that BIG but now they are considering to build the	*R1*
244		tank	
245	S4:	mm hm	*RR1*
246	S3:	which can receive three thousand ton at one shot	*R1a/T(2)*
247	S4:	in a year?	*I(2)*
248	S3:	yeah in a year. (3) they said their consumption will be three to four	*R2*
249		thousand ton <14> per x </14>	
250	S4:	<14> but </14> in case some day they really build that tank mean they	
251		can only they can also do the dissolution	*RR2/T(3)*
252	S2:	you mean the [org 6]?	*I(3)*
253	S4:	mm	*R3*
254	S2:	i always check er them for the <15> distribution </15>	*RR3*

The first non-understanding in this instance arises in line 242: *their tank? that big?* resulting from the trigger provoked by S3's prior statement. Although the indication is constituted immediately after S3's speech: *per lot (.) in the near future* in line 241, it is much more plausible that the cause of the understanding problem links with S3's preceding remarks in lines 238-239: *because er they are study to have three thousand ton er they study to import three thousand ton cargo*. Indeed, the two speeches could have been combined into one sentence if not being separated by S5's minimal acknowledgment: *mm* in line 240. It is however sensible to consider S3's both speeches as a whole as a trigger. S4's indicating procedure *their tank? that big?* is clearly referred to the '*they study to import three thousand ton cargo*' in line 239 and '*per lot in the near future*' in line 241. The indication itself performs as a reformulation as comprehension check (Vasseur et al. 1996) in which S4 reformulates S3's utterance, presumably, '*they*' (line 238) and '*cargo*' (line 239) into '*their tank?*' and '*three thousand ton*' (line 239) into '*that big?*' using rising intonation to openly request clarification. The question is fairly explicit and short, or characterized as 'minimal queries' according to Vasseur et al. (1996). S3 response in line 243 by repeating two essential words '*big*' (*er not yet not that **big***) and '*tank*' (*but now they are considering to build the **tank***). If we analyze the response procedure closely, it indicates that S3 paraphrases his previous statement, namely '*they study*' (line 238) to '*they are considering*' and '*in the near future*' (line 241) to '*not yet*'. By responding this way, S3 appears to act on the assumption that S4 has not properly understood his previous account, he therefore paraphrases it and repeats S4's essential words to make the statement more simply to understand, that is to say, from '*they study to import three thousand ton cargo per lot in the near future*' to '*not yet not that big but now they are considering to build the tank*'. S4 then signals his understanding in line 245: *mm hm* as a reaction to the response in which the non-understanding can thus be regarded as resolved.

Nonetheless, S3 does not finish his statement yet but goes on to provide more elaborative description in line 246: *which can receive three thousand ton at one shot*, which again relates to his preceding talk in line 239. By analyzing the procedure of trigger, indicator, response as well as reaction to the response outlined above, it is noticeable that S3 seems to reckon that his statement in line 238-239 has the potential cause to the confusion. Repair is adopted at the first stage, i.e. as soon as S3 recognizes his grammatical mistake, he immediately repairs it, namely from '*they are study*' to '*they study*'. In addition, he also changes the verb in the sentence, i.e. from '*have*' to '*import*' probably in a bid to make the sentence sound more logical and precisely. Lastly, he adds an additional word '*cargo*' to supplement the statement. However, when S4 poses a question, it is fairly plausible that the words '*they study*' are problematic. S3 seems to hold this interpretation so that when he answers S4, he opts for a slight reformulation of the verb—'study' to 'consider'—as well as altering the verb construction from a present simple *they study* to a present continuous *they are considering*. As a consequence, whereas the statement has been paraphrased and reformulated, its semantic core remains intact. The negotiation of the meaning does not cease at this point but resumes as S4 indicates in line 247: *in a year?* which could be considered a minimal query with interrogative intonation. At the most basic level, the potential trigger to this indication could be contributed to S3's utterance in line 241: *in the near future*. However, S3's speech itself does not pinpoint the specific timeframe which hence results in two possible interpretations that S4's question is, on the one hand, purely based on his own prediction or, on the other hand, an outcome of his previous knowledge about the topic. However, when we take the answer S3 provides in line 248 into account, the latter interpretation seems to hold a higher possibility. S3's response features an affirmative response '*yeah*' and a reprise of S4's speech '*in a year*' and followed by an elaborative explanation '*they said their consumption will be three to four thousand ton per x*' (lines 248-249). Although there is no part in the preceding conversation that mentions the exact timescale of company 6's project, it is highly probable that the participants have acquired beforehand some, more or less, knowledge about the topics being discussed in the meeting. S4 might not know the detail of company 6's project plan, but he might at least know they have a plan to do something next year which enables him to produce such a precise indicator. This piece of information could be a shared knowledge amongst participants so that when S4 poses a question *in a year?*, S3 does not seem to be surprised that S4 can make a correct assumption, rather, he gives a

prompt affirmative response. In this respect, it could be argued that S4's indicating procedure *in a year?* functions as a confirmation check with his initial knowledge. A response he receives is another piece of evidence that the shared knowledge can enable participants to catch up with the topic despite some communicative difficulties which may arise during the course of the interaction. S4's following speech once again exhibits his former knowledge about the topic. In lines 250-251, he gives a comment on company 6's plan: *in case some day they really build that tank mean they can only they can also do the dissolution* as a reaction to the response. His statement shows his general knowledge about the system of the tank which makes it feasible to maintain the communicative flow of the negotiation sequences. It is of relevance to highlight two semantic points in S4's remark. First, at the grammatical level, there is an elision of the conjunction between the two clauses, namely: (1) *in case some day they really build that tank* and (2) *mean they can only they can also do the dissolution.* That is to say, he does not put the subject to the verb 'mean'. The elision could possibly be either deliberate or mistaken, but whichever reason, this does not seem to provoke unintelligibility to the extent that participants neither indicated nor did they show sign of bewilderment. On the other hand, S4 does not let the word '*only*' in *they can only* pass but repairs it to *they can also do the dissolution* (lines 250-251). It is possible to imagine that S4 recognizes that the word carries a different meaning and could therefore distort the semantic meaning of the whole sentence. As a result, he finds it necessary to repair the phrase in order to convey the message precisely.

Example 2 (meeting 6)

```
145   S2:   and there are four regions of (.) the (.) country that they import x
146         singapore? (.) korea? saudi arabia and china. (3) and this is the analysis
147         of our (po) xtistic statistic (.) as you can see the last year (.) er in two
148         thousand (.) twelve? (.) there is no cargo from china <fast> EVEN two
149         thousand thirteen as well </fast> just a fews cargo from china (.) but
150         start from two thousand fourteen (.) china is become (1) more bigger
151         shares.
152   SS:   mm hm
153   S2:   and (.) er so the idea they have er less and less cargo (.) because they
154         may turn to european? market?
155   SS:   mm hm
156   S2:   and EVEN NOWS? er singapore is still be (guest) but singapore is
157         include and xx xxx so it's look like a big (.) but actually i think (.)
158         china is maybe (.) bigger (1) okay (1) and this is behind background of
159         the (process) statistics (.) and now [org 4] korea they only (decide)?
160         not to import but (.) they is start by from us since (.) (last year) (.)      T
161   S4:   you mean (.) [ORG4]? thailand.                                               I
162   S2:   [org4] thailand yes.                                                         R1
163   S4:   mm                                                                           RR
164   S2:   we supply them last time we supply sixty metric tons to them                 R1a/T(2)
165   S4:   regular basis?                                                               I(2)
166   S2:   not regular it depend on their orders                                        R2
```

167	S4:	oh	
		RR2	
168	S2:	but someTIME theys send the enquire with the (advice)	
		R2a	
169	SS:	mm	*RR2a*
170	S2:	but if i cannot match with your order i think they skip (2)	*R2c*
171	SX:	mm	*RR2c*
172	S6:	since er when during was your xx er three xx us er send me er you	
173		have some monthly report so i see all the report summary and how	
174		much time customer take their time i have no time now to see that	
175		kind of a <soft> (evolution) </soft> so that's why i curious er if your	
176		customer is customer based (.) is er changing or still the same	

In this example, the understanding problem arises in line 161 following the review on the import performance and prospect in Asian region presented by S2. According to S4's indicator: *you mean org4 thailand*, it is plausible to assume that the trigger is limited in lines 159-160, the part in which S2 talks about company 4. Thereby the indicating procedure that S4 employs in line 161 is to "submit hypothetical meaning to [his] partner's agreement" (Vasseur et al. 1996: 84), a strategy in which they call "a re-elaboration of the other's discourse" (p. 84). It is reported to be effectively exercised by advanced speakers "to check how far shared understanding has been obtained and actively take part in the joint clarification work" (Pitzl 2010: 88). In the light of the preceding interpretation declaring the presumed portion of trigger and the indicating procedure that being employed, the cause of the non-understanding is most likely to be an "elliptical utterance" (Bremer 1996: 53). In this case, what S4 does is to try to supply himself the missing or unclear information in lines 159-160. By looking essentially at the context, since company 4's Korea branch decided not to import, S4 can infer that '*they*' in line 160 likely implies its branch in Thailand. In the meantime, the words '*from us*' (line 160) could drop an additional hint that S2 was talking about MITO Thailand. As a consequence, he is able to formulate '*they is start by from us*' (line 160) as a hypothesis. Although S4 seems to recognize that S2 speaks from his own perspective, as his indication suggests, he might be uncertain whether mutual intelligibility is shared among others because he is Singaporean and not a member of MITO. He therefore opts for combining a comprehension check *you me*an with his hypothetical inference: *org4? thailand* (line 161) in an effort to clarify the understanding problem. S2 then uses "reprise" (Vasseur et al. 1996), repeating S4's last two words *org4 thailand* supplemented with an affirmative response *yes* (line 162). At this point, the non-understanding on the side of S4 is resolved as proved by his acknowledging feedback in line 169: *mm*. The conversation then proceeds to which S2 elaborates more detail on the company's performance. His information is nevertheless met with S4's

indicating procedure in line 165: *regular basis?* which obviously functions as a clarification request. Structural speaking, it seems logical that S2's statement in line 164 could be divided into two separate sentences namely, '*we supply them*' and '*last time we supply them sixty metric tons to them*'. Against this backdrop, it might be difficult to locate the actual trigger to S4's indication. However, if we consider the preceding talk and the conversation as a whole, it is very likely that S2's statement: *we supply them last time we supply sixty metric tons to them* is an act of "repair". His response in line 166: *not regular it depend on their orders* support this interpretation. It clearly suggests that S2 interprets that the cause of S4's non-understanding is whether MITO supplies company 4 with the same average amount of goods (sixty metric tons) on a regular basis. He also adds supporting information in line 168 and the reactions received from S4 in lines 167: *oh* and 169: mm confirm this assumption. It is worthwhile to mention that the "let it pass" (Firth 1996) strategy is employed in the context on many occasions. There are several parts of S2's speech which were ungrammatically constructed but neither of which had been repaired by other participants nor had it been the source of non-understanding. What is remarkable is that when S2 mistakenly used the pronoun '*your*' instead of '*their*' in line 170, rather than indicating, participants opted for letting it pass. The plausible explanation could contribute to the fact that S2 was talking about company4, it was therefore not possible that '*your order'* in his speech literally meant the interlocutors' companies (especially when there were three guests who came from three different companies). It therefore made no sense for participants to unnecessarily interrupt the flow of the conversation whilst they all appeared to understand what S2 exactly meant. Participants let this slide in which one of them shows acknowledgement in line 171: *mm* and S6 moves on to the next topic in lines 172-176 which clearly suggests that there was no understanding problem left behind.

6.1.2   Eliciting the most accurate data: Dealing with delicate issue

On one level, it has been witnessed that participants have drawn on different strategies to resolve some minor non-understandings or sometimes adopt the 'let it pass' mainly to maintain the flow of the ongoing interactions. However, an abundance of instances from the data analyzed suggest that the issue of clarity and preciseness is of ultimate necessity and is usually a prime requirement in each business meeting. We would see from the following excerpts the high involvement strategies, which include the use of repetition, spelling as well as

non-linguistic means, e.g. picture, diagram, employed by participants as a means to elicit the most accurate information to prevent the potential misunderstanding which might have affected the negotiation and business direction.

Such scenario is remarkably prominent when the negotiation involves the matter of number. It was obvious that participants would not hold back when it came to bringing the accurate figure to light. In these contexts, they were prepared to enter the re-negotiation procedure for the sake of precise information.

Example 3 (meeting 6)

138	S2:	(5) next it's start for the review of the marketing in two thousand	
139		fourteens (4) in two thousand fourteen thailand net imports (.) thirty	*T*
140		five kt of the (.) this is historical (income) records	
141	S4:	hm? thirty five?	*I*
142	S1:	fifty three	*R1*
143	S2:	FIFTY THREE yes	*R1a*
144	S3:	<soft> fifty three kt </soft>	*R1b*

Following the conversation in example 3, S2, a staff of MITO, continues giving a report on Thailand's net imports in year 2014. While his incomplete sentence in line 140 does not seem to be problematic for the listeners, the number he presents does. S4's indicator clearly indicates that "*thirty five*" is a trigger utterance which causes him confusion. He thereby uses a minimal query '*hm?*' and a repetition of a trigger '*thirty five?*' accompanied by rising intonation in both words as a comprehension check. It is important to note that all participants had been handed out the information sheet before the meeting started to which they can refer during the course of the meeting. Therefore, whilst S2 claims that the total number is thirty five, the sheet says differently. S4 does not let this pass but immediately voices his non-understanding to check which is the correct number. The indicator is first picked up and reacted by S1's, the chair, correction in line 142: *fifty three*, followed by S2 who corrects his own statement by repeating S1's utterance and adds the affirmative word "*yes*" (line 143) as a way to confirm S1's utterance. Considering from the degree of the non-understanding, it is very likely that the responses by S1 and S2 suffice to resolve the understanding problem. S3, another MITO's staff, nevertheless decides to collaborate with his two colleagues to affirm the correct information in line 144: *fifty three* complemented by the unit of weigh *kt* (kiloton). The indicator and the responses also verify that what causes ambiguity is virtually the word '*thirty five*' not the word '*kt*' which indicates the common knowledge of specific lexis and acronyms amongst participants. All in all, it is very obvious that participants give

special importance and attention to the accuracy of the issue relates to the concerns and goals of business (Charles 2007). The net imports such as a case in point could be a key relevant indicator to a foreign business partner in a decision making for any future collaboration. The prompt responses from all staff on the side of MITO have borne out the significance of the issue which aroused them to join in to clear up the understanding problem.

Example 4 (meeting 2)

```
418   S2:   FOR how many units?                                        Qu.
419   S1:   er right now three fifty                                   T=Ans.
420   S2:   three hundred fifty                                        I
421   S1:   yea (.) and then for new ones (.) this year about the thirty (.)   R1
422         two thirty customer <101> with </101> er
423   S2:   <101> every year </101> briefly                           RR1
424   S1:   we er connection                                          ...R1
425   S2:   okay                                                      ...RR1
426   S1:   that's mean er when we order the station                   R1a
427   S2:   okay it will come with this <102> new x </102>            RR1a
428   S1:   <102> it come </102> with the new new new customer       ...R1a
```

Similarly to the preceding instance, the exchange in this example relates to the figure in particular. The discussion is about the new gas meter reading device that will be installed in PTA's client factories. A product presented by S2, a sales engineering representative from a Singapore's company, does not however implement PTA's specification to which it needs some further upgrade systems. S2 has acknowledged that, thereby the information such as the number of factories that require such device is of highly relevance. For this reason, the negotiation sequence is initiated by a short and explicit question posed by S2: *for how many units?* in line 418. The answer that S1 provides: *er right now three fifty* (line 419) however does not seem to fully satisfy S2 in achieving the degree of understanding he had expected. That is to say, it is S1's answer which triggers the non-understanding. S2 then opts to slightly reformulate S1's *three fifty* to *three hundred fifty* in line 420 clearly in a bid to seek comprehension check – a practice which indicates the "extraordinary need for clarity and preciseness that sets business meetings apart from casual conversations" (Pitzl 2010: 89). Considering the fact that S2 can come up with the proper reformulation coupled with S1's simple affirmative response '*yes*' in line 421, it suggests that a scale of the non-understanding is of minimal in the first place. This interpretation is particularly plausible seeing that the number had in fact been stated by S1 in the preceding conversation twice, to which he said 'three hundred fifty', both times, not 'three fifty'. S1 then provides further clarification in his response adding that this year the number will be increasing around '*thirty two thirty*' (line 421) which is promptly accepted by S2 who actively overlaps in line 423: *every year briefly* to

express his acknowledgement. Structural speaking, S1's utterance '*and then for new ones this year about the thirty two thirty customer with we connection*' (lines 421-422, 424) – the '*thirty two thirty*' in particular – has the potential to cause listeners confusion. Nevertheless, S2 has stated in the interview afterwards that he could immediately figure out what S1 meant, i.e. this year PTA would have thirty to thirty two more prospect clients who need this device. His interpretation is in accord with what S1 described in his interview which clearly indicates their common knowledge. While S2's acknowledgement '*okay*' in line 425 suggests the resolution of any non-understanding that might exist and not to mention that it is presumably of a small degree in the first place, S1decides to render second response in lines 426 and 428 which further clarifies the situation.

Example 5 (meeting 5)

1	S1:	give you more information (.) previously below one point four six (.)	
2		we count one point four six (.) we will not look at the meter reading (.)	
3		we count at one point four six that's why er the the amount for february	*T1*
4		quite er <1> more under expect </1>	
5	S2:	<1> yes it's quite expensive </1>	*I(1)*
6	S1:	yea yea yea that's why i coming today <2>@@@</2>	*R1a*
7	SS:	<2>@@@@@@</2>	*RR1a*
8	S1:	i come to solve this this er this problem (.)er because they cut a big point<3>	
9		and</3>below that (.) we will charge at one point four six (.) and er we we	
10		split into three (.) three range <4> right? </4> er this one we correct by er	*R1b/*
11		factor <5> but</5>below four hundred kilo <6>we</6>count four hundred	*T2*
12	SS:	<3> yea </3> <4> mm </4> <5> mm </5> <6> mm </6>	
13	S3:	that's mean new cut by xx	*I(2)*
14	S1:	four hundred	*R2a*
15	S3:	four hundred	*RR2a*
16	S1:	four hundred	*R2b*

Unlike two preceding examples, the information about number in this instance has a direct impact on the customer's interest. The issue is therefore a lot more sensitive and involves more strategies and engagement from the participants. This extract is a part of the amended contract negotiation between PTA sales engineer team and the Japanese customers. Since the negotiation zeroes in on some changes in the meter measurement, it is no surprise to see participants direct their particular attention to the accuracy of numbers. In line 1-4, S1, the PTA team manager, is seen trying to provide a more concrete instance in support to his preceding detailed introduction about the new measurement. While he is clarifying how the meter was calculated in the past which left an impact on the meter reading in February, he is overlapped (line 4) by S2, the executive of the Japanese company, who instantly pre-empts the turn completion in line 5 pointing that the charge in February was relatively high. The parallel of their overlapping utterances, S1's '*more under expect*' and S2's '*yes it's quite expensive*' not only suggests the common insights that both parties share, but also highlights their

common concerns over the particular case in February. In offering an explicit response '*yea yea yea that's why i coming today*' (line 6), S1 makes clear that the customer's concerned issue has been acknowledged and will accordingly be resolved attentively. It is worthwhile to mention that by saying '*yes it's quite expensive*', S2 sounds neither offensive nor intense but more of 'half serious half playful'. It is no surprise then to see S1 responds in a playful tone as well. His intention is apparent when he accompanies his statement with a laugh which is in parallel with the other participants'. After all the laughs, S1 then continues by repeating that he comes to tackle the problematic issue and clarifies the source of the problem as well as the resolution in line 8-11. The statement clearly receives active responses from the side of Japanese customers as seen from their several overlaps in line 12 as a means to signal acknowledgement and listenership. Although it seems most likely that the understanding is at this point achieved by the customers based on their feedbacks in line 12, there is still a minor non-understanding on the part of S3 who indicates in line 13 '*that's mean new cut xx*'. Considering from the combined strategy that S3 uses to form his indicator, namely a comprehension check '*that's mean*' and a reformulating of the trigger utterances '*new cut by xx*', one could argue that the non-understanding is only of slight degree scale. While it is difficult to locate the particular trigger utterances since the last two words of S3's indicator were unclearly heard, we can nevertheless assume from the response S1 provides '*four hundred*' in line 14 that the problematic utterances are limited in the last portion of S1's explanatory speech, namely '*but below four hundred kilo we count four hundred*' (line 11). S1'choice of handing a minimal response reinforces the interpretation that the level of the non-understanding is small. It might be questionable if the answer virtually completes its job since S3 reacts to it by reiterating the word '*four hundred*' (line 15). What is however noticeable is the utterance is not paired with the interrogatory pitch movement. It is all the more plausible then that the understanding has already been obtained and that S3 opts to repeat it exclusively for the sake of the accuracy since this piece of information is of high relevance to the company's interest. By confirming that the statement is correct by repeating 'four hundred' (line 16) rather than using an affirmative token such as 'yes', it leaves no doubt that S1 has a common concern in making the data the most accurate as possible. The meaning negotiation has finally drawn to a close at this point through a brief silence from the participants as a reaction and followed by a discussion among the Japanese in their mother tongue. If we take into account that the word 'four hundred' has been mentioned

altogether for four times, this allows us to come to the conclusion that in favour of their companies' interest participants would make considerable effort in the joint clarification work regardless of the prolonged negotiation process. Their remarkable contributions into the matter "stress their need for obtaining precise information that pertains to business talk" (Pitzl 2010: 90).

Example 6 (meeting 3)

```
1    S1:    yea (.) listen er every five years the (.) er <1>government </1> yea will
2           have the third party (.) to er check (.) <2> every five years </2>
3    S4:    <1> government </1>
4    S2:    <2> not me </2> (.) not me <3> check </3> (.) third party check
5    S4:    <3> mm </3>
6    S1:    and government go to your factory
7    S4/S5: mm
8    S1:    yea (.) d o e b                                    T
9    S5:    d o e b?                                           I
10   S2:    DEPARTMENT of <4> energy business </4>             R1
11   S3:    <4> energy business </4>                           R2
12   S2:    <slow> department of energy business </slow>       R1a
13   S5:    <writing> business </writing> (.) yes              RR1a
14   S3:    we work together <5> @@ </5>                       R3
15   S4:    <5> yea we come to check </5> <6> xx </6>          RR3
16   S2:    <6> yea we work together </6>                      R3a
```

Although the indication for non-understanding in this example which signals the need for clarification does not show up until in line 9, the beginning sequences are worth to mention in terms of the intense contribution that participant provide to the accuracy of the information despite the nonappearance of any non-understanding during the smooth conversation sequences. This excerpt begins with S1 who is the senior sales engineer of PTA provides further detail on the country's monitoring process of the power plant to the Japanese customers. While S1 seems to have some difficulties in searching for the word '*government*', S4, the customer, spots that and immediately offers the word which however occurs at the same time S1 could manage to figure the word out. This is likely to contribute to the fact that S1's hesitancy can be felt from his short pause and falter in '*the (.) er*' (line 1) which therefore allows very brief room for S4, who interprets that action as interactional difficulties of S1, to offer help. Even though this results in a simultaneous speech, S4's help is acknowledged by S1 who gives an affirmative feedback '*yea*' in line 1 which explicitly demonstrates a high level of attention both sides pay to each other's speech. This is not to mention the fact that S4 who is obviously an outsider in this PTA community is able to produce the correct word, and, is also the one who brings this word up instead of the other two PTA participants, namely S2 and S3. It can however be argued that S2 and S3 assume that their supervisor would finally come up with the word and therefore feel it unnecessary to offer help which could potentially cause interruption. What

it is learned, nevertheless, from S4's ability to come up with such precise term is that he is very likely to possess, more or less, knowledge about this monitoring procedure. Still, it is hard to predict whether this interpretation has been considered by PTA staff since both S1 and S2 insist to reiterate some utterances, highly probably those parts they perceive as important, apparently in a bid to ensure an utmost degree of understanding delivered to the customers. That is, S1 chooses to repeat his own utterance regarding the process' timeframe '*every five years*' in the same sentence (lines 1-2). Meanwhile, S2 opts to restate his supervisor's particular piece of information about the *the third party*'s inspection by supplying the rejective expression '*not me',* repeating it another time by adding the verb '*check'* and lastly reprising S1' crucial utterance '*third party check*' (line 4). S2 makes obvious that it is an act of '*preventing misunderstanding*' whereby one tries to confirm and subsequently rephrase their utterances or providing additional explanations (Mauranen 2006a). In his case, it seems that he wants to reassert that it is not PTA who is undertaking the inspection at the customer's plant to prevent any misunderstanding that might occur. It is also of relevance to note that his speech overlaps with S1's last portion of sentence, namely '*every five years*'. There seem to be two possible interpretations for this occurrence: first S2 misinterprets S1' brief pause after the words *'to er check'* in line 2 as the finish of the statement, he then takes the shift, or second he interrupts S1's turn on purpose in a bid to support his account. Either interpretation it is, his overlap clearly serves collaborative purpose in which he signals support not an attempt to take the floor. S1' and S2' statements have been succeeded by a brief response from S4 '*mm*' which suggests that up until this stage, no sign of non-understanding has come to the surface. The non-understanding actually arise in line 9 as provoked by S1's use of abbreviation for the concerned department. His choice for the abbreviation over the full name could possibly stem from the impression that the customers might have shared some common knowledge judging from previous sequences. However, '*d o e b*' in line 8 has proved to cause confusion where S5 immediately indicates his non-understanding by repeating these crucial letters paired with rising intonation as a means to request clarification. His indicator is picked up promptly not by S1, the provoker of this unclear information, but by his subordinates, S2 and S3, who actively collaborate in clarifying the matter. This once again verifies that clarity and accuracy are the issues of enormous significance for the BELF participants. Not only S5 feels the urge to insert an indicator as soon as he detects the lack of clarity, he and his colleague, S4, also make clear that they contribute greatly to

the new piece of information by jotting down the name of the problematic words. Their reactions are acknowledged by S2 who reiterates the term slowly to ensure the accuracy and at the same time facilitate the writing (line 12). While the non-understanding is now resolved as seen from S5's explicit reaction, a reprise of the last word '*business*' followed by the confirmation token '*yes*' in line 13, the active participation in this negotiation work still continues. That is to say, S3 opts to add further detail that this is the joint operation work between the authority and PTA (line 14). The information is also valued by S2 who expresses support and involvement with an affirmative '*yea*' and a reprise of S3's utterance '*we work together*' in line 16. The understanding is seen to be achieved at this point through a brief silence among participants before the negotiation is changed to another topic.

- **Using non-linguistic means for clarification**

What have been observed from previous sections were participants' abilities to strategically exercise different linguistic features at their disposal … There were however moments where the non-linguistic means can become an asset in clarifying matters, particularly when linguistic resources are not sufficient to produce the understanding (Bazzanella and Damiano (1999). In this section, a striking interactive practice of participants resort to the diagram, figure or drawing during the process of their negotiation of meaning will be exemplified. The following examples, which are extracted from meeting 5 where the use of non-verbal means (diagram) could be found most, will illustrate how this strategy takes a crucial role in the pursuit of communicative success.

