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Communication Strategies in BELF: implications for business English Language Teaching[1]

Abstract

Research has shown that Communication Strategies are one of the main tools employed by ELF users to reach common understanding and effectiveness in communication, with participants cooperatively and jointly constructing meaning through several pragmatic moves. In English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) in particular, Communication Strategies aimed at enhancing explicitness and checking comprehension, such as requests for clarification and repetition, or paraphrasing and reformulation, are seen as an essential skill, together with business know-how, clarity of message and explicitness.

The pedagogical implications of findings in BELF communication have so far been researched to a certain extent, for instance looking at the inclusion of Communication Strategies in ELT business materials, and at BELF-oriented training in some higher education programmes. This paper aims at contributing to this research area by exploring how BELF findings can be taken into account in terms of materials development and classroom practices that are oriented at fostering the development of communication skills to effectively communicate in international and intercultural business contexts.

1. Introduction

The role that English has developed as the global lingua franca of communication in a plethora of domains, from personal mobility for leisure, study or work to digital communication, is unquestioned. Research into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication has grown exponentially since the 2000s, with the aim of uncovering the function and uses of English as a common code among speakers of different linguacultures who interact in a variety of settings, from academia to the workplace. English, either as a

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corporate or as the main contact language in internationally-oriented global interactions, has also become the main language of business, and research into English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) has thrived for more than a decade now, investigating how BELF is effectively used by professionals to conduct global transactions. Research has widely shown that BELF communication is characterised by an "essentially pragmatic approach to language issues" through a "skilful and strategic use of BELF together with other languages" (Ehrenreich 2010, 411). Besides the specificity of the genre and domain as to knowledge/know-how, discourse practices and terminology, clarity and explicitness have also been shown to be essential characteristics of BELF communication in that they are part of the process of 'getting the job done'. A strategic use of the language through pragmatic moves in joint meaning negotiation, alongside accommodation towards the participants also in terms of rapport-building and relational skills, are other crucial aspects of BELF interactions. Including these essential skills in ELT business-oriented training materials and practices would appear fundamental to prepare (future) professionals to effectively interact in the global business arena. This paper aims at exploring how research findings from BELF could inform ELT business materials and classroom practices in fostering the development of effective communication skills in international business contexts, particularly in terms of communication strategies, intercultural awareness and the creation of rapport.

2. BELF – Business English as a Lingua Franca Communication

One of the effects of the global spread of English, and more in general of globalization processes, is that English has *de facto* come to represent the most widely used language of international communication, in business as in other contexts. While sharing the characteristics of English used as a contact language in its lingua franca role (ELF), interactions in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) settings are also influenced by the specificity of the work domain, that is, by flexibility and adaptation of the speakers' "pragmatic and strategic competence to the various communicative challenges on the international workplace", where "[a]ccommodation, relational talk and rapport-building are seen as essential aspects of communication in (B)ELF environments" (Cogo and Yanaprasart 2018, 100).

BELF, or English employed as a communication code in business contexts, has been defined as 'neutral' since it is not the L1 of any of the speakers: even when participants for whom English is a native language are involved, the specificity, fluidity and hybridity of (B)ELF contexts make the 'English' that is employed characterised and appropriated in its lingua franca role. BELF has also been defined as 'shared' since it is used to conduct "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).

Given the hybridity and the inherently inter/transcultural nature of (B)ELF encounters, flexibility and adaptation involve both language use, not last in the multilingual nature of (B)ELF, and cultural aspects. In addition, the specificity of BELF contexts entails that a diversity of business (and corporate) cultures are at work, too. As Cogo and Yanaprasart put it, "BELF is a dynamic medium of communication with multilingual resources coming to play in and within English in the professional workplace" (2018, 101).

Negotiation and co-construction of meaning through pragmatic moves and communication strategies are hence particularly relevant in BELF, not only because of the diversity of linguacultures - and corporate cultures - of the participants, but also due to the specificity of the context - the 'B' of BELF - where 'geting the work done' implies, and relies upon, accuracy in content throughout the process of mutual understanding. Communicative competence in BELF "calls for clarity and accuracy in the presentation of business content, knowledge of business-specific vocabulary and genres conventions, and the ability to connect on the relational level" (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen 2015, 129).

