



**EXPLORING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND THEIR
EFFECTIVENESS IN BUSINESS ENGLISH AS A LINGUA
FRANCA IN MYANMAR ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION**

YIN MIN HLA

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY**

2025

©COPYRIGHT BY MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY

**EXPLORING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND THEIR
EFFECTIVENESS IN BUSINESS ENGLISH AS A LINGUA
FRANCA IN MYANMAR ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION**

YIN MIN HLA

**THIS DISSERTATION IS A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY**

2025

©COPYRIGHT BY MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY



DISSERTATION APPROVAL
MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY
FOR
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT


Dissertation Title: Exploring Communication Strategies and Their Effectiveness in Business English as a Lingua Franca in Myanmar Economic Organization.

Author: Yin Min Hla


Examination Committee:

Assistant Professor Denchai Prabjandee, Ph. D.	Chairperson
Atima Kaewsa-ard, Ph. D.	Member
Assistant Professor Wilawan Champakaew, Ph. D.	Member
Sirikorn Bamroongkit, Ph. D.	Member
Phirunkhana Phichiensathien, Ph. D.	Member

Advisor:


.....Advisor
(Atima Kaewsa-ard, Ph. D.)

Dean:


.....
(Associate Professor Sorabud Rungronjsuwan, Ph. D.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, my deepest gratitude to my advisor Dr Atima Kaewsard who have helped me and shape the ideas from the beginning of this PhD journey. I am highly appreciating the expertise she gave me, the invaluable advice and insightful feedback she offered me, encouragement as well as patience. This dissertation would not have been possible without her guidance.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis committee members: Assistant Professor Dr.Denchai Prabjandee, Assistant Professor Dr. Wilawan Champakaew, Dr.Phirunkhana Phichiensathien, and Dr. Sirikorn Bamroongkit—for their constructive feedback, and insightful comments to the improvement of my dissertation.

I also would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all my professors in the English for Professional Development (EPD) Program at Mae Fah Luang University, Dr. Maneerat Chuachoo Wong, Dr. Bhornsawa Inpin, and Assistant Professor Dr. Sasima Charubusap, Associate Professor Dr. Sorabud Rungronjsuwan, for their dedicated teaching, and continuous support throughout my course of study at MFU. And I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mae Fah Luang University for providing the research writing grant.

Many thanks are also given to my colleagues who took part in this study with ethical issues approach participants for my study and DICA office allowed data collection. Lastly, my thankfulness to my beloved parents for their endless love and unwavering support all my life. I also thank my two elder sisters in helping me complete my dissertation throughout the years.

Yin Min Hla

Dissertation Title	Exploring Communication Strategies and Their Effectiveness in Business English as a Lingua Franca in Myanmar Economic Organization
Author	Yin Min Hla
Degree	Doctor of Philosophy (English for Professional Development)
Advisor	Atima Kaewsard, Ph. D.

ABSTRACT

As English increasingly functions as a shared working language in international business and public-sector institutions, understanding how communication is managed beyond linguistic accuracy has become essential. This study investigates communication strategies in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)–mediated workplace interaction within a Myanmar economic organization, focusing on how professionals strategically manage meaning, accountability, hierarchy, and intercultural relations under institutional constraints.

Adopting an embedded mixed-methods research design, the study draws on multiple data sources, including semi-structured interviews with 15 officials, a corpus of 74 professional emails, recordings of real-time workplace meetings, and a structured questionnaire. Guided by a conceptual framework that views BELF communication strategies as interactional resources rather than compensatory linguistic tools, the analysis integrates functional content analysis of written communication with conversation analysis of spoken interaction.

The findings reveal that BELF communication strategies in this context function as situated interactional practices shaped by institutional roles, procedural accountability, and intercultural sensitivity. In written communication, politeness and indirectness are systematically deployed to establish institutional alignment, assign responsibility, and maintain professional relations without undermining authority. In real-time meetings, strategies such as repetition, reformulation, clarification requests, and multimodal resources emerge sequentially in response to interactional trouble,

enabling participants to negotiate understanding and sustain interactional flow in high-stakes decision-making contexts. Rather than compensating for limited proficiency, these strategies reflect a high degree of interactional competence tailored to institutional demands.

The study further demonstrates that the effectiveness of BELF communication strategies lies not in fluency or native-like accuracy, but in their capacity to support task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration despite linguistic asymmetries and organizational constraints. Drawing on these findings, the study argues for a reconceptualization of BELF-oriented English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training. It suggests that professional communication training should move beyond language correctness to emphasize interactional awareness, institutional accountability, and strategic meaning-making in real workplace contexts.

By examining BELF communication in an underexplored public-sector economic organization in Myanmar, this study contributes to BELF scholarship by extending its empirical and theoretical scope to Global South institutional settings. It advances an interactional understanding of professional communication and provides a principled foundation for context-sensitive ESP training grounded in authentic workplace practices.

Keywords: Business English as a Lingua Franca, BELF Communication, Communication Strategies, Language Proficiency, Intercultural Competence

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 BELF Communication in Trade and Investment in Myanmar	4
1.3 Significance of the Problems	7
1.4 Research Objectives	10
1.5 Research Questions	10
1.6 Significance of the Study	11
1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study	12
1.8 Definitions of Keys Terms	13
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	1.6
2.1 Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)	16
2.2 Key Features of BELF Communication in Workplace Interaction	22
2.3 Communication Strategies in BELF Workplace Interaction	28
2.4 Communication Strategies in BELF Contexts	36
2.5 Intercultural Communicative in BELF	43
2.6 English as a Working language in ASEAN	52
2.7 BELF Communication in Myanmar	56
2.8 English Language Education and Workplace Communication in Myanmar	60
2.9 Empirical Studies on BELF and Communication Strategies	65
2.10 Conceptual Framework of the Study	69
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	73
3.1 Overview of the Study	73
3.2 Research Design	74
3.3 Population and Sampling	75

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
3.4 Data Collection Instruments	78
3.5 Data Analysis	82
3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study	86
3.7 Ethical Consideration	88
4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS	90
4.1 Demographic Information of the Participants	90
4.2 The Use of Common Communication Strategies	92
4.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the Workplace	101
4.4 Politeness and Directness in Email Communication	108
4.5 Conversation Analysis of Real-time Institutional Meetings	113
5 DISCUSSION	119
5.1 English Language Communication Practices in the Myanmar Economic Organization	120
5.2 The Effectiveness of BELF Communication Strategies in Achieving Business Objectives and Fostering Intercultural Collaboration	126
5.3 Implications for ESP Training in BELF- Mediated Institutional Contexts	131
5.4 Limitations of the Study	136
5.5 Recommendations	138
REFERENCES	143
APPENDICES	149
APPENDIX A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FORM	149
APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTION	156
APPENDIX C CONSENT FROM	158
APPENDIX D MEETING TRANSCRIPT	159
CURRICULUM VITAE	162

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1 Participants Groups and Data Sources	77
4.1 Participants' Professional and Language Background	91
4.2 Summary of Communication Strategies Used by Participants	93
4.3 Clarity and Explicitness Strategies	94
4.4 Negotiation of Meaning Strategies	96
4.5 Adaptability and Context Sensitivity Strategies	98
4.6 Other Significant Communication Strategies	99



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
2.1 Model of ICC	47
2.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study	70



ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
BELF	Business English as a Lingua Franca
ESP	English for Specific Purpose
ICC	Intercultural Communication Competence
DICA	Directorate of Investment and Company Administration
MIC	Myanmar Investment Commission
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalization has intensified communication across national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, particularly in international trade and investment. As business activities increasingly involve collaboration among professionals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, English has become a shared working language in many international business settings. Crystal (2003) explains that English has gained global prominence because of historical, economic, and technological forces that have expanded its use across international domains. In business contexts, this means that English is often used not primarily as a native-speaker language, but as a practical means for exchanging information, coordinating action, building professional relationships, and accomplishing organizational objectives.

Within international business communication, this use of English is commonly understood as Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) define BELF as the use of English as a shared language among business professionals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, where communicative effectiveness and task accomplishment are prioritized over adherence to native-speaker norms. Similarly, Seidlhofer (2011) emphasizes that lingua franca communication is oriented toward intelligibility, mutual understanding, and pragmatic success rather than linguistic correctness alone. From this perspective, BELF communication is not simply a matter of using correct English; it is a goal-oriented form of communication in which speakers adapt their language to accomplish professional tasks.

A key feature of BELF communication is its emphasis on strategic language use. In multilingual business interaction, communicative effectiveness does not result from the use of English alone. Rather, it depends on how speakers strategically manage meaning, clarify procedures, negotiate understanding, maintain politeness, and sustain

professional relationships in situated workplace contexts. Jenkins (2007) argues that lingua franca communication involves flexibility and accommodation among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. In BELF settings, this flexibility is realized through communication strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, paraphrasing, backchanneling, mitigation, code-switching, and non-verbal cues. These strategies help participants prevent misunderstanding, maintain interactional flow, and support task accomplishment.

Importantly, communication strategies in BELF should not be viewed merely as compensatory techniques used by speakers with limited English proficiency. Earlier views of communication strategies often treated them as problem-solving devices for overcoming gaps in linguistic knowledge. However, more recent ELF and BELF scholarship has shifted attention toward the interactional and cooperative nature of communication. For example, Cogo and Dewey (2012) describe lingua franca communication as a dynamic process in which speakers collaboratively construct meaning through adaptation, accommodation, and negotiation. Björkman (2014) also shows that strategies such as clarification, repetition, and reformulation function as normal and effective resources in multilingual professional interaction. Therefore, in BELF-mediated workplaces, communication strategies can be understood as interactional resources that allow professionals to manage linguistic diversity, intercultural differences, and task demands.

In institutional business settings, BELF communication becomes even more complex because professionals are not only communicating as individuals but also acting as representatives of their organizations. Workplace communication may involve official correspondence, meetings, negotiations, regulatory explanations, investment procedures, and decision-making processes. Poncini (2004) notes that business communication is closely linked to relationship-building, trust, and the coordination of professional action. In public-sector or regulatory organizations, these communicative demands are further shaped by institutional roles, hierarchical relationships, accountability, and the need for procedural clarity. A misunderstanding in such contexts may therefore affect not only interpersonal communication but also institutional efficiency, professional trust, and organizational decision-making.

Previous studies have shown that BELF plays an important role in international business communication by supporting task coordination, reducing misunderstanding, and strengthening professional relationships. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), for instance, found that business professionals often value domain-specific knowledge and communicative effectiveness more than native-like grammatical accuracy. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) similarly argue that successful BELF communication depends on shared business knowledge, pragmatic competence, and the ability to achieve workplace goals. In addition, studies of ELF and BELF interaction have identified strategies such as repetition, reformulation, clarification, accommodation, and negotiation of meaning as important resources for achieving communicative success (Mauranen, 2012; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Björkman, 2014).

Nevertheless, much of the existing BELF research has focused on multinational corporations, private-sector organizations, or Western-dominated business contexts. For example, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) examined BELF communication among professionals in Finland-based companies, while Marra (2014) explored how non-native speakers used communicative strategies in a Swedish business context. Although these studies provide valuable insights into BELF communication, they offer limited understanding of how BELF strategies operate in public-sector economic organizations in developing or transitional economies. Such contexts are important because communication is often shaped not only by linguistic and intercultural diversity, but also by bureaucratic procedures, institutional hierarchy, accountability demands, and high-stakes decision-making.

In addition, many previous studies have examined BELF communication at a broad level, focusing on general communicative effectiveness, linguistic accommodation, or language needs. Less attention has been paid to how specific communication strategies are enacted, negotiated, and adapted in authentic workplace interactions. This gap is particularly important in institutional contexts where meaning must be managed carefully across spoken and written communication. As Mauranen (2012) points out, lingua franca interaction is a site of continuous meaning negotiation, where speakers monitor understanding and adjust communication in real time. Therefore, further empirical research is needed to examine how BELF users

strategically manage meaning, procedural clarity, accountability, and intercultural interaction in real workplace communication.

Against this background, the present study investigates the communication strategies used by staff in a Myanmar economic organization when engaging in BELF-mediated workplace communication. By focusing on how these strategies are used to negotiate meaning, maintain procedural clarity, manage intercultural interaction, and support task accomplishment, the study seeks to contribute to a more context-sensitive understanding of BELF communication. In particular, it examines BELF communication strategies as interactional resources within an underexplored public-sector economic context, thereby extending existing BELF research beyond Western corporate settings.

1.2 BELF Communication in Trade and Investment in Myanmar

Myanmar's engagement with regional and global trade and investment has increased the need for effective English-mediated communication between local professionals and international stakeholders. In trade and investment-related contexts, English is frequently used as a shared working language among participants who do not share the same first language. This is particularly relevant in Myanmar because many of the country's major trade and investment partners, including ASEAN member states, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and several European countries, do not use English as their native language. In this sense, English in Myanmar's trade and investment communication functions primarily as Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), where mutual understanding, professional coordination, and task accomplishment are more central than native-like accuracy.

The trade and investment sector in Myanmar provides an important context for examining BELF communication because it involves frequent interaction between Myanmar professionals and international business actors. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) emphasize that BELF communication is strongly oriented toward accomplishing business tasks and maintaining shared understanding among professionals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. In Myanmar's trade and investment

context, such communication often occurs in formal and institutionally sensitive situations, including investment approval, company registration, regulatory clarification, policy explanation, official correspondence, and international negotiation. Therefore, BELF communication in this setting is not limited to routine information exchange; it is closely connected to institutional procedures, professional responsibility, and accountability.

Within Myanmar's economic governance framework, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) plays a central role in facilitating and regulating foreign investment and international business activities. Staff members in such organizations routinely communicate with foreign investors, international organizations, business representatives, and regional partners through English. These stakeholders bring diverse linguistic repertoires, cultural norms, and communicative expectations to workplace interaction. As Seidlhofer (2011) argues, lingua franca communication requires speakers to focus on intelligibility, adaptability, and pragmatic effectiveness rather than strict conformity to native-speaker norms. In the DICA context, this means that successful communication depends not only on English proficiency, but also on how participants strategically manage meaning, maintain professional relationships, and align communication with institutional expectations.

BELF communication in this context is shaped by several layers of complexity. First, staff and international stakeholders may have different levels of English proficiency and different degrees of familiarity with investment-related terminology and procedures. Second, they may have different expectations regarding politeness, directness, turn-taking, clarification, and decision-making. Third, communication takes place within a public-sector institutional environment where hierarchy, formality, procedural clarity, and accountability are important. House (1999) notes that lingua franca interactions may be affected by pragmatic differences and culturally shaped expectations, while Jenkins (2007) highlights the need for flexibility and accommodation in multilingual communication. These perspectives suggest that communication strategies in Myanmar's trade and investment context should not be understood simply as individual language choices or signs of limited English ability, but as situated responses to workplace demands, institutional roles, and intercultural interaction.

Previous research on English as a Lingua Franca has shown that non-native speakers often rely on cooperative and adaptive strategies to establish shared meaning and prevent communication breakdowns. Mauranen (2012), for example, explains that lingua franca communication involves continuous meaning negotiation, as speakers monitor understanding and adjust their language use during interaction. Similarly, Cogo and Dewey (2012) highlight accommodation, collaboration, and pragmatic adjustment as important features of ELF communication. In BELF-mediated workplace communication, such strategies may include clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, paraphrasing, reformulation, mitigation, backchanneling, and non-verbal cues. However, in Myanmar's trade and investment context, these strategies are further shaped by the formal and high-stakes nature of institutional communication. Staff must often explain regulations, clarify procedures, request documents, respond to inquiries, and negotiate understanding while maintaining politeness, professional authority, and organizational accountability.

Sociocultural and educational factors also influence BELF communication in Myanmar. Access to English education and opportunities for professional English use may vary among staff, leading to differences in confidence and communicative flexibility. At the same time, culturally embedded norms of politeness, hierarchy, indirectness, and face-saving may influence how staff ask for clarification, express disagreement, confirm understanding, or correct misunderstanding. Spencer-Oatey (2008) emphasizes that rapport management and face considerations are central to intercultural interaction, especially in contexts where professional relationships and social expectations must be carefully maintained. In public-sector economic organizations, these considerations become even more significant because communication may involve senior officials, external clients, and international partners. Therefore, the use of BELF communication strategies in Myanmar cannot be fully understood without considering the relationship between language, culture, hierarchy, and institutional responsibility.

Despite the growing relevance of BELF communication in Myanmar's trade and investment sector, empirical research on how communication strategies are enacted in actual workplace interaction remains limited. Existing studies in related contexts have often focused on general English proficiency, communication needs, or training

requirements. While such studies are useful, they provide limited insight into how professionals strategically manage meaning in authentic institutional communication, especially across spoken and written modes. Björkman (2014) shows that strategies such as clarification, repetition, and reformulation can function as normal interactional resources in multilingual professional settings. However, more research is needed to understand how these strategies operate in public-sector economic organizations where communication is shaped by hierarchy, accountability, intercultural expectations, and high-stakes decision-making.

Accordingly, Myanmar represents not merely a contextual setting but a theoretically meaningful site for exploring BELF communication as a dynamic, situated, and institutionally embedded phenomenon. Examining how professionals in a Myanmar economic organization employ communication strategies to negotiate meaning, manage intercultural interaction, maintain procedural clarity, and accomplish organizational goals can contribute to a deeper understanding of BELF beyond Western corporate contexts. It can also provide empirical insights for developing more context-sensitive ESP training and professional communication support for staff working in international trade and investment environments.

1.3 Significance of the Problems

The effective use of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) has become increasingly important in international trade and investment contexts, particularly in economic organizations that operate between national institutional systems and global business practices. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) argue that BELF communication is strongly oriented toward achieving shared understanding and accomplishing business tasks among professionals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In Myanmar, public-sector economic organizations such as the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) play a central role in facilitating communication between domestic institutions and international stakeholders. Staff in such organizations are required to use English to communicate with foreign investors, international organizations, business representatives, and

ASEAN counterparts. These interactions often involve diverse linguistic backgrounds, cultural expectations, professional norms, and institutional responsibilities.

In this context, communication challenges cannot be understood only as problems of limited English proficiency. Although language proficiency remains important, BELF-mediated workplace communication also requires staff to manage institutional procedures, explain regulations, clarify requirements, negotiate meaning, and maintain professional relationships across cultural boundaries. Seidlhofer (2011) emphasizes that lingua franca communication should be understood in terms of intelligibility, pragmatic effectiveness, and mutual understanding rather than native-speaker correctness alone. This perspective is particularly relevant in trade and investment settings, where misunderstanding may affect document processing, investment approval, regulatory compliance, institutional credibility, and collaboration with international partners. Therefore, the central issue is not simply whether staff can use English accurately, but how they strategically use English to achieve mutual understanding and accomplish institutional tasks.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of English proficiency and communicative competence in international business communication. However, much of the existing research has tended to frame communication challenges as linguistic deficits or training needs. Such perspectives are useful, but they provide limited insight into how communication is actually managed in real workplace interaction. Mauranen (2012), for example, views lingua franca communication as a process of continuous meaning negotiation in which speakers monitor understanding and adjust their language use during interaction. In BELF-mediated institutional contexts, professionals must respond to multiple communicative pressures at the same time, including varying levels of English proficiency, intercultural differences, hierarchical relationships, bureaucratic procedures, and accountability demands. These conditions require communication strategies that help participants clarify meaning, maintain interactional flow, manage politeness, and support task accomplishment.

Existing BELF research has also focused mainly on multinational corporations, private-sector organizations, or Western-dominated business contexts. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010), for instance, examined BELF communication in Finland-based corporate settings, while Marra (2014) investigated communicative

strategies in a Swedish business context. Although these studies provide valuable insights into BELF communication, comparatively less attention has been paid to public-sector economic organizations in developing or transitional economies. This contextual gap is important because communication in public-sector institutions is often shaped by formal procedures, organizational hierarchy, regulatory responsibility, and culturally embedded norms of interaction. In Myanmar, these factors may influence how staff select, adapt, or constrain their use of communication strategies when interacting with international stakeholders.

In addition, there is an empirical gap in the current literature. Many studies have examined BELF communication through general perceptions, language needs, or training-oriented data, but fewer studies have investigated how communication strategies are enacted in authentic workplace communication. Björkman (2014) shows that strategies such as clarification, repetition, and reformulation function as normal interactional resources in multilingual professional settings. However, more empirical attention is needed to examine how such strategies operate in real spoken and written workplace data, such as institutional meetings and professional emails. Without examining these real communicative events, it remains difficult to understand how BELF users negotiate meaning, manage misunderstanding, and accomplish workplace goals in practice.

There is also a theoretical gap. Existing studies have not sufficiently explained how BELF communication strategies function as interactional resources for managing meaning, hierarchy, accountability, and intercultural relations in institutional settings. Earlier views of communication strategies often treated them as techniques for overcoming linguistic limitations. However, more recent ELF research has emphasized the collaborative and adaptive nature of lingua franca communication. Cogo and Dewey (2012), for example, argue that ELF interaction involves accommodation, flexibility, and mutual adjustment among speakers. In public-sector economic organizations, communication strategies may therefore serve broader institutional functions. Clarification requests may help reduce procedural risk, repetition may reinforce accountability, indirectness may maintain politeness and hierarchy, and reformulation may support mutual understanding across linguistic and cultural differences. Therefore, BELF communication strategies need to be examined not merely as language

techniques, but as situated interactional practices shaped by workplace and institutional demands.

Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates communication strategies used by staff in a Myanmar economic organization when engaging in BELF-mediated workplace communication. The study examines how these strategies are used in real spoken and written interactions to negotiate meaning, maintain procedural clarity, manage intercultural communication, and support task accomplishment. By focusing on communication strategies as interactional resources, this study seeks to contribute to BELF research by extending understanding of workplace communication beyond Western corporate contexts and by providing empirical insights into how BELF operates within a public-sector economic organization in Myanmar.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present study aims to:

1. To identify the key communication strategies used by staff in a Myanmar economic organization when engaging in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication.
2. To examine how the identified BELF communication strategies facilitate or impede task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration within the organization.

1.5 Research Questions

To achieve the research objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What communication strategies are commonly used by staff in a Myanmar economic organization when engaging in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication?
2. In what ways do the identified BELF communication strategies facilitate or impede task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration within the organization?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in theoretical, contextual, and practical dimensions, particularly within the fields of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), workplace communication, and applied linguistics. At the theoretical level, the study contributes to BELF research by examining communication strategies as situated and interactional resources rather than as isolated linguistic techniques or compensatory responses to limited English proficiency. By analyzing how communication strategies are enacted in authentic workplace interactions, the study extends existing understandings of BELF communication beyond general notions of communicative effectiveness and highlights how meaning negotiation, task accomplishment, and intercultural collaboration are managed in institutional business contexts.

From a contextual and empirical perspective, the study addresses an underexplored setting in BELF research by focusing on a public-sector economic organization in Myanmar. Much of the existing BELF literature has been based on multinational corporations, private-sector organizations, or Western-dominated business environments. In contrast, this study provides empirical insights into BELF communication in a developing economy where workplace interaction is shaped by institutional hierarchy, bureaucratic procedures, intercultural diversity, accountability demands, and non-native English speaker communication. In this regard, the study contributes to a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of BELF communication across diverse global business settings.

Methodologically, the study is significant because it draws on multiple sources of workplace communication data, including questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, professional emails, and recorded workplace interactions. This allows the study to examine both participants' reported perceptions of communication strategies and the actual use of strategies in spoken and written workplace communication. By integrating these data sources, the study provides a more comprehensive account of how BELF communication strategies function in real institutional practice.

In practical terms, the findings of this study have implications for professional communication, staff capacity development, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

training in Myanmar's economic organizations. By identifying communication strategies that support mutual understanding, procedural clarity, task accomplishment, and intercultural collaboration, the study provides an empirical basis for designing more context-appropriate professional communication support. Rather than relying only on assumed language deficiencies or general business English models, ESP training and workplace communication development can be informed by the actual communication practices observed in the organization.

Overall, the significance of this study lies in its contribution to advancing theoretical understanding of BELF communication as a strategic, situated, and institutionally embedded phenomenon. At the same time, the study offers empirically grounded insights that can inform professional practice and ESP development in Myanmar and similar non-native English-speaking institutional business contexts.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication strategies used by staff in one public-sector economic organization in Myanmar. The scope of the study is limited to workplace communication in which English is used as a shared working language between Myanmar staff and international stakeholders. The study examines both spoken and written communication, including questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, professional email communication, and recorded workplace interactions.

The study specifically investigates communication strategies used to achieve mutual understanding, manage meaning negotiation, maintain procedural clarity, support task accomplishment, and facilitate intercultural collaboration. These strategies include clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, paraphrasing, backchanneling, code-switching, politeness strategies, and non-verbal cues. The study does not aim to evaluate general English proficiency, compare English use across multiple organizations, or assess the effectiveness of an ESP training program.

A major limitation of the study is its single-site research setting. Since the study is conducted within one Myanmar economic organization, the findings may not be statistically generalizable to all economic organizations in Myanmar or to organizations in other sectors or cultural contexts. However, the focused setting allows for an in-depth examination of BELF communication as it occurs in a specific institutional workplace context.

Another limitation concerns the number of participants and communicative events included in the study. Because the research involves real workplace communication, access to participants, documents, emails, and meetings was limited by organizational permission, confidentiality, and ethical considerations. Therefore, the data may not represent all possible BELF communication practices across the organization or across other public-sector institutions.

In addition, time constraints affected the scope of data collection. Due to the nature of the business and administrative environment, it was not possible to observe or record all meetings, negotiations, or workplace interactions. The study therefore relies on selected communicative events that were accessible, approved, and relevant to the research objectives.

Despite these limitations, the study provides context-specific and analytically meaningful insights into how BELF communication strategies are used in a public-sector economic organization in Myanmar. Rather than seeking broad statistical generalization, the study aims to offer a detailed understanding of how communication strategies function as situated and interactional resources in authentic workplace communication.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

Communication Strategies in this study refer the verbal, written, and non-verbal interactional practices employed by staff in a Myanmar economic organization to achieve mutual understanding and accomplish professional tasks in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) contexts. These strategies include clarification requests, confirmation checks, negotiation of meaning, repetition, reformulation, paraphrasing,

backchanneling, code-switching, politeness strategies, mitigation, non-verbal cues, humor, and letting misunderstandings pass when appropriate. In this study, communication strategies are not treated merely as compensatory techniques for limited English proficiency. Rather, they are understood as adaptive and situated interactional resources used to manage meaning, maintain interactional flow, support procedural clarity, and facilitate intercultural workplace communication.

Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in this study refers to the use of English as a shared working language among non-native English speakers in professional business and institutional interactions within a Myanmar economic organization. BELF is characterized by its functional and task-oriented nature, in which communicative effectiveness, mutual understanding, and task accomplishment are prioritized over native-speaker accuracy, fluency, or linguistic norms. In this study, BELF is examined as a situated workplace practice shaped by institutional roles, intercultural interaction, and organizational objectives.

Intercultural Communication Competency (ICC) in this study refers to the ability of participants to manage cultural and communicative differences in workplace interaction. The concept is informed by Byram's model, which includes attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. ICC is used as an interpretive framework for understanding how staff manage intercultural differences, maintain professional relationships, and communicate effectively with interlocutors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this study, ICC is not viewed as fixed cultural knowledge, but as a competence enacted through strategic language use and interactional sensitivity in BELF-mediated workplace communication.

Effectiveness in this study refers to the extent to which BELF communication strategies help participants achieve mutual understanding, accomplish workplace tasks, maintain procedural clarity, manage institutional accountability, and support intercultural collaboration. Effectiveness is not defined primarily in terms of grammatical accuracy, native-like fluency, or linguistic correctness. Instead, it is understood in relation to how communication strategies enable staff to complete professional tasks, clarify meaning, prevent or resolve misunderstanding, maintain appropriate politeness and directness, and sustain cooperative relationships with

international stakeholders. In written communication, effectiveness may be reflected through clear requests, appropriate tone, politeness markers, directness, mitigation, and professional organization of information. In spoken interaction, effectiveness may be reflected through clarification, confirmation, repetition, reformulation, backchanneling, non-verbal cues, and successful negotiation of meaning.

Task Accomplishment refers to the successful completion of workplace communication goals in BELF-mediated interactions. These goals may include explaining regulations, requesting or providing documents, clarifying procedures, confirming information, arranging meetings, negotiating meaning, responding to inquiries, and supporting investment-related communication. Task accomplishment is used as one indicator of communicative effectiveness because BELF communication in this study is closely linked to institutional and professional responsibilities.

Intercultural Collaboration refers to the ability of staff and international stakeholders to work together effectively across linguistic and cultural differences. It involves maintaining mutual understanding, professional rapport, respect, and cooperation during workplace communication. Intercultural collaboration is supported by communication strategies such as clarification, confirmation, politeness, mitigation, adaptation, and non-verbal cues. It may be constrained when differences in language proficiency, hierarchy, politeness norms, directness, or cultural expectations create misunderstanding or limit open communication.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter establishes the theoretical and conceptual foundations for examining communication strategies in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) within a Myanmar economic organization. The chapter critically reviews and synthesizes key literature to develop an analytical framework for understanding BELF communication as a strategic and interactional phenomenon in workplace contexts.

The discussion begins by conceptualizing BELF as a task-oriented and institutionally embedded form of English used among multilingual business professionals. It then examines core features of BELF communication, with particular attention to how meaning is negotiated, managed, and co-constructed in intercultural business interaction. Building on this foundation, the chapter reviews research on communication strategies as interactional resources employed to achieve mutual understanding, maintain cooperation, and accomplish organizational goals in BELF-mediated workplaces.

By integrating insights from BELF studies, communication strategy research, and intercultural communication literature, this chapter constructs a theoretical lens that informs the analysis of authentic workplace interactions in the Myanmar context. This framework provides the basis for identifying, interpreting, and evaluating communication strategies in real-life business practices, thereby supporting the research objectives and questions of the present study.

2.1 Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

2.1.1 Defining Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) refers to the use of English as a shared working language among business professionals who do not share a common first language and who operate within multilingual and multicultural business environments. The concept was introduced to capture the specific nature of English use

in international business contexts, where communication is primarily conducted among non-native speakers and where effectiveness in accomplishing professional tasks takes precedence over conformity to native-speaker linguistic norms (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Unlike traditional notions of Business English rooted in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), BELF does not conceptualize English as a target language to be mastered according to standardized grammatical or stylistic conventions. Instead, BELF emphasizes English as a functional communicative resource that enables cooperation, coordination, and decision-making across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In this sense, BELF reflects a pragmatic orientation toward language use, in which communicative success is evaluated based on whether interlocutors achieve mutual understanding and accomplish business-related objectives rather than on linguistic accuracy or native-like fluency (Nickerson, 2005).