Example 7 (meeting 3)

17	S1:	(2) <toS2>and the secondary demand </toS2>	
18	S2:	yea secondary demand (.) we supply gas to the er power PLANT	
19	**S1:**	<soft><show diagram>**here power plant** </soft></show diagram>	
20	S4:	mm	
21	S2:	in order to er manufacturing to (1) electricity	
22	**S1:**	**<show diagram>and (assumption) to the xx </show diagram>**	
23	S2:	yea (assumption) to the er TARGET	
24	S1:	if you have some er (assumption) maybe you can order for the machine	
25		to get this from them	
26	**S2:**	okay (2) **<show diagram> and this is offtake station </show diagram>**	
27	S5:	mm	
28	S2:	we purchase er (.) natural gas from PTA offtake station (.) okay	
29		**<show diagram >this is offtake station </show diagram >**	
30	S4/S5:	mm	
31	**S2:**	(1) and this is e:r **<show diagram > measuring regulating station**	*T*
32		**</show** diagram >	
33	S5:	is this?	*I*
34	S2:	yes (2) okay (.) in order to measuring the gas for consumption and (.)	*R*
35		control gas pressure and (building) m r s	
36	S5:	mm hm	*RR*
37	**S2:**	m r s installation (.) from er at your plant (.) **<show diagram> here m r s**	*…R*

38		</show diagram>	
39	S4:	control <7> er </7>	*I(2)*
40	S5:	<7> control gas </7> pressure also?	*...I(2)*
41	S2:	yes (.) control the outlet between one to one point five <8> bar </8>	*R2*
42	S5:	<8> mm hm </8>	*RR2*
43	**S1:**	**the detail will show in next page <show diagram>here the detail</show**	*...R2*
44		**diagram>**	
45	**S2:**	**<show diagram> this is er your factory </show diagram>**	
46	S4/S5:	mm hm	
47	**S2:**	**<show diagram> this is er m r s </show diagram>**	
48	**S1:**	**<drawing> and this is main pipe (.) main pipe and m r s er install gas station**	
49		**and your factory </drawing>**	

The discussion in this negotiation sequences concerns the gas transportation planning code where a descriptive explanation of each step is required, and the diagram happens to fulfil this job unquestionably. As the first excerpt consists lengthy conversation sequences, the parts where participants draw on the diagrams are then made bold to facilitate the analysis. In this example, it is clear that S2 is assigned the main speaker for the procedural explanation while S1, the supervisor, acts as his supporter. The handouts have been distributed to the customers at the beginning of the meeting and S1 and S2 who sit next to the customers would refer to the diagram by pointing or drawing alongside of their talks. The first employment is in line 19 in which S1 points at the diagram to locate the spot of the power plant for the customers in collaboration with S2's statement in line 18. The action prompts S4's minimal acknowledgement '*mm*' as a signal of understanding. S1 then opts to refer again to the handout in line 22 to further clarify the electrical manufacturing issue that S2 mentions. Their collaborative work goes on very well as S2 signals explicit agreement '*yea*' and repeats, presumably, S1's preceding speech (as his last two words were unable to identify) in line 23. The utilization of the diagram then resumes whereby S2 use it to pinpoint the positions of the offtake station (line 26, 29) and the measuring regulating station in line 31. While the customers response to the location of the offtake station with understanding, the latter site has provoked S5 to react with a minor degree of uncertainty '*is this*' (line 33). As far as the form of the question used is concerned, that is, very brief with no other additional question included, it is arguable that S5 only seeks a confirmation to this piece of information. In addition, the minimal response '*yes*' from S2 followed by a short silence from other participants appear to be the verdict for this interpretation. As the non-understanding seems to be resolved, S2 then proceeds with his clarification on the measuring regulating station (m.r.s.) that is used to measure and control the output pressure of gas (lines 34-35). It is noticed that as S2 elaborates that the m.r.s. will be installed at the customer's power plant, he makes a second reference to the same diagram '*here m r s*' (line 37), probably in a bid to ensure

clarity. At this stage, it is of interest to see the rise of non-understanding on both S4 and S5 who seem to pose the same question and almost in the same time. That is to say when S4 utters the word '*control*' (line 39) and the moment he falters S5 overlaps with the question '*control gas pressure also?*' (line 40) which suggests the high possibility of being the identical question to those of what S4 intended to deliver. What is remarkable is the issue has been discussed by S2 in his previous account '*in order to measuring the gas for consumption and (.) control gas pressure and (building) m r s*' (lines 34-35) to which S5 expressed his acknowledgement by uttering '*mm hm*'. Nevertheless, as soon as S2 starts to move on to the next topic, S4 and S5 decide to take up the matter again. This evidently suggests that the description S2 previously provides does not suffice to bring about enough degree of understanding on the part of the customers. The indication '*control gas and pressure also?*' is seen as the act of reformulating and reprising S2's previous remark which implies that a confirmation is required here. As a matter of course, S2 reacts with an affirmative '*yes*' and supplemented with a further elaborate answer '*control the outlet between one to one point five bar*' in line 41. Though it could be argued that the problematic issue is now drawn to a close judging from the reaction '*mm hm*' from S5, a second response, which follows in line 43, has been nonetheless offered by S1. In this light, he decides to resorts to the non-verbal means, the handout, suggesting that the detail of the issued discussed can be found in the next page. His methodology reflects the significance of providing rich and accurate detail to the customer and how the non-linguistic means can, in some cases, ensure a greater degree of clarity. Also, in the unlikely event of the remaining, or, new emerging non-understanding regarding the issue, S1 can feel safe in the knowledge that the customers can later refer to the document for a better understanding. The remaining parts of the excerpt still portray the utility of the diagram to which PTA staff seem to find it as an asset in their clarification work.

While example 8 has highlighted how the Thai PTA staff made use of the non-linguistic tools in their clarification work to the Japanese customers, example 10 and 11 will now present it the other way round: the shifting of the users. That is to say after having been advised all the necessary details on the gas distributing procedures from PTA, it is now the customers' turn to negotiate the deal. Both extracts mainly concern the pipeline construction plan to which the customers try to clarify their specs and requirements where linguistic resource is not the only channel that they rely on.

Example 8 (meeting 3)

403	**S5**:	we need the pipe (.) **\<drawing\> here \</drawing\>**	*I(1)*
404	S1/S2:	AH	*R*
405	S4:	yea	*RR*
406	S1:	it is er @@@ very short	*R1a*
407	S2:	very short okay	*R1b*
408	S1:	AH yea yea \<58\> it is easier \</58\>	*R1c*
409	**S5**:	\<58\> yea we need pipe **\<show diagram\>here\</show diagram\>** \</58\>	*I(2)*
410	S1:	MM: okay okay	*R2*

The conversation starts with S5 marking the spot where he needs the pipe to be constructed on the diagram '*we need the pipe here*' (line 403). By doing this, he could save time in explaining the exact location and could also prevent the misunderstanding which might have occurred while specifying. His action evokes identical exclamations by S1 and S2 who simultaneously cry '*AH*' in the following line. This does not only show their outright understanding but it very seems to also signal their surprise as disclosed in the next sequences. That is to say, having been shown the exact spot on the diagram makes S1 and S2 come to realize that the required length of pipeline is shorter than what they had predicted: '*it is er very short*' (line 406), '*very short okay*' (line 407). The reaction response does not end here as S1 continues to openly show his acknowledgement through another exclamation expressions '*AH yea yea*' supplemented with an additional piece of information '*it is easier*' (line 408) to signal his greater degree of comprehension to the customer's need. Judging from the PTA staff's reaction, it is assumable that S5 recognizes how effective it is of providing the visual appearance of the exact location. Very likely due to this reason that prompts him to not solely react with an affirmative '*yea*' but to repeat his previous account while making a reference to the picture again '*we need pipe here*'. The action reflects his concern for exchanging the most precise information as it involves the construction plan where minor misunderstanding could turn into a disaster, and undeniably, it is the non-verbal means that leads S5 to achieve this particular purpose.

Example 9 (meeting 3)

489	S2:	we will prepare total investment cost (.) of natural gas system for you after
490		we (.) discuss condition (.) all condition (.) finish
491	**S4:**	okay (2) **\<draw diagram\> now we conserve area \</draw diagram\>**
492	S1/S2:	AH::
493	S1:	yes yes
494	**S4:**	then (.) maybe you can put m r s **\<draw diagram\>here \</draw diagram\>**
495	S1/S2:	\<68\>AH:\</68\>
496	S3:	\<68\>OH\</68\>
497	S1:	best area @@@
498	SS:	@@@
499	S4:	xx right?

S4 then draws something more
500	SS:	OH: okay
501	**S4:**	**yea (.) every time we <show diagram> x here (.) then we put utility here (.)**
502		**and boiler somewhere here </show diagram>**
503	S1/S2:	ah okay okay
504	S1:	could you submit this er this drawing to us
505	S1/S2:	@@@
506	S4:	@@ this is just er sketch
507	S1:	ah yea yea sketch
508	S4:	after we complete we will send you
509	S1:	okay
510	SS:	@@@
511	S2:	thank you very much
512	S4:	but er we plan to put here
513	S1:	ah yea yea
514	**S4:**	**<draw diagram> and the pipe is coming (2) coming down**
515		**<72> here </72></draw diagram>**
516	S1:	<72> ah right </72> okay
517	S4:	short
518	S1:	very short okay

Like example 8, the subject in this extract still revolves around the construction plan where S4, the other customer, takes the speaker shift in clarifying their company's need. Through the reference to the diagram, it is obvious that S4 effectively achieves his purpose here. After giving an acknowledging feedback '*okay*' to S2's statement, S4 initiates the negotiation sequence by indicating that he would like to conserve the area, as shown in the diagram, as the construction location (line 491). The indication provokes exceptionally loud and long acclamations which signal a sense of surprise from S1 and S2 who utter simultaneously. S4 then goes on with further description by pinpointing the potential spot, on the diagram again, where he requires the measuring regulating station (m.r.s.) to be installed in line 494. This results in much more emotional responses from all the three PTA staff who cry out loud with surprise at the same time (lines 495,496) and followed by S1 additional comment that it is the '*best area*'. S4 then opts to draw something more to provide a further elaborate detail on the prospect installation sites of the 'utility' and 'boiler'(lines 501-502). Apparently, his sketch can lead the PTA staff to a greater degree of understanding as they react '*ah okay okay*' and to the extent that S1asks whether he could keep it for the reference '*could you submit this er this drawing to us*' in line 504. Although S4 refuses and explains that it is '*just sketch*', he is aware of its remarkable utility and promises to deliver the complete version in a due course. At this point, the mutual understanding is clearly seen to be achieved by both parties. Yet, S4 utters a re-elaboration of his own statement in line 512 '*but er we plan to put here*' and add another in line 514 '*and the pipe is coming coming down here*' by making the final reference to the diagram. Furthermore, in

line 517 he reemphasizes that the required length of the pipe is indeed 'short', the fact that has already been pointed earlier (see example 9). Similar to the preceding example, S4 makes explicit that he considerably concerns about the precise information. In opting for these re-elaborations, he could check by seeing the interlocutors' reactions that they maintain the achieved understanding. By considering from S1's responses '*ah yea yea*', '*ah right okay'* and '*very short okay'* in line 513, 516 and 518 accordingly, S4 can be certain that his strategies have brought the negotiation to a satisfactory end.

6.2   The negotiation of meaning and the use of simultaneous speech

What are already analyzed in the above section are instances of the negotiation of the meaning among the BELF participants where 'one party talks at a time' during their interactional management. But of course the negotiation sequences can be actively engaged by participants in which the speech exchange does not always follow the basic one party talks at a time system. Not to mention some contradictory results between the dyadic conversations and the group interactions in which the latter seem to leave impacts in various ways on the allocation of speaking turns (Wolfartsberger 2015: 260). Consequently, the turn-taking distribution, in multi-participant interactions in particular, can therefore manifest itself in a "lack of balance in floor-holding, violations of speaker-selection rules, and interruptions and simultaneous talk" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004: 4). In so far, Pitzl's (2010) investigation of how miscommunication is interactionally managed and resolved among ELF speakers is particularly relevant for the present study to the extent that it is observed in the international business meetings and that the negotiation of meaning framework of Varonis and Gass (1985) is applied. In this section, the analysis of forms and functions of simultaneous speech will be added up to cover the overall scope of the data. To maximize the insightful investigation, the research of Wolfartsberger (2009) in the characteristics and complexities of turn-taking in ELF business interactions will also present as another extensive contribution to this study in parallel with Pitzl's.

As will show in the following instances, a number of simultaneous speech has been observed in the group business meetings of the present data. An intellectual combination between the negotiation of meaning approach and Sacks et al.'s turn taking framework is therefore an attempt to facilitate the

investigation and account for the integrated features characteristic of the BELF interactions. As previously mentioned, it is apparent that the types of simultaneous speech can vary between ELF general conversation and ELF business interaction. That is to say while their collaborative functions have been recently established in ELF casual communication, in the business context overlaps have likewise been strategically employed for competitive purposes on various occasions without being unnecessarily interpreted as problematic. The data in this study comprises countless cases of simultaneous speech serving multi purposes. The examples investigated below will demonstrate both of its collaborative functions and competitive purposes which are indicated by using tag number in angle brackets as described in the conventions and the relevant passages will be made bold.

6.2.1 Collaborative overlaps

The instances of the collaborative simultaneous speech arisen in the data feature multiple functions and forms, e.g. to express listenership or agreement, to support current speaker to continue or to assist in word-search situations, etc. As previously discussed that the categorization work of the simultaneous speech is "to a certain extent always subjective, because the analyst cannot be sure whether a given overlap was perceived and/or intended as collaborative or competitive" (Wolfartsberger 2009: 173). There are however some cues from participants unfolded by a close analysis of the interaction, namely a critical reflection on their overall behaviour at the events (Watts 1991: 91), particularly the surrounding sequences which are fulfilled by the overlaps (Wolfartsberger 2009). As she indicates, one of the most apparent tokens which are commonly regarded as a collaborative form of overlaps are so called minimal responses or backchannel items. While in principle, backchannellings are generally perceived for their supportive form of overlaps, it is worthwhile to note that participants, particularly in multiparty interaction, also draw on the backchannels as a common technique to prepare the stage for taking over the turn (Kothoff 1993). Nevertheless the analysis in this section will present their collaborative function. The items such as 'yea', 'right', 'mm hm', 'okay' which are frequently found in the data will present how BELF participants rely on them as a means to signal listenership and encourage the ongoing turn of the current speaker. An instance of this function can be observed in example 10:

Example 10 (meeting 2)

```
296  S1:   or other equipment because er our system (.) we decide? we don't need
297        er more external <70> system </70> to the our system because we
298        NEED only the the corrected volume and and corrected <71> volume
299        </71> from the two source <72>and </72> then we need data and then
300        we to the generate the system to the deport to <73> the xx </73>
301        system and then we need er ALARM (.) alarm system something like
302        <74>the er </74>
303  S2:   <70> okay </70> <71> okay </71> <72> okay </72> <73> okay <73>
304        <74>the ALARM?  </74> can be transmit using the lfs <75> so </75>
305        on off <76> on off </76> on off er er alarm
306  S1:   <75> yea </75> <76> yea yea </76> (.) yea ALARM alarm is er
307        alarm like a evc (.) failure or modem failure some something like <77>
308        that</77> just only alarm (.) just for to this
309  S2:   <77> okay </77>
```

Apparently, in this example the simultaneous speech has been displayed between the two parties: S1, PTA's engineering manager and S2, a sales engineer of a Singaporean company, multiple times. However, if we look at their conversation exchanges, they appear to be very much in flow of speech. That is to say while S1 is clarifying why S2's product is not yet met with their requirement, S2 repeatedly overlaps to indicate his acknowledging feedback '*okay*'. His overlapping speeches explicitly signal his considerable attention to S1's utterance and to encourage him to continue, clearly as it is vital piece of information in redeveloping the product. Nevertheless in line 302, when S2 notices that S1 is experiencing some difficulties in describing the required alarm system, S2 does not wait to hear out the rest of the utterance but interrupts him via simultaneous speech in a bid to clarify the alarm system operation of his product. Despite the fact that S1 is cut off, he does not seem to take it as an interruption as seen from his interactive overlaps '*yea*' in line 306 which signal agreement and listenership to S2. Furthermore, as soon as he can locate the next TRP, S1 continues with a further explanation in addition to S2's statement (lines 306-308) which is likewise overlapped by S2 who again signals his acknowledging response '*okay*' in line 309. In contrast to its form, the simultaneous speech employed between S1 and S2 orients to the progressive quality of each other's turns which therefore represent its collaborative function.

6.2.1.1   Pre-emptive completions

Apart from signalling listenership and encouraging the current speaker, another form of collaborative overlaps frequently used is called the 'Pre-emptive completion' (Lerner 2004), referring to a method of response in which a recipient does not wait until completion of the current speaker's turn but pre-empting that completion (p. 225). In this respect, pre-emptive completions do not "represent a bid for next speakership but usually orient to the progressivity of the ongoing turn and are hardly carried further beyond the next possible TRP (Wolfartsberger

2009: 170). Examples of overlapping speech occurring in the form of pre-emptive completions are discussed in this section.

Example 11 (Meeting 1)

1	S3:	usually pta (.) i think they have deadline or some <1> er to </1>	I
2	**S1:**	**<1> yeah they have to submit </1>** <2> deadline </2> to them	R
3	S3:	<2> yeah </2> they have to submit financial statement she will	RR
4		make up this also	

Example 11 involves an extremely short and simple exchange where the turn overlaps are exercised between the two persons as the pre-emptive completion to serve supportive function. As far as the structure is concerned, the negotiation starts with an indicating procedure with no immediately preceding trigger utterance. If we take S3'utterance in line 1 literally '*usually PTA I think they have deadline or some*', by using the tentative '*I think*', it appears that S3 is not utterly certain about the information and therefore uttering an assumption. S1 seems to detect this in which she does not wait for S3 to finish her statement but overlaps to confirm that what S3 'think' is correct. Her overlap here functions as pre-emptive completions in a sense that it is used as a method of responding rather than attempting to take the floor (Lerner 2004). Though this is an act of interruption, it is clearly seen that S1's purpose is to support S3 not to take over speakership. When S1 says '*yeah they have to submit'* in line 2, S3 can now be certain about the deadline, however as soon as she hears the word 'submit' she shows her enthusiasm to the content by overlapping with S1. Her utterance '*they have to submit financial statement*' features a turn completion in which S3 shows her cooperation by trying to complete the turn for S1. Although S3's speech turns out to be slightly different from what S1 intends to say, the overlap in line 3 exhibits her supportive purpose to S1. To conclude, the occurrence of overlaps both times could be regarded as collaborative whereby both parties cooperatively complete each other's turn.

Example 12 (meeting 2)

474	S1:	but thailand is <122> no two g </122> @@
475	**S2:**	**<122> yea yea </122> like like the [product 2] we HAVE the**
476		[product2] but we have (.) we sell it mostly in ITALY? (.) and they're
477		still working based? on gprs
478	S1:	that's the data is (.) that's normally is er only two g or three g is enough
479		<123> for the </123>
480	**S2:**	**<123> OH it's enough </123>** it's enough <124> because it's very
481		small it's only take x </124>
482	S1:	<124> but (.) but (.) but the xx </124 > we have in the system is <125>
483		not support </125> not support us
484	**S2:**	**<125> it's very advance yea </125> yea**
485	S1:	if if thailand is er two g er in 30 years i still use two g
486	SS:	@@@@@

```
487   S1:    this is er our requirements <126> but the </126>
488   S2:    <126> okay </126>
489   S1:    (4) but you system is some (.) some like a customer like a [org3] or
490          [org4] that is a big customer
491   S2:    yea
492   S1:    yea (.) that that one that we needs like your <127> system </127>
493   S2:    <127> more complex </ 127>
494   S1:    yea more complex because er (.) the customer is er important for us
495   S2:    okay
```

Like the preceding example, this extract exhibits the strategic use of simultaneous speech as pre-emptive completions but in more lengthy sequences. Throughout the conversation exchange, S2 has shown his considerable degree of attention and involvement to S1's speech. S1, the chair, tries to give explanation to S2, a sales engineer from Singapore, about the network requirement of PTA. In lines 474, S1's tentative utterance is overlapped with S2 who actively takes the turn to signal his understanding: *yea yea* (line 475). By referring to the other product which is compatible in Italy in lines 475-477, S2 makes it clear that he can fathom the distinct requirement that each country holds. He continues to expresses his high degree of engagement when hearing S1's response in line 478-479 to which he does not wait for the TRP but overlaps in line 480 to voice his agreement. He deploys a minimal interjection and a reprise of S1's crucial word: *oh it's enough* followed by more elaborate description as a kind of stating his support and understanding to the situation. The utterance is however confronted with an interruption by S1 in line 482. What is of interest here is that although the intervention begins with a contrasting expression '*but*' which is formally classified as an act of disagreeing, it is not S1's aim here to contend with S2. Instead, he simply further clarifies what S2 is saying. The turn is overlapped by S2 again who explicitly demonstrates his high engagement and makes the effort to complete the turn by suggesting the idea: *it's very advance yea* in line 484. S1 then proceeds with his clarification on the product requirement, in turn being met with a pre-emptive completion by S2 in line 493 who does not wait for the full response but utters: *more complex* to indicate involvement and understanding. In doing this, his overlapping speech turns to be accomplished as seen from an approving feedback from S1's agreement token '*yea*' and a repetition of S1's words '*more complex*' supplemented by additional explanation in line 494. Despite the fact that S2's product presentation is turned down, he carries on with a considerable level of attention and involvement to the negotiation, as noted in his interview that it is of necessity to record details of customers' needs for the future deal making. Therefore, his employment of high engagement strategies not only expresses a great deal of concern towards the

clarity and preciseness in relation to the business content but also reflects his knowledge of specific lexis which keeps the flow of the negotiation sequence – the practices which are parts of the keys necessity that BELF communication demands (Charles 2008; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010).

Example 13 (Meeting 1)

47	S1:	<10> i i </10> understand i understand that the auditor xx you only but	
48		(.) our board they don't need th- the real <11> the real </11> singing	*I(1)*
49		one.	
50	S3:	<11> no </11>	*R1a*
51	**S2:**	**<11> oh don't need </11> don't <12> need to sign </12> just <13>**	*R1b*
52		leave it xx </13>	
53	**S1:**	**<12> right </12> ah <13> that's why we don't have problems</13>**	*RR1*
54		for the (po) x ry we don't have <14> problem </14> even though	
55		we can SEND it at ten? (.) we can send? the NUMBERS?	*I(2)*
56	**S2:**	**<14> we don't have problem </14>**	*R2*
57	S3:	so it's mean that we can (upbeats) <15> (up here) </15>	*I(3)*
58	**S1:**	**<15> yeah </15> <16> right </16>**	*R3a*
59	S2:	<16> because er: </16> (PO x ries) just meet the pta er:: reporting	*...R2*
60		(deadline) they have to reporting (deadline) on (.) on like we you	
61		need to give that <17> xx </17>	
62	**S1:**	**<17> yeah </17>**	*RR2*

Example 13 portrays multiple indicators-resolution sequences with fair amount of overlaps going on among participants. As far as the structure is concerned, the negotiation cycles could have been complex, but are in fact rather rudimentary due to the lack of immediately preceding trigger utterances coupled with their collaborative function of simultaneous speech. The negotiation in this instance therefore begins with an indicator procedure in lines 47-49 where S1 discusses the unnecessity to obtain the signature from the auditor by employing the subjective expression 'i understand' which conveys a sense of certainty. She however states her doubt in line 48 to verify that they neither need the signature from the board. It is apparent that as soon as S3 and S2 hear '*but our board they don't need th- the real*', they can predict what S1 is going to say. As a result, they do not wait until S1 finishes her talk but overlap to provide the immediate answer. Their overlapping speeches occur practically at the same time, while S3 gives a minimal affirmative response '*no*' (line 50), S2 provides more elaborate answer: *oh don't need don't need to sign just leave it xx* (lines 51-51). Despite the length differing, the employment of both overlaps is regarded as pre-emptive completions in a sense that both speakers express their support to S1 and not signal a bid to take the turn. S2's response '*don't need to sign just leave it xx'* is however overlapped by S1 who voices her enthusiastic acceptance and attention using the agreement token '*right*' and exclamation '*ah*' as shown in line 53. S1 then carries on the role of speaker summarizing the situation: *that's why we don't have problem for the (po) x ry we don't have* where S2 overlaps again

echoing S1's phrase '*we don't have problem*' (line 56) as a mean to support and pre-empting her statement. S3 then comes to a conclusion in line 57 which is corresponded by S1's overlapping speech '*yeah right*' as pre-emptive completions. While S1 does not wait for S3 to finish her turn, S2, on the other hand, appears to projecting the TRP to provide further explanation in response to S3's statement. Whereas he can project the likely point of S3's turn completion, he misses S1's which results in the "terminal overlaps" (Jefferson 1984) with S1. The overlap is however brief and does not impair the hearing, partly due to the use of "appositional beginning" (Sacks et al 1976): *because* (line 59) which can veil the main part of the message. His explanation in lines 59-60 has been responded favorably as seen from S1 who overlaps to expresses her agreement in line 62: *yeah.*

Example 14 (meeting 2)

234	S2:	and since it is LF? (.) any kind of LF flow after turbine meter like	T1
235		after evc <53> also no power in here </53>	
236	S3:	<53> and and and what kind </53> of data that they set	I(1)
237	S2:	they will <54> set </54>	R1
238	**S3:**	**<54> sms? </54>**	RR1
239	S2:	SMS yea (.) so	...R1
240	S3:	do you have example (.) the the data	I(2)
241	S2:	i i don't have the example of the (.) the data in here (.) so on the	
242		OTHER SIDE? (.) we have the SOFTWARE? (.) that will they could	R2
243		(.) set the SMS? and then it will show	
244	S1:	they generate the <55> data </55>	I(3)
245	**S2:**	**<55> yea they </55> generate all the <56> data </56>**	R3a
246	S1:	<56> yea </56> <57> yea </57>	RR3a
247	S2:	<57> yea <57> (.) but (.) this is based? on the sms	R3b
248	S1:	yes	RR3b

The pre-emptive completions strategically used in this extract by the participants can be categorized as a product of their shared understanding to the topic. The negotiation sequences in this instance are therefore undertaken via a simple trigger-indication-response-reaction structure. The first indicating procedure, which is employed by S3, is triggered by S2's clarification on his product operating system. Although the question is posed explicitly, it is unfolded very soon afterwards in S3's next utterance that the non-understanding is only of a minor scale. That is, as soon as S2 begins his turn, S3 does not wait to hear out the answer but overlaps suggesting the hypothetical word '*SMS*' (line 238) himself. Not only his hypothesis is correct as confirmed by S2 in line 237: *SMS yea*, it also indicates his shared understanding to the matter which consequently maintains the flow of the conversation. The simultaneous speech drawn on in this particular context then functions as collaborative overlap. As the first question is resolved, S3 then poses another question and though there is no immediate

preceding trigger utterance, it clearly concerns the same issue, namely the data generated by the discussed meter. His request for an example of the data stresses his need for precise figure. As S2 advised in an interview that by seeing how the data is visually operated and presented by the SMS could have helped him and other staff in making a decision whether the system is practicable for them or not. In this light, although S2 does not carry the example of the data with him, he expresses his recognition to the significance of this non-verbal means by offering the substitute example of the software which should consequently produce the data requested (lines 242-243). This once again reinforces the merit of the approach which has been critically exemplified in examples 9-11. His clarification nevertheless appears to provoke a minor non-understanding on the part of S1 who utters: *they generate the data* in line 244. The utterance is very likely to function as an indicator though it is not presented as such, i.e. without interrogative intonation. However, what can be pinpointed with a considerable degree of certainty is the minimal level of his non-understanding. When considering S2's following response in line 245, he makes obvious that he is able to foretell what S1 is going to say from the word '*generate*' to which he is seen to abruptly react to the indicator without necessarily hearing the whole utterance. His simultaneous speech: *yea they generate all the data* not only features a pre-emptive completion but also presents the knowledge that he and S1 share in common. It is therefore possible to assume that the indicating procedures by S3 and S1 in lines 236 and 244 are initiated to fulfil the comprehension check purposes. Furthermore, the fact that the non-understandings in this instance are of minimal degree and can be negotiated via such short and simple exchange suggests that BELF communication proceeds smoothly where the knowledge of the topic – the technical knowledge in this particular case – is shared (e.g. Charles 2007; Du Babcock 2009; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Pullin 2015).

Example 15 (meeting 2)

```
453   S1:   <113> ah you have time </113> and then we will invite you to send
454         you a meeting <114> all </144> information all technical <115> and
455         </115> then we have time for like a (.) next month (.) april (.) to send      T
456         back the <116> (pricing) </116> and then (.) the server and the (.)
457         this one (.) still including the xx
458   S2:   <114> yes </114> <115> okay </115> <116> okay </116>
459         OKAY (1) so it's it's TWO G or three g                                        I
460   S3:   no no no three g only <117> no no </117> two g                                Ra
461   S2:   <117> three g only </117> oh three <118> g only </118>                        RRa
462   S1:   <118> no two g @@ </118> that's thailand have er (.) two g is er              Rb
463         expire @@
464   S3:   <119> @@ </119>                                                              RRb
```

As demonstrated in the previous sections how much interest BELF participants have given towards the exchanging of the precise information, example 16 will also show the collaborative function of overlaps as a way to ensure preciseness and accuracy of the information. The extract involves the same issue to the preceding example, namely to review the product specification. In lines 453-457, S1, the chair, brings the discussion to a summary – S2's product fails to meet their requirement but they welcome the future modified model. His explanation is actively responded by S2 who apparently overlaps at intervals (line 458) in efforts to signal listenership and encourage S1 to continue. Once the TRP appears, S2 stresses the acknowledging feedback '*okay*' once again followed by a question: *so it's it's TWO G or three g* (line 259) which constitues an indicating procedure. The rise of his non-understanding can be subsumed under the distant referent as there appears to be a long gap between the referent of 'three G' and the trigger part which subsequently prompts the understanding problem. It is S3 who first picks up the question and provides immediate response. His employment of the word '*no*' multiple times: *no no no three g only* followed by an additional stress: *no no two g* in line 460 can point towards his prime concern of delivering the recipient with the most accurate information. In response, S2 expresses his immediate acknowledgement by reprising S3's speech '*three g only*' which results in an overlap speech with S3. S1, whose beginning of the turn overlaps with S2's latter part of speech, then supplements with S3. He reiterates that it is not 'two g' and shows his considerable degree of involvement by rendering further clarification that because it has 'expired' in Thailand. Apparently, the employment of simultaneous speech by participants in this particular context can be seen as a mean to secure precise information – the requirement for three g network – and by repeating this crucial piece of information they are able to ensure an utmost degree of mutual understanding. This proves that their interactive overlaps are collaborative and in fact makes the communication more efficient.

