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The emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language in multinational teams

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St Mary's
University
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London

**THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF MIXED PROFICIENCY LEVELS
IN THE CORPORATE LANGUAGE IN MULTINATIONAL TEAMS**

THESIS SUBMITTED BY:

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FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS, LAW AND SOCIETY

ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY, LONDON

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Abstract

Many businesses are becoming increasingly complex and reliant on the performance of their multinational teams. Large corporations generally assume that the invocation of a language mandate to share information with subsidiaries resolves all communication issues. The requirement to speak a foreign language with other team members can give rise to misunderstandings and barriers to knowledge sharing. Language diversity in a work environment triggers significant emotional challenges. Research has identified a form of circumstantial anxiety reaction, explicitly resulting from communication in a non-native tongue, contributing to the formation of a language barrier and constituting a threat to team collaboration.

This study investigates the impact of language-induced emotions in multinational teams resulting from a corporate language mandate. It does this through two qualitative studies. It identifies significant problems in communication between managers with different mother tongues and suggests effective strategies to resolve them. In contrast to previous studies focusing on industry sectors with lower reported proficiency levels, this study focuses on the consultancy services sector, which has the highest reported proficiency level. The research shows that even in the sector with the highest reported linguistic proficiency level, multilingual teams still experience collaborative difficulties caused by language differences and associated emotions. However, this study also suggests effective ways to mitigate these problems.

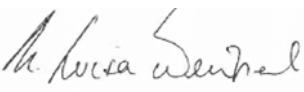
The first qualitative study uses semi-structured interviews with two global teams from two multinational corporations in Information Technology consultancy services. The analysis identifies several issues including loss of information, ambiguity over equivalence of meaning, variability in sociolinguistic competence as well as problems of adjustment to cultural norms. The second study takes the form of a focus group, comprising members of several global teams from different multinational corporations from the consultancy services sector, and endorses the issues identified in the first study with an interesting shift in emphasis caused by the group dynamic. The research also identified several lingua-culturally adaptive behavioural strategies relating to international leadership, including the need for multinational team leaders to become more conscious of and reflect on the emotional impact of mixed proficiency level speakers of the corporate language in their teams. Finally, this study suggests effective ways for multinational team leaders to leverage the linguistic and cultural diversity of their team members to produce a more productive team environment.

Declaration of originality

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List of Abbreviations

BELF	Business English as a foreign language
CA	Conversation Analysis
ELF	English as a foreign language
IB	International Business
L1	Native language / Mother tongue
L2	Second language
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MNT	Multinational Team
NNS(s)	Non-native Speaker(s)
NS(s)	Native Speaker(s)
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
WSEE	World Standard Spoken English

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The rationale of the study

Language based research as a legitimate area of research within international business (IB) has been driven forward over the last few years by scholars interested in the area of how language is managed within multilingual business environments. Indeed, Tietze and Piekkari (2020) describe the status of inquiry as showing “increasing institutionalisation of networks as well as the beginnings of interdisciplinary work between international business, institutional scholarship, organisational studies, and translation studies” (p. 184).

The reasons for this are as follows. In a global environment, characterised by ambiguity and complexity, organisations are becoming increasingly diverse in relation to culture and language. The requirement to interact in a corporate language, most often English, highlights the language diversity of the employees. The social context in which groups and teams operate makes the understanding of intercultural interaction a vital prerequisite for success.

When comparing nationally based, mono-cultural teams with MNTs, both types of teams face similar procedural and interpersonal challenges (Behfar, Kern and Brett, 2006). However, the distinction of a MNT, as defined by Snow et al. (1996) is, “a multinational team, in contrast to teams from a single culture, entails differences among members in language, interpersonal styles, and a host of other factors. Such differences can create a balance (cohesion and unity) or an imbalance (subgroup dominance, member exclusion, and other undesirable outcomes), depending on how they are handled” (p. 32).

The researcher initially became curious about language sensitive issues in this environment through her own observances of MNTs and their leaders. During a 25-year career as an international HR professional working in MNCs, the researcher recognised a distinct deficiency in the global team leadership skills repertoire related to managing language diversity, and its potential to impact emotions and motivation. Leaders also look to HR to help provide strategies to mitigate the issues, such as ways to manage ambiguous communication and diminish resentment of the corporate language policy. At the time, it was apparent that little scholarly research was channelled in the direction of language sensitive studies in international business (IB) and hence the motivation arose to research and expand knowledge of this area. Research into global leadership competences, at the time, constituted a limited focus on growing a global mindset, cultural skills and intercultural competencies (Bird et al. 2010), drawing on the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2001). Whilst these

attributes continue to be of value, the impact of language diversity in the context of globalised collaboration and the processes that multilingual employees undergo to speak in a foreign language in the IB context requires further scrutiny (Janssens and Steyaert, 2014).

Of course, with the status that English has achieved as a global language, discussed in Chapter 2, there is no question of its significance for organisations to be able to respond and comply with swiftly changing market conditions. Advances in technology and the increasing pace of globalisation compel multinational corporations (MNCs) to rely increasingly on the collaboration of MNTs around the world (Kassis-Henderson, 2005). These teams operate virtually across time zones and are frequently required to use a common language. However, under closer examination, how good is their communication and how does this language mandate impact their emotions? Emotions act as key drivers for motivation by prompting bursts of energy to elicit action (Izzard, 1993). It should also be noted that both motivation and emotion stem from the same Latin root 'movere', meaning to move.

Language and communication play fundamental roles in business, but organisations may be unaware of their importance (Darics and Koller, 2018). The mandate of a global language can bring great success to an organisation when communication is well-managed (Neeley, 2015). It conjures up another signal of convergence or the universalist approach as organisations strive for the 'holy grail' in implementing a "one-size fits all" approach in managing their global operations, not only through common management policies, but also in a worldwide language mandate (Wright and McMahan, 1992).

At the same time, such an approach brings with it significant challenges because it ignores the human response in the form of emotions to imposed language standardisation (Wang et al., 2020). In MNTs, this response can be further distilled, for if proficiency levels in the corporate language are unequally distributed among team members, barriers to communication can arise, triggering team conflicts and misunderstandings (Paunova, 2017), thereby creating obstacles for effective teambuilding and cooperation (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2012).

Research into language diversity and language barriers in MNTs has grown enormously over the last few years and the key debates, thus far, focus primarily on language-induced power distortions (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017), trust issues (Kassis-Henderson, 2005, Tenzer and Pudelko, 2014), social identity formation (Hinds, Neeley and Cramton, 2012), obstacles to knowledge-sharing (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2012; Aichhorn and Puck, 2017) and emotional conflict. Language diversity in MNTs presents particular emotional challenges, because non-native speakers (NNS) of the corporate language tend to feel apprehensive, uncomfortable and tongue-tied (Hinds, Neeley and Cramton, 2012), sense a loss of status (Neeley, 2013), face pessimistic evaluations (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015), experience high levels of stress and helplessness (Aichhorn and Puck, 2017) and frustration (Vigier and

Spencer Oatey, 2018). These studies point to several causes of collaborative failure owing to language sensitive issues culminating in emotional issues. The participants of these studies were drawn from industry sectors, with lower proficiency levels in the corporate language (EF Proficiency Index, 2016), and whilst raising awareness, offer little in relation to remedy strategies to improve collaborative communication across language barriers.

This study examines the impact of an invocation of a corporate language on MNT communication on the emotions of team members and team leaders within one of the highest proficiency level sectors – Information Technology. This study illustrates how emotions are elicited even when team members have advanced levels of fluency. By highlighting the significance of speaker meaning through cross-cultural pragmatics, it makes the case for cross-lingual sensitivity when navigating the differences and similarities in the language behaviour of people when they come together to communicate in one language. It builds on other studies in the field, highlighting the challenges faced by leaders, managing a linguistically and culturally diverse workforce, but also presents a model that promotes reshaping MNT strategy to mitigate such issues by drawing on cultural intelligence and examining the use of cross-lingual sensitivity.

1.2 An interdisciplinary approach

This thesis is interdisciplinary and whilst the context is firmly based in the management sphere, it also draws on the disciplines of linguistics and psychology to bring a deeper understanding to a complex problem. The integration of approaches from linguistics and psychology shed new light on the human responses to working with a language mandate because challenges encountered by individuals, no matter in what environment, rarely observe disciplinary boundaries (Carr, Loucks and Blöschl, 2018). By introducing knowledge and understanding from other disciplines, a deeper perspective is achieved into the integrated nature of the challenges experienced by MNT members.

1.3 Significance of the study

Employers often refer to the importance of teamwork and the skills to collaborate effectively, particularly in the context of globally dispersed, multilingual teams (Zander and Butler, 2010). In today's knowledge-driven world, most work is done in teams. Teams are formed to co-create process and transfer knowledge to wherever it is required across the global reach of the organisation. Globalised corporations rely particularly on MNTs to manage their diversity effectively, harnessing the expertise of their globally dispersed operations and thereby leverage innovation.

For many years, international management studies focused on the impact of cross-cultural collaboration. Only in the last two decades have they focused on the issue of language sensitive

studies in IB. Language plays a vital part in facilitating collaboration and thought transference, knowledge sharing and understanding. The corporate language mandate provides a practical instrument for communication among group members for whom some it is their native language and others for whom it represents a daily struggle to voice their contribution, whilst collectively all will be striving for a common corporate goal. This asymmetric linguistic competence, coupled with cultural differences, not only provokes detrimental working conditions for teams but also proves a particularly acute leadership challenge, as is borne out by this study. Inefficiencies relating to language take the form of loss of information, misunderstandings, disruption of collaborative process, to name but a few (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012). Although management studies have only recently taken a 'linguistic turn' (Tietze 2008, p. 2), much of the literature so far has focused on the identification of issues and less on how these issues can be mitigated (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2017).

This study identifies how negative emotions can be triggered through language barriers and also how MNT leaders can successfully diminish the potentially detrimental effects of cross-lingual differences. The research also contributes to the literature of MNT leadership by not only investigating the nature of the challenges faced in working with a multilingual group environment but also advances the knowledge of how individuals handle emotions caused by language barriers and additionally provides an extensive exploration of effective leadership strategies and outcomes.

As will be expanded further in this study, many of the challenges are not simply resolved by increased proficiency levels but frequently amplified by contextual cues, meaning that many utterances cannot be interpreted literally and are often contingent on context, as will be discussed further in Section 3.3.3 of Chapter 3. The context of language assumes a common ground created on the basis of the interlocutor and the listener's previous linguistic experience (Minakova and Gural, 2015). Indeed, Kecskes (2008) posits that linguistic and culturally shared knowledge may be accompanied by socially embedded experiences necessary to interpret the linguistic contribution. To illustrate the issue of foreignness at first hand, Brannen (2004) illuminates the role of language in a cross-border transfer of organisational assets and illustrates the effects of social semiotic context on foreignness and strategic fit. The author describes the calamitous experiences of Walt Disney company's attempts to transpose blindly their assets that had been successful in one culture into another culture, namely in France.

One further example illustrating contextual difference of language following a merger between AMD Inc. and Fujitsu, Japan which formed Spansion Limited. In North America, the term "bonus" is commonly understood to mean an additional discretionary payment. However, in Japan a bonus (*bonasu* in Japanese) is generally regarded as an integral part of a Japanese remuneration scheme, negotiated by unions, to provide approximately two months' salary twice a year and is formally set

out in a Japanese employee's compensation package. In this way, Spansion's efforts fell apart as a result of language misalignment, when attempting to make cost savings during a market downturn in the flash memory market of 2002 (Brannen and Mughan, 2018).

As organisations try to deploy their strategic concepts set out the language in which they were originally conceived, they need to be agile in being able to associate and distinguish meaning across contexts, in recognising what Brannen refers to as "recontextualisation" (Brannen, 2004).

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

In light of the research motivation, this study aims to:

- 1) Assess the key triggers and contexts that elicit emotions for both NSs and NNSs in MNTs when collaborating in the corporate language and
- 2) To investigate strategies to mitigate the issues.

To achieve these aims, the following objectives need to be met:

1. By gathering MNT members' subjective perceptions of their cross-lingual collaborative communications, the researcher will determine what the key emotional triggers are and in what contexts they arise to answer Research Question One.
2. This process of data gathering will require an inductive and explorative examination of the language-induced effects on emotions of MNT members collaborating in a corporate language to be conducted. The research participants will also be asked if they recommend any strategies to mitigate any issues experienced to contribute in answering Research Questions One and Two.
3. The study will require a qualitative approach, using two research methods: **semi-structured interviews** with MNT leaders and their members and a **focus group**. Both the semi-structured interviews and focus group will be transcribed and analysed thematically to identify codes, patterns and the key themes contributing to answering Research Questions One and Two.
4. On completion of the second study, the key themes will be synthesised against the results of the first study to determine any differences or whether saturation has been reached. The results will be compared and evaluated.
5. The results of existing studies as well as linguistic and psychological theory will also be discussed to explain ambiguities and background to speaker meaning in order to raise awareness of strategies that a leader might enact in a multilingual setting to improve collaboration and so answering both Research Questions One and Two.