The multifaceted set of skills that are part of intercultural and multilingual BELF interactions has been framed in the Global Communicative Competence (GCC) model (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011), that comprises competencies related to the three intertwined layers of Multicultural competence, Competence in BELF and Business knowhow (see Fig. 1). These three interweaving layers all contribute to successful BELF communication and, together with the strategic skills they involve - active listening, accommodation and tolerance towards different 'Englishes' (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013) - have been shown to be indeed more relevant than adherence to standard and native-like language

proficiency (e.g. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010; Cogo 2016a),
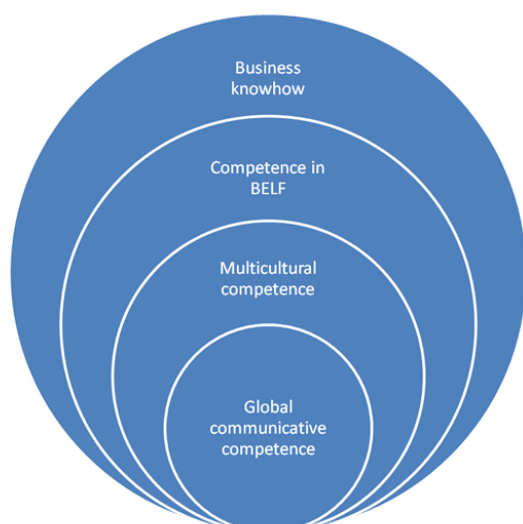above all in highly contextual BELF interactions.

Figure 1: Model of Global Communicative Competence in a business context (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011, 258)

The innermost level of GCC, Multicultural competence, comprises skills to
manage interaction with participants of different linguacultures, including
accommodation to diversity in cultural (national, corporate and professional)
and linguistic terms. In the second layer, competence in BELF, we find
knowledge of business genres, skills in managing tasks and building rapport,
and aspects related to strategic competence "such as an ability to ask for
clarifications, make questions, repeat utterances, and paraphrase", alongside
"clarity, brevity, directness and politeness" (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013, 28). The last layer refers to business knowhow, including both
general business discourse and more specific domains of use (Ibid.).

Particularly relevant to the discussion in this paper is the second layer,
Competence in BELF, especially in its strategic competence aspects. Indeed,
communication strategies aimed at checking and ensuring understanding, as
well as at enhancing expliciteness, such as repetition and paraphrase,
constitute an important element in ELF interactions; they are even more
relevant in BELF, where clarity of content as to the business issues dealt with
is paramount (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011). Such
pragmatic moves, that often include resources from the speakers'
multilingual repertoires (e.g. Cogo 2016a), are exploited by interactants "to

accommodate and adapt to their interlocutors and negotiate meaning and understanding" (Pullin 2015, 34). Several studies have shown how communication strategies are widely employed by professionals in international business contexts (e.g. Cogo 2012; 2016a; 2016b; Bjørge 2010; Ehrenreich 2010; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011; Pitzl 2010; Franceschi 2017; 2019; submitted). A cooperative and active listening attitude oriented at reaching mutual and effective understanding (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011; Palmer-Silveira 2013) has also been highlighted, whereby "intercultural business encounters are not to be seen as "a minefield of mis-communication, but as a negotiated form of strategic communication" (Nickerson 2012, 239).

3. BELF and Business English Language Teaching

While the implications of ELF research findings in, and for, ELT has been a widely explored area over the last decade (e.g. Alsagoff et al. 2012; Bayyurt and Sifakis 2015a; 2015b; Bayyurt and Akcan 2015; Sifakis and Tsantila 2018; Matsuda 2012; 2017; Vettorel 2015; 2016), the impact that BELF research can have in syllabus design and business-oriented ELT has been less investigated. However, given the significant role that BELF plays in international professional communication, business-related curricula and materials ought to be informed by BELF research in order to adequately prepare students for international communication.

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010), drawing on findings from their study on users' perceptions of BELF, highlight three main aspects that should guide the teaching of English for Business purposes: curricula should be based on business knowledge and awareness of specific, real contexts; materials coursework and assessment should include strategies for effective business communication, with the ultimate aim of teaching students to be "flexibly competent" in BELF (not ENL) communication (2010, 208). The fact that BELF represents a "working language", different from "Official English" conceptualized as ENL, is reiterated by Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen (2015). The authors also point to the importance of developing GCC in teaching, taking into account that in BELF the "two primary criteria for success are getting the job done and maintaining rapport with their communication/business partners", also through clarity, politeness and strategic communication/Communication Strategies (2015, 141). It is also

stressed that the development of skills related to the three layers of GCC could be realised through case studies, simulations and problem-solving activities, familiarizing 'in context' not only with specific terminology and genre, but also with discursive and communication practices and strategic accommodation moves (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013, 30-31).