A defining characteristic of BELF is its role as a shared working language among non-native speakers. In many international business settings, English is not owned by any particular linguistic group but is jointly appropriated by its users to serve immediate communicative needs. As a result, BELF communication often displays linguistic variation, simplification, and hybridity, shaped by the participants' diverse linguistic repertoires and professional backgrounds. Such variation is not viewed as a communicative deficiency but as a natural and functional outcome of English being used as a *lingua franca* in business contexts (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011).

The functional orientation of BELF is particularly evident in its focus on task accomplishment and organizational goals. BELF interactions are typically goal-driven, time-constrained, and embedded within institutional settings that demand clarity, efficiency, and accountability. Business professionals using BELF must therefore align their language use with the practical demands of meetings, negotiations, reporting, and decision-making. This orientation encourages communicative practices that prioritize explicitness, shared understanding, and cooperative interaction over linguistic complexity or stylistic sophistication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Taken together, BELF can be understood not merely as a variety of English or a simplified form of business language, but as a context-specific mode of communication shaped by multilingual participation, institutional constraints, and task-

oriented interaction. This conceptualization highlights the importance of examining how BELF users strategically manage communication in real workplace settings, thereby foregrounding communication strategies as a central analytical focus in the study of BELF-mediated business interaction.

2.1.2 BELF and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) is conceptually grounded in the broader framework of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which views English as a shared means of communication among speakers with different first languages rather than as a language owned by native speakers (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). ELF research has emphasized the fluid, adaptive, and negotiated nature of English use in multilingual interactions, highlighting speakers' ability to draw on flexible linguistic and pragmatic resources to achieve mutual understanding. Within this perspective, communicative success is evaluated in terms of intelligibility and interactional effectiveness rather than adherence to standardized linguistic norms.

While BELF shares these foundational principles with ELF, it represents a contextually specific realization of ELF situated within business and organizational environments. Unlike general ELF interactions, which may occur in a wide range of informal or social contexts, BELF communication is embedded in institutional settings characterized by defined roles, professional responsibilities, and organizational objectives. As such, BELF interactions are typically task-oriented, outcome-driven, and shaped by the communicative demands of workplace activities such as meetings, negotiations, reporting, and decision-making (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

The institutional embeddedness of BELF distinguishes it from ELF in important ways. In BELF contexts, communication is not only a means of exchanging information but also a mechanism for coordinating action, maintaining professional relationships, and fulfilling organizational accountability. Business professionals using BELF must align their communicative practices with institutional norms, hierarchical structures, and time constraints, which often require a high degree of clarity, explicitness, and efficiency. These conditions place particular pressure on interlocutors to manage meaning strategically and to ensure that communication supports task accomplishment rather than merely sustaining interaction.

Furthermore, BELF communication often involves asymmetries in power, expertise, and institutional authority, which may influence how meaning is negotiated and how communicative strategies are deployed. Unlike many ELF encounters that emphasize equal interaction among speakers, BELF interactions frequently occur within structured organizational frameworks where participants occupy unequal positions. This institutional dimension shapes not only what is communicated but also how communication unfolds, reinforcing the need for strategic language use that balances efficiency with interpersonal and professional considerations.

From this perspective, BELF can be understood as an institutionally embedded form of ELF in which communicative practices are closely linked to organizational goals and professional roles. While drawing on the flexibility and cooperative orientation central to ELF, BELF foregrounds the strategic management of communication under workplace constraints. This conceptualization underscores the importance of examining BELF communication as situated interaction, where communication strategies function as key resources for negotiating meaning, managing institutional demands, and achieving business objectives in multilingual environments.

2.1.3 BELF and Traditional Business English

Business English has traditionally been conceptualized within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where the primary focus lies in equipping learners with the linguistic knowledge and genre conventions required for professional communication. Within this tradition, Business English instruction often emphasizes mastery of specialized vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and standardized discourse patterns associated with native-speaker models. Communicative competence is typically evaluated in relation to how closely language use aligns with established norms of correctness and appropriateness in professional settings.

In contrast, Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) represents a shift away from norm-oriented and pedagogy-driven conceptions of business language use toward an interactional and practice-based understanding of communication in multilingual workplaces. Rather than treating English as a target language to be mastered, BELF conceptualizes English as a shared communicative resource jointly negotiated by its users in order to accomplish work-related tasks. From this perspective, communicative success is determined not by linguistic accuracy alone but by the extent to which

interlocutors achieve mutual understanding and effectively coordinate professional action (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Another key distinction lies in the role of native-speaker norms. Traditional Business English approaches often implicitly position native-speaker usage as a benchmark for proficiency, even in international business contexts where native speakers may constitute a minority of participants. BELF research challenges this assumption by foregrounding the realities of multilingual business interaction, in which English is primarily used among non-native speakers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In such contexts, adherence to native-speaker norms may be less relevant or even counterproductive, particularly when idiomatic language, complex structures, or culturally specific conventions hinder comprehension (Nickerson, 2005).

Furthermore, while traditional Business English frameworks tend to focus on pre-defined genres and predictable communicative events, BELF highlights the emergent and dynamic nature of workplace interaction. Business communication in BELF settings often unfolds in real time under conditions of uncertainty, time pressure, and institutional constraint. Participants must therefore adapt their language use strategically, drawing on practices such as simplification, paraphrasing, clarification, and negotiation of meaning to maintain interactional coherence and ensure task completion. These practices reflect an orientation toward communicative effectiveness rather than formal linguistic precision.

Importantly, the distinction between BELF and traditional Business English is not merely pedagogical but theoretical. BELF reframes business communication as a situated social practice shaped by multilingual participation, institutional roles, and organizational objectives. This reframing has significant implications for research, as it directs analytical attention away from prescriptive models of language use and toward the strategic management of communication in authentic workplace contexts. Understanding BELF in this way supports an examination of communication strategies as central mechanisms through which business professionals navigate linguistic diversity and accomplish work-related goals.

2.1.4 BELF as an Interactional and Strategic Phenomenon

Taken together, the literature conceptualizes Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) not simply as a linguistic code or a reduced form of English, but as an interactional and strategic phenomenon shaped by the demands of multilingual business communication. From this perspective, BELF is best understood as a mode of language use that emerges through interaction, rather than as a stable or standardized variety of English. Meaning is co-constructed moment by moment as participants draw on available linguistic, pragmatic, and contextual resources to achieve shared understanding and accomplish professional tasks.

Viewing BELF as an interactional phenomenon foregrounds the role of communicative practices over linguistic forms. In multilingual workplace settings, communication is not governed by pre-established norms of correctness but by the need to maintain interactional coherence, manage interpersonal relations, and support task progression. BELF users orient to these interactional demands by adapting their language use in response to their interlocutors, the institutional setting, and the immediate communicative goals of the interaction. As a result, variation, flexibility, and hybridity are not peripheral features of BELF communication but central characteristics that enable effective interaction in diverse business contexts.

At the same time, BELF is inherently strategic. Business communication often takes place under conditions of time pressure, organizational accountability, and high stakes, where misunderstandings may have tangible professional consequences. Within such environments, speakers do not simply communicate information but actively manage meaning through deliberate interactional choices. These choices include deciding when to be explicit or implicit, when to simplify or elaborate, and how to respond to signals of misunderstanding or uncertainty. Strategic language use in BELF contexts thus reflects an orientation toward achieving communicative efficiency while maintaining cooperation and professional rapport.

Importantly, the strategic dimension of BELF is closely tied to its institutional embeddedness. Participants in BELF interactions operate within organizational structures that define roles, responsibilities, and power relations. These institutional factors influence how communication unfolds and shape the range of communicative strategies that are considered appropriate or effective in a given context. As a result,

communication strategies in BELF cannot be understood solely as individual skills but must be examined as situated responses to the interactional and institutional constraints of workplace communication.

Conceptualizing BELF as an interactional and strategic phenomenon has important implications for research. It shifts analytical attention away from evaluating language use in terms of accuracy or proficiency and toward examining how business professionals collaboratively manage meaning in real-time interaction. This perspective positions communication strategies as central analytical constructs for understanding BELF-mediated workplace communication. Accordingly, the present study adopts this interactional view of BELF to investigate how communication strategies are enacted, adapted, and negotiated in authentic business interactions within a Myanmar economic organization.

2.2 Key Features of BELF Communication in Workplace Interaction

2.2.1 Communicative Effectiveness and Task Accomplishment

A central feature of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication in workplace interaction is its strong orientation toward communicative effectiveness and task accomplishment. In BELF contexts, successful communication is evaluated primarily in terms of whether interlocutors achieve shared understanding and complete work-related tasks, rather than in terms of grammatical accuracy or conformity to native-speaker norms (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). This effectiveness-oriented perspective reflects the practical realities of international business environments, where communication functions as a means to coordinate action, make decisions, and accomplish organizational objectives.

Unlike traditional language-focused approaches that prioritize linguistic correctness and stylistic appropriateness, BELF communication emphasizes functional adequacy. What matters most is whether information is conveyed clearly enough to allow progress toward concrete outcomes, such as reaching agreements, resolving issues, or advancing organizational processes. As a result, deviations from standard grammar or non-native-like language forms are generally tolerated, provided that they do not hinder comprehension or task progression (Nickerson, 2005). This pragmatic

tolerance enables participants with diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying levels of English proficiency to engage productively in workplace interaction.

The emphasis on “getting the job done” is particularly salient in institutional business settings, where communication is often time-sensitive and outcome-driven. Workplace interactions such as meetings, negotiations, and administrative exchanges typically occur under constraints of limited time and professional accountability, which heighten the need for efficiency and clarity. In such contexts, adherence to complex linguistic forms or culturally specific conventions associated with native-speaker usage may impede rather than facilitate effective communication (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). BELF users therefore tend to favor communicative practices that promote explicitness, transparency, and efficiency, even when these practices diverge from conventional norms of linguistic correctness.

This task-oriented orientation also shapes the interactional behavior of BELF users. Rather than focusing on producing linguistically polished utterances, speakers actively monitor understanding, respond to signs of misunderstanding, and adjust their language use to maintain interactional flow. Communication is thus treated as a collaborative process in which responsibility for successful task completion is jointly shared among participants (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Such collaboration highlights the role of communication strategies as essential resources for managing meaning and aligning interaction with professional goals.

Understanding communicative effectiveness as a defining feature of BELF underscores the importance of examining how business professionals strategically use language to accomplish work in multilingual environments. By foregrounding task accomplishment as the primary criterion for success, BELF research shifts analytical attention from language form to communicative function. This perspective provides a conceptual foundation for investigating the communication strategies through which interlocutors negotiate meaning, maintain efficiency, and achieve organizational objectives in real workplace interactions.

2.2.2 Clarity, Explicitness, and Simplicity in BELF Communication

Clarity, explicitness, and simplicity constitute core features of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication in workplace interaction. In multilingual business environments, where participants do not share the same linguistic or cultural

background, the risk of misunderstanding is inherently high. BELF users therefore orient toward communicative practices that minimize ambiguity and enhance mutual intelligibility, prioritizing clarity of meaning over linguistic sophistication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Clarity in BELF communication is closely associated with the tendency to make meanings explicit. Rather than relying on implicit assumptions, idiomatic expressions, or culturally bound references, BELF users frequently articulate information in a direct and transparent manner. This explicitness supports shared understanding by reducing the interpretive burden placed on interlocutors, particularly when differences in language proficiency or pragmatic norms are present (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). In workplace settings where misinterpretation may lead to delays, errors, or reputational risk, explicit communication becomes a pragmatic necessity rather than a stylistic preference.

Simplicity further complements clarity and explicitness in BELF interaction. Simplified lexical choices, shorter syntactic structures, and straightforward discourse organization are commonly employed to facilitate comprehension and maintain interactional flow. Such simplification does not indicate a lack of competence but reflects strategic language use aimed at ensuring that key messages are understood by all participants, regardless of their linguistic background (Nickerson, 2005). By avoiding unnecessary complexity, BELF users create communicative conditions that support efficiency and task accomplishment.

Empirical studies of BELF interaction have also shown that explicitness and simplicity are often realized through interactional practices such as repetition, paraphrasing, and reformulation. Speakers may restate information using alternative wording, elaborate on key points, or summarize prior contributions to confirm understanding and align interpretations among participants (Björkman, 2014). These practices function as proactive strategies for managing potential breakdowns and sustaining shared meaning in ongoing interaction.

Importantly, clarity and simplicity in BELF communication are not fixed linguistic properties but interactionally negotiated achievements. What counts as “clear” or “simple” is determined in situ, shaped by the participants’ responses, signals of understanding or confusion, and the evolving demands of the task at hand. BELF

users continuously adjust their level of explicitness in response to the interactional context, demonstrating sensitivity to both communicative efficiency and interpersonal considerations.

By foregrounding clarity, explicitness, and simplicity as defining features of BELF communication, the literature highlights the strategic nature of language use in multilingual workplace interaction. These features serve as key mechanisms through which business professionals manage meaning, prevent misunderstanding, and maintain progress toward organizational goals. As such, they provide an essential conceptual foundation for examining the communication strategies through which BELF users navigate complex and high-stakes professional environments.

2.2.3 Negotiation of Meaning and Cooperative Interaction

Negotiation of meaning is a central interactional feature of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication in multilingual workplace settings. In BELF contexts, interlocutors cannot assume shared linguistic norms or cultural frames of reference. As a result, successful communication depends on participants' ability to collaboratively manage understanding through ongoing interactional adjustment rather than through reliance on pre-established conventions (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011).

BELF research consistently highlights the cooperative orientation of interaction among non-native speakers. Rather than treating communication breakdowns as individual failures, BELF users tend to approach meaning construction as a shared responsibility. This cooperative stance is reflected in frequent use of interactional practices such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, and paraphrasing, which enable participants to identify potential misunderstandings and realign interpretations in real time (Kaur & Birlik, 2021; Björkman, 2014). Through these practices, interlocutors actively co-construct meaning and sustain interactional coherence despite linguistic and cultural diversity.

Negotiation of meaning in BELF is closely tied to the goal-oriented nature of workplace communication. Because business interactions are typically task-driven and time-sensitive, participants are motivated to resolve ambiguity efficiently in order to maintain progress toward organizational objectives. Rather than engaging in extended repair sequences, BELF users often employ concise and strategic negotiation moves that balance communicative clarity with interactional economy (Louhiala-Salminen &

Kankaanranta, 2011). This pragmatic orientation reinforces the role of negotiation of meaning as a functional mechanism for achieving task accomplishment.

Importantly, negotiation of meaning in BELF extends beyond linguistic clarification to include the management of interpersonal and professional relations. Cooperative interaction involves sensitivity to face, rapport, and professional alignment, particularly in intercultural business settings where differences in communicative style and expectation may arise. BELF users therefore negotiate not only what is meant but also how meaning is conveyed in ways that sustain collaboration and professional rapport (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011).

Empirical studies further suggest that negotiation of meaning in BELF is an emergent and context-dependent process. The need for negotiation is shaped by factors such as participants' relative proficiency levels, institutional roles, task complexity, and time constraints. As interaction unfolds, speakers continuously monitor each other's responses and adjust their communicative strategies accordingly, demonstrating a high degree of interactional awareness and adaptability (Björkman, 2014). This adaptive negotiation underscores the dynamic nature of BELF communication as situated workplace practice.

By foregrounding negotiation of meaning and cooperative interaction as defining features of BELF communication, the literature emphasizes that effective business interaction in multilingual contexts is achieved through collaborative effort rather than individual linguistic mastery. These features further reinforce the importance of communication strategies as central analytical constructs for understanding how BELF users manage meaning, maintain cooperation, and accomplish professional tasks in real workplace interactions.

2.2.4 Pragmatic Flexibility and Multilingual Practices

Pragmatic flexibility constitutes a defining feature of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication in multilingual workplace interaction. In BELF contexts, communication does not follow a fixed or standardized set of linguistic norms; instead, it is shaped by participants' ability to adapt their language use to situational demands, interlocutors' needs, and institutional constraints. This flexibility enables BELF users to manage interaction effectively despite differences in linguistic

proficiency, cultural expectations, and communicative conventions (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2007).

Pragmatic flexibility in BELF is closely linked to the strategic deployment of multilingual resources. Rather than adhering strictly to monolingual English norms, BELF users may draw on elements of their first language or shared regional languages to support comprehension, clarify meaning, or expedite task completion. Such practices include code-switching, lexical borrowing, and hybrid discourse forms that combine English with local linguistic resources (Cogo, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2010). These multilingual practices function as pragmatic tools that enhance communicative efficiency rather than as deviations from an idealized language standard.

Research on BELF interaction indicates that the use of multilingual resources is often purposeful and context-sensitive. Speakers selectively shift between languages or linguistic varieties based on factors such as interlocutor familiarity, power relations, task urgency, and communicative risk. In institutional workplace settings, multilingual practices may be employed to resolve misunderstandings, reinforce key information, or signal alignment and solidarity among participants (Björkman, 2014). Such practices demonstrate that effective BELF communication involves dynamic language choice rather than exclusive reliance on English alone.

Importantly, pragmatic flexibility in BELF does not imply communicative disorder or lack of control. On the contrary, it reflects a high level of interactional competence, as speakers continuously monitor the communicative situation and adjust their language use accordingly. BELF users negotiate when to maintain English as the primary medium and when to incorporate multilingual elements without undermining professional norms or institutional expectations (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). This balancing act highlights the strategic nature of language use in BELF-mediated interaction.

Multilingual practices in BELF are also shaped by institutional embeddedness. In organizational contexts, language use is influenced by formal procedures, documentation requirements, and hierarchical relationships. While English may serve as the official working language, multilingual practices often coexist alongside it in informal exchanges, preparatory discussions, or problem-solving moments. These

practices enable participants to navigate both formal accountability and practical communicative needs within the workplace (Ehrenreich, 2010).

By foregrounding pragmatic flexibility and multilingual practices, the BELF literature challenges traditional monolingual and norm-oriented views of business communication. Instead, it conceptualizes BELF communication as an adaptive, resource-oriented process in which speakers strategically mobilize available linguistic repertoires to achieve mutual understanding and organizational goals. Recognizing these practices provides an essential foundation for analyzing communication strategies as situated responses to the complex realities of multilingual workplace interaction.

2.3 Communication Strategies in BELF Workplace Interaction

2.3.1 Defining Communication Strategies in Applied Linguistics

Communication strategies have long been a central concept in applied linguistics, particularly in research on second language use, interaction, and communicative competence. Early conceptualizations viewed communication strategies as problem-solving mechanisms employed by language users when encountering difficulty in expressing or comprehending meaning due to limitations in linguistic resources. In this tradition, strategies were primarily associated with learners' attempts to compensate for gaps in linguistic knowledge in order to maintain communication (Tarone, 1980; Faerch and Kasper, 1983).

From this perspective, communication strategies were defined as conscious or semi-conscious plans used to overcome communication problems and achieve communicative goals. Tarone (1980), for example, conceptualized communication strategies as mutual attempts by interlocutors to negotiate meaning in situations where shared linguistic resources are insufficient. Similarly, Faerch and Kasper (1983) emphasized the strategic and goal-oriented nature of communication strategies, framing them as part of speakers' problem-management behavior during language production.

Subsequent developments in applied linguistics expanded this view by situating communication strategies within broader models of communicative competence. In particular, communication strategies were recognized as an integral component of

strategic competence, alongside grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence (Canale and Swain, 1980). Within this framework, communication strategies are not limited to compensating for linguistic deficiency but are understood as resources that enable speakers to manage interaction, repair breakdowns, and sustain communication under varying conditions.

More recent perspectives have further shifted the focus from individual cognitive deficiency to interactional and contextual dimensions of communication strategies. Rather than being viewed solely as responses to linguistic problems, strategies are increasingly understood as dynamic, socially situated practices that emerge through interaction. From this standpoint, communication strategies involve both proactive and reactive moves through which interlocutors collaboratively manage meaning, align understanding, and maintain interactional flow (Rod Ellis, 2008).

This interactional orientation is particularly relevant in lingua franca contexts, where communication takes place among speakers with diverse linguistic repertoires and no shared native norm. In such settings, communication strategies function not only as compensatory tools but as routine and expected practices that facilitate mutual understanding. Strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, and paraphrasing become part of the normal communicative repertoire rather than markers of communicative difficulty.

In applied linguistics, therefore, communication strategies can be conceptualized as purposeful, context-sensitive actions through which speakers manage communicative demands and pursue interactional goals. This definition aligns with contemporary views that emphasize language use as a form of social action shaped by task demands, institutional contexts, and interlocutor relationships. Such a perspective provides a robust theoretical foundation for examining communication strategies in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) workplace interaction, where strategic language use is central to achieving professional and organizational objectives.

2.3.2 Communication Strategies as Interactional Resources

In more recent applied linguistics and lingua franca research, communication strategies have been reconceptualized as interactional resources rather than merely individual problem-solving techniques. From this perspective, strategies are not pre-planned or mechanically deployed responses to linguistic difficulty; instead, they

emerge dynamically through interaction and are shaped by the immediate communicative context, interlocutor relationships, and institutional goals (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2007).

Viewing communication strategies as emergent practices highlights their context-dependent nature. In multilingual workplace interaction, speakers continuously monitor each other's responses and adapt their communicative behavior accordingly. Strategies such as repetition, paraphrasing, clarification requests, and confirmation checks arise in response to perceived gaps in understanding, shifts in task demands, or signals of uncertainty from interlocutors. These strategies are therefore co-constructed in interaction rather than unilaterally initiated, reflecting a shared orientation toward achieving mutual understanding (Cogo, 2010).

As interactional resources, communication strategies play a central role in managing meaning and maintaining coherence in BELF-mediated communication. Meaning in BELF contexts is not transmitted in a linear or fixed manner but is negotiated incrementally as interaction unfolds. Speakers use strategic moves to clarify reference, align interpretations, and ensure that key information is understood by all participants. Through these practices, interlocutors jointly construct a coherent interactional trajectory despite differences in linguistic background or communicative norms (Björkman, 2014).

Communication strategies also contribute to the management of interactional flow in workplace settings. In task-oriented interactions, maintaining progress toward communicative and organizational goals is crucial. Strategies such as summarizing prior contributions, explicitly marking topic shifts, or signaling agreement and understanding help regulate turn-taking and sustain interactional momentum. These practices enable participants to coordinate action efficiently while minimizing the risk of misunderstanding or communicative breakdown.

Importantly, the interactional view of communication strategies foregrounds their proactive as well as reactive functions. In BELF workplace interaction, speakers do not only respond to communication problems after they occur; they often anticipate potential difficulties and adjust their language use accordingly. By making meanings explicit, simplifying expressions, or pre-emptively checking understanding, BELF

users strategically manage interaction to prevent disruption and maintain cooperative engagement (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2007).

Conceptualizing communication strategies as interactional resources thus aligns with contemporary views of language use as social action. In BELF contexts, strategies are integral to how speakers manage meaning, coherence, and interactional flow within institutionally embedded and goal-driven communication. This perspective provides a critical analytical lens for examining how communication strategies function in real workplace practices, forming a direct theoretical link to the empirical investigation of BELF communication strategies in the present study.

2.3.3 Communication Strategies in Spoken Workplace Interaction

Research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) has identified a range of communication strategies that speakers employ in spoken workplace interaction to manage meaning, sustain cooperation, and accomplish task-related objectives. In BELF contexts, these strategies are not exceptional responses to communicative failure but constitute routine and expected practices embedded in everyday professional interaction (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2007). Because BELF interaction typically involves participants with diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying levels of English proficiency, communication strategies function as essential interactional resources rather than indicators of linguistic deficiency. The following subsections outline key types of communication strategies commonly observed in BELF-mediated workplace communication, with illustrative examples to clarify their interactional functions.

2.3.3.1 Clarification and confirmation requests

Clarification and confirmation requests are among the most frequently reported strategies in BELF interaction. Clarification requests are used when a speaker signals uncertainty or incomplete understanding and invites further explanation, while confirmation requests are employed to verify whether an interpretation is accurate. These strategies allow interlocutors to address potential misunderstandings explicitly and collaboratively, thereby maintaining interactional coherence and preventing communication breakdowns (Kaur, 2011; Kaur & Birlik, 2021).

In spoken workplace interaction, such requests are often concise and task-oriented. For example, a staff member may ask, “Do you mean the approval from the

head office, or just internal clearance?” to clarify procedural requirements. Similarly, a confirmation request such as “So we submit the documents by Friday, correct?” helps ensure alignment before proceeding. These brief interactional moves enable participants to resolve ambiguity efficiently without disrupting the overall flow of professional discourse.

2.3.3.2 Repetition, reformulation, and paraphrasing

Repetition, reformulation, and paraphrasing function as key strategies for enhancing intelligibility and aligning shared understanding in BELF communication. Speakers may repeat critical information, restate ideas using alternative lexical or syntactic forms, or paraphrase previous contributions to make meanings more accessible to interlocutors with differing levels of English proficiency (Björkman, 2014).

For instance, a speaker might first state, “The investment proposal needs additional documentation,” and then reformulate the message as “We still need more supporting documents before approval.” Such reformulation serves both preventive and remedial functions, allowing speakers to anticipate potential comprehension difficulties and to repair emerging misunderstandings as interaction unfolds. In BELF workplace settings, these strategies support accuracy and efficiency while maintaining a cooperative interactional climate.

2.3.3.3 Backchannels and discourse management

Backchannels and discourse management strategies play an important role in maintaining interactional flow and signaling engagement in spoken workplace interaction. Minimal responses such as acknowledgements, agreement markers, and continuers (e.g., “I see,” “okay,” “right”) indicate attention, understanding, or alignment, thereby supporting cooperative interaction (Cogo, 2010).

In BELF contexts, backchannels help speakers monitor mutual understanding without interrupting the progression of task-oriented discourse. For example, during an explanation of regulatory procedures, brief responses such as “yes,” “understood,” or nodding may signal that the listener is following the explanation, allowing the speaker to continue. These discourse management strategies contribute to smooth turn-taking and reinforce shared engagement in the communicative task.

2.3.3.4 Let-it-pass strategies and repair mechanisms

Let-it-pass strategies refer to instances where speakers temporarily tolerate ambiguity or partial non-understanding in order to maintain interactional momentum, particularly when immediate clarification is not essential to task completion (Jenkins, 2007). In BELF workplace interaction, participants may choose to let minor lexical or grammatical issues pass if the overall meaning appears sufficiently clear or if time constraints make immediate repair impractical.

For example, a listener may momentarily accept an unclear expression and wait for further contextual cues before initiating repair. When repair becomes necessary, it is often managed collaboratively through self-repair or other-initiated repair mechanisms that minimize face threat and preserve professional rapport (Seidlhofer, 2011). A speaker might self-correct by saying, “Sorry, what I mean is the revised contract, not the original one,” or a listener may initiate repair with a polite prompt such as “Could you explain that part again?” These practices reflect strategic judgment in balancing accuracy, efficiency, and interpersonal considerations.

2.3.3.5 Non-verbal cues and pragmatic signals

In addition to verbal strategies, BELF workplace interaction frequently involves the use of non-verbal cues and pragmatic signals to support communication. Gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and references to shared documents or visual materials may complement spoken language and enhance comprehension, particularly in complex or high-stakes interactions (Björkman, 2014).

For instance, a speaker may point to a document while explaining procedural steps, or use hand gestures to indicate sequence or emphasis. Such multimodal resources help anchor verbal explanations in shared visual or physical context, facilitating meaning-making and interactional alignment. In spoken workplace interaction, these non-verbal strategies function as integral components of communication rather than as supplementary features.

Taken together, these communication strategies illustrate how BELF users actively manage spoken workplace interaction through a combination of verbal, pragmatic, and multimodal resources. Rather than reflecting linguistic inadequacy, the strategic use of these practices demonstrates interactional competence and adaptability in multilingual professional environments. Identifying and analyzing these strategy

types provides a systematic analytical framework for examining how communication is accomplished in real BELF-mediated workplace practices, thereby establishing a clear conceptual bridge between theory and the empirical investigation undertaken in this study.

2.3.4 Communication Strategies in Written Workplace Interaction

While spoken interaction has received considerable attention in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) research, written workplace communication is also an important site where communication strategies are enacted. In institutional and business contexts, written communication, particularly professional email communication, is not merely a channel for transferring information. Rather, it functions as a form of workplace interaction through which participants manage tasks, establish professional relationships, assign responsibility, and maintain institutional accountability. As Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken (2007) emphasize, business discourse is shaped by professional goals, organizational relationships, and the communicative demands of workplace contexts.

Email communication is especially significant in BELF-mediated workplaces because it often connects participants from different linguistic, cultural, and institutional backgrounds. In such contexts, writers must make strategic choices to ensure that their messages are clear, polite, and professionally appropriate. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) argue that BELF communication is primarily oriented toward achieving shared understanding and accomplishing business tasks rather than conforming to native-speaker norms. This orientation is also relevant to written workplace communication, where effectiveness depends on how clearly writers frame requests, explain procedures, and guide readers toward expected actions.

Unlike spoken interaction, where clarification can occur immediately through turn-taking, written interaction requires the writer to anticipate possible misunderstanding before it occurs. For this reason, professional email writers often use strategies such as explicit subject lines, formal greetings, contextual framing, clearly sequenced information, and specific deadlines. Gains (1999) notes that email communication has developed distinctive textual features that combine efficiency with interactional purpose. In institutional BELF contexts, these features may help writers reduce ambiguity, organize procedural information, and support accountability,

especially when communication involves official requests, regulatory explanations, document submission, or coordination with international stakeholders.

Politeness and directness are also central strategies in written workplace communication. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory explains how speakers and writers use linguistic choices to manage face needs and reduce potential threats in interaction. In professional email communication, this is particularly important because writers often need to communicate institutional requirements while maintaining professional respect. For example, direct requests may be necessary to ensure task completion, but they can be softened through modal verbs, polite expressions, or conventionally indirect forms such as "Could you please provide...", "May we kindly request...", or "Please be informed that...". In this sense, politeness does not merely make the message more courteous; it functions as an interactional resource for managing hierarchy, face, and intercultural expectations.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) further argues that rapport management is central to intercultural communication because participants must manage not only face but also sociality rights and interactional expectations. This perspective is useful for understanding written BELF communication, where email writers need to balance clarity with relational sensitivity. In institutional settings, a message may need to be direct enough to assign responsibility or request action, while also being polite enough to maintain cooperation with international stakeholders. Therefore, politeness and directness should not be treated as opposing features. Rather, they can work together as complementary strategies for achieving clarity, accountability, and professional rapport.