1.5 Research questions

After careful examination of the results of studies conducted thus far as well as the researcher's personal experience, the importance of this study is clear. Effective collaboration in MNTs requires additional leadership capabilities and hence an investigation is necessary to understand firstly whether greater linguistic proficiency in the corporate language elicits the same or similar emotional responses in team collaboration and, if so, what are the emotional triggers. Secondly, bearing in mind the uncoupling of culture from language in several previous studies, the impact of cross-cultural speaker meaning is also investigated. Hence, this study breaks down the overall research question into two, more specific research questions. The first is:

1. How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifest itself in MNTs?

The identification of critical incidents experienced, and actions taken by the MNT members and leaders, will increase the understanding of other collaborative issues encountered and provide greater contextual depth. Strategies, suggested by the respondents to mitigate these issues will also be of benefit to the study. This leads to the second research question:

2. What potential issues are the team leaders and team members aware of, and what strategies do they recommend?

1.6 Research strategy, Epistemological Position and Methodology

In view of the lack of scholarly research into this particular area, an inductive qualitative research approach was adopted. Two research studies were undertaken in the form of semi-structured interviews with multinational global team members from two MNCs in the Information Technology sector and a focus group made up of different MNT members from the same sector. The thesis adopts a critical realist perspective in that it recognises the difference between the "real" world and the "observable" world whilst at the same time distinguishing the parts played by perception and cognition (Fletcher, 2016). On this basis, reality exists detached from human perceptions, theories and constructions, and what we understand of the world is constructed from our own perspectives and experiences and through what is "observable" (Bhaskar, 1998). Some scholars argue that critical realism provides a "third way", reaching beyond the constraints of positivism and interpretivism (Bergin et al, 2008). Furthermore, as claimed by Bhaskar and Danermark (2006), "critical realism is [...] the ontologically least restrictive perspective, insofar as it is maximally inclusive as to causally relevant levels of reality and additionally maximally inclusive insofar as it can accommodate the insights of other metatheoretical perspectives." (p. 294).

This flexibility in presenting a perspective is useful in this study as the data gathered from semi-structured interviews and a focus group, includes observations of events and opinions in relation to how the corporate language mandate impacts how they feel in terms of collaboration and communication, which are then interpreted through the prism of critical realism.

1.7 The structure of the study

This study investigates the impact of speaking and collaborating in a common corporate language as a member of MNT with particular emphasis on what triggers emotional responses, as well as the specific issues MNT members encounter in their cross-border communication. The study also explores measures and strategies to mitigate and minimise negative emotional responses to create a more productive team climate. The study employs the term multinational team (MNT) and in so doing includes the concept of virtual working in a dispersed, global team framework. Indeed, MNTs, located across the globe, work across temporal and spatial boundaries, connected through technology and without face-to-face interaction to achieve common organisational goals (Zander, Mockaitis and Butler, 2012).

Chapter 2 sets out an assessment of the existing IB literature relating to the emotional impact of language barriers. It examines indications that a lack of proficiency in the corporate language can constrain communication (Rogerson-Revell, 2007), create discomfort for both native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) of the corporate language (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012) and interrupt knowledge transfer (Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman, 2005, 2007; Buckley, Carter, Clegg, and Tan, 2005; Mäkela, Kalla, and Piekkari, 2007; Welch and Welch, 2008).

Chapter 3 explores the theory and essence of language with particular emphasis on how language is used to convey meaning. In view of the fundamental importance of language and communication to international business, this study includes a review of the nature of language, taking stock of certain arenas of language use to highlight the choices made by individuals to convey thought through the language lens. The chapter covers several key aspects of language relevant to this study: the power to influence through the rules of conversational turn-taking, second language acquisition, pragmatics and, in particular, cross-cultural pragmatics, exploring the significance of speaker intention and listener expectation against context. The constituents of this encounter with linguistics all contribute to the overall circumstances affecting MNT communication. In concluding Chapter 3, an explanatory paragraph leads into the theoretical framework which summarises the literature to date and sets out the basis for the research study.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology and research design for the two research studies. Study One is in the form of semi-structured interviews with members of two MNTs and Study Two is a focus group with members of different MNTs from the same sector as Study One. The research philosophy is presented. Following a review of different research paradigms and approaches, the final choice of research paradigm and approach for both studies are justified. Then, the choice of research design and use of thematic analysis is presented, supported by the questionnaire compilation for the semi-structured interviews in Study One as well as the role of the focus group approach in Study Two, the pilot study and selection of research participants. Lastly, this chapter considers the validity issues and ethical considerations in the conduct of the Studies One and Two.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the research findings from the semi-structured interviews of Study One in relation to Research Question One, exploring the emotional impact of working with mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language. The final results of the thematic analysis are presented with thematic maps. The key themes and sub-themes are then narrated, illustrating the results and explaining the emotions that emanate from three key themes resulting from collaboration across different proficiency levels in the corporate language.

Chapter 6 presents the research findings from the semi-structured interviews of Study One in relation to Research Question Two, capturing potential issues that the team leaders and team members are aware of and the strategies, recommended by the participants to alleviate these issues. Again, the final results are presented in the form of thematic maps.

Chapter 7 brings together the results relating to Research Questions One and Two from the semi-structured interviews of Study One. It explores in depth both the critical incidents described by the research participants to reveal the key triggers for emotional responses in collaboration across language barriers in MNTs as well as the issues hidden in cross-border collaboration and probes the suggested strategies by the participants.

Chapter 8 presents the results and discussion of Study Two. In view of the richness of the research results of Study One, a second study in the form of a focus group was undertaken to triangulate the results of Study One, thus providing an additional collective dimension to the thoughts and perceptions of the research results of Study One. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the research results of Studies One and Two and an engrossed version of the theoretical framework, summarising the literature reviewed with links to the key themes identified in the study. Also included are key findings tables highlighting the contribution to theory and its impact on leadership.

Chapter 9 presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study as a whole. The research findings, including the key themes and suggested strategies are set out. The reader's attention is drawn to the study's theoretical and managerial significance and important contributions to leadership development initiatives. Limitations to the study are explained and recommendations for future research presented as well as final thoughts for consideration.

Chapter 2: The vulnerability of collaborative dynamics against the corporate language mandate - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

English has become crucial for professional success within the globalized world, and has become indispensable for much cross-border activity communication. Language gives meaning to what happens within organisations (Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014). Sharing knowledge, networking and building relationships are all essential challenges for most companies and they are all dependent on how language is used (Holden, 2002, cited in Welch and Welch, 2020).

This review of existing language-sensitive studies highlights the increasing level of research interest into language diversity in multinational teams. It focuses primarily on the few studies that have directly or indirectly recognised the impact of language diversity on the emotions of multinational team members and the consequences. This is important because global organisations require these teams to perform at their best (Butler, 2011) by enjoying the rewards of diversity whilst avoiding its pitfalls (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt and Jonsen, 2010).

2.1.1 The adoption of a corporate language

For almost three decades, English has been the corporate language of cross-border organisations yet research into the complex area of language strategies in multinational organisations has, until recently, been relatively neglected (Neeley 2017). It has become the consensus that since English is generally assumed to be the language of IB, the issue of language barriers has been removed (Tietze and Dick, 2013; Youssef and Luthans, 2012). Furthermore, the decision to adopt English as the “common” corporate language is often made by senior managers of organizations who already have a strong command of the language and have attended Anglo-Saxon biased MBA programmes and represent the “transnational elite” from the Headquarters of English-speaking multinational organizations. These leaders often pay little attention to their language strategies, in the belief that “one size fits all”, a typical example of the universalist paradigm in international human resource management of how human resources are managed strategically within MNCs according to a one-country model (Wright and McMahan, 1992). As observed by Steyaert et al. (2011 p. 271), language standardisation ‘is an administration management tool that helps global operations proceed efficiently’. Hence, it is often found that unsupported multilingualism in exchanging information cross-border can lead to countless problems, critical exchanges and misunderstandings, culminating in lengthy discussion, lost revenues that affect the bottom line (Neeley and Kaplan 2014). The effects of

this illusion when English is used for cross-border communication are highlighted in a recently published book focused on communication strategies of the Chinese and French businesses. Tréguer-Felten (2018) describes how speakers of “good” English fail in their communication because of their own culturally-embedded communication strategies (an example of cross-cultural pragmatics - see Chapter 3, §3.3.3). In this sense English becomes a synthetic outer wrapper of culturally-led acts of communication. The consequence of proper communication becomes an illusion of true success. For many years, the study of language-sensitive research in International Business (IB) was enveloped in the domain of cross-cultural studies (Piekkari et al., 2014). Such scholars as Hall (1959) suggest that those without a basic knowledge of a foreign language can communicate efficiently if they simply grasp some of the basic cultural assumptions and non-verbal cues that accompany conversation. Naturally, at that point, the notion of a “silent language” was well received by mono-lingual English speakers in the 1960s and 1970s (Piekkari and Westney, 2017, cited in Tietze and Piekkari, 2020).

When language-sensitive research first arose in the field of IB, the predominant approach was to uncouple culture from language and place a spotlight on language alone (Brannen et al., 2014). Since then, counter arguments have presented a persuasive case for their re-coupling (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Neeley, 2017).

All organisations need to find a way of dealing with the difficulties of language barriers when expanding into countries where the host country language differs from that of the home country. It is therefore surprising that the area of language diversity in IB has only come to the fore over the last three decades and continues to develop as a field of enquiry (Tietze and Piekkari, 2020). It has been alluded to as “the most neglected field in management” (Reeves and Wright, 1996) or “the forgotten factor” (Marschan, Welch and Welch, 1997). Indeed, there is still much to discover about the role of language in MNCs. As Maclean (2006, p. 1377) appropriately points out, “Companies deal with language issues every day. They cope, the world continues to turn. How they do so, however, remains largely absent from the literature.” Scholars focused on the role of the corporate language and how it related to other languages. More recently, language-based research starts to examine a view of language that is more related to social practice, and this research has focused on the context of headquarters-subsidary relations (Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio, 2011; Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman, 2005; Björkman & Piekkari, 2009; Harzing and Feely, 2008; Harzing, Köster and Magner, 2011; Harzing and Pudelko, 2014; Luo and Shenkar, 2006). As highlighted in their review of recent studies, Karhunen et al. (2018), state that meaning is created by taking actions in the world and analysis needs to focus on how such actions are enabled or constrained in multilingual contexts by using languages in different ways using different groups with different aims.

2.1.2 The importance of multinational teams

Multinational teams, which include members from different countries, are an important tool to manage the complex operations of today's multinational corporations. A distinguishing feature of these teams is the diversity of mother tongues their members are speaking. Language diversity profoundly shapes team communication and consequently affects multinational team processes and outcomes (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2020).

Over the last couple of decades, multinational teams (MNTs) have become an increasingly established organisational concept and an essential facet of the global economy (Kozlowski and Bell, 2013). Furthermore, these teams, often functioning through technology, or virtually, facilitate for organisations the contribution of a variety of abilities essential to performing important activities (Wilson and Doz, 2012). However, in spite of the many benefits brought by MNTs, they also deal with substantial challenges, in particular through the different native languages spoken by the team members (Harzing, Köster and Magner, 2011). MNTs typically communicate via the corporate language, usually English, which can lead to differences in language proficiency levels between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) (Li et al., 2019).

When the pressure and strain to communicate in a foreign language is felt by employees, depending on the context, feelings bubble up and shape their capacity for action and so can impact performance. Up until now, research into the area of MNTs and how their leaders manage the emotions induced by differing proficiency levels in the corporate language is limited (Ayoko and Konrad, 2012; Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015). Those that have researched the area of IB look more at the challenges of working in a cross-cultural context and the inherent leadership challenges (House et al., 2004) or the cultural differences in how emotions are expressed (Mesquita and Albert, 2007; Wang et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Focus of literature review

As borne out in the experience of the researcher and evidenced in the limited previous studies specifically into the emotional impact of language barriers in MNTs, the act of having to speak a corporate language (for example, English) in one's daily working life elicits emotional responses (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015, Aichhorn and Puck, 2018; Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

Contrary to earlier studies in IB, which highlight anxiety and frustration as a result of lack of proficiency in the corporate language, this study builds on extant research by analysing the elicitation of emotions through cross-cultural interactional (pragmatic) meaning, drawing on the disciplines of linguistics and

psychology. It investigates how communication can only succeed when the emotional impact of different ethnographies embedded in the speakers' utterances are taken into consideration, such as the context (and issues) surrounding the interpersonal communication and the ethnocentric bias of the speaker's native language. An added factor to be examined is the proficiency level of the sector. With reference to the EF English Proficiency Index (Figure 3.2) (cited by Tran and Burman, 2016), this study examines the extent to which respondents from an industry sector with a higher proficiency level in the corporate language experience emotional responses to speaking a corporate language at work. With this in mind, the study investigates whether a knowledge of cross-cultural pragmatics and cross-lingual sensitivity should be integrated into MNT leadership skills repertoire.

