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DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FOR ENGLISH BUSINESS MEETINGS USING BUSINESS MEETING SIMULATIONS

Abstract

This article reports on the analysis of business meeting simulation data investigating the use of Business English (BE) in business meeting simulations at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The research explores the use of business meeting simulations in a higher education setting in order to bring into focus how patterns of linguistic interactions among BE students are structured, with and without a BE teacher's corrective feedback. The findings provide possible solutions for the effective integration of business meeting simulations into BE programmes to improve students' performance in international business meetings in which English is the lingua franca by using business meeting simulations as a BE teaching tool. Corpus analysis and qualitative analysis of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements of foreign language communicative competence (FLCC) were used to explore the development of FLCC elements of BE students in the spoken corpus of English business meeting simulations. The main finding of the study is that whilst repeated business meeting simulation practice may provide BE students with a certain concrete experience of this communicative context even without a teacher's corrective feedback, practice without corrective feedback does not facilitate the correct and comprehensive development of FLCC.

Keywords: foreign language communicative competence (FLCC), Business English, business meeting simulation, spoken corpus, corrective feedback, higher education.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to present possible solutions for the effective integration of business meeting simulations into Business English (BE) programmes. It is argued that business meeting simulations provide BE students with a framework to develop their foreign language communicative competence (FLCC) for business meetings (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 78), enabling them to benefit from a concrete experience of this communicative context.

Although business meeting simulations have been widely used as a BE teaching tool to simulate international business meetings (Crosling & Ward, 2002), it has received little attention by researchers. Due to this research gap, business meeting simulations have not yet been sufficiently analysed to understand how patterns of linguistic interactions among BE students are structured to develop their FLCC. Moreover, they have not yet been adequately analysed to understand whether or how corrective feedback integration can facilitate the development of FLCC for business meetings (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 78).

The present study examined the learner corpus of English business meeting simulations at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia in order to answer the research question concerning how BE students' linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements of FLCC have developed with and without the corrective feedback of a BE teacher. This article will first outline the components of the interdisciplinary model for the study of business meeting simulations in English. Next, the background and methodology of the study will be presented. In the following section, the comparative results of FLCC elements will be discussed.

2. Theoretical framework

New knowledge is learned by incorporating concrete experience into the learning cycle – the continuous spiral circulation through the stages of learning, i.e. concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb 1984; Marentič Požarnik, 2011; Widdowson, 2012). In BE the learning process of an individual takes place in a broader social context of a BE language class, all participants and the target situation (Johns, 2015; Jurkovič, 2015). This allows for the development of language (Chandler, 2003; Ellis & Johnson, 2010; Merrill, 2013), specifically by engaged participation in their target occupational domain tasks (Čepon, 2012; Ellis, N., 2005; Jarc 2007).

As an activity at the heart of every organization (Boden, 1994), the business meeting has been universally recognised to be a key task in the occupational domain (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 78). Its purpose is a business transaction to "*get the work done*" (Bargiella-Chiappini et al., 2007, p. 3); therefore business people need to be fully knowledgeable about its structure and patterns of interaction to use them efficiently. In international business meetings, English is most widely used and "*largely accepted as a pragmatic necessity*" among native and non-native speakers (Rogerson-Revell 2008, p. 339) and every business person needs to be able to interact in English in such a way to do business transactions in business meetings efficiently.

Interactions in business meetings are highly unpredictable (Evans, 2013; Handford, 2010; Maier, 1992). In its essence, the business meeting genre interaction patterns (Comfort & Brieger, 1998; Handford, 2010) are structured with genre specific language functions and

genre non-specific language functions[1]. Genre specific language functions appear in fixed interaction sequences, e.g. opening the meeting, welcoming and introducing participants, stating the purpose of the meeting, giving apologies for absence, discussing the minutes of the previous meeting, etc. (Handford, 2011, pp. 69–75). These are central communicative functions in a business context. It is therefore crucial that the BE learning environment effectively prepares BE students for this "*multidimensional discursive reality of international business environment*" (Bhatia, 2008, p. 162), particularly for business meetings (Crosling & Ward, 2002). Consequently, a business simulation, as a key task in the educational domain, is used to facilitate the development of students' FLCC as a set of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences for an appropriate interaction in their main target occupational domain task, which is a prerequisite for successful work in a foreign language environment (Council of Europe, 2011).

Corrective feedback is information from a teacher on how (much) the student's FLCC differs from the target one. There has been much discussion in the field as to whether or how corrective feedback can affect the process of learning a foreign language. Some findings state that a teacher's corrective feedback may not affect the process of learning a foreign language, its fluency (Long, 1996; Samuda, 2001) and/or accuracy (Trahey & White, 1993; Truscott, 1996). Other findings suggest, however, that it may trigger the progress of learning a foreign language (Chandler, 2003; DudleyEvans & St John, 1998; Rei, 2013), its speed of learning (Lyster, 1994; Polio, 2012; Savignone, 1991) and its fluency and accuracy (Ellis, N., 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2011; Mcdonough, 2004).