Written workplace communication also involves the strategic organization of information. Gimenez (2000) observes that business email often blends features of spoken and written discourse, making it both efficient and relational. In BELF-mediated institutional communication, opening sequences may establish institutional identity and clarify the purpose of the message, while body paragraphs may present requests, explanations, procedural steps, or deadlines in a logical order. Closing sequences may express appreciation, maintain rapport, and signal continued cooperation. These structural choices help readers understand not only the content of

the message, but also the writer's institutional role, the expected response, and the level of urgency or responsibility involved.

In BELF contexts, written communication strategies should therefore not be viewed as fixed formulaic expressions or purely linguistic features. They are situated interactional practices shaped by workplace tasks, institutional norms, intercultural relationships, and accountability demands. As Poncini (2004) points out, business communication involves not only information exchange but also relationship management and the coordination of professional action. Examining written workplace communication therefore allows researchers to understand how BELF users manage meaning and professional relationships beyond spoken interaction.

For the present study, this perspective is particularly relevant because professional emails form one of the key data sources for analyzing how staff in a Myanmar economic organization use communication strategies in written BELF communication. The analysis of email communication can reveal how staff manage clarity, politeness, directness, institutional positioning, procedural accountability, and intercultural relations through written interaction. This supports the broader aim of the study, which is to examine communication strategies not as isolated language forms, but as interactional resources used to accomplish workplace tasks and sustain intercultural collaboration.

2.4 Empirical Studies on Communication Strategies in BELF Contexts

Empirical research on Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) has increasingly emphasized the role of communication strategies as central mechanisms through which multilingual workplace interaction is managed. Rather than treating BELF communication as a simplified or deficient form of English use, existing studies conceptualize it as a strategically rich and interactionally sophisticated practice shaped by task demands, institutional contexts, and intercultural dynamics (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2007). Within this body of research, communication strategies are consistently identified as key resources for preventing misunderstanding, sustaining cooperation, and enabling task accomplishment in international business settings.

Studies of BELF interaction across corporate and professional domains demonstrate that speakers routinely employ a range of strategies to manage meaning and interactional flow. These strategies are not applied uniformly but are adapted to specific communicative situations, reflecting the contextual and emergent nature of BELF communication. As such, empirical BELF research provides valuable insight into how communication strategies function in authentic workplace environments rather than in controlled or pedagogical settings.

2.4.1 Communication Strategies in BELF Research

Empirical research on Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) has consistently highlighted communication strategies as a central feature of multilingual workplace interaction. Early ELF and BELF studies shifted the focus away from linguistic deviation and error toward examining how speakers actively manage meaning and interactional coherence in real communicative contexts (Firth, 1996; Seidlhofer, 2005). Within this line of inquiry, communication strategies are conceptualized not as compensatory mechanisms for linguistic deficiency but as routine interactional practices that enable successful communication among speakers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

A substantial body of BELF research conducted in multinational corporate and professional settings demonstrates that speakers regularly employ clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, and paraphrasing to maintain mutual understanding (Mauranen, 2006; Cogo, 2010; Björkman, 2014). These strategies are shown to function both proactively and reactively. Proactively, speakers anticipate potential comprehension difficulties by simplifying language or making key points explicit. Reactively, they address emerging misunderstandings through negotiation of meaning and repair sequences. Such findings challenge traditional views of communication as linear message transmission and instead emphasize its collaborative and emergent nature.

Several studies have further highlighted the cooperative orientation underlying strategy use in BELF interaction. Research by Kaur (2010, 2011) illustrates how interlocutors treat understanding as a shared responsibility, collaboratively resolving ambiguity rather than attributing miscommunication to individual speakers. Similarly, Cogo and Dewey (2012) argue that BELF communication is characterized by

accommodation, flexibility, and mutual adjustment, with strategies serving as tools for sustaining interaction rather than correcting linguistic form. This cooperative orientation is particularly salient in workplace contexts, where maintaining professional relationships and achieving task outcomes are closely intertwined.

Other empirical studies have examined how communication strategies are shaped by institutional and organizational contexts. Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005) demonstrate that BELF interaction is embedded within specific business genres and organizational practices, which influence how strategies are selected and interpreted. For example, clarity, directness, and explicitness are frequently prioritized in business meetings and negotiations, reflecting the need for efficiency and accountability in professional decision-making (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). In such contexts, communication strategies are closely aligned with task demands and institutional expectations rather than purely linguistic considerations.

Research has also documented the role of multilingual practices in BELF communication. Studies show that code-switching, strategic use of shared first languages, and references to multilingual resources may function as effective communication strategies, particularly when interlocutors share linguistic backgrounds or when precise technical meaning is required (Ehrenreich, 2010; Cogo, 2012). These findings underscore the fact that BELF communication is inherently multilingual and cannot be fully understood through monolingual models of language use.

Despite these valuable insights, existing BELF research has predominantly focused on private-sector multinational corporations and Western-dominated business environments. Comparatively fewer studies have examined communication strategies in public-sector economic organizations or in developing and transitional economies, where institutional hierarchies, bureaucratic procedures, and uneven access to English education may shape communicative practices in distinctive ways. Moreover, much of the empirical work relies on corporate meeting data, interviews, or self-reported perceptions, leaving everyday interactional practices in underexplored contexts insufficiently examined.

Taken together, the existing literature demonstrates that communication strategies are integral to BELF workplace interaction and are shaped by task demands, institutional settings, and intercultural dynamics. However, the limited attention to

public-sector economic organizations and emerging-economy contexts indicates a need for further empirical investigation. By examining communication strategies as they are enacted in real workplace interactions within a Myanmar economic organization, the present study seeks to extend BELF research by providing context-sensitive insights into how meaning is negotiated and organizational goals are achieved in underrepresented institutional settings.

2.4.2 Communication Strategies and Intercultural Business Interaction

Intercultural interaction constitutes a defining feature of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication. In international business settings, participants routinely engage with interlocutors who differ not only in linguistic background but also in communicative norms, cultural expectations, and professional practices. As a result, communication strategies in BELF contexts serve a crucial intercultural function by enabling speakers to manage cultural diversity, mitigate misunderstanding, and sustain effective professional relationships.

Research on ELF and BELF has emphasized that interculturality in lingua franca communication should not be understood as a static contrast between national cultures, but as a dynamic, interactionally constructed process (House, 2009; Baker, 2015). In this view, cultural differences emerge and are negotiated through communicative practice rather than pre-determined by speakers' national or ethnic identities. Communication strategies therefore play a central role in how interlocutors orient to, manage, and sometimes neutralize intercultural differences in real-time workplace interaction.

2.4.2.1 Managing cultural differences through strategic language use

Empirical studies indicate that BELF users frequently rely on strategic language use to manage potential cultural divergence in business interaction. Strategies such as explicit clarification, paraphrasing, and confirmation checks help speakers address differing assumptions, expectations, and interpretive frames that may arise from culturally embedded communication styles (Mauranen, 2006; Kaur, 2011). By making meanings explicit and negotiable, speakers reduce the risk of implicit misunderstanding that may otherwise go unnoticed in intercultural encounters.

In addition, research suggests that BELF users often adopt a pragmatic orientation toward cultural difference, prioritizing task accomplishment over strict

adherence to culturally specific norms of communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). For example, speakers may simplify discourse, avoid culturally loaded idiomatic expressions, or reformulate messages in more neutral terms to ensure accessibility for interlocutors from diverse backgrounds. Such strategies enable participants to establish a shared communicative ground without requiring deep cultural alignment.

Several studies have also highlighted the role of accommodation and flexibility in managing intercultural interaction. Cogo (2010) and Björkman (2014) demonstrate that BELF speakers frequently adjust their communicative behavior in response to perceived interlocutor needs, including modifying speech rate, lexical choice, and interactional style. These adaptive practices reflect an interactional sensitivity that allows speakers to navigate cultural differences pragmatically rather than treating them as obstacles to communication.

2.4.2.2 Rapport building, politeness, and face management

Beyond task-oriented communication, BELF interaction also involves the strategic management of interpersonal relations. Rapport building, politeness, and face management have been identified as important dimensions of intercultural business communication, particularly in contexts where long-term collaboration and trust are essential (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Poncini, 2004). In BELF settings, communication strategies contribute not only to intelligibility but also to the maintenance of professional relationships across cultural boundaries.

Research has shown that BELF users employ a range of politeness-oriented strategies to manage face concerns in intercultural interaction. These include hedging, indirectness, mitigation devices, and supportive backchannels that signal respect and consideration for interlocutors' positions (House, 2009). Such strategies are especially relevant in institutional contexts where hierarchical relations and accountability structures may influence how messages are delivered and received.

Importantly, BELF research suggests that politeness in lingua franca interaction does not necessarily follow native-speaker norms but is co-constructed through shared interactional practices (Ehrenreich, 2010). Speakers negotiate what counts as appropriate or respectful behavior within specific professional contexts, often drawing on a hybrid repertoire of linguistic and pragmatic resources. Communication

strategies thus function as tools for managing face and rapport in ways that are locally meaningful rather than culturally prescriptive.

Taken together, existing research demonstrates that communication strategies are integral to intercultural business interaction in BELF contexts. Through strategic language use, speakers manage cultural differences, build rapport, and maintain professional relationships while pursuing organizational goals. However, much of the existing literature has focused on private-sector or multinational corporate environments. Less is known about how these intercultural strategies operate within public-sector economic organizations in developing or transitional contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study examines communication strategies as they are enacted in intercultural BELF interaction within a Myanmar economic organization, thereby extending current understanding of how intercultural business communication is managed in underrepresented institutional settings.

2.4.3 Communication Strategies in Institutional and Organizational Settings

Communication in institutional and organizational settings is shaped not only by linguistic and intercultural factors but also by structural conditions such as hierarchy, formality, accountability, and time pressure. In Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) contexts, these institutional features exert a strong influence on how communication strategies are selected, adapted, and interpreted. As a result, communication strategies cannot be fully understood without considering the organizational environments in which they are embedded.

Research on BELF and workplace discourse highlights that institutional contexts impose specific communicative constraints and expectations that distinguish organizational interaction from informal or purely interpersonal communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Poncini, 2004). In such settings, communication strategies serve not only to facilitate understanding but also to manage professional roles, institutional responsibilities, and organizational risk.

2.4.3.1 Role of hierarchy, formality, and accountability

Hierarchy and formality play a significant role in shaping communication strategies in institutional BELF interaction. Studies of workplace discourse indicate that power relations and role asymmetries influence how speakers initiate clarification, manage disagreement, and negotiate meaning (Ehrenreich, 2010; House, 2009). In

hierarchical organizations, lower-positioned participants may adopt more cautious or indirect strategies, such as hedging, mitigation, or delayed clarification, in order to maintain professional appropriateness and avoid face-threatening acts.

In BELF-mediated institutional contexts, accountability further constrains strategic language use. Communication is often tied to official decisions, documentation, and regulatory procedures, making accuracy and clarity critical. As Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005) note, business communication frequently involves genres where responsibility for outcomes is explicitly assigned, such as meetings, negotiations, or approval processes. In these situations, strategies such as explicit confirmation, repetition of key decisions, and reformulation are employed to ensure shared understanding and to minimize institutional risk.

Formality also affects the deployment of communication strategies. While BELF interaction is often described as flexible and adaptive, institutional settings may require speakers to balance flexibility with adherence to formal communicative norms. This tension can be observed in the strategic use of polite forms, controlled directness, and careful turn-taking, which allow speakers to remain efficient while respecting organizational expectations (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

2.4.3.2 Time pressure and high-stakes communication

Time pressure constitutes another defining characteristic of institutional and organizational BELF interaction. Workplace communication frequently occurs under constraints such as deadlines, limited meeting time, or urgent decision-making requirements. Under such conditions, communication strategies are often oriented toward efficiency and immediacy rather than exhaustive explanation (Björkman, 2014).

Empirical studies suggest that in high-stakes situations, BELF users prioritize strategies that support rapid alignment and task progression. These include concise clarification requests, simplified explanations, and strategic repetition of essential information (Mauranen, 2006). Let-it-pass strategies may also be employed more frequently when minor ambiguities are deemed non-critical to immediate task completion, allowing interaction to proceed without interruption (Jenkins, 2007).

At the same time, the high-stakes nature of institutional communication amplifies the consequences of misunderstanding. Decisions related to contracts, investment approval, or regulatory compliance may carry significant organizational and

financial implications. As a result, speakers often engage in explicit repair and confirmation practices at key decision points to ensure accountability and traceability (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). These practices reflect a strategic balancing of speed and precision, shaped by institutional responsibility rather than individual linguistic preference.

Overall, existing research demonstrates that communication strategies in BELF settings are deeply influenced by organizational structures and institutional demands. Hierarchy, formality, accountability, time pressure, and the high-stakes nature of professional decision-making all shape how strategies are enacted and evaluated in workplace interaction. However, much of the current literature has focused on private-sector multinational corporations, with comparatively limited attention to public-sector economic organizations. Examining communication strategies in such institutional settings, particularly within developing or transitional economies, remains an underexplored area. The present study addresses this gap by investigating how BELF communication strategies are employed within a Myanmar economic organization, where institutional constraints and intercultural interaction intersect in complex ways.

2.5 Intercultural Communication in BELF

Intercultural communication constitutes a foundational dimension of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Unlike traditional models of intercultural communication that often assume interaction between clearly bounded national cultures, BELF communication involves participants with diverse linguistic, cultural, and professional backgrounds who engage in interaction without shared native-language norms. As a result, interculturality in BELF is not an external variable influencing communication but an inherent condition shaping how interaction unfolds in everyday business practice.

Research in ELF and BELF has increasingly emphasized the need to reconceptualize intercultural communication as an interactional and emergent phenomenon rather than a static comparison of cultural values or communicative styles (House, 2009; Baker, 2015). In BELF contexts, speakers do not simply transfer

culturally specific norms into interaction; instead, they negotiate meaning, expectations, and appropriateness through situated communicative practices. Communication strategies therefore function as key mechanisms through which interculturality is managed and made workable in professional settings.

2.5.1 Interculturality in BELF Communication

BELF communication is inherently intercultural because it typically involves interaction among speakers who do not share a first language, cultural background, or communicative conventions. Rather than relying on predefined cultural norms, BELF users draw on flexible and adaptive strategies to establish shared understanding and accomplish business tasks (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). Interculturality in this sense is not tied to nationality alone but emerges through participants' differing linguistic repertoires, professional experiences, and pragmatic orientations.

Studies on ELF interaction highlight that cultural diversity in lingua franca communication manifests primarily at the pragmatic level, including variation in discourse organization, politeness practices, turn-taking behavior, and degrees of explicitness (Mauranen, 2006; Kaur, 2011). In BELF contexts, such pragmatic variation is often addressed through strategic language use, including clarification, reformulation, mitigation, and accommodation. These strategies enable speakers to navigate differing expectations without explicitly invoking cultural explanations, thereby allowing interaction to proceed smoothly.

Importantly, research suggests that BELF users tend to adopt a pragmatic, task-oriented approach to intercultural interaction. Rather than emphasizing cultural difference, speakers often prioritize mutual intelligibility and task accomplishment, treating cultural diversity as a normal and manageable aspect of professional communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). This orientation challenges deficit-based views of intercultural communication and highlights the competence of BELF users in managing diversity through interactional practices.

Baker (2015) further argues that interculturality in ELF communication is fluid and context-dependent, shaped by the specific goals, participants, and institutional settings of interaction. In BELF workplace environments, intercultural communication is intertwined with organizational roles, power relations, and professional accountability. As a result, pragmatic variation is not only culturally influenced but also

institutionally mediated. Communication strategies thus function at the intersection of intercultural and organizational demands.

Taken together, existing literature positions BELF communication as a form of intercultural interaction that is negotiated moment by moment through strategic language use. Cultural diversity and pragmatic variation are not obstacles to be eliminated but conditions that require adaptive communicative practices. Understanding interculturality in BELF as an emergent and interactional phenomenon provides an essential theoretical foundation for examining how communication strategies are employed in real workplace contexts. This perspective informs the present study's focus on communication strategies as resources for managing intercultural interaction within a Myanmar economic organization.

2.5.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has been widely recognized as a key construct for understanding how individuals communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts. In contrast to models that equate successful communication with linguistic proficiency alone, ICC frameworks emphasize the integration of linguistic, sociocultural, attitudinal, and interactional dimensions of communication. This perspective is particularly relevant in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) contexts, where interlocutors must navigate linguistic diversity, cultural variation, and institutional demands simultaneously.

Research in intercultural communication has evolved from static, culture-as-nation approaches toward more dynamic and interaction-oriented models that conceptualize competence as situated and context-dependent (Byram, 1997; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Baker, 2015). Within this evolving tradition, ICC is increasingly understood as the ability to interpret, negotiate, and co-construct meaning in intercultural interaction rather than as mastery of predefined cultural norms. Such an orientation aligns closely with contemporary understandings of ELF and BELF communication as emergent, adaptive, and pragmatically driven.

2.5.2.1 Overview of ICC Frameworks

A range of ICC frameworks has been proposed to conceptualize how individuals engage in intercultural communication. Early models often focused on attitudes toward other cultures, cultural knowledge, and awareness of cultural

differences. Subsequent frameworks expanded this focus to include interactional skills, relational management, and the ability to adapt communicative behavior in response to contextual demands (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). More recent perspectives emphasize criticality, reflexivity, and the negotiation of meaning as central components of intercultural competence (Baker, 2015).

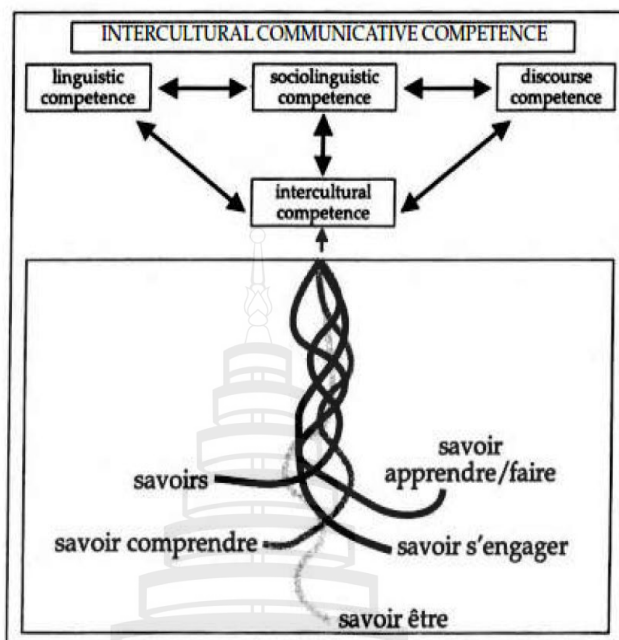
Within professional and workplace contexts, ICC has been linked to the ability to manage face, rapport, and relational goals while accomplishing institutional tasks. Studies in intercultural business communication suggest that effective intercultural communicators are those who can balance clarity, politeness, and efficiency while remaining sensitive to diverse communicative expectations (Poncini, 2004; House, 2009). From this viewpoint, ICC is not a static personal attribute but a set of interactional resources activated in specific communicative situations.

Importantly, ICC frameworks increasingly acknowledge that intercultural communication does not necessarily involve clearly distinguishable cultural groups. In BELF contexts, interculturality often arises from pragmatic variation, professional norms, and organizational cultures rather than from national cultural differences alone. This recognition underscores the need to conceptualize ICC in ways that are compatible with lingua franca communication, where shared understanding is constructed through strategic language use rather than through shared cultural backgrounds.

2.5.2.2 Byram's Model of ICC

Among the most influential frameworks of ICC is Byram's (1997) model, which conceptualizes intercultural competence as a multidimensional construct comprising attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness. Byram identifies five interrelated components: attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and

interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*).



Source Byram (1997, p. 73)

Figure 2.1 Model of ICC

1. Attitudes (*savoir- être*)

This fundamental encompasses openness and inquiry. It means that instead of believing that their opinions and behaviors are the only ones that are reasonable and appropriate, a person should be open to evaluate anything. The first element is attitudes, which consist of curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs. This can help the development of intercultural knowledge and skills essential to interact appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures. To assist language learners to develop these attitudes, analyzing, comparing, and relating skills should be promoted in foreign language classrooms.

2. Knowledge (*savoir*)

Intercultural knowledge, or understanding of one's own social group, materials, and habits, is the second skill. According to Byram, knowledge may be divided into two distinct groups: awareness and subconscious. The former refers to information that can be somewhat refined but continues to exist to some extent, while

the latter refers to the understanding of ideas and processes used in exchanges. He mentioned that learners acquire knowledge of their own culture and identity, and unconsciously belong to a social group at primary socialization. To avoid misleading and ignoring individual differences, knowledge of other cultures should be complemented by reinforcing knowledge of one's cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors.

3. Skills (*savoir comprendre*)

The skill of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) relies on the learners' previous knowledge of the foreign culture. The ability to understand, explain, and react to a cultural event. Intercultural speakers must be able to understand how the limitations of real-time communication and contact affect capacities of discovery and interaction the ability to learn new things about a culture and its practices, as well as skills and attitudes.

4. Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir faire*)

Within the restrictions of real-time communication and interaction, the capacity to learn new information about a culture and cultural practices, as well as skills and attitudes.

5. Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)

A capacity to assess activities and goods in one's own and other cultures critically and based on stated criteria. People's different viewpoints and attitudes regarding other people's languages and cultures, particularly in linguistically and culturally different circumstances, are the root cause of intercultural communication challenges (Nomnian, 2018; Phumpho & Nomnian, 2019). Since communication difficulties between persons from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds typically result from sociolinguistic and cultural gaps, strong intercultural communication competency is crucial to overcoming these obstacles that influence their distinctive perceptions, interpretations, and lack of shared experiences and frames of reference (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Silverthorne, 2005).

Byram's model has been widely applied in language education and intercultural studies due to its comprehensive and pedagogically grounded structure. In BELF contexts, the model provides a useful lens for understanding how business professionals engage with cultural difference through interaction. For example, skills

of interpreting and relating are evident when speakers attempt to make sense of unfamiliar communicative practices, while skills of discovery and interaction are reflected in the use of communication strategies such as clarification, negotiation of meaning, and accommodation.

At the same time, scholars have noted that Byram's model was originally developed with educational and language learning contexts in mind, rather than professional workplace interaction. As such, its application to BELF settings requires interpretive adaptation. In BELF workplace communication, ICC is often manifested less through explicit cultural comparison and more through pragmatic sensitivity, strategic language use, and the ability to manage intercultural interaction under institutional constraints (House, 2009; Baker, 2015). Nevertheless, Byram's emphasis on attitudes, skills, and critical awareness remains highly relevant for examining how BELF users orient to cultural diversity and negotiate meaning in professional contexts.

In the present study, Byram's model of ICC serves as a conceptual foundation for understanding the intercultural dimension of BELF communication strategies. Rather than treating ICC as a separate competence from linguistic or strategic ability, the study views ICC as intertwined with communication strategies that enable speakers to manage cultural diversity, maintain rapport, and accomplish organizational goals. This integrated perspective provides a theoretical basis for analyzing how intercultural competence is enacted through strategic language use in real workplace interaction within a Myanmar economic organization.

2.5.3 ICC as an Interpretive Framework in BELF Studies

In recent BELF and ELF research, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has increasingly been adopted as an interpretive framework for understanding how workplace interaction is managed in linguistically and culturally diverse environments. Rather than conceptualizing ICC as an individual attribute or a set of stable cultural knowledge, contemporary studies view it as an interactionally enacted competence that becomes visible through communicative practices in specific institutional contexts (House, 2009; Baker, 2015). This perspective aligns closely with BELF research, which emphasizes meaning negotiation, pragmatic adaptation, and strategic language use in real workplace interaction.

When applied as an interpretive framework, ICC enables researchers to move beyond surface-level descriptions of communication strategies and to examine how such strategies reflect participants' orientations to cultural difference, professional roles, and interactional expectations. In BELF studies, ICC thus functions as a lens through which communication strategies can be understood as manifestations of intercultural awareness, adaptability, and reflexivity rather than as isolated linguistic techniques.

2.5.3.1 ICC as a Lens for Understanding Workplace Interaction

Using ICC as an interpretive lens allows BELF researchers to analyze workplace interaction as a site where intercultural competence is enacted moment by moment. Empirical studies suggest that competencies such as openness, tolerance of ambiguity, and sensitivity to interlocutors' perspectives are not expressed explicitly but are embedded in interactional choices, including how speakers initiate clarification, manage disagreement, or accommodate diverse communicative styles (Kaur, 2011; Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

From this viewpoint, communication strategies such as paraphrasing, confirmation requests, or mitigation devices can be interpreted as indicators of ICC in practice. For example, a speaker's decision to reformulate an instruction using simpler language or to seek confirmation before proceeding reflects an awareness of potential intercultural and linguistic asymmetries. Such practices demonstrate not only communicative effectiveness but also an orientation toward shared responsibility for understanding, a core dimension of ICC in BELF contexts.

Importantly, ICC-informed analyses of BELF interaction also account for the influence of institutional and organizational factors. Workplace communication is shaped by hierarchical relationships, accountability structures, and professional norms, which mediate how intercultural competence is expressed and evaluated. ICC as an interpretive framework therefore enables researchers to examine how intercultural interaction is co-constructed within institutional constraints rather than attributing communicative outcomes solely to individual competence.

2.5.3.2 ICC in Managing Intercultural Challenges in BELF Contexts

BELF studies employing ICC perspectives highlight that intercultural challenges in workplace interaction are often pragmatic and interactional rather than

overtly cultural. Misunderstandings may arise from differences in discourse conventions, expectations of explicitness, or approaches to decision-making rather than from identifiable national cultural traits (Mauranen, 2006; Björkman, 2014). ICC provides a framework for interpreting how speakers recognize and respond to such challenges through strategic language use.

Research indicates that BELF users manage intercultural challenges by drawing on a combination of communicative strategies and intercultural awareness. These include adapting speech rate and lexical choice, employing politeness and mitigation strategies, and using collaborative repair mechanisms to resolve misunderstanding without threatening professional relationships (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). From an ICC perspective, these practices reflect the ability to balance task demands with relational considerations in intercultural business interaction.

Moreover, ICC-oriented BELF research emphasizes that successful intercultural communication does not require eliminating cultural difference but involves making it manageable through interaction. Speakers demonstrate ICC by recognizing when cultural or pragmatic differences become interactionally relevant and by responding flexibly rather than rigidly adhering to predetermined norms (Baker, 2015). This view challenges deficit-based interpretations of intercultural communication and underscores the competence of BELF users in navigating complex professional environments.

In sum, ICC serves as a valuable interpretive framework in BELF studies by providing conceptual tools to analyze how intercultural awareness, adaptability, and strategic language use intersect in workplace interaction. By integrating ICC with BELF research, scholars gain deeper insight into how communication strategies function as resources for managing intercultural challenges in institutional contexts. In the present study, ICC is employed as an analytical lens to interpret how communication strategies enacted in a Myanmar economic organization reflect participants' intercultural orientations and contribute to effective BELF-mediated workplace interaction.

2.6 English as a Working Language in ASEAN

The use of English as a working language within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides an important regional and institutional context for understanding Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication in Southeast Asia. ASEAN is characterized by extensive linguistic and cultural diversity, with hundreds of languages spoken across its member states. Within this multilingual environment, English functions as a shared communicative medium that enables cooperation, coordination, and negotiation among member countries.

Importantly, English in ASEAN does not operate as a national or native language for any member state. Instead, it functions predominantly as a lingua franca used by speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds for institutional, professional, and economic purposes. This makes the ASEAN context particularly relevant to BELF research, as English use in the region exemplifies core characteristics of lingua franca communication, including functional orientation, pragmatic flexibility, and accommodation to diverse users.

Scholarly research on English in ASEAN highlights that the role of English has expanded alongside regional integration, particularly in areas such as trade, investment, education, and labor mobility. As ASEAN promotes economic cooperation and regional connectivity, English has become an indispensable communicative resource that supports cross-border interaction without privileging any single national language. Consequently, English use in ASEAN reflects broader global trends in ELF and BELF communication, where effectiveness and mutual understanding are prioritized over native-speaker norms.

2.6.1 English as the Official Working Language of ASEAN

From a policy perspective, English has been formally designated as the official working language of ASEAN. This designation governs the language used in official meetings, policy documents, agreements, and intergovernmental communication. Researchers argue that this policy choice is driven by pragmatic and political considerations rather than linguistic preference, as adopting the language of any

member state would create imbalance and exclusion within the organization (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Baker, 2012).

Studies of ASEAN language policy emphasize that English is framed as a neutral and practical solution for regional cooperation. Its role is to facilitate communication rather than to promote native-speaker standards or linguistic assimilation (Kirkpatrick, 2017). As a result, English use at the ASEAN level aligns closely with ELF principles, where intelligibility, clarity, and accessibility take precedence over grammatical accuracy or conformity to standardized norms.

Empirical research further demonstrates that English functions as a *lingua franca* in actual ASEAN practices. Most participants in ASEAN-related communication are non-native English speakers who draw on their multilingual repertoires and professional experience to negotiate meaning. This has led scholars to describe English in ASEAN as inherently variable and adaptive, shaped by the communicative needs of users rather than by prescriptive language models (Baker, 2015). Pragmatic strategies such as simplification, repetition, and explicit clarification are therefore common in regional cooperation contexts.

In addition, English use in ASEAN is closely linked to institutional and professional domains, including economic governance, regulatory coordination, and international negotiation. Communication in these settings is often high-stakes and accountability-driven, requiring participants to manage precision, clarity, and intercultural sensitivity simultaneously. Communication strategies thus play a crucial role in enabling effective interaction within ASEAN frameworks, allowing speakers to navigate linguistic diversity while fulfilling institutional responsibilities.

Overall, English as the official working language of ASEAN provides a macro-level policy context that shapes BELF communication practices across Southeast Asia. This regional framework directly influences how English is used in national economic organizations, including those in Myanmar, which operate within ASEAN-driven systems of trade and investment. Understanding English use in ASEAN therefore contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of BELF communication as an institutionalized, intercultural, and strategically managed phenomenon in the region.

2.6.2 BELF Communication in ASEAN Business and Institutional Contexts

Business and institutional communication in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) takes place within highly multilingual and multicultural environments. Professionals operating in ASEAN-related business and institutional settings typically bring diverse linguistic repertoires shaped by national languages, regional lingua francas, and varying levels of English proficiency. In this context, English functions primarily as a lingua franca that enables interaction among participants who do not share a common first language, making BELF communication a routine and necessary practice rather than an exceptional one.