The review explores existing studies focused on the emotional impact of multilingual communication as a result of a corporate language in multilingual teams and the issues experienced cross-lingually in multilingual team environments. In addition to this, it examines strategies identified to mitigate the effects of language-induced emotions collaborating in a multilingual team climate.

2.2 When language policies start to hurt – the emotional impact of diverse proficiency levels in the corporate language

2.2.1 *The parameters of emotion*

At this point, it is important to define the parameters of emotion that will be referred to in this study. Given the lack of research into emotions in the context of IB, studies have also been investigated from psychological sources.

Emotion is “a mental state of action readiness that arises from cognitive appraisal of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; and is often expressed physically” (Bagozzi et al., 1999, p. 184). This definition highlights the property of emotions as a group of synchronised symptoms involved in multi-component changes reacting to a relevant event (Scherer, 2005). Depending on the event that triggers them, the components of an emotion consist of a) evaluation of a situation, b) somatic symptom, c) facial and vocal expression, d) motivation to take certain action and e) subjective feeling or the awareness of bodily sensation described by the individual (Lazarus, 1991).

Emotions are created through context (Barrett et al., 2007; Mesquita and Leu, 2007). Instead of defining emotions as properties of the mind, emotions should be situated at the interface between mind and context and are both navigated and informed by social context. Cross-cultural research into emotions suggests that emotions align closely with cultural models of self and relationships and

therefore emotional draws from cultural models in creating reality (Wierzbicka, 1999). Therefore, by incorporating social context into the definition, emotion is not separate from culture but aligned with it (Mesquita, 2007).

The essential dimensions that shape emotion are universal, but the assessment focus varies culturally (Mesquita and Ellsworth, 2001). For example, in many Western countries where people strive for individual identity, the behavioural focus is aligned towards personal pleasantness (Kitayama, Markus, and Kurokawa, 2000), self-serving attribution (Imada and Ellsworth, 2011), and positioning oneself to influence others (Tsai et al., 2007), thus giving rise to inescapable self-focused emotions (Eid and Diener, 2001; Kitayama, Mesquita, and Karasawa, 2006; Tsai, Knutson, and Fung, 2006). On the other hand, in many Asian countries where inter-reliant selfhood is prevalent, the implicit fostered appraisal tendency is predisposed to projecting mutual harmony, modesty and readiness to adjust to others, leading to a “hyper-cognized” other-focused emotion with low activation (Niiya et al., 2006; Miyamoto and Ma, 2011; Sims and Tsai, 2015, as cited in Wang et al., 2020). For example, Imada and Ellsworth (2011) found that Americans are more likely to attribute success to their own ability and demonstrate pride and satisfaction in their individual achievements. However, in Japan or Korea, individuals would credit comparable successes to others or circumstances. Likewise, Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, and Norasakkunkit, (1997) observed that while feeling good is frequently emphasised in the USA as a consequence of asserting individual thoughts, ability and personality, shame is often promoted in Japan to motivate individuals to align with societal standards. These general principles can be applied to the cross-border communication practices in MNCs.

2.2.2 Studies to date highlighting emotions as a result of language barriers in IB

The implementation of a language policy often does not necessarily play out in the field as envisioned by the senior leadership and policy makers of a MNC (Brannen and Mughan, 2018). The emotional and psychological impact of working under a mandated language, both for a NNS and NS, can lead to negative emotions that seriously affect the collaboration of the team (Beyene, Hinds and Cramton, 2009; Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012).

Given the reliance of MNTs on knowledge sharing and teamwork, a prescriptive mode of communication can cause problems for NNSs within the team. Certain research studies have shown the disruptive potential conjured up by mixed emotions, and the reactions of team members can prove critical to the success of team operations. Firstly, such emotions have been reported to exacerbate any existing friction within the team. Given that emotions are already difficult to communicate in one’s native language, this is even more problematic in a foreign language (von

Glinow et al., 2004). Secondly, it has been found that language barriers prove emotionally divisive between NSs and NNSs of the corporate language of the organisation leading to issues of anxiety and ambiguity to name but a few (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012).

Figure 2.1 overleaf highlights the turmoil between NSs and NNSs in an organisation. Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) describe how NNSs of a corporate language are apprehensive to speak up because of their fear of not being understood, judged negatively or losing face because of their language competence. As a result, they start to avoid meeting NSs or switch to their mother tongue to say something quickly for which they cannot find the words in the corporate language (code-switching). This culminates in resentment of the corporate language policy, of more proficient speakers' influence and so these individuals form groups or silos with other NNSs and fail to contribute fully to the team effort. The NSs of the corporate language, on the other hand, lose patience with their NNS colleagues for their incompetence, deleting correspondence, walking out of meetings and demanding for translation. The negative emotions that ensue become cyclical, each side shifting the burden to the other. Hostile stereotyping and emotional conflicts are likely to follow, again increasing miscommunication, uncertainty and anxiety (Harzing and Feely, 2008). Whilst Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) promote some measures to help collaboration such as to learn and practise the corporate language, these measures seem light in overall effectiveness and unlikely to last long term when up against the pressure of IB today. Furthermore, the authors fail to analyse the underlying detail of the cultural and cross-lingual communication.

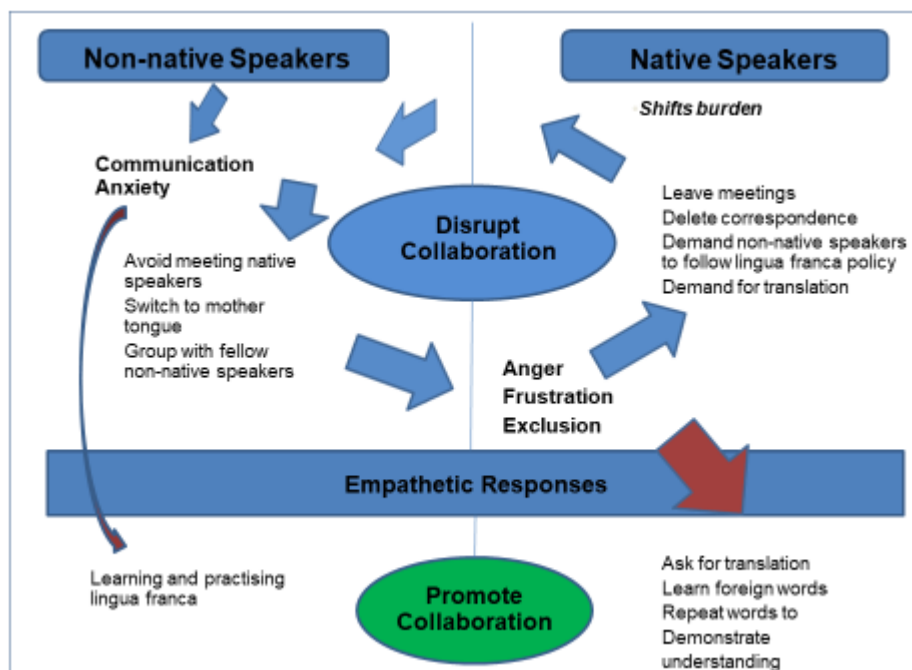


Figure 2.1: Cyclical disruption in collaboration, adapted from Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012)

Aichhorn and Puck (2018) also pinpoint some of the consequences of inherent anxiety that result from speaking a foreign language, highlighting the fear of lack of proficiency and/or lack of satisfaction with their level of communicative competence when comparing themselves to their native speaking or near native speaking colleagues. Similar findings are also highlighted in studies in classroom settings relating to foreign language students (Clement, Dornyei, and Noels, 1994, Ewald, 2007; Tóth, 2010; Young 1992). Furthermore, as highlighted by Horwitz et al., (1986 p. 128),

“Adults typically perceive themselves as reasonably intelligent, socially-adept individuals, sensitive to different socio-cultural mores. These assumptions are rarely challenged when communicating in a native language as it is usually not difficult to understand others or to make oneself understood. However, the situation when learning a foreign language stands in marked contrast. Because individual communication attempts will be evaluated according to uncertain and even unknown linguistic and sociocultural standards, second language communication entails risk and is necessarily problematic.”

In their study using respondents from the Telecoms sector in Austria, Aichhorn and Puck not only highlight the existence of negative emotions but also the consequences of foreign language anxiety in communication avoidance/withdrawal and code-switching in disrupted knowledge sharing and damaged social relations (2018). Whilst their study, highlights cognitive and emotional challenges and draws relevant comparison to studies in second language acquisition, it explains little in relation to the function of the emotions and offers few solutions to mitigate the problem and calls for further research in this area.

In their research study (2015), Tenzer and Pudelko propose a model illustrating the relationship between language barriers and negative emotions and the inherent consequences on performance outcomes. The emotion management measures outlined in their study highlight the need for leadership to re-direct emotions away from language barriers, thereby reducing the negative appraisal of language barriers. Whilst their results may provide a useful contribution to systemising language-induced emotions, the study lacks reference to speaker intention (see Chapter 3 §3.3.1) and cultural context, uncoupling the link between language and culture which casts doubt over the usability of the recommendations outside the context of the study.

In their exploration into the asymmetries in language fluency and team dynamics, Vigier and Spencer-Oatey highlight how culturally diverse teams can amplify individual differences and increase the propensity for conflict (2018). Their study investigates the relationship between language fluency and fault line subgroupings. The authors propose that where language-related fault lines in teams occur, attempts to mitigate the negative attitudes and atmosphere using rules take longer to implement and

are less likely to be successful in the first instance. Whilst this study emphasises the existence of a linguistic fault line (compared to other fault lines, such as nationality, gender, professional sector, age, experience) as a contender to form 'them and us' divisions, the study's potential to influence other project teams is rather light. It uses teams that were created for a short-term internal corporate programme and were competing against each other. Furthermore, the teams were observed only in the early stages of formation and coached and assessed by a *moniteur*. Therefore, their behaviour may differ from team participants in longer-established non-training teams.

Although not in the context of a MNT but across an entire multinational organisation, Wang et al. (2020) examine the impact of invoking a corporate language on the emotions of individuals. Using appraisal theory (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003), the authors propose that individuals feel tension as they appraise their potential to express themselves in another language and that these emotions are generated through cultural pre-disposition relating to the nature of the interaction. In this sense, the authors support the findings of Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) highlighting emotions in intercultural communication are generated not only by NSs but also by NNSs (see Figure 2.1). Whilst this study emphasises that anxiety is a natural response to intercultural communication and promotes good management of linguistically diverse employees, the context of the study is a Chinese organisation with little experience in internationalisation which negatively affected the pre-disposition of some of the participants to communicate across-cultural boundaries and thereby resulted in a lower level of intercultural interaction. In view of the context, other than awareness raising, no strategies are offered to mitigate the challenges raised by the authors.

2.2.3 The main consequences of emotions as a result of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language

Earlier studies conducted in relation to language anxiety have been conducted mainly in the context of the classroom and many of these have pinpointed negative disruptive effects (Erwald, 2007; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). The results showed that language anxiety can radically affect an individual's physical, psychological, cognitive and behavioural wellbeing. Some physical effects included perspiration, sweaty palms and feet, jittery hands, a dry mouth and an increased pulse rate. Clement et al. (1994) also described how students with language anxiety experienced diminished self-confidence and self-esteem. As described in Vigier and Spencer-Oatey (2018) clusters of team members with similar language proficiency levels can impact the performance outputs of MNTs. Their study highlights how configurations of fluent and less-fluent speakers can determine the success of team relations and practices, particularly when language fluency is aligned with demographic and professional factors, for example, gender, age, corporate tenure, and

functional sector. The alignment of such diversity components to the language-fluency component is found to create a fault line dividing the team into two subgroups – lowering collaboration. This supports the need for managers to take language proficiency into consideration as much as possible when assembling multicultural project teams.