Example 16 (meeting 3)

150	S4:	but er your (.) billing your year is er january? or	*I(1)*
151	S2:	oh no no	*R1*
152	S1:	er twelve billing (.) er for the contract years	*R1a*
153	S4:	contract year?	*I(2)*
154	S1:	ah yes contact is er twelve billing (1) not january<25>if er</25>you	*R2a*
155		get natural gas on september (.) that er after that twelve month (.) is	
156		e:r to <26> er </26>	
157	**S4:**	**<25> not january </25>**	*RR2a*
158	**S3:**	**<26> august </26>**	*R2b*
159	S1:	august (.) right august (.)	*RR2b*
160	**S1:**	**september is er <27> month one </27>**	*R3a*
161	**S3:**	**<27> septermber is month one month number one</27>**	*R3b*

162	S2:	<27> september is month one </27>	*R3c*
163	S1:	twelve is er august next year	*R4*
164	S4/S5: mm		*RR4*

Like some preceding examples, the indication procedure in this extract does not stem from the immediately preceding trigger utterance, but in fact from the conversation sequences earlier. After some discussions about the construction plan, S4, the customer, is approaching the billing issue by submitting the hypothesis-forming question '*but er your billing your year is er January? or*'. Syntactically speaking, the utterance is not explicitly structured as a pure question that is based on a complete lack of knowledge. The fact that S4 submits the specific period of time, namely January, as a hypothesis should have suggested that he had some clues in the subject. However, the interrogatory intonation after the word and the small token 'or' added at the end clearly exhibits the emergent non-understanding on the side of the customer. S2's immediate response '*oh no no*' has encouraged the interpretation that S4 had no clue in the matter and tried to seek answer through the hypothetical question. Though the indication is first picked up by S2, it is S1 (his supervisor) who provides the explanation. His '*twelve billing er for the contact years*' in line 152 nevertheless provokes another indicating procedure from S4 who instantly signals his non-understanding by reprising the words 'contact year' with rising intonation. S4's brief response clearly indicates the failed clarification work of S1 and very seems to suggest that he has the understanding problem with this particular word. In an attempt to clarify the meaning of the 'contact year' and to provide a more elaborative explanation to S4's non-understanding as a whole, S1 reformulates: (1) his own previous statement that the contract year is 'twelve billing' and (2) S2's previous response that it is 'not January' (line 154). Also, in the following line, he tries to provide a more concrete example '*if er you get natural gas on September (.) that er after that twelve month is er to*' to illustrate a clearer picture and make it more comprehensive. He is however noticed to confront some difficulties in pinpointing what the exact month is to which S3, the subordinates, recognizes and immediately overlaps to offer the word 'august' (line 158). The help is overly acknowledged by S1 who repeats the word twice coupled with the affirmative 'right'. What is remarkable is that after S1 finishes his speech, there is an occurrence of the TRP to which all the three PTA's staff, namely S1, S2, and S3 simultaneously self-select as the next speaker. Their statements in lines 160-162 make it even more extraordinary to the extent that they all come up with the same explanation: *September is month one.* This reflects a high level of the collaborative work among the three staff and that they

all have a common interest in making an effort to clarify the emerging problematic issue on the side of the customer as well as processing a common knowledge which subsequently results in the occurrence of three strikingly similar overlapping speeches. At this point, we can see that the customer's non-understanding regarding the billing matter has been untangled: the deal is a contract year meaning a period of 12 months to which, in this particular case, commencing on September and end in August. Nevertheless, in the line follows S1 opts to add the fourth reaction to ensure the utmost degree of precise information by reformulating his preceding accounts (in lines 155, 159) concerning the end date of the contract to '*twelve is er august next year*' as found in line 163.

Example 17 (meeting 6)

350	S2:	because they need to give the cargo to their first priority (.) sometime	
351		(.) because er and they request me to deliver like a (.) two days? xx	*T*
352		two nights deliver (.) it's alway like this	
353	S3:	they use the same truck?	*I(1)*
354	S2:	they have only one trucks and <26> this truck </26>	*R1/T*
355	S3:	<26> [org8] </26> and and <27> [org9] </27>	*I(2)*
356	S2:	<27> [org8] and [org9] </27> yes	*R2/T3*
357	S3:	same same <28> truck? </28>	*I(3)*
358	S2:	<28> same truck </28>	*R3/T4*
359	S3:	oh if [org8] request they <29> will </29>	*RR3/I(4)*
360	S2:	<29> mm they </29> have to give to first priority to er [org8]	*R4*
361	S3:	mm	*RR4*

Unlike above examples, this extract involves only two speakers, the staff of MITO, who demonstrate their active roles in the clarification work through the employment of simultaneous speeches. From the conversation preceding this extract, S2 is reporting on the cargo delivery system of the two companies. His explanation in lines 350-352 seems to be problematic for S3 who then explicitly indicates in line 353: *they use the same truck*? using the interrogative intonation. Instead of giving a short form of answer such as '*yes*', S2 opts for rendering an explanation as a response. Nevertheless before he completes with his turn, S3 interrupts in line 355 stating the two companies names: *org8 and and org9*. Though the rising intonation is not employed here, his statement can clearly be interpreted as a reconfirmation check that it is company 8 and company 9 to which they are referring. It is possible that his utterance '*and and*' conveys a sense of hesitation despite the fact that no pause represents. This might provoke S2 to provide him an immediate response after having received only the first half or the utterance rather than waiting for the completion of the turn. As a consequence, he overlaps by repeating the exact same phrase as S3 '*org8 and org9*' and adds an affirmative token '*yes*' as an effort to complete the turn for

him. Yet, the non-understanding does not seem to be completely resolved at this stage as S3's indicator in line 357 displays. S3's explicit minimal query '*same same truck?*' is saliently a reprise of the question he had already stressed '*they use the same truck?*' in line 353 but is reduced to its semantic core. Even though it is rather difficult to pinpoint the level of incomprehension on the side of S3 which drives him to draw on a repetition of his initial question, it is very likely that he uses it as a reconfirmation check. Similarly to the preceding sequence of indicator and response procedure in lines 355-366, S2 overlaps with S3 to provide a prompt response. Apparently, S2 can project what S3 is going to address from the context and the words '*same same*' (line 357). As a result, he opts for completing the turn for S3 using the same words '*same truck*' in place of waiting for the completion point. At this point, the non-understanding with regard to the first trigger is cleared up as S3's reaction to the response: *oh* in line 359 shows. The negotiation is however followed by S3's new indicator: *if org8 request they will* which is clearly meant to request clarification about the issue. Once again, before he completes with the statement, he is overlapped by S2 who can again successfully predict the rest of the message. As a result, the pre-emptive completion is employed here whereby he draws on "pre-starts" (Sacks et al. 1974): *mm* (line 360) at the beginning of the new turn which can prevent the hearing impairment caused by overlap and followed by the explanation: *they have to give to first priority to er org8*. S3 then simply expresses in line 361: *mm* which evidently indicates that all understanding problems are now resolved.

Example 18 (meeting 6)

178	S3:	actually they also er buy one cargo from us in december (.) and for	
179		this er actually in the past they regular importing er from korea	
180	SS:	mm	
181	S3:	but this plant <toS2> <soft> what the name of the plant? </soft>	*I(1)*
182		</toS2>	
183	S2:	[ORG5]	*R1*
184	S3:	er [org5] plant they (1) er they they will not continue <7> produce </7>	*T2*
185	**S1:**	**<7> [org5]? </7> who is [org5]?**	***I(2)***
186	S2:	[org5] is <8> their </8>	*R2a*
187	**S3:**	**<8> [org4] [org5] </8>**	*R2b*
188	**S2:**	**their subsidiary <9> company </9>**	*...R2a*
189	**S3:**	**<9> their subsidiary </9> company**	*R2c/T3*
190	S1:	oh who? [org4]?	*RR2c/I(3)*
191	S3:	[org 4].	*R3*
192	S1:	[org5] plant?	*I(4)*
193	S3:	yes in thailand (2) but er:: because [org 4] also think er they will (.)	*R4*
194		they try to stop produce (vambrace) in thailand also (.) so we are not	
195		sure that they they will come back to buy the xx but they said if they	
196		have the requirement? they will xxx (.) so this is just opportunities we	
197		need.	
198	SS:	mm hm	*RR4*

Example 18 also exhibits the cooperative overlaps result from the two parties self-select as the next speaker to pre-empt current speaker's completion. While S3 is reporting on company4's import system, he has difficulty explaining the company's particular plant. He therefore turns to S2, his colleague, to ask for help by using an explicit question: *what the name of the plant?* with interrogative intonation in lower voice. As S2 and S3 are the main representatives of the host company to which they have been coworkers for many years and cooperating on many projects together, it is thus not surprising to see S3 personally addresses S2 whom he perceives as dependable. S2's immediate response: *org5* (line 183) evinces that they have indeed shared knowledge. Consequently, the strategy of appealing for help here is successful in resolving the word-search situation and maintaining the flow of the conversation. S3 then reiterates the word and goes on with his explanation in line 184. His description however triggers S1 who interrupts by posing an explicit question: *org5? who is org5?* in line 185. Although the question clearly relates to S3's preceding speech, he does not address it specifically to S3. That is to say, he leaves the other participants to self-select at the first possible transitional-relevance place (TRP) according to the turn allocational component of Sacks et al. (1974). In this case, S2 can project a TRP and claim the floor as the first starter. In response, he employs the possessive expression 'their' in line 186. It could be due to the perception that S2 was talking about company 4 in lines 178-179 before S3 cuts in in line 181, he therefore feels it is justified to use this expression as a referent to company 4. It nevertheless turns out very soon afterwards that the distance that exists between his referent and the use of such specific possessive expression has the potential to create ambiguousness to the listener. His response is however coincided with a slight overlap on the side of S3 who provides a more specific information: *org4 org5* (line 187). It is fairly obvious that S3 predicts the TRP later than S2, his utterance however does not interrupt the communicative flow. By contrast, it features pre-emptive completions in which he does not wait until S2 completes his turn but overlaps to assist S2 in providing a response to S1's question. In line 188, S2's continuing turn: *their subsidiary company*, is again overlapped by S3 who repeats the exact same phrase. S3's purpose is clearly not to start a turn of his own but to complete the turn for S2 which shows his high degree of engagement in the joint clarification. The interactive function of the overlaps here then demonstrates the collaboration of the participants. Yet, the negotiation of meaning does not cease here as '*their subsidiary company*' has brought about another indicator. S1's *oh who? org4?* in line 190 features a reaction to the

response as a question and an indicator at the meantime. His question suggests that the non-understanding at this stage is of quite a small scale, that is to say he almost completely understands. It is possible to interpret that without S3's utterance of '*org4*' in line 187, the degree of non-understanding could have been more severe. That is to say, the identification of company 4 in his question seems to stem from S3's response '*org4 org5*' (line 187). The word '*org4*' is however spoken during the overlap which might spoil the quality of the hearing and lead to non-understanding. It would thus seem that S1's '*oh who? org4?*' functions as a reconfirmation check which is conveyed by minimal queries paired with rising intonation. An affirmative respond is first provided by S3 who repeats the company name without further explanation. Yet, S1's *org5 plant?* in line 192 constitutes another indicating procedure, which is highly possible that he reprises S3's words in his initial statement in line 184 and accompanies with a rising intonation as a comprehension check. This time S2 picks up the indicator and responses in line 193: *yes in thailand* which is an extensive answer to S3's response '*org4*' in line 191 and followed by an additional explanation on the current situation of company 4 in Thailand. A minimal reaction by participants in line 198: *mm hm* proves that any understanding problems which might have remained are now cleared up. Similarly to some preceding examples, this extract has clearly underpinned the clarity and preciseness of information as a significant requirement in the meeting. It is very obvious that on the one hand, S2, the supervisor, did not turn a blind eye to the unknown matter, namely about company 5, but has strategically sought precise information about it – a practice which "sets business meetings apart from casual conversations" (Pitzl 2010: 89). On the other hand, S2 and S3, the subordinates, have actively taken part in clarifying the matter to ensure a receipt of understanding.

Example 19 (meeting 6)

```
270   S2:    next is next er [org 7] become more aggressive [org 8] have er contact
271          with [org 6] some portion? they become to knows [org 6] will increase
272          they one assumptions nearly future they will more (.) more and more
273          aggressive (.) another POINT's thai distributor (.) i heard several
274          distributor they try to approach x from china (.) at the beginning i
275          heard they try to like the import xx tent? and deliver to customer (.) but    T1
276          now last month i also heard they also plan to build the stock? and xx
277          tank in thailand.
278   S6:    who are they?                                                                  I(1)
279   S2:    i (.) the name of this distributor is er [org 9] but they didn't tell to       R1/T2
280          our customer the original x <17> but they mention is </17>
281   S6:    <17> chemical of xx? </17>                                                      I(2)
282   S2:    [org 9]                                                                         R2
283   S3:    they already sent the sample?                                                  I(3)
284   S2:    they already sent the sample                                                   R3
285   S5:    chemi <18>cal:? </18>                                                          I(4)
```

286	S2:	<18> [org9] </18>	*R4a*
287	S3:	<18> [org9] </18> <19> <spel> i n t e r </spel> </19>	*R4b*
288	S2:	<19> <spel> i n t e r </spel> </19>	*R4c*
289	S5:	<writing> aha </writing> (.) and how you spell supply	*RR4/I(5)*
290	S2:	<spel> s u p p l y </spel>	*R5a*
291	S5:	<writing> s <20> u </20> </writing>	*RR5a*
292	**S1:**	**<20> supply </20>**	*R5b*
293	S5:	oh (.) the company name? is [org 9]	*RR5b*
294	SX:	@@	
295	S5:	is it old history (trader)?	*I(6)*
296	S3:	i don't <21> think so </21>	*R6a*
297	**S2:**	**<21> seven years </21>** based on my (.) my check list the xx	*R6b*
298		source (.) i saw their financial statement start from last seven years	
299	S1:	is it chinese company	*I(7)*
300	**S2:**	**it's thai <22>company </22>**	*R7a*
301	**S3:**	**thai <22> company </22>**	*R7b*
302	S6:	what is their major business?	*I(8)*
303	S2:	trading (.) chemical	*R8a*
304	S3:	er i think they they have a good support from [org6] for the people (.)	*R8b*
305	SX:	oh	*RR8b*

This instance contains multiple layers of trigger-resolution sequences which establish considerable stretches of negotiation sequences, whereby the collaborative overlap functioning as pre-emptive completions play a crucial role. In lines 270-277, S2 reports on the competitiveness of some of their business partners and their strategic direction. Once the TRP arises, S6 poses an immediate and explicit question: *who are they?* (line 278). His indicator clearly points towards a particular portion of the trigger, namely lines 273-277 which mention about a Thai distributor. S2 responses by proving the name of the distributor followed by some more description, but before he finishes it, S6 overlaps to indicate again. It appears that his last two words are not clear due to a hearing problem caused by the overlap. However, by looking at S2's response: *org 9* in line 282, it is very likely that the trigger to S6'non-understanding is S2's utterance of the company 9's name. It is therefore possible to interpret that S6 overlaps to check whether he has got the name of the company correctly before the conversation moves beyond the current issue by attempting to repeat it and using rising intonation to signal a reaction. Though S6's utterance consists of the word '*of*' which is not actually contained in the company name, the word '*chemical*' can drop a hint for S2 as it is the initial word of the company name. As a result, S2 reacts to S6's indicator by reprising the name of the company as an affirmative response. The non-understanding then seems to be resolved at this point as a new question from S3 has arisen with regard to the company 9: *they already sent the sample?* (line 283) accompanied by rising intonation which constitutes another indicating procedure. S2 opts for a simple reprise of the whole indicating speech*: they already sent the sample* but with ending intonation as an affirmative response. As soon as the TRP occurs, S5 starts a new turn by uttering the word *chemical* (line 285) using lengthened sound at the ending

coupled with interrogative intonation to indicate the understanding problem. At the point of this long sound, both S2 and S3 speak simultaneously mentioning the exact same phrase, namely '*org 9*' (lines 286-287). Again, it is highly probable that S2 and S3 can make a sense out of a single word from the context and the initial question posed by S6 in line 281 regarding the company name. Consequently, to offer immediate response both S2 and S3 overlap with S5 to provide the full name of company 9 and continue with a spelling of its middle word: *inter* in line 287. S3 starts first, and as soon as he utters the first syllable, S2 overlaps rendering the exact spelling in line 288. If one analyzes the repeated portion of the trigger utterance, namely the name of company 9 which consists of three words, it seems fairly obvious that the cause of non-understanding point towards the last two words, as its initial word: *chemical* has been reiterated correctly by both S6 and S5 in their indicators (lines 281 and 285). This interpretation coincides with the act of S3 and S2 giving a spelling and is further justified by S5's reaction in line 289: *aha* a minimal response to signal understanding and followed by an explicit indicator: *and how you spell supply* which proves that S3's and S2's spelling method is effective. This time it is only S2 who picks up and responds to the indicator by giving a spelling of the word requested in line 290 which is reacted positively by S5 who repeats the utterance. It is also essential to note that S5 is seen trying to write the name of the company since it is first mentioned by S2 in line 279. It is highly probable that S2 and S3 might have noticed this so they chose to provide the spelling to help S5 get the name correctly. Although the spelling method seems to sufficiently solve the non-understanding, S5 nevertheless renders a second response in line 292. That is to say, while S5 is repeating the first two syllables and writing them, S1 overlaps repeating the word: *supply* again. What is remarkable this time is S5's particular reaction in line 293 which involves a minimal interjection: *oh* and supplemented by a reprise of the company name: *the company name is org9*. It is quite questionable how he exhibits a clear and immediate understanding towards S1's utterance when he is not even spelling, but not with S2's and S3's. If we consider the fact that both S5 and S1 are Japaneses whereas S2 and S3 are Thais, a very plausible explanation for this apparent phenomenon could be attributed to the phonetic quality. On the one hand, S2's and S3's pronunciation of the word 'supply' might be peculiar for S5 which could therefore cause ambiguity. S1, on the other hand, is a Japanese whose pronunciation might be more familiar to S5 to which he can easily achieve understanding. It is necessary to note that S1, the chair of the meeting, is also the boss of S2 and S3, and according to the interview

this piece of information about company 9 is their shared knowledge. It is not surprising then to see S1 gets the name correctly and abruptly overlaps to assist S5 who still appears to be bewildered. Participants also share a laugh as a reaction to S5's expressing a sense of genuine understanding after quite a long stretch of the negotiation sequence. S5 then poses another question relates to the company once the TRP appears: *is it old history (trader)?* in line 295. Nonetheless he does not address anyone particularly, S3 thus self-selects as the next speaker to react to S5's query. Though being uncertain as his answer '*I don't think so*' (line 296) shows, S3 might feel the urge to give a response as being one of the staff of the host company and that he is able to project the TRP first. His speech is however overlapped b S2 who provides the more precise information to S5: *seven years based on my checklist* (line 297). His overlap might be an outcome of his delayed TRP projectability or he might observe that S3 seems unsure about his answer. Either interpretation it is, his overlap here does not interfere the progressivity of the ongoing turn but pre-empts its completion. As the enquiry is resolved, S1 poses another question about the company being discussed: *is it Chinese company* (line 299). Again, as he does not select the next speaker, the only option is therefore the next speaker selects self (Sacks et al. 1974). This time S2 is the first person who projects the TRP, but as soon as he starts a turn: *it's Thai company* (line 300), it is coincided with S3 who pre-empts its completion using the exact same phrase '*Thai company*' as line 301 displays. It is therefore obvious that the employment of S2's and S3's overlaps in this instance is not to interrupt each other turns but to serve for supportive purposes.

6.2.1.2   Word-search assistance

As has been presented in the previous section of the interactive function of the overlap which diverges from its form, simultaneous speech serving as a word-search assistance is another shape of collaborative overlap frequently captured in the data analyzed. Following examples will highlight the situations where participants overlap with the current speaker to offer an immediate lexis help.

Example 20 (meeting 2)

```
130   S1:    normally we (.) er our project normally our project we don't er need to
131          much the data like a pressure temperature (.) we just need the only the
132          er er th- <28> the signal </28>
133   S2:    <28> the data base </28>
134   S1:    yes NO the signal from the evc for the er the for the (.) corrected
135          volume
136          <29> and the <29> cross volume from the turbine meter (.)<30> just
137          </30> just <31> to er </31>
138   S2:    <29> yes? </29> <30> yes? </30> <31> so the </31> corrected and
139          <32> uncorrected xx</32>
```

```
140  S1:   <32> yea yea </32> for <33> reject in</33> to x (.) and then to the
141        modem to the mem
142  S2:   <33> yes </33>
143  S1:   there is a (.) can you like a find out some (.) the the data the modem er
144        @@@ (.) connect to the xxx (translip) to the center? (.) it's i don't like
145        to <34> e:r <34>
146  S2:   <34> OH: i know i know </34>
147  S3:   <34> you mean solid pulse? </34>
148  S1:   yea yea (.) because er (.) this is one is a (.) looking for a maintenance (.)
149        if like this installation (.) for the three hundred fifty station (.) our
150        system that is more maintenance for US for (.) solar power for battery
151        for (.) the xx it's a (.) you know it's a not problem
152  S2:   yea no pro <35> blem </35>
153  S1:   <35> yea but </35> (1) solar power and battery to make year more e:r
154        <36> main </36>
155  S2:   <36> maintenance </36>
156  S1:   yea i need (.) i need er no maintenance <37>or </37> little maintenance
157        like this (.) like a mm (.)
158  S2:   <37> okay </37>
159  S1:   (2) just like a ec to the data to the (.) to this (.) er like this together
160        WITH (.) no xx all without (.) no pro<38>blem</38>
161  S2:   <38> okay? </38>
162  S1:   and this one er send to your system transmitter (.) and then this one can
163        can er like er (.) like er not from from the two g two (.) like a we
164        connect to the hardwire (.) hardwire signal <39>output </39>from the
165        (.) from <40> the: </40> yes evc (.) hardwire to the modem (.) and
166        then er        hardwire from the (.) er turbid meter to the modem (.)
167  S2:   <39> oh:: </39>
168  S3:   <40> evc </40>
```

Since this example represents lengthy conversation exchanges, relevant passages for simultaneous speech functioning as assistance in word-search situations will therefore be indicated by bold letters. In lines 130-132, S1 clarifies the company's specification of a meter device where only some specific features are required. It appears however that he falters to complete the utterance '*we just need the only the er er th-*' (lines 131-132) which prompts S2 to cut off suggesting the phrase '*the data base*' in line 133. Although it reveals soon afterwards that the words S1 is looking for are '*the signal*' (line 132, 134), S2's immediate assistance has shown his active cooperation to the conversation. His interpretation is of only a slight slip which does not halt his joint operation, by contrast it continues and reaches accomplishment in line 136-137 where S1 seems hesitant again in his description '*just just to er*', and S2 overlaps, summarizing the situation, namely the type of data that is required '*so the corrected and uncorrected xx*' in lines 138-139. This time, his suggestion is approved by S1 who overlaps '*yea yea*' followed by a further explanation in lines 140-141. As a sales engineer representative of a Singaporean company who is promoting a company's product, it is not surprising to see S2 putting great efforts to understand his customer's needs. In this light, he might feel the urge to signal his understanding and offering words assistance, whether correct or not, where appropriate. S1 then continues with his turn in lines 144-145 where he is seen experiencing some difficulties explaining the required operating system: *it's i don't like to er*. At this

point S2 and S3 cut him off simultaneously in a bid to offer assistance. Their helps however come in distinct forms, namely while S2 uses an exclamatory reaction paired with acknowledging expression: *OH i know know* (line 146) to signal understanding, S3 offers the words suggestion '*solid pulse*' combines with the metalinguistic comprehension check '*you mean*' in line 147. S1 then acknowledges their helps via affirmative response: yea and carries on with his description. It is probably that S2 knows what S1 wants to say but unable to figure out the proper words at the moment. On the other hand, S3 is S1's subordinate and a team project member, he is therefore able to produce such correct and effective terms instantly. Whereas the interventions by S2 and S3 could be identified as the acts of interruption, their simultaneous speeches in this case are collaborative and in fact enhance the progress of the ELF communication. In line 155, the overlapping speech as word-search assistance takes place on the side of S2 again as soon as S1 shows a sign of hesitation in line 153. His word offering '*maintenance*' is very probably elicited from S1's speech in lines 148-150 where he explains why he needs such specific system. The word is implicitly acknowledged by S1 who repeats the term in his utterance in lines 156: *i need i need er no maintenance or little maintenance.* It is therefore possible to interpret that S2's simultaneous talk does not intervene S1 but rather assist him to complete his utterance.

6.2.2   Competitive overlaps

While there are countless cases of overlaps from the data that fulfill collaborative functions, participants have yet proved that they overlap many a time each other for competitive purposes. This is in lines with Wolfartsberger's (2009) observation that the context in ELF business meetings is unlike ELF small talk to the extent that it is of "primarily outcome-oriented interaction" (p. 172). Therefore, contrary to the above section, the following examples will display sequences of overlapping speech by participants as a mean to signal disagreement or to intervene the ongoing speech so that another issue could be addressed. The practice as such accounts for the fact that in a business negotiation, there is a strong need for disambiguity (Firth 2009) in which disagreement is necessarily brought out immediately, not at some point later where the topic might not be relevant (Grässel 1991). Examples 23-28 will provide varying scenarios in which the competitive turn overlaps are adopted in different scale of confrontation, namely from implicitly to explicitly, according to the situation at the time being.

Example 21 (meeting 1)

```
59    S2:    <16> because er: </16> (PO x ries) just meet the pta er:: reporting
60           (deadline) they have to reporting (deadline) on (.) on like we (.) you need    ⌉ T
61           to give that <17> xx </17>                                                     ⌋
62    S1:    <17> yeah </17>
63    S3:    <17> but i don't think </17> it's really like that (.) they don't think we     I
64           set the er target (.) it's like a ten day? (.) and when when we send to
65           us (.) they will like the (consolidate) <18> to the </18> (.) for the pta
66           (consolidate) <19> or so </19> yeah <20> i think </20>
67    S1:    <18> yeah </18>                                                                Ra
68    S2:    <19> mm hm </19>                                                               Rb
```

To begin with, example 21 shows a rather implicit confrontational approach the speaker draws on to signal disagreeing idea. The trigger utterance in this excerpt could be found between lines 59-61, the part where S2 is giving the information on the project timescale. While S1 overlaps S2'speech to signal her acknowledgement in line 62, S3 somehow spots that the information that S2 is giving does not accord with what she had learned. Instead of letting it pass, she recognizes the need to clarify the issue in which she interrupts in line 63 to voice her disagreement and provide details in lines 64-66 to support her statement. Her intervention later proves to be worthy as conceded by S1 and S2 who overlap in lines 67 and 68 to express their agreement. It is of interest to note that although S3 seems very certain that the information she provides is correct, her expression of "*but i don't think it's really like that*" does not convey an explicit sense of disagreement. It is possible that this is an internal meeting where everyone discusses each topic fairly casually so that S3 does not want to ruin the atmosphere by showing unnecessarily explicit disagreement.

Example 22 (meeting 2)

```
1    S2:    … yea i think very simple (.)
2    S1:    @@
3    S2:    i CANNOT I CANNOT make any CALL because <1> the: </1>
4    S1:    <1> just comeback </1> to the the contract xx the diagrams <2> you
5           you </2>
6    S2:    <2> okay </2> here
```

This extract exhibits a fairly short and simple conversation exchange involving only two simultaneous speeches: one to serve competitive purpose and the other for collaboration; and unlike example 21, the turn competitive overlap here is far more explicit. In the preceding talk, S2 has just delivered an approximate twenty minutes long product presentation. It is noticeable that the presentation includes a detailed description of the product and concerns a number of technical aspects. S2 is however seen to render a positive impression by uttering a subjective conclusion in line 1 that the product's operating system is after all very simple. As receiving a nonverbal response, namely a laugh, from S, S2 then opts to provide further explanation relating the technical issue in line 3. At this point, S1

abruptly cuts him short in the middle of his extended turn in line 4, obviously not to signal disagreement but rather to raise another concerning issue. His utterance 'just come back to...' explicitly reveals his purpose of this sudden interruption, i.e. to halt S2's continuing turn in order to reverse to the topic that has been discussed earlier but not yet delivered a sufficient degree of clarification. In this case, it is clearly indicative of the existent non-understanding, particularly in relation to the contract, on the side of S1 who feels the urge to indicate right away. S1 revealed afterwards that although he would hardly carry out the interruption as such in a normal conversation, it was nevertheless something difficult to avoid in the business meeting. As the buyer, he said it was of necessity to ensure that the product virtually met with the company's requirements. The non-understanding concerning any aspects of the product could not therefore be disregarded but needed to be clarified as immediate as possible for the sake of the precise information. In this particular case, S1 does not compromise the delay of the still existent non-understanding he has towards the preceding topic, to which he opts to suddenly interrupts S2 who is seen to continue with another topic discussion. Though his "blatant intervention" (Gramkow-Andersen, 2001) might risk being classified as rude, in his defense, S1 said it was "the inevitable nature of the business" where clarity was a priority, at least in his case in point. What is remarkable is that his account appears to be supported by S2 who favourably responses in line 6 by overlapping to signal his acknowledgement as well as showing the diagram at the meantime. This impression is even more reinforced when hearing the attitude towards the use of simultaneous speech in the meeting on the side of S2. It should be noted that overlaps have presented as the most prominent feature in this meeting interaction. Throughout the duration of around 100 minutes, overlaps have been spotted more than 150 times. As the three main speakers, two Thais and one Indonesian, played both the active and the passive roles, namely to overlap and to be overlapped, it was not surprising that they would feel fairly neutral towards it. When asked about the feeling of being interrupted in the middle of the talk during the interactions, S2, an Indonesian, reported that the practice by no means offended him. As he put, being a product representative meant he had to prepare for being "interrogated and encountered with questions of all sorts". To be intervened during the turn was hence "just a part of its process". Furthermore, he added that he kind of understood the reason behind the action, as he also found himself in the same situation where he felt the need to interrupt the current speaker from time to time to supply immediate explanation or correct the

statement. Example 23 which was retrieved from the same meeting, will display those situations.