Pullin (2015) includes also the need to develop an intercultural dimension in Business and Economics curricula in higher education within a sociocognitive approach to language learning, where students ought to be encouraged to "deploy the adaptive strategies used in BELF communication" (2015, 45). Pullin identifies in Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT, see e.g. Ellis 2003) a possible approach to introduce, and practise, BELF authentic communication in the classroom, with a focus on interaction and on noticing as to (inter)cultural awareness. Besides outlining the learning aims, two tasks with advanced learners are illustrated: in the first, the simulation of meetings based on research data, and in the second interviews with professionals carried out outside the classroom (cf. also Pullin 2013b). The simulated meetings took place in groups after some preparation tasks; participants worked cooperatively, and Communication Strategies (CSs) were employed in meaning co-construction, for specific terminology, too. Feedback was discussed in the reflective post-task activities, and helped identify difficulties and awareness of variation (Pullin 2010b).

A similar view on the need to use authentic data from the workplace in business-oriented ELT has been set forward by several researchers in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen 1996; Nickerson 2002; Poncini 2002, 2004; 2013; Planken, van Hoft, and Korzilius 2004; Bremner 2010; Evans 2013), with the need of exposure to "real-life BELF communicative contexts", that has been highlighted also by students (Faltzi and Sougari 2018, 249).

Business meetings in particular (e.g. Angouri 2010; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Rogerson-Revell 1999, 2010) are an area where the mismatch between research findings and teaching materials has been shown (Nickerson 2005), together with an inadequate treatment of communication strategies in ELT business materials (Franceschi 2018; Vettorel 2019; cf. also Evans 2013). In this respect, Planken's (2005) study on negotiation simulations shows that the strategies successfully used by experienced business people could be usefully introduced in classroom practices, both in terms of pragmatic and strategic competence; in addition, Tarnopolsky (2012) stresses the importance of a content-based and experential approach for the development of communicative competence in the workplace.

In BELF Communication Strategies are hence part and parcel of (Global) communicative competence, in that they are effectively and cooperatively deployed in meaning co-construction, either pre-emptively or retroactively, to ensure mutual understanding. These strategic and pragmatic moves also work towards preventing, and resolving, potentially problematic areas, such as lack of comprehensibility, cultural and discourse differences, as well as stereotypical associations with particular accents in English in terms of prestige (Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009), whether for native or non-native BELF users. In this perspective it should be noted that in professional domains, as Nickerson points out, "the distinction between an L2 speaker and a foreign language speaker has little relevance for BELF and IBE [International Business English, involving also L1 speakers] business interactions" (2015, 398). In BELF contexts, as the GCC model stresses, effective interactions aimed at 'getting the job done' can rather be ensured through an interweaving set of skills 'good business communicators' enact. In this perspective it would hence seem most relevant to identify "a core set of accommodation strategies used by all professional business people, regardless of whether they speak English as an L1, [that] will help to establish what it means to achieve professional communicative competence" (Nickerson 2015, 393). Examples of this strategic and accommodative behavior should then be part of business-oriented ELT materials and practices, in order to prepare (future) professionals to communicate in the complexities of the global business arena, developing skills related to BELF communicative competence as part of GCC.

4. BELF-oriented ELT materials/activities/practices: some suggestions

Before setting forward a few proposals for the introduction of BELF-oriented materials and practices in ELT, it should be mentioned that some general principles, particularly as to a 'change in mindset' in taking account of the current sociolinguistic reality of the ways in which English is used in its lingua franca role, can be valid in ELF as in BELF. As general informing principles, first of all the appropriation of English by its (B)ELF multilingual users, and the legitimacy of their 'uses' of the language in its own right, and not in comparison with ENL usage, should be viewed as a starting point. Secondly, the fact that (B)ELF speakers are by definition bi/multilingual and most often interculturally aware, and that plurilingual and pluricultural resources

are integral part of their multilingual/cultural communicative competence ought equally to inform pedagogic choices and practices.