Other studies in the context of MNTs highlighted the perception of power as a strong influence on language dynamics (Henderson, 2005). This can arise from issues relating to the dispersal of the team, i.e. the balance of teams being disproportionate in one location or the leader of the team being based at headquarters (Neeley, 2009). Where proficiency levels differ, sub-groups often form because employees prefer to speak to a colleague who shares their native tongue (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017). The authors highlight how a corporate language mandate to speak a specific corporate language can also significantly restrict communicative abilities of team leaders in meetings if their proficiency levels are not sufficient, thereby distorting their authority with the team. A similar situation was also reported in the case of technical experts imparting advice and knowledge for a time-critical team project. Again, communication networks can start to crystallise, operating independently from the official company infrastructures. "These 'parallel information networks' (Harzing, and Feely, 2008; Harzing and Pudelko, 2014; Marschan et al., 1997, cited in Tenzer and Pudelko, 2014) counteract formal authority relationships" (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017 p. 46). Furthermore, the adoption of an English language mandate has also been identified as a cause for "power-authority distortions" (Harzing and Pudelko, 2013) as it can create control affects and power imbalances (Steyaert, Ostendorp and Gaibrois, 2011) and alter the hierarchy within the organisational structure (Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2015). As highlighted by Neeley et al. (2012), it contributes to the feeling of "them" and "us" between those who are NSs and NNSs.

So far, only a handful of scholars have looked at the dynamics of power within MNTs (Méndez García and Pérez Cañado, 2005; Janssens and Brett, 2006; Hinds, Neeley and Cramton, 2014; Luring and Klitmøller 2015b). This can be seen as a more intricate area in view of the close interdependencies that exist within teams that rely on a variety of power sources to achieve productive outcomes (Greer, 2014).

As highlighted by Neeley (2013), the adoption of a corporate language can often cause NNSs to experience a loss in status, as the mandate raises the status of English speakers in an organisation (Neeley and Dumas 2016). This thinking is also supported by Berger et al.'s (1986, p.7) opinion that "highly fluent speakers usually are evaluated more highly", are "more influential in different sorts of situations", and are "more likely to achieve group dominance". The perception of status loss to linguistic power in teamwork can activate linguistic fault lines (Hinds et al., 2014) and, as mentioned

previously, Luring and Klitmøller in their (2015a) study illustrate how this can give way to communication avoidance.

Up until recently, the research in relation to power dynamics in teams had been confined to senior leadership teams (Finkelstein, 1992; Smith Houghton, Hood and Ryman, 2006). Little light had been shed on teams at middle-management level. The issue had previously been referred to as a potential source of emotional and cognitive issues in trust formation by other researchers (Feely and Harzing, 2003; Lagerström and Andersson, 2003; Neeley, 2013; Piekkari, 2006 as cited by Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017). Tenzer and Pudelko (2017), in their ground-breaking study into the influence of language barriers on power dynamics in MNTs, highlight professional expertise and formal hierarchies as power sources. Not only have they expanded this by identifying team members' perceptions of power, they research power as a moderator to show how aspects of language, when isolated, can weaken or boost power held by team leaders or professional experts. Negative emotions as a result of language barriers from their MNT study are shown to harm collaboration through communication difficulties, by impeding trust formation, knowledge sharing and reducing creativity (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017). One aspect omitted in the study by Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) is the use of conversational turn-taking (see Chapter 3, §3.5) in relation to exerting power in groups and the potential creation in-groups and out-groups through this practice (Reid and Ng, 2000). However, the research results of Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) endorse the potential for well-managed linguistic diversity when similar linguistic proficiencies exist among team members.

As multinational businesses expand and rely increasingly on global teams, coordinating their actions and adapting their behaviour in response to other team members, a shared mental model becomes a fundamental element of teamwork. There has been significant research into shared mental models as a whole, but one forgotten element is that of language and its impact on the formation of shared mental models (Hadjichristidis, Geipel, and Surian, (2017). Establishing common ground is an essential part of building trusting relationships within a globally dispersed team and an essential part of knowledge sharing (Lagerström and Andersson, 2003). Some scholars suggest the integration of small talk about non-work related matters into team meetings as well as sharing discussion about shared troubles was reported to alleviate any disagreements (Pullin, 2010; Debray, 2018). This may prove useful in some part for teams with overall high proficiency levels, however, if team members share only limited vocabulary and cannot pronounce sentences correctly in the working language, less information can be exchanged in the time allowed and misunderstandings frequently arise (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2012).

2.2.4 Human reflexes through speaking a foreign language

Language and emotions are closely coupled – in everyday conversation, selecting the right words to convey the most appropriate meaning is often challenging enough as a NS (Baider and Cislaru, 2014), but for a NNS to express feelings in a different language can be a lot more demanding (Henderson, 2005; von Glinow et al., 2004). Furthermore, differences in language competency often create a barrier and complicate communication and this then leads to misunderstandings and communication problems (Lauring and Selmer, 2010).

Such ambiguity due to misunderstandings and lack of confidence leads to team members seeking those with a similar linguistic background to themselves, creating sub-groups as a coping strategy. In a study to define the social representation of engineers in society, Kelly and Michela (1980) illuminate this further by attribution theory which helps to explain the causes for other people's behaviour. Kassis-Henderson (2005) goes a step further in describing how each speech community regard their speech forms as suitable and when these are missing or not present in communication with others with different mother tongues, they may adopt a negative approach towards members of these different speech groups. As stated by Harzing and Feely (2008), once these attitudes take hold between the members of the different groups, communication can go downhill very quickly.

2.3 Other issues coupled with diverse proficiency levels in the corporate language

The very presence of multiple languages in a working environment has the propensity to forge a "shadow structure" (Marshan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch, 1999) that not only impacts communication, trust and performance (Kassis-Henderson, 2005; Lauring and Klitmøller, 2015b; Neeley, 2013; Tenzer and Pudelko, and Harzing, 2014), but also develops into a source of power and status (Aichhorn and Puck, 2017; Gaibrois and Steyaer, 2017; Lønsmann, 2014; Hinds et al., 2014) as well as of resistance (Gaibrois, 2015) and identity (Detzen and Loehlein, 2018).

As will be expanded further in Chapter 3, language can be interpreted through a number of different lenses according to culture and values (Stadler, 2018). To date scholars have tended to focus on cultural differences in relation to team management. Whilst culture does play a role in relation to language, the specific language elements and their impact on emotions within the team have been omitted (Holden, 1987; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999, Welch et al. 2005; Harzing and Feely, 2008). This is because of the general assumption that English is accepted everywhere as the language of business. Furthermore, in view of the fact that language has been regarded in IB literature as a minor problem that can be solved by a corporate language, translators, translation software and linguistically

competent employees (Welch et al., 2005), there has been little cross-fertilisation of ideas between disciplines and this might explain the lack of research in language (Harzing and Feely, 2008).

Peltokorpi and Clausen (2010) in their study exploring the causes and consequences of cultural and linguistic barriers between the Nordic regions and Japan maintain that language and cultural values have different consequences in intercultural communication. They encapsulated this into three reasons: - firstly, a shared working language does not guarantee perfect understanding because cultural values establish themselves through language usage and communication styles tend to create obstacles to receiving and decoding the message effectively (von Glinow et al., 2004; Henderson, 2005). The diversity of language does not only allude to the variety of different mother tongues, but also to people hearing in different ways as their different mechanisms for interpretation make sense of the information received. The second reason emphasises a second-language speakers' willingness to speak up. Indeed, it has been found that very often this results in fewer ideas being contributed, less active roles undertaken and subjects, difficult to express, being ignored (Corder, 1983). Thirdly, language barriers often form socially divisive elements, stronger than cultural values because of the functional and psychological barriers they impose on social interaction (Giles and Johnson, 1981; Harzing and Feely, 2008).

Indeed, this appears a commonly held approach. Voss, Albert and Ferring (2014) also endorse this in their case study focused on multinational teamwork in Luxembourg. Here the authors highlight the anxiety caused by misunderstandings due to language proficiency; it can even impact coordination within the team (Lauring and Selmer, 2010). Communication style differs between team members depending on their cultural background, in that some cultures prefer a more direct, others a more indirect, implicit approach to communication and this, too, can contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts. Despite multinationals adopting corporate languages for communication at work, other languages are often used in informal situations between co-workers (Lauring and Selmer, 2010). Hence, employees prefer to communicate with those with whom they identify and feel comfortable with. Again, this often leads to "in" and "out" groups, creating a culture of exclusion – the "them and us" scenario. Similar situations leading to the formation of silos can also start out when lower proficiency speakers, searching for words, briefly switch to their native language during meetings to ease their anxiety. Such instances of code-switching are often deemed as "annoying, rude and disrespectful" (Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2017, p. 24) and can cause negativity in others because they feel excluded from the conversations they do not understand (Hinds et al., 2014; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015; Aichhorn and Puck, 2017). This has also been termed "linguistic ostracism" by Dotan-Eliasz, Sommer and Rubin (2009).

These few studies referred to above have made important contributions in bringing the emotional impact of language barriers to the fore. In the following section, the literature in relation to MNT leaders managing these groups is reviewed. These leaders face the challenge of giving clear direction to their teams via email, meetings, video conferences, whilst keeping track of their team members' "states of mind", their client relationship status, work environment, even the social and economic situation in their respective countries. All of these factors affect team performance.

MNCs look to their team leaders to bring cohesion and a culture of productivity to their operations. One essential aspect in achieving true team cohesion is the aspect of trust (Lee et al., 2010).

2.3.1 The impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language on trust formation between leader and follower

Trust is a key element of team leadership – the glue that keeps all the collaborative relationships together (Braun et al., 2013). Tenzer, Pudelko and Harzing (2014) describe how surface level diversity may create the look of deep-level diversity within a team, but when the surface is scratched, serious problems emerge in terms of power distortion and lack of trust formation, particularly when exposed to a context including language barriers. The writers found that team members perceived colleagues with lower language proficiency as less competent and therefore less inclined to trust in their expertise. The misunderstandings and disruptions due to language barriers also caused them to consider colleagues less reliable and unable to build trust in each other's integrity. This study emphasises the importance of interdependency and social interaction to enable the team members to fulfil the integrative goals given to them by the global organisation. This study indicates that language barriers do impede trust formation between MNT members. Moreover, certain forms of trust only develop over time and during interaction. The writers carried out their study within three German automotive corporations. They openly acknowledge that their study is specific to the German automotive sector with a disproportionate number of German interviewees – hence the weighting of the contributions to their conclusions invites further research in different sectors. With different samples of diverse teams, the results could be different.

Trust formation within a team may also be contingent of the use and perception of power. In certain instances, language competence can lead to certain team members being recognised and promoted quicker. Members of teams may resent the "unearned" advantage of "undeserved" disadvantage language can give to individual team members (Neeley and Dumas, 2016; Tenzer and Pudelko 2016). The writers maintain that to create trust and a fair working environment, they should allocate speaking time during team meetings to all individuals and openly convey their appreciation for contributions to mitigate the disruptive effects of language barriers.

2.3.2 Employee competence in the corporate language and communication avoidance

Language competence clearly has an impact on the ease with which a language policy can be implemented. With the right support mechanisms in place, the introduction of a language policy will facilitate communication but, as emphasised by Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006 p. 409), “it will not render it monolingual”. Their study highlights the reactions of one German MNC, where the employees, on receiving the mandate to speak English, lost engagement and identified less with the corporate HQ. As stated earlier, the area of language competence within MNTs has been relatively neglected until only recently. There have been several studies incorporating one or two MNCs focusing on the role of language in MNC expansion (Harzing and Feely, 2008; SanAntonio, 1987; Lauring, 2008) or examined communication levels across overseas subsidiaries (Andersen and Rasmussen, 2004). Of significance is Peltokorpi and Yamao’s findings in relation to reverse knowledge transfer, using data collected from 574 middle managers leading functional departments of foreign subsidiaries in Japan (2017). The authors highlight the positive effect between frequent communication between HQ and subsidiary, collective language proficiency and shared vision in securing successful reverse knowledge transfer. Not only does this outcome show the advantage of inter-unit social identity (Giles and Johnson, 1981), the approach also demonstrates familiarity with national culture and saving face by uniting the managers in a collective commitment (Fang et al., 2010). By contrast, Harzing and Feely demonstrate that individual managers with lower proficiency levels actively avoid communication in order not to appear unintelligent (2008). SanAntonio reports meetings in a Japanese subsidiary being especially reserved when non-Japanese speaking colleagues were present because everyone had to speak English (the corporate language) (1987). Lauring and Tange also relate how a group of Danish employees from headquarters felt anxious and uncomfortable at having to speak English and therefore avoided communication with non-Danes altogether (2008).

The issue of communication avoidance has been the focus of several studies in a monolingual context in the field of communication and psychology (Burgoon and Hale, 1983). In general terms, communication avoidance refers to the avoidance of interaction with other people (McCroskey, Fayerd and Richmond, 1985). Studies have indicated that those who avoid communication not only see their personal relationships impaired and follow a lower promotional path within organisations (Avtgis, 2000), but also experience limited career progression (Estes, 1979). Although these studies refer to monolingual situations, communication avoidance can have serious consequences for MNCs that rely heavily on verbal communication for knowledge sharing and collaboration (Lauring and Klitmøller, 2015a).