While these studies focussed predominantly on corrective feedback in written assignments, the role of a BE teacher's corrective feedback in students' interaction in business meeting simulations has not yet been given sufficient scientific attention. Possible reasons for this research gap may lie in the difficulties with the availability of transcribed spoken corpora in general (Teubert, 2007) and the confidentiality of business data specifically (Nelson, 2000). Nevertheless, corpus tools are becoming more accessible for BE teachers. Consequently, there is a growing awareness of the need for knowledge transfer from and to the BE learning environment.

The present study was therefore built around the following components: (1) foreign language communicative competence (FLCC), (2) experiential learning, (3) corrective feedback, and (4) business meeting simulations:

Foreign language communicative competence (FLCC): to analyse how the FLCC of a BE student develops using business meeting simulations for business meetings in the international business environment.

Experiential learning: to explore how the students' concrete experience with business meeting simulations with or without corrective feedback in the course of language learning altered with regard to their FLCC.

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1 Genre non-specific language functions are: imparting and seeking factual information, expressing and finding out attitudes, suasion, socialising, structuring discourse and communication repair (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 126).

Corrective feedback*:* to explore whether and how FLCC develops with and without corrective feedback of a BE teacher in business meeting simulations to determine the teacher's role with regard to fluency, accuracy, control, quality and quantity of FLCC elements.

Simulation of a business meeting: to explore the corpus of business meeting simulations (hereinafter referred to as the SAPS corpus) with regard to FLCC elements by using corpus tools.

The study attempted to determine how the BE teacher's use of corrective feedback affects the development of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements of FLCC in BE students' performance in business meeting simulations to better prepare them for their future business careers, i.e. English business meetings in the international environment (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 78). To the author's knowledge, there has not been any published research on developing FLCC using business meeting simulations and the role of a BE teacher's corrective feedback in business meeting simulations.

3. Methodology

The research question posed in this paper was part of a larger study into the use of business meeting simulations as a teaching tool for students of BE. The research methodology sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of a combination of different qualitative and quantitative methods in the exploration of BE learning and teaching. The triangulation of methods, data sources and fields of study increased the width, depth and complexity of the findings, which allowed for a better understanding of the problem. For a comprehensive overview of results see Dostal (2015a).

For the purpose of this article, the following research question is discussed:

RQ: What are the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic FLCC elements in the spoken corpus of English business meeting simulations of students with and without the corrective feedback of a BE teacher?

To answer the research question, corpus analysis was used (cf. McEnery and Hardie, 2012; Tischer et al., 2000) and the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic FLCC elements were analysed in experimental and control corpora of the spoken SAPS corpus. The selection of respondents included third-year university programme undergraduate students (96) at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

First, the SAPS corpus of business meeting simulations was built. After all permissions for recording business meeting simulations had been collected, students were organised into 16 fixed groups with six members in each group. In the next step, all 16 groups were recorded during their initial simulation of the Marbi case study in their textbooks (Dostal, 2012, pp. 24–26). In the continuation, seven case studies from a collection of case studies (Comfort & Brieger, 1998) were carried out, one every week by all groups, in eight experimental groups with BE teacher's corrective feedback[2] and in eight control groups without BE teacher's corrective

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2 BE teacher's corrective feedback was based on linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements of FLCC. It was incorporated through discussion before, during and after each simulation (see Dostal, 2015b, pp. 23–42).

feedback. Upon completion of the research by midterm[3], all 16 groups were recorded again during the final simulation. For both recordings, the same case study was used in order to better compare the initial and final simulation corpora. Finally, 32 simulations of up to 20 minutes each were recorded, i.e. 16 experimental group simulations (eight initial and eight final) and 16 control group simulations (eight initial and eight final), totalling ten hours of audio material.

The SAPS corpus was transcribed in Word. All turns[4] were anonymised with S1–S6 (student1–student6) and tagged with 21 error types. The CEFR 2011 classification of FLCC elements (Council of Europe 2011, pp. 108–130) was adapted to the purpose of research (cf. McCarten, 2007; McCarthy, 2001). Errors were tagged according to the frequency of error types and classified into errors in vocabulary (WVOC: e.g. You are welcome to *enjoy me), grammar (WGRAM: e.g. Marbi is too *much focused), politeness (WPOL: e.g. I *want that you give me), prepositions (WPREP: e.g. discuss *about the problem), starts (WSTART: e.g. *I speak... Could we speak in Italian?), register (WREG: e.g. *gonna), articles (WART: e.g. and *Italians), pronunciation (WPRON: e.g. *course as /kɜːs/), phrases (WPHR: e.g. Thank you for *a word), pronouns (WPR: e.g. *Our?), number (WNUM: e.g. Any *suggestion?), word order (WWO: e.g. Tell me why *are you sending the reports), tense (WTEN: e.g. *am working in Maribor), modals (WMOD: e.g. We must *to give you), continuation (WCONT: e.g. Is she informed? Does *he know that?), conditionals (WCOND: e.g. If it *would be), context (WCONTEXT: e.g. Your *Italian hasn't improved.), conjunctions (WCONJ: e.g. But *however we), stress (WSTRESS: e.g. pur*chase), repetition (WREPEAT: e.g. we see and *we) and language switching (WLANG: e.g. You have to *kako se že reče?).