These, as other aspects, should be fully integrated into the need for a (B)ELF-aware approach in teaching (and learning), in order to cater for the complex sociolinguistic diversity in (B)ELF and foster the ability to communicate effectively with speakers of different linguacultures by deploying a range of strategies, from creative appropriation of the language to strategic moves. Last but not least, in pedagogic terms we ought to be aware that there cannot (and should not) be a 'standardised' and fixed recipe for (B)ELF-informed materials and pedagogic practices; they should rather be tailored to the specificity of the educational context, syllabi, and learners' (future) needs.

Naturally, the specificity of the professional domain, as we have briefly illustrated in the previous sections, plays an important role in BELF. Nevertheless, in the process of communication both ELF and BELF users show an adaptive and effective use of resources and strategies, that are adjusted and suited to the specificity of the interaction. As Pullin well summarizes,

Effective speakers of BELF 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. For example, such resources may include awareness that politeness may be enacted differently in different cultural settings, or that genres do not always follow the same patterns in all cultures. It is these communication strategies alongside cultural and linguistic awareness that are of interest in teaching English for Business in ways that are relevant for the twenty-first century, in addition to moving away from native speaker socio-cultural norms (Pullin 2015, 34).

These would seem, then, focal aspects that should inform ELT business-related materials and classroom/training practices, within the more general aim of promoting knowledge, and raising awareness of, linguacultural and professional differences, in order to foster tolerance, flexibility and accommodative attitudes in communication. It is indeed the ability to accommodate, seen as "the work done by a speaker to change and adapt one's communication to the interlocutors, their socio-cultural background or the socio-cultural context of the exchange" (Cogo 2016a, 366), that can lead towards and ensure effective communication, often reached by means of pragmatic fluency and strategic moves.

BELF-informed practices in business-oriented ELT could hence be promoted by taking into account and developing the following areas.

- Activities aimed at raising awareness and practice of communication strategies, both speaker and listener-initiated, within meaningful meaning-negotiation contexts

This area would more generally be set within an 'active listening' perspective, which sees practices aimed at effective communication and mutual understanding relying both on the speaker and on the listener, and hence communication strategies as part of 'normal pragmatic practice' (Widdowson 2003). The relativity of notions of 'perfect communication' (Pitzl 2010) in any language, and of 'correctness' as associated only to native-speaker/ENL norms would constitute a side area, that could help develop awareness of, and respect for, other 'accents' (e.g. Kankaanranta 2012; see also the awareness-raising activity 'My English' in Chan and Frendo 2014), as well as the use of multilingual repertoires of speakers as a resource (e.g. Cogo 2016a; 2016b).

The main aim of focusing on Communication Strategies would be to improve communication skills to interact in BELF contexts, whether for L2 or L1 speakers, and more specifically develop BELF competence as described in the GCC model (see also Nickerson 2012; 2015). For instance, extracts from the professional subcorpus in VOICE, such as the following examples (see Franceschi 2019, 65), could be used to raise awareness of how Communication strategies are effectively employed in BELF settings.

Excerpt 1 (VOICE, PBmtg300)
2261 S8: [...] you (start) </7> to (offer all of your) (.)
2262 S2: <7> mhm </7>
2263 S8: shippers you know i mean =
2264 S2: = yeah
2265 S8: hh the people which are booking with you huh?

In this case, attention could be drawn on how a paraphrase of the word "shippers" is made to pre-empt a possible non-understanding of the term, and in the next example (Excerpt 2) on different ways of dealing with requests for clarification (Franceschi submitted):

Excerpt 2 (VOICE, PBmtg3)

2278 S1: okay (4) er NOW er talking about TARGET . (2) er (.) kids are (no more) (.) GULLIBLE
{word is used in the presentation material} than adults. per<5>haps even less so </5> they're
2279 S5: <5><un> xxxxx </un></5>
2280 S4: excuse me er (.) GULLIBLE i've never heard that word. what does that mean? (.)
2281 S5: hm
2282 SX-1: <pvc> gullabry <ipa> ˈɡʌləbri </ipa> </pvc> (more like) <6> that?</6>
2283 S4: <6> @ </6>
2284 S5: @@ (.)
2285 S2: <Lɪkor> x [first name5] xx?</Lɪkor>
2286 S4: gullible?
2287 S1: gullible gullible (1) yeah gullible means (2) not english word (.) (but) like er GREEDY ? (.)
[...]
2319 S1: <2> O:H </2> yeah i think <3> (it) EASY to be influenced </3> [...]