2.6.2.1 Multilingual Business Environments in ASEAN

Empirical research on English use in ASEAN highlights that multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception in regional business and institutional communication. Participants often possess knowledge of multiple languages and draw on these resources strategically depending on communicative goals, interlocutors, and institutional expectations (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Baker, 2015). English is commonly used as the main medium for formal communication, such as meetings, negotiations, documentation, and cross-border coordination, while local or regional languages may be employed in informal interaction or internal discussion.

Studies examining workplace interaction in ASEAN contexts indicate that English use is shaped by pragmatic considerations rather than by linguistic ideology. Speakers adjust their language use to accommodate interlocutors' linguistic backgrounds, professional roles, and situational demands. This includes modifying speech rate, simplifying lexical choices, and avoiding culturally specific idioms that may hinder understanding (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Such practices reflect core characteristics of BELF communication, where mutual intelligibility and task accomplishment are prioritized over conformity to native-speaker norms.

In addition, ASEAN business environments often involve interaction across institutional and sectoral boundaries, including public-sector agencies, private enterprises, and international organizations. Communication in these settings is frequently high-stakes, involving regulatory compliance, investment approval, and policy coordination. As a result, English as a working language must be flexible enough

to support both efficiency and precision while accommodating diverse communicative expectations.

2.6.2.2 Implications for BELF Communication Practices

The multilingual nature of ASEAN business and institutional contexts has significant implications for BELF communication practices. First, communication strategies play a central role in enabling effective interaction. Clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, and paraphrasing are commonly employed to manage meaning and prevent misunderstanding in multilingual settings (Mauranen, 2006; Björkman, 2014). These strategies are not merely compensatory responses to linguistic limitations but are integral to professional communication in ASEAN contexts.

Second, BELF communication in ASEAN is closely intertwined with intercultural and institutional considerations. Speakers must navigate differences in communicative style, expectations of explicitness, and norms of politeness while operating within organizational hierarchies and accountability structures. Research suggests that BELF users in ASEAN contexts often adopt a pragmatic and cooperative orientation, treating communication as a shared responsibility and adjusting their strategies dynamically in response to interactional cues (Kaur, 2011; Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Third, the institutional embedding of English in ASEAN influences how BELF communication is evaluated and regulated. While English serves as the official working language at the policy level, its actual use in business and institutional interaction is shaped by local organizational cultures and professional practices. This creates a tension between formal expectations of clarity and accuracy and the flexible, adaptive nature of lingua franca communication. BELF users manage this tension through strategic language use that balances institutional requirements with communicative efficiency.

Overall, BELF communication in ASEAN business and institutional contexts illustrates how English operates as a functional and adaptive resource in multilingual professional environments. The ASEAN setting demonstrates that effective BELF communication depends not only on individual language proficiency but also on strategic competence, intercultural sensitivity, and institutional awareness. This regional context provides an essential backdrop for the present study, as

Myanmar's economic organizations function within ASEAN-driven systems of trade, investment, and governance. Examining BELF communication strategies in Myanmar therefore contributes to a broader understanding of how English as a lingua franca is enacted in ASEAN business and institutional practices.

2.7 BELF Communication in Myanmar

The role of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in Myanmar must be understood within the country's evolving economic, institutional, and regional positioning. As Myanmar has increasingly engaged with international trade, foreign direct investment, and regional cooperation frameworks, English has emerged as a key working language in economic organizations that interact with international stakeholders. In this context, English functions predominantly as a lingua franca used by non-native speakers, making BELF communication a routine feature of professional interaction rather than a specialized or exceptional practice.

Myanmar's participation in regional and global economic networks, particularly within ASEAN-driven trade and investment systems, has intensified the need for effective BELF communication. Economic organizations in Myanmar operate at the intersection of local institutional structures and international business practices, where communication must accommodate linguistic diversity, intercultural variation, and institutional accountability. As a result, BELF communication in Myanmar represents a complex and contextually embedded phenomenon shaped by both global and local factors.

2.7.1 The Role of English in Trade and Investment in Myanmar

English plays a central role as a working language in Myanmar's trade and investment sectors, particularly within government-related economic organizations responsible for facilitating, regulating, and coordinating international business activities. In these institutional settings, English is commonly used for official correspondence, meetings, negotiations, documentation, and interaction with foreign investors and international partners. Importantly, English use in this context is not

associated with native-speaker norms but functions as a shared communicative resource among professionals from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Research on English use in Myanmar highlights that most international business interaction involves communication between non-native English speakers, including representatives from ASEAN member states, East Asian economies, and other global partners. This situates English firmly within a BELF framework, where communicative effectiveness, clarity, and task accomplishment take precedence over linguistic accuracy or stylistic sophistication. English thus serves as a practical tool for coordinating economic activities and managing institutional processes rather than as a marker of linguistic prestige.

Within economic organizations, English is embedded in formal and bureaucratic structures that demand precision, accountability, and transparency. Communication often carries institutional consequences, such as investment approval, regulatory compliance, or contractual negotiation. Under these conditions, BELF users must balance efficiency with accuracy, frequently employing communication strategies such as explicit confirmation, repetition of key decisions, and reformulation to ensure shared understanding. These practices reflect the institutional embedding of BELF communication, where strategic language use is closely tied to organizational responsibility.

Communication with international stakeholders further amplifies the importance of BELF in Myanmar's economic context. Interactions with foreign investors, consultants, and partner organizations often involve differing expectations regarding communicative style, levels of directness, and decision-making processes. Studies examining workplace communication in Myanmar suggest that professionals must navigate intercultural differences while operating within hierarchical and formal institutional environments. Communication strategies therefore play a crucial role in managing potential misunderstanding, maintaining professional rapport, and achieving organizational objectives.

At the same time, English use in Myanmar is shaped by uneven access to English education and professional training, resulting in varying levels of communicative confidence among staff. Rather than relying solely on linguistic proficiency, BELF users compensate through strategic language practices, including

clarification requests, paraphrasing, and collaborative negotiation of meaning. These strategies enable effective communication despite linguistic asymmetries and reflect the pragmatic orientation of BELF interaction in real workplace settings.

Overall, the role of English in trade and investment in Myanmar illustrates how BELF communication operates as an institutionally embedded and intercultural practice. English functions as a working language that connects Myanmar's economic organizations with international stakeholders while being shaped by local organizational norms, regional frameworks, and professional demands. Examining BELF communication strategies in this context therefore provides valuable insight into how English as a lingua franca is enacted in an emerging economy, offering a context-sensitive contribution to existing BELF research.

2.7.2 Institutional and Workplace Communication Constraints in Myanmar

Institutional and workplace communication in Myanmar is shaped by a combination of organizational structures, sociocultural norms, and linguistic conditions that together create distinctive constraints on Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication. Within economic organizations, particularly those operating in the public sector or in close coordination with government agencies, communication is embedded in formalized procedures, hierarchical relationships, and accountability-driven practices. These institutional characteristics significantly influence how English is used, how communication strategies are selected, and how interactional challenges are managed in everyday workplace encounters.

2.7.2.1 Organizational Hierarchy and Formality

Organizational hierarchy constitutes a central feature of workplace communication in Myanmar. Studies on institutional communication in Myanmar indicate that hierarchical relationships strongly shape interactional norms, including turn-taking, decision-making, and the expression of disagreement. In formal organizational settings, respect for seniority and authority often constrains how openly clarification or challenge can be expressed, particularly by lower-ranking staff. As a result, BELF users may adopt indirect strategies, such as hedging, mitigation, or delayed clarification, to maintain professional appropriateness while attempting to ensure understanding.

Formality further reinforces these constraints. Communication in economic organizations is frequently governed by bureaucratic protocols, official documentation, and standardized procedures. English used in such contexts is expected to convey precision, legitimacy, and institutional credibility. This expectation places additional pressure on BELF users, who must balance the need for clarity and accuracy with limited linguistic resources and varying levels of English proficiency. Communication strategies such as repetition, explicit confirmation, and reformulation therefore become essential tools for managing institutional accountability while minimizing the risk of misinterpretation.

Moreover, the hierarchical and formal nature of workplace communication affects how responsibility is distributed and recorded. Decisions related to trade, investment approval, or regulatory compliance often require clear documentation and traceable communication. Under these conditions, BELF interaction is closely linked to institutional risk management, where misunderstanding can have significant organizational consequences. Communication strategies are thus employed not only to facilitate understanding but also to demonstrate due diligence and procedural compliance.

2.7.2.2 Linguistic and Intercultural Challenges

In addition to institutional constraints, linguistic and intercultural challenges further shape BELF communication in Myanmar workplaces. English is used as a foreign language by most professionals, and access to English education and training varies considerably across institutions and individuals. This results in uneven levels of linguistic confidence and communicative competence, particularly in high-stakes professional interaction with international stakeholders.

Intercultural challenges arise not only from differences between Myanmar professionals and foreign interlocutors but also from the diverse cultural and professional backgrounds of international partners. Differences in expectations regarding directness, decision-making processes, and communicative style can create interactional tension. For example, Myanmar professionals may operate within communicative norms that value indirectness and deference, while international counterparts may expect explicit articulation of positions and rapid decision-making. Such mismatches can lead to misunderstanding if not strategically managed.

BELF users in Myanmar often respond to these challenges through adaptive communication strategies. Clarification requests, paraphrasing, and confirmation checks are used to negotiate meaning and align expectations across cultural and linguistic boundaries. At the same time, speakers may employ let-it-pass strategies or implicit accommodation to preserve interactional harmony in situations where direct clarification could be perceived as face-threatening or inappropriate. These practices reflect a pragmatic orientation toward communication that prioritizes relationship maintenance alongside task accomplishment.

Importantly, these linguistic and intercultural challenges are not isolated individual difficulties but are embedded in broader institutional and sociocultural contexts. Workplace communication in Myanmar economic organizations is shaped by historical patterns of education, governance, and international engagement, which influence how English is perceived and used. As a result, BELF communication strategies must be understood as situated responses to layered constraints rather than as generic features of lingua franca interaction.

Overall, institutional hierarchy, formality, and linguistic–intercultural challenges together create a complex communicative environment for BELF use in Myanmar workplaces. These constraints shape how communication strategies are enacted and evaluated in professional interaction. Despite their significance, such context-specific constraints remain underexplored in existing BELF research, which has largely focused on private-sector or Western-dominated corporate settings. By examining BELF communication strategies within Myanmar’s institutional and workplace contexts, the present study addresses this gap and contributes a nuanced understanding of how English as a lingua franca is managed under conditions of hierarchical organization, formal accountability, and intercultural diversity.

2.8 English Language Education and Workplace Communication in Myanmar

The relationship between English language education and workplace communication in Myanmar is a critical factor in understanding how Business English

as a Lingua Franca (BELF) is enacted in professional settings. As English has become increasingly important for international trade, investment, and institutional coordination, the effectiveness of workplace communication is closely linked to how English is taught, learned, and transferred from educational contexts to professional practice. However, existing research suggests that a persistent gap remains between English language education and the communicative demands of real workplace interaction in Myanmar.

Studies on English use in Myanmar highlight that while English is widely taught across educational levels, instructional practices have traditionally emphasized grammatical knowledge, reading comprehension, and examination performance rather than interactional competence and strategic language use. As a result, many professionals enter the workforce with formal knowledge of English but limited experience in using the language for spoken workplace communication, particularly in intercultural and institutional settings. This mismatch has significant implications for BELF communication, where effectiveness depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on the ability to manage meaning, interaction, and professional relationships.

2.8.1 English Language Education and Professional Communication

Research on English language education in Myanmar indicates that English plays an important role in shaping workforce preparedness, particularly for positions involving international engagement. English is taught as a compulsory subject at multiple levels of the education system and is increasingly promoted as a key skill for employability, professional mobility, and participation in regional and global markets. However, the orientation of English instruction has often been criticized for its limited alignment with the communicative realities of professional workplaces.

Several studies point out that English education in Myanmar has been characterized by teacher-centered approaches, limited opportunities for spoken interaction, and a strong focus on accuracy and examination outcomes. While such approaches may support foundational language knowledge, they provide limited preparation for the dynamic, interactional nature of workplace communication. In BELF contexts, professionals are expected to negotiate meaning, manage uncertainty, and adapt their language use in response to diverse interlocutors and institutional

constraints. These skills are rarely developed explicitly within formal educational settings.

The consequences of this educational–professional gaps are evident in workplace communication practices. Professionals may experience difficulty participating confidently in meetings, negotiations, or discussions with international stakeholders, particularly when communication requires spontaneous interaction rather than scripted responses. Linguistic insecurity, fear of making errors, and limited exposure to authentic spoken interaction can constrain participation, even among individuals with relatively strong formal English backgrounds. As a result, workplace communication effectiveness often relies heavily on the use of communication strategies to compensate for gaps in interactional competence.

In addition to pedagogical factors, structural constraints further affect the transfer of English education to professional communication. Limited access to continuous professional development, uneven quality of English training across institutions, and insufficient emphasis on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contribute to persistent challenges in workplace communication. Although ESP initiatives have been introduced in certain sectors, these programs often focus on vocabulary and genre familiarity rather than on strategic and intercultural dimensions of communication.

Importantly, existing research suggests that professionals in Myanmar do not rely solely on linguistic proficiency to manage workplace communication. Instead, they draw on communication strategies such as clarification requests, paraphrasing, repetition, and collaborative negotiation of meaning to achieve communicative goals. These strategies allow professionals to function effectively in BELF contexts despite educational constraints, highlighting the importance of viewing workplace communication competence as a situated and adaptive practice rather than as a direct outcome of formal language education.

Overall, the literature indicates that English language education in Myanmar provides an essential but insufficient foundation for effective workplace communication in BELF contexts. The gap between educational preparation and professional communicative demands underscores the need for research that examines how communication strategies are actually used in real workplace interaction. By

focusing on BELF communication strategies within Myanmar economic organizations, the present study responds to this need and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how English education, professional practice, and strategic language use intersect in an emerging economy.

2.8.2 Implications of Educational Background for BELF Communication

Educational background plays a significant role in shaping how professionals engage in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication in the workplace. In contexts such as Myanmar, where English is taught primarily as a foreign language, differences in educational experiences contribute to uneven levels of linguistic proficiency, communicative confidence, and readiness for professional interaction. These differences have direct implications for how BELF communication is enacted and how communication strategies are employed in workplace settings.

2.8.2.1 Uneven Proficiency and Communicative Confidence

Research on English language education in Myanmar suggests that learners' exposure to English varies considerably depending on institutional resources, instructional approaches, and opportunities for authentic language use. While some professionals may have received extensive formal instruction in English grammar and reading, others may have had limited access to communicative or interaction-focused learning environments. As a result, linguistic proficiency among workplace professionals is often uneven, particularly in spoken interaction and real-time communication.

This uneven proficiency is closely linked to differences in communicative confidence. Studies indicate that professionals who lack experience in spoken English interaction may experience anxiety, hesitation, or reluctance to participate actively in workplace communication, especially in high-stakes or intercultural situations. Fear of making linguistic errors or losing face can further constrain participation, even when individuals possess sufficient technical knowledge or professional expertise. Consequently, communicative confidence becomes a critical mediating factor between educational background and workplace communication effectiveness.

Importantly, BELF research emphasizes that limited confidence does not necessarily equate to limited communicative competence. Many professionals demonstrate the ability to engage meaningfully in interaction by relying on adaptive

practices rather than on fluent or native-like language use. However, lower confidence may influence how proactively individuals initiate interaction, request clarification, or assert their viewpoints within institutional hierarchies.

2.8.2.2 Relevance to Communication Strategies in the Workplace

The implications of educational background become particularly evident in the strategic use of communication in BELF workplace interaction. Professionals with uneven proficiency or limited confidence often rely more heavily on communication strategies to manage interactional demands. Clarification requests, paraphrasing, repetition, and confirmation checks function as essential tools for ensuring understanding and maintaining interactional flow when linguistic resources are constrained.

At the same time, educational background influences which strategies are perceived as appropriate or accessible. For example, individuals socialized in teacher-centered educational environments may be less accustomed to openly questioning or seeking clarification, especially in hierarchical settings. As a result, they may favor indirect strategies, such as reformulating statements cautiously or employing let-it-pass strategies to avoid face-threatening interaction. These choices reflect not individual deficiency but the interaction between educational socialization and workplace norms.

Research on BELF and workplace communication further suggests that professionals compensate for educational limitations by drawing on contextual knowledge, professional expertise, and collaborative interactional practices. Communication strategies thus enable speakers to participate effectively despite linguistic asymmetries, highlighting the adaptive and resource-oriented nature of BELF communication. Rather than viewing educational background as a fixed determinant of communicative success, existing studies emphasize the role of strategic competence in bridging the gap between formal education and workplace demands.

Overall, the literature indicates that educational background significantly shapes how BELF communication is performed in professional contexts, influencing both proficiency and confidence. These factors, in turn, affect the selection and deployment of communication strategies in workplace interaction. Understanding this relationship is essential for interpreting BELF communication practices in Myanmar economic organizations, where professionals operate within multilingual, hierarchical,

and institutionally constrained environments. By examining communication strategies as situated responses to educational and professional conditions, the present study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how BELF communication competence is constructed and enacted in real workplace settings.

2.9 Empirical Studies on BELF and Communication Strategies

2.9.1 Empirical Studies on BELF in Workplace Settings

A substantial body of empirical research has examined Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in workplace settings, with particular attention to how professionals use English to accomplish business tasks in multilingual and multicultural environments. Drawing on data from meetings, negotiations, interviews, emails, and naturally occurring workplace interaction, these studies consistently demonstrate that BELF communication is shaped less by adherence to native-speaker norms and more by the pragmatic demands of professional activity (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

International studies conducted in multinational corporations show that BELF functions primarily as a shared working language among non-native speakers, where communicative effectiveness and task accomplishment take precedence over grammatical accuracy. Empirical findings indicate that business professionals routinely prioritize clarity, efficiency, and mutual understanding, often simplifying language, avoiding idiomatic expressions, and adjusting discourse to accommodate interlocutors' linguistic repertoires (Nickerson, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). These studies challenge traditional assumptions that successful business communication depends on native-like proficiency, instead emphasizing the central role of strategic and adaptive language use.

Research focusing on spoken workplace interaction further reveals that BELF communication is highly interactional and collaboratively constructed. Studies based on meeting discourse and negotiation data demonstrate that participants actively co-construct meaning through clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, and paraphrasing (Björkman, 2014; Kaur, 2011; Mauranen, 2012).

Björkman's empirical analyses of technical and business meetings show that such strategies are not indicators of communicative failure but constitute routine practices that support shared understanding in complex, task-oriented interaction (Björkman, 2011, 2014). Similarly, Kaur's studies on clarification practices illustrate that BELF users display a strong cooperative orientation, explicitly addressing potential misunderstandings to maintain interactional progressivity (Kaur, 2009, 2011; Kaur & Birlik, 2021).

Beyond multinational corporate contexts, regional studies have expanded empirical understanding of BELF by examining communication in diverse institutional and cultural settings. Ehrenreich's ethnographic study of a German multinational corporation highlights how English operates alongside other languages in workplace interaction, with professionals strategically drawing on multilingual resources to meet situational and organizational demands (Ehrenreich, 2010). These findings reinforce the view of BELF as a flexible and multilingual communicative practice rather than a monolithic language system (Cogo, 2012; Jenkins, 2014).

Empirical research has also addressed the interpersonal and relational dimensions of BELF workplace communication. Studies suggest that BELF interaction involves ongoing management of rapport, power relations, and professional identity, particularly in meetings and negotiations involving participants from diverse cultural and institutional backgrounds (Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Neeley, 2012). Communication strategies in BELF contexts therefore serve not only transactional purposes but also relational functions, supporting trust-building, alignment, and professional legitimacy within organizations (Poncini, 2004; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

Despite these contributions, empirical BELF research remains unevenly distributed across contexts. Much of the existing literature has focused on multinational corporations operating in Western or English-dominant environments, while public-sector organizations, emerging economies, and institutionally constrained settings remain underrepresented (Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). In addition, some studies rely primarily on self-reported perceptions or training-oriented data, offering limited insight into how communication strategies are enacted moment by moment in authentic workplace interaction (Nickerson, 2015).

Taken together, empirical studies on BELF in workplace settings converge on the view that BELF communication is strategic, adaptive, and context-sensitive. Professionals draw on a range of communicative resources to manage meaning, sustain cooperation, and achieve organizational goals in linguistically diverse environments (Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012). However, the concentration of research in specific organizational and geographical contexts highlights the need for further empirical investigation in underexplored institutional settings. Examining BELF communication strategies within a Myanmar economic organization therefore offers an opportunity to extend existing empirical knowledge by situating BELF within a different institutional, cultural, and developmental context.

2.9.2 Empirical Studies on Communication Strategies in Business Contexts

Empirical research on communication strategies in business contexts has consistently demonstrated that professional interaction is shaped by a combination of intercultural complexity, institutional constraints, and task-oriented objectives. Across international business settings, communication strategies are shown to function as essential interactional resources that enable participants to manage meaning, maintain cooperation, and accomplish organizational goals in linguistically and culturally diverse environments (Gumperz, 1982; Poncini, 2004; Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2007).

Studies situated in intercultural business interaction highlight that communication strategies are closely tied to cultural expectations, pragmatic norms, and power relations. Research on international meetings and negotiations indicates that professionals frequently employ clarification requests, repetition, paraphrasing, and confirmation checks to prevent misunderstanding and to align interpretations across cultural boundaries (House, 2003; Kaur, 2011; Björkman, 2014). These strategies allow participants to address ambiguity explicitly while maintaining a cooperative orientation, particularly in situations where shared cultural assumptions cannot be taken for granted.

Empirical investigations further show that communication strategies in business contexts are not merely reactive responses to breakdowns but are proactively used to manage interactional risk. Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008), for example, demonstrates that speakers strategically simplify language, avoid idiomatic expressions, and adjust

speech rate in anticipation of potential comprehension difficulties. Such preventive strategies are especially salient in BELF-mediated interaction, where interlocutors possess varying levels of English proficiency and diverse linguistic repertoires (Nickerson, 2005; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

In institutional business settings, communication strategies are additionally shaped by organizational roles, hierarchy, and accountability. Studies of workplace discourse reveal that professionals must balance clarity and efficiency with politeness, face management, and institutional expectations (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Poncini, 2004). For instance, in formal meetings or regulatory interactions, speakers often employ indirectness, hedging, or mitigation strategies to manage power asymmetries while still ensuring task progress (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Ehrenreich, 2010). These findings suggest that communication strategies in business contexts are inseparable from the institutional structures within which interaction occurs.

Research focusing on multilingual business environments further underscores the strategic nature of communication practices. Empirical studies document how professionals draw on multilingual resources, code-switching, and non-verbal cues to support meaning-making and interactional alignment, particularly under time pressure or in high-stakes situations (Cogo, 2012; Björkman, 2014). Such practices illustrate that communication strategies extend beyond verbal language use and include multimodal and contextual resources that are mobilized dynamically during interaction.

Despite the richness of existing empirical work, much of the research on communication strategies in business contexts has concentrated on multinational corporations or private-sector organizations in Western or English-dominant environments. Comparatively fewer studies have examined strategy use in public-sector economic organizations or in developing and transitional economies, where institutional procedures, bureaucratic norms, and sociopolitical factors exert strong influence on workplace communication (Ehrenreich, 2010; Nickerson, 2015). Moreover, some studies rely heavily on self-reported data, leaving the moment-by-moment enactment of communication strategies in authentic interaction underexplored.

Overall, empirical studies on communication strategies in business contexts demonstrate that strategic language use is central to effective intercultural and institutional interaction. Communication strategies enable professionals to navigate

linguistic diversity, cultural variation, and organizational constraints simultaneously. These findings provide a strong empirical foundation for the present study, which seeks to examine how such strategies are enacted in real BELF-mediated workplace interaction within a Myanmar economic organization, thereby extending existing research into a context that remains largely absent from the literature.

2.10 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Building on the theoretical and empirical insights reviewed in the preceding sections, this study adopts a conceptual framework that integrates Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), communication strategies, intercultural communicative competence, and institutional workplace conditions. The framework functions as an analytical and interpretive guide for examining BELF-mediated workplace interaction rather than as a model for testing causal relationships. It conceptualizes BELF communication as a situated, interactional, and strategic phenomenon shaped by linguistic diversity, intercultural complexity, and organizational constraints.

At the core of the framework is BELF-mediated workplace interaction, understood as professional communication conducted primarily among non-native English speakers for the purpose of accomplishing business and organizational tasks. In this study, BELF is not treated as a fixed linguistic variety or a standardized form of Business English. Rather, it is understood as a functional communicative resource that emerges through interaction and is continuously adapted to specific institutional and workplace contexts. This includes both spoken and written workplace communication, such as institutional meetings and professional email exchanges.

Surrounding this core are communication strategies, which constitute the central analytical constructs of the study. Drawing on Björkman's strategy framework, communication strategies are conceptualized as interactional resources that professionals employ to manage meaning, maintain interactional flow, and accomplish task-related objectives in BELF contexts. These strategies include clarity and explicitness practices, such as repetition and reformulation; negotiation of meaning, including clarification requests, confirmation checks, and backchannels; and

adaptability and context sensitivity, such as lexical suggestion, signaling importance, strategic simplification, politeness, directness, and written request formulation. Rather than being viewed as compensatory mechanisms for linguistic deficiency, these strategies are positioned within the framework as indicators of interactional competence and professional expertise in multilingual workplace communication.

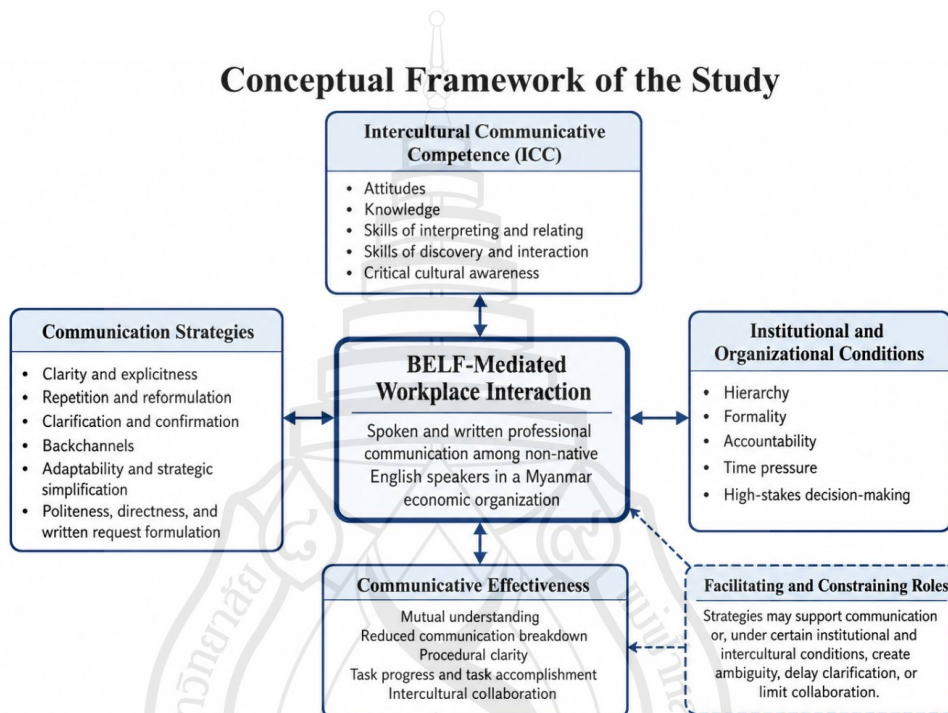


Figure 2.2 conceptual frame work

The framework also incorporates intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an interpretive lens for understanding BELF interaction. Drawing on Byram's model of ICC, intercultural competence is conceptualized not as static cultural knowledge, but as the ability to manage intercultural challenges through interaction. Within the framework, ICC is reflected in attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Communication strategies are understood as one of the main means through which ICC is enacted in workplace interaction, while intercultural orientations simultaneously shape how strategies are selected, interpreted, and evaluated during communication.

Importantly, the framework situates BELF communication within institutional and organizational conditions. Factors such as organizational hierarchy, formality,

accountability, time pressure, and the high-stakes nature of economic decision-making are recognized as shaping communicative behavior. These institutional constraints influence not only which strategies are available to participants, but also how, when, and to what extent strategies can be deployed in workplace interaction. For example, hierarchy may limit direct clarification, accountability may require explicit confirmation, and intercultural expectations may influence the use of politeness, mitigation, or indirectness.

Conceptually, the framework assumes a dynamic and reciprocal relationship among its components. BELF interaction provides the communicative medium; communication strategies function as the mechanisms through which interaction is managed; intercultural communicative competence shapes pragmatic choices and interpretations; and institutional conditions both enable and constrain strategic action. Communicative effectiveness is therefore understood as an emergent outcome of how these elements interact in real workplace practices. In this study, effectiveness is operationalized through indicators such as mutual understanding, reduced communication breakdown, task progress, task accomplishment, procedural clarity, and successful intercultural collaboration.

At the same time, the framework allows the study to examine not only how communication strategies facilitate workplace communication, but also how their effectiveness may be constrained. Some strategies may support task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration in one situation but create ambiguity, delay clarification, or limit critical engagement in another. For example, indirectness may help maintain politeness and professional rapport, but it may also reduce clarity if expectations are not explicitly stated. Similarly, let-it-pass strategies may help maintain interactional flow, but they may also allow unresolved misunderstanding to continue. This perspective is important because the study examines both the facilitating and constraining roles of BELF communication strategies.

Guided by this framework, the present study examines communication strategies as they occur in authentic spoken and written BELF-mediated interaction within a Myanmar economic organization. The empirical analysis focuses on identifying the repertoire of communication strategies employed and examining how these strategies facilitate or constrain task accomplishment and intercultural

collaboration under institutional conditions. By grounding the analysis in actual workplace interaction rather than abstract language norms or perceived proficiency levels alone, the study seeks to capture the strategic, adaptive, and context-sensitive nature of professional communication in an underexplored institutional setting.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted to investigate communication strategies in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)-mediated workplace interaction within a Myanmar economic organization. Guided by the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2, the methodological approach is designed to capture the interactional, intercultural, and institutional dimensions of BELF communication as they occur in authentic professional settings. The chapter outlines the research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data analysis methods, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations that underpin the empirical investigation.