Example 23 (meeting 2)

Function of simultaneous speech	Number of occurrence
Collaborative purpose	5
Competitive purpose	3

24	S3:	(4) actually but actually our requirement we need to stand alone we	
25		don't use we we don't need to use the battery (.) do you have any	
26		solution? <4> from the last </4> er we we don't use to we don't want	T1
27		to use the battery <5> you you have another </5> solution? (.) er NO	
28		NO not battery i mean the battery inside the modem	T2
29	**S2:**	**<4> what you you </4> <5> you you don't </5>**	I(1)
30		battery inside the <6> modem? </6>	I(2)
31	S3:	<6> yea </6> not the external battery like this	R2
32	S2:	OH::	RR2a
33	S3:	because the last year <7> er </7>	...R2
34	**S2:**	**<7> WE HAVE</7> <8> we have </ 8> yes we have we have er**	RR2b/
35		we have one we call a focus <9> focus </9>	T3
36	S3:	<8> oh </8> <9> yeah yeah last </9> last year you send me to	I(3)
37		another specification <10> for er </10>	
38	S2:	<10> yes </10> er <slow> i can show to you </slow> but the: one one	
39		thing? e:r WHY? I don't promote this because at the moment the	
40		FOCUS PLUS? that WE have? (.) it's still based on e::r GPRS <11>	R3
41		GPRS </11> communication (1) so this is the one (.)	
42	S3:	<11> oh:: </11>	RR3

After S2 finishes his presentation, the negotiation continues with S1 and S3, the main representatives of PTA (the host company) asking some further questions to elicit more details about the product. In lines 24-28, while S3 is trying to clarify that they are in fact looking for a product that comes with a built-in battery, it is however noticeable that his speech has trigged the non-understanding on the part of S2 who is seen struggling to compete the floors (line 29) as a way to indicate the understanding problems. If we consider the characteristics of the first indicator (line 29), it is quite obvious that the triggered utterances are between lines (25-27), either '*we don't need to use the battery*' or '*we don't want to use the battery*'. Whichever the utterance, this prompts S2 in making two immediate interruptions with S3's speech. Although he has failed in his attempts, S2 makes it explicit that he calls for the non-understanding to be negotiated at the point of its occurrence rather than adopting the 'wait and see strategy' (Pitzl 2010, 89). While S3 does not yield the turn to S2, he seems to be able to tell from S2' action and the audible words of the specific portion of the trigger, thereby he draws on the self-correction '*NO NO not battery*' and reformulates his utterance to '*the battery inside the modem*' paired with a metalinguistic comment '*i mean*' in line 28. Nevertheless, S2's reprise of the phrase '*battery inside the modem?*' with rising intonation in line 30 suggests the still existent non-understanding which

prompts the overlapping reaction from S3 who resorts to another reformulation '*yea not the external battery like this*' in line 31. This time S2 make obvious that he can now understand what S3 means through the exclamatory reaction: *OH* in line 32. Furthermore, he blatantly claims the turn while S3 starts to provide further explanation in line 33. His sudden intervention via the repeated expression: '*WE HAVE we have yes we have …*' in line 34 explicitly voice his strong argument. In relation to this particular practice, S2 has stated in the interview that he has always given special importance in supplying the most accurate details on his product.

Example 24 (meeting 6)

Function of simultaneous speech	Number of occurrence
Collaborative purpose	-
Competitive purpose	4

```
199  S2:   (3) er second one is er one chinese producer they become to know as
200        high attractive of thai markets because er the the DEMAND in
201        thailand is quite interesting for them? er i THINK theys  politician        T1
202        strategy actually in the past they just want to (.) get the profit of the x
203        but right now they want get the share as well
204  S5:   then who are the agent of (1) this producer (.) chinese producer?         I(1)
205  S2:   chinese producer? i heard from [org 6] they they did directs business
206        <10> with [org5] </10>                                                     R1/T2
207  S5:   <10> hah? </10> the direct?                                                I(2)
208  S2:   direct <11> yes </11>                                                      R2
209  S5:   <11>the [org 6] </11> singapore or [org 6] china. (.)                      I(3)
210  S2:   <soft> mm not sure </soft>                                                 R3a
211  S5:   they have a political issue                                                …I(3)
212  S2:   ah i see                                                                   R3b
213  S3:   maybe we try to check <12> today </12>                                     R3c
214  S5:   <12>[org5]</12> they have (1) i think three different group  maybe
215        beijing hongkong singapore. (.) they have a different (type) but they
216        always bounce each other (.) they want to show off (.) so i don't know
217        actually in thai market who is the leader player in (1) it seems like to
218        be (.) er SUPPOSE to be like er [org5] singapore (.) but actually [org6]
219        singapore is just a x [org 6] hong kong (.) and the: that for the [org 6]
220        maybe in beijing (.) they always want to come xx
221  S3:   i think err [org 5] will be more attentive er in the near <13> future
222        </13>
223  S6:   <13> if </13>[org 5] can get the company in (privacy) it is highly
224        possible they talk to xxx
```

Considering the question purposed by S5 in line 204, it is clearly noticed that it concerns the report about a Chinese producer provided by S2 as a whole rather than indicating any specific portion of the trigger utterance. S5's question "then who are the agent of (1) this producer (.) Chinese producer?" suggests that there is a certain degree of understanding, still, an extended piece of information is required. The practice evidently demonstrates the speaker's high degree of concentration and engagement where he makes the effort to elicit as much

details as possible. As a business partner, S5 has stressed the importance of obtaining all the necessary information from the host company. It is therefore not surprising to see him, and the other two participants who are also business guests, jot down when new information which is not included in the hand out arises. The answer provided by S2 in line 205-206 however provokes the non-understanding on the side of S5 who abruptly interrupts in line 207. His surprise reaction '*hah?*' followed by a reprise of S2's essential word '*direct?*' simultaneously presents the occurrence of the understanding problem. By looking solely at S5's indicating procedure, one could argue that is possibly functions as a request for a reconfirmation. Furthermore, S2's affirmative response in line 208: *direct yes* seems to point that it is this interpretation that he follows. Nevertheless, if we consider the following negotiation sequences, there is a higher potential that S5's indicator is employed here to signal disagreement to S2's speech in line 205. That is to say, S2's confirmative answer evidently fails to bring the non-understanding to the satisfactory end, rather it leads to another indicating procedure proposed by S5 in line 209. By providing the alternative of answer: *the [org 6] singapore or [org 6] china*, S5 strategically makes use of his indicator based on hypothesis-forming, thereby he displays his considerable degree of involvement in the joint clarification work. What follows is S2's uncertainty: *mm not sure* in line 210 in a response and S5's reaction to the response: *they have a political issue* in line 211 accordingly. At this point, it becomes clear that S5 holds some insights about the companies being discussed, namely they should not conduct direct business due to a political issue. Therefore, by receiving the information which contrasts to what he had learned, it is very likely that his first sudden intervention in line 207 is intended to signal the disbelieving that his perception is wrong. Although S5 does not explicitly express his disagreeing right away but opts for more implicit indicators (lines 207, 209) which seems to points towards his uncertainty about the situation, his utterance and utilization of the simultaneous speech give different impression. Through his sudden interruptions in lines 207, 209 and 214 and the extensive clarification on the current business relationship between company 5 and company 6 in lines 214-220, it is indicative that S5 holds a certain degree of confidence in his perception. This interpretation is later proved to be correct as the issue has been brought into the discussion again during the break where participants were having lunch in the meeting room and had casual conversations on different topics. There was one moment where S2 brought this particular issue into the forefront, probably due to his surprise that the case companies were having such

conflict issue, which was outside of his knowledge. In this light, S5 expressed his certainty by insisting the existent conflicts between those companies and asked if S2 and S3, staff of the host company, were able to reexamine the matter to ensure the utmost degree of preciseness. It can therefore doubtless argue that S5 does not wait to hear out the full response provided by S2 in lines 205-206 but chooses to interrupts him immediately in situation of disagreement. It should nevertheless be noted that his disagreement is articulated in a slight tone and he accordingly submits a hypothesis which seek to elicit the more elaborate information. In doing these,

The last example that is presented in this section contains the longest negotiation sequences in the data analyzed. Since the negotiation itself in this instance is considerably lengthy, example 26 will therefore exhibits the preceding exchanges to sketch the overall structure of the conversation and the detailed analysis will be discussed in example 26.

Example 25 (meeting 4)

Function of simultaneous speech	Number of occurrence
Collaborative purpose	7
Competitive purpose	-

```
145   S2:   so then then i think we will talk about some general terms (.) because
146         we have several contracts <25> not </25> only one <26> but we </26>
147         have only one code <27> one regime </27>
148   S4:   <25> mm </25> <26> mm </26> <27> yes </27>
148   S2:   i wonder whether we should have general term for all contracts
149   S4:   mm hm
150   S2:   er and only particular commercial terms for er the capacity contract for
151         <28> xxx </28> contract and <29> xx </29> contract (.) but other general
151         terms (provision) that we will also er is away of clear up thing that easier
152         for er <30>you know </30> we can get approval for the general term
153         <31> condition </31>
154   S4:   <28> mm hm </28> <29> mm hm </29> <30> mm hm mm hm </30>
155         <31> ah okay </31>
```

The meeting took place between the PTA's legal department team and their legal consultants from Australia. It mainly involved legal documents to which participants engaged very actively in drafting and reviewing the contract; an activity that could be described as 'fragile' where the utmost degree of clarity and shared understanding is required (Pitzl 2013: 98). In example 25 the discussion revolves around the issue of the terms used in their various types of contracts to which S2 proposes the idea of inventing the general terms and clarifies its

benefits. At this point we can see that she manages to keep the flow of speech along the course of her relatively long and several turns without being interrupted. A number of overlapping speeches from S4 that arise in parallel all serve collaborative purpose, namely to signal acknowledgement and support her to continue. The next example however carries various indicating procedures which accordingly result in the emergence of various competitive turn overlaps, a very prominent feature found in this particular meeting.

Example 26 (meeting 4)

Function of simultaneous speech	Number of occurrence
Collaborative purpose	5
Competitive purpose	15

156	S2:	and we can <32> defend </32>	
157	S1:	<32> may i ask for the language </32>	*I(1)*
158	S2:	they <33> have to be </33>	*R1*
159	S1:	<33> because </33> because your will be in thai	*…I(1)*
160	S2:	understood	*R1a*
161	S1:	and and the contract (.) <34> should be in english </34>	*…I(1)*
162	S4:	<34> (why) (.) xx english </34>	
163	S2:	<34> i try </34> (.) i try to defend it should be in english (.) because	
164		otherwise it would be difficult (.) er because (.) our (.) our sale and	*R1/*
165		purchase upstream (.) <35> downstream </35> is in english (.)so	*T2*
166		<36> so we will </36>	
167	SS:	<35> mm hm </35>	*RR1*
168	S1:	<36> no no not for the </36>	*I(2)*
169	S2:	except (contract 1) <37> only </37>	*…R1*
170	S1:	<37><L1th>aw nai i d p kao kien{oh it was stated in i d p}</L1th></37>	
171	S2:	<L1th> chai {yes} </L1th> and also that the version that has been	
172		approved by the regulator (.) it is also in English	*R1a*
173	S1:	mm hm	*RR1a*
174	S2:	if we transfer (.) er translate it in thai it will be xx and very	*R1b*
175		difficult to understand	
176	S4:	@@	*RR1b*
177	S2:	we have experience that <38> in in </38> g p a code	*R1c*
178	S4:	<38> mm hm </38>	*RR1c*
179	SS:	yea @@@@	*RR2c*
180	S2:	and also the regime at <39> the beginning </39>	*R1d*
181	S1:	<39> but er </39> my question is that (.) if we use (.) use in English	
182		(.) and then when someone read it and it is not the same understanding	
183		as in thai in the CODE (.) so it <40> will make </40> it will make	*I(3)*
184		more (.) more conflict <41> instead of more (.) clearer </41>	
185	S2:	<40> that that what we </40> <41> no (.) i i would x not </41> to say	
186		like this (.) we translate er g p a code in English version originally in	*R3/*
187		xx (.) and try to keep the concept keep the content (.) and er and <42>	*T4*
188		and meanings in (.) so they should not be xx </42>	
189	S1:	<42> yea that is our intention but but when (.) when <42> are x read	
190		it because er we announce the code in thai (.) but when we do the	*I(4)*
191		(conduct) (if) other (shippers) will be in <43> english </43> so when	
192		their lawyers read it (.) er it may not be the same as you think and and	

193		<44> intend </44> in the code	
194	S2:	<43> i </43> <44> then </44> then my personal view is that (.) we	*R4/*
195		issue the code in thai? (.) but we have the english translation version	*T5*
196	S1:	we should not the er (.) because when we change more in thai especially	
197		after the er p r c comments? (.) if we change it and (.) and we may not	*I(5)*
198		xx change it but (.) in in english version do (.) it <45> will make </45>	
199	S2:	<45> i (.) i </45> would recommend that you will change to the (.) the	
200		english t p a code (.) to be abide with the thai version and xx amend	
201		base on the comment of the p r c (.) otherwise we will not have the	*R5/*
202		english er as the reference version even though it is in official (1)	*T6*
203		because if you if you have the <46> all the contract in thai </46>	
204	S1:	<46> yes we should have it </46> in official but should not be	*I(6)*
205		attached x into the <47> the official one </47>	
206	S2:	<47> we WON'T <47> attach er we appendix as the official translation	*R6*
207		not the official one (.) because as everybody know that thai version will	
208		be the government governed version (.) but i would recommend that	
209		otherwise er we will be very difficult to seek the international advice or	
210		or er even for our argument (.) this is international (situation) (.) and if	
211		we want to use in some other places (.) it will be also difficult (2) that	
212		that my recommendation (2) and in fact if we (.) er i think we should be	
213		able to defend why we need to er have the contract in english version (.)	
214		the standard english <48> contract </48>	
215	S4:	<48> can i </48> ask you a question? (.) mm (1) so (1) it is agreed (.)	*I(7)*
216		are you agreed that the contract should be in english? but xx whether	
217		the x should be in thai? <49> yes? </49>	
218	S2:	<49> er the code </49> should be in thai <50> the official one </50>	*R7*
219	S4:	<50> yes </50>	*RR7*

S2's flow of speech has come to the terminate point when S1 suddenly intervenes and diverges the current topic into the matter of language choice instead. From this point onwards the negotiation then primarily concerns the agreement seeking on whether the language to be published in the contract should be in Thai or English. The issue is initiated by S1, the chair of the meeting. In line 157, she abruptly intervenes S2's speech by diverging to another topic in a sudden: *may I ask for the language*. It turns out that her interruption, which functions as an indicating procedure, is meant to prepare the floor for the speakership rather than seeking an immediate answer. S2 however interprets it differently as she responses as soon as the TRP occurs to which she was again interrupted after the first utterance. S1 makes explicit that she does not want to hear out the answer right away but rather intends to continue her question by further clarifying '*because because your will be in Thai*' (line 159). At this point, it is remarkable to see that S2 opts to response with an acknowledgement expression 'understood' and make a pause to give a turn to S1 rather than offering an explanation immediately as she did in her previous account. However, when S1 takes turn in the line follows to continue with the elaboration on her indication '*and and the contract…*, she is interrupted while making a very brief pause in the middle of her talk by S4 and S2 who speak simultaneously as soon as the TRP occurs which

result in the overlapping speech. While it is difficult to indicate the function of S4's overlap as the hearing is impaired, we can interpret though that S2's motive is to claim the speakership. It is indicative that S1 is not done with her talk and the pause is clearly not the signal of the turn completion. Therefore, S2's overlap could be regarded as a consciously produced competitive turn whereby she decides not to wait to hear out S1's remaining speech but rather feels the need to insert a clarification instantly. While this could be interpreted as inappropriate in a general conversation (Liddicoat 2011), particular when the Thai cultural norms namely the seniority appreciation is concerned (ref) (as S2 is the junior and the subordinate of S1), the practice is no stranger to the ELF workplace meeting where stretches of disagreement and dispute are visible (Wolfartsberger 2009). By starting the turn which is coincided with the other two participants' utterances, S2 seems to be aware of the potential inhibition of the beginning to which she adopts the repetition of the first words '*I try*' to ensure the receipt of a complete sentence. She then provides the response to S1's indication through a combination of a reformulation and a clarification. That is, S2 reformulates her previous account by shifting from the explicit '*they have to be*' (line 158) to the more implicit '*I try to defend'* (line 163) which exhibits much more clearly that she is expressing the subjective view not the agreed code. Then she provides a clarification as to why it should be in English '*because otherwise it would be difficult*' and supplements with a more elaborate explanation '*because our sale and purchase upstream downstream is in English'* (lines 163-165). Her last bits of speech '*so we will*' are nevertheless met again with S1 who interrupts quite quickly '*no no not for the*' (line 168) to signal disagreement. Since the sentence is incomplete, it might be difficult to identify S1's intention. But if we consider S2's following utterance in line 169 '*except (org1) only*', there is the potential that S1 was intending to argue that the English version is not required by some particular contracts, which is very likely to be correspondent with what S2 says. The interpretation is reinforced very soon afterwards when S1 discovers some information from the document and makes another overlapping speech through a code switching to Thai. By considering her speech in which she reacts with surprise, one could assume that the code switching here is unconsciously uttered rather than to serve particular purpose, e.g. addressing Thai participants specifically. S2 seems to carry this perception in which she provides a minimal affirmative response '*yes*' in Thai and switches back to English for clarification in lines 171-172. At this point, one might say that the non-understanding on the part of S1 has been cleared out judging from her acknowledging reaction '*mm*

hm' in the line follows. As it will reveal afterwards, nonetheless, the non-understanding resolution has not been accomplished but was only left pending. After receiving S1's reaction, S2 proceeds with her clarification work for another couple of turns which evoke the laughter and acknowledging feedback from the other participants (lines 174-179). However, her contribution in line 180 is cut off by S1 who suddenly interrupts by exploiting "appositional beginning" (Sacks et al. 1974) *but* (line 181) as a "pre-start" (p.719) to refrain the revelation of the essential information. By starting the statement '*but er my question is that*', S1 seems to resorts to an explicit indicating procedure as a means to bring S2 into the re-negotiation of her first indication. This obviously exhibits S1's existent non-understanding and her need to attain a greater degree of clarity and understanding. Rather than overly indicates that she objects to the idea of using the English language in the contract, S1 makes an effort to implicitly illustrate the worst-case scenario in which English creates '*more conflict instead of more clearer*' for some readers (line 181-183). From this point onwards, we would see stretches of negotiation and disagreement between S1 and S2 which lead to a number of interruptions and competition for the floor. In line 185, it is noticed that S2 has failed in her first attempts to cut off S1, likely to clarify her point, in which she makes a pause and lets S1 goes on with her turn. However, after hearing S1 claiming that the English version of the contract '*will make more conflict*', she feels the urge to make another interruption by beginning the sentence with the explicit denial '*no i would x not*' to voice her disagreement. In line 187 while S2 is in the middle of her explanatory work, she is cut short by S1 again. Though the beginning of the overlapping utterance appears to be syntactically constructed as supportive: *yea that is our intention*, the filler *'but but when when'* (line 189) shows her intrinsic intention, namely to signal disagreement. What is remarkable is that S2 insists to hold the floor and proceeds with her turn until finish despite S1's quite a forceful interruption, in the meantime, S1 does not call off an attempt to take over the turn although it is unsuccessful. The response S2 provides in lines 186-187 is opposed by S1 who suddenly indicates and brings forth the explanatory phrase in lines 190-193. During the course of her turn, we can see that S2 makes two attempts to cut off despite the nonappearance of TRP. Although unsuccessful, S2' interruptions obviously demonstrate that she feels necessary to clarify the matter at once so that S1 does not have to waste time discussing it. By saying '*then my personal view is that*' (line 194), it appears nevertheless that S2 does not wish her disagreement sounds too straightforward but more like a suggestion '*we issue*

the code in Thai but we have the English translation version' (line 195). By contrast, S1 does not show hesitation to express her disagreement outright '*we should not the er because when we change more in Thai …*' in lines 196-198. It is plausible to explain that such scenario could potentially be shaped by the important concept of Thai cultural practice, namely the respect for seniority—whether in terms of age or status (ref). As mentioned before, S1 is the senior and has a higher position, so while S2 does not avoid to intervene whenever she feels necessary, she would resort to a more implicit language when expressing her opinion to mitigate the likelihood of face-threatening act. The interpretation is emboldened when looking at S2's next response in line 199 in which she competes for the floor but opts to do it in a more implicit manner through the similar strategy in her previous turn by uttering '*I would recommend that you …*' as a means to express her view. The response she provides in turn comes to trigger another indicator I(6) imposed by S1 who cuts short S2's last portion of utterance. There seem to be two possible interpretations for S1' indication. On the one hand, after hearing S'2 response, she probably does not want the issue to be unnecessarily extended which thus provokes her to abruptly interrupts simply to voice her idea: '*yes we should have it in official but should not be attached x into the the official one*' (lines 204-205). Yet, it is possible to assume that she is suspicious that S2 would attach the translation part into the official contract, the idea to which she objects and feels forced to insert the indication at once. Though it is difficult to decide which of these two scenarios is actually the case, this entails a blatant intervention from S2 who argues '*we won't*' (line 206) in quite a loud voice and followed by a long contribution from lines 206-214. If one looks at the way S2 claims the floor, it appears to be quite a forceful interruption. However, S2 is noticed to strategically make her arguing statement between lines 206-208 sound less competitive. By adding '*but I would recommend that …*' (line 208), '*… that my recommendation*' (line 212) and '*I think we should be able to defend …*' (lines 212-213) in her clarification, one could describe it as an attempt to mitigate the prospect negative effect of her interruption that could have occurred on the part of S1. Her response again is met with an indicating procedure, but this time from S4. It is observed that S2 has dominated her turn for about a minute without any overlaps despite the appearance of TRPs that arise several times until S4 decides to break her flow of speech by indicating '*can I ask you a question?*' in line 215. Probably due to the length of preceding negotiation exchanges between S1 and S2 which are relatively long that invokes S4, the invited legal consultant, to cut S2 off. By submitting a hypothetical question '*so it*

is agreed (.) are you agreed that the contract should be in English? but xx whether the x should be in Thai?' (lines 215-216) suggests that he wants the conclusion to this long-discussed matter. In addition, if we analyze S2' contribution in lines 206-214, we could see that she has been clarifying why they should follow her suggestion which seems to be the resolution to the problematic issue. It is possible therefore to interpret that S4 feels the urge to interrupt S2 in order to get the final verdict before the issue is dragged further. S4's confirmation check '*yes?*' (line 217) is however overlapped by S2 who provide a sudden response in line 218 and S4' acknowledging feedback 'yes' in the line follows suggests that the understanding problem is finally brought to an end.

What has emerged as a clear view from this example is another distinguish characteristic of ELF business meetings whereby participants prioritize clarity and disambiguity over interpersonal alignment (Firth 2009: 161) which tacitly forces them to confront with potentially face-threatening act in dealing with difficult topics in order to reach the purposes of the meeting (Wolfartsberger 2009: 172). Almost all of the interruptions occur in the extract could be described as 'blatant interventions' in which the participants cuts the current speaker's turn abruptly despite the absent of the transition relevance place (Gramkow-Andersen 2001: 132). It is noteworthy that the competition for the floor is quite intense here to the extent that the intervening participants neither hesitate to break the current flow of speech nor restrain when the current speaker did not yield the turn which subsequently results in two turns running parallel. This clearly proves that they are prepared to confront hard negotiations and conflicts. A possible explanation could attribute to the fact that the meeting is carried out purposely to seek consultancy and agreement from the legal consultants from an Australian company. Due to the significant time constraints, participants seem to have a common interest in not prolonging the negotiation but feel necessary to reach agreement as quickly as possible. Yet, it is very seem that these competitive overlaps were not perceived as 'violative' (Sacks et al. 1974: 724) by the interlocutors. None of the participants react to the interruption with anger. In contrary, they seem to acknowledge it with understanding that this is a common way of business negotiation where the outcome is of primary importance.

In all, the analysis in this section has critically presented how the simultaneous speech was employed to serve competitive purposes without having to be seen as 'violative' against the turn taking rule of one-at-a-time (Sacks et al. 1974: 724). Instead, the practice reflects the "primarily outcome-oriented interaction"

(Wolfartsberger's 2009: 172) of BELF interaction rather than presenting participants' lack of ability "to wait for and/or to project a suitable point of transitional relevance" (House 2008: 355).

6.3   Code-switching

Code-switching has been demonstrated by a wealth number of studies as a common phenomenon in international meetings and as a natural tool in which participants draw on to serve various supportive purposes, e.g. to overcome language difficulties, to encourage cooperation or to build a common ground (see e.g. Poncini 2003; Nikko 2007; Cogo 2009; Wolfartsberger and Vienna 2009; Angouri and Miglbauer 2014; Gunnarson 2014). Though code switching did not mark the prevalent strategy in the data analyzed, it has represented some of its important collaborative functions which echoed its status as the 'multilingual resources' labelled by many ELF empirical research. In the present study, code switching was employed occasionally in every meeting but meeting 1 was the most tangible case on account of its qualities. There were some factors, such as the type of the meeting as well as the interpersonal relationship among participants, which were very likely to influence participants to switch the language quite often throughout the course of the interactions. It is necessary to indicate that it was an internal meeting among colleagues who had pretty close relationship, so their interaction went in quite an informal way. Furthermore, the meeting consisted of only one Singaporean, (who reported to understand some common Thai words) among other ten Thai participants. In light of this, while English was used as a mean of communication in all written documents, Thai was most of the time the language of choice in their daily interactions, whereas English would exclusively be exploited in the presence of the Singaporean (or S2, henceforth). Nonetheless, Thai participants revealed that they tended to use, deliberately and undeliberately, some Thai terms in front of S2, which, if necessary, led them to provide him the meaning of those words. For these reasons, in the examples below we would see that code switching has been carried out by the Thais multiple times throughout the interaction to serve various different purposes. A model for the negotiation of meaning of Varonis and Gass's (1985) will be employed to see how the code switching serves in the process of negotiation, namely in the trigger and resolution.

6.3.1   A tool to overcome language difficulties

One of the most prominent functions of code switching seems to lie in word-searching situations where participants code switch to ask for help from the others. Apparently, the strategy is reported to receive effective collaboration from other interlocutors who immediately offer help and suggestions (e.g. Cogo 2009; Wolfartsberger and Vienna 2009; Angouri and Miglbauer 2014). Examples 28 and 29 illustrate similar phenomena in which S1 code switches to Thai to seek help from the others in her word-searching moments.

Example 27 (meeting 1)

```
71    S1:    <22> normally it's like this because pta serve as a pri er: is er: <L1th>
72           a rai wa {what is that bloody word} </L1th>                          I
73    S5:    @@
74    S3:    <toS1> pub <23> bli- </23> public <24> company </24> <L1th>
75           raw?{right?} </L1th> </toS1>                                        R
76    S1:    <23> no no </23> <24 ah YEAH YEAH </24> it's a public company       RR
77           (.) and it's it's er use the auditor <25> (general) </25> right?
```

Example 28 (meeting 1)

```
26    S1:    <tos2> S2 this is the the the new: new </tos2> <L1th> a rai wa {what is    I
27           that bloody word} </L1th> (.) new new:
28    S3:    policy.                                                                    R
29    S1:    policy of a cost cutting (.)                                               RR
30    S2:    oh
```

In example 27, the negotiation sequence starts when S1, the chair, has some difficulties in finding the particular word where, line 71, she is about to say 'private' but realizing that it is not the term she is looking for. She therefore code switches to Thai, which serves as the indicator, to ask for help from her Thai subordinates. S3, her assistant, is the first one to response by offering the word 'public' followed by the Thai question word 'raw' (which means 'right') in line 75 with rising intonation. The choice for using Thai ending word over English here seems to suggest her intention to create common ground. When looking at her ability to provide the correct term immediately, one could attribute it to the shared knowledge they have towards the general information of the company. Similarly, in example 28 when S1 wants to explain about the new policy of the company to S2, but cannot figure out the word 'policy', code switching steps in as a rescuer once again. She indicates by explicitly asks for help from the others in Thai 'a rai wa' in line 26 to which she receives a collaborative response from S3 who manages to find the right word. S3' shared knowledge enables her to predict the term from S1's particular utterance: 'new'. In addition, it shows that she must have been paying a great intention to the interaction so that she can find the right word instantly only from a small hint.

It is clearly seen that in both word-searching moments, S1 uses the same expression 'a rai wa' to ask for the words. It is also of interest to note that while 'a rai' means 'what', 'wa' is actually a swear word in Thai. It is considered particularly rude if the youngers speak to, or even in front of, the olders. Nevertheless, on some occasions 'a rai wa' is seen to be adopted as an expression rather than being considered rude. In these two contexts, S1 is the senior (and also the boss) and the way she says 'a rai wa' gives the impression that she is mumbling with herself. Also, it is important to note that they have very close relationship which makes it sound more like a very casual and friend-like way to ask for a word which enhances the existing cosy and intimate mood.