The Word files (*.doc) were then changed into text files (*.txt) and analysed using the corpus tool AntConc (2014)[5]. The analysis comprised of qualitative and quantitative corpus analysis of SAPS as a learner corpus[6] (Dostal, 2015c, pp. 193–223). The quantitative corpus analysis of the SAPS corpus compared linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic FLCC elements, specifically: the errors[7], word tokens, word types, and positive and negative keywords in the initial and final experimental and control corpora. In addition to the quantitative corpus analysis, the qualitative analysis of the SAPS corpus compared various sociolinguistic and pragmatic FLCC elements[8] in the SAPS corpus, i.e. the specific and non-specific language functions of the business meeting genre. Genre specific language functions (Comfort & Brieger, 1998; Handford, 2010) were classified into 26 categories, i.e. (1) opening of meeting: the chair opens the meeting (1.1), welcomes the participants (1.2), introduces the participants (1.3), states the

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3 In the second half of the term, experimental and control groups were swapped to enable the same working conditions to all students for their exam simulation at the end of the term and ensure that the research was conducted in accordance with professional ethical and scientific standards.
4 A turn is a time during which a single participant speaks, within a typical, orderly arrangement in which participants speak with minimal overlap and gap between them (Levinson, 1983, pp. 295–296).
5 Log Likelihood was used as the statistical measure with significance values p < 0.05 (critical value = 3.84384).
6 A learner corpus is a collection of authentic texts produced by foreign/second language learners (Granger, 1998, p. xix).
7 tagged
8 not tagged

purpose of the meeting (1.4), gives apologies of absence (1.4), asks about the minutes of the last meeting (1.5), participants comment on the minutes (1.6) and take them as read (1.7), the chair assigns the roles (1.8), participants agree the roles (1.9), the chair sets the ground rules (1.10), introduces the agenda (1.11), participants agree the agenda (1.12), the chair asks about AOB (1.13), participants comment AOB (1.14), the chair introduces the first item on the agenda (1.15); (2) discussion of the agenda: the chair asks for an opinion (2.1), directs the course of discussion (2.3), brings people in (2.22), directs voting (2.39), summarizes each item (2.40), introduces a new item (2.41), introduces AOB (2.42), summarizes the main points of the meeting (2.43); (3) closing of meeting: the chair thanks participants for their participation (3.1), informs them about the next meeting (3.2), and closes the meeting (3.3).

4. Results

First, errors in the entire SAPS corpus (i.e. final and initial corpora of experimental and control groups' simulations) were analysed. The corpus analysis showed that the most common errors were errors in vocabulary (17%), grammar (12%), articles (12%), politeness (10%), prepositions (8%), starts (6%), register (5%), pronunciation (5%), phrases (4%), pronouns (4%), number (4%), word order and tense (3%), modal verbs (2%), and continuation, conditionals, context, conjunctions, stress, repetition and language switching (1%) (see Figure 1)[9].
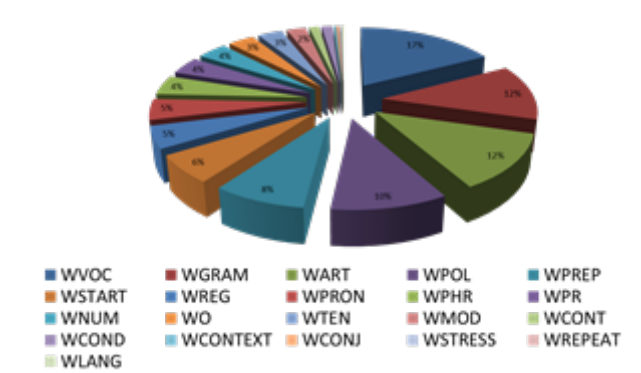

Figure 1: All errors in SAPS

The corpus analysis of the entire SAPS corpus showed that there were more errors in the control group corpus (initial and final control corpora together) than in the experimental group corpus (initial and final experimental corpora together) (see Figure 2).

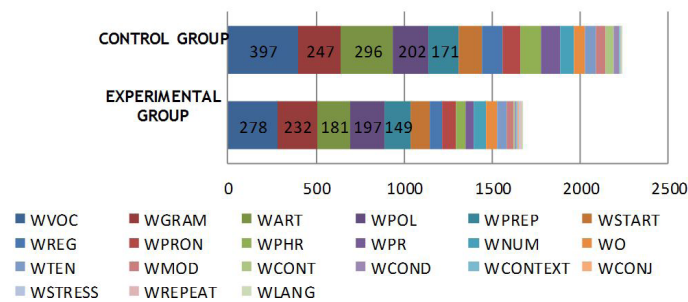9 For a comprehensive overview of results see Dostal, 2015a.