3.1 Overview of the Study

The present study examines communication strategies used in BELF-mediated workplace interaction within a Myanmar economic organization. It focuses on both reported and actual communication practices in order to understand how staff strategically manage meaning, maintain procedural clarity, accomplish workplace tasks, and engage in intercultural collaboration with international stakeholders.

The study is organized around two main analytical purposes. First, it identifies the communication strategies commonly used by staff when engaging in BELF-mediated workplace communication. This includes strategies used in both spoken and written interaction, such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, paraphrasing, backchanneling, politeness strategies, directness, mitigation, code-switching, and non-verbal cues.

Second, the study examines how these communication strategies facilitate or constrain task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration within the organization. To address this purpose, the study analyzes multiple data sources, including survey questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, professional email

communication, and recorded workplace meetings. These data sources allow the study to examine communication strategies from different perspectives: participants' reported use of strategies, their perceptions of communication challenges, written BELF practices in institutional emails, and real-time strategy use in workplace meetings.

Together, these data sources provide a comprehensive understanding of BELF communication strategies within the institutional and intercultural context of a Myanmar economic organization. Rather than treating communication strategies as isolated linguistic techniques or signs of limited English proficiency, the study examines them as situated interactional resources used to manage meaning, accountability, hierarchy, and intercultural relations in authentic workplace communication.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts an embedded mixed-methods research design to investigate communication strategies in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)-mediated workplace interaction within a Myanmar economic organization. This design is appropriate because the study primarily seeks to understand how communication strategies are enacted, negotiated, and interpreted in authentic workplace communication, while quantitative data are used in a complementary role to provide broader descriptive patterns of strategy use.

The selection of this research design is guided by the study's conceptual framework, which conceptualizes BELF communication as a situated, interactional, and strategic phenomenon embedded within intercultural and institutional contexts. Since the study focuses on real workplace communication, a purely quantitative design would not be sufficient to capture the complexity of how participants manage meaning, procedural clarity, hierarchy, accountability, and intercultural collaboration in actual interaction.

Qualitative methods form the core of the research design. Semi-structured interviews, professional email communication, and recorded workplace meetings are used to examine how BELF communication strategies are experienced, constructed,

and enacted across spoken and written modes. These qualitative data allow the study to analyze not only what strategies are used, but also how they function as interactional resources in specific communicative situations. This is particularly important for understanding strategies such as clarification, confirmation, repetition, reformulation, politeness, directness, mitigation, backchanneling, and non-verbal cues in relation to workplace tasks and institutional demands.

Quantitative data are incorporated in an embedded and supportive role through a structured questionnaire developed based on Björkman's framework of communication strategies. The questionnaire is used to identify broader patterns in the reported frequency and perceived effectiveness of communication strategy use across the organization. The quantitative data are not intended to test causal relationships or measure the effectiveness of an intervention. Rather, they provide descriptive insights that help contextualize and triangulate the qualitative findings.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data occurs during the interpretation stage of the study. Interview data provide participants' reflective accounts of communication challenges and strategy use, email data reveal written BELF practices in institutional communication, recorded workplace meetings show how strategies are enacted in real time, and questionnaire data provide an organizational-level overview of reported strategy patterns. Together, these data sources enable methodological triangulation and support a more comprehensive understanding of how BELF communication strategies facilitate or constrain task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration in institutional workplace settings.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population of this study consists of employees working in a Myanmar public-sector economic organization that regularly engages with foreign investors, international organizations, and multinational stakeholders. The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) was selected as the research site because of its central role in facilitating and regulating investment-related communication between Myanmar institutions and international stakeholders. In this organizational context, English is

frequently used as a shared working language in professional communication, making MIC a relevant and information-rich setting for examining Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)-mediated workplace interaction.

Given the study's focus on communication strategies in institutional and intercultural contexts, a purposive sampling approach was employed. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative-dominant mixed-methods research because it allows the researcher to select participants and communicative data sources that are directly relevant to the research objectives (Merriam, 2014). In this study, participants and data sources were selected based on their direct relevance to English-mediated professional communication with international stakeholders and their capacity to provide insight into BELF communication strategies in authentic workplace contexts.

The study involved multiple participant groups and communicative data sources. First, the survey questionnaire was administered to 40 staff members to obtain an overview of the reported frequency and perceived effectiveness of BELF communication strategies used within the organization. Second, 15 employees with a minimum of three years of professional experience at MIC were selected for semi-structured interviews. These participants were chosen because they had direct experience in English-mediated communication with international stakeholders and were able to provide reflective accounts of workplace communication challenges, strategy use, and intercultural interaction. Third, recorded workplace interaction data were drawn from three institutional meetings involving 25 participants in total. These meetings were selected because they represented authentic BELF-mediated workplace interaction involving discussion, clarification, negotiation of meaning, and institutional decision-making. In addition, 74 professional emails were collected as written workplace communication data to examine how BELF communication strategies were enacted in institutional email correspondence. The participant groups and data sources are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Participant Groups and Data Sources

Data source	Participants / data units	Purpose
Survey questionnaire	40 staff members	To identify reported frequency and perceived effectiveness of BELF communication strategies
Semi-structured interviews	15 employees with at least three years of professional experience at MIC	To explore participants' experiences, communication challenges, and strategy use
Recorded workplace meetings	3 meetings involving 25 participants in total	To examine real-time BELF communication strategies in authentic institutional interaction
Professional email corpus	74 emails	To examine written BELF communication strategies, including politeness, directness, request formulation, and institutional accountability

The participants represented a range of institutional roles and responsibilities within the organization. This variation allowed the study to capture communication practices across different levels of organizational hierarchy, which is particularly important because BELF communication in public-sector economic organizations is shaped by institutional authority, formality, accountability, and professional responsibility.

The purposive selection of participants and communicative events was not intended to achieve statistical representativeness. Rather, it was designed to ensure depth, relevance, and contextual richness. By focusing on participants and data sources directly connected to BELF-mediated workplace communication, the study was able to generate detailed insights into how communication strategies are reported, perceived, and enacted in real institutional settings. This sampling strategy aligns with the

qualitative-dominant embedded mixed-methods design of the study and supports the analytical aim of examining BELF communication as a situated, strategic, and interactional workplace practice.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

This study employed multiple data collection instruments to capture BELF communication strategies from different perspectives and interactional modes. Consistent with the qualitative-dominant embedded mixed-methods design, the instruments were selected to document both participants' reported perceptions of communication practices and the actual enactment of BELF strategies in authentic workplace interaction. The use of multiple instruments also enabled methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility and robustness of the findings.

The data collection instruments consisted of four main sources: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) a structured questionnaire, (3) professional email texts, and (4) recorded workplace interactions. Each instrument served a distinct analytical purpose while collectively contributing to a comprehensive understanding of BELF communication practices within the Myanmar economic organization. The questionnaire provided an overview of reported strategy use and perceived effectiveness, the interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions, the email corpus captured written BELF communication, and the recorded workplace interactions revealed spoken strategies as they occurred in real time.

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth qualitative insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and communicative challenges in BELF-mediated workplace interaction. This method was chosen because it allows flexibility in exploring participants' views while still maintaining focus on the research objectives. The interviews were particularly useful for understanding how staff perceived communication challenges, intercultural issues, institutional constraints, and the strategies they used when communicating with international stakeholders.

A total of 15 employees were interviewed. Each participant had at least three years of professional experience at the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and had direct experience in English-mediated communication with international stakeholders. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was guided by nine open-ended questions focusing on participants' use of English in professional contexts, perceived communication challenges, intercultural communication experiences, and communication strategies used in workplace interaction. Follow-up questions were used when necessary to clarify responses and encourage elaboration.

The interview questions were developed based on the study's conceptual framework, particularly the concepts of BELF communication strategies, intercultural communicative competence, and institutional workplace communication. The interview protocol was reviewed to ensure that the questions were relevant to the research objectives and appropriate for the participants' professional context. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix B.

All interviews were conducted at the MIC offices in Yangon and were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and, where necessary, translated into English by the researcher. To ensure translation accuracy, the translated interview data were reviewed and confirmed by an EFL specialist from Yangon University of Foreign Languages. The interview data were subsequently analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to BELF communication strategies, intercultural challenges, and institutional workplace communication.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was developed to complement the qualitative data and to provide a broader overview of BELF communication strategy use across the organization. The questionnaire was based primarily on Björkman's framework of communication strategies in BELF contexts and was adapted to suit the institutional workplace context of the present study.

The questionnaire included items related to major categories of communication strategies, including clarity and explicitness, negotiation of meaning, adaptability and context sensitivity, non-verbal communication, politeness, directness, and other

commonly reported BELF strategies. These categories were aligned with the conceptual framework and the research questions of the study.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to measure the reported frequency and perceived effectiveness of different communication strategies. It was administered to 40 staff members in order to identify general patterns of strategy use within the organization. The questionnaire data were not used to test causal relationships. Rather, they provided descriptive quantitative insights that helped contextualize and triangulate the qualitative findings from interviews, emails, and recorded workplace interactions.

Before administration, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure content relevance, clarity of wording, and alignment with the research objectives. Where necessary, wording was adjusted to make the items understandable for participants working in the Myanmar institutional context. The questionnaire results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation.

3.4.3 Professional Email Corpus

To examine BELF communication strategies in written workplace interaction, a corpus of professional emails was collected with the consent of both the organization and the individual participants. A total of 74 emails were gathered over a six-month period from investment-related departments within the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC). The emails represented routine institutional communication between MIC staff and international stakeholders.

The email corpus was included because written communication is an important site of BELF-mediated workplace interaction. In this study, emails were not treated as isolated linguistic texts. Rather, they were examined as institutional communicative events through which staff managed meaning, requested information, clarified procedures, maintained politeness, assigned responsibility, and sustained professional relationships with international stakeholders.

The email data were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. Included emails involved workplace communication related to investment procedures, document requests, regulatory clarification, appointment arrangements, follow-up communication, or coordination with international stakeholders. Personal emails,

highly confidential documents, and emails unrelated to BELF-mediated workplace communication were excluded from the corpus.

Analytical attention was directed to how politeness, directness, mitigation, clarity, cultural awareness, and institutional positioning were enacted across email interactions. This included the examination of opening and closing sequences, request formulations, responsibility-related statements, deadlines, and references to institutional procedures. These features were analyzed as interactional moves embedded within broader institutional practices rather than as decontextualized linguistic features.

All identifying information was removed to ensure confidentiality. Names, email addresses, departments, reference numbers, clients, and sensitive institutional details were anonymized or modified. Only voluntarily submitted emails were included in the corpus.

3.4.4 Recorded Workplace Interaction

To capture BELF communication strategies as they occurred in real-time spoken interaction, recordings of workplace meetings were collected. The recorded data consisted of three institutional meetings involving 25 participants in total. These meetings included video-conferenced and audio-recorded interactions between MIC officials and international stakeholders.

This instrument was crucial for examining spoken BELF communication as an interactional and multimodal phenomenon. Unlike interviews or questionnaires, recorded workplace interactions allowed the study to observe how communication strategies were actually enacted in real time. The recorded meetings provided evidence of how participants used clarification, repair, repetition, reformulation, backchannels, turn-taking practices, gestures, facial expressions, and other pragmatic signals to manage meaning and maintain interactional flow.

The meetings were selected because they represented authentic BELF-mediated workplace communication involving institutional discussion, clarification, procedural explanation, negotiation of meaning, and decision-making. All recordings were made with prior informed consent from participants. Participants were informed of the purpose of the recording, the academic use of the data, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality.

The recorded interactions were transcribed and analyzed using conversation-analytic principles. The analysis focused on both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, including clarification requests, confirmation checks, repair sequences, repetition, reformulation, backchannels, gestures, gaze, and other multimodal cues. These strategies were examined as they emerged sequentially in interaction, with attention to how participants responded to one another and co-constructed meaning in high-stakes institutional contexts.

All recorded data were anonymized, securely stored, and used exclusively for research purposes. The names of participants, organizations, clients, and sensitive institutional details were removed or replaced with pseudonyms.

Together, these instruments supported a comprehensive and context-sensitive analysis of BELF communication strategies within the Myanmar economic organization. They enabled the study to examine not only what strategies were used, but also how these strategies functioned as interactional resources for managing meaning, procedural clarity, accountability, hierarchy, task accomplishment, and intercultural collaboration.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis focused on identifying BELF communication strategies, interpreting their interactional functions, and examining how these strategies facilitated or constrained task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration within an institutional workplace context. Since the study employed a qualitative-dominant embedded mixed-methods design, each data source was first analyzed separately using an appropriate analytical method. The findings were then integrated through triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of BELF communication strategies across reported perceptions, written communication, and real-time spoken interaction.

Data from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, professional emails, and recorded workplace meetings were analyzed in relation to the study's research questions and conceptual framework. The questionnaire data provided descriptive

patterns of reported strategy use and perceived effectiveness. The interview data provided participants' reflective accounts of communication challenges and strategy use. The professional email corpus enabled analysis of written BELF communication strategies, while the recorded workplace interactions allowed close examination of how strategies were enacted sequentially in spoken institutional interaction.

3.5.1 Qualitative Analysis of Interview Data

The semi-structured interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The purpose of this analysis was to identify recurring themes related to BELF communication strategies, intercultural communication challenges, institutional constraints, and participants' perceptions of communicative effectiveness.

The analysis began with repeated reading of the interview transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Initial codes were then generated by identifying meaningful segments related to participants' experiences of English-mediated workplace communication, communication difficulties, strategy use, and intercultural interaction. Although the coding process was primarily inductive, the study's conceptual framework provided sensitizing concepts, including clarity and explicitness, negotiation of meaning, adaptability, intercultural awareness, institutional hierarchy, and task accomplishment.

After initial coding, related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories. These categories were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the interview data and were relevant to the research questions. Particular attention was paid to how participants described the use of communication strategies in relation to mutual understanding, procedural clarity, task completion, hierarchy, politeness, and intercultural collaboration.

The themes generated from the interview data were then compared with findings from the questionnaire, email corpus, and recorded workplace interactions. This comparison helped determine whether participants' reported perceptions were consistent with actual communication practices observed in written and spoken workplace data.

3.5.2 Quantitative Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the reported frequency and perceived effectiveness of BELF

communication strategies across the organization. Responses from the five-point Likert scale were coded and entered into a spreadsheet for analysis.

The analysis included frequency distributions, mean scores, and standard deviations for each communication strategy category. These categories included clarity and explicitness, negotiation of meaning, adaptability and context sensitivity, non-verbal communication, politeness and directness, and other relevant BELF strategies. The mean scores were used to identify which strategies were reported as more frequently used or perceived as more effective, while standard deviations were used to examine the degree of variation among participants' responses.

The quantitative results were not used to test causal relationships or to make statistical generalizations. Instead, they served a complementary function by providing an organizational-level overview of strategy use. These descriptive findings helped contextualize the qualitative analysis and supported triangulation with interview, email, and recorded meeting data.

3.5.3 Analysis of Professional Email Communication

The professional email corpus was analyzed using qualitative content analysis to examine BELF communication strategies in written workplace interaction. The analysis focused on how staff used written communication to manage meaning, maintain politeness and directness, clarify procedures, assign responsibility, and sustain professional relationships with international stakeholders.

A coding scheme was developed based on the conceptual framework and the recurring features of the email data. The coding categories included opening sequences, institutional positioning, request formulation, politeness markers, directness, mitigation, responsibility-related statements, deadline specification, procedural references, and closing sequences. These categories allowed the analysis to examine how email writers organized information and managed institutional and intercultural communication through written interaction.

Each email was read carefully and coded according to these categories. The analysis did not treat emails as isolated linguistic texts. Rather, each email was interpreted as an institutional communicative event embedded in workplace procedures and professional relationships. Particular attention was paid to how writers balanced clarity and politeness, how they framed requests, how they referred to institutional

procedures, and how they maintained accountability while preserving professional rapport.

Recurring patterns across the email corpus were then identified and interpreted in relation to the research questions. The email analysis contributed especially to understanding written BELF communication strategies, including how politeness, directness, mitigation, and institutional framing functioned as interactional resources in professional correspondence.

3.5.4 Conversation Analysis of Recorded Workplace Interaction

Recorded workplace meetings were analyzed using conversation-analytic principles to examine how BELF communication strategies were enacted in real-time spoken interaction. The analysis focused on the sequential organization of interaction and on how participants co-constructed meaning turn by turn.

The recorded meetings were first transcribed in detail. The transcripts included relevant verbal features, such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, repair sequences, backchannels, and turn-taking practices. Where relevant, non-verbal and multimodal cues, such as gestures, gaze, nodding, facial expressions, and references to shared documents, were also noted because these resources supported meaning-making in BELF-mediated interaction.

After transcription, selected interactional episodes were identified for close analysis. Episode selection was guided by the research questions and conceptual framework. The selected episodes included moments where participants managed misunderstanding, clarified procedures, negotiated meaning, confirmed institutional responsibilities, maintained interactional flow, or responded to intercultural communication challenges.

The analysis examined how communication strategies emerged in sequence, how participants responded to one another's turns, and how strategies contributed to task accomplishment, procedural clarity, accountability, and intercultural collaboration. Rather than treating strategies as isolated linguistic features, the analysis interpreted them as interactional practices co-constructed by participants in response to specific communicative demands.

3.5.5 Integration and Triangulation of Findings

After each data source was analyzed separately, the findings were integrated through triangulation. Triangulation was used to compare patterns across questionnaire responses, interview data, professional emails, and recorded workplace interactions. This process helped strengthen the credibility of the analysis by examining whether similar communication strategies appeared across different types of data.

The questionnaire data provided broad descriptive patterns of reported strategy use and perceived effectiveness. The interview data offered insight into participants' perceptions, experiences, and explanations of strategy use. The email data revealed how strategies were enacted in written institutional communication, while the recorded meetings showed how strategies emerged in real-time spoken interaction.

The integration of these findings allowed the study to examine both reported and actual communication practices. It also enabled a more nuanced interpretation of how BELF communication strategies functioned as interactional and intercultural resources within the Myanmar economic organization. Through this integrative analysis, the study addressed the two research questions by identifying commonly used communication strategies and examining how these strategies facilitated or constrained task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration in authentic workplace communication.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed throughout the research process. Since the study adopted a qualitative-dominant embedded mixed-methods design, trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation. The study used multiple data sources, including questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, professional emails, and recorded workplace interactions. These data sources allowed the researcher to compare participants' reported perceptions with actual written and spoken workplace communication practices. For example, questionnaire findings

provided a broad overview of reported communication strategy use, while email and meeting data showed how such strategies were enacted in authentic workplace interaction.

Transferability was supported through the detailed description of the research context, participants, data sources, and institutional setting. Although the study focused on one Myanmar economic organization and was not intended for statistical generalization, the thick description of the workplace context allows readers to determine the relevance of the findings to similar public-sector, institutional, or BELF-mediated communication contexts.

Dependability was addressed through systematic and transparent data analysis procedures. Each data source was analyzed using an appropriate method: thematic analysis for interview data, descriptive statistics for questionnaire data, qualitative content analysis for professional emails, and conversation-analytic principles for recorded workplace interaction. The coding procedures, analytical categories, and interpretation process were guided by the study's conceptual framework and research questions.

Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining a clear link between the data, coding categories, and interpretations. The analysis was grounded in participants' interview responses, email excerpts, and recorded interactional episodes rather than in the researcher's assumptions. In addition, the use of multiple data sources helped reduce reliance on a single interpretation of BELF communication practices.

Translation accuracy was also considered an important part of trustworthiness. Interview recordings were transcribed and, where necessary, translated into English by the researcher. To enhance accuracy, the translated data were reviewed and confirmed by an EFL specialist from Yangon University of Foreign Languages. This process helped ensure that participants' meanings were represented as accurately as possible in the analysis.

Overall, these procedures strengthened the credibility and rigor of the study by ensuring that the findings were based on systematic analysis, multiple sources of evidence, and careful attention to contextual meaning.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout all stages of the research to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants involved in the study. Since the research was conducted in a real workplace setting within a governmental economic organization and involved the collection of authentic professional communication data, particular attention was paid to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and the responsible use of institutional data.

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) to conduct the study within the organization. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the types of data to be collected, and the intended use of the data for academic research purposes only. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that they had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before administering questionnaires, conducting interviews, collecting professional email texts, and recording workplace interactions. For recorded meetings, consent was secured from all individuals involved before recording. Participants were informed that the recordings would be used solely for research analysis and that no individual-level data would be shared with supervisors, management, or third parties within the organization.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all identifying information was removed from the data. Participants were assigned pseudonyms or role-based labels, such as Officer A or Senior Officer 1, and the names of individuals, departments, clients, organizations, and specific projects were anonymized in all transcripts, excerpts, and reported findings. Email addresses, personal names, reference numbers, and any information that could potentially identify individuals or sensitive institutional processes were deleted, modified, or generalized. Only emails voluntarily submitted by participants were included in the corpus.

All data were stored securely in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. Audio recordings, video recordings, transcripts, questionnaires, and email data were used exclusively for the purposes of this study and were not distributed beyond the scope of academic analysis. The data will be retained only for the period required by institutional research guidelines and will be securely deleted thereafter.

Given the institutional and hierarchical nature of the research context, particular care was taken to minimize potential power imbalance between the researcher and participants. The study emphasized that participation was independent of professional evaluation, job performance, promotion, or organizational assessment. Participants were assured that their decision to participate or withdraw would not affect their professional status in any way. Findings are reported at an aggregate and analytical level to avoid attributing specific communicative practices to identifiable individuals or roles in a way that could create professional risk.

Ethical considerations were also integrated into the analytical process. Communication strategies were analyzed as interactional practices rather than as indicators of individual linguistic deficiency or personal competence. This approach aligns with the study's conceptual framework, which views BELF communication as a situated and collaborative activity shaped by institutional and intercultural constraints. By adopting this perspective, the study avoids deficit-oriented interpretations of participants' language use and respects participants as competent professionals operating within complex multilingual workplace conditions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study in response to the two research questions. First, it reports the communication strategies commonly used by staff at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) when engaging in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)-mediated workplace communication. Second, it examines how these communication strategies facilitate or constrain task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration within the organization.

The findings are drawn from four data sources: questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, professional workplace emails, and recordings of real-time workplace meetings. The questionnaire data provide descriptive quantitative patterns of reported strategy use and perceived effectiveness, while the interview, email, and meeting data provide qualitative evidence of how communication strategies function in authentic workplace interaction.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section 4.1 presents the demographic and professional background of the questionnaire respondents. Section 4.2 reports the questionnaire findings on commonly used BELF communication strategies. Section 4.3 presents interview findings related to intercultural communicative competence and workplace communication challenges. Section 4.4 reports findings from professional email communication, and Section 4.5 presents findings from real-time institutional meetings. Section 4.6 integrates the findings across data sources in relation to the two research questions.

4.1 Demographic Information of the Participants

The participants in this study were staff members from the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) in Yangon, Myanmar. All participants were involved in professional communication with international

stakeholders, and their job positions ranged from deputy staff officers to deputy director generals.

Table 4.1 Participants' Professional and Language Background (N = 40)

Category	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Educational Background	Bachelor's degree	21	52.5
	Master's degree	12	30.0
	Doctoral degree	4	10.0
	Other qualifications	3	7.5
Duration of English Study	Less than 5 years	7	17.5
	5–10 years	6	15.0
	More than 10 years	27	67.5
Work Experience at DICA	2–5 years	3	7.5
	6–10 years	3	7.5
	More than 10 years	34	85.0

As shown in Table 4.1, the majority of questionnaire respondents held a bachelor's degree (52.5%), followed by those holding a master's degree (30.0%) and a doctoral degree (10.0%). The remaining respondents reported other qualifications (7.5%). This indicates that the participants had varied educational backgrounds, while most had completed at least undergraduate-level education.

Regarding English learning experience, most respondents had studied English for more than 10 years (67.5%). A smaller proportion had studied English for less than 5 years (17.5%) or between 5 and 10 years (15.0%). This suggests that most respondents had long-term exposure to English, although the study does not assume that length of English study directly equates to workplace communicative competence.

In terms of professional experience, most respondents had worked at DICA for more than 10 years (85.0%), while smaller groups had 2–5 years (7.5%) and 6–10 years (7.5%) of work experience. This professional background is important because the study focuses on BELF-mediated workplace communication in an institutional setting where staff are required to communicate with foreign investors, international organizations, business representatives, and other international stakeholders.

All questionnaire respondents were non-native speakers of English. English was used primarily as a working language rather than as a language for everyday social interaction. Its use was mainly associated with institutional communication purposes, including formal meetings, written correspondence, document processing, regulatory clarification, and interaction with international stakeholders. This participant profile supports the relevance of the study's focus on BELF communication strategies in a public-sector economic organization.

4.2 The Use of Common Communication Strategies by Participants

This section reports the questionnaire findings on communication strategies used by participants in BELF-mediated workplace interaction. The results primarily address the first research question, which asks what communication strategies are commonly used by staff at DICA when engaging in BELF communication. The questionnaire data were organized according to Björkman's framework of communication strategies and are presented by strategy category to reflect the conceptual focus of the study on communication strategies as interactional resources in institutional workplace contexts.

The mean scores were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.80 = very rarely used, 1.81–2.60 = rarely used, 2.61–3.40 = moderately used, 3.41–4.20 = frequently used, and 4.21–5.00 = very frequently used. These interpretation ranges were used to describe the reported level of strategy use across the questionnaire categories.

Table 4.2 Summary of Communication Strategies Used by Participants (N = 40)

Category of Strategy	Examples of Strategies (CS Codes)	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
Repetition & Paraphrasing	Repetition (CS1), Paraphrasing (CS2)	3.8	0.7	Frequently used
Clarification & Confirmation	Requests for clarification (CS5.1), Confirmation checks (CS4.1)	3.7	0.8	Frequently used

Table 4.2 continued

Category of Strategy	Examples of Strategies (CS Codes)	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
Backchanneling & Gestures	Gestures (CS6.2), Minimal queries (CS6.1)	3.9	0.6	Frequently used
Non-verbal / Prosodic Cues	Tone variation (CS8.1), Stress on key words (CS8.2)	3.3	0.8	Moderately used
Humor & Informality	Humor (CS9.3), Light comments (CS9.2)	3.1	0.7	Moderately used

Table 4.2 summarizes the communication strategies reported by participants in BELF-mediated workplace interaction. The strategies are grouped into five categories and reported using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations.

Overall, the results indicate that participants reported frequent use of strategies related to backchanneling and gestures ($\bar{X} = 3.9$, $SD = 0.6$), repetition and paraphrasing ($\bar{X} = 3.8$, $SD = 0.7$), and clarification and confirmation ($\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 0.8$). These categories recorded the highest mean scores among all strategy groups. This suggests that participants commonly relied on strategies that support shared understanding, maintain interactional flow, and help manage meaning in multilingual workplace communication.

In contrast, strategies associated with non-verbal or prosodic cues, such as tone variation and stress on key words, were reported at a moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.3$, $SD = 0.8$). Humor and informality were also reported as moderately used ($\bar{X} = 3.1$, $SD = 0.7$), indicating lower reported frequency compared with strategies directly related to meaning management and procedural clarity. This finding suggests that participants tended to prioritize strategies that helped clarify information and sustain task-oriented communication over strategies mainly associated with relational softening or informal rapport building.

The standard deviation values across all categories ranged from 0.6 to 0.8, suggesting relatively consistent response patterns among participants regarding their reported use of communication strategies. The lowest standard deviation was found in backchanneling and gestures ($SD = 0.6$), indicating stronger agreement among respondents that these strategies were commonly used in BELF-mediated workplace interaction.

4.2.1 Clarity and Explicitness

Table 4.3 presents the questionnaire results for communication strategies related to clarity and explicitness. These strategies include repetition, paraphrasing, summarizing, simplifying complex terms, and using simple questions to check or prompt understanding. The mean scores ranged from 3.1 to 4.0, indicating that participants reported using these strategies at moderate to frequent levels.

Table 4.3 Clarity and Explicitness Strategies

Strategy (CS Code)	Description	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
CS1.1	Restating important data or deadlines	3.8	0.8	Frequently used
CS1.2	Gradual repetition of concepts	3.1	1.0	Moderately used
CS1.3	Summarizing main points	3.7	1.1	Frequently used
CS2.1	Replacing complex terms with simpler ones	4.0	1.0	Frequently used
CS2.2	Restating questions or statements in simpler terms	3.9	1.0	Frequently used
CS2.3	Using examples or scenarios to clarify messages	3.8	1.1	Frequently used
CS3.1	Using simple questions to briefly check understanding	3.5	0.8	Frequently used
CS3.2	Repeating part of a message with a questioning tone to confirm details	3.3	0.9	Moderately used
CS3.3	Asking simple questions to prompt clarification	3.5	0.8	Frequently used

As shown in Table 4.3, the highest mean score in this category was found for replacing complex terms with simpler ones (CS2.1, $\bar{X} = 4.0$, $SD = 1.0$), followed by

restating questions or statements in simpler terms (CS2.2, $\bar{X} = 3.9$, $SD = 1.0$). These findings indicate that participants frequently relied on simplification and reformulation to make workplace messages more accessible in BELF-mediated communication.

Other frequently used strategies included restating important data or deadlines (CS1.1, $\bar{X} = 3.8$, $SD = 0.8$), using examples or scenarios to clarify messages (CS2.3, $\bar{X} = 3.8$, $SD = 1.1$), summarizing main points (CS1.3, $\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 1.1$), using simple questions to briefly check understanding (CS3.1, $\bar{X} = 3.5$, $SD = 0.8$), and asking simple questions to prompt clarification (CS3.3, $\bar{X} = 3.5$, $SD = 0.8$). These results suggest that participants regularly used clarity-oriented strategies to reduce ambiguity and support shared understanding in institutional workplace communication.

In contrast, gradual repetition of concepts (CS1.2, $\bar{X} = 3.1$, $SD = 1.0$) and repeating part of a message with a questioning tone to confirm details (CS3.2, $\bar{X} = 3.3$, $SD = 0.9$) were reported at a moderate level. This may indicate that participants used repetition selectively, particularly when clarification was necessary, rather than relying on repeated explanation throughout interaction.

Overall, the findings show that clarity and explicitness were important features of participants' BELF communication practices. The frequent use of simplification, restatement, examples, summarizing, and simple clarification questions indicates that participants tended to prioritize comprehensibility and procedural clarity when communicating with international stakeholders.

4.2.2 Negotiation of Meaning

Table 4.4 presents the questionnaire results for negotiation of meaning strategies. These include confirmation checks, clarification requests, requests for repetition, brief verbal responses, and gestures used to maintain interactional flow. The mean scores ranged from 3.4 to 4.0, indicating moderate to frequent use of these strategies.