Communication avoidance was not an option for long for Rakuten employees (Neeley, 2017). On introduction of the “Englishnization” mandate, the CEO immediately issued the caveat that all Rakuten employees would be required to raise their English proficiency level to the score of 650 or above on the 990 point Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) within a two-year period. Failure in this task would result in demotion. The draconian approach naturally elicited significant emotions of anxiety and dejection among employees, feeling that their workforce had now been differentiated by language ability, particularly among those who had not studied English at school (Neeley, 2017). The approach also received significant criticism although this did not deter other organisations, such as Uniqlo, the Japanese clothes retailer, and Nissan to follow suit with a corporate language mandate very soon after. More recent initiatives in Japan include softer approaches, as in the case of Shiseido and Honda Holdings (Matsui, Onishi and Hara, 2018).

2.3.3 IB studies into Emotion Management of employees

Until only recently, much of the literature in relation to emotion management ‘emotion regulation’ has focused on the management or regulation of one's own emotions. Since the pioneering publications by Gooty and her team into organisational behaviour research in the late 2000s, which highlighted the impact of employees’ emotions on organisational performance (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith and Gupta, 2010; Gooty, Gavin and Ashkanasy, 2009), there has been a growing interest into positive emotions and the motivation they bring (Salovey et al., 2008).

Further studies have identified the disturbing influence of negative emotions on employee productivity and the need to understand and control them (Kulik, Cregan, Metz and Brown, 2009; Mooney, Holahan and Amason, 2007; von Glinow, Shapiro and Brett, 2004). The issue of managing employee emotions in organisations was identified as an acute management problem that erodes collaborative efforts at corporation level and is therefore an important aspect of leadership (Kaplan, Cortina, Ruark, LaPort and Nicolaides, 2014; Thiel, Connelly and Griffith, 2012). These emotional challenges can impede collaborative interpersonal communication (Neeley, 2013; Neeley, Hinds, and Cramton, 2013) and even wreck team building (Hinds et al., 2014; Luring and Tange, 2010, Tenzer Pudelko and Harzing, 2014; von Glinow, Shapiro and Brett, 2004). Cases have been reported where senior managers sought to harness their subordinates’ emotions (McColl-Kennedy and Anderson, 2002). However, until now little has been published in relation to how to resolve them (Harzing and Feely, 2008; Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015).

Increasing interest is now emerging in the management and regulation of others’ emotions in the workplace. It is recognised that NNS employees have little opportunity to influence the emotions of their fellow team members and tend to feel restricted in their communication skills and this can

therefore lead to apprehension, anxiety, embarrassment, shame and frustration (Harzing and Feely, 2008; Wang et al., 2020). Language barriers impede and aggravate any existing friction and trigger added problems when communicating such issues in a foreign language (Henderson, 2005; von Glinow et al., 2004).

2.4 Strategies to mitigate emotions across language barriers through Team Leaders

Emotion management, usually referred to as emotion regulation in psychological literature, is described as either managing the antecedents to one's own or others' emotions or controlling one's own or others' emotional responses (Little et al., 2012). Whereas psychological literature tends to place greater focus on self-management or self-regulation (Gross and Thompson, 2007), other studies have established that managing subordinates' emotions is an important facet of leadership (Ayoko and Konrad, 2012; Kaplan et al., 2014). Following the work of Gross (1998), several scholars have settled on the classification (using different terminology) that the most productive strategy in offsetting emotions is to remove or modify the contributing elements (Gross and Thompson, 2007; Little et al., 2012). In her study exploring threat-reducing behaviour, Williams (2007) examines emotion management and adapts aspects of the four broad categories of self-emotion management (refined by Gross, 1998), by applying them to the interpersonal emotion management context. The first three strategies require the manager to resolve the problem by tackling the root cause of the emotions, with the idea that these approaches are employed before emotional responses are allowed to mature in a given situation. The fourth strategy requires the supervisor to interrupt the experience of emotion in response to harm. In their investigation into the context of MNTs within three MNCs in the German automotive sector, Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) advocated some high-level strategies diverting attention away from language barriers and diminishing the negative perception of lower proficiency levels in NNSs and thereby helping to reduce the negative emotional levels in MNTs. However, there is little evidence of these strategies being tested.

Some studies have suggested that humour, promoting sociability, can deflect negative emotions in the event of a conflict and help to play down awkward situations (Little et al., 2011, Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009). For example, Barsade (2002) recommends humour to lighten the tone and promote positivity to the environment. Whilst in certain groups this may work well, caution should be observed in relation to context; in some cultures, humour is liable to misfire and lead to ambiguity (Rogerson-Revell, 2007), or even run the risk of the leader losing credibility or not being taken seriously as in Germany or Japan, particularly during working hours (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015).

Specific empirical research into MNT leadership strategies to manage the emotions of diverse groups remains limited (Nurmi and Koroma, 2020). Indeed, Nurmi and Koroma (2020) explored the notion of a “psychologically safe” environment as a collective coping mechanism for language-induced emotions. However, the concept they introduce is without leadership intervention and, although the employees appeared to benefit from the psychologically safe environment, the communication climate declined to such an extent that innovation was substantially reduced. In their study into the power dynamics forged by multilinguals in MNCs, Tenzer and Pudelko (2017) stress the need for team members to take advantage of language courses offered and that those with higher proficiency should not abuse their advantage owing to the potential negative sensitivities that this can cause. Whilst these scholars recommend the use of policies, leadership strategies would work more closely with the team climate and, in conjunction with ground rules, cement a targeted approach (Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2017).

Whilst raising the challenges of collaborating across language barriers in MNTs, von Glinow, Shapiro and Brett (2004) question the appropriateness of encouraging team members to speak about their feelings when resolving broken relationships within teams. Promoting the notion of externalising feelings may be detrimental from the cultural perspective in several ways - the ability to express oneself, willingness to talk and the contextualisation of protocol of the MNT. Von Glinow, Shapiro and Brett (2004) recommend the use of visual aids, including the use of drawings, as alternatives to speech to reach mutual understanding.

Another recent study by Wang et al. (2020), although targeting the issue of language-induced emotions because of language standardisation, fails to offer any tangible strategies for team leaders other than a general suggestion of intercultural training and socialisation. Details of the training structure and how these measures would address the issue were not included.

Although not in the context of language barriers, Kennedy and Anderson (2002) examine the impact of leadership style on emotions, focusing on the emotions of frustration and optimism interceding between a transformational leadership style and team performance. The scholars’ findings promote leveraging optimism and offering cognitive training to mitigate the negativity arising from frustration.

So far, other studies into the area of language barriers in international business have focused largely on the communication between headquarters and subsidiaries of MNCs (Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman, 2005); Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, and Piekkari, 2006; Harzing et al., 2011; Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio, 2011; Harzing and Pudelko, 2013; Luo and Shenkar, 2006). Klitmøller and Luring also identify the impact of language and culture as a key when comparing understanding rich media and lean media in global virtual teams (2013).

The typical organisational chart fails to reflect where most of the work is done. Organisations today are increasingly using teams to operate across functions, divisions, geographies, product lines and even in multiple dimensions, such as in a matrix organisation. There is a lack of literature relating to the question of emotion management through team leaders. Butler et al. (2012) suggest the use of mixing groups of proficient and less proficient speakers as multilingual groups, “blenders”, to help diffuse emotions. Whilst it may be feasible to integrate varieties of speakers into larger teams working physically together, the authors present little evidence of this operating globally in a virtual environment.

For a leader of a MNT, good leadership qualities play an essential role in influencing team performance and the balance of task and person-focused leadership are of equal importance (Burke et al. 2006, Zaccaro et al., 2001). Among MNCs, cross-border teams usually have a higher degree of concentration of linguistic diversity when compared to the other hierarchies within an organization (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015). As organisations expand geographically opening new markets, further demands are placed on them, such as knowledge sharing and virtual collaboration across multiple time-zones. One further strategy in bridging the invisible hurdles faced by team leaders is described by Teagarden, Meyer and Jones (2008). When Hi-Tech MNCs shared knowledge between India and China, their team leaders, despite embracing a common language, experienced tremendous exhaustion when communicating across language barriers. The study describes the consequences and how the team leaders worked to create solutions through “Knowledge Bridges” that include the leveraging of local competencies, globally distributed team development and socialization. Surprisingly, the writers omit to describe the effectiveness of these measures on the culture and emotions of the team post implementation.

2.5 Summary

When considering the matter of language, most senior leaders in MNCs have come to depend on a single language policy as the “modus operandi” - the idea that “one size fits all” to ensure communication happens. There is a need to research further into the area of language-sensitivities in MNTs. Most studies of this have been presented in this review. However, there is little research specifically into the impact of language on emotions, especially in the context of MNTs and innovative strategies to overcome the issues.

This chapter reviews the studies to date that have examined or reported on emotions as issues resulting from language diversity in MNTs. Several studies refer to the issue of language-induced emotions in different contexts. As documented in this chapter, there have been a few research studies directly raising the emotion consequences of language barriers MNTs (Harzing and Feely, 2008;

Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Aichhorn and Puck, 2018; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015; Wang, 2020). Outside the area of IB, other studies have reported the issue in language study classrooms students (Clement, Dornyei, and Noels, 1994, Ewald, 2007; Tóth, 2010; Young 1992).

In the area of IB, there is a growing wealth of studies that emphasise issues that couple with emotions, either as preceding or succeeding an act of using language. Some of the key ones include the perception of power (Henderson, 2005), the dynamics of power (Méndez García and Pérez Cañado, 2005; Janssens and Brett, 2006; Hinds, Neeley and Cramton, 2014; Luring and Klitmøller 2015b), parallel information networks (Harzing and Feely, 2008; Harzing and Pudelko, 2014; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2014), power imbalances (Steyaert, Ostendorp and Gaibrois, 2011; Yamao and Segiguchi, 2015) trust issues (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017).

Many of these studies emphasise the important issue of ambiguity and misunderstandings but fail to observe any of the properties that govern conversation or the importance of establishing speaker meaning. Understanding the linguistic influences on team affective states is a key to building a cohesive team climate (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2020). These aspects are amplified in the case of language barriers apparent in speech. This study addresses this gap by examining the distinct complexities of language and drawing on them in the findings. By offering this in-depth assessment of the linguistic factors of influence, this study equips team leaders with the rudiments to bridge the interpersonal communication challenges in language diverse teams and facilitates greater insight in the analysis of the research studies.

To develop a deeper understanding of these important factors, the next chapter explores how language is used by individuals in daily interaction and how instinctive assumptions are made to convey meaning. It explains how speaker intention can be enveloped by context and may malfunction, but also how power can be exerted through conversational skills and the dominant position achieved by English as a global language. This is of value to leaders in an international business environment as language and communication are fundamental in how organisations operate both internally and externally.

Chapter 3: The Nature of Language

3.1 Introduction

Given the significance of language in international business (IB) today and the demand for individuals to communicate effectively with people from different linguistic backgrounds (Tenzer, Terjesen and Harzing, 2017), it is important, before embarking on an in-depth investigation of the research area, to examine the key constituents of language and aspects of socio-linguistics that illuminate the essence of language and how exposure to different languages can lead us to unfamiliar ways of being. Chapter 2 presents a review of the fast-growing literature in relation to the language asymmetries and the emotions elicited from them in language diverse MNCs and, in particular, MNTs, but to date no studies have approached this area, forearmed with such an explanatory approach to open up this multifaceted, complex, and dynamic concept.

This exploratory chapter, investigating the nature of language, informs the research as to key aspects of how humans use language and, in particular, their instinctive expectations of the interlocutor. These notions can help or hinder achieving company objectives, management and employees. As emphasised in the previous chapter, language has huge practical implications for both MNCs and MNTs and holds vital importance in exchanging knowledge, both externally and internally. However, when the message conveyed is distorted through miscommunication across language barriers, greater awareness is needed to unpack the different linguistic facets at play.

3.2 What is language?

All living organisms possess the common ability of communication in some form, even as far as the most primitive microbial form that communicates through releasing explicit chemical signals (Pierson, Maier and Pepper, 2015). However, while all other communication systems in the natural world are stuck in the here and now, only human communication through language can transcend time and space, and it is this which gives it prodigious communicative power (Trask, 1999a).