Figure 2: Errors in the experimental and control corpora

The final and initial corpora of the experimental and control group simulations were compared to show whether and how much progress each group had made (see Figure 3).
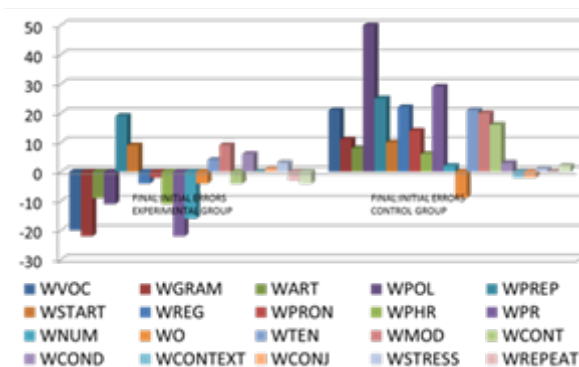
Figure 3: Comparison of the final and initial experimental and control group errors

While there were fewer errors in the final experimental group corpus (795) than in the initial corpus (876), there were more errors in the final control group corpus (1242) than in the initial control group corpus (994) (see Table 1). The comparison of the initial and final experimental group corpus showed that there was a dramatic decrease in the frequency of errors in grammar (–22), pronouns (–22) vocabulary (–20), number (–16), phrases (–11), politeness (–11), article (–9), register (–4), word order (–4), continuation (–4), language switching (–4) and repetition (–3), while there was a slight increase in errors (highlighted) in prepositions (+19), starts (+9), modal verbs (+9), conditionals (+6) number (+4), stress (+3) and conjunctions (+1). Additionally, the comparison of the initial and final control group corpus showed a dramatic increase in the frequency of errors (highlighted) in politeness (+50), pronouns (+29), prepositions (+25), register, tense and vocabulary (+21), modal verbs (+20), continuation (+16), pronunciation (+14), grammar (+11), starts (+10), article (+8), phrases (+6), number (+2), language switching (+2) and stress (+1) and a minute decrease in the frequency of errors in word order (–9), conjunctions (–2) and context (–2).

ERROR	SAPS	EXP.	INITIAL	FINAL	DIFF.	CONTROL	INITIAL	FINAL	DIFF.
WVOC	675	278	149	129	−20	397	188	209	21
WGRAM	479	232	127	105	−22	247	118	129	11
WART	477	181	95	86	−9	296	144	152	8
WPOL	399	197	104	93	−11	202	76	126	50
WPREP	320	149	65	84	19	171	73	98	25
WSTART	239	113	52	61	9	126	58	68	10
WREG	190	66	35	31	−4	124	51	73	22
WPRON	180	82	42	40	−2	98	42	56	14
WPHR	169	53	32	21	−11	116	55	61	6
WPR	153	46	34	12	−22	107	39	68	29
WNUM	146	68	42	26	−16	78	38	40	2
WO	127	60	32	28	−4	67	38	29	−9
WTEN	119	58	27	31	4	61	20	41	21
WMOD	93	39	15	24	9	54	17	37	20
WCONT	48	4	4	0	−4	44	14	30	16
WCOND	51	14	4	10	6	37	17	20	3
WCONTEXT	12	8	4	4	0	4	3	1	−2
WCONJ	11	9	4	5	1	2	2	0	−2
WSTRESS	6	5	1	4	3	1	0	1	1
WREPEAT	3	3	3	0	−3	0	0	0	0
WLANG	10	6	5	1	−4	4	1	3	2
∑	3907	1671	876	795	−81	2236	994	1242	248

Table 1: The initial and final experimental and control group corpora

The comparison of length (i.e. time), word tokens, word types and turns, showed that all final simulations were longer than the initial ones, with more word tokens, word types and turns used. However, the comparison of final simulations of both groups showed that, while final simulations of the experimental and control group were of very similar length, there were fewer but at the same time longer speaker turns in the experimental group simulations. In comparison with the control group, there were fewer errors in the experimental group simulations, while the number of word tokens used in a turn was higher. The token-error ratio, which shows the number of word tokens per error, and time-error ratio, which shows the time span between two errors, increased more in experimental groups than in control final groups. Besides, the type-token ratio, which shows lexical variety, was also higher in the experimental group simulations (see Table 2).