Table 4.4 Negotiation of Meaning Strategies

Strategy (CS Code)	Description	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
CS4.1	Providing clear confirmations to ensure mutual agreement	3.6	0.8	Frequently used
CS4.2	Summarizing key points to confirm shared understanding	3.4	0.9	Moderately used
CS4.3	Confirming key details to ensure agreement	3.7	1.0	Frequently used
CS5.1	Asking for details to clarify ambiguities	3.8	0.8	Frequently used
CS5.2	Requesting simpler explanations of complex terms	3.6	0.9	Frequently used
CS5.3	Asking for repetition when initial explanations are unclear	3.7	1.0	Frequently used
CS6.1	Using brief encouraging responses to maintain interactional flow	3.9	0.8	Frequently used
CS6.2	Using gestures (e.g., nodding, smiling) to show understanding and engagement	4.0	0.9	Frequently used
CS6.3	Using brief verbal cues to encourage continuation of talk	3.7	0.9	Frequently used

As shown in Table 4.4, the most frequently reported strategy in this category was the use of gestures, such as nodding and smiling, to show understanding and engagement (CS6.2, $\bar{X} = 4.0$, $SD = 0.9$). This was followed by using brief encouraging responses to maintain interactional flow (CS6.1, $\bar{X} = 3.9$, $SD = 0.8$). These results suggest that participants frequently used both verbal and non-verbal backchanneling to signal attention, support turn progression, and maintain cooperative interaction.

Clarification-related strategies were also frequently reported. Participants indicated frequent use of asking for details to clarify ambiguities (CS5.1, $\bar{X} = 3.8$, $SD = 0.8$), asking for repetition when explanations were unclear (CS5.3, $\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 1.0$), and requesting simpler explanations of complex terms (CS5.2, $\bar{X} = 3.6$, $SD = 0.9$). These findings indicate that participants actively monitored understanding and used clarification strategies when messages, procedures, or technical terms were unclear.

Confirmation strategies were also commonly used. Confirming key details to ensure agreement (CS4.3, $\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 1.0$) and providing clear confirmations to ensure mutual agreement (CS4.1, $\bar{X} = 3.6$, $SD = 0.8$) were reported as frequently used. However, summarizing key points to confirm shared understanding (CS4.2, $\bar{X} = 3.4$, $SD = 0.9$) was reported at a moderate level. This suggests that participants may rely more often on brief confirmation checks than on longer summarizing practices.

Overall, the results indicate that negotiation of meaning was a central part of participants' BELF-mediated workplace communication. The frequent use of clarification requests, confirmation checks, verbal backchannels, and gestures suggests that participants treated understanding as a shared interactional responsibility rather than as an individual linguistic task.

4.2.3 Adaptability and Context Sensitivity

Table 4.5 presents the results for adaptability and context sensitivity strategies, which include lexical simplification, contextual explanation, and signaling the importance of information. The reported mean scores ranged from 3.3 to 3.9, indicating that these strategies were used at moderate to frequent levels.

Table 4.5 Adaptability and Context Sensitivity

Strategy (CS Code)	Description	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
CS7.1	Making difficult ideas easier to understand by using simpler substitutes	3.6	0.9	Frequently used
CS7.2	Providing brief explanations for complex or unfamiliar terms	3.7	1.0	Frequently used
CS7.3	Using analogies to clarify difficult terms or concepts	3.5	1.0	Frequently used
CS8.1	Alternating tone to highlight important ideas	3.3	1.1	Moderately used
CS8.2	Using visual aids (e.g., bolding, color-coding) to highlight key points	3.9	1.0	Frequently used
CS8.3	Using explicit expressions to emphasize important issues	3.7	1.1	Frequently used

As shown in Table 4.5, using visual aids, such as bolding or color-coding, to highlight key points (CS8.2, $\bar{X} = 3.9$, $SD = 1.0$) recorded the highest mean score in this category. This finding suggests that participants frequently relied on visual signaling to make important information more noticeable, especially in written or document-based workplace communication.

Participants also reported frequent use of strategies related to lexical and conceptual adaptation. These included providing brief explanations for complex or unfamiliar terms (CS7.2, $\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 1.0$), making difficult ideas easier to understand through simpler substitutes (CS7.1, $\bar{X} = 3.6$, $SD = 0.9$), and using analogies to clarify difficult terms or concepts (CS7.3, $\bar{X} = 3.5$, $SD = 1.0$). These strategies indicate that participants adjusted their language according to the complexity of the topic and the presumed needs of their interlocutors.

The use of explicit expressions to emphasize important issues (CS8.3, $\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 1.1$) was also frequently reported. In contrast, alternating tone to highlight important ideas (CS8.1, $\bar{X} = 3.3$, $SD = 1.1$) was reported at a moderate level. This may suggest that participants relied more on lexical, visual, and explicit textual strategies than on prosodic strategies, particularly in formal or document-based institutional communication.

Overall, the results indicate that participants regularly adapted their communication to suit workplace demands, task complexity, and interlocutor needs. Adaptability and context sensitivity were reflected most clearly in the use of visual emphasis, simplified explanations, analogies, and explicit expressions of importance. These strategies helped participants make institutional information clearer and more accessible in BELF-mediated communication.

4.2.4 Other Significant Strategies

Table 4.6 presents the results for other significant communication strategies reported by participants, including humor, non-verbal cues, and code-switching. The mean scores for this group ranged from 3.0 to 3.8, indicating that these strategies were used at moderate to frequent levels.

Table 4.6 Other Significant Communication Strategies

Strategy (CS Code)	Description	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
CS9.1	Using relevant humor to lighten the mood and engage participants	3.2	0.9	Moderately used
CS9.2	Using culturally appropriate humor to maintain a positive atmosphere	3.4	1.2	Frequently used
CS9.3	Starting with light-hearted jokes to break the ice and encourage openness	3.0	1.2	Moderately used
CS10.1	Using nods and smiles to show understanding and provide positive feedback	3.8	0.8	Frequently used

Table 4.6 continued

Strategy (CS Code)	Description	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Usage Level
CS10.2	Using facial expressions to reinforce clarity and emotional meaning	3.7	0.9	Frequently used
CS10.3	Using pauses to highlight key points and support message comprehension	3.5	1.0	Frequently used
CS11.1	Using shared language terms to clarify complex ideas	3.6	0.9	Frequently used
CS11.2	Fostering an inclusive communication environment that respects linguistic diversity	3.6	1.0	Frequently used
CS11.3	Using language switching to facilitate understanding and bridge cross-cultural communication	3.6	1.0	Frequently used

As shown in Table 4.6, non-verbal communication strategies were reported more frequently than humor-related strategies. Using nods and smiles to show understanding and provide positive feedback (CS10.1, $\bar{X} = 3.8$, $SD = 0.8$) recorded the highest mean score in this category, followed by using facial expressions to reinforce clarity and emotional meaning (CS10.2, $\bar{X} = 3.7$, $SD = 0.9$). The use of pauses to highlight key points and support message comprehension (CS10.3, $\bar{X} = 3.5$, $SD = 1.0$) was also reported as frequently used. These findings suggest that participants used non-verbal cues as interactional resources to signal attention, support understanding, and maintain cooperative engagement.

Strategies related to shared language use and code-switching were also consistently reported as frequently used. Participants indicated frequent use of shared language terms to clarify complex ideas (CS11.1, $\bar{X} = 3.6$, $SD = 0.9$), fostering an inclusive communication environment that respects linguistic diversity (CS11.2, $\bar{X} = 3.6$, $SD = 1.0$), and language switching to facilitate understanding and bridge cross-

cultural communication (CS11.3, $\bar{X} = 3.6$, $SD = 1.0$). These findings indicate that participants sometimes drew on multilingual resources to support meaning-making in BELF-mediated workplace communication.

In contrast, humor-related strategies were reported only at a moderate level. These included using culturally appropriate humor to maintain a positive atmosphere (CS9.2, $\bar{X} = 3.4$, $SD = 1.2$), using relevant humor to lighten the mood and engage participants (CS9.1, $\bar{X} = 3.2$, $SD = 0.9$), and starting with light-hearted jokes to break the ice (CS9.3, $\bar{X} = 3.0$, $SD = 1.2$). The lower mean scores for humor suggest that participants may have used humor cautiously in institutional workplace communication, possibly because of the formal, intercultural, and high-stakes nature of the organizational context.

Overall, the results show that non-verbal cues and code-switching or shared language strategies were reported more frequently than humor-based strategies. This pattern suggests that participants were more likely to rely on strategies that directly supported understanding, inclusivity, and interactional alignment, while humor was used more selectively as a relational or rapport-building device.

4.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the Workplace

This section reports findings from the semi-structured interview data. The analysis was informed by Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework, which includes attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. In this study, ICC is used as an interpretive lens to examine how participants managed intercultural challenges through BELF communication strategies in institutional workplace interaction.

The interview data were drawn from 15 officials at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), representing different investment divisions within the organization. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and focused on participants' experiences of miscommunication, strategies for managing

intercultural interaction, and challenges encountered in BELF-mediated workplace communication.

The findings in this section are particularly relevant to the second research question, which examines how communication strategies facilitate or constrain task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration. The interview data show that participants' intercultural competence was enacted through practical communication strategies, including greeting, smiling, attentive listening, clarification requests, confirmation checks, examples, visual aids, and culturally sensitive language use.

4.3.1 Attitudes

In Byram's (1997) model, attitudes refer to curiosity, openness, and a willingness to suspend judgment when engaging with cultural others. The interview findings indicate that participants generally demonstrated positive attitudes toward intercultural communication, particularly through respect, relational orientation, and willingness to initiate interaction.

One participant emphasized that silence or lack of visible engagement could lead to exclusion or misunderstanding in multicultural interaction:

(DO_PS3): "In a multicultural setting, without saying a word, you may be outside the communication. We do not know others' perceptions or attitudes, and this can lead to misunderstanding between the two parties."

This response suggests that active participation was perceived as important for avoiding misunderstanding in intercultural workplace communication. In BELF-mediated interaction, visible engagement can function as a communication strategy because it signals attention, openness, and willingness to cooperate.

Participants also highlighted the importance of interpersonal behaviors such as greeting, smiling, and initiating interaction as strategic entry points into professional communication:

(DO_PL1): "Greeting, smiling, and shaking hands are essential practices for ensuring a successful first meeting, especially before beginning discussions in international meetings."

Another participant added:

“In my experience, some people from certain countries hesitate to greet first. When I take the initiative, the conversation usually starts more smoothly.”

These accounts show that greetings, smiling, and first-move interaction were not viewed merely as social etiquette. Rather, they functioned as relational communication strategies that helped establish rapport, reduce initial distance, and create a cooperative atmosphere before task-oriented discussion began.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that culturally embedded norms of restraint within Myanmar society could limit verbal participation in intercultural encounters:

(DO_PS2): “In Myanmar culture, we tend to be shy when speaking for the first time, especially with people from other countries, because we are afraid of making mistakes.”

This finding indicates that positive attitudes toward intercultural engagement may be constrained by fear of error, face preservation, and cultural norms of caution. Therefore, while participants generally showed openness and willingness to communicate, their participation was shaped by the tension between intercultural engagement and culturally influenced restraint.

Overall, the attitude component of ICC was reflected in participants’ efforts to initiate interaction, show respect, and maintain openness in intercultural communication. These attitudes facilitated intercultural collaboration by supporting rapport and reducing social distance. However, hesitation and fear of making mistakes could also constrain more active participation in BELF-mediated workplace interaction.

4.3.2 Knowledge

The knowledge component of ICC involves awareness of cultural practices, institutional norms, and professional conventions. Interview findings show that participants recognized intercultural knowledge as an important resource for facilitating smoother communication, particularly in formal meetings and negotiations.

One participant noted the usefulness of cultural references in building rapport and easing interaction:

(DO_IV2): “Knowing the significance of cultural references can make conversations smoother during negotiations—for example, mentioning cherry blossoms in Japan.”

This response suggests that cultural knowledge was used strategically to create connection and reduce interpersonal distance. In this case, cultural reference served as a rapport-building strategy that helped make professional interaction more comfortable before or during negotiation.

Participants also emphasized that knowledge of other cultures should be accompanied by sensitivity and attentive listening:

(DO_PS3): “When communicating with people from different cultures, recognition, care, and attentive listening are important.”

This finding indicates that intercultural knowledge was not understood simply as factual information about other countries. Rather, participants associated it with interactional awareness, including the ability to listen carefully, recognize differences, and respond appropriately to interlocutors’ expectations.

In BELF-mediated workplace communication, such knowledge can facilitate task accomplishment by helping staff anticipate possible differences in communication style, politeness expectations, and professional norms. It can also support intercultural collaboration by enabling participants to interpret others’ behavior more carefully and avoid premature judgment.

Overall, the knowledge component of ICC appeared in participants’ awareness of cultural references, professional expectations, and the need for attentive listening. These forms of knowledge supported smoother interaction by helping participants build rapport, interpret communicative behavior, and manage intercultural differences in institutional communication.

4.3.3 Skills of Interpreting and Relating

This response suggests that participants were aware of the need to interpret implicit meanings, especially in professional communication where short or concise messages may carry procedural, relational, or institutional significance. In BELF contexts, this skill is important because interlocutors may use different levels of directness, detail, or contextual explanation.

Participants also reported the use of negotiation-of-meaning strategies, including clarification requests and non-verbal cues. A senior official explained:

(DDG_3): "I use gestures and eye contact, such as raising my eyebrows, to signal that I want clarification during meetings."

He further added:

"If it is still unclear, I request confirmation, such as 'Can you explain more on this?'"

These practices show how interpreting and relating were enacted through concrete communication strategies. Gestures and eye contact functioned as low-risk signals of uncertainty, while explicit confirmation requests were used when further clarification was necessary. This is particularly important in institutional contexts where direct interruption may be sensitive, but accurate understanding remains essential for task completion.

These findings suggest that participants did not rely only on linguistic comprehension. They actively interpreted communicative cues, monitored possible misunderstanding, and used clarification or confirmation strategies to align meaning with interlocutors. Such strategies facilitated task accomplishment by reducing ambiguity and supported intercultural collaboration by allowing participants to negotiate meaning without creating unnecessary face threat.

Overall, the skills of interpreting and relating were evident in participants' ability to recognize implicit meaning, monitor understanding, and use clarification strategies to align interpretations across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

4.3.4 Skills of Discovery and Interaction

Skills of discovery and interaction refer to the ability to acquire new cultural understanding during interaction and adapt communicative behavior accordingly. Interview data indicate that participants demonstrated considerable adaptability, particularly when dealing with complex legal or institutional content.

One participant explained:

(DO_IP1): “It depends on the situation. For the Investment Law, I explain the content again simply. When expressing my opinion, I use examples or model cases.”

He further elaborated:

“Normally, I refer to the law first and then explain using sample or model cases. I remain open to answering questions or inviting follow-up.”

This response shows that the participant adapted explanations according to the complexity of the content and the needs of the interlocutor. The use of simpler explanation, examples, and model cases functioned as communication strategies for making abstract legal or procedural information more accessible. These strategies facilitated task accomplishment by helping international stakeholders understand institutional requirements more clearly.

Participants also described the use of visual aids to enhance understanding:

(DO_CP1): “Sometimes I draw diagrams or pictures to clarify definitions, especially when clients are confused.”

This example indicates that participants used multimodal resources when verbal explanation alone was insufficient. Diagrams and pictures served as interactional resources that supported meaning-making, especially when dealing with complex definitions or technical content.

The findings suggest that skills of discovery and interaction were enacted through flexible strategy use. Participants did not apply one fixed communication style; instead, they adjusted their explanations, used examples, invited follow-up questions,

and incorporated visual aids when necessary. These practices supported intercultural collaboration by making communication more accessible and responsive to interlocutors' needs.

Overall, this component of ICC was reflected in participants' ability to adapt communication in real time. Their use of simplification, examples, model cases, follow-up invitations, and visual aids helped bridge linguistic and procedural gaps in BELF-mediated workplace interaction.

4.3.5 Critical Cultural Awareness

One participant noted differences in how people from different countries express disagreement or refusal:

(DO_PL1): "Some countries prefer not to say 'no' directly during legal meetings, which can cause challenges."

This response indicates awareness that indirectness may affect understanding in institutional communication. In high-stakes meetings, avoiding direct refusal may preserve politeness or face, but it can also create ambiguity if the intended meaning is not clearly understood. This finding is important for RQ2 because it shows that communication strategies may both facilitate and constrain workplace interaction. Indirectness may support rapport, but it may also delay clarification or reduce procedural clarity.

Participants also emphasized the sensitivity of their institutional roles when communicating with international stakeholders:

(DO_PL2): "When negotiating with other countries, we cannot use informal language because we represent our nation. Meetings are live and recorded, so there is no second chance."

This response shows that institutional accountability shaped how participants evaluated appropriate communication. Because they represented DICA and, more broadly, the country, participants felt the need to maintain formality, professionalism, and careful language use. This institutional caution helped protect professional

credibility, but it may also have limited openness, spontaneity, or direct critical reflection during intercultural interaction.

These responses suggest that participants recognized cultural variation and institutional expectations, but explicit critical evaluation of cultural assumptions was constrained by the high-stakes nature of governmental communication. Rather than openly critiquing cultural differences, participants tended to manage them cautiously through professionalism, formality, and controlled language use.

Overall, critical cultural awareness appeared less explicitly articulated than attitudes, knowledge, and interactional skills. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of intercultural competence. Rather, it suggests that participants' critical reflection was shaped by institutional accountability, diplomatic sensitivity, and the need to maintain professional authority in recorded and formal settings.

4.4 Politeness and Directness in Email Communication

This section reports findings from the analysis of business-related email communication exchanged between officials of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) and international business stakeholders. The emails examined were used primarily for institutional purposes, including information provision, document requests, appointment arrangements, and coordination of investment-related procedures.

The findings illustrate how email communication operates as an institutional interactional resource for managing meaning, accountability, hierarchy, and intercultural relations within a formal governmental context.

4.4.1 Managing Institutional Entry: Establishing Alignment and Professional Positioning

Analysis of the email corpus reveals a consistent orientation toward institutional alignment at the entry point of email interactions. Opening sequences frequently combined formal greetings with explicit institutional identification, positioning the writer within an official organizational role before introducing task-related content.

Excerpt 4.4.1

“Dear Mr. [Surname],

I am writing on behalf of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) regarding your inquiry on company registration procedures under the Investment Law.”

In this excerpt, the formal greeting establishes professional distance, while the explicit reference to DICA and the Investment Law frames the interaction as an institutional action rather than a personal exchange. The writer does not immediately issue a request; instead, institutional legitimacy is foregrounded to establish the interactional footing for subsequent procedural communication.

A similar pattern is observed in follow-up correspondence, where institutional alignment is maintained while the entry becomes more streamlined.

Excerpt 4.4.2

“Dear Mr. [Surname],

Further to our previous email regarding the investment endorsement, we would like to request an update on the submitted documents.”

Here, the opening sustains formal alignment through continuity with previous communication. The phrase “Further to our previous email” links the current message to an ongoing institutional process rather than presenting it as a new or isolated request. This creates procedural continuity and reminds the recipient that the requested action is part of an existing case.

Across the email corpus, opening sequences functioned as interactional gateways to institutional action. They clarified role relations, reduced ambiguity, and positioned subsequent requests within an accepted procedural framework. This was particularly important in intercultural exchanges involving regulatory authority, where the writer needed to communicate institutional responsibility while maintaining professional politeness.

4.4.2 Managing Meaning and Accountability through Strategic Indirectness

A salient interactional pattern across the email corpus was the systematic use of conventionally indirect request forms when communicating institutional requirements. Requests were rarely issued as direct imperatives; instead, they were embedded within procedural explanations that oriented recipients to institutional processes and responsibilities.

Excerpt 4.4.3

“As discussed during our previous meeting regarding the investment endorsement, we are currently reviewing the submitted documents. In order to proceed with the next stage of approval, could you please provide the updated shareholder information by 15 March?”

In this example, the request is preceded by contextual framing that situates the action within an ongoing institutional process. The indirect formulation (“could you please provide”) mitigates face threat, while the explicit deadline (“by 15 March”) ensures clarity and accountability.

Indirectness is also combined with explicit institutional referencing in regulatory contexts.

Excerpt 4.4.4

“Please be informed that, according to MIC procedures, the submission must be completed within the specified timeframe.

May we kindly request confirmation as to whether your team will be able to meet this requirement?”

Here, accountability is made visible through reference to MIC procedures, while the indirect request invites confirmation rather than compliance alone. This interactional design allows responsibility to be negotiated without invoking overt authority.

These excerpts illustrate that indirectness did not function to obscure meaning. Instead, it served as a strategic interactional resource that allowed writers to assign responsibility, maintain clarity, and preserve professional relations simultaneously. In

this context, politeness and directness worked together rather than in opposition. Directness was achieved through procedural references, task specification, and deadlines, while politeness made these institutional requirements interactionally acceptable in intercultural professional communication.

4.4.3 Managing Professional Relations through Flexible Closings

In contrast to the relative stability of formality in opening sequences, closing sections of emails displayed greater flexibility in tone. Even in emails involving regulatory or procedural matters, closings often incorporated brief expressions of appreciation or goodwill.

Excerpt 4.4.5

“Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Best regards,”

In this excerpt, the closing softens the interaction without weakening the institutional authority established earlier in the email. The expression of appreciation functions as relational work rather than as a withdrawal from formality.

In ongoing correspondence, closings were sometimes further condensed.

Excerpt 4.4.6

“Thank you.

Best,”

Despite its brevity, this closing maintains relational alignment and signals responsiveness, particularly in repeated exchanges where institutional roles are already established.

Across the dataset, closing strategies functioned as relational maintenance devices. They allowed writers to recalibrate interpersonal tone at the end of the message while preserving the institutional footing established at the outset. This flexibility appeared especially important in sustaining long-term coordination with international stakeholders, where professional relationships needed to be maintained across repeated written exchanges.

4.4.4 Politeness and Directness as Institutional Interactional Practices

Taken together, the email data demonstrate that politeness and directness in written BELF communication were not randomly distributed linguistic choices. Rather, they were systematically organized interactional practices shaped by institutional demands.

Politeness strategies were most salient at moments where institutional positioning, accountability, or intercultural sensitivity was at stake. These included points of entry, requests for action, confirmation of responsibility, and closing sequences. Directness, on the other hand, was achieved through explicit procedural references, task specification, deadline articulation, and clear indication of required action.

Importantly, politeness in this context did not weaken institutional authority or reduce clarity. Instead, it operated as a professional interactional resource that enabled writers to manage meaning, assign responsibility, and sustain cooperation in a high-stakes governmental setting. Similarly, directness did not necessarily appear as bluntness or imposition. It was embedded within formal and polite structures that made institutional requirements clear while maintaining professional rapport.

These findings are relevant to the second research question because they show how written communication strategies facilitated task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration. Polite openings and closings helped maintain professional relationships, while procedural references, deadlines, and clear request formulations supported task completion and accountability. At the same time, the findings suggest a possible constraint: indirectness may preserve politeness and hierarchy, but if used without sufficient procedural clarity, it could create ambiguity about responsibility or expected action. In the email data, however, this potential limitation was often managed through explicit deadlines, institutional references, and clearly stated requests.

Overall, written email communication functioned as a key site of institutional action in BELF-mediated workplace communication. The findings demonstrate that effective written communication required not only linguistic competence, but also interactional, intercultural, and institutional awareness. Politeness and directness were used together to support clarity, accountability, task accomplishment, and professional collaboration with international stakeholders.

4.5 Conversation Analysis of Real-Time Institutional Meetings

This section reports findings from the conversation analysis of real-time meetings conducted between officials of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) and international stakeholders. The meetings involved multilingual participants and were characterized by institutional goals, including regulatory clarification, procedural coordination, and investment-related decision-making.

Drawing on recorded meeting transcripts, this analysis examines how verbal and non-verbal communication strategies were deployed interactionally to manage meaning, support institutional accountability, and maintain communicative effectiveness in BELF-mediated professional contexts. Rather than treating these strategies as isolated communicative techniques, the analysis adopts a conversation-analytic orientation by examining how participants used strategies in response to specific interactional demands, such as procedural ambiguity, technical terminology, uncertainty, or the need to confirm shared understanding.

The findings in this section are particularly relevant to the second research question because they show how communication strategies facilitated task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration in real-time workplace interaction. At the same time, the analysis also reveals how institutional formality, hierarchy, and the complexity of regulatory content shaped the way participants used these strategies.

4.5.1 Verbal Communication Strategies as Interactional Resources

Analysis of the meeting data indicates that participants relied on several verbal communication strategies to manage understanding during institutional interaction. The most salient strategies included repetition, reformulation, paraphrasing, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and backchanneling. These strategies did not occur randomly. Rather, they tended to emerge at interactional moments where participants needed to clarify procedures, explain institutional responsibility, confirm timelines, or ensure that international stakeholders understood regulatory requirements.

4.5.1.1 Repetition as a Resource for Emphasis and Institutional Alignment

Repetition frequently emerged after moments of uncertainty, procedural explanation, or potential misunderstanding. In these cases, repetition functioned not merely as emphasis, but as an interactional resource for aligning participants' understanding around institutionally important information.

Extract 4.5.1

DDG_2:

“No, three months. If you submit the documents, we will conduct the field inspection, and then submit the report at the MIC meeting. MIC meeting we have it every month.”

In this extract, the repetition of “MIC meeting” occurs following an explanation of procedural sequencing. By repeating the institutional term, the speaker stabilizes the interaction around a shared procedural reference, ensuring that all participants align their understanding of the approval timeline before moving forward.

A similar pattern is observed when institutional boundaries are clarified:

Extract 4.5.2

DDG_2:

*“For raw materials, no need to apply MIC.
Please contact CMP CMP association for every shipment.”*

In these cases, repetition of “CMP” functions to differentiate regulatory responsibility across institutions. Rather than merely emphasizing information, repetition serves to delimit institutional roles and reduce ambiguity, thereby supporting accountability and procedural clarity.

Overall, repetition in the meeting data functioned as a resource for procedural clarity, institutional alignment, and accountability. It helped participants foreground key information, especially when communication involved timelines, institutional roles, and procedural requirements.

4.5.1.2 Reformulation and Paraphrasing for Negotiation of Meaning

Reformulation and paraphrasing emerged as responsive strategies following indications of possible misunderstanding or complexity. Instead of providing simplified explanations in advance, speakers reformulated institutional rules in situ, adapting explanations to the interactional needs of participants.

Extract 4.5.3

DDG_2:

“We allow duty-free for machinery during the commercial period...

If your business is CMP, your machinery and raw materials can also enjoy tax-free benefits.”

In this extract, the speaker reformulates regulatory policy by restating eligibility conditions in relation to the recipient’s business category. The reformulation does not reduce institutional precision; rather, it translates abstract policy into an interactionally accessible format, enabling accurate interpretation while maintaining procedural authority.

Such reformulation practices illustrate how meaning is negotiated collaboratively in BELF-mediated institutional interaction, particularly when regulatory rules involve conditional or exception-based logic.

4.5.1.3 Clarification Requests and Interactional Monitoring

Clarification requests and confirmation checks appeared at moments where accurate understanding was necessary for institutional decision-making. Although they were less frequent than repetition and reformulation, they were important because they allowed participants to monitor understanding and repair possible ambiguity before the interaction moved forward.

Clarification requests were typically brief and embedded within the ongoing interaction. This allowed participants to seek additional explanation without disrupting the formal flow of the meeting. Confirmation checks also helped ensure that key details, such as timelines, responsibilities, document requirements, or procedural steps, were mutually understood.

In addition, verbal backchanneling, such as “yes,” “I see,” and “okay,” occurred during extended explanations. These responses functioned as interactional monitoring devices. They signaled that the listener was following the explanation and allowed the speaker to continue without unnecessary interruption.

Together, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and backchanneling supported communicative effectiveness by enabling participants to monitor understanding in real time. These strategies were especially important in BELF-mediated institutional meetings because participants had to manage complex content across linguistic and cultural differences while maintaining formal professional interaction.

4.5.2 Non-Verbal Communication Strategies in Institutional Interaction

In addition to verbal resources, non-verbal communication played a significant role in managing interactional flow and reinforcing understanding during real-time meetings. Gestures, head nods, facial expressions, eye contact, and pauses were integrated with spoken discourse and functioned as multimodal resources in BELF-mediated interaction.

These non-verbal strategies were not merely supplementary. They supported meaning-making, helped participants display attention, softened institutional authority, and maintained cooperative engagement in multilingual interaction.

4.5.2.1 Head Nods and Gestures as Signals of Understanding and Alignment

Head nods frequently occurred after explanations, confirmations, or procedural statements. These embodied actions functioned as acknowledgments of understanding and agreement. In some cases, nods co-occurred with short verbal responses such as “yes” or “okay,” reinforcing mutual understanding without interrupting the speaker.

Gestures were also used to support explanation, particularly when speakers described procedural sequencing, institutional distinctions, or document-related processes. For example, hand movements were used to indicate stages, directions, or distinctions between organizations or responsibilities.

These gestures did not replace verbal explanation. Rather, they complemented spoken language and helped make complex information more understandable. In BELF-mediated meetings, where participants may have different

levels of English proficiency, gestures supported task accomplishment by making explanations more accessible and reducing the possibility of misunderstanding.

4.5.2.2 Facial Expressions and Smiling as Relational Resources

Facial expressions, particularly smiling, were frequently observed during greetings, acknowledgments, and moments of agreement. Smiling functioned as a relational resource that softened the formality of institutional interaction while maintaining professional decorum.

In the meeting data, smiling and positive facial expressions helped create a cooperative atmosphere. This was especially important in intercultural communication because participants needed to maintain rapport while discussing formal or potentially sensitive institutional matters. These non-verbal cues signaled openness, receptiveness, and willingness to cooperate.

At the same time, smiling did not reduce the seriousness of the institutional context. Rather, it helped balance authority and approachability. This balance is important in DICA's communication with international stakeholders because officials need to explain regulations and institutional requirements while sustaining professional relationships.

4.5.2.3 Limited Use of Pauses

Extended pauses were relatively infrequent in the meeting data. When pauses occurred, they were often associated with moments of uncertainty, possible misunderstanding, or the need to process complex information. Participants appeared to minimize prolonged silence, likely to avoid interactional breakdown and maintain communicative flow in multilingual settings.