In Excerpt 2, attention could be drawn on how clarification of a word ("gullible") is dealt with, first with a different (non-standard) pronunciation provided by SX-1 and then, after S4's repetition of the problematic lexical item with a rising intonation, through paraphrasing by S1, at first with an uncertain definition, and then with a more appropriate one. Raising awareness of such strategies as commonly used in BELF interactions can certainly represent a starting point to foster active practice of these pragmatic moves.

It should be noted that ELT business materials generally do not include a focus on Communication Strategies in a consistent and BELF-oriented way (e.g. Franceschi 2018; Vettorel 2019). However, some recent materials presenting collections of activities devote attention to this area, as for example, Chan and Frendo (2014), where a few tasks on active listening in business communication are presented; some suggestions for the inclusion of pragmatic moves are included in Kiczowiak and Lowe (2018), too. Active listening in more general contexts is also examined in Chong (2018), with a series of tips and reflections that could well be adapted in BELF-oriented teaching. The use of multilingual resources is however very rarely – if ever – included in pedagogic materials, particularly in their accommodation and rapport-building function, which has been shown to play an important role in BELF. Certainly, corpora including interactions in business contexts (e.g. VOICE) could be used for awareness-raising activities, exemplifying how BELF users deploy all resources at their disposal to cooperatively construct meaning, as in the examples above. Such activities would then be followed by active practice, with tasks involving simulations of interactions focusing on

employing these resources, and on communication strategies (e.g. asking for clarification/repetition, repetition/reformulation/paraphrase, etc.).

- Cultural and intercultural awareness; knowledge and respect for other cultures; corporate cultures

Aspects related to differences in cultural practices have been shown to play an important role in BELF (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta 2005), together with corporate cultures. Effective communication in international and intercutural BELF settings is based upon a range of complex and interweaving aspects that, as we have seen, go well beyond a fixed view of 'national cultures', and ought hence to be addressed in teaching practices (e.g. Kikzkowlak and Lowe 2018).

Tasks related to (inter)cultural awareness are generally included in ELT business coursebooks, particularly in more recent or specifically-focused ones (see for instance Dignen 2011), as well as in collection of activities to complement coursebooks and classroom practices (e.g. Gibson 2000; Chan and Frendo 2014). However, in many cases the perspective that is presented in coursebooks is connected to 'nationalities', where 'other cultures' are situated in a nation-state static perspective, rather than as a complex, multiple and on-going product of trans-national and trans-cultural fluxes (Angouri 2010; Baker 2015), as it is often and increasingly the case in ELF and BELF contexts. Furthermore, such representations should also go beyond Western-oriented perspectives (Nickerson 2015). The same can be said when looking at volumes for professional language learning addressed either at classroom work (e.g. Dignen 2011), or providing additional materials and activities (e.g. Gibson 2000), which do include examples aimed at developing intercultural awareness and communication across cultures. However interesting, and certainly useful as a first step to promote knowledge and respect for other cultures (e.g. Kankaanranta 2012), the overall perspective adopted in these materials cannot be defined as BELF-oriented, but is rather, once again, in the greatest majority of cases based on a 'national' view of cultures.

In this case, too, ELF corpora including BELF data could provide opportunities for reflection on (inter)cultural aspects in professional contexts; the Intercultural Awareness (ICA) model developed by Baker (2015) could for instance constitute a guideline for the different steps, in connection to the Multicultural Competence layer of GCC.

One additional aspect that ought to be taken into consideration is that of corporate cultures, which may present differences in conventions, discourse practices as well as strategies for communication (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta 2005). In this respect, Communities of Practice (CoP) may be at work within corporate cultures (Angouri 2010), or even shorter-lived Transient International Groups (TIGs, Pitzl 2018; 2019), with their own cultural and interactional practices. In this case attention could be drawn to the specificity of these contexts, with awareness-raising and noticing tasks on data from literature and, when available, BELF-related corpora. Such awareness-raising activities could then be followed by tasks aimed at guided and freer practice, for example within a task-based and project work approach, in BELF-oriented communicative contexts.

- Building and maintaining rapport/relational work

One area that has been shown to be particularly relevant in BELF interactions, and that cuts across all categories above and the three layers of GCC (e.g. Pullin 2010a; 2013a; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011, 260) is that of relational work aimed at creating and maintaining positive interpersonal rapport among the participants. Building and maintaining rapport in BELF is carried out above all through small talk, which has been shown to be enhanced by intercultural skills, as well as through the use of the participants' plurilingual repertoires, where other languages are employed in addition to English as the common code (e.g. Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Cogo 2016a; Poncini 2003; 2013; Sung 2017). While topics and activities related to small talk in different work situations are generally tackled in business ELT coursebooks (e.g. networking events, greetings and conversation topics, see Vettorel 2019), they are once again not presented from a BELF perspective. Employing examples from BELF data, similarly to what was exemplified above, could in this case too represent a starting point to first raise awareness of and then practise language use in realistic contexts.