6.3.2   Increase common ground and build relations

Example 29 (meeting 1)

74	S3:	\<toS1> pub \<23> bli- \</23> public \<24> company \</24> \<L1th> **raw?** {right?}	*I*
75		\</L1th> \</toS1>	
76	S1:	\<23> no no \</23> \<24 ah YEAH YEAH \</24> it's a public company	*R*

Example 30 (meeting 1)

86	S2:	\<26> ACTUALLY \</26> er: I just close xxx \<27> to the bank \</27>	*T*
87	S1:	\<27> AH: you send the (perim) \</27> to them already \<28> \<L1th> **raw?**	*I*
88		{right?} \</L1th> \</28>	
89	S2:	\<28> I sent already \</28> \<29> let me \</29> show you. (.)	*R*
90	S1:	\<29> ah yeah \</29> (.) the difference is very minimal in in (any)	*RR*
91		\<L1th> **na** {okay} \</L1th>	
92	S2:	usually no xxx @	*Ra*
93	S1:	ah usually no \<30> re xxx \<L1th> **na** {well}\</L1th> \</30>	*RRa*
94	S2:	\<30> because i x to xx i think (.) NO no point to defend \<31> i think	

Example 31 (meeting 1)

104	S1:	\<34> just in case \<L1th> **ar na**{well}\</L1th> \</34> \<35>	*I*
105		yeah understand \</35> (1) but but because \<36> for now \</36>	
106	S2:	\<36> but i can \</36> x by a year (.) it's not that x	*R*
107	S1:	yeah ok (.) so if you can \<L1th> **na** {okay} \</L1th> it will	*RR*
108		be the best way because they they (.) kind of LIKE to have er	
109		formality.(.) meeting.	

In examples 29-31, it is seen that S3 and S1 (both Thais) switch to Thai at the end of the sentences by using the question particle '*raw*' (lines 74 and 87) instead of the English word 'right'. While the choice of the word is very much understandable for S3 as she specifically addresses the message to S1, the chair, who is Thai, S1 however clearly speaks to the S2, the Singaporean, in line 87. Her preference for '*raw*' over 'right' could contribute to the fact that it is a very common word among Thai colleagues and she is certain that S2 is very familiar with the word and knows its meaning. This reflects in line 89 where S2 shows no sign of perplex to which he can respond accordingly. For Thais, the ending particles can signal politeness and intimacy among speakers. '*Na*' is one of the

most frequent choice to express intimacy. It is typically used in informal communication amongst friends, family. It can only be accepted in a formal speech when accompanied with the other ending particle word '*ka*', i.e. 'na ka' to show politeness. The above examples show that S1 apparently addresses the word '*na*' in line 91, 93 and 107 to S2. Again, the word conveys neither puzzlement to S2 nor a hindrance to the flow of the interaction. Instead, it creates relaxing atmosphere and a friendly work discussion. From the interview, S1 did mention that she did not want the discussion to be too serious. However, she pointed that the occurrence of many Thai particles in the meeting seemed to come out unconsciously as a result of constant practice in the daily operation. It is of interest to note that S1 is the head of financial unit in Singapore office where she is entitled to give a direct order to her subordinates. Nevertheless, in line 107, she opts for the phrase '*so if you can*' instead of direct speech like 'so you have to' or 'so you should' to assign a task to S2. In addition, it is very likely that she exploits '*na*' to add a softer tone to the content, that is, the work order to S2. This is more or less related to Thai cultural practices where '*Krengjai*', "an attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his or her own interest or desire in situations that could give rise to discomfort or conflict and where there is a need to maintain a pleasant and cooperative relationship" (Boode 2005: 13) is a concern in most circumstances. Although S2 is not Thai, most of the employees in the unit are. That is to say, an atmosphere of Thai working style has permeated the office albeit in such international setting. In this case, S1 is accustomed with working with her Thai subordinates, it is therefore explicable that she applies some of the same working values to her foreign subordinate.

Example 32 (meeting 1)

```
36    S1:    <9> yeah </9> i know they don't NEED the auditor (.) because they
37           don't sign anything
38    S2:    they decided                                                    T
39    S1:    they sign?                                                      I
40    S2:    decided.                                                        R
41    S1:    <L1th> aw {i see} </L1th> decide (.) so so no more the exact number    RR
42           right?
```

Example 33 (meeting 1)

```
83    S1:    financial report. (.) send to them. (.) but for (.) some small company    T
84           like us (.) sometime they may give you like ten days late? (.)
85    S2:    <L1th> aw {i see} </L1th>                                       I
86    S1:    but for the main one they don't allow <26> yeah </26>           R
```

Example 32-33 demonstrate the use of Thai expression '*aw*' instead of 'I see' in English. Thai people usually use 'aw' to indicate understanding or

acknowledgement of the statement in informal interaction. In example 4, the code switching in line 41 serves as reaction to response. The problematic part in the extract is caused by the words 'sign' and 'decide'. While S1 explains that the auditor is not required here because they do not sign any document, S2 agrees and wants to add that the auditor just decided. S1 however thought that S2 contends her statement as she mishears the word 'decided' to 'sign it'. In this respect, '*they decided*' could be seen as a *trigger* which results in the *indicator* '*they sign?*' in line 39 to signal the non-understanding. S2 then provide the answer in line 40 '*decided*' which turns out to clear up the non-understanding. The code switching in line 41 'aw' which means 'I see' thus functions as a *reaction to the response* (RR). It is possible that S1 either code switches unconsciously due to her prompt reaction or she might do it deliberately to create the friendly work environment, as stated that the word is only drawn on in a casual situation. Whether she does it on purpose or not, she must be confident that S2 understands this expression. This is affirmed in example 5 line 85 in which S2, the Singaporean uses the same expression '*aw*' to show his acknowledgement to S1's statement. It is of interest to see him chooses to code switch to Thai rather than saying 'I see' in English. His choice confirms his understanding to the expression and reflects that the word is normally used among them. In addition, it is in line with cogo's (2009) discussion that code switching can be strategically employed as an expression of participants' bilingual or multilingual competence. In this case, S2 elaborates on his multilingual repertoire, switching from English to a third language, Thai, a practice in which Cogo (2009) calls as normal and unmarked in the multilingual/cultural setting which can signal solidarity and membership into the same community.

Example 34 (meeting 1)

```
1     S1:    <L1th> ar {well} </L1th> next next agenda <L1th> na {okay}          I
2            </L1th> three point one? (.) financial performance? (.)
3            <L1th> aow present pai <toS2> S2 (.) na ka {Well let's present it S2 (.)
4            please} (.) </L1th> okay </toS2>
5     S2:    ok er well good afternoon you all? er I will present (.) the er:          R
6            financial performance? (.)
```

Using code switching to build relations and signal solidarity is also clearly exemplified in example 34. In line 1, S1 uses few Thai particles as usual to address the message to all participants but what is striking interesting is line 3 to which she explicitly code switches to Thai when speaking to S2 in particular. The phrase '*ao present pai S2 na ka*' consists of only one English word. As mentioned earlier, Jo does not speak Thai. He knows only few common words. However, S1's

speech does not seem to disrupt the flow of the conversation at all. Jo can manage to respond promptly to S1's statement. It is very likely that he understands those Thai words as they are very common words. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that S1 turns to speaks to Jo specifically when addressing his name '*<to S2> S2 (.) na ka (.) okay </to S2>*' to which she ends the speech with English word '*okay*'. When considering this against Sacks et al.'s (1974) turn-taking model, it is plausible to explain that Jo knows when to begin the turn because he pays attention to S1' turn construction and projects the possible completion point (the turn constructional component). That is to say, in an unlikely case that he does not know those Thai words, he still has a hint from the words 'present' coupled with how S1 turns to talk to him personally and the ending word 'okay'. In this way, he can predict the likely point where S1 completes her turn and begins the new turn at the appropriate time. The above example manifests that S1 exploits code switching as "solidarity markers" (Wolfartsberger and Vienna 2009), a tool to include S2 as a member in the office community to boost a unity and "encourage cooperation" (Cogo 2009).

Example 35 (meeting 1)

1	S4:	hello (.) <L1th> **waddee nong nong took kon ka** {hi everyone}</L1th>	
2	SS:	<L1th> **KAA waddee ka** {yes hello}</L1th>	
3	S1:	<L1th> **krob krob leaw chai <1> mai ka?** {is everybody altogether?}	*I*
4		</1> </L1th>	
5	S4:	<1> <L1th> **kor tod khun S2** @@@ {sorry S2} <L1th> </1>	*R*
6	S1:	S2 is HERE (.)	*Ra*
7	SS:	@@@	
8	S1:	on the left hand side (.) <2> ACTUALLY </2> (.) <3> actually </3>	*...Ra*
9		today he is SICK <L1th> **na** {well} </L1th> (.) he's SICK	
10		but he has to COME (.) to accommodate the the pta <4> xx </4>	
11	S4:	<2> hello S2 </2> <3> hi </3> <4> wow </4>	
12	SS:	@@@	
13	S1:	<L1th> **ai (.) mue keun ai tang keun mai dai non lei** {he was coughing	
14		all night long and could not get sleep} (.) **wan nee ootsa ma** {but he	
15		manages to come today} </L1th>	
16	S4:	<L1th> **pap neung na** {just a moment} </L1th>	

Example 35 is an extract from the second session of the meeting, the video conference with staff at Thailand office. S4 is the chair from the side of Thailand where she starts the interaction by greeting everyone in Thai '*waddee nong nong took kon ka*' (hi everyone). '*Waddee*' is an informal greeting word abbreviated from '*Sawasdee*', a formal way to say 'hello'. The word 'Nong' is used to call a person who is younger to which she doubles to include everyone. Thais have a high value of seniority. Younger people need to address the older ones as 'Pee'. However, it is not necessary for the older one to always address the youngers as 'Nong'. It is evident that S4 says '*waddee*' rather than '*sawasdee*' and addresses everyone as '*nong nong*' as a way to express intimacy and promote a friendly

working environment. Everyone in Singapore office responds her greeting in the same direction. '*Kaa waddee ka*' signals intimacy but in the meantime exhibits politeness to seniority, as 'ka' is the ending particle used by a woman to show politeness. By looking at line 1-3 that S4 starts the conversation in Thai and that the others also respond in Thai might suggest that S2 seems to be excluded from the conversation. But then, S4 addresses S2 specifically in line 5 'kor tod khun S2' (sorry S2). The way that she still uses Thai even when speaking to S2 clearly indicates that she knows that S2 understands some Thai. However, considering that she addresses him as 'Khun', a polite and formal way to address people, rather than 'Nong' shows that she sees him more as a guest in which she needs to say sorry to him personally for having him wait for her team. But again she does not forget to encourage a relaxing atmosphere by adding the laughs after her speech. S1 then switches to English in line 6 'S2 is here' to ensure that S2 is included in the conversation. Everyone in the room is still in a chillaxing mood in which they, including S2, laugh after hearing S4 and S1's statements. In line 8-10, S1 tells S4 about Jo's illness by using English to include Jo in the conversation. However, she code switches to Thai in line 13-14 when giving more details on Jo's symptom. This is perhaps because she speaks directly to S4, switching to their mother tongue can enhance understanding and ensure accurate information.

Example 36 (meeting 1)

```
16    S4:    <L1th> pap neung na {just a moment} </L1th>
S4 excuses herself and leaves the room for a few seconds
17    S1:    okay <L1th> tong ror tong ror chairman proa waa{we have to wait for
18           the chairman because} (.) proa wa agenda tee <5> neung tong open the
19           </5> meeting? {because she needs to open the meeting to begin agenda
20           one}</L1th>
21    S4:    <5> <L1th> ma ma ma ma {go go go go} <L1th> </5>                        T
22    S1:    <L1th> aoi ma leaw raw? {oh there you come right?} <L1th> (.) okay      I
23           <6> <L1th> ar ar ja {okay okay} </L1th> </6>
24    S4:    <6> open the meeting. </6>                                             R
25    S1:    <L1th> ar ja {okay} </L1th>                                           RR
26    S1:    <tos2> S2 this is the the new: new </tos2> <L1th> a rai wa {what is    I2
27           that bloody word} </L1th> (.) new new:
```

As the previous part of the conversation is Thai, S4 then resumes it in Thai saying 'pap neung na' (just a moment) in line 16 to excuses herself and leaves the room for a few seconds. It seems that S1 wants to break the ice so she tells everyone that they need to wait for the chairman to open the meeting. However, she mixes the two languages together in her speech obviously to maintain the relaxing mood. A precise translation of the sentence '*tong ror tong ror **chairman** proa waa proa wa **agenda** tee neung tong **open the meeting**'* is '*we have to have to wait for the chairman because because she needs to open the meeting to begin agenda one*'. What is of interest is that the structure of the sentence is

intentionally made ungrammatically correct. It is evident that S1 deliberately omits some Thai words before the phrase '*open the meeting*'. A plausible explanation could be linked with the values of a combination between English words and mother tongue's. It is believed that some Thais exploit this as a mean to superiorize themselves over others. Nevertheless some people use it the other way round as a joke. In this case, S1 exercises it as a way to induce humor and it is very likely that she forms the sentence incorrectly on purpose to make sure that everyone gets her intention right. This observation is affirmed in line 21-23 where S4 returns and both of them interact very casually. S4's speech in line 24 '*open the meeting*' proves that the purpose of S1's talks in line 17-19 is genuinely for invoking humor. Indeed, there is no actual formal speech from the chair to start the meeting. Rather, it seems that the real point of having to wait for the chair is to be assured that everyone is present before they start the discussion. These lines of talks seem to rule out Jo tacitly. From an interview, he admitted that he could barely understand when the conversation went mostly in Thai. However, he did not perceive this as a problem. He has been working among Thais for few years and was accustomed with their occasional code switches. The practice was not his concern as he knew that they would code switch to English when the matter was relevant to him. His view is echoed in line 26 when S1 code switches to English to talk about the issue relevant to him.

What we have learned so far is the analysis of the actual business interactions occurring in the meetings. It illustrated a range of pragmatics strategies used by the business professionals to enhance interactions and overcome the problems of understanding. In the next section, readers' understanding will be broaden by learning some insights from the participants which should then be able to link back to the finding obtained from meeting data.

6.4   The analysis of interview data

This section presents the exploration of the participants' perspectives of what makes their business meetings successful and how they feel about their use of English as a tool for international communication using excerpts from the interviews. The purpose is to find out how the participants perceived the use of ELF in a business context in general (e.g. what characteristics they regarded as important or unnecessary in authentic business interactions) and how they

perceived their own performance in particular (e.g. what they perceived as enhancing the successful communication).

The data is based on the semi-structured interviews and insights that emerged from brief talks with participants during meeting breaks. The information obtained supplements the preliminary findings of the meeting data analysis and provides deeper insights and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This will subsequently lead to the answers of the second research question: *What, from the participants' perspectives, contributes to successful communication in international meetings?* and the sub-question: *What is the participants' perspective on their use of English as a lingua franca in international communication?*

6.4.1   Multicultural competence and Intercultural accomodation

The first category involves the intercultural aspects. It reveals participants' attitudes towards their own working practices and those of foreigners, to identify whether there are significant differences that interfere with the success of the interaction. Excerpts 1 to 4 show that the participants were oriented to intercultural accommodation to handle interactions involving people from different national, organisational, and cultural backgrounds.

Excerpt 1

"So far, I have never experienced any difficulties working with my foreign colleagues. I have always been aware if my action might have offended them and vice versa. The key is to respect each other [T17_PTA]."

Excerpt 2

"My team and I had quite a hard time in the first few months. The problem was not only about the difference in accent, but also in some working patterns. While the Russian guy spoke very good English, the English pronunciation of the French seemed to be quite troublesome for us, and not to mention that they hold different working values from us. Anyway, the problems did not last long, as we were all very eager to work together harmoniously. So, after some trial and error, we got to know each other and kind of reached a compromise [T18_NEIL]."

It seems that the idea of 'respecting others' was echoed across the participants, particularly in the PTA Singaporean trading unit, which consisted of nearly 70

staff from seven or eight different countries. From their point of view, cultural differences did not pose a threat to the success of the interaction or operation. This appeared to contribute to their intercultural sensitivity in which they were conscious of their own actions while showing respect towards others. In the same spirit, a marketing manager of NEIL (excerpt 2) said that it was not easy to work with two new team members from Russia and France, as there had never been foreign staff in the department before. Therefore, in the first few months they had faced some language difficulties including arguments about the working patterns, as there seemed to be some differences between European working values and those of Thai people. However, those problematic issues dissolved quite quickly, since everyone was very keen to adapt to each other after realising that they had the same commitment.

This phenomenon was also covered in the MITO company, in which comprehension was claimed to be easily co-constructed with their Japanese colleagues due to their long-standing working relationship which, as they indicated, allowed them to familiarise themselves with the Japanese colleagues' accent. For this reason, the informants suggested that they had experienced different circumstances when they dealt with new foreign customers, even those from Japan. Difficulties were reported to generally arise in the very first encounters due to the unfamiliarity with the interlocutors' accent or some particular working practices which required "an effort to rapidly adjust to them."

Excerpt 3

"But, after a few meetings, those difficulties would, for the most part, dissolve, since we have become more familiar with their accent and characteristics. What we need to do is to quickly adapt to them [T12_MITO]."

As MITO is a Japanese company, its branch in Thailand comprises approximately 70 percent Thai staff and 30 percent Japanese. In this light, the Thai staff reported that there were some markedly contrasting working values between them.

Excerpt 4

"Thai staff in general are quite relaxed, which makes us negligent sometimes. But the Japanese staff are remarkably attentive and prudent in everything, so all of their operations are carried out under close scrutiny. They would monitor each step, check and re-check every piece of information before passing on to the customer" [T12_MITO].

However, the participants described that they were essentially influenced by such a working environment, concluding that it was beneficial for the company as mistakes were reportedly claimed to be considerably reduced.

Furthermore, it was striking that not only did the Thais state they had been influenced by the Japanese working values, but the Japanese employees themselves also reported changing some of their habits in compliance with the Thais. For example, they advised that in the early years the Japanese managers and executives had been seen to fully exploit their power and show anger explicitly by using harsh words or manners when privately supervising their subordinates or even in internal meetings. This is significant because it contrasts to the Thai cultural norms where the values of politeness, respect, and face-saving are quite sacred (e.g. Boode 2005; Cornrn 2004; Hart-Rawung and Li 2008). In light of this, although it was not certain whether there had been some type of report or complaint from the Thai staff, the incidences were observed to gradually reduce and have now completely disappeared.

Excerpt 5

"I heard that the Japanese management used to be quite aggressive, like hitting the table when they were angry. But I don't see such practices nowadays. They probably still do it among the Japanese, I'm not very sure, but not towards the Thai staff. Perhaps they have learned that we are not familiar with it [T13_MITO]."

As the MITO staff member suggested, the conduct was traditionally considered toxic for the Thai people, so it was highly plausible that the Japanese recognised this and made appropriate adjustment in a bid to assimilate into the Thai community.

Similarly, an Indonesian informant who worked for a Singaporean company accepted that the very first encounter with his Thai business partners left him confused about their issue of politeness, something which was quite in contrast to the Singaporean working culture. Nevertheless, having been assigned to present the product in Thailand, after many interactions he gained a comprehension of some important aspects of Thai people's working styles, which worked as guidance on how to cope with the diverse characteristics.

Excerpt 6

"In Singapore the competition and work ethic is very strong. Singaporeans like to perceive themselves as very efficient and straightforward. Normally, when they say they cannot, they cannot, or when they say I don't want to, they mean it. But for the Thais, they seem to be very polite. Sometimes when they don't want to do something, probably they will say 'maybe later', so it's very different. But if you understand the culture, you will accomplish it. It's quite confusing though in the first encounter. I think Thai people don't really like to say no. They just say, 'ok, ok, ok' but then nothing happens because it was actually a 'No'. So, it's a big difference. If you don't understand the real meaning, then sometimes you get confused. But, overall, it's not really different because we are Asians [Is1_Guest]."

It is of interest to note that although he found this particular practice on the part of Thai people markedly different and quite confusing in some contexts, he did not perceive it as wrong, nor did he demand an adjustment from them. Rather, in response to the issue, he advised that he tried to repeat or rephrase the statement to ensure a definite answer from the Thais. This method has likewise been adopted by the Indian participant who reported experiencing a similar issue of Thai colleagues being 'very polite' which resulted in their soft tone and sometimes unclear response:

Excerpt 7

"I think the only issue I have with the Thais is they are very polite. They like to speak in a very soft voice and sometimes their answers are unclear. But that is not a big problem. I just ask them to repeat it or speak louder [In1_PTA]."

In a similar vein, he neither expressed any negative feeling towards the Thais' habit nor did he criticise the colleagues from other countries.

6.4.2 Negotiating differnces through shared goals and understanding

Having shared goals and shared understanding are important qualities which help to facilitate communication amid cultural diversity. In excerpt 8, the Singaporean informant, who was based in PTA's Singapore office, noted that it was plausible that her colleagues might have faced some differences in social practices at the very beginning of their time in Singapore.

Excerpt 8

"They might at first experience some culture shock when they first moved to Singapore, but as time passed we have adapted to each other, so I don't find any difficulties in communicating with them. I just need to be more patient and listen to them carefully. Having worked here for few years has made me become used to different accents. … in terms of working style, I consider myself to be very straightforward, I always say things right to the point but I don't see it causes a problem in the meetings [S2_PTA]."

Nevertheless, she found that everyone had gradually learned to adapt to each other. Positively, this must be attributed to the fact that they are members of the same community where the purpose and direction of the company's (particularly in this trading unit) business serve as the common ground that they share. In this situation, the participants are all 'in the same boat' and are required to coordinate accordingly despite some differences in accent and working characteristics.

Excerpt 9

"From my experience, cultural difference contributed the least impact on our interactions. Since we always had explicit agendas for all the meetings, those invited then attended the meeting with information about the matters to be discussed. Also, we were quite familiar with one another's working styles from which we were able to predict one's reaction and adapt ourselves along the course of the interactions. For example, in our meeting the staff would not hold back indicating their problems of understanding or disagreement. So, when there was no question from the others it was most plausible to assume that mutual understanding had been achieved [T16_PTA]."

In a similar case, the Thai senior financial trader pointed out that the internal meetings would generally run quite smoothly since everyone was familiar with each topic being discussed and, therefore, possessed more or less shared knowledge about it. In addition, she noted that as they were colleagues, although coming from a variety of different countries, the staff had built a certain degree of relationship which provided them with some ideas on how to behave towards different people in different contexts, as well as the ability to understand their colleagues' working styles and the meaning behind them. Based on these insights, she stressed that there was no evidence the staff had faced communication difficulties due to the variety of cultural backgrounds.

An example can also be seen in excerpt 10 in which the participant was able to adapt to and embrace the practice which might not be regarded as usual in the environment she came from, in this case an abrupt interruption, without any bad feeling.

> Excerpt 10
>
> "The atmosphere in the international office is totally different from what I had experienced in the Thai. You need to understand that here when people suddenly interrupt you in the meeting, they do not mean to threaten your face but that you might have missed some important points or given incorrect information. You should not feel humiliated as it is a very common act which everyone adopts [T16_PTA]", said a senior staff member of PTA's Singaporean office.

This was an act of what she described as "the art of social exchange" where staff from a variety of countries were required to adapt to each other as "the basis of good teamwork".

In the meantime, while meeting five consisted of the CEO and other two executives from a Japanese company, the meeting went fairly casually in which the sense that neither hierarchy nor seniority was represented in the interaction. PTA staff seemed to openly signal disagreement, make competitive turns, and express their ideas freely with the Japanese top-tier executives regardless of the distinct hierarchical position, as illustrated in excerpt 11.

> Excerpt 11
>
> "I did not expect the top executives from a fairly big international company to be so humble. I and my team felt relaxed enough to have some arguments with them. It was a scene you would hardly ever or never see in the meetings among Thais, particularly internal meetings, where the CEO or the vice president attended. It would be regarded as very rude if you interrupted them abruptly [T9_PTA]."

This is interesting as the senior financial trader of the PTA Singaporean trading unit described that argument and interruption were very common in her office, especially if someone presented something wrongly, the others would suddenly indicate it. However, she hardly faced such scenarios at her former workplace, namely another PTA unit in Thailand, where seniority and hierarchy were relatively appreciated.

Excerpt 12

"From what I have seen, in the meetings among Thais I could tell that everyone preferred to stay in their safe zone. Apart from not wanting to threaten anyone's face, they also wanted to avoid the backlash. It was more like, 'well I had better not say anything so that next time they would take it easy on me if I made some mistakes'. It was like we were trying to maintain a peaceful and harmonious working environment [T16_PTA]".

In this respect, she further explained that the practice however varied from unit to unit, depending on the culture of that community. At her previous workplace, the authority to give comments or signal disagreement to the presenter or the speaker was usually handed in to the chair of the meeting. In rare cases, she pointed that if the others would like to argue or provide suggestion when they disagreed, they would exploit the ultimately polite expressions to maintain a pleasant and cooperative relationship such as '*please allow me to suggest that…*', '*would you mind if I say that …*', or '*I did not mean to interrupt but the information that I have received …*'.

6.4.3   Disagreement is unavoidable

This category emphasised that BELF interactions are goal oriented and therefore not always consensual, as manifested in a number of examples in meeting data analysis. As revealed in excerpts 13 and 14, the accuracy of the content discussed was recognised as significant and was treated with attentiveness. The participant was poised to confront colleagues with argument and disagreement and seek ways to override it.

Excerpt 13

"As you can see, today we invited two legal consultants from the Australian law firm, so we needed to reach agreement within the time limit. We could not avoid arguing with our boss because we were discussing an extremely sensitive issue. What we agreed today would affect our timetable. We would not have time for a revision or correction, so I wanted to ensure that we made the best decision [T8_PTA]."

If we take her utterances literally, it appeared that she introduced her interruptions – in most cases – explicitly on a structural level, but implicitly in their syntactic construction. Quite similar to example 23, while the interruptions were carried out quite abruptly, she resorted to the more implicit suggestions

such as 'then my personal view is that' or 'I would recommend that you', etc. (see example 26, to which she remarked:

Excerpt 14

"In such scenario, argument was something we really could not avoid but I would not make it sound offensive. You would not act like that to your boss, especially as this was not an internal meeting [T8_PTA]".

Considering this aspect, it seemed that Thai culture was still, in part, visible between the Thais. In other words, the fact that the international culture did not prevail in the corporations themselves but exclusively emerged in certain circumstances "by no means transforms these exchanges into cultural-neutral or culture-free interactions" (Ehrenreich 2009: 141).

6.4.4 Getting the tasks done through the shared business knowledge

Excerpts 15 to 18 reveal participants' perceptions towards the presence of translators in the meetings. Interestingly, translators were not perceived as necessary due to their insufficient knowledge of the business and specific vocabularies.

Excerpt 15

"This is the first time they brought the translator in. I'm not sure why. They probably wanted to facilitate some top executives, but as you can see, at the end of the day we were able to understand each other through English. It is not that I and my team are fluent speakers of English. But the thing is, we are engineers, they are engineers and we discussed engineering issues [T9_PTA]."

The Thai participant explained that their past meetings all went fairly smoothly without the use of the interpreter. However, he pointed out that it was possible that the Japanese partners were concerned about their English, which seemed to be limited, and as the discussion was quite sensitive they preferred to speak in Japanese to ensure mutual understanding.

In the contrast, the Thai engineering manager reported that he and his team members preferred to have a direct conversation with the Japanese rather than

via the interpreter. He said he recognised that both parties were not very fluent in English but it never provoked any problems considering their past meetings. Those encounters went successfully as they all shared the background information, professional knowledge and genre conventions in engineering. As he stated, it was these parts of knowledge that were crucial qualities and were required in the negotiation whereas English functioned as a subordinate element.

When asked about the performance of the interpreter, the Thai manager felt that the negotiation seemed to have been made "unnecessarily intricate" to the extent that he and his teams needed to explain some technical terms and issues to the interpreter that could have been simply understood by the Japanese.

> Excerpt 16
>
> "By doing this, the process doubled the time and there was no guarantee whether the messages were translated correctly. So, I decided to speak in English even when the interpreter asked me in Thai so that my answers could be delivered to the Japanese at the same time [T9_PTA]."

He further discussed the fact that under this shared context he believed that mutual understanding could be constructed despite the Japanese participants' uncertainty about their English skill. His assumption was affirmed when the Japanese acknowledged his answer and responded in English. Along the same lines, the Thai participant in meeting 7 likewise voiced his concern over the reliability of the translator, claiming that his previous encounters ran smoothly without the presence of the translator. He added that because the genre knowledge was shared it was not difficult for them to reach mutual understanding through the use of English as a common language. By contrast, he did not feel confident when the Japanese informed them that the interaction should be solely dependent on the interpreter, in which case he pointed out:

> Excerpt 17
>
> "Although the translator appeared to be very fluent in Japanese in which she could transmit my message fairly smoothly, I could not help to be sceptical since I do not speak Japanese. There is no way for me to find out whether the content has been mistranslated or the meaning has been distorted [T11_PTA]".

To resolve the issue, after the meeting proceeded for a while he adopted the same practice as with the Thai participants in meeting 5, that was, trying to

initiate the exchange in English. He explained that he did not want to prolong the lack of certainty. By doing this, he felt "more guaranteed that his interlocutor will be given the first-hand information," and that his entire message had been completely delivered with "no important parts being left out". By judging from the interlocutor's reaction, i.e. facial expression and some responses in English, he was certain that intelligibility had been achieved. In addition, for the benefit of first-hand information, he suggested that rather than communicating through the interpreter he has developed the idea of learning the Japanese language.

Excerpt 18

"As you can see that I tried to speak as much as I could in English to her as I felt more convinced that we would reach the same understanding. …I think it should not be very hard if I learn just some specific Japanese terms relating to the context use. Things should be easier to facilitate, since I am an engineer, so I know the context while the translator does not [T11_PTA]."