This pattern suggests that participants oriented toward continuous interactional progression. Instead of allowing silence to persist, speakers often used verbal or non-verbal resources, such as repetition, reformulation, gestures, or confirmation, to keep the interaction moving. In this sense, the limited use of pauses may reflect the task-oriented nature of institutional BELF communication, where maintaining progress is important.

However, the limited use of pauses may also indicate a possible constraint. In high-stakes institutional meetings, participants may feel pressure to maintain smooth interaction even when full understanding has not yet been achieved. This suggests that

while continuous interactional flow can facilitate task progress, it may also reduce opportunities for deeper clarification if participants avoid interrupting or extending repair sequences.

4.5.3 Summary of Verbal and Non-Verbal Strategies in Real-Time Meetings

Taken together, the conversation-analytic analysis shows that BELF communication strategies in real-time institutional meetings functioned as interactional resources rather than static techniques. Repetition and reformulation emerged at moments where participants needed to clarify procedures, reinforce institutional reference points, or make complex regulatory content more accessible. Clarification requests, confirmation checks, and backchanneling supported interactional monitoring and helped participants maintain shared understanding.

Non-verbal strategies, including gestures, nods, facial expressions, eye contact, and pauses, also contributed to meaning-making. These strategies reinforced understanding, supported interactional flow, and helped maintain cooperative relations in intercultural workplace communication.

The findings are relevant to the second research question because they show how communication strategies facilitated task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration. Repetition supported procedural clarity, reformulation made complex information more accessible, clarification requests reduced ambiguity, and non-verbal cues maintained engagement and rapport. At the same time, the findings also suggest possible constraints. Institutional hierarchy, formality, and the pressure to maintain smooth interaction may limit direct questioning or extended clarification. Therefore, communication strategies in real-time DICA meetings both enabled and shaped BELF communication within the constraints of institutional workplace interaction.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that effective BELF communication in real-time institutional meetings required more than English proficiency. It depended on participants' ability to use verbal and non-verbal strategies flexibly to manage meaning, institutional accountability, task progression, and professional relations with international stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives, research questions, and conceptual framework. Drawing on questionnaire findings, semi-structured interviews, professional emails, and real-time institutional meetings, the chapter interprets how communication strategies were used by staff at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) in BELF-mediated workplace communication.

The discussion is organized around the two research questions. First, it discusses the communication strategies commonly used by DICA staff when engaging in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) communication. Second, it explains how these strategies facilitated or constrained task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration within the organization.

The chapter argues that BELF communication strategies in this study should not be understood as isolated linguistic techniques or as compensatory responses to limited English proficiency. Rather, they functioned as interactional resources through which participants managed meaning, clarified procedures, maintained accountability, negotiated intercultural understanding, and sustained professional relationships. The findings also show that strategy use was shaped by institutional conditions, including hierarchy, formality, regulatory responsibility, time pressure, and the high-stakes nature of governmental economic communication.

This chapter situates the findings within broader BELF, ELF, communication strategy, and intercultural communication scholarship. It also explains how the study contributes to a more interactionally grounded and context-sensitive understanding of workplace communication in a public-sector economic organization in Myanmar.

5.1 English Language Communication Practices in the Myanmar Economic Organization

This section discusses how English language communication practices functioned within DICA as a BELF-mediated institutional environment. In particular, it explains how communication strategies operated as interactional resources shaped by institutional roles, accountability, intercultural relations, and task-oriented workplace demands.

The findings show that English at DICA functioned not merely as a medium for exchanging information, but as a practical tool for accomplishing institutional action. Staff used English to explain regulations, request documents, clarify procedures, respond to inquiries, coordinate meetings, and maintain professional communication with international stakeholders. Therefore, BELF communication in this context was closely connected to procedural clarity, regulatory compliance, institutional accountability, and intercultural collaboration.

This finding supports the conceptual framework of the study, which views BELF communication as a situated, strategic, and interactional phenomenon. In the DICA context, communicative effectiveness was not defined by native-like accuracy or fluency. Instead, effectiveness was reflected in the ability to achieve mutual understanding, support task accomplishment, maintain procedural clarity, and sustain professional relationships with international stakeholders.

5.1.1 Communication Strategies as Institutional Interactional Resources

Findings from the questionnaire, interviews, professional emails, and recorded meetings indicate that communication strategies at DICA emerged in response to institutional and interactional demands. Strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, paraphrasing, mitigation, politeness, backchanneling, gestures, and visual support were not used randomly. Rather, they appeared at moments where meaning, responsibility, procedural clarity, or intercultural alignment was important.

This finding is consistent with the interactional view of communication strategies discussed in Chapter 2. Earlier approaches often treated communication

strategies as compensatory devices used to overcome limited linguistic resources (Tarone, 1980; Faerch & Kasper, 1983). However, more recent ELF and BELF research conceptualizes communication strategies as interactional resources used to negotiate meaning, maintain shared understanding, and support communicative effectiveness in multilingual contexts (Cogo, 2010; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). The findings of the present study support this latter view by showing that DICA staff used communication strategies as professional resources for managing institutional workplace interaction.

For example, the questionnaire findings showed frequent reported use of backchanneling and gestures, repetition and paraphrasing, and clarification and confirmation. These strategies were directly related to maintaining shared understanding and interactional flow. Similarly, the email analysis showed that written strategies such as formal openings, institutional identification, indirect requests, procedural references, deadline specification, and polite closings helped staff manage accountability and professional relations. The meeting analysis further showed that repetition and reformulation were used to clarify timelines, institutional responsibilities, and regulatory procedures.

These findings suggest that communication strategies in the DICA context should not be interpreted as signs of linguistic weakness. Instead, they represent strategic professional practices used to manage complex workplace interaction. In high-stakes institutional contexts, misunderstanding can affect document submission, investment procedures, regulatory compliance, and professional trust. Therefore, clarification, confirmation, repetition, and reformulation functioned as accountability-oriented practices rather than merely language-support strategies. This interpretation aligns with Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) view that BELF communication is strongly oriented toward task accomplishment, shared understanding, and professional effectiveness.

These finding challenges deficit-oriented interpretations of BELF communication, which frame communication strategies mainly as responses to limited language competence. The DICA data suggest that strategic communication practices constitute a form of workplace expertise. Staff used communication strategies to

manage meaning, reduce ambiguity, maintain professional authority, and support task progress under multilingual and intercultural conditions.

5.1.2 BELF Communication as Institutional Positioning

Communication practices at DICA were closely tied to participants' institutional roles and responsibilities. Staff did not communicate only as individual English users; they communicated as representatives of a public-sector economic organization. As a result, their use of English was shaped by institutional positioning, regulatory responsibility, organizational hierarchy, and the need to maintain professional credibility.

This finding extends the BELF literature by showing that communication in public-sector economic organizations is shaped not only by business goals but also by bureaucratic accountability and institutional authority. BELF research has emphasized that workplace communication is pragmatic, goal-oriented, and closely linked to professional tasks (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). The present findings support this view, but also show that in a governmental economic organization, communicative choices are additionally shaped by regulatory procedures, public responsibility, hierarchy, and institutional legitimacy.

This pattern was particularly visible in professional email communication. Email openings often established institutional identity before presenting task-related content. Expressions such as "I am writing on behalf of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA)" positioned the writer as an official representative of the organization. Similarly, procedural references such as "according to DICA procedures" helped frame requests as institutional requirements rather than personal preferences. These strategies allowed staff to communicate authority while maintaining professional politeness.

The same pattern was found in real-time meetings. Repetition and reformulation often occurred when speakers needed to clarify institutional procedures, distinguish organizational responsibilities, or explain regulatory conditions. For example, repeated reference to DICA meetings or related institutional bodies helped align participants' understanding of approval processes and responsibilities. In this sense, repetition did

not function only as emphasis; it also helped establish institutional boundaries and procedural accountability.

These findings are also consistent with studies of workplace and business discourse, which argue that professional communication involves not only information exchange but also relationship management, role positioning, and coordination of institutional action (Poncini, 2004; Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2007). In the DICA context, communication strategies were not only tools for mutual understanding. They were also tools for positioning the speaker, protecting institutional legitimacy, and guiding stakeholders through formal procedures.

5.1.3 Intercultural Awareness as Interactional Sensitivity

Another key finding concerns the role of intercultural awareness in DICA's BELF communication. The interview findings indicate that participants understood intercultural communication not simply as knowledge of other cultures, but as sensitivity to interactional situations. Participants described the importance of greeting, smiling, attentive listening, careful language use, clarification requests, examples, and visual aids when communicating with international stakeholders.

This finding aligns with contemporary views of intercultural communication, which conceptualize intercultural competence as dynamic, situated, and interactionally enacted rather than as fixed cultural knowledge (Byram, 1997; Baker, 2015). In BELF contexts, interculturality is not limited to national cultural difference. It emerges through pragmatic variation, differing expectations, institutional roles, and the need to negotiate meaning across linguistic and professional boundaries (House, 2009; Baker, 2015).

The findings suggest that intercultural competence in the DICA context was enacted through practical communication strategies. For example, greetings, smiling, and initiating interaction helped create rapport at the beginning of intercultural encounters. Attentive listening and clarification requests helped participants monitor understanding. Examples, model cases, and diagrams helped explain complex legal or procedural content to international stakeholders. These practices show that intercultural awareness was not separate from communication strategy use. Rather, it was embedded in how participants adjusted their communication to the needs of the interlocutor and the demands of the task.

This interpretation is consistent with Spencer-Oatey's (2008) concept of rapport management, which emphasizes the role of face, sociality rights, and interactional expectations in intercultural communication. In the DICA context, politeness, mitigation, attentive listening, and careful explanation helped participants balance task accomplishment with the maintenance of professional relationships. Therefore, intercultural awareness functioned as interactional sensitivity, enabling staff to monitor meaning, preserve rapport, and respond flexibly to interlocutors' needs.

The findings also show that intercultural awareness was shaped by institutional constraints. Participants were aware that they represented DICA and, more broadly, Myanmar in formal international communication. As a result, they tended to use careful, polite, and controlled language. This institutional caution helped protect professional credibility and diplomatic sensitivity. However, it could also constrain more direct clarification, open disagreement, or critical reflection when interaction involved hierarchy or high-stakes decision-making.

Therefore, intercultural awareness in this study can be understood as interactional sensitivity. It was reflected in participants' ability to monitor meaning, adjust explanations, preserve face, and maintain rapport while still working toward institutional tasks. This finding supports Byram's (1997) view of intercultural competence as dynamic and situated, while also showing that intercultural competence in BELF-mediated workplaces is strongly shaped by institutional responsibility.

5.1.4 Rethinking Effectiveness in BELF Communication

The findings of this study suggest that communicative effectiveness in BELF-mediated institutional communication should be understood beyond linguistic accuracy, fluency, or native-like performance. In the DICA context, effective communication was achieved when participants were able to establish shared understanding, clarify procedures, complete workplace tasks, maintain accountability, and sustain professional relationships with international stakeholders.

This interpretation is consistent with BELF scholarship, which argues that communicative success in international business settings depends more on shared understanding, task accomplishment, and pragmatic effectiveness than on native-speaker norms (Nickerson, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). It also aligns with ELF research, which emphasizes intelligibility, accommodation, and mutual

negotiation as key features of lingua franca communication (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012).

This helps explain why strategies such as repetition, paraphrasing, clarification, confirmation, politeness, indirectness, visual signaling, and non-verbal cues were frequently used. These strategies supported communication not because they made English more native-like, but because they helped participants manage the practical demands of institutional communication. For example, repetition reinforced important procedural information, reformulation made complex regulations more accessible, indirect requests balanced politeness with institutional authority, and non-verbal cues supported engagement and understanding in real-time meetings.

At the same time, the findings show that communication strategies may both facilitate and constrain effectiveness. Indirectness can help maintain politeness and hierarchy, but it may also create ambiguity if expected actions are not clearly stated. Let-it-pass practices or avoidance of extended clarification may help preserve interactional flow, but they may also allow partial misunderstanding to remain unresolved. Institutional formality can protect professional credibility, but it may also limit spontaneity, direct questioning, or open negotiation of meaning. This finding is consistent with the conceptual framework of the study, which assumes that communication strategies are shaped by institutional conditions and may both enable and constrain task accomplishment and intercultural collaboration.

Therefore, communicative effectiveness in BELF should be viewed as an emergent outcome of interaction. It depends not only on the strategies themselves, but also on how those strategies are used in relation to task demands, institutional roles, intercultural expectations, and the immediate communicative situation. In this study, effective BELF communication was achieved through the careful balancing of clarity, politeness, accountability, and collaboration.

Taken together, the findings suggest that BELF communication practices at DICA are best understood as interactional and institutional phenomena rather than as individual linguistic behaviors. Communication strategies functioned as resources for managing meaning, hierarchy, accountability, task accomplishment, and intercultural relations within a governmental economic organization. This interpretation is central to the contribution of the study because it positions BELF communication in Myanmar's

public-sector economic context as a strategic, situated, and professionally meaningful form of workplace communication.

5.2 The Effectiveness of BELF Communication Strategies in Achieving Business Objectives and Fostering Intercultural Collaboration

This section discusses the effectiveness of BELF communication strategies through an interactional and institutional lens. Effectiveness is conceptualized here as the extent to which communication strategies enable participants to accomplish institutional tasks, manage accountability, and sustain intercultural collaboration under constrained workplace conditions.

In this study, BELF communication strategies are shown to be effective not because they eliminate linguistic limitations, but because they allow professionals to work productively despite such limitations. Effectiveness, therefore, is understood as situational, conditional, and purpose-driven rather than absolute or universal.

5.2.1 Effectiveness for Institutional Task Accomplishment

The findings demonstrate that BELF communication strategies at DICA were effective in supporting institutional task accomplishment, particularly in relation to regulatory clarification, procedural coordination, document-related communication, and investment-related decision-making. Strategies such as repetition, reformulation, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and explicit procedural framing enabled participants to maintain clarity in complex interactions involving legal and administrative requirements.

This finding aligns with the task-oriented view of BELF communication. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) argue that BELF communication is primarily evaluated in terms of whether it enables professionals to achieve shared understanding and accomplish business tasks. Similarly, Seidlhofer (2011) emphasizes that lingua franca communication should be understood in terms of intelligibility and pragmatic success rather than conformity to native-speaker norms. In the present study, participants' use of communication strategies reflected this pragmatic orientation

because the main concern was not linguistic perfection, but whether institutional procedures could be understood and completed.

Importantly, effectiveness in this context did not depend on linguistic sophistication or native-like fluency. Instead, it was achieved through interactional practices that foregrounded procedural relevance and shared understanding. For example, repetition helped reinforce key procedural points, reformulation made legal or regulatory information more accessible, and clarification requests allowed participants to resolve uncertainty before moving forward. These findings support Björkman's (2014) argument that strategies such as clarification, repetition, and reformulation are normal and effective resources in multilingual professional interaction rather than signs of communicative failure.

The data also suggest that BELF communication strategies functioned as tools for reducing institutional risk. By anchoring interaction around key terms, deadlines, procedural steps, and institutional responsibilities, participants minimized the possibility of misunderstanding. This is particularly important in public-sector economic communication, where unclear communication may affect document processing, investment approval, regulatory compliance, and institutional credibility. Therefore, effectiveness in the DICA context is best understood as procedural reliability rather than linguistic precision.

5.2.2 Effectiveness under Institutional and Intercultural Constraints

BELF communication strategies at DICA were effective under multiple and sometimes competing constraints. These included varying levels of English proficiency among participants, asymmetrical institutional authority, culturally embedded norms of politeness and hierarchy, and the high-stakes nature of investment-related communication. These conditions confirm the view that BELF communication is shaped by workplace roles, institutional demands, and intercultural expectations rather than language proficiency alone (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Poncini, 2004).

Within these constraints, strategies such as indirectness, mitigation, politeness, and formal framing enabled participants to manage authority without escalating face threat. Rather than weakening institutional control, indirectness allowed officials to communicate requirements, assign responsibility, and request compliance while

maintaining cooperative relations with international stakeholders. This finding shows that politeness and indirectness can function as institutional resources in BELF-mediated workplace communication.

This finding challenges the simplistic assumption that directness is always more effective in business communication. In the DICA context, effectiveness depended on balancing clarity with relational sensitivity. Politeness strategies did not obscure institutional intent. Instead, they helped make institutional demands interactionally acceptable across cultural and professional boundaries. This interpretation is consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1987) view of politeness as a means of managing face concerns, and with Spencer-Oatey's (2008) concept of rapport management, which emphasizes the management of face, sociality rights, and interactional expectations in intercultural communication.

The findings also support the view that communication strategies are shaped by institutional context. In DICA's written and spoken communication, directness was often achieved through procedural references, deadlines, and clear task specifications, while politeness was used to maintain professional rapport. Thus, politeness and directness were not opposing strategies. Instead, they worked together to support accountability, task progress, and intercultural cooperation.

5.2.3 Effectiveness Despite Linguistic and Communicative Limitations

Another important dimension of effectiveness concerns how communication strategies operated despite acknowledged limitations. Interview data indicated that participants were aware of challenges related to accent diversity, limited vocabulary, and varying levels of intercultural competence. However, these limitations did not necessarily result in communication breakdown.

Instead, the strategic use of negotiation-of-meaning practices, such as confirmation checks, paraphrasing, and multimodal support, allowed participants to compensate interactionally without framing communication as deficient. This supports ELF research that conceptualizes communicative success as co-constructed and adaptive rather than dependent on individual linguistic mastery (Mauranen, 2012; Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Effectiveness, therefore, emerged not from the absence of difficulty, but from participants' ability to recognize potential trouble and respond to it in real time. In the

meeting data, for example, repetition and reformulation were used to clarify institutional procedures and regulatory conditions. In the email data, explicit procedural references and deadlines helped reduce ambiguity. In the interview data, participants reported using examples, model cases, diagrams, and clarification questions to make complex information more accessible.

This reframes BELF communication strategies as evidence of interactional competence rather than remedial behavior. Instead of viewing strategies as compensation for inadequate English, the findings suggest that they are professional practices that allow participants to manage meaning under multilingual and institutional conditions. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary BELF scholarship, which views strategic communication as a normal and necessary part of multilingual workplace interaction (Seidlhofer, 2011; Björkman, 2014).

5.2.4 Effectiveness in Fostering Intercultural Collaboration

Beyond task completion, BELF communication strategies were also effective in fostering intercultural collaboration. The use of politeness, relational closings in email communication, greetings, smiling, attentive listening, confirmation checks, and non-verbal cues in meetings contributed to the maintenance of professional rapport across repeated interactions. These practices helped participants sustain cooperation with international stakeholders while working within formal institutional procedures.

This finding aligns with intercultural communication scholarship which views intercultural competence as dynamic, situated, and interactionally enacted rather than as fixed cultural knowledge (Byram, 1997; Baker, 2015). In the DICA context, intercultural collaboration was not achieved primarily through explicit cultural explanation or extensive cultural knowledge. Instead, it was sustained through interactional sensitivity, including monitoring understanding, adjusting explanations, maintaining politeness, and responding carefully to the needs of interlocutors.

The findings also support Spencer-Oatey's (2008) concept of rapport management. In both email and meeting data, participants used communication strategies to balance institutional authority with relational sensitivity. For example, polite closings in emails helped maintain goodwill, while gestures, smiles, and backchanneling in meetings signaled openness and cooperation. These strategies

supported intercultural collaboration by helping participants maintain professional relationships while accomplishing institutional tasks.

However, the study also reveals limits to this effectiveness. While participants demonstrated strong practical interactional skills, critical cultural awareness appeared more cautiously enacted. Participants recognized differences in communication styles, such as indirectness and refusal, but their ability to critically discuss or challenge such differences was constrained by institutional accountability, diplomatic sensitivity, and the need to represent DICA professionally. This finding extends Byram's (1997) model by showing that critical cultural awareness in public-sector BELF contexts may be shaped by institutional risk and professional responsibility.

Thus, effectiveness in fostering intercultural collaboration was functional and pragmatic, but not always explicitly reflective or critically evaluative. Participants were effective in maintaining cooperation and avoiding misunderstanding, but institutional constraints sometimes limited more open negotiation of cultural assumptions or communicative expectations.

Taken together, the findings suggest that effectiveness in BELF communication should be reconceptualized. Rather than asking whether strategies "work" in general, effectiveness should be understood in relation to what communication is required to accomplish, under what institutional and intercultural conditions, and despite which constraints. In the DICA context, BELF communication strategies were effective because they enabled professionals to accomplish institutional tasks reliably, manage accountability and hierarchy, sustain intercultural cooperation, and mitigate risk in high-stakes communication.

This reconceptualization moves beyond narrow performance-based or proficiency-based definitions of effectiveness. It positions BELF communication as a form of institutional interactional competence, in which effectiveness depends on the ability to balance clarity, politeness, accountability, task accomplishment, and intercultural collaboration in situated workplace interaction.

5.3 Implications for ESP Training in BELF-Mediated Institutional Contexts

This section discusses the implications of the study's findings for the design of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training in BELF-mediated institutional settings. Although the present study does not evaluate an ESP training program, the findings provide useful insights into how professional communication support can be designed for staff working in public-sector economic organizations. The discussion is based on the findings reported in Chapter 4 and the interpretations presented in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.

The findings suggest that ESP training in the Myanmar economic organization context should move beyond traditional language-focused models and adopt a more interactionally grounded and institutionally informed approach. In particular, training should not focus only on grammar, vocabulary, or native-like fluency. Instead, it should help professionals develop the ability to manage meaning, clarify procedures, maintain accountability, and sustain intercultural collaboration in real workplace communication. This direction is consistent with BELF scholarship, which emphasizes communicative effectiveness, shared understanding, and task accomplishment over conformity to native-speaker norms (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Nickerson, 2005).

5.3.1 Moving Beyond a Deficit-Oriented View of BELF Communication

A key implication of this study is the need to reconsider the assumptions that often inform ESP training for business and professional communication. Traditional ESP programs may frame communication challenges as the result of insufficient language proficiency and therefore prioritize grammatical accuracy, vocabulary expansion, or native-like fluency. While these areas remain useful, they are not sufficient for preparing professionals to communicate effectively in BELF-mediated institutional contexts.

The findings of this study demonstrate that communication challenges in the DICA context were rarely caused by linguistic deficiency alone. Instead, challenges emerged from the complexity of institutional procedures, intercultural expectations,

regulatory accountability, and the high-stakes nature of investment-related communication. At the same time, participants managed these challenges through interactional strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, reformulation, repetition, indirectness, politeness, non-verbal cues, and visual support.

This finding aligns with contemporary ELF and BELF scholarship, which argues that communication strategies should not be viewed merely as compensatory mechanisms for limited linguistic competence. Rather, they are normal and functional resources for negotiating meaning and sustaining communication in multilingual professional interaction (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011; Björkman, 2014). Therefore, ESP training should not position BELF users as deficient communicators who need to be corrected. Instead, it should recognize their existing interactional competence and build on the strategic practices they already use in real workplace communication.

In this sense, ESP training should shift from a deficit-oriented model to a capability-oriented model. A capability-oriented model values professionals' ability to manage meaning under institutional and intercultural constraints. It does not ignore language development, but it situates language improvement within actual communicative tasks, such as explaining procedures, requesting documents, clarifying legal requirements, responding to inquiries, and coordinating with international stakeholders.

5.3.2 Reframing ESP Training around Interactional Competence

The findings indicate that BELF communication strategies functioned as interactional resources rather than isolated linguistic techniques. Strategies such as clarification, confirmation, repetition, reformulation, indirectness, mitigation, backchanneling, and non-verbal cues were deployed dynamically in response to specific interactional demands, institutional roles, and intercultural sensitivities.

Accordingly, ESP training should prioritize the development of interactional competence. In this context, interactional competence refers to professionals' ability to manage communication as it unfolds in real time. This includes the ability to recognize moments of potential misunderstanding, respond to interactional trouble, confirm shared understanding, manage institutional accountability through language, and balance clarity with relational sensitivity.

Such competence cannot be developed through decontextualized grammar or vocabulary exercises alone. Instead, ESP training should make learners aware of how meaning is co-constructed in workplace interaction. For example, training activities may involve analyzing authentic or simulated workplace emails, meeting extracts, procedural explanations, and clarification sequences. Through these activities, learners can examine why certain strategies work, when they should be used, and how they can be adapted to different institutional situations.

This implication is consistent with ELF and BELF research that conceptualizes communicative success as emergent, cooperative, and collaboratively achieved rather than as an individual possession of native-like linguistic competence (Mauranen, 2012; Cogo & Dewey, 2012). It also supports Björkman's (2014) view that strategies such as repetition, clarification, and reformulation are central to effective multilingual professional interaction

5.3.3 Integrating Institutional and Intercultural Awareness into ESP Training

Another important implication concerns the role of institutional context in shaping communication practices. The findings show that BELF communication at DICA was deeply embedded in institutional norms, including hierarchy, formality, procedural accountability, and diplomatic risk management. Communication strategies were selected not only for linguistic clarity or interpersonal effectiveness, but also for their appropriateness within a governmental regulatory framework.

Therefore, ESP training should incorporate institutional awareness as a core component. Professionals should be supported in understanding how language functions to establish institutional identity, assign responsibility, communicate procedural requirements, signal authority, and maintain professionalism. For example, in written communication, staff may need to learn how to combine polite request forms with clear deadlines and procedural references. In spoken meetings, they may need to practice explaining institutional procedures clearly while allowing space for clarification and confirmation.

This implication aligns with workplace discourse research, which views business communication as a form of professional action shaped by organizational roles, relationships, and institutional goals (Poncini, 2004; Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2007). It also extends BELF scholarship by showing that in

public-sector economic organizations, effectiveness depends not only on task accomplishment but also on maintaining institutional legitimacy and accountability.

Intercultural awareness should also be integrated into ESP training. However, intercultural competence in this context should not be reduced to cultural facts, etiquette, or national stereotypes. Instead, it should be framed as interactional sensitivity. This means the ability to adapt communicative behavior based on interlocutors' responses, institutional roles, task demands, and the level of possible misunderstanding. This view is consistent with Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, particularly the emphasis on attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. It also aligns with Baker's (2015) view of interculturality as fluid, situated, and constructed through interaction.

In practice, ESP training should therefore include activities that help professionals manage intercultural interaction in context. These may include role-plays involving clarification of procedures, email-writing tasks that balance politeness and directness, meeting simulations requiring confirmation checks, and reflection tasks on how hierarchy, face, and institutional responsibility shape communication choices

5.3.4 Addressing Challenges without Undermining Effectiveness

The study also identified persistent challenges related to language proficiency variation, accent diversity, limited vocabulary, hesitation, and cautious critical cultural awareness. Importantly, these challenges did not necessarily prevent effective communication. Rather, they required participants to rely more actively on interactional strategies to manage understanding and maintain task progress.

Therefore, ESP training should address communication challenges without undermining the effectiveness of existing practices. Training should not overemphasize error avoidance or linguistic correction in ways that reduce learners' confidence. Instead, it should support professionals in managing uncertainty productively, asking for clarification appropriately, using multimodal resources strategically, and recognizing when clarity is more important than fluency.

This implication is consistent with ELF research, which argues that lingua franca communication is often successful because speakers accommodate, negotiate, and adjust meaning collaboratively rather than because they produce native-like

English (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012). In the DICA context, strategies such as reformulation, visual support, repetition, confirmation checks, and polite requests helped participants manage linguistic and intercultural complexity. ESP training should therefore strengthen these practices rather than replace them with rigid native-speaker models.

Training should also help professionals distinguish between strategies that facilitate communication and strategies that may create constraints. For example, indirectness may help preserve politeness and hierarchy, but it may also create ambiguity if requests, deadlines, or responsibilities are not clearly stated. Similarly, let-it-pass strategies may maintain interactional flow, but they may allow partial misunderstanding to remain unresolved. Making these trade-offs explicit can help learners make more informed communication choices in high-stakes institutional settings.

5.3.5 Toward an Interactionally Informed ESP Training Model

Taken together, the findings suggest that ESP training for BELF communication in institutional settings should be grounded in an interactional understanding of communication. Training should be informed by authentic workplace practices and designed to enhance professionals' ability to manage meaning, accountability, hierarchy, and intercultural relations through language.

Rather than aiming simply to fix language use, ESP training should make the interactional logic of workplace communication visible to learners. This means helping learners understand why certain strategies work, when they are effective, and under what conditions they need to be adapted. For example, staff should be able to identify when to repeat key information, when to reformulate a complex procedure, when to ask for confirmation, when to use polite indirectness, and when to state requirements more explicitly.

An interactionally informed ESP training model for BELF-mediated institutional contexts should include at least four components. First, it should include task-based workplace communication practice, such as explaining regulations, requesting documents, responding to inquiries, and coordinating meetings. Second, it should include strategy-focused training on clarification, confirmation, repetition, reformulation, summarizing, and visual support. Third, it should include written

communication practice focusing on email openings, institutional positioning, request formulation, procedural references, deadlines, politeness, and closings. Fourth, it should include intercultural and institutional awareness training, with attention to hierarchy, face, accountability, and professional representation.

This approach positions ESP training as a form of professional development rather than merely linguistic improvement. It recognizes that effective BELF communication depends on the ability to balance clarity, politeness, accountability, task accomplishment, and intercultural collaboration. By grounding ESP training in empirical evidence from real workplace interaction, the study provides a principled foundation for developing training programs that are context-sensitive, theoretically informed, and aligned with the realities of BELF communication in governmental economic organizations.

Overall, the implication of this study is that ESP training in BELF-mediated institutional contexts should not aim to make professionals sound like native speakers. Instead, it should help them become more strategic, confident, and interactionally aware communicators who can use English effectively to accomplish institutional tasks and collaborate with international stakeholders.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the study was conducted within a single public-sector economic organization in Myanmar, namely the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). This single-site focus allowed the study to examine BELF-mediated workplace communication in depth and to capture how communication strategies functioned within a specific institutional context. However, the findings may not be directly generalizable to other types of organizations, such as private-sector companies, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, or public institutions in other national contexts. The results should therefore be interpreted as context-specific insights rather than statistically generalizable conclusions.

Second, although the study drew on multiple data sources, including questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, professional emails, and recorded workplace meetings, the data represented a limited period of workplace communication. The email corpus and recorded meetings provided valuable evidence of written and spoken BELF interaction, but they captured only selected communicative events that were accessible and approved for research purposes. A longer period of data collection could provide deeper insight into how BELF communication strategies develop over time, how they vary across different types of workplace tasks, and how they change across repeated interactions with international stakeholders.

Third, the study was limited by issues of access and confidentiality. Since the research involved authentic workplace communication in a governmental economic organization, not all emails, meetings, documents, or interactional episodes could be collected or reported. Some sensitive institutional details had to be anonymized, modified, or excluded to protect participants and the organization. While these ethical procedures were necessary, they may have limited the amount of contextual detail that could be presented in the findings.