Language is unique because it is “a discrete combinatorial system” (Chomsky, 1991; Abler, 1989; Studdert-Kennedy, 1990, cited in Pinker, 2015 p.82). Phonemes are discrete sound elements which combine to form meaning (words) and a change of phoneme will change the word completely. When words are combined in grammatical strings to produce sentences, there is literally no limit to the number of sentences that a speaker can generate or understand. For humans, it is second nature to produce conventional sequences of sounds to create the primary medium of language which is

speech; by utilising the vocal tract, such that air passing out of the lungs is squeezed and shaped by the position of the tongue, shape of the lips and size of the resonating chamber (the mouth or nasal passage), humans have the capacity to produce a range of phonemes (Lieberman, 2018). In English, there exists approximately 40 phonemes (Trask, 1999) which can be infinitely articulated and blended in different combinations. The number is approximate as not all English accents use the same set of speech sounds. Furthermore, these speech sounds, meaningless on their own, when combined, form words. For communication to take place these words are pronounced and crucially, combinations of words are organised by grammatical rules that convey meaning and a verbal exchange of information (Trask, 1999b). The effective employment of this 'discrete combinatorial system' in the use of phonemes and then words is then expressed very aptly by Wilhelm von Humboldt as he describes language's capacity to "make infinite use of finite means" (1836/1965 Chomsky trans.). By this, Humboldt refers to the brain's capacity to translate "between order of words and combination of thoughts" (Pinker 2007, p.84). Pinker then illustrates this by highlighting the different human reaction to simply changing the order of words: for example, one's acceptance of hearing "Dog bites man" rather than "Man bites dog".

3.2.1 Language as a systematic structure

The order of words provides the ability to convey numerous meanings but the means to do this requires rules. As described by Crystal, "grammar is the study of all the contrasts of meaning that it is possible to make within sentences. The 'rules' of grammar tell us how. By one count, there are some 3,500 such rules in English" (Crystal, 2006 p. 97).

Learners of English as a foreign language usually focus on the set of rules of one relatively well-defined form of English (such as Standard English) - a set of rules through which the use of sounds, words, clauses and phrases are governed in a natural language. Once mastered, fluent speakers of a language will have internalised these rules to convey meaning (semantics). These rules govern the internal structure of words (morphology) and how words are used in the construction of phrases and sentences (syntax) (Trask, 1999a).

A human being possesses a lexicon of words and the concepts they stand for and a rule set that combines the words to convey relationships among the concepts (Pinker, 2015).

3.2.2 Conveying information

At this point, it is important to distinguish between the term 'language' itself as a faculty that enables us to communicate with each other and 'a language' as a particular form of communication used by a group of speakers. A language can be identified by its specific characteristics, its grammar, its

vocabulary, its pronunciation (Hammerström, 2016). The group of speakers who speak and understand the language can convey information to each other, but they do not understand nor can they speak to the speakers of other languages. The language spoken is also likely to be distinguished by its geography and political associations, for example Polish is the language of Poland, French the language of France and other French-speaking regions (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011). Having the knowledge of a language explains the speakers' ability to deploy all its structural systems in rule-governed ways to turn pre-verbal thought into the articulation of that thought, whether by speaking or writing. These sentences are the tools used to express composite thoughts and ideas. Such linguistic units are termed "discourse" (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003).

Of course, the primary medium of language is speech. However, for deaf people who cannot hear sounds, another such medium exists called signing. The sign language involves gestures which, when used correctly, can convey everything that normal speech can from jokes, puns and even obscenities. These gestures are quite separate from the numerous body movements such as hand gestures and nods we use with normal speech (Trask, 1999a).

3.2.3 Nonverbal communication or "body" language as a form of communication in relation to speech

In recent years, some social cognition scholars have made claims that speech forms a small part of what constitutes human communication (Ephratt, 2011; Busso et al., 2004). Probably the most notable and widely cited claim in relation to the effectiveness of nonverbal communication was by Albert Mehrabian (1971) whose quantitative statement that communication is 7 per cent verbal, 38 percent vocal and 55 per cent facial has been given ample publicity as a catch-all answer in numerous contexts (Yaffe, 2011). However, on closer examination, this study is a superficial treatment of some significant and interesting areas of behaviour (Casselberry, 1973). The data requires prudence in interpreting the results (Lapakko, 1997). Firstly, the population used by Mehrabian totalled 63 female undergraduates from California who participated in the study as part of their psychology course requirements. Furthermore, as noted by Burgoon (1985), "in the vocal-facial study, the verbal component was held constant -the word 'maybe' was used in all cue combinations - so it never had a chance to make a difference to receivers' interpretations. Hence the verbal component was never given a fair test" (p. 155). The female psychology students, upon hearing the word "maybe" spoken over audio tape in three different tones of voice, were more inclined to react to the speaker's voice than the one single word therefore the research actively controlled the stimulus of verbal content. The methodology carried no external validity. In reality, people have relationships with each other and use language to interact in phrases and sentences – not one-word answers (Thomas and McDonagh, 2013). One of the

attractive aspects of the study for those seeking some surety in this area is the numerical aspect and it even suggests some objectivity (Merriam, 1990), although Mehrabian himself states the numbers as approximate. However, to give such values at all is incorrect (Burgoon et al. 1996) and misleads one to believe that more is known about communication than is the case (Hegstrom, 1979).

Ironically, following some criticism after the publication of his work "Silent Messages", Mehrabian (1971), responded by saying that he was not trying to devalue the role of language in communication:

"My findings are often misquoted. Please remember that all my findings on inconsistent or redundant communications dealt with communications of feelings and attitudes. This is the realm within which they are applicable. Clearly, it is absurd to imply or suggest that the verbal portion of all communication constitutes only 7% of the message. Suppose I want to tell you that the eraser you are looking for is in the second right-hand drawer of my desk in my third floor office. How could anyone contend that the verbal part of this message is only 7% of the message? Instead, and more accurately, the verbal part is nearly 100% of the message. Again, anytime we communicate abstract relationships (e.g., $x = y - \text{the square of } z$), clearly 100% of the entire communication is verbal" (Mehrabian, 1995, as cited in Lapakko, 1997, p. 65).

Lapakko (1997) argues, some writers remain true to Mehrabians' context, for example, Stewart and D'Angelo (1988) stating that Mehrabian makes the case that "when we're uncertain about what someone's feeling, or about how much we like him or her, we rely 55 percent on facial nonverbal cues, 38 percent on vocal nonverbal cues, and only 7 percent on the words that are spoken" (p. 169), other researchers, such as Brillhart and Galanes (1989), play down the percentages. However, other scholars cite the statistics without proviso; Dodd (1995), for instance, states "Mehrabian indicates that 93 percent of meaning in a conversation is conveyed nonverbally-38 percent through the use of voice and 55 percent through the face" (p. 153).

It is of course reasonable to acknowledge that nonverbal behaviour complements our communication to a limited extent. It could even provide an interesting and challenging discussion or case study for learners of a foreign language. However, Mehrabian's erroneous formula 7-38-55 appears to have achieved fame and prominence among pedagogues in a variety of fields, such as intercultural training, business sales training, public speaking, to name but a few (Lapakko, 1997). This attempt to diminish the complexity and importance of language in communication by quantifying data that is immeasurable numerically is misleading and unnecessary (Hsee, Hatfield and Chemtob, 1992).

This case forms an example of how the literature uses such data, to provide a definitive answer to a question which has no quantifiable answer. After all, it is impossible to pass anything other than

current emotion through nonverbal language. Furthermore, the term body “language” is misleading and incorrect. As referenced earlier, a language is a “discrete, combinatorial system”, allowing for infinite possibilities in structure and comprehension and there is nothing discrete or combinatorial in a human body.

3.3 Pragmatics

One particularly striking and important aspect about the use of language is the way the meaning of a sentence does not necessarily correspond to its form. Semantics is concerned with the meanings of words and sentences. However, often the meaning of certain utterances or complete exchanges between people depends as much on the context of the speech and the purpose of the speakers as on the literal meanings of the sentences themselves (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011). From this has arisen the discipline of pragmatics.

Crystal describes pragmatics as “The study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language have on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 1997:301). In this sense, Crystal refers to the speakers’ knowledge of social conventions and the way they interact according to the social convention. Naturally, these conventions may be common to all or partly culturally specific (Gumperz, 1982; 1992). For any given grammatical construction, the study of pragmatics examines the choices one makes when selecting the language used to express what one wants to say. It illuminates the reasons for those choices and the effects that those choices convey. A speaker needs an understanding of the relationship between form and context to be able to express and interpret meaning.

3.3.1 *Speech Act Theory*

The British philosophers, John Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) examined the relationship between direct and indirect speech acts, together with the notion that things could be ‘done’ with words (Davies, 2007). Greater emphasis started to be placed on speaker intention rather than the literal sense of the words. Austin (1962) claimed that utterances not only contain a message but also a social act in themselves too. Hence, to say “I promise I’ll be there” not only conveys information but itself represents the act of promising (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011). The ability to promise and to intend to promise may depend on the existence of a social practice or set of conventions about what a promise is and what constitutes promising. Austin (1962) expressly emphasised the importance of social factors and conventions in doing things with words, in particular with respect to the class of speech acts known as locutionary acts (communicative acts).

When an individual makes an utterance, that person performs a locutionary act. That is to say, a sequence that complies with the phonological and grammatical rules of the language (otherwise, they would not make sense nor be understood). Declarations, commands and promises are known as illocutionary acts in that an action takes place by way of their utterance (Lanigan, 1977). Pragmatics also has a stake in illocutionary acts by way of the meaning intended by the utterance. Examples of this might include a promise, threat, a question or greeting (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011).

One form of illocutionary acts is referred to as performatives – statements. Similar to the act of promising, they contain a verb which enacts the social force of the utterance. “I baptise this child Mary, I sentence you to prison, You’re fired” (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011). One of the conditions of performative acts is that they are performed at the right time and place.

3.3.2 Co-operative Principle

The dissonance that comes from such utterances arising in an unsuitable context only supports an essential point in pragmatics. When this happens in everyday life, a dialogue does not break down but rather the listener works hard to understand the message from the utterance which may at first seem strange. It was this very act that Paul Grice (1975) recognised as standard behaviour in proposing the “cooperative principle” (CP), the central tenet of all human communication that speakers are being co-operative and not uncooperative. However, this principal is also a most controversial theme in the field of pragmatics (Hadi, 2013).

Grice (1975) claims that when a speaker creates an utterance, it is normally accepted by the listener to be true, have the right amount of information, be relevant and expressed in an understandable way. When this is not the case, the listener does not immediately deem it as nonsense, there is a distinct assumption that an appropriate meaning is to be inferred (Davies, 2007).

Grice was concerned with the distinction between saying and meaning and how speakers know how to generate implicit meanings and how listeners can reliably understand their intended meaning (Davies, 2007). Grice’s objective was to understand how this worked. One example could be taken from a team working researching for a pitch:

A: We need the stats by the end of the day.

B: Darren will be in this afternoon.

A speaker with a common understanding that meaning is commonly inferred and not laid out with logical precision would have no problem understanding the meaning that the team need the stats but

that Darren will be in the office in the afternoon to do them. As a framework for the Cooperative Principle, Grice set out four maxims to provide a way to explain the implication process:

Quantity: Ensure your contribution is informative with just the right amount of information.

Quality: Be truthful. Back up what you are saying with adequate evidence.

Relation: How relevant is what you are saying?

Manner: Avoid ambiguity

By and large, speakers intend to be cooperative in interaction, but it cannot always be taken for granted that speakers will give the right amount of truthful, clear and relevant information in their normal interactions (Okanda et al., 2015). In fact, speakers rarely keep to Grice's maxims – hence they are termed “maxims” rather than “rules”. Grice introduced the concept of conversational implicatures, which are techniques worked out by the hearer to reconcile the observance of the maxims, thereby saving cooperation and conversation (Ephratt, 2012). When these maxims are broken, then the hearer understands that certain implicatures must be inferred from the utterance. To achieve this, speakers deliberately break the maxims to signal to the hearer that an implicated message should be understood.

Grice's theory of implicature accounts for aspects of speaker meaning not included in the truth conditions of the sentence uttered by the speaker. The focus is on the speaker's intention to communicate meaning beyond what they are saying. The speaker not only looks to produce an effect on the listener, but this is only achieved when the listener actually recognises the speaker's intended message. Furthermore, all other communicative effects created by the speaker, not part of the communication or recognised by the listener, are superfluous to the speaker's intention (Gauker, 2000).

One example to show this would be (after an evening out):

Susan: Do you want to come in for a drink?

John: I'd better get back – I have an early flight in the morning.

John's response is open for interpretation. He might well have an early flight and some work to do before his departure the following morning. Alternatively, he might be trying to gracefully avoid being sucked into a situation he would rather avoid and to let Susan down gently by protecting both their faces. This use of veiled language allows diplomatic withdrawal without altering the status of the relationship, whereas overt language cannot be taken back as it has already revealed thoughts openly.