	INITIAL EXPERIMENTAL	FINAL EXPERIMENTAL	INITIAL CONTROL	FINAL CONTROL
time (s)	6271	8084	6239	8463
time (h)	1:44:31	2:14:44	1:43:59	2:21:05
turns (∑)	472	637	537	743
word tokens (∑)	11800	15682	12283	17201
word types (∑)	2753	3222	2516	3359
type/token ratio	9 %	8 %	7 %	7 %
Errors (∑)	876	795	994	1242
word tokens/error	13.47	19.72	12.36	13.85
time (s)/error	7.16	10.17	6.27	6.81
word tokens/turn	25	24.62	22.87	23.15
time (s)/turn	13.29	12.69	11.61	11.39
word tokens/time (s)	1.9	1.94	1.9	2

Table 2: Comparison of the initial and final corpora of the experimental and control groups

The study then compared the final experimental corpus with the final control corpus to determine which keywords were typical for each final corpus and how they were different. The comparison of the final experimental corpus (FeC) with the final control corpus (FcC) showed the positive keywords which were typical for the experimental corpus and simultaneously, negative keywords which were untypical for the control corpus. Some typical keywords for the experimental groups, yet untypical for the control group, were *believe, help, aaa, should, group, situation, colleagues, create, feel, deal, recommend, aware, pleased, convinced, deal, proposal, please, rather, opinion, offering, proposal*, etc. and errors (*) in pronunciation and stress (*WPRON, WSTRESS*) (see Table 3).

no	frequency	keyness	token	no	frequency	keyness	token
1	31	26.777	BELIEVE	26	5	7.507	ISN
2	62	24.585	AAA	27	5	7.507	PLEASED
3	117	17.112	SHOULD	28	33	7.160	LESSONS
4	83	11.720	GROUP	29	8	7.010	FOUR
5	20	11.396	SITUATION	30	10	6.756	ALWAYS
6	7	10.510	COLLEAGUES	31	62	6.436	OTHER
7	7	10.510	SIDES	32	18	6.320	THESE
8	7	10.510	WORDS	33	22	6.056	CROATIA
9	99	9.784	AS	34	4	6.006	CONVINCED
10	10	9.590	GUYS	35	4	6.006	CORPORATION
11	16	9.117	HELP	36	4	6.006	DEAL
12	6	9.009	HOSTILE	37	4	6.006	FORM
13	6	9.009	OTHERS	38	4	6.006	GIVEN
14	6	9.009	PROFIT	39	4	6.006	HUMILIATING
15	6	9.009	UNTIL	40	4	6.006	INFLUENCE
16	14	9.008	CREATE	41	4	6.006	OFFERING
17	14	9.008	FEEL	42	4	6.006	OTHERWISE
18	115	8.945	ON	43	4	6.006	PROPOSAL
19	9	8.289	CONTROL	44	4	6.006	RATHER
20	15	8.074	OPINION	45	4	6.006	RECOMMEND
21	13	7.908	PLEASE	46	4	6.006	THINKING
22	53	7.861	ITALIANS	47	4	6.006	*WPRONCOOPERATE
23	49	7.670	THEM	48	4	6.006	*WSTRESS
24	5	7.507	AWARE	49	19	5.931	SLOVENIANS
25	5	7.507	CORPORATE	50	31	5.862	EACH

Table 3: Positive keywords of the experimental corpus (= negative keywords of the control corpus; FeC:FcC)

The comparison of the final control corpus (FcC) with the final experimental corpus (FeC) showed the positive keywords for the control corpus. At the same time it identified the negative keywords for the experimental group. Some typical keywords for the control groups, yet untypical for the experimental groups were *write, project, it, your, think, need, he, yeah, nobody, wants, cannot, laughs, pause*, etc. and errors (*) in pronouns, register, phrases, modals, vocabulary, prepositions, pronunciation, grammar and indefinite article (see Table 4). Informal *yeah* denoted informal register, *laughs* indicated more laughs in the control group, whereas *pause* indicated longer pauses than in the experimental group.

no	frequency	keyness[10]	token	no	frequency	keyness	token
1	30	38.323	*WCONT	26	6	7.665	PERCENT
2	30	30.989	*WPRDEL	27	6	7.665	PERHAPS
3	18	22.994	WRITE	28	6	7.665	WANTS
4	17	21.716	PROJECT	29	6	7.665	*WPRTHIS
5	215	19.428	IT	30	55	7.623	*WPRON
6	57	17.177	*WREGYES	31	15	7.445	DOING
7	112	16.263	YOUR	32	110	6.741	LIKE
8	184	12.907	THINK	33	9	6.497	PAST
9	49	12.811	NEED	34	16	6.428	TALK
10	9	11.497	HE	35	5	6.387	ADMINISTRATION
11	13	10.903	*WPHRDEL	36	5	6.387	EMPLOY
12	27	10.426	IMPORTANT	37	5	6.387	HAPPENS
13	74	10.242	YEAH	38	5	6.387	INFORM
14	12	9.780	*WMODCOULD	39	5	6.387	RUINED
15	35	9.325	*WVOCDEL	40	5	6.387	TOPIC
16	7	8.942	WEEKS	41	5	6.387	TWICE
17	7	8.942	*WPHR	42	5	6.387	*WVOCLUXURY
18	27	8.874	REPORT	43	124	6.049	NOT
19	14	8.830	BEST	44	11	5.892	*WGRAMDEPEND
20	11	8.669	WORLD	45	28	5.883	*WARTA
21	16	8.369	*WPREPAT	46	21	5.845	WHEN
22	18	8.137	LAUGHS	47	8	5.442	CANNOT
23	13	7.829	PAUSE	48	8	5.442	DIDN
24	6	7.665	BOOST	49	8	5.442	SERIOUSLY
25	6	7.665	NOBODY	50	8	5.442	TOP