To sum up, BELF-oriented pedagogic ELT materials and classroom practices in all the three main areas above should be connected to 'authentic' data, deriving both from BELF corpora and from 'real(istic)' work situations, for example through case studies, simulations and problem-solving activities. This would foster first of all knowledge and awareness of linguacultural and professional differences, as well as opportunities for reflection on how (effective) communication is realised in 'authentic' BELF interactions (see

e.g. Sung 2017; Evans 2013). Activities aimed at raising awareness of these differences, and strategies to overcome them in BELF use, could be integrated in classroom work from lower levels (Pullin 2015, 47), focusing both on intercultural and strategic competence, for example through noticing tasks on differences in telephoning, also drawing on the students' experiences, or examining differences in terms of address through mini-research projects. Subsequently, these tasks would lead to the development and building of skills in all the three layers of GCC 'in context'. Such activities could be realised both in face-to-face, task-based projects, possibly including internship experiences abroad, too (Faltzi and Sougari 2018), but also taking advantage of the affordances offered by digital technologies. Blended learning, digital platforms, webconferences and social media can indeed represent relevant environments to devise and put into practice such projects, providing cooperative and real-life experiences of BELF use.

5. Concluding remarks

As we have seen, internationally-oriented business communication through English in its lingua franca role is characterised by meaning negotiation, the use of pragmatic strategies 'to get the job done', as well as in rapport building. Professional communication in the domain of business today involves a complex and interweaving set of skills, represented in the Global Communicative Competence (GCC) model (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011), comprising Multicultural competence, Competence in BELF and Business knowhow. In order to adequately prepare (future) professionals to communicate internationally in the globalized world of work, ELT business materials, syllabi and training practices should include elements from all the three layers of GCC, and above all those connected to the development of BELF and multicultural competence; as Pullin points out, the GCC notion is "particularly relevant in curriculum development for BELF", not least with reference to the notion of 'socio-pragmatic competence' as comprising "social norms and their relative natures" and "pragmatic strategies for communication" (2015, 39), which characterise the adaptive and flexible nature of BELF interactions.

In turn, this implies a need to reconsider traditional notions of linguistic (native-like) competence: as we have seen, effective communication in (B)ELF does not rely on 'grammatical (ENL) correctness', but on the

different aspects of GCC, moving away from a native/non-native speaker dichotomy and emphasising a strategic use of language for successful communication. What ought to be promoted in business-related ELT is then the development of what has been defined for ELF as communicative and 'lingual' capability' (Seidlhofer and Widdowson 2017) where the speakers' repertoires are strategically used in the co-construction of understanding, both in rapport-building and in the process of 'getting the job done', tailoring it to the specificity of BELF contexts. With Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta, "in BELF teaching, learners should be trained to see themselves as communicators, with real jobs to perform and real needs to fulfil; it is these jobs and needs that should be emphasised, not the language they use to carry them out" (2005, 419). Such a shift in perspective would also entail going beyond conceptualizations of language as 'native-like', rather seeing it as 'appropriated' to suit the participants' communicative goals.

As it has been pointed out for ELF, in order to take account of BELF research findings in ELT business materials and pedagogic practices, teacher education plays an important role (e.g. Pullin 2015), both in applying a BELF-aware approach and in exploring ways to exploit and integrate existing materials with 'authentic' BELF language use. Indeed, awareness in this area, and particularly in the importance of communication strategies in (B)ELF communication, is growing (e.g. Pullin 2013b, 2015; Seidlhofer 2011; Kiczkowiak and Lowe 2018). However, the challenge Nickerson identified more than ten years ago in applying BELF research findings to the "development of appropriate teaching materials" (2005, 378) still seems to be open. In this perspective, a crucial future research area in business ELT materials and practices for researchers, material developers, teacher educators and practitioners alike would be to include the pragmatic and skilful use of Communication Strategies by BELF users 'to get the job done' and build rapport; working in this direction could contribute to the development of those skills and competencies needed to effectively communicate in BELF contexts.

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