6.4.5   Ensuring clarity of the content

This category highlights that participants were committed to the clarity of content, which was perceived as a relevant source in achieving the business goals. In relation to the findings of the meeting data, as presented in example 7-9, participants confirmed that a picture, diagram, or chart, would come into immediate use when they found themselves falling short of linguistic resources. As was evident from many meetings, these pictures or diagrams were mostly prepared beforehand, very likely as a means to support the statements and enhance mutual understanding. For example, a participant in meeting three praised the diagram as an integral part in the negotiation of meaning, as he claimed:

Excerpt 19

"I have been working here for few years, but this is my first encounter with the foreign customers. I was quite nervous as my English is not very good, so I tried to prepare all necessary documents, diagrams, pictures, everything that would support my talks. … as you can see, I referred to these documents most of the time during the meeting. By doing this, I was a lot less concerned about my English and was quite convinced that the customers understood me [T6_PTA]."

In addition, on some other occasions the speakers would draw something spontaneously when the linguistic means failed to do its work. The group of engineers in meeting 5 opted to draw diagrams on the whiteboard to clarify the matter when spotting signs of perplexity on the part of Japanese partners.

> Excerpt 20
>
> "The issue we were dealing with today was fairly important. The Japanese customers were attempting to re-negotiate the deal we had agreed last time. However, their request to decrease the meter rate was quite difficult, both in theory and in practice, for us to follow. That's why we had to provide an elaborate explanation, to clarify as much detail as we could. While it was not easy to deliver every detail in English, drawing diagrams made our job easier [T10_PTA]," explained a sales engineer.

As evident, their primary purpose in these two particular examples here was to make the deal with their business clients. The moment in which their English resource was not adequate did not seem to pose a threat to the success of the negotiation as they managed to find another resource to get their work done.

Furthermore, the importance of the content's clarity was more acute when the negotiation involved a sensitive message, such as a figure or specific names. In such cases, participants would undergo the negotiation until they reached understanding, or in other words, until they were satisfied with the clarity of the content. For example, a group of sales engineers from PTA admitted that they did not understand everything when dealing with foreign partners, but they would let it pass if the overall picture could be constructed and the main idea had been captured. However, when it came to the figures, or some specific name, participants did not hesitate to indicate when there was an immediate problem of understanding or even signal disagreement abruptly at the expense of the steady flow of communication.

> Excerpt 21
>
> "Generally speaking, I would overlook some emergent minor non-understandings as far as I managed to reach the main idea of the issue. Anyhow, when it came to the information about figures, specific names, contract details, etc., we needed to be precise [T5_MITO]."

As they added, being optimistic that the partners would always easily understand the content might not be appropriate in the business negotiation scenario. This is

why endeavour was always displayed to provide clarity and demonstrate the accurate figures or a clear explanation of the issue concerning sensitive information even if there was no sign of an understanding problem:

Excerpt 22

"Some piece of information was of great importance to the point that we should not be too optimistic that the customers would simply achieve sufficient understanding with a short explanation. This is why we chose to repeat the same data many times or add more details even they did not ask for it [T7_MITO]."

6.4.6   Communicators in their own right

The idea of using English in their own right rather than being shaped and governed by the native speaker rules is quite prevalent among participants. For example, a Thai junior financial trader employee who had been working in Singapore for two years said that since English was not her mother tongue she then found it necessary to try to 'improve' it all the time. However, she clarified that the improving process here did not refer to the native-speaker norms as she did not try to 'imitate' them, either in terms of the pronunciation or the construction of the sentence. Rather, she has developed 'her own style' as she put:

Excerpt 23

"I think the more we try to imitate them, the more mistakes we will make. Just use it the way you want, like trial and error. English is not our mother tongue, no one is going to blame you if you make some mistakes [T17_PTA]."

The idea was also stressed by a Singaporean staff member who suggested that Singaporean people use English in their own style and 'speak from our mind' rather than worry if it is grammatically correct.

Excerpt 24

"*We just speak what we want to. I was not concerned about my English as I believe everyone understood what I presented* [S2_PTA]."

When asked if the perception was reinforced by the fact that there was no native speaker present in the interactions, most participants declined to agree.

Excerpt 25

"There were some occasions where I had contact with the native speakers. They seemed to understand that it was not my first language and did not expect me to be able to use it perfectly. As long as I could get my message across that was enough [T17_PTA]," said a Thai financial staff member.

On the conceptual level, the ambition of 'speaking like a native speaker' has been expressed by some informants. However, it did not come to the surface in practice as one junior PTA staff member stated,

Excerpt 26

"If you ask me frankly, I have to admit that I do wish to be able to speak like a native speaker, both in terms of pronunciation and the grammatical aspect. I have a feeling that this would make me look more professional and gain more credit when dealing with the foreign customers. But when I was in the actual situation, those feelings just disappeared. I think it was because I addressed all my intentions to the contents and the negotiation. I focused more on whether the customers understood my points which made me automatically became less concerned about my English [T7_PTA]."

A similar perception was likewise adopted by a more senior and experienced financial trader who had worked at PTA's Singapore branch for almost a decade. She still contradicted herself with her genuine desire and the reality. On the one hand, she tried to evade using the 'Singlish' which she described as the non-standard form of English and made huge efforts to speak 'standard English', namely native English. As she explained that this seemed to be an essential quality if ever she had a chance to transfer to an English speaking country in the future. What was of interest on the other hand was that she had achieved little success from her efforts and to her surprise, the failure never actually affected her daily communication in any way.

Excerpt 27

"I have been working in Singapore for eight years already. Although I have to use English everyday, I do not think I am a master in it. Well, as you can see, people here speak English quite differently because of their variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, at my office we have about sixty staff coming from six to seven different countries. Our English is 'not standard' and sometimes broken. The thing is, I prefer a more 'standard' English version of native speakers so I try to practice it by listening and

reading the BBC or CNN news on a regular basis. But ultimately, it does not seem to pay off in the actual interaction. I mean I find it almost impossible to sound like a native speaker and most importantly, this does not seem to matter as in the end I manage to get my message across to my colleagues with my local accent [T16_PTA]."

The ideal that a business professional equates to those who master (NS) English was also echoed by an Indonesian sales engineer who presented his product at PTA (in meeting 3). He explained that he was originally from Indonesia and while Bahasa was in fact his mother tongue, having been working in Singapore for over a decade required him to use English most of the time to the extent that he eventually regarded English as his first language. Although the native speaker English competence did not appear to play an active role in his actual interactions, he predicted that the NNS who spoke fluent English and sounded pretty much like the NS should impress the others and gain credentials in the international settings where the NS prevailed. Consequently, he gave the reason that Singaporean English or 'Singlish' was not really perceived as a standard version of English among Singaporeans themselves.

Excerpt 28

"It is not really business English. So, when you talk Singlish in an international meeting, I think they will not take you very seriously but when you talk very good English they will take you seriously. But it does not mean they are not smart because most of them are quite smart, it is just the way that they talk differently [Is1_Guest]."

In spite of this notion, he nonetheless pointed out that he did not actually apply the concept in his own case, as Singlish was typically used in his office whereas in the international meetings he might just have to adapt slightly by, for instance, avoiding the use of slang and some terms. He further explained that an attempt to use English like a native speaker would likely to be unsuccessful for someone who has never studied or lived in English-speaking countries. Yet, there was no NS in his office and most of his international encounters were with NNS from the Asian countries, in particular. It was, thus, not imperative to attain the NS English competence from his point of view.

Native speaker conformity was clearly not perceived as the relevant key to their communicative success. An Indian participant, who was observed to be an advanced speaker of English, also suggested that conformity was not

required in the setting. He noted that although English was not his mother tongue, he used it all the time to the point that it "came out naturally", so he found it impossible and unnecessary to adjust his English and imitate the native speaker:

Excerpt 29

"It's one's perception. I think, maybe if I'd lived in those English-speaking countries for a long time I may try to sound like them. But if you ask me if we need to, I don't think so as we use English differently, the same as I don't think I need to have an accent like the Thais or Chinese [In1_PTA]".

6.4.7   Professional knowledge over English proficiency

Professional and business knowledge was reported to play a greater role than fluency in English. In this respect, most participants explained that their daily operation did not rely on the English language, it was therefore groundless for the companies to set English proficiency as a requisite skill for them. Instead, they held a common perception towards the significance of professional knowledge over English proficiency. For example, a sales engineering manager who holds a Master's degree from the United States believed that he was accepted for the job because of his knowledge in engineering not in English. As he explained, his English skill was moderate, so he did not think it gave him an advantage when he was hired or received a promotion.

Excerpt 30

"I only use English when dealing with the foreign customers, so it does not play a significant role in my career. However, as a manager, many times the decisions in meetings rest upon me, it is then important that I have the ability to negotiate some hard deals in English. But, in the end, I have to say that the negotiation rather relies on the knowledge of engineering and English is just a means we use in exchanging that knowledge [T9_PTA]."

He also added that in general the foreign customers he dealt with were also engineers, so while English was used as a common language it still seemed as if they speak the same language, i.e. "the language of engineer". The importance of the knowledge in technical terms and specific vocabularies was underlined by many participants, particularly among the engineers.

Excerpt 31

"In our meeting, it does not require good English but a good understanding
of the issue and a sufficient knowledge in specific vocabularies [T4_PTA]."

This perception wasis surprisingly echoed by the participants who reported to
usinge English in their daily work. For example, participants whose office was
based in Singapore reported that although they required English for everyday
communication with foreign colleagues (which included the written
communication, e.g. emails, documents, reports), English did not
compriseestablish the core ofin their work:

Excerpt 32

"It is true that I work in Singapore where English is a common language for
everyone. But to be honest, I did not find it to be the prerequisite in my work.
I mean, I use English just to communicate with others because the core of my
work concerns other things [T17_PTA]."

She also added that when she used English in this international business setting,
she mainly focused on the interlocutors' understanding, to ensure that the
important parts of the content have been successfully delivered, rather than
being concerned about the language pattern or structure. Along the same lines, a
Singaporean who said English was her first language did not find her high level of
proficiency a privilege when it came to the marketing-related issues. As she
pointed out, everyone in the office used English, whether it is their first, second,
or foreign language, hence they would make an effort to understand each other.
Her English, therefore, did not place her in an advantageous position. It was
rather the knowledge in the field that mattered above all.

A good example is the president of the PTA Singaporean trading unit who has
around 70 staff from six or seven different countries under his supervision.
Among other things, he defended his ability to lead the unit, indicating that
he could handle the tough negotiations and effectively deal with all the
employees without having to master English:

Excerpt 33

"I had been studying in Thailand all my life and only had a chance to study
abroad for a Master's degree. So, my English is not perfect but that is not a
big deal. I mean, although I am not an advanced speaker of English, I could
handle fraught negotiations with foreign partners or chair the meeting, like

today, without difficulties because being a director requires some other important qualities, such as strong leadership and management skills plus the expertise in the field [T15_PTA]."

This chapter has introduced the detailed findings from the meeting data and interview data. They illustrated the pragmatic strategies used to enhance understanding in the ELF business group meetings and revealed characteristics and qualities perceived by participants as relevant to the success of the BELF interactions. Chapter 7 will provide a discussion of the findings, which will lead to the answers of the two research questions of the thesis.

Chapter 7: Discussion

What have been presented in the analysis chapter were a number of different instances of the negotiation of meaning sequences between ELF participants in the business meetings which outlined how they collaborated through a range of interactive strategies to handle non-understandings and achieve successful business communication. It also represented major findings from the interviewing data in support of the analysis from the actual interactions for a better understanding. In this chapter, the findings presented in previous chapter will be thoroughly discussed and summarized. The rationale of the study will be restated in the first part followed by the results discussion in relation to the research questions. Two research questions raised in Chapter 1 will be then answered.

7.1 Research rationale

The main purpose of this study is to illustrate the descriptive findings of the successful BELF communication in Asian context as a part of efforts to bridge the gaps between the growing number of BELF research in Europe and the localized recognition of its phenomenon in Asia. By exploring a number of authentic business meetings between Thai business professionals and their Asian partners/colleagues, the particular focus is set on the interactional/pragmatic strategies participants employed to achieve mutual understanding and subsequently reach their business goals. In addition, semi-structure interviews with the participants are also drawn on to build a more depth understanding on participants' perspectives of the use of ELF in their professions in general and towards the characteristics that contribute to the successful interactions in particular. Subsequently, the findings of this study would be beneficial for a better understanding and an important step for a new perspective regarding the use of BELF in the Asian region.

Aside from the reason stated above, this research also stemmed from the pure curiosity over the strong concerns raised by Thai government and educational sectors throughout the half decade that Thai people should (or even have to) level up their English proficiency in order to survive the ASEAN economic society. The suspicion was further strengthened by a number of media coverages which widely hailed English nearly as the driving force in this upcoming reshaped economy. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate the actual situations where Thai business

professionals engage in the business interactions by using English as a lingua franca in. In this way, we can see how these Thai business elites achieve successful communication when dealing with people who do not speak Thai and come from different culture. The results can give a rational verdict whether the (native) English competence plays a key role or poses a threat to the success of the international interactions; or the other way round English is just a resource or a tool that they use to achieve their business goals. The choice of the settings, namely three Thai international corporations, came to the forefront because of the intensive connection the researcher have with each companies' contacts coupled with the fact that two of these companies are engaging in international trading and investments with the countries in Asian region in particular. Subsequently, the group business meetings with their business partners or prospective customers have been carried out on a regular basis. It is however noteworthy that the majority of Thai participants in the data use spoken mother tongue in their daily operations, and English has exclusively come to their disposal when having to deal with their foreign colleagues or with business people from other countries which were mostly on the occasions of business visits.

7.2   The task and goal-oriented interactions: Discussion on BELF characteristics

Recalling the meetings characteristics of the data, while not all interactions fall into the formal type of business meetings, e.g. having agenda setting, participants introduction or pre-allocated speakers, the majority of which are subject to an "episode ordering" (Cuff ad Sharrock 1985) through which the interactions have been organized in a three-phase structure: opening section, central development section and closing section (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 65). Yet, the degree of this structural formality varies from meeting to meeting, it is however less likely to have an influence on the core contents of the interactions. In other words, considering the instances presented in the analysis, it is doubtless argued that ELF participants contributed greatly in the joint negotiation of meaning to achieve their specific business goal. Such quality points in the same direction that their speech events are subject to specific objectives which make them differ markedly from casual talks or informal interactions.

With regard these overt business goals, the meetings observed in this study represent three main distinct types of meetings proposed by Holmes and Stubbe

(2003), namely planning or prospective/forward-oriented meetings, reporting or retrospective/backward-oriented meetings, and task-oriented or problem-solving/present-oriented meetings (p.63). In most meetings, the purposes have been stated explicitly in the introductory section while in some others the focus has come to the surface during the central development section. Nevertheless, it was obvious that all interactants hold the clear understanding to the objectives and the contents discussed in the interactions which were reflected in their capabilities to effectively engage in the negotiation. These shared frame and knowledge have borne out to facilitate the communicative flow and had important implications for the developing of mutual intelligibility. To achieve the successful BELF communication, it consists of various different factors e.g. cooperative practice, knowledge in business or the "BELF competence" which demands the genre knowledge, lexis or vocabulary of specific field of expertise, the ability to understand a range of different accents as well as the clarity, accuracy but yet conciseness in self-expression and presentation of business content (Charles 2008; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013). The details are discussed in the following sections.

7.2.1   Be adaptive and collaborative

While BELF interactions involve a variety of language patterns, forms or pronunciation due to the diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the participants, it appears that these challenges have been strategically coped with through collaborative work and accommodation strategy. Unlike the native speakers interactions where participants' utterances are assumed to be simply understood by everyone, BELF participants cannot take this for granted and require the constant process of negotiation of the meaning (Wolfartsberger 2009: 209). When referring to Kankaanranta and Planken's (2010) remarks that "BELF can be characterized as a simplified, hybridized, and highly dynamic communication code" (p. 380), we would see that participants in the study have been witnessed to be skilfully adaptive in which their discourse and behaviour were highly dynamic and responsive to the particular circumstances. In terms of the discourse, since communication is a joint work where the speaker and listener are demanded to work collaboratively (Vandergriff 2006), responsibilities of understanding therefore did not lie solely on the listener but on both sides to anticipate the prospect understanding problems and seek ways to handle (Ren 2016). For these reasons, speakers in the observed meetings were noticed to be

markedly attentive to the formulation of their own utterances and at the same time to the interlocutors' reactions in order to monitor whether comprehension has been met. They were alerted to adapt their linguistic features to the interlocutors for the sake of successful interaction, e.g. by reformulating the speech to increase clarity. Such ability seems to be an outcome of the 'inherent variability' (Firth 2009: 162) of ELF which increases the repertoire of languages that speakers depend on and, as a result, enable them to be able to "regularly modify their language in different settings in order to accommodate to their interlocutors and to facilitate intelligibility" (Seidlhofer 2011: 81).

7.2.1.1   Multicultural competence

An interesting point, which it is worthwhile to mention, is that the participants' variety of cultural backgrounds were never reported to hinder comprehension, nor did they provoke a communication breakdown in the present study. This is not to suggest that cultural differences were not noted by participants. Although the participants shared a common ground with some aspects of business values (doing profitable business) and relied on BELF for shared purposes (Charles 2007), their interactions were by no means 'cultureless' (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 404). In fact, individuals who engaged in such diverse cultural environments seemed to, either wittingly or unwittingly, carry their own norms, values, culture, hybridity, or variation with them, which in turn reflected the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the speakers (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010). Some differences in working or linguistic patterns were spotted but were, however, strategically resolved by the contributions of the participants mainly to the dynamics of culture and intercultural sensitivity i.e. having the knowledge and respect for other cultures, accents, or discoursal patterns (Kankaanranta 2012; Pullin 2015).

Against this backdrop, any cultural differences and similarities emerging in these contexts were then seen as changeable and negotiable (Baker 2015:21). 'Respecting each other' was echoed by a number of participants as an essential manner in their encounters whereby the ability and willingness to accommodate to others presented a key enabler. For example, when experiencing difficulties in understanding colleagues' or partners' accents, participants suggested that they put efforts into accommodating to the accents they at first were not familiar with and drew on different strategies in an attempt to understand rather than blame the speakers or ask them to adjust to the listener (see excerpts 2-3). Similarly, the participants did not treat the practices which were found to be different from

their own as peculiar; for instance, the Japanese participants' great attentiveness to operational process and detail. In contrast, they embraced and adopted it, seeing it as beneficial to the company as a whole. Overall, it seems that the impact of cultural difference was very unlikely to be significant in the study. No sense of superiority has been introduced from either side of the participants, namely the Thais and foreigners. What was remarkable was that such contrasting features – the indirectness and the straightforwardness – were recognised and appeared to have been tackled by the Thai participants with ease. For example, while the straightforwardness has been drawing comparisons with Thais' being 'too polite' by some foreign participants, at the very least it was not reported to be a major concern. Unlike Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2005) study of the Finnish and Swedish corporate mergers which reveals some negative impacts on the communication due to the perception of one's own communicative practice to be effective and the other's less so, such claim has never been raised by the participants in the present study. To put it simply, while the foreign respondents viewed Thais as very polite and sometimes indirect and described themselves as more direct, they did not try to justify which characteristic was better. Instead, they focused on how to deal with such arisen distinction if ever it caused a confusion to the understanding.

7.2.2   Making use of shared business knowledge and expertise

The shared knowledge and expertise also stood out from my data as crucial elements to consolidate the progress of the interactions despite some language difficulties which emerged during the meetings. The first two remarkable instances could be seen in meetings five and seven where the two parties, Thais and Japanese, achieved mutual understanding on their own through their shared experiences and expertise despite the presence of the translator. Furthermore, these cases outlined that a third party, namely an interpreter, was unlikely to bring satisfactory results to the communication since they were not members of these communities (engineers and sales engineers) and were, therefore, not subject to the same professional expertise as those two parties. In both cases, it was the action of the Japanese partners who brought the translators into the meetings. In these two particular cases, it was quite obvious that the Japanese participants were concerned about potential communication problems, which might have been caused by, as they claimed, 'their limited English.' Indeed, the presence of the translators gave Thai participants a surprise, as they explained that their past meetings all went fairly smoothly without the help of an

interpreter. It was notably apparent afterwards that the good command of both the languages, namely Thai and Japanese, that the translator possessed was not adequate to bring about successful communication between both parties. As Xiaofei (2009) observed from her study, people with a high proficiency in general English may experience some difficulties in an in-depth business negotiation or profession-specific conversation.

In meeting five, it was noticeable that the communication through the translator was not going as smoothly as expected. Difficulties appeared to be caused by the translator's insufficient knowledge of engineering terminology, which required her to switch back and forth to ask for more clarification from the Thais (see excerpts 15-16). When these difficulties occurred a few times, the Thai participants then decided to switch to English in order to speak directly with the Japanese (see excerpts 16-18). This was observed by Ehrenreich (2010), who cautioned that working via an interpreter who is not sufficiently familiar with the subject might not facilitate the communication as expected. The Thai participants suggested that they tried to resolve the issues by speaking only in English even when answering the translator's question which was addressed in Thai. They advised that they successfully put their messages across and this was apparent from the Japanese participants' explicit acknowledgement, as they then switched back to English. At this stage, the conversation was reported to resume mostly in English and went fairly smoothly, primarily based on their shared specific knowledge and the employment of various interactive pragmatics.

These two salient cases proved that the shared topic and project background knowledge as well as the shared expertise and genre conventions have facilitated the communication despite the limited resources of English which were claimed by the Japanese. It was clear that English did not constitute the core part of these interactions, and the robust languages skills of the translators did not enhance the successful communication as was expected. This concurs with Ehrenreich (2010) who argued that language skills without the necessary professional profile are not sufficient to be successful in business; by contrast, BELF users can negotiate the meaning with interlocutors who have limited English on account of their shared managerial and technical knowledge.

The merits of professional expertise alongside business knowledge is prominent in a number of examples where participants made use of their shared business knowledge and expertise to enhance the communication. For instance, in word-search situations, where the speaker was seen to experience some difficulties in

his/her utterance, immediate help would generally be offered by the speaker's colleague(s). Their abilities to supply the correct missing piece of information clearly suggested that they possessed a sufficient degree of understanding and common knowledge of the context. This should not be uncommon, as being insiders has allowed them to access the same source of information which, as a consequence, yielded them common insights into almost all aspects of the matter discussed. There were, nevertheless, some occasions where such problematic moments were first reacted to and resolved by the outsider. This was credited to not only their specific expertise, but also their considerable contribution to the interaction.

Similar scenarios also emerged in the form of pre-emptive completions where the other participants overlapped the current speaker in a bid to complete the turn. In these cases, as discussed, the participants were seen to be engaging very actively and effectively in their negotiations of meaning. Their common knowledge proved to be remarkably helpful in numerous cases. For example, BELF participants drew on their shared expertise to support the current speaker's statement by pre-empting the turn completion or to provide the word assistance, including some technical terms which seemed to be inconceivable by the outsiders. In some situations, where the non-understandings arose due to a lack of clear explanation, instead of explicitly requesting an elaborate clarification, the participants exhibited their considerable contribution to the joint negotiation work by submitting a hypothetical meaning to the interlocutors. In addition, participants also took advantage of their shared frame and knowledge to help their colleagues by offering words, affirming or rectifying statements, or providing more clarification to the other party, namely business partners or customers.

7.2.3   Making statements clear, precise and succinct

As presented in the analysis, the negotiation of meaning can vary from short and simple to remarkably long and complex sequences depending on the scale of the emerging non-understanding and how important the issue discussed was to the participants. Consequently, while we have seen participants' involvement in all extracts analysed, their attention was notably multiplied in some particular negotiations.

A wealth of instances suggests that clarity and preciseness prevail in the international business interactions analysed. Given the high involvement

strategies that the participants exploited to clarify a statement or elicit the most accurate information, it was obvious that clarity and accuracy of the content surely outweighed the linguistic correctness (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Participants were never entirely dependent on a single meaning as far as the correctness or preciseness of the statement was concerned. An attempt was always made to narrow down the possibilities of confusion or any understanding problems to ensure mutual intelligibility, and this included the employment of the non-linguistic means. For example, a picture, diagram, or chart would come into immediate use when speakers seemed to fall short of their linguistic resources. As was evident from many meetings (examples 7-9), these pictures or diagrams were mostly prepared beforehand, very likely as a means to support statements and enhance mutual understanding. In addition, on some other occasions the speakers would draw something spontaneously when the linguistic means failed to do its work. Hence, in a situation where the speaker provided a description of something but a problem of understanding on the part of interlocutors still existed, the speaker then resorted to the alternative resource, i.e. by drawing a picture, diagram, or a chart on paper or on the whiteboard, to clarify the matter rather than solely relying on the linguistic means (see excerpts 19-20).

The practice proved that participants contributed greatly to the 'what', namely the content, instead of focusing on 'how' to transmit it – concentration on content over form (Cogo 2012). It is of interest to mention that this group of business professionals were not language-focused users. Their perceptions were therefore not shaped by linguistic issues but were determined by context/task-specific aspects, which was a core of their particular relevance systems (Ehrenreich 2010). Their primary purpose in these particular examples was to achieve the deal with their business clients. The moment in which their English resource was not adequate did not seem to pose a threat to the success of the negotiation, as they managed to find another resource to complete their work.

Whilst there were many aspects of the interactions in each meeting, mostly grammatical mistakes, where the participants adopted the 'let it pass' (Firth 1996) strategy, such a scenario rarely appeared in matters related to their company's interest. For example, when an issue involved the terms and conditions of the deal, or content which might affect the business goals or strategic plans, the participants would make much more effort and contribute very actively to the negotiation of the meaning for the benefit of clarity and accuracy. A combination of different strategies was exploited in the negotiation

procedures, which subsequently resulted in "high involvement sequences" (Pitzl 2013: 128). It is noteworthy that while time is regarded as a precious commodity in business meetings, participants were ready to sacrifice it until they reached an understanding. For example, when discussing the financial figures, the participants did not hesitate to indicate an immediate understanding problem or even signal disagreement abruptly at the expense of the steady flow of communication. Endeavour was always displayed to elicit the accurate figures or a clear explanation of the issue concerning sensitive information by, for example, repeating the same utterance multiple times or providing further clarification, even when there was no sign of an understanding problem.

7.2.3.1   Competitive overlaps

The significance of clarity was also reflected in the participants' use of simultaneous speech, which was employed on a regular basis in the meeting data. What was remarkably noticeable in the study was that the BELF participants appeared to stand on an equal footing, regardless of whether they were the hosts or guests, supervisors or subordinates, seniors or juniors. In all roles, they demonstrated efforts in using various interactive strategies to reach their objectives. This included the employment of competitive overlapping speech which, in theory, risks face-threatening the hearers (see Brown and Levinson, 1987) and is particularly counter to Thai social traits, which commonly value conflict-avoidance and face-saving acts (Sriussadaporn 2006; Hart-Rawung and Li 2008). The Thai participants admitted that such competitive interruptions had scarcely, or even never, been carried out by subordinates, especially the younger members of the meetings among Thais. This can be attributed to their attempts to remain in their safe zone and to not provoke unnecessary hostility (see excerpt 12). The situation was different in the international encounters whereby competitive overlaps occurred very frequently. An implicit example was seen in an internal meeting of the PTA Singaporean financial unit (meeting 1) where interruptions were triggered several times by Thai subordinates towards their Thai senior supervisor. It was, nevertheless, obvious that they were very close, and the tone of the meeting was very casual. In addition, the degree of the interruptions themselves was fairly slight. None of the interruptions signalled a strong sense of disagreement, nor did it exhibit competitiveness. An expression like "but I don't think it is really like that" (example 22) gave an impression that the speaker intended to soften the tone of her disagreement.

Most meetings in this study were conducted on the occasions of business visits in which the foreign business partners, in most cases, had flown in from abroad to attend these particular events. Hence, contrary to the internal meetings which allowed a more flexible time frame, these external meetings seemed to compel participants to achieve their business goals and deals within the time limit. It is, therefore, not surprising to see that preciseness predominated over the cultural norms, and straightforward exchanges were more favourable in these particular contexts. For example, the Singaporean sales engineer who was presenting his product was abruptly cut short in the middle of his turn by the Thai engineer manager in an attempt to halt the speaker and return to the topic that had been discussed earlier, but which had not yet delivered a sufficient degree of clarification (example 22). This could be attributed to the fact that as a buyer it was a necessity to ensure that the product met the company's requirements. It was therefore not uncommon for the speaker to feel the urge to interrupt immediately for the benefit of preciseness.

The property of ELF interaction itself was also reported to encourage participants' decisions. Participants were aiming to deliver or elicit information of the utmost accuracy for the best interest of the companies. Therefore, expressing their attitude explicitly or making interruptions blatantly were perceived as part of their responsibilities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the blatant interventions for competitive purposes were mostly visible during the turn exchanges between the Thais and foreigners. The interruptions among Thais themselves were rather implicit, whereas the rare cases of those indicated openly were indicated by the supervisors. The exceptional case was represented in example 27, which concerned the discussion about legal documents, a 'fragile activity' in which the utmost degree of clarity and shared understanding is required (Pitzl 2013: 98). The competition for the floor between the Thai supervisor and her assistant was markedly salient in the meeting. In this respect, the assistant revealed afterwards that the time constraints were indeed a stimulation behind her action (excerpt 13).