Table 4: Positive keywords of control corpus (= negative keywords of experimental corpus; FcC:FeC)

The analysis of sets of concordance lines of the keywords showed that positive keywords for the experimental group (and negative keywords for the control group) were frequently used to express cooperation (e.g. *Can we take them as read? / Help them cooperate together. / How do you feel about it? / Why do you feel that? / I feel that.../ We feel responsible. / We would feel more like a part of a company*), common interest (e.g. *will provide / will become / will produce / will aim for*), and politeness (*in my opinion / We would rather see that... / we were thinking / we have been thinking / help your company).* Furthermore, the analysis of sets of concordance lines of the keywords showed that positive keywords for the control group (and negative keywords for the experimental group) were frequently used to express lack of cooperation (e.g. *everybody wants / nobody wants / Who wants to say something?*), confrontation (e.g. *your duty / on your own / you need to improve / you need to respect / You make it better! / you cannot*), and personal interest (e.g. *not taken seriously / not taking us seriously / seriously jeopardizing*).

In conclusion, the comparison between experimental and control group corpora showed that positive keywords in the experimental corpus (and negative keywords in the control corpus) most frequently expressed common interest, and on the other hand, negative keywords in the experimental corpus (and positive keywords in the control corpus) were used to express personal interest. While politeness and appreciation were frequently expressed in the final experimental corpus, lack of politeness and rejection were frequently expressed in the final control corpus (see Table 5).

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10 Log Likelihood was used as the statistical measure with significance values p < 0.05 (critical value = 3.84384).

	POSITIVE KEYWORDS	NEGATIVE KEYWORDS
EXPERIMENTAL corpus	cooperation common interest politeness avoiding confrontation	lack of cooperation personal interest confrontation informality
CONTROL corpus	lack of cooperation personal interest confrontation informality	cooperation common interest politeness avoiding confrontation

Table 5: Comparison of the final corpus with the initial corpus

All final simulations were more effectively structured than the initial ones. They included more business meeting genre specific language functions. In the experimental groups, they were also sequenced more logically. The students in the experimental group were more aware of the genre specific language functions than control group students, and consequently used them more often than the control group (218 vs. 173). The lack of awareness of genre specific language functions in the control group resulted in the incorrect use and less frequent use of certain genre specific language functions (compare Tables 6 and 7). In the initial simulations (I), 8 to 14 genre-specific language functions were identified for the experimental group (I1–I8), and 5 to 15 for the control group (I9–I16). In the final simulations (F), 14 to 20 genre specific

FUNCTION	I1	F1	I2	F2	I3	F3	I4	F4	I5	F5	I6	F6	I7	F7	I8	F8	TOTAL
1.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
1.2	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	X	12
1.3	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	14
1.4	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	-	10
1.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.6	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	7
1.7	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	7
1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	1
1.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
1.10	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	8
1.11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	13
1.12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	1
1.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	1
1.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
1.15	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	14
2.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
2.3	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	11
2.22	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
2.39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2.40	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	7
2.41	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	12
2.42	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	10
2.43	X	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	X	8
3.1	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	12
3.2	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	12
3.3	-	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	9
I / F	13	15	14	17	9	16	9	16	14	15	8	14	14	20	8	16	89/129
I +F	28		31		25		25		29		22		34		24		218
F – I		2		3		7		7		1		6		6		8	40

Table 6: The experimental group: genre specific language functions

language functions were identified for the experimental group (F1–F8); and 8 to 17 for the control groups (F9–F16). In the final simulations of the experimental group genre specific language functions were present more often than in the control groups (129 times vs. 99 times) (compare Tables 6 and 7). Some genre specific language functions were present in all simulations. In all experimental and control groups the chair opened the meeting, introduced the agenda, introduced the first item on the agenda, asked the participants for their opinion and directed the discussion. In all simulations, there was progress in some genre-specific language functions, for example when the chair introduced the agenda of the meeting, but a decline in many others, for example giving apologies of absence, informing about the next meeting and closing the meeting (compare Tables 6 and 7). The experimental groups made more progress than the control groups as they used more genre-specific language functions (40 vs. 25) in the appropriate order. In comparison with the initial simulations, some control groups digressed, while experimental groups all showed progress in the use of genre-specific language functions. The range of progress of individual experimental groups was lower than in control groups (from 1 to 8 per group, from –4 to 11 per group, respectively); however, all experimental groups showed progress, while two control groups even deteriorated in the use of genre-specific language functions. The specific structure of the meeting (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1996, p. 269; Koester, 2010, p. 26) was only established in the experimental group simulations, where progress was made in the use of genre specific language functions.