Fourth, although the study examined communication strategies in relation to institutional hierarchy and accountability, it did not systematically investigate deeper power relations, organizational politics, or ideological dimensions of workplace communication. Power was considered mainly through observable institutional roles, formality, hierarchy, and responsibility. Future studies could examine more closely how power relations, organizational culture, and political or bureaucratic structures shape the use of BELF communication strategies in public-sector institutions.

Fifth, the study relied partly on participants' self-reported perceptions through questionnaires and interviews. Although these data were triangulated with professional emails and recorded workplace meetings, self-reported data may still be influenced by participants' memory, personal interpretation, or desire to present their communication practices positively. The inclusion of authentic email and meeting data helped reduce this limitation, but future research could include more naturally occurring workplace interactions to further strengthen the analysis.

Finally, the study focused on BELF communication strategies within one institutional and national context. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as

representing all BELF communication practices in Myanmar or in ASEAN economic organizations more broadly. Instead, the study provides an in-depth account of how communication strategies functioned in one underexplored public-sector economic setting.

These limitations do not undermine the value of the study. Rather, they clarify the scope of the findings and highlight possible directions for future research. The study provides context-specific and analytically meaningful insights into BELF-mediated workplace communication, while future studies can extend this work through comparative, longitudinal, and multi-site research designs.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed for professional communication practice, ESP training, workplace communication development, and future research. The recommendations are grounded in the main finding that BELF communication strategies functioned as interactional resources shaped by institutional, hierarchical, and intercultural conditions. Therefore, the recommendations do not focus only on improving English accuracy, but on strengthening professionals' ability to manage meaning, accountability, task accomplishment, and intercultural collaboration in real workplace communication.

5.5.1 Practical Recommendations

First, governmental and economic organizations that regularly engage with international stakeholders should reconsider how communicative competence in English is conceptualized and evaluated. In BELF-mediated institutional contexts, effective communication should not be measured only by native-like fluency, grammatical accuracy, or pronunciation. Rather, organizations should recognize the importance of interactional competence, including the ability to clarify meaning, confirm understanding, reformulate complex information, manage politeness, and maintain institutional appropriateness. This recommendation is consistent with BELF scholarship, which emphasizes communicative effectiveness, mutual understanding,

and task accomplishment rather than conformity to native-speaker norms (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Nickerson, 2005).

Second, ESP training programs for professionals in international economic organizations should be grounded in authentic workplace communication practices. Training should move beyond fixed business expressions, general vocabulary lists, or decontextualized grammar exercises. Instead, it should focus on how communication strategies operate in real institutional tasks, such as requesting documents, clarifying procedures, explaining regulations, confirming deadlines, managing accountability, and handling misunderstanding in meetings and email correspondence. Such training would be more closely aligned with the interactional nature of BELF communication, where meaning is negotiated and co-constructed through practical workplace interaction (Mauranen, 2012; Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Third, organizations should encourage the use of clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, summarizing, and visual support as normal professional practices. These strategies should not be interpreted as signs of weak English ability. Instead, they should be recognized as responsible communication practices that help reduce ambiguity, prevent misunderstanding, and support institutional accountability. For example, confirming deadlines, repeating key procedural terms, or reformulating complex regulations can help reduce institutional risk in high-stakes communication.

Fourth, professional development initiatives should include training on politeness, directness, and institutional positioning in written communication. The findings of this study show that DICA staff used email openings, institutional references, indirect requests, deadlines, and polite closings to balance clarity with professional rapport. Therefore, training should help staff understand how to write emails that are polite but still clear, institutionally appropriate, and action-oriented. This is especially important in public-sector communication, where staff must communicate authority while maintaining cooperation with international stakeholders. This recommendation is consistent with workplace discourse research, which views professional communication as a means of managing tasks, relationships, and institutional roles (Poncini, 2004; Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2007).

Fifth, organizations should provide opportunities for staff to practice real-time BELF interaction through meeting simulations, role-plays, and case-based discussion. These activities should focus on how to ask for clarification, confirm understanding, explain procedures, respond to uncertainty, and use non-verbal cues appropriately. Since BELF communication often occurs under time pressure and institutional constraints, staff need practice in managing interaction as it unfolds, not only in preparing correct language in advance.

Finally, workplace communication assessment should be revised to include interactional and intercultural criteria. Assessing communication only through grammatical accuracy overlooks the complex work required in BELF-mediated institutional settings. Evaluation criteria should include the ability to achieve mutual understanding, support task progress, clarify responsibilities, manage politeness and directness, respond to misunderstanding, and collaborate effectively with international stakeholders. Such criteria would better reflect the actual demands of BELF communication in public-sector economic organizations.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

First, future studies should extend the investigation to other organizational contexts, such as private-sector firms, multinational corporations, international organizations, and other public-sector institutions. Comparative studies would help identify how different institutional structures, organizational cultures, and power relations shape BELF communication strategies. This would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of BELF as a situated and context-dependent workplace phenomenon.

Second, future research should examine BELF communication strategies across multiple public-sector organizations in Myanmar or across ASEAN contexts. Since English functions as an important working language in regional cooperation and international business communication, studies across different ASEAN institutional settings could reveal how BELF communication is shaped by regional multilingualism, bureaucratic practices, and intercultural expectations.

Third, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine how professionals' interactional competence in BELF develops over time. Such research could follow staff across different stages of professional experience, repeated interactions with

international stakeholders, or participation in workplace communication development programs. This would provide insight into how communication strategies become more flexible, effective, or institutionally appropriate over time.

Fourth, future studies could empirically evaluate ESP training programs designed around BELF communication strategies and interactional competence. For example, researchers could develop training based on authentic workplace emails, meeting extracts, clarification sequences, and procedural explanation tasks, and then examine whether the training improves participants' ability to manage meaning, clarify procedures, and sustain intercultural collaboration. Such intervention studies would help connect BELF research more directly to professional training and workplace development.

Fifth, future research could examine power relations, hierarchy, and institutional accountability in greater depth. The present study considered hierarchy and accountability as important contextual factors, but did not systematically analyze deeper organizational politics or ideological dimensions of communication. Further research could explore how status, seniority, institutional authority, and bureaucratic responsibility influence who asks for clarification, who controls the interaction, and how misunderstanding is managed.

Finally, more BELF research is needed in Global South and underrepresented institutional contexts. Much of the existing BELF literature has focused on multinational corporations or Western-dominated business environments. Further studies in Myanmar, ASEAN, and other developing or transitional economies would help broaden the empirical base of BELF research and challenge assumptions based mainly on Western corporate settings. This would contribute to a more inclusive and globally relevant understanding of BELF communication in contemporary professional contexts.

Overall, these recommendations suggest that BELF communication development should not aim simply to make professionals sound more native-like. Instead, it should support them in becoming more strategic, interactionally aware, institutionally sensitive, and interculturally responsive communicators. In public-sector economic organizations such as DICA, effective English communication depends on

the ability to balance clarity, politeness, accountability, task accomplishment, and professional collaboration with international stakeholders.



REFERENCES

- Baker, W. (2012). From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 66(1), 62–70.
- Baker, W. (2015) Culture and identity through English as a Lingua Franca, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin, Boston.
- Baker, W., & Jenkins, J. (2015). Criticising ELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 4(1), 191–198.
- Björkman, B. (2014). An analysis of polyadic English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speech: A communicative strategies framework. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 66, 122–138.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F., Nickerson, C., & Planken, B. (2007). *Business discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F. (2009). Business communication across cultures: A theoretical perspective. *Professional communication collaboration between academics and practitioners*, 19-30.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cogo, A., & Dewey, M. (2006). Efficiency in ELF communication: From pragmatic motives to lexico-grammatical innovation. *Nordic journal of English studies*, 5(2), 59-93.
- Cogo, A. (2010). Strategic use and perceptions of English as a lingua franca. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 46(3), 295–312.
- Cogo, A., & Dewey, M. (2012). *Analysing English as a lingua franca: A corpus-driven investigation*. Continuum.
- Coupland, N., Giles, H., & Wiemann, J. M. (Eds.). (1991). *Miscommunication and problematic talk*. (pp. 1-17).
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Ehrenreich, S. (2010). English as a business lingua franca in a German multinational corporation: Meeting the challenge. *The Journal of Business Communication* (1973), 47(4), 408-431.

- Ehrenreich, S. (2010). English as a lingua franca in multinational corporate settings: Observations from a European perspective. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29(4), 355–365. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2010.07.003>
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Firth, A. (1996). The discursive accomplishment of normality: On “lingua franca” English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26(2), 237–259. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(96\)00014-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(96)00014-8)
- Feely, A. J., & Harzing, A.-W. (2003). Language Management in Multinational Companies. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 10(2), 37–52.
- Færch, C., & Kasper, G. (1980). Processes and strategies in foreign language learning and communication. *Interlanguage studies bulletin*, 47–118.
- Færch, C., & Kasper, G. (1983). Plans and strategies in foreign language communication. In C. Færch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 20–60). Longman.
- Gains, J. (1999). Electronic mail—a new style of communication or just a new medium?: An investigation into the text features of e-mail. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18(1), 81–101. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(97\)00051-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(97)00051-3)
- Gimenez, J. (2000). Business e-mail communication: Some emerging tendencies in register. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19(3), 237–251.
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Kim, Y. Y. (2003). *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.
- House, J. (2003). English as a lingua franca: A threat to multilingualism? *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(4), 556–578.
- House, J. (2009). Subjectivity in English as Lingua Franca discourse: The case of you know. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 6(2).
- House, J. (1999). Misunderstanding in intercultural communication: Interactions in English as a lingua franca and the myth of mutual intelligibility. In C. Gnutzmann (Ed.), *Teaching and learning English as a global language* (pp. 73–89). Stauffenburg.

- House J. (2012). English as a lingua franca and linguistic diversity. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 1, 173-175.
- Hepburn, A., & Bolden, G. B. (2012). The conversation analytic approach to transcription. *The handbook of conversation analysis*, 57-76.
- Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2015). Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca. *Englishes in Practice*, 2(3), 49-85.
- Kankaanranta, A., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2010). “English?–Oh, it’s just work!”: A study of BELF users’ perceptions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29(3), 204-209.
- Kaur, J. (2010). Achieving mutual understanding in world Englishes. *World Englishes*, 29(2), 192–208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2010.01642>.
- Kaur, J. (2011). Raising explicitness through self-repair in English as a lingua franca. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(11), 2704–2715. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.04.012>
- Kaur, J. (2016). Conversation analysis and ELF. *English as a lingua franca: Perspectives and prospects: Contributions in honour of Barbara Seidlhofer* (pp. 161–168).
- Kaur, J., & Birlik, S. (2021). Communicative effectiveness in BELF (English as a business lingua franca) meetings: ‘Explaining’ as a pragmatic strategy. *The Modern Language Journal*, 105(3), 623-638.
- Kantabutra, N. (2018). *Negotiating the meaning: BELF Pragmatics in Thai international corporations* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Southampton.
- Kankaanranta, A., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2010). “English? Oh, it’s just work!”: A study of BELF users’ perceptions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29(3), 204-209.
- Kaur, J. (2011). Intercultural communication in English as a lingua franca: Some sources of misunderstanding. *Intercultural pragmatics*, 8(1).
- Kankaanranta, A., & Planken, B. (2010). BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. *The Journal of Business Communication* (1973), 47(4), 380-407.

- Kirkpatrick, A. (2010). *English as a lingua franca in ASEAN: A multilingual model*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2012). English in ASEAN: The lingua franca of Asia? In A. Kirkpatrick & R. Sussex (Eds.), *English as an international language in Asia: Implications for language education* (pp. 81–90). Springer.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2017). *World Englishes: Implications for international communication and English language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2017). Language education policy among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). *European Journal of Language Policy*, 9(1), 7-25.
- Kankaanranta, A., & Lu, W. (2013). The Evolution of English as the Business Lingua Franca Signs of Convergence in Chinese and Finnish Professional Communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 27(3), 288-307.
- Kankaanranta, A. (2005). English as a corporate language: Company-internal email messages written by Finns and Swedes. In B.-L. Gunnarsson (Ed.), *Communication in the workplace* (pp. 42–59). Uppsala University.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2017). Language education policy among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). *European Journal of Language Policy*, 9(1), 7-2
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., Charles, M., & Kankaanranta, A. (2005). English as a lingua franca in Nordic corporate mergers: Two case companies. *English for Specific Purpose*, 24(4), 401-421.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Kankaanranta, A. (2011). Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 54(3), 244-262.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., Charles, M., & Kankaanranta, A. (2015). English as a Lingua Franca in Business Contexts: A Conceptualization and Research Agenda. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 52(4), 452–481.
- Mauranen, A. (2006). Signalling and preventing misunderstanding in English as lingua franca communication. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 177, 123–150. <https://doi.org/10.1515/IJSL.2006.008>
- Mauranen, A. (2012). *Exploring ELF: Academic English shaped by non-native speakers*. Cambridge University Press.

- Marra, M. (2014). *A pragmatic approach to business communication: Negotiating meaning in workplace discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Nomnian, S. (2018). English as a lingua franca in Thailand: Implications for English language teaching and learning. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, 55, 1–24.
- Nickerson, C. (2005). English as a lingua franca in international business contexts. *English for specific purposes*, 24(4), 367-380.
- Nickerson, C. (1999). The use of English in electronic mail in a multinational corporation. In F. Bargiela-Chiappini & C. Nickerson (Eds.), *Writing business: Genres, media and discourses* (pp. 35–55). Longman.
- Phumpho, C., & Nomnian, S. (2019). Intercultural communication challenges in English as a lingua franca contexts. *Journal of Language and Intercultural Communication*, 19(4), 1–16.
- Planken, B. (2007). Managing rapport in lingua franca sales negotiations: A comparison of professional and aspiring negotiators. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26(3), 326–344. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2006.10.002>
- Poncini, G. (2004). *Discursive Strategies in Multicultural Business Meetings*. Peter Lang.
- Pogner, K.-H., & Søderberg, A.-M. (2003). The discourse of all.department e-mails: A case study. In A. P. Müller & A. Kieser (Eds.), *Communication in organizations: Structures and practices* (pp. 241–259). Peter Lang.
- Pullin, P. (2015). Culture, curriculum design, syllabus and course development in the light of BELF. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 4(1), 31–53.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman.
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2007). Humour in business: a double-edged sword. a study of humour and style shifting in intercultural business meetings. *J. Pragmat.*, 39, 4-28.
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2007). Using English for international business: A European case study. *English for specific purposes*, 26(1), 103-120.

- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2008). Participation and performance in international business meetings. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(3), 338-360.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2005). English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal*, 59(4), 339–341. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cci064>
- Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*. Oxford University Press.
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2017). *Communication Between Cultures*. Cengage Learning.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2001). Closing a conceptual gap: The case for a description of English as a lingua franca. *International journal of applied linguistics*, 11(2), 133-158.
- Silverthorne, C. (2005). Organizational psychology in cross-cultural contexts. *Journal of Management Development*, 24 (1), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710510572392>
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2nd ed.). Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Tarone, E. (1980). Communication strategies, foreigner talk, and repair in interlanguage 1. *Language learning*, 30(2), 417-428.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Descriptions

This questionnaire is an instrument of my Ph.D. dissertation in English for Professional Development, at Mae Fah Luang University. This questionnaire is a part of my research project entitled, “Communication Strategies Used by Employees at DICA Office with International Clients”. The aim of this research is to investigate the different kinds of communication strategies and tactics that DICA employees employ while interacting with foreign interlocutors /clients.

Thank you for taking your time to assist me with this research. You are under no obligation to answer any of the questions, but your participation will greatly assist me in completing my research. The data collected will remain confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Part 1 General Information

1. Division (For Example- Company Registration Division)

2. Position _____

3. Work Responsibility (in brief)

4. Education

Bachelor's Degree () Field of Study ()

Master's Degree () Field of Study ()

Others Diplomas () Field of Study ()

5. English Study Year

Less than 5 years () 5-10 years ()

More than 10 years ()

6. Working Years

Less than 2 years () 2- 5 years ()

6-10 years () More than 10 years ()

Part 2: The Use of Communicative Strategies

Instruction: Please indicate the level of frequency of each communication strategy that you used while communicating with international clients. For each strategy, mark only one option that best represents your usage.

Communication Strategies	The most and the least frequency of the number				
	Always (5)	Often (4)	Someti mes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
1. Repetition					
1.1 I regularly restate important data or deadlines during conversations to ensure everyone has the same understanding.					
1.2 I introduce a concept briefly and then repeat it with more details in subsequent mentions to gradually build understanding.					
1.3 At key points during a conversation or meeting, I summarize the discussed topics to reaffirm the main points and ensure all participants are aligned.					
2. Paraphrasing (Reformulation)					
2.1 I replace complex terms or jargon with simple words or familiar analogies to make the content more accessible to the audience.					
2.2 I actively restate questions or statements in					

simpler terms, especially when noticing signs of confusion or misunderstanding from the audience.					
2.3. I provide examples or scenarios that illustrate the point in a different way, helping to clarify the original message.					
3. Minimal Queries					
3.1 I use simple questions like “Does that make sense?” or “Are you with me so far?” to check for understanding without a lengthy interruption.					
3.2 I repeat part of what was said with a questioning intonation to confirm details.					
3.3 I ask straightforward questions like “Could you explain what you mean by that?” or “Could you elaborate on that point?” to prompt further explanation or reiteration.					
4. Requests for Confirmation					
4.1 I employ straightforward confirmations, ensuring alignment by seeking explicit agreement after presenting information.					

4.2. I often summarize discussed points and verify understanding by checking if the summary reflects the participants' perceptions accurately.					
4.3 For clarity on detailed discussions, I confirm key decisions or details by explicitly stating them for agreement.					
5. Request for Clarification					
5.1. To clear ambiguities, I request more specific information or elaboration on unclear points.					
5.2. In cases involving complex terms, I ask for explanations in simpler terms to ensure comprehension among all participants.					
5.3. When initial explanations are not clear, I request the repetition of the information to ensure accurate understanding.					
6. Backchannels					
6.1. I use short verbal responses like "right," "I see," and "okay" to indicate understanding and encourage continued dialogue.					
6.2. Gestures such as nodding, smiling, or tilting the head are used to show engagement and understanding without					

interrupting the speaker.					
6.3. I provide subtle verbal encouragement such as "go on" or "and then?" to maintain the flow of conversation, particularly during complex or detailed narratives.					
7. Lexical Suggestion					
7.1 When technical jargon is used, I provide simpler synonyms that might be more familiar to the audience to facilitate understanding.					
7.2. If a term is complex or unfamiliar, I follow up with a concise explanation or definition to clarify its meaning.					
7.3. To make abstract or complex terms more accessible, I often use analogies or compare them to more common situations or objects.					
8. Signaling Importance					
8.1. I use variations in tone, such as speaking more loudly or softly, to emphasize the importance of certain points during a conversation.					
8.2. In presentations, I employ visual aids like underlining, bolding, or color-coding to draw					

attention to key elements of the discussion.					
8.3 I explicitly state the importance of certain information using phrases such as "It's crucial that..." or "I want to highlight that..." to ensure the audience understands the significance of these points.					
9. Humor					
9.1. I use humor that is relevant to the situation or topic at hand to lighten the mood and engage participants more effectively.					
9.2. When incorporating humor, I ensure it is appropriate and sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of all participants to prevent misunderstandings and maintain a positive atmosphere.					
9.3. I employ light-hearted comments or jokes at the beginning of a session to break the ice and make participants feel more relaxed and open to dialogue.					
10. Non-Verbal Cues					
10.1. I use affirmative gestures such as nods and smiles to show agreement or understanding, reinforcing the verbal message and providing positive feedback.					

10.2. I employ varied facial expressions to convey emotions or reactions that support my verbal communication, enhancing the clarity and impact of my message.					
10.3. I utilize thoughtful pauses in my speech to emphasize important points or to give the audience time to absorb complex information, thereby enhancing comprehension.					
11.Code Switching					
11.1. When complex ideas are discussed, I clarify concepts by incorporating terms from a commonly shared language among participants to clarify these concepts more effectively.					
11.2. I acknowledge and respect the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the participants, fostering a more inclusive and comfortable communication environment.					
11.3. By switching between languages, I create a more relatable and engaging dialogue, helping to bridge cultural gaps and build stronger connections among participants.					

Thank you very much for answering the questionnaire

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTION

Intercultural Communication and Communication Strategies at Workplace (2024)

Description

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview about communication strategies and intercultural communication at the workplace, as well as concepts related to intercultural communication (IC) awareness. This interview is a part of my PhD dissertation. Your identity and the interview recording will be kept confidential.

Part 1 General Information of the Interviewee

Position: _____

Years worked at DICA _____

Division: _____

Part 2- Interview Questions

To help answer the research questions and clarify points raised in the questionnaire survey, the interview questions are designed to extract specific and detailed insights from participants about their communication strategies in BELF settings.

Common Communication Strategies

1. Can you describe the communication strategies you most frequently use when communicating in English with your colleagues and clients?
2. Which strategies do you find most effective when dealing with non-native English speakers within the organization?
3. Are there specific communication techniques you rely on during high-stakes or critical business interactions? If so, what are they?

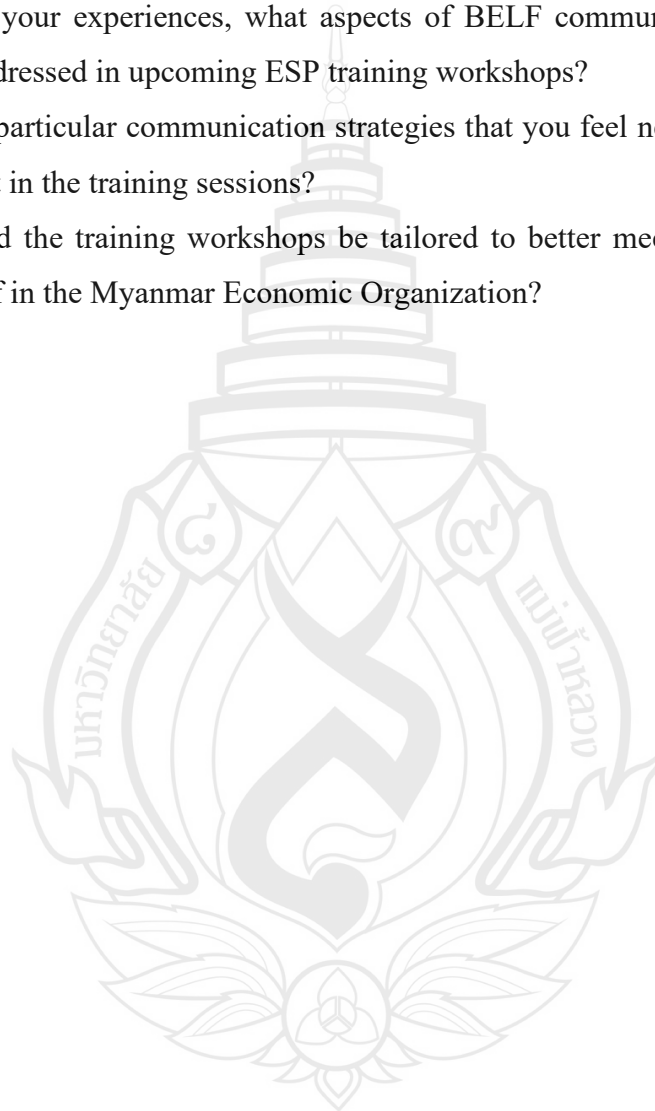
Impact on Intercultural Collaboration

4. In your experience, how have certain BELF communication strategies either facilitated or hindered intercultural collaboration in your team?

5. Can you provide an example of a time when a communication strategy either significantly helped or created a barrier in a multicultural team setting?
6. What challenges do you face when using English as a lingua franca in diverse cultural groups within the organization?

Focus Areas for ESP Training Workshop

7. Based on your experiences, what aspects of BELF communication do you think should be addressed in upcoming ESP training workshops?
8. Are there particular communication strategies that you feel need more emphasis or improvement in the training sessions?
9. How could the training workshops be tailored to better meet the communication needs of staff in the Myanmar Economic Organization?



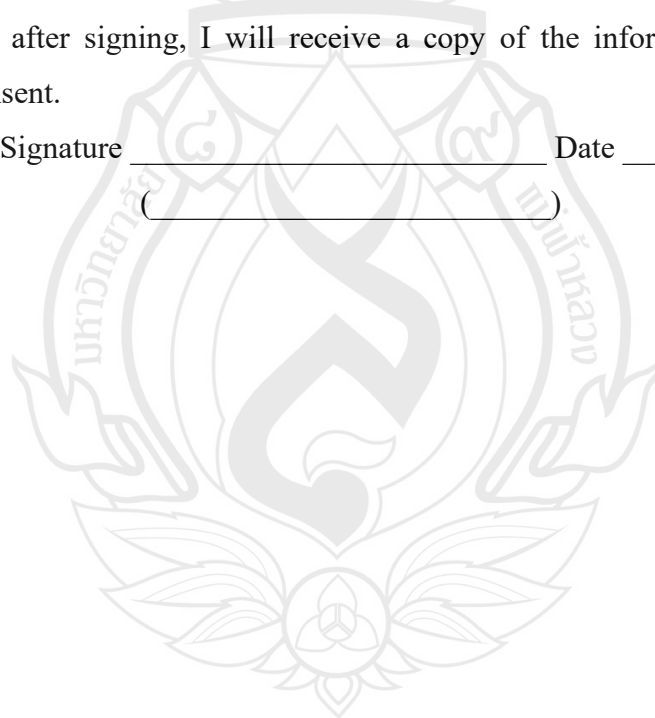
APPENDIX C

I, _____, have decided to participate in [Exploring Communication Strategies in Business English as a Lingua Franc (BELF) in the Actual Practices in Myanmar Economic Organization]. I have received information and explanations about this research, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive satisfactory answers. I have had sufficient time to read and understand the information provided in the documents thoroughly and have decided to participate in this research. I understand that I have the freedom to choose not to participate in this research, and I can withdraw from this research at any time without any impact on my care or rights that I am entitled to.

By signing this document, I do not waive any rights that I am entitled to under the law, and after signing, I will receive a copy of the information sheet and the informed consent.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

(_____)



APPENDIX D

MEETING TRANSCRIPT

Meeting Conversation (1)

(1) M: I think I have been three times to Nanning for Expo

(2) C: last year?

(3) M: *Yes, last year*

(4) M: I have been three times to Nanning for....

(5) M: So our department is very warm welcome to the delegation, I would like to introduce the DDGs DDG 4, 3, and Investment promotion,4 for investment operation, these are all my colleagues.

(Interpretation Myanmar language to Chinese Language)

(6) C: Thank you for the opportunity to see you because you are so busy that I didn't have the opportunity to face to face to see you...

(7) M: Yes.

(8) M: And this is ahh, we are very glad.

(9) M: Just Like I mention you, that you visited (TesCO) for three times and I believe that you must be familiar with....

(10) C: Your colleague tells me that only your facilitating there, and you also made presentation to some major key investment operation projects of Myanmar.

(11) C: Your presentation had catch Chinese Companies that the reason this time we have visit Myanmar, we will have companies along with us...(Introduce Chinese investors .. some laughing while introducing because of call wrong name)

(12) C: We are purpose China ASEAN Expo this year the delegation, specific emergence industries, key company, green economy, and water supply and investment supply.

(13) In meantime we also invite Shanghai cooperation, Austrilia, Newzeland,...

(14) C: This year we will also organize more powerful networking program for business ...we also go launching programs, we acknowledge for the ASEAN countries for Chinese industry sector, we will also arrange more specific activities for participants,

specific networking for investors, ahh so as to provide more business opportunities as well as cooperation between China and Myanmar as well as ASAEAN.

M : Myanmar Side

C: Chinese Delegation

Meeting Conversation (2)

- (1) DDG: Investment increased you have the initial 10 million investment value should be finished investment increase amount fulfilled and turn another investment increased.
- (2) Investor: According to receive the appraisal commencement, my investment increased the 3 months, you need to send the chamber official
- (3) DDG : No, (3) months, if you submit the officials, we will go the field inspection (hand pointing to the other side to understand his meaning clearly), and then we will submit the report at the *MIC meeting*. *MIC meeting*, we have every month, (hand gestures). Yeah.
- (4) The translator: “Three-month report?” (in Myanmar Language)
- (5) DDG: “Yes” He nodded to indicate the answer is correct.
- (6) MIC allowed already initial raw for the semi right. You will have to export and then you have the ET and this ET attached to inform the MIC for your commercial, officially to MIC. Yeah
- (7) Next time, for the raw material, no need to apply MIC, please you contact (Energy) *CMP*, *CMP* association for every shipment, every more export for raw material *CMP*. MIC allowed already initial raw for the semi- right!

Meeting Conversation (3)

- (1) Investor: We discussed with the customer, we produce product to our customer order, we earn money and if we will not get free tax, because difficult for us...because we will use money expenses to buy for machine and you will not extend ..we have little profit and. ah cannot with the customer.
- (2) DDG : Is your business is *CMP*? Is your machine for *CMP*, arr. you will also enjoy on *CMP* raw material tax free.
- (3) We will allow duty free for machinery, *CMP* ..we already ah, allow duty free during the commercial period ..to the operation.
- (4) And also if you start your business you need to start commercial period. Commercial period ..for machinery already expressed.

- (5) Right now, another one year extend, you start 2023, October. So and one year commercial period already finish. So all the machinery.



CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME	Yin Min Hla
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	
2007	Master of Arts (English) Dagon University, Yangon, Myanmar
2006	Diploma of English Language Teaching (Dip, ELT) Yangon University, Yangon, Myanmar
2004	Bachelor of Arts (English) Dagon University, Yangon, Myanmar
WORK EXPERIENCE	
2008	Staff Officer, Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise, Ministry of Energy
2011	Staff Officer, Department of Border Trade, Ministry of Commerce
2014	Assistant Director, Department of Trade, Ministry of Commerce
2015	Assistant Director Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Ministry of National Planning, Investment and Foreign Economic Relations

PUBLICATION

Hla, Y. M., & Kaewsard, A. (2023). Investigating Challenges Faced by Myanmar Employees in BELF Communication. *In Proceedings of the Malaysia International Conference on Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (MICOLLAC 2023)* (pp. 163-167), University Putra Malaysia.

CONFERENCE

Thailand TESOL. (2026). *Business English as a lingua franca: Exploring communication strategies in Myanmar economic organization.*