Furthermore, as Wolfartsberger (2010) noted, the drive behind the use of simultaneous speech in ELF interactions might vary according to speakers' mother tongues and cultural backgrounds (p.177). In the light of these considerations, while participants were led into an unavoidable argument or dispute due to the unique nature of ELF business meetings, each party was still committed to, and joined forces on, the ongoing interactions to enable mutual

understanding. Although parties tended to be shaped by some aspects of their cultural values, which resulted in their strategic behaviours, they were prepared to negotiate. In other words, they proved to be effective speakers of BELF "who exploit their linguistic and cultural resources, in using communication strategies to accommodate and adapt to their interlocutors and negotiate meaning and understanding" (Pullin 2015: 34). What is noticeable here, as Seidlhofer (2011) stated, was "the process of language dynamics" to which the participants adapted and altered their language "to suit the changed circumstances of their use" (p. 88).

7.2.4   Code-switching

Code switching has been demonstrated by a wealth number of studies as a common phenomenon in international interactions where participants draw on to serve different supportive purposes. As it presented in this study, while English was the main language, items from other languages were not absent. Code switching occurred occasionally in each meeting and none of which signalled the speakers' linguistic deficiency. Rather participants illustrated their "bilingual or multilingual competence to draw on their multifaceted linguistic repertoire" (Cogo 2009: 263). Participants were seen to exploit this dynamic language choice to enhance their communication in different situations. The most apparent function seemed to lie in word-searching situations where participants code switch to ask for help from the others which proved to receive effective collaboration from other interlocutors who immediately offer help and suggestions. It is also interesting to note that the question posed in Thai ('a rai wa' in example 29) consisted of a swear word, which instead of expressing impoliteness, indeed enhanced the existing casual and intimate atmosphere of the internal meeting. However as explained earlier, the choice of using this particular word was based on the fact that the speaker is the senior supervisor whereas the participants in the meeting are her subordinates whom she has close relationship with. In addition, participants also used the code switching to create common ground, opting for the simple words known by the Singaporean colleague (e.g. example 29-31, 34). It manifested their attempts to boost a unity and encourage cooperation by using code switching as "solidarity markers" (Wolfartsberger and Vienna 2009). The strategy was emphasized by the Singaporean participant's use of Thai expression which was presumably frequently used in the community (example 33). It is therefore an act of the BELF user exploiting his multilingual repertoire, something Cogo (2009) called as normal and unmarked in the

multilingual/cultural setting which can signal solidarity and membership into the same community.

7.2.5   Making Use of English as a tool

It is important to remember that the ELF speakers in the present study are business professionals who conduct their work through the use of a common language, English. Therefore, they do not necessarily see themselves as 'learners' of the language but rather as 'users'. What was observed from the interactions analysed suggested that BELF participants tend to prioritise content and effective communication over linguistic correctness within the NS normative model. In addition, the interviews revealed a much more concrete result that the perception of using English as a tool was indeed prominent among the participants in this business community. In other words, their use of English, as they indicated, was not shaped by native English, nor did they make attempts to imitate this. Rather, what has emerged was their method of "making full use of their multilingual resources to create their own preferred forms" (Jenkins 2011: 283–284). For example, a Thai junior financial trader staff who had been working in Singapore for two years said that since English was not her mother tongue she found it necessary to try to 'improve' it all the time. However, she clarified that the improvement method here did not refer to the native-speaker norms as she did not try to 'imitate' them, either in terms of the pronunciation or the construction of the sentence. Rather, she noted that the more she tried the more mistakes she seemed to make, so she had developed 'her own style' (excerpt 23). This perspective seems to relate to Widdowson's (2015) argument that non-conformity is in fact a source of effective communication, which allows users to fully exploit their linguistic resources in creative ways to serve multiple contexts of use. This was also stressed by a Singaporean employee who suggested that Singaporean people use English in their own style and 'speak from our mind' rather than worry whether it is grammatically correct. She also added that she was not concerned about her English as it was quite apparent that the others understood her (excerpt 24).

This idea corresponds to Seidlhofer's (2011) observation that ELF interaction does not necessarily focus attention on "what is proper English in reference to standard or native-speaker norms, but what is appropriate English for new and different communicative and communal purposes" (p.88). On the conceptual level, the ambition for 'speaking like a native speaker' has been expressed by some

informants, but it however did not come to the surface in practice as they tended to focus more on the content and the negotiation, which made them less concerned with linguistic issues. A similar perception was likewise adopted by a more senior and experienced financial trader who had worked at the PTA Singapore branch for almost a decade and still contradicted herself with her genuine desire and the reality. On the one hand, she tried to evade the use of 'Singlish', which she described as a non-standard form of English and made a huge effort to resort to 'standard English', namely native English. She explained that this seemed to be an essential quality if ever she had a chance to transfer to an English-speaking country in the future. What was of interest, on the other hand was that she had achieved little success from her efforts and, to her surprise, the failure had never actually affected her daily communications in any respect. The point was strengthened by the Singaporean informant who noted that although in certain contexts 'Singlish' was not really perceived as a standard version of English among Singaporeans themselves, this did not imply that those who used it were not smart, because most of them were very intelligent business elites (excerpt 28).

This enhances the conceptualisation of ELF research in which speakers seek ways to communicate successfully and prioritise their attention toward 'getting the message across' rather than on trying to comply with traditional notions of 'standard English grammar' (Cogo and Dewey 2012) or the norms of other varieties of English (Widdowson 2015). Native speaker conformity was clearly not perceived as the relevant key to their communicative success. An Indian participant who was observed to be an advanced speaker of English also suggested that conformity was not required in the setting. He noted that although English was not his mother tongue, he used it all the time to the point that it "came out naturally", so he found it impossible and unnecessary to adjust his English and imitate the native speaker (excerpt 29).

7.2.5.1   Professional knowledge over (native) English competence

When referring back to some discussions about the significance of English in the world's today international business in chapter 1, there are many discrepancies emerge from my data. That is to say, while the mastery of English is overtly highlighted as a key competitive advantage for international corporations (e.g. Björkman and Piekkari 2009; Piekkari et al. 2014) and even the key for the improved job opportunities (McCormick 2013), English does not constitute the very prime criteria in the case companies (it is noteworthy that one of them is one

of the largest international companies in Thailand). None of the participants claimed that English play the key role in their career advancement which is in a huge contrast to the situations of many big companies across different countries which promote English proficiency as relative key in recruiting, or promotion in its management ranks (see e.g. Exec 2011; The English empire 2014; Chen 2015; Jarvis 2015). In this respect, most participants explained that their daily operation did not rely on the English language, it was therefore groundless for the companies to set English proficiency as a requisite skills for them. Instead, they held a common perception towards the significance of professional knowledge over English proficiency. For example, a sales engineering manager who holds a Master's degree from the States believes that he got accepted for the job because of his expertise in engineering not in English. As he explained that his English skill was moderate so he did not think it gave him an advantage when he got hired or received a promotion (excerpt 30).

Discrepancy also lines between the call for the mastery in English language which has recently sprung to the forefront for the business elites, particularly the top-tier executives in many parts of the world (see e.g. The English empire 2014; Chen 2015; Dou and Xin 2015; Jarvis 2015). There has been a claim that English competence is necessary for the business professionals in order to survive and stay competitive in the growing global marketplace and that low English competence can present a barrier to staff from participating training programs or to the senior management team to receive executive development courses that are often offered in English (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999a; Andersen and Rasmussen 2004). In my actual observation, most of the executives and the managers reported that they did not terribly good at English, yet, this did not seem to pose a threat to their career security or advancement. The good case in point is the president of PTA Singaporean trading unit where he has around 70 staff from 6-7 different countries under his supervision. Among other things, he defended his ability to lead the unit, indicating that he could handle the tough negotiations and effectively deal with all the employees without having to master in English but rather a" strong leadership and management skills plus the expertise in the field" (excerpt 33). In a similar vein, the branch manager of PTA Singaporean financial unit suggested that while she felt a little pressure when using English in some difficult negotiations, the knowledge in the context would always help her get through. Overall, she argued that her performance and leadership would not necessarily be poorer just because she was not terribly good at English (excerpt 32).

In all these respects, it is worth to mention that participants in my data were business professionals in different areas, namely, sales, marketing, finance, engineering and legal who used English as a common language in their interactions. Aside from the two native speakers of English in meeting 4, none of whom used English as their mother tongues. No concrete evidence suggested as a consequence that English constituted the very core of the joint enterprise; rather, in correspondent to Ehrenreich (2009), it was used as a resource alongside with other resources in their share repertoires to negotiate the meaning within the community.

7.2.6 Community of practice

With close scrutiny of the findings of this study, one could account for this marked phenomenon, i.e. the attainment of successful communication amid the cultural diversity, through the concept of 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998). It manifested that the participants in the business community in this study were bounded together by the framework's three core dimensions: (1) joint enterprise, (2) mutual engagement, and (3) shared repertoire, which were conducted under constant renegotiation among members (Wenger 1998: 2).

Since 'community of practice' can be described as a process of social learning, it was obvious, in this regard, that the members within this BELF community have constructed the shared idea of what mattered to them, what was appropriate, and what was not in their contexts, which were clearly the agreed product of internal negotiations. As stated earlier, mutual engagement is established among business professionals through multiple forms of encounters, locally and internationally, with colleagues, partners, or clients. Having worked in the same community for a good period of time, the participants were allowed to develop a relationship of mutual engagement which enhanced their communication.

It is noteworthy, however, that mutual engagement does not necessarily emerge specifically from interaction, as previously addressed, but can indeed be generated by the participants' shared business knowledge (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2018). Having shared business knowledge means participants know and understand the goal of the business and discussion. This also led to interpersonal relationship skills, which were accompanied by their flexibility, respect, and politeness. This seems to contribute to the participants' intercultural sensitivity and their abilities to accommodate to colleagues and partners who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which proved to

strengthen communication. Working in the same company allowed staff to build a certain degree of relationship, which provided them with ideas of how to behave towards different people in different contexts, as well as the ability to understand their colleagues' working styles and the meaning behind them. For example, at the PTA international office it was known among staff that when any problems of understanding arose during discussions participants would not hold back but would raise questions or make interruptions straight away. This allowed the speaker to assume that understanding had been constructed when no one asked a question. As noted by one informant, while this practice had not been exercised in her previous workplace, she learned to comply with the conduct of this international business community for mutual understanding (see excerpt 8, 9). This could be regarded as a self-organising system which members have developed over time and that can change over the course of their engagement (Wenger and Synder 2000). It resonates with Scallon et al.'s (2012) findings that stressed that no one is a member of only one culture, rather we have all gone through multiple discourse systems, which can possibly lead us to master some particular forms of face and discourse systems of the community in which we participate (p.161). In a similar vein, this quality also seemed to foster the communication skills of the Singaporean sales engineering representative who managed to understand the actual meaning of the Thais' indirect response, which had at first confused him, after having interacted with Thai customers for many years (excerpt 6). As a consequence, what emerged from this dynamic process of social learning were the new and creative approaches constructed by the members in response to different contexts in their BELF community.

This can be linked to the concept of joint enterprise, which relates directly to the roles and accountabilities of members in the community and subsequently serves as the ultimate benchmark for appropriateness (Ehrenreich 2018: 44). The concept is quite straightforward and can be applied to the business community studied, in which all the relevant parties' contributions were guided by their shared goals and purposes, which specifically involved business matters. At the micro level, the internal interactions under investigation represented members of the same community who shared the purpose and direction of the company in conducting business. Under this condition, participants were therefore all in the same position and were required to coordinate accordingly, despite some differences in accent and working characteristics. In the meantime, while they pursued their own business goals, the external interactions exhibited BELF users' common business knowledge and professional expertise, collaborative mindset,

as well as a 'win-win' mentality (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2018). Thus, the joint enterprise defined the participants' responsibilities and helped them to come to realise what mattered and what did not. They were, therefore, capable of complying with the norms and measures prevailing in the business community of practice.

In the study, it was apparent that the participants were content-oriented rather than language-oriented. They shared interests and concerns which related to business matters. Therefore, it was not surprising to observe that they contributed greatly to details of financial figures (in examples 3-5), or specific names (example 6, 18 or 19), as these pieces of information generally presented the key relevant indicators to their business direction and initiatives. The domain-specific nature of BELF also sheds new light on the communicative strategies that reflect not only a sense of cooperative work, but also speakers' choice of strategies which are socially governed. That is to say, as parts of an effort to elicit clarity, the use of interruption was a common practice in the business interactions studied. Participants did not avoid interrupting, at times abruptly, the speaker to signal disagreement or to change the topic of discussion. This emphasised the "primarily outcome-oriented interaction" (Wolfartsberger 2009) of BELF, where there is a strong need for disambiguity (Firth 2009) in which disagreement is necessarily brought out immediately, not at some point later where the topic might not be relevant (Grässel 1991).

By looking at what mattered to the participants in the case companies, one could argue that business matters were the centre of their community. In agreement with Ehrenreich's (2009) study, their particular relevance systems were task- and context-specific, whereas English played a subordinate role in the communities' shared repertoire in fulfilling the purpose of doing business. As business elites who were non-linguists, the importance of English proficiency was therefore recognised in a more relaxed pragmatic way (Ehrenreich 2009), or 'in their own style' which they saw as appropriate for their roles.

Overall, the concept has manifested in the development of members of a BELF community of practice, through their mutual engagement (gained from shared knowledge of business fundamentals and essences) and joint enterprise (benchmark for appropriateness to achieve the shared goal), from EFL learners with ENL norm-based concepts into competent BELF users of their respective shared repertoires.

7.3   Answers to the research questions

In this section two research questions raised in the first chapter will be answered by building on the profound analysis from chapter 6. The first question deals with the analysis of what actually happens in the meetings. It seeks to answer (a) how the participants ensure successful meetings through a variety of pragmatic strategies; and (b) how do they deal with the resources that they have in their negotiation of the meeting. The answer will be based on the profound analysis of the authentic group business interactions, i.e. the analyses of negotiation of meaning and the use of simultaneous speech.

The second question would deal with the participants' perspectives of (a) what makes their business meetings successful when they are dealing with people who do not speak the same language and come from different culture; and (b) how they feel about their use of English as a tool for international communication. These will be answered by primarily relying on the semi-structure interviews as well as some insights emerging from the meetings.

7.3.1   Question 1: How ELF participants work together through different pragmatic strategies to ensure the success of international business meetings?

Due to its goal-oriented nature of BELF as stated previously, it is obvious that when the participants conduct their business meetings they strive to accomplish their particular purposes, i.e. "to get the work done" (e.g. Charles 2008; Ehrenreich 2009, 2010; Kankaanranta et al. 2015). It is however essential to clarify that this 'work' in BELF is distinct from the typical ELF interactions to the extent that it particularly ties with the 'B' or the 'business'. To put it bluntly, while the objective of the casual ELF interaction might vary from encounter to encounter, the BELF users exclusively aim at the concerns and goals of business, i.e. to enhance the company's mission, vision and values, as well as boosting interpersonal engagement with colleagues (Kankaanranta et al. 2015). In this respect, to reach their business goals, the participants in the observed meetings have skillfully drawn on various types of pragmatic strategies in their negotiation of meaning process which, as a whole, went rather successfully.

7.3.1.1 Question 1A: What pragmatic strategies are used in the business meetings?

What we have witnessed from the profound analysis of the authentic meeting interactions was the collaborative work between the BELF speakers and listeners in their pursuit of successful communication. Because "achieving shared understanding is a joint, dynamic, and interactive process that participants continuously engage in and work towards" (Cogo and Pitzl 2016: 339), a range of different pragmatic strategies then were drawn on by both the recipients—to indicate understanding problems once it arose—and by the speakers—to prevent potential non-understanding or to solve the problems. This accounts for the fact that when there was a sign of understanding problems in the course of the interactions, participants were not hesitant to undergo the renegotiation process, e.g. to modify the speech until the understanding has been achieved. Although the participants have manifested their efforts and engagement in all negotiations of meaning presented in the study, the degree of involvement varied according to the significance of the matters discussed. In other words, some negotiations of meaning were brought to the end within extremely short and straightforward sequences, e.g. via a single indicating procedure and a response. It was fairly indicative that the non-understandings in these cases in point were only on a small scale and the issues were less likely to be perceived as very important by the participants. The basic indications then became the method of choice for BELF speakers to clear up the problems; for instance, a 'repetition' of the crucial words, a 'minimal query' such as 'uh?', 'really?', etc., or a 'slight reformulation' of the problematic statement to which they were paired with the interrogation intonation to function as a comprehension check. In these cases, the response could be as simple as an affirmative token, such as 'mm' or 'yes'. It is significant nonetheless to note that participants do not necessarily indicate all of the emerging ambiguous words in order to achieve successful interaction (see e.g. Firth 1996; Pitzl 2010). The interlocutors will decide whether the ambiguity is consequential for the progressivity of the interaction, but among other things, the decision also seems to lie on the "activity-type and face considerations" (Pitzl 2010: 36). For example, the 'let it pass' strategy (Firth 1996) has occasionally been adopted in each meeting of the present study when the ambiguity, in most cases concerning the grammatical errors, did not lead to complete unintelligibility or it not at all hindered comprehension, the listeners then might find it unnecessary to provoke the disruption of the communicative flow. Also, this could prevent the undesired face-threatening act that might have occurred from

the indication. On the flip side, for the matters where clarity and accuracy of the information was top priority, such as those concerning procedural description, specific name, number, etc. , the ambiguity, vague and unclear messages could potentially leave a significant impact on the ongoing and future business plans or deals to which the participants felt the urge to negotiate those problems immediately.

These negotiation sequences could be stretched remarkably long, featuring multiple indicators and responses before the understanding has been achieved. In such events, participants would contribute greatly to the joint negotiation work which usually involved the employment of various strategies to ensure that the listeners achieve deep enough understanding. The strategies could range from, for instance, 'self-initiated negotiation' as a means to prevent misunderstanding, the 'hypothesis submission', the 'request for more elaborate clarification' to the use of 'non-linguistic means'. For example, we could see the coordination between the two colleagues who opted to repeat and re-elaborate each other statements in an attempt to ensure that the utmost degree of understanding has been obtained by the listeners as well as to prevent the prospect misunderstanding although there was no sign of non-understanding from the side of the customers. Or, in other cases, the speaker might decide to submit additional explanation whereas the non-understanding had apparently been brought to the satisfactory end via the preceding response. A 'combined strategy' such as the use of repetition and reformulation has come into play when the specific term, name or number needed to be highlighted. Participants seemed to be specially sensitive in obtaining these pieces of information whereby they would reiterate them several times and in some cases resort to the 'spelling' method. It is of strikingly interest to note that while all the meetings were bounded by the time-constraints, BELF participants were readily to accept the unnecessarily prolonged negotiation process in exchange of the clarity and preciseness of the information; a remarkable quality that pertains to business talk (Pitzl 2010: 90).

What was particular noticed was that the proficient BELF speakers seemed to, if possible, take advantage on their shared knowledge and expertise and exhibited their active role to formulate a hypothetical meaning as a question when the understanding problem arose rather than solely and explicitly requesting the others for clarification. The strategy was also beneficial in maintaining the flow of the ongoing interaction by allowing the speaker to supply the missing the

information or to monitor how far mutual intelligibility has been succeeded. When there was a sign of uncertainty or that the speaker was experiencing some difficulties in his/her discourse, help would most of the time be offered immediately by the others. It was noteworthy though that the assistance in the word search situations was not only limited to the insiders, namely amongst colleagues, but was also exercised by the outsiders, e.g. the business partners, who were able to come up with the precise terms. Their abilities were attributed to the knowledge in the topic, specific terms and so on that served as a common ground that they shared plus the genuine attention towards the progressivity of the communication. Since the BELF participants were considerably alerted to the ongoing interaction, the response could then coincide with the current turn and led to the occurring of overlapping speech. Participants however made use of simultaneous speech in various scenarios to serve the collaborative purposes whereby they were not aiming to claim the next speakership but rather oriented to the progressivity of the ongoing turn, e.g. to assist in word-search situations as discussed, to express listenership or agreement or to support current speaker to continue. On the other hand, since, there is a strong need for disambiguity in a business negotiation (Firth 2009) it is, as a result, essential that disagreement has to be brought out immediately, not at some point later where the topic might not be relevant (Grässel 1991). In this respect, simultaneous speech has then likewise been strategically employed by BELF speakers for competitive purposes on various occasions and unnecessarily being interpreted as problematic.

Last but not least, it is essential to present another strategy that emerged as an asset for many speakers in clarifying the matters and enhancing the intelligibility, i.e. the employment of the 'non-linguistic means'. There were various scenes which showed that linguistic resource was not the only channel that participants rely on, rather they also resorted to the handout, diagram or picture when they wanted to construct a deeper understanding into the topic. In a nutshell, a wide range of pragmatic strategies that have been discussed asserts that BELF participants are very active and skillful in negotiating the meaning in various circumstances, e.g. with persistent or multilayered non-understanding, within the time-constraints or even when there was not enough linguistic resource at their disposals. The answer to question 1B will present how the BELF participants deal with the pragmatic strategies in the negotiation of the meaning.

7.3.1.2   Question 1B: How do the participants organize the interaction in the business meetings?

What is already observable is that the BELF participants are very capable in negotiating the meaning through various pragmatic strategies of their choice. Since the negotiation of meaning was based exclusively on participants' common drive to achieve the business purpose, there were thus tangible results of their remarkable collaboration in clarifying non-understandings that might or have occurred.

It has become obvious however that the unique setting of ELF interaction requires a distinct communicative strategy from the native speaker interaction, namely the accommodation skill. With the abilities to adapt and accommodate their linguistic and behavior to the interlocutors, participants managed to survive the challenges of the language and cultural diversity in the ELF interactions. Consequently, it is no surprise to see BELF participants in the study skilfully adaptive in which their discourse and behaviour were highly dynamic and responsive to the particular circumstances. On the linguistic level, they were markedly attentive to the formulation of their own utterances and at the same time to the interlocutors' reactions in order to monitor whether comprehension has been met. In terms of the behavior, BELF participants were also very responsive and adaptive to the particular situations they were facing, i.e. it was noticeable that they have taken into account the dynamics of culture and intercultural sensitivity which mirrored their respect for other cultures, accents or discoursal patterns. The perception seemed to be partly influenced by the concept of 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998) which bounded the BELF participants together through three core dimensions: (1) joint enterprise, (2) mutual engagement, and (3) shared repertoire (p.2). By being the members within this BELF community, they have constructed the shared idea of, e.g. what mattered to them, what was appropriate and what was not in their contexts (which were clearly the agreed product of internal negotiations) which allowed them to easily co-construct mutual understanding amid variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

While collaboration and mutual support were highlighted as crucial feature in ELF casual talk, the "primarily outcome-oriented interaction" (Wolfartsberger 2009: 172) of BELF has led participants to be unavoidably competitive in certain contexts in the pursuit of different goals achieving. What we have seen then was the situation where there was a parallel with collaboration on the linguistic level (in their negotiation of the meaning) alongside the competitiveness on the

content level (e.g. in the agreement seeking or deal negotiation). As a consequence, there is an additional dimension to BELF interactions in which participants devoted themselves to the best interest of their company at the expense of argument and turn competition while in the meantime made great effort to cooperate on the linguistic level to ensure that they understood each other. This is significant because the values of seniority and social hierarchy are quite sacred in Thai society which made face-threatening act a common matter of concern in the interactions among the Thais. Nevertheless, it very seemed that the Thai participants did not essentially carry their own cultural norms into the international encounters. Rather, they did not hold back when it came to addressing the issue of particular interest by using various interactive strategies including the employment of competitive overlapping speech which jeopardised face-threatening the hearers. In this light, one could argue that the significance of the clarity and preciseness of the information which was the heart of their business interaction seemed to override the face considerations. However, it is important to note that the blatant interventions for competitive purposes were mostly visible during the turn exchanges between the Thais and foreigners whereas the interruptions among Thais themselves were rather implicit. They seemed to adopt a less confrontational approach amongst themselves than with the foreigners via the expressions which signaled polite intonation. This is to suggest that although the participants tended to be shaped by some aspects of their cultural values which resulted in their strategic behaviors, they were prepared to adapt themselves into the negotiation process in order to reach the communicative goals.

7.3.2 Question 2: From the participants' perspective what are the characteristics of successful business communication in international meetings?

What has emerged as a clear view among the BELF participants was that their attention was primarily directed on the successful meeting, namely to achieve the business goals whereby English functioned as one of many tools that accompanied them to the success. In other words, what contributed to their successful communication consisted of different number of factors. First of, there seemed to be a mutual agreement among BLEF participants that the prime requisite in the interaction was the possession of the professional knowledge and adequate insights into the topic discussed. These qualities were reported to help them got through some difficulties when they did not have enough English

resource. For instance, the interpreters in the two meetings between Thai and Japanese engineers were reportedly unable to facilitate the communication as expected due to their lack of technical knowledge. By contrast, while the Japanese participants described themselves as influent speakers of English, the Thais found the interaction went more smoothly and effectively when the two parties communicate directly in English due to their common knowledge. The perception corresponds with what Ehrenreich (2010) argues that language skills without the necessary professional profile are not sufficient to be successful in the business while on the other hand BELF users can negotiate the meaning with the interlocutors who have limited English on account of the shared managerial and technical knowledge.

7.3.2.1   Question 2A: What is participants' perspective on their use of English as a lingua franca / or as a tool in international communication?

This question focuses particularly on the participants' perspectives towards the role of English as a lingua franca in the business international interaction. As English has recently been the subject of intense debate where Thai authorities and media have been arguing about its enormous importance. The answer to this research question will therefore clarify how accurate a reflection it is of the portrait provided in Thailand.

It is evident that the results that have come to light appear to contradict speculation that good proficiency of English was the key necessity for Thais in the international business stage. The perception of using English as a tool was indeed prominent among the participants in this business community. In other words, BELF participants tend to prioritize content and effective communication over linguistic correctness within the NS normative model. Their use of English, as they indicated, was not shaped by the native English nor did they make attempts to imitate them. Rather, what has emerged was a way of them 'making full use of their multilingual resources to create their own preferred forms' (Jenkins 2011: 283-284) to which many of the informants reported to 'use English in their own styles'. Interestingly, while some informants spoke of some merits of acquiring the NS competence which might have benefit them in the international business setting, they suggested that the idea of applying it in the actual interaction was an unlikely scenario. In other words, they admitted that although they tended to believe that the good proficiency in English would enhance the credibility and image of the business professionals, the failure to fulfil the ambition did not

seem to affect the communication in any facets. However, this is not to suggest that English was perceived as unimportant and needed no improvement. Indeed, the participants stressed that enhancing their level of English proficiency was necessary but this has been obtained by learning from everyday communication. In other words, the learning process was unnecessarily adhered to the NS traditional norm but was something "inherently fluid and flexible, deeply multicultural and multilingual, and highly context-bound, negotiable in situ" (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen and Karhunen 2015: 128). As they advised that with their professional expertise coupled with some knowledges in specific vocabularies, it was adequate for them to achieve the successful communication. In terms of the career advancement, none of the participants claimed English as a prime criteria in recruiting or promotion in their companies. This did not only apply to those who reported that their daily operation did not rely on the English language, but the claim was also echoed by the participants who worked in Singapore where English was used as a common mean in all interactions.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis provides a more concrete picture of how successful business communication is achieved in ELF context. Since the participants are the business elites who are in a relatively high stakes important role, it is highly convinced that they are the successful communicators. The scope of the data analyzed in this study is, as a result, around the pragmatic strategies BELF participants used to ensure successful meetings.

What we have learned so far from this study is that English is a de facto business tool for the BELF users, rather than some idealized view of language, namely English as a native language. The study is a genuinely realistic investigation of how English is used as a lingua franca in the international business situations, and how the participants deal with these resources at their disposal to achieve the shared understanding. The naive view is often associated with the perception of very fluent English speaker could become a successful communicator in the meeting, however, the realistic view is actually English is a tool that works with other resources and qualities. This study brings us to the general conclusion documented in many previous ELF research that English is used and perceived as a (shared) resource, rather than the ENL norm-following.

It is clear that English competence alone is not enough to bring participants a successful interaction. In fact, English is a part of their broader business competence which includes business-related expertise, knowledge of process and situation, the expectation and the outcome of the meeting. So, what occurred in the meetings was the experienced business professionals leaned on their shared knowledge of the contents, professional expertise and specific lexis and vocabularies, rather than solely relying on English. These shared repertoire of resources explain that while almost none of the participants claimed to acquire polished English or reported to have restricted English fluency, it either posed a major challenge or difficulty to the success of interactions or undermined the quality of the interaction. Both speakers and interlocutors would always fully exploit all the resources at their disposal, which accordingly brought about a wide range of pragmatic strategies, e.g. accommodation, repetition, hypothesis submission, clarification request, simultaneous speech, non-verbal means or code-switching, to ensure the successful communication. This is why an "enterprise-centred repertoire" and "pragmatic approach" should be exercised

even when it conflicts with prior English educational requirements (Cogo 2016: 368).

This seems to contribute to the fact that participants were not interested in learning English as a native language, and that the understanding problems related to the level of vocabulary and grammar were scarcely visible. The study proves that the business goal accomplishment sits at the core of the BELF based interaction. As it has presented, BELF is not the platform where business professionals showcase their language competencies or to improve their competency (Cogo 2016). Participants did not scoped the native speaker model as parts of their communicative tools but focus on the "expertise in the business and knowledge of the common repertoire which also includes intercultural accommodation" (ibid, p. 366).