FUNCTION	I9	F9	I10	F10	I11	F11	I12	F12	I13	F13	I14	F14	I15	F15	I16	F16	TOTAL
1.1	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
1.2	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	4
1.3	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	13
1.4	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	10
1.5	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	5
1.6	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	2
1.7	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	2
1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
1.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
1.10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	2
1.11	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	13
1.12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	1
1.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
1.15	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	12
2.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
2.3	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	14
2.22	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	X	5
2.39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2.40	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	9
2.41	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	10
2.42	-	X	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	X	9
2.43	X	X	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	X	X	8
3.1	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	10
3.2	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	X	7
3.3	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	5
I / F	10	15	10	8	8	11	5	13	8	11	12	13	15	11	6	17	74/99
I + F	25		18		19		18		19		25		26		23		173
F – I		5		-2		3		8		3		1		–4		11	25

Table 7: The control group: genre specific language functions

Nevertheless, this hasn't been established for the control group simulations, where some groups even digressed. The study showed how the awareness of BE students of the specifics of the business meetings genre developed with support of corrective feedback for a broader understanding of the professional business code (Albi, Vidal Lopez, 2011, p. 3). It can therefore be concluded that corrective feedback facilitated the correct and frequent use of genre-specific pragmatic elements of FLCC.

In all of the final simulations there was also a greater variety of business meeting genre-non-specific language functions, such as the language function for expressing views and making suggestions. Whilst in the initial simulations only the chair of the meeting made suggestions (S1) with the group members either accepting them passively or refusing them directly, in the final simulations, both groups explained and expressed their views better, repeatedly signalled they were following the debate and frequently checked their understanding. They made suggestions more actively and expressed disagreement more appropriately (see Example 1[11]).

Example 1: Expressing the views and suggestions (initial and final corpora)

Initial experimental group:

S1   Of course, this programme Group Communication, I think that is really good idea and I have also arranged for sports and social events to take place in all three locations and this should really work great on our relations.

S5   Ok.

Initial control group:

S1   But that's funny because in a way you don't want to cooperate and you think you're better than us or you have the know-how, but you expect us to pay.

S5   Yes.

Final experimental group:

S4   May I interrupt? I'm afraid I don't agree with that on the whole. I believe that English is the second language in Italy, in Slovenia, in Croatia. So, in my opinion there should be the … English language … the second language in Italy, too.

S2   Sure, I agree up to a point, but English is so hard, and we always spoke Italian. So, there is no problem. Why would we change it now?

---

11 Students' errors were not corrected.

Final control group:

S6   I disagree with that statement, because I think that improving your English is vital for Novara plant and improving the climate in it.

S1   Ok. Great. So, that's I think … maybe these are great solutions.

There were numerous differences between the experimental and control group corpora. Whilst students of the final experimental groups tactfully expressed wishes, students of the control groups unwittingly and inappropriately expressed demands and even threats. In the final experimental groups there was agreement and partial agreement, whilst there was strong disagreement in the final control groups (see Example 2).

Example 2: Expressing wishes and demands; agreement and disagreement (final experimental and control corpora)

Final experimental group:

S2   It seems to me that I can talk to our staff and let them know about this and yes, I can discuss with them.

S1   What would be an affection on this group? Do you think this group would bring better that we cooperate, better corporation…I mean that… Do you think that our cooperation would improve?

S3   Yes, definitely. Yes. Because people will know each other more like in private way, so that they can discuss even personal things and not just things that matter to the company. So, maybe this could be good. Maybe Italians could present to us their culture even more, because as you know… Italians usually eat like pasta and we don't. So, maybe this would be a good thing to discuss with them. What do you think?

Final control group:

S1   Are you suggesting that we might …that we should consider other people for your position?

S2   No, I consider…We…may…We can maybe…

S6   … we could arrange … I don't know, fourteen-day reports, twice a month would be

S2   … enough. It's not weekly, it's not monthly. It's something in the middle.

Only in the final experimental groups was there hesitation where students were searching for more appropriate and more polite expressions to avoid confrontation. This resulted in a more polite interaction in the experimental groups (see Example 3).

Example 3: Avoiding confrontation (final experimental corpus)

S1   Agree is too hard a world…word, too hard for us. We may say that we will make a proposition to our, to our top management that there has been a…maybe…we

discovered a new solution, but we can't force our workers to...into learning two additional maybe three additional new languages. This is just not an option for us. Maybe we can scan our departments and maybe we'll find someone who already speaks Italian, Croatian or on your part, Slovenian, and maybe we should put them in charge of communicating with our other plants. So, this is one solution we have come up with

Only in the final experimental groups' simulations did students know how to interrupt the discussion politely, assume the role of the speaker tactfully, develop the topic logically and structure their discourse appropriately (see Example 4).