Appropriateness adds a dimension to context in that out of context the utterance would not fit and thereby create ambiguity and lose meaning (Atlas, 2005).

Another example of where meaning is implied but not direct which in many societies is often safer and more appropriate:

“Do you find it cold in here?” is safer than “Close the window!”

The suggestion that the other person might find it cold is a gentler way of proposing that the window might be closed. In some cultures, a direct order to close the window would be seen as extremely rude. In fact the level of cultural sensitivity enveloped in implication can vary from one cultural norm in society to another (Buchan, Croson and Dawes, 2002).

Although respected as a central theory in the area of pragmatics, Grice’s theory is deemed by a number of scholars to be flawed (Hadi, 2013). Grice was focused on discovering the logic of conversation and how to explain the gap between saying and meaning. For him, this showed itself in the manifestation of rational acts.

Ladegaard (2009) suggests that Grice’s approach is too biased towards cooperation and that individuals are not so ready to cooperate in their dealings with one another. He claims, “human interaction may be irrational and illogical, and that resistance and non-cooperation may be adopted as the preferred discursive strategy, and that, given the choice, interactants seem to try their best to be ‘bad’ communicators” (Ladegaard 2009, p. 650). From his own studies, he concludes that social and psychological conditions determine people’s intentions as to whether or not to cooperate in a conversation. Other scholars term Grice’s notion of the CP as inflexible and over-simplistic. Sarangi and Slembrouch (1992, p. 142) claim that human communication is a rich and complex matter and that Grice omits to include when people miscommunicate but does not rule it out. As recommended by Hadi (2013), care should be taken when interpreting Grice’s use of the term “cooperation” as it is different from how it is used on an everyday basis. Grice’s work is better studied in the context of Grice’s works as a whole, rather than in isolation.

Of course, Grice deliberately did not overstate to what extent his maxims were valid he said, “each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose, or at least a mutually accepted direction” (1989 p. 26). Nor is there any record of Grice claiming universality for his maxims across cultures and, in the context of this thesis, this calls into question the applicability of these maxims in the wider context of other languages and cultures. Over the years Grice’s maxims have ignited heated debate over the Anglo-centricity of their basis (Bowe and Martin, 2007; Clyne, 1994; Keenan, 1976; Thomas 1984; Wierzbicka, 1985). Naturally, this is understandable when considering that many

cultural value systems that do not share full resemblance to the Anglo-centric nature of the Gricean maxims; for instance, some European, Middle Eastern and especially Southeast Asian cultures have a complete divergence from such Anglo-norms. Hence, in many situations and cultures, ambiguity, respect, discourse, self-control, and harmony are a key component to communication, this would make Grice's maxims inapplicable (Clyne, 1994). In recognition of other cultural norms, Clyne suggests revisions to Grice's maxims in other cultures and speaker groups norms and expectations. In relation to the maxim of quality, he proposes "do not say what you believe to be in opposition to your cultural norms of truth, harmony, charity, and/or respect" (Clyne 1994, p.194). This adjustment incorporates situations where the listener may not want to respond truthfully, to maintain face or harmony with the speaker (Lakoff, 1973).

3.3.3 Cross-cultural pragmatics

As discussed earlier, communication never takes place in a vacuum and is always moulded to a certain degree by the context in which it occurs (Stadler, 2018). For the NNS, this gives rise to several challenges: utterances that might be natural in one's native tongue, may be totally inappropriate in another language or even cause offence. Furthermore, simply having a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is insufficient for communicating across cultures. What is said in an utterance cannot always be interpreted literally; the meaning depends on the speaker's intention, context and culture in which it was expressed (Stadler, 2018).

Language is of course not an all or nothing phenomenon. As stated by Roberts "many interactions are characterised by the illusion of understanding [...] in which both sides believe, at least for a while, that they have understood each other" (1996 p.12).

However, the less common ground people have (linguistically, culturally or personally), the greater the likelihood of complications in achieving mutual understanding (Gass and Varonis, 1991), and hence the more noticeable the occurrence of misunderstanding in intercultural communication.

The study of cross-cultural pragmatics compares and contrasts the characteristics of communication between cultures by identifying similarities and differences in speech behaviour and the inherent challenges of acquiring pragmatic competence. According to Alcón and Safont Jordá (2008), cited by Stadler (2018), pragmatic competence requires "knowledge of those rules and conventions underlying appropriate language use in particular communicative situations and on the part of members of specific speech communities" (Alcón and Safont Jordá 2008, p. 193). Therefore pragmatic competence requires the ability to produce an utterance that is meaningful and fitting in the social and contextual setting in which it is expressed and also to interpret the other person's message by inferring the

intended meaning. This ability requires significant sensitivity and perceptiveness and understanding of the contextual backdrop to the setting (Tulgar, 2015).

On entering into an exchange with another person, one may assume the existence of some common ground by way of sociocultural background knowledge shared with the other speaker. When communicating across such social divides, this knowledge may not be shared and can pose a problem for the speaker as he or she may depend on the pragmatic principles of the other speaker being the same as their own (Stadler, 2018). This common ground is taken for granted, where it is not the case. The intended meaning fails to come across as it was intended or causes offense where none was meant (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001). Hall (1976) and Hofstede (2001) divided cultures into either low-context or high-context. According to them, low context cultures express meaning explicitly, precisely and messages are understood at face value whereas high-context cultures rely significantly by drawing on contextual cues. For example, a Dutch person (low context culture) might say: "In the Netherlands if you don't say it straight, we don't think you are trustworthy." However, in a high context culture, a Chinese person might say, "In Chinese culture, *pang quiao ce ji* [beating around the bush] is a style that nurtures an implicit understanding. In Chinese culture, children are taught not to just hear the explicit words but also to focus on *how* something is said, and on what is *not* said." (Meyer 2014, p. 41). For these cultures, inference in conversation is an essential means of interpretation; the need for this common background knowledge can make difficulties for people from different contexts learning the culture. The study of cross-cultural pragmatics seeks to unravel and investigate how such messages are uttered and intended; it then examines how they were received and understood in the cultural context in which they take place (Stadler, 2018).

3.3.4 Cross-cultural speech acts

In view of the difference in common ground and that speech acts are intended to perform a specific function, they too are subject to misinterpretation whether humorously or seriously, when uttered across cultures. Those speech acts that are likely to draw the most attention include compliments, apologies, refusals, requests, greetings, complaints and disagreements (Gas and Neu, 1996, p. 1).

Apologies are common examples of this. Rosinski (2003) highlights an example of an apology across-cultural differences when he describes a Japanese manager starting a presentation by extending profuse apologies to his audience:-

"I would like to apologise for the fact that I am utterly unprepared to speak in front of this distinguished group."

The manager bows and speaks in a low voice and a soft tone. Any Western members of the audience might well consider the manager to be seriously lacking in confidence and not worth listening to. Yet, the Japanese manager's colleagues would see this same behaviour to be appropriate and to be rewarded. Again, using an apology to start a presentation is socio-pragmatically appropriate in Japanese culture. Indeed, all languages and cultures will have their own speech acts which will carry an intended meaning in the social norm and circumstance of the culture. Lakoff (2001) highlights that the word "sorry" in English is used in many forms ranging from the utterly explicit (a) to the ambiguously indirect, alluding to the existence of an unambiguous apology (b) form which is not an apology.

(a) I am so sorry ... I did not mean to wake you up!

(b) I'm sorry, but I don't have to put up with this!

The area of apologies and also requests in speech acts can be particularly challenging for NNS who may have a very sound command of English with excellent vocabulary and understanding of grammar (Daskalovska et al., 2016). This point is also vividly demonstrated by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, (1989) in their Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP). Through NNSs of English (Canadian French, Israeli Hebrew, Danish and German participants) this study shows that there is a general preference for the most opaque hinting strategy. House's analysis concerns British and German conventions of the use of please in requests. Blum Kulka and House compared speakers of Australian English, Hebrew, Canadian French, German, and Argentinian Spanish and found that the Argentinians were the most direct in their requests, followed by the Hebrew speakers, while the Australians were the least direct. Faerch and Kasper (1989) studied Danish learners of English and German. Wolfson, Thomas and Jones (1989) compared their findings from the CCSARP questionnaire with results from their own and others' ethnographic work.

As described so far, context forms a fundamental part of how the meaning of language is conveyed and understood and envelops all aspects of the communication. Context may give important information in the interpretation of meaning. It is not enough to understand the meaning of words to understand the meaning of discourse (Thomas and McDonagh, 2013). It is important to know why one has to say what to whom and where. Werth summarizes this as follows:

"The context of a piece of language (...) is its surrounding environment. But this can include as little as the articulatory movements immediately before and after it, or as much as the whole universe with its past and future." (Werth 1999, pp. 78 – 79).

3.4 Conversation Analysis

As indicated earlier, pieces of language, such as strings of words and sentences seldom occur in isolation. They usually form part of something far more substantial, such as conversations, debates, news articles, lectures and are otherwise known as text. These larger sections of language adhere to rules to form comprehensible structures and facilitate interpretation (Trask, 1999a). Conversation Analysis (CA) is an approach which developed in the 1960s from the collaboration of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson to examine every day social interaction together with verbal and non-verbal conduct. It looks at the practice of conversation and how it operates with rules and conventions that can be analysed.

The initial studies by these scholars focused on socially organised practices such as turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974) and the sequencing of actions in conversation (Schegloff, 1968). The description by Heritage and Atkinson (1984) states that CA aims to explain, “the underlying social organisation – conceived as an institutionalised substratum of interactional rules, procedures and conventions – through which orderly and intelligible social interaction is made possible (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984 p. 1).” Defining such a framework as rules, procedures and conventions seems to suggest “context free structures” (Sidnell, 2007) that support the production and interpretation of “context-sensitive” conduct in interaction. After all conversation takes place in a particular context which is partly linguistic (what has been said previously) and partly non-linguistic (the speaker’s situation and the knowledge of the world) (Trask, 1996 p. 123). Sacks et al. (1974 p. 703), cited by Sidnell (2007), put forward that the process of turn-taking in conversation is “context-free” as conversation has capacity for a wide range of situations from “passing remarks at a bus stop to extended spates of talk into the wee small hours of the morning”. Sidnell (2007) argues that conversation is a vehicle for interaction between parties with almost any identity – family members, co-workers, strangers, employers and employees etc. Sacks et al. (1974) emphasise that although the underlying configuration of turn-taking is generic, the way in which practices of turn-taking are used will be sensitive to the context. With this in mind, the focus of studies in CA is to work across each unique circumstance to elucidate norms, practices and competences supporting the organisation of social interaction.

Although the materials used in the pioneering work by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson were primarily in English, it was purported that the methods would be transferable to other languages, cultures and social groups (Sidnell 2007; Zimmermann, 1999) as the observations described, although general and universal in nature, formed a robust basis for further studies. An exploration into the use of certain aspects of different languages (grammar, vocabulary, intonation) in conversation analysis and the

cultural shaping of specific ‘taboos’ was therefore needed to assess to what extent these might cause restrictions in the usage of certain words or phrases.

In a comparative study, investigating languages as different as Japanese and Tzeltal, Sidnell (2007) brought to light a robust base of apparently generic interactional organisation. He argues “Such generic aspects of the organisation of interaction reflect the specifically human ‘form of life,’ which Wittgenstein sought to describe in his later philosophy (Wittgenstein, 1953)”, cited by Sidnell (2007 p.241). This is not to say that for both languages the interactional organisation was mostly common to English; the local languages are complex and highly structured semiotic systems of grammar, social categorisation with their own distinctive properties. In suggesting commonalities, this did not suggest a universal truth but that the organisation reference or interaction varied according to scale and population distribution. These included turn-taking, repair, person reference to assess how these were adapted, twisted or modulated in local circumstances. Such comparative studies in human interaction demonstrate clearly the important links between different sociocultural settings and language.

CA can also be used in teaching pragmatics and thereby adding an additional dimension to second language learning. Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) investigated the use of CA to complement the teaching of socio-pragmatic norms. Their study illustrates how students learn from CA material, using authentic dialogues, to anticipate, interpret and reproduce socio-pragmatically appropriate verbal behaviour in their target language. Success at turn-taking is an intrinsic part of the conversation process leading to influence. A person who is inept at this will be unable to influence others in conversation as it is the primary form of human social interaction (Ng and Deng, 2017). An example of this may likely occur in interaction between a NS and NNS, particularly in relation to the negotiation of meaning in the event of a potential or actual break-down in the conversation (Varonis and Gass, 1985). Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) address this in relation to conversations between native speakers, emphasising that adults prefer to correct themselves rather than be corrected by others. Being corrected by others can be embarrassing when the interlocutors are supposed to be of equal status. Negotiation of meaning was meant to be of great importance in language learning and interaction between NS and NNS. However, it did not become nearly as important as these early researchers claimed it would. This area will come under closer scrutiny under §3.7 ‘Second Language Acquisition’.