Competence in BELF which consists of a combination of business-related knowledge, strategic skills plus business communication skills constitute essential characteristics of BELF interactions under investigation (Kankaanranta et al. 2015). Participants were adept in making use of their shared business knowledge and professional expertise to facilitate the understanding and overcome some emerging linguistic difficulties. Their abilities to achieve mutual understanding on their own despite the assistance of the translator were a tangible case. It exhibited that the third party who possessed a high linguistics competence but lacked of shared professional expertise and specific terminology was unlikely to bring a BELF successful communication. Meanwhile, BELF participants who claimed to have limited English proficiency turned to successful communicator on account of their BELF competence.

It is also worthwhile to give recognition to their cooperative work and 'listener-orientation' (Pitzl 2012: 40) which contributed to various interactional strategies. As stressed in many studies, cooperativeness has emerged as an apparent quality in ELF interactions which, partly, leads to the successful communication. The observation likewise holds true in this study where the shared understanding appears to be facilitated by the participants' considerable degree of cooperation. On the basis of the findings, participants assigned a great deal of efforts and attention to the accommodation. The scale of their collaborative efforts, monitoring and adjusting their practices and speech to the others, rather than sticking to their usual linguistic patterns and cultural habits, is a clear indication that participants have fully brought into the accomplished ELF users perspective in which accommodation skill serves as the critically significant

component (e.g. Jenkins 2000, 2006; Cogo 2007, 2009, 2012; Seidlhofer 2011; Pitzl 2012). Participants in the study have been witnessed to be skillfully adaptive in which their discourse and behaviour were highly dynamic and responsive to the particular circumstances. This can attribute to their multicultural competence, an element of a model of Global Communicative Competence suggested by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) to the extent that a variety of cultural backgrounds participants carried did not hinder comprehension, nor did they provoke a communication breakdown. Clearly, they were capable to handle interactions involving people from different national, organisational, and cultural backgrounds mainly due to their dynamics of culture and intercultural sensitivity i.e. having the knowledge and respect for other cultures, accents, or discoursal patterns (Kankaanranta 2012; Pullin 2015).

The findings prove that BELF is indeed context- and task-specific where participants' shared interest and concerns related to the business matters. The domain-specific nature of BELF therefore reflects on participants' choice of communicative strategies which did not reveal only a sense of cooperative work, but also competitive side which were situational governed. That is to say, as parts of an effort to elicit clarity, the use of interruption was a common practice in the business interactions studied. For instance, while the Thais would not generally intend to exhibit the disagreement or contest towards the superiors, they did not avoid doing this when prompted by the situation and communicative need. Unlike the ELF casual talk which tends to be mostly consensual, the study stressed that BELF users' language use and behaviour were determined and influenced by the specific communicative purposes. In other words, while ELF is dynamic and fluid in general, the pragmatic motives in ELF casual talk can be varied from those in BELF interaction which is more situational-constraints. It was observed that in the environment of such 'fragile activities' (Pitzl 2013) as illustrated in some discussions of the meetings observed, disambiguity had the potential to yield significant impact on their business plans, deals or timescale, which subsequently prompted them to engage in debating these delicate issues to bring out the clarity immediately. Among other things, it is worth bearing in mind that most of the meetings were shaped and determined by the time-constraints nature of business meetings. This hence seemed to reinforce the predominance of clarity in the negotiation in the sense that agreement was expected be reached within the session rather than being deterred to the next meeting.

With all these qualities, people in the business could achieve successful international interaction without having to master in English. Rather, it is more like they have to know certain amount of English that they need for specific situation in order to conduct the meeting, and do not necessarily need to sit down and learn English in a traditional manner. Native speaker did not represent the role model for the majority of the participants, and in the meantime, the failed attempts for those who had tried to imitate the NS were reportedly left no impact to the success of the interactions. What is strikingly interesting is that the idea was similarly reflected by members of top management (though they did not constitute the majority of the participants) whose work, on the face of it, seemed to require a relatively high level of English proficiency for operating in international business. For example, the Japanese executives who were not fluent in English, survived the negotiation not via the translator they brought into the meeting but rather with the common knowledge they had with the Thais alongside their collaborative efforts in using language strategically. Along the same lines, the two Thai executives of PTA Singaporean branch, who reportedly used English in their daily operations, did not recognize good English proficiency as the criteria for their position. In addition, while both of them were observed to be good English speakers, they suggested that their English was not strictly adhered to standard ENL. This has entailed another remarkable finding that linguistic fluency neither played a crucial role to the communicative success nor did it associate with power in the interaction. No concrete example suggested that a varying degree in fluency led to some speakers having an advantage over the others. I could argue in this respect that since their target was the completion of particular business goals, or 'to get the job done', participants therefore focused on getting their core content across and were less concerned with the language per se.

To conclude, the study has stressed the idea of 'making use of English as a tool' of BELF speakers. The results clearly indicate that English is not conceptualized as the main integral element for success in international encounters but it rather functions as the subordinate part. In all these respects, my study seems to be in line with Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) model of Global Communicative Competence which consists of (1) multicultural competence; (2) competence in BELF; and (3) business knowhow as the three relevant central contextual features for BELF interaction (p.404). In other words, it reveals that participants orient to accommodation and effective communication instead of linguistic correctness while embrace the non-nativeness.I could argue

the same that my participants survived the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity through such qualities, and enhanced by their remarkable abilities to regularly accommodate to the others, in terms of speech and behaviours, which was, in part, a result of their possession of intercultural sensitivity—having the knowledge and respect for other cultures, accents or discoursal patterns (Kankaanranta 2012; Pullin 2015). No sign of bias has been discovered, from either the actual interactions or the interviews, regarding individuals' cultural norms, working practices, or linguistics patterns. Participants did not compare themselves with the others, instead, they suggested 'respect' as the crucial manner when dealing with people from different countries as a means to maintain the positive vibe.

8.1   Implications

All in all, the study has provided the new perspective towards the use of English as a lingua franca in Thailand business. Thailand is a useful and excellent example to this investigation because of its position of English in the world, to the extent that it does not necessarily have any links with English historically but is purely due from the global phenomenon. The particular situation in this study is therefore a very good example of English really being a lingua franca for Thai business people and should be able to form a strong generalization about English in international business. As clearly witnessed, the participants were relatively successful communicators who processed a rather skilled interactional management of the understanding problems, the results should then give a significant contribution to the reconceptualization of the role of English in the international business communication, that is, to draw people's attention to the concept of ELF and establish it more firmly in Thailand educational and business sectors.

The fact that Thai participants constitute the largest sampling in the study further strengthens the suspicion of the traditional normative notion of native English competence as the driving force which seems to prevail in Thailand. On the basis of the findings, I would argue that the attempts (and the plan) to overhaul the country's language policy and curriculum in reference to the standard ENL as a means to survive the ASEAN economic community had not been shaped by the intrinsic understanding of the nature of the challenge that we are facing. The

underlying concerns and fears that Thai people would be challenged, or in the worst case scenario, be replaced by the workforce from the regional country peers if we are not improving our English skills should be reconsidered. To be precise, my study reveals that (NS) English competence did not represent the driving force to the success of international communication as speculated, and that the performances of the business professionals would not be necessarily poorer as a result of their limited English proficiency. I would also like to emphasize the strengths of this study, namely the settings—two large corporations (Thai and Japanese) with extensive international contacts and a number of subsidiaries across Asia—and the participants, i.e. business professionals who had frequent contacts with foreign partners but having varying degree of English proficiency. By investigating the naturally occurring BELF interactions, we can learn what actually happened in the meetings, what pragmatic strategies have been used and how the participants organized them to ensure the successful communication. The semi-structured interviews have provided us with deeper insights into the participants' perception in support of the meetings data.

My study is therefore important when considering the current representation of English in Thailand. Within the educational sector, it reflects that the phenomenon of favouring the native speaker in English language teaching is problematic when Thais literally use English for global communication where foreigners they engage with are largely non-native speakers of English. In this respect, to keep up with the pace of the ASEAN economy community and be responsive to globalisation, the focus should not be placed on boosting English education in reference to English as native language, but on a more multilingual model of communication, namely the ELF approach which is appropriate in the context where fluidity, hybridity and flexibility are essential.

Considering this important fact, one could argue that the ELF approach would be the most appropriate in the investigation of the role of English In the business sector, for instant, SCG, the Thai chemicals and material-packaging giant has recently made its vow to be one of the first Thai companies to adopt English as its corporate language by 2018 in correspondence to the sustainable progress for the AEC (Changsorn 2015). The change of its model is expected to be an attempt to fulfill their aspire to be an "Asean corporate citizen" (SCG). It is significant that they know what it means to use English as a corporate language. By reflecting critically on the findings of my study will provide a more understanding that

English is a tool that fits with other characteristics and qualities. It should allow readers to move away from learning and using English in reference to the native English speakers to the effective (B)ELF communicators in their own right. This should therefore open up a new way of reconceptualising the necessary knowledge and competence in the international business communication, i.e. the accommodation skill, shared professional expertise, knowledge in some specific lexis and the willingness to actively coordinate in the negotiation of the meaning.

8.2   Limitations and Further study

With the exceptional small number of ELF studies in Thailand (mostly cover in academic settings), it is hoped that this research would potentially serve as a starting point of BELF study in Thai context and as the reference for the future research in similar setting. Although This study is a representative of the broader range of language use, by investigating BELF in this particular situation will entail a greater understanding of how English is actually used by Thai business professionals in their international operations. In addition, as the audio recordings which reveal the actual interactions between the BELF users is the primary source of data, the number of interviewees does not necessarily be immense in order to understand the situation. In addition, all of the 23 interviewees were active speakers who contributed greatly to the interactions, their responses have therefore provided relevant and considerably insightful data to the study. Overall, my study has brought to light the pragmatic strategies emerging from the naturally occurring BELF meeting interactions, supplemented by the meeting participants' perspectives regarding their use of BELF. With the focus on this particular natural context, it provides a reasonable generalization or at least an example of English in the international business. However, further works need to be done on other contexts to see how language use might vary in different situation. So basically, my investigation, for the most part, concerns situations where English has been exclusively used in the international meetings and that most of the participants did not use BELF routinely at work. For these reasons, a closer ethnographic look into the spoken BELF interaction in the corporation in Thailand where English is mandated as an official language should provide a different insightful perspective to the research on BELF. It is interesting in the sense that the domain of BELF use is very likely to extend to some other activities, such as daily interactions, or small talk among staff. It would raise

interesting questions: does English prevail over Thai in all activities and situations, and if so, what kinds of challenges employees face routinely at work as well as would it make English fluency (orient to the NS norm?) a prerequisite quality? More investigation into the perceptions of the participants from other countries would surely benefit the analysis to the extent that it could mitigate a Thai-biased perspective and form a more generalized perception on the use of BELF. On other contexts, the analysis of email genres (Kankaanranta 2005) or the pragmatic strategies (Ren 2016) could also shed new light to the written business communication. It is of interest in a sense that: (a) while English appears to hold a stronger position in written communication (to conform with standard English), an investigation into the use of email in ELF context should entail a different perspective; and (b) while email is a very popular means of communication and prevails in almost corporation, it has scarcely been explored in the context of ELF, which would therefore contribute greatly to the research field.

Appendix A : Transcription conventions

Mark-up conventions, adapted from: VOICE project website,

http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/documents/VOICE_mark-up_conventions_v2-1.pdf

S1: S2: …	The speakers ID are given at the beginning of each turn and numbered in the order they first speak.
SS:	Utterances assigned to more than one speaker spoken either in unison or Staggered.
Example: S1: that's what my next er slide**?** does	Words spoken with rising intonation are followed by a question mark "?"
Example: S7: that's point two**.** absolutely yes**.**	Words spoken with falling intonation are followed by a full stop "**.**" .
Example: S7: er internationalization is a very IMPORTANT issue	If a speaker gives a syllable, word or phrase particular prominence, this is written in capital letters.
Example: SX-f: because they all give me different **(.)** different **(.)** points of view	Every brief pause in speech (up to a good half second) is marked with a full stop in parentheses.
Example: S1: aha **(2)** so finally arrival on monday evening is still valid	Longer pauses are timed to the nearest second and marked with the number of seconds in parentheses, e.g. (1) = 1 second, (3) = 3 seconds.
Example: S1: it is your best **<1> case </1>** scenario (.) S2: **<1> yeah </1>** S1: okay	Whenever two or more utterances happen at the same time, the overlaps are marked with numbered tags: **<1> </1>**, **<2> </2>**,… Everything that is simultaneous gets the same number.
Example: S9: it it is (.) to identify **some<1>thing** </1> where (.) S3: <1> mhm </1>	All overlaps are approximate and words may be split up if appropriate. In this case, the tag is placed within the split-up word.
Example: S1: you can run faster but they have much **mo:re** technique with the ball	Lengthened sounds are marked with a colon "**:**".
Example: S5: personally that's my opinion the**:** **er::m**	Exceptionally long sounds (i.e. approximating 2 seconds or more) are marked with a double colon "**::**".
Example: S1: in denmark well who knows. @@ S2: <@> yeah </@> @@ that's right	All laughter and laughter-like sounds are transcribed with the @ symbol, approximating

	syllable number (e.g. ha ha ha = @@@). Utterances spoken laughingly are put between **<@> </@>** tags.
Example: S3: i've a lot of very **(generous)** friends	Word fragments, words or phrases which cannot be reliably identified are put in parentheses **( )**.
Example: S5: **<L1de> bei firmen </L1de>** or wherever	Utterances in a participant's first language (L1) are put between tags indicating the speaker's **L1**.
Example: S1: and they (3) created some (1) some er (2) JARGON. do you know? the word JARGON? (.) **<spel> j a r- </spel> <spel> j a r g o n? </spel>** jargon	The **<spel> </spel>** tag is used to mark words or abbreviations which are spelled out by the speaker, i.e. words whose constituents are pronounced as individual letters.
Example: S2: because as i explained before is that we have in the **<fast>** universities of cyprus we have **</fast>** a specific e:rm procedure <fast> </fast> <slow> </slow> <loud> </loud> <soft> </soft>	Utterances which are spoken in a particular mode (fast, soft, whispered, read, etc.) and are notably different from the speaker's normal speaking style are marked accordingly. The list of speaking modes is an open one.
Example: S9: that's one of the things (.) that i (1) just wanted to clear out. (2) **[S13]**?	Whenever speakers who are involved in the interaction are addressed or referred to, their names are replaced by their respective speaker IDs.
Example: S5: erm she is currently head of marketing (and) with the **[org2]** (1)	Companies and other organizations need to be anonymized as well. Their names are replaced by **[org1]**, etc.
{S7 enters room} {S2 points at S5} {S4 starts writing on blackboard}	Contextual information is added between curly brackets **{ }** only if it is relevant to the understanding of the interaction or to the interaction as such.
Example: S1: four billion <spel> u s </spel> dollars. (.) S4: quite impressive (.) S1: er **<to S2>** not quite isn't it **</to S2>** (.) i understand some other countries we handle	To indicate that a speaker is addressing not the whole group but one speaker in particular, the stretch of speech is marked with (e.g.) **<to S1> </to S1>**, choosing the speaker ID of the addressee.
Example: S4: we **<un> xxx </un>** for the <7> supreme (.) three </7> possibilities	Unintelligible speech is represented by **x's** approximating syllable number and placed between parentheses.

Appendix B : Data of meetings and interviews

Meeting 1

Type:	Extract A: Internal meeting of a financial unit among staff based in Singapore office
	Extract B: Video conference of a financial unit between staff based in Singapore office
Company:	PTA
Place:	Singapore
Time:	February 2015
Overall length:	50 minutes
Number of participants:	11
Number of speakers:	5

	L1	gender	age	status
S1	Thai	female	50+	Chair of Singapore office
S2	Chinese	male	25+	main representative of Singapore office
S3	Thai	female	35+	Staff of Singapore office
S4	Thai	female	50+	Chair of Thai office
S5	Thai	female	35+	Staff of Singapore office

Interviewee data (length: 25 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Branch financial manager	50+	Female	[T1_PTA]
Thai	Assistant financial manager	40+	Female	[T2_PTA]
Singaporean	Financial analyst	25+	Male	[S1_PTA]

Meeting 2

Type:	Engineering department's product presentation
Company:	PTA
Place:	Thailand
Time:	March 2015
Overall length:	105 minutes
Number of participants:	6
Number of speakers:	4

	L1	gender	age	status
S1	Thai	male	45+	Chair
S2	Indonesian	male	40+	Guest
S3	Thai	male	30+	PTA's staff
S4	Thai	male	35+	PTA's staff

Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code

Thai	Engineering manager	50+	Male	[T3_PTA]
Thai	Engineer	30+	Male	[T4_PTA]
Indonesian	Sales engineer	35+	Male	[Is1_Guest]

Meeting 3

Type: Contract negotiation
Company: PTA
Place: Thailand
Time: April 2015
Overall length: 120 minutes
Number of participants: 5
Number of speakers: 5

	L1	gender	age	status
S1	Thai	male	35+	Chair
S2	Thai	male	25+	PTA's staff
S3	Thai	female	25+	PTA's staff
S4	Japanese	male	45+	Guest
S5	Japanese	male	40+	Guest

Interviewee data (length: 13 minutes)

Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Senior sales engineer	40+	Male	[T5_PTA]
Thai	Sales engineer	25+	Male	[T6_PTA]
Thai	Sales engineer	25+	Female	[T7_PTA]

Meeting 4

Type: legal contract discussion
Company: PTA
Place: Thailand
Time: April 2015
Overall length: 120 minutes
Number of participants:7
Number of speakers: 6

	L1	gender	age	status
S1	Thai	female	45+	Chair
S2	Thai	female	40+	PTA's staff
S3	Thai	male	30+	PTA's staff
S4	British	male	45+	Guest
S5	Australian	male	45+	Guest

Interviewee data (length: 10 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Legal assistant manager	40+	Female	[T8_PTA]

Meeting 5

Type: Contract negotiation
Company: PTA
Place: Thailand
Time: April 2015
Overall length: 140 minutes
Number of participants: 12
Number of speakers: 7

	L1	gender	age	Status
S1	Thai	male	40+	PTA's representative
S2	Japanese	male	40+	Staff of the host company
S3	Japanese	male	45+	Executive of the host company
S4	Thai	male	35+	PTA's staff
S5	Japanese	male	40+	Staff of the host company
S6	Japanese	male	60+	CEO of the host company
S7	Thai	female	25+	Interpreter

Interviewee data (length: 15 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Sales engineering manager	40+	Male	[T9_PTA]
Thai	Sales engineer	30+	Male	[T10_PTA]

Meeting 6

Type: Marketing strategies discussion
Company: Mito
Place: Thailand
Time: March 2015
Overall length: 120 minutes
Number of participants: 7
Number of speakers: 6

	L1	gender	age	Status
S1	Japanese	male	35+	Chair
S2	Thai	male	30+	Mito's staff
S3	Thai	male	40+	Mito's staff
S4	Singaporean	male	35+	Guest
S5	Japanese	male	40+	Guest
S6	Taiwanese	male	30+	Guest

Interviewee data (length: 25 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Marketing assistant manager	40+	Male	[T12_MITO]
Thai	Marketing analyst	25+	Male	[T13_MITO]
Thai	Marketing analyst	25+	Female	[T14_MITO]

Meeting 7
Type: Contract negotiation of PTA's sale engineer department (external meeting)

Participants: meeting: 3 Thais, 1 Japanese

Interviewee data (length: 23 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Senior sales engineer	40+	Male	[T11_PTA]

Meeting 8

Type: Annual meeting of a trading unit at PTA's Singapore office (internal meeting)

Participants: meeting: 63 (Thais and Singaporean in majority and others from India, Malaysia, Korea, Indonesia and Philippine)

Interviewee data (length: 52 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	President	40+	Male	[T15_PTA]
Thai	Senior financial trader	35+	Female	[T16_PTA]
Thai	Financial trader	25+	Female	[T17_PTA]
Singaporean	Financial trader	30+	Female	[S2_PTA]
Indian	Senior financial trader	40+	Male	[In1_PTA]

Meeting 9   (1 hour)
Type: General discussion of NEIL's marketing department (internal meeting)

Participants: meeting: 3 Thais, 1 Russian, 1 French

Interviewee data (length: 13 minutes)				
Nationality	Position	Age	Gender	Identification Code
Thai	Marketing manager	35+	Male	[T18_NEIL]
Thai	Marketing assistant	30+	Male	[T19_NEIL]

Appendix C : Transcriptions

Extract from meeting 4

1	S1:	yea (.) listen er every five years the er <1>government </1> yea will have
2		the third party (.) to er check <2> every five years </2>
3	S4:	<1> government </1>
4	S2:	<2> not me </2> (.) not me <3> check </3> (.) third party check
5	S4:	<3> mm </3>
6	S1:	and government go to your factory
7	S4/S5:	mm
8	S1:	yea (.) d o e b
9	S5:	d o e b?
10	S2:	DEPARTMENT of <4> energy business </4>
11	S3:	<4> energy business </4>
12	S2:	<slow> department of energy business </slow>
13	S5:	<writing> business </writing> (.) yes
14	S3:	we work together <5> @@ </5>
15	S4:	<5> yea we come to check </5> <6> xx </6>
16	S2:	<6> yea we work together </6>
17	S1:	(2) <toS2>and the secondary demand </toS2>
18	S2:	yea secondary demand (.) we supply gas to the er power PLANT
19	S1:	<soft><show picture toS4>here power plant </soft></show picture toS4>
20	S4:	mm
21	S2:	in order to er manufacturing to (1) electricity
22	S1:	<show diagram toS4>and (assumption) to the xx </show diagram toS4>
23	S2:	yea (assumption) to the er TARGET
24	S1:	if you have some er (assumption) maybe you can order for the machine to get
25		this from them
26	S2:	okay (find the picture) (2) and this is offtake station
27	S5:	mm
28	S2:	we purchase er (.) natural gas from PTA offtake station (.) okay <show picture>
29		this is offtake station </show picture>
30	S4/S5:	mm
31	S2:	(1) and this is e:r <show picture> measuring regulating station </show picture>
32	S5:	is this?
33	S2:	yes (2) okay (.) in order to measuring the gas for consumption and (.) control gas
34		pressure and (building) m r s
35	S5:	mm hm
36	S2:	m r s installation (.) from er at your plant (.) <show diagram> here m r s
37		</show diagram>
38	S4:	control <7> er </7>
39	S5:	<7> control gas </7> pressure also?
40	S2:	yes (.) control the outlet between one to one point five <8> bar </8>
41	S5:	<8> mm hm </8>
42	S1:	the detail will show in next page<show diagram>here the detail</show diagram>
43	S2:	<show diagram> this is er your factory </show diagram>
44	S4/S5:	mm hm
45	S2:	<show diagram> this is er m r s </show diagram>
46	S1:	<drawing> and this is main pipe (.) main pipe and m r s er install gas station and
47		your factory </drawing>
48	S2:	yes this is er (2)
49	S3:	layout
50	S2:	layout yea m r s
51	S1:	yea layout if er we complete
52	S3:	we will write this @@
53	S1:	yea after er we complete (.) the gas system (.) this is er the example to show you

54	S5:	so you are <show diagram> (install) it here? <9> or </9> </show diagram>
55	S1:	<9> to to </9> your machine
56	S2:	(2) and we have er emergency control centre (1) or we call g r c c (.) available for
57		emergency call twenty four hours
58	S5:	mm
59	S2:	and we have er computer (scalar) (.)
60	S5:	mm hm
61	S2:	we will monitor the pressure (.) in order to er (2) leak
62	S3:	check leak
63	S2:	check leak yes

Extract from meeting 6

90	S1:	yea yesterday i x the example (.) just example xxx for the car (.)
91	SS:	mm hm
92	S1:	three years ago (.) you know (.) government supported
93	SS:	mm hm
94	S1:	any: you know first new car (.) government support er one hundred
95		thousand thai baht
96	SX:	wow
97	S1:	so THEN (.) you know (.) people go to buy one more car (.)
98	SS:	mm
99	S1:	but that as a RESULT you know (.) sure i know when we buy car
100		usually er xxx so need the (statement)
101	SS:	mm hm
102	S1:	THEN (.) er rather than car in our (.) buying power against other goods
103		state at (road) (.) so this is the why it's xx (.) generally speaking this is
104		what is happening (.)
105	SS:	mm hm
106	S1:	so it means the: (.) THOSE who are not xx buy car (1) even you know
107		(.) but (.) but thanks to the government (.) support (.) they COULD buy
108		(.) but as a result SALARY you know (.) they're not xxx to x check x
109		buying power (.) SO THEN as a result (.) you know people are
110		suffering
111	S2:	i have one another example (.) i talk with my FRIENDS who working
112		the [org3] fast moving supports (.) they make a research with the one
113		partner service (.) they compare: the spendings (.) per persons in one-
114		year (.) imagine that in last 2 years ago before the crisis (.) er they
115		spendings about one thousand bath per year (.) but right now spendings
116		about five hundred bath per year
117	S6:	oh half half
118	S2:	so they don't have less spending
119	SX:	mm
120	S3:	(2) also the the (.) the the the car (.) that people cannot make er loan
121		payment also (.) taking by the financial er company also increase
122	SX:	mm
123	S2:	(5) any questions?
124	S4:	no er x (listen)
125	S3:	@@
126	S1:	and the er sorry do u do u bring the comparison of the gdp gross in
127		other: ASEAN region. (.)
128	SX:	mm
129	S1:	okay in fact (.) two thousand fourteen malaysia philippine indonesia
130		russia cambodia myanmar laos (.) OTHER asean region (.) they did
131		very good gdp gross (.) only hang on @ we can say this is fundamental
132		wise (.) you know same asean region (.) FUNDAMENTAL as xxx (.)
133		but that (my) main duty as political <4> and unstability </4> and that
134		some (.) bad <5> policy </5> (.) by the government (.) you know at
135		only (pattern) it's a <6> facing </6> very bad economic in this
136		solution. (.)
137	S3:	<4> yea </4> <5> meeting meeting policy </5> <6> mm </6>
138	S2:	(5) next it's start for the review of the marketing in two thousand
139		fourteens (4) in two thousand fourteen thailand net imports (.) thirty
140		five kt of the (.) this is historical (income) records
141	S4:	hm? thirty-five?
142	S1:	fifty three
143	S2:	FIFTY THREE yes

144	S3:	<soft> fifty-three kt </soft>
145	S2:	and there are four regions of (.) the (.) country that they import x
146		singapore? (.) korea? saudi arabia and china. (3) and this is the analysis
147		of our (po) xtistic statistic (.) as you can see the last year (.) er in two
148		thousand (.) twelve? (.) there is no cargo from china <fast> EVEN two
149		thousand thirteen as well </fast> just a fews cargo from china (.) but
150		start from two thousand fourteen (.) china is become (1) more bigger
151		shares.
152	SS:	mm hm
153	S2:	and (.) er so the idea they have er less and less cargo (.) because they
154		may turn to european? market?
155	SS:	mm hm
156	S2:	and EVEN NOWS? er singapore is still be (guest) but this singapore is
157		include x? and xx x tion so it's look like a big (.) but actually i think (.)
158		china is maybe (.) bigger (1) okay (1) and this is behind background of
159		the (process) statistics (.) and now [org 4] korea they only (decide)?
160		not to import but (.) they is start by from us since (.) (last year) (.)
161	S4:	you mean (.) [ORG4]? thailand.
162	S2:	[org4] thailand yes.
163	S4:	mm
164	S2:	we supply them last time we supply sixty metric tons to them
165	S4:	regular basis?
166	S2:	not regular it depend on their orders
167	S4:	oh
168	S2:	but someTIME theys send the enquire with the (advice)
169	SS:	mm
170	S2:	but if i cannot match with your order i think they skip
171	SX:	mm
172	S6:	since er when during was your xx er three xx us er send me er you
173		have some monthly report so i see all the report summary and how
174		much time customer take their time i have no time now to see that kind
175		of a <soft> (evolution) </soft> so that's why i curious er if your
176		customer is customer based (.) is er changing or still the same
177	S2:	mm hm
178	S3:	actually they also er buy one cargo from us in december (.) and for this
179		er actually in the past they regular importing er from korea
180	SS:	mm
181	S3:	but this plant <toS2> <soft> what the name of the plant? </soft>
182		</toS2>
183	S2:	CABAI
184	S3:	er cabai plant they (1) er they they will not continue <7> produce </7>
185	S1:	<7> cabai? </7> who is cabai?
186	S2:	cabai is <8> their </8>
187	S3:	<8> [org4] cabai </8>
188	S2:	their subsidiary <9> company </9>
189	S3:	<9> their subsidiary </9> company
190	S1:	oh who? [org4]?
191	S3:	[org 4].
192	S1:	cabai plant?
193	S3:	yes in thailand (2) but er:: because [org 4] also think er they will (.)
194		they try to stop produce (vambrace) in thailand also (.) so we are not
195		sure that they they will come back to buy the xx but they said if they
196		have the requirement? they will xxx (.) so this is just opportunities we
197		need.
198	SS:	mm hm
199	S3:	and er i feel they don't have intention to bring the (cargo) of xx
200	S2:	(3) er second one is er one chinese producer they become to know as
201		high (adjective) of thai markets because er the the DEMAND in
202		Thailand is quite interesting for them? er i THINK theys politician
203		strategy actually in the past they just want to (.) get the profit of the x
204		but right now they want get the share as well
205	S5:	then who are the agent of (1) EACH producer (.) chinese producer?
206	S2:	chinese producer? i heard from [org6] they they did directs business
207		<10> with [org5]
208	S5:	<10> hah? </10> the <11> direct? </11>
209	S2:	<11> direct </11> yes
210	S5:	the [org 5] singapore or [org 5] china. (.)
211	S2:	<soft> mm not sure </soft

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