Example 4: Interrupting and structuring (final experimental and control corpora)

Final experimental groups:

S5   And if I may interrupt, as my colleague said previously, atmosphere is not delightful, aaa...because you don't know what we have to cope with. We have to cope with ... high phone and petrol expenses and it's not easy, you know. Correct me if I am wrong, but I heard...

Final control groups:

S5   But we already said our workers to learn English language.

S1   I think this is solved already, so.

S4   I am sorry, but I didn't hear you.

Due to the poor structure of their simulations, the control group students often did not know when or how to react. Turn stealing was frequent and consequently there was overlapping speech and impolite interaction. The overlapping speech (...) was not evidence of members finishing each other's lines enthusiastically, as was the case in the experimental groups, but rather evidence of conflict (see Example 5). The students were unable to tell when it was their turn to speak.

Example 5: Overlapping speech (final experimental and control corpora)

Final experimental groups:

S1   Because aaa...the... the thing is that Marbi is still their...

S3   ...subsidiary...

S1   ...still their subsidiary since the takeover, right? So,...

Final control groups:

S5   But older ...

S1   ...That's a good idea.

S5   …people are…They don't want to learn. Just…

S2   …but maybe if they are…

S5   …ask my father. He don't want to learn now anything. He just works and…

S2   …but our company doesn't have only old people. Maybe the young would want …are motivated and like to be…

5. Discussion

The main aim of the present research was to explore how FLCC for business meetings is developed using business meeting simulations to effectively integrate them into BE programmes. Corpus analysis and qualitative analysis of FLCC elements were used to explore their use as a teaching tool in a higher education setting. The main finding of the study is that whilst repeated business meeting simulation practice may facilitate a certain concrete experience for experiential learning even without a teacher's corrective feedback, practice without corrective feedback does not facilitate the correct and comprehensive development of FLCC.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework above, within the foreign language teaching research community, several studies have indicated the positive effects of corrective feedback integration on language performance (Chandler, 2003; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Ellis, R., 2005; Lyster, 1994; Mcdonough, 2004; Polio, 2012; Rei, 2013; Savignone, 1991) whilst others have not (Long, 1996; Samuda, 2001; Trahey & White, 1993; Truscott, 1996). While these studies focused on language performance in general English, the present study explored language performance in an ESP setting, i.e. the development of FLCC in BE specifically.

Research results have shown that FLCC developed differently with instruction integrating corrective feedback in the experimental groups and without it in the control groups. Corpus analysis and qualitative analysis of FLCC elements showed that in the experimental groups all parameters in business meeting simulations improved with the teacher's corrective feedback, i.e. fluency, accuracy, sophistication, control, range, length and variety in interaction (cf. Chandler, 2003; Merrill, 2013; Polio, 2012). In the control groups, however, only the quantity of business meeting genre-specific and non-specific language functions increased. Moreover, the results show that whilst linguistic FLCC elements developed in both groups, with the experimental groups progressing faster and better in all groups, the sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements did not. In the control groups, in which corrective feedback was not provided, they only developed partially in some groups and incorrectly in most groups.

Given that the results of the study show that corrective feedback instruction in business meeting simulations yielded the desired results, it would seem reasonable to further focus on various specific aspects of corrective feedback instruction in different business meeting simulation settings (e.g. in-company training, language schools, tertiary education; locally and internationally) to see how language learning is best enhanced. These results also bring into question the organisational aspects of communicative language teaching in a higher education setting. They indicate the need for corrective feedback which has significant implications for

all ESP settings, e.g. e-learning, where corrective feedback needs to be integrated into the programme to facilitate the correct development of students' FLCC.

Additionally, they may have several implications for CLIL classes in tertiary education for a BE teacher, particularly organisational, e.g. in specialised business meeting simulations modules which allow for highly flexible settings. In a broader perspective, team-teaching across various subject areas with BE teachers would be another option to better cater to the development of students' FLCC. In conclusion, these results indicate the need for BE teachers to more carefully facilitate business case simulations in terms of preparation (of the students and the materials used), how they are integrated into the BE class and the BE programme in general and finally in terms of their dissemination. Without corrective feedback, FLCC may develop incorrectly; therefore a teacher's involvement in all phases of a business meeting simulation is essential to improve BE students' performance for their target professional environment. Only by doing so will a teacher facilitate a significantly easier integration of BE students into the international business environment using business meeting simulations.

Several limitations of this study can be identified. The first one is the amount of time dedicated to business meeting simulation instruction. The total language course was limited to sixty hours and the time dedicated to business meeting simulations was deducted from this time. In my opinion, the organization of a more extensive separate module would possibly give a more long-term perspective of the results. The second is the size of the experimental and control groups and consequently the size of SAPS corpus. The study was conducted among 16 groups of third-year students who were taught by the same teacher, which produced a rather modest sample of 96 participants and consequently a 56, 966-word corpus. The ability to generalize the findings is thus somewhat limited.

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