3.5 Language and Power

Whilst many competing conceptions of power exist, one of the most prominent in relation to language is the view that characteristics, present in individuals, are reflected in their interactions (the relational view) (Clegg, 2014). Therefore, from this perspective for example, those with wealth would

characteristically have more power. Fleming and Spicer (2013 p. 239) suggest that power is “a resource to get things done through other people, to achieve certain goals that may be shared or contested” which naturally plays out through the speaker’s use of power to influence through conversation.

As highlighted so far, a conversation is a speech exchange system in which the extent and sequence of speaking turns have not been preassigned but require coordination on an utterance-by-utterance basis between the individuals involved. In view of its centrality to conversations and the important theoretical issues that it raises for social coordination and implicit conversational conventions, the concept of turn-taking has been the centre of extensive research and theorising over a number of years (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990; Grice, 1975; Sacks et al., 1974).

Success at turn-taking is an essential part in the skill of conversation and influence, and it manifests itself in two important ways (Ng and Deng, 2017). The first method by which the current speaker selects the next speaker potentially influences who will speak next and, indirectly, increases the chances that he or she will get a turn after they have finished. The usual way for this to be done is for the current speaker (A) to interject a tag question such as “Ya know?” or “Don’t you agree?” to the selected speaker (B), thereby carrying the force of choosing the person being addressed as the next speaker and discouraging others for putting themselves forward. Therefore, in a conversation between two speakers, A and B, starting out as simply A_1B_1 , the exchange sequence is found to have a high probability of extending into $A_1B_1A_2$ in the next round of exchange, followed by its continuation in the form of $A_1B_1A_2B_2$. Then, for example, in a six-member group, the $A_1B_1 \rightarrow A_1B_1A_2$ sequence of exchange has more than 50% chance of extending the $A_1B_1A_2B_2$ sequence, which is well above chance level, considering that there are four other hearers who could intrude at either the A_2 or B_2 slot of turn (Strasser and Taylor, 1991).

In the second way, a speaker can take advantage of their power of holding the floor to manoeuvre from a potentially embarrassing topic to a harmless one and so prevent it being aired. Alternatively, the speaker can use their influence by prolonging the subject that they prefer or puts them in a better light or even steer the subject matter to something inoffensive to the group concerned (O’Connell, Kowal and Kaltenbacher, 1990).

Other researchers (Bales, 1950; Ng et al., 1995) identified that the frequency of turn-taking served to identify individuals with the potential to be task or relational leaders. The reason for this was that the number of turns taken in conversation provided the speaker with more opportunities to use the power of turns. Group members on the path to becoming leaders were more likely to be the ones with the ability to break through the complex conversational system to gain the position as next speaker. More recent research has identified that groups often selectively favour particular forms of speech in that

potential leaders not only stand a better chance to become leaders through their success at turn-taking but also by their use of prototypical communication, that is to say how they adopt an accent, choice of code words and their ability to speak in a tone that characterise the group (Hogg and Tindale, 2005). Furthermore, the prototypical utterances distinguish members of the group as part of their social identity and form an in-group, differentiating themselves against those who are not in their group - the out-group (Reid and Ng, 2000). The idea was further developed to also shape behaviour of in-group members supporting the communication behaviour of potential leaders.

Such differentiating features belonging to group members may extend to those with a different native language learning a second language. The curriculum for learning a second language encourages the learner to embrace a whole new repertoire of words and conventions but when it comes to raising a question about meaning against a position of power or where the learner stands to lose face – the challenge increases further (Morita, 2012).

In the superior-subordinate relationship, certain power differentials in the use of language come into play. From the outset, the learner is a language user. When, however, the emphasis of interaction moves from the content of communication to the form of communication, this recreates the user as a learner and as a poor communicator (Liddicoat, 2016). This scenario brings inequality to the speakers of the language which, based on the position of the native speaker being the ideal creates asymmetry between the native speaker and the non-native speaker by reason of their proficiency:

“Those born into the matrix of nation and language can often invoke, in conversations with someone foreign to that matrix, the notion of a birthright of linguistic authority, an authority that is configured as an infallible innate sense of the acceptable utterance” (Bonfiglio, 2013 p. 29). This statement conjures up analogies to pollution of a race by foreigners and strongly goes against the direction of expansion of the English language today. Support for such a position of advantage of an English native speaker does not only lead to negativity, mistrust and anxiety in international communication but goes against the promotion of common understanding.

3.6 English as a Global Language

3.6.1 A leading contender as the world lingua franca

In his much-cited book “English as a global Language” (1997 p.1), Crystal states “English is a global language ... the kind of statement which seems so obvious that most people would give it hardly a second thought.” Crystal describes how language becomes global because of the power of the people who speak it and the concept of power which means different things at different times. The English language has become the language of commerce, the main language of diplomacy, the language of

air-traffic control, the main language of academic journals and also the most common language on the internet. It has been intimated that English might eventually be supplanted by languages such as Chinese, Hindi/Urdu or Arabic as global languages in the field of international business. This currently appears unlikely, given the interest and investment in the role played by English, as well as the point that the Roman alphabet would need to be supplanted too (Graddol, 2004).

Since adopting this dominant role, other researchers have also referenced English in a variety of forms, for example Ahlu (1977) calls it “General English” and McArthur (1987) declares it “World Standard (Spoken) English”. It then later appears as “English as a Lingua Franca” (House, 1999; Gnutzmann, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001; Jenkins, 2007).

In its growth from a national language to that of the Anglo-American culture and then that of global English, it is also interesting to examine what has happened to the inherent culture. Crystal (1997) is careful to recognise the global status of English by setting out the history of British Imperial dominance and American power which contributed to what is commonly referred to as the ‘spread’ of English. He links the existence of culture and dominance throughout his chronicle of colonisers and identifiable victims of colonisation (Kayman, 2004). However, when it comes to the present day, the historical element dissolves into an account of the language “which has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time” (Crystal 1997, p. 78), not that anyone actually placed it there but everyone has a claim on it. From this angle, Firth (1996 p. 240) , although clearly not referring to native speakers, describes it as “a contact language between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication”. Likewise, Kayman (2004 p.3) refers to it as a “stateless medium for communicating in a global community” – then De Swaan (2001 p.17) ultimately declares it “the hypercentral language that holds the entire world language system together.”

3.6.2 Global Englishes

As highlighted by Crystal (1997), the imperialistic legacy has left those countries laying claim on their own English. A quick reference to a spell-checker software displays an array of Englishes on offer – for example, Australian, Ghanaian, Nigerian and Indian. For each of these, although the differences are minimal, the English used reflects the cultural identity with its own words, expressions, accent and even grammatical structure (Crystal, 2010). Indian English – quite distinctive in terms of pronunciation and other grammatical variations, for example, the use of the continuous present with certain verbs. An English person from the UK might say “I know” In Indian English, this might be “I am knowing the answer to your question”. “I am thinking about it – I am knowing what you are saying”.

Clearly, Indian English has a few different rules to those pertaining to Standard English in the UK and USA. However, with the high level of movement in our world today, it is common to hear this among Indian and Asian English speakers in the UK today.

The map below in Figure 3.1 shows the way that English has spread around the world and highlights the influence of the two main branches of American and British English.

The American economic and cultural supremacy acts as a magnet for international business and trade and has consolidated the position of the English language and continues to maintain it today. The dominance by America and its worldwide influence has made English essential in developing international markets and providing access to scientific, technology and academic resources which would otherwise be denied developing countries (Crystal, 2019).

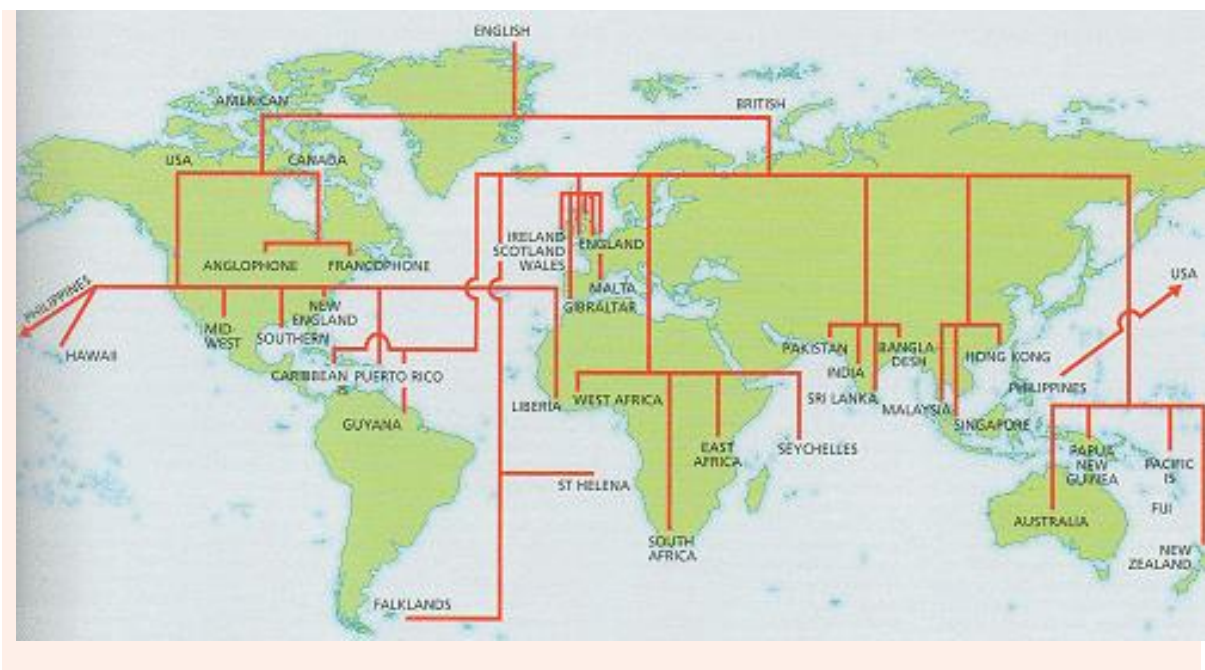


Figure 3.1: The spread of British and American English (Strevens,1972, cited by Crystal, 2019)

3.6.3 English as Lingua Franca

Clearly, the gravitational pull that English has over other languages and its worldwide reach is much greater than anything achieved historically by Latin or French, and there has never been a language as widely spoken as English is today (De Swaan, 2001). Many would reasonably claim that, in the fields of business, academics, science, computing, education, transportation, politics and entertainment, English is already established as the de facto lingua franca. Naturally, with the growth of the global status of English, the usage of English among non-native English speakers has increased exponentially (Crystal, 2010).

In their 2013 review, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen highlight the research into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in a globalised environment in the business context. They call this English as Business Lingua Franca (BELF). Their research was inspired by earlier research into ELF, which focuses on communication by NNSs as opposed to NSs and their research builds on the work by Seidlhofer (2001) who compared the nature of English spoken by native English speakers (ENL) and that of NS, speaking English as Lingua Franca (ELF), and explored the forms used. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen's findings (2013) highlight the goal-orientation of the business environment and how this is reflected in BELF discourse. Participants of the two studies conducted by the scholars were non-native English speakers from Sweden and Finland. The scholars describe BELF as "... very different from a "natural" language spoken with native speakers because it is highly situation-specific, dynamic, idiosyncratic and consequently, inherently tolerant of different varieties" (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, 2013 p. 28). Furthermore, they maintain that whilst grammatical correctness was not nearly as important as the particular field of expertise, a shared understanding of what, why, how and when to communicate was highly prized. Furthermore, professional competence included communication know-how was found to be an integral part of business know-how.

Two years earlier, Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011), presented some typical features of ELF lexicogrammar, phonology and pragmatics and their work sought to regularise the linguistic features and forms of ELF discourse in an attempt to define ELF more concisely. Since then, there has been a greater focus on context extending out to Academic settings (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Honna, 2012; Dewey, 2012).

Jenkins (2015) has continued research outside the business context and prescribes ELF is "hybrid" English, such that a NNS invents different ways of speaking English. Jenkins recommends the native speaker to mimic the NNS's different pronunciation and even build in words from other languages which the NNS may interject to the discourse in order to accommodate the features of their speech. According to Jenkins, the communication in ELF is supposed to be 'fluid' (adaptable) the native English speaker should adjust their way of thinking to accommodate this style of English.

This notion is interesting. However, to stretch the parameters this far is unlikely to be successful in the business world. Furthermore, it pushes the boundaries beyond those proposed by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2012), for whom the premise in the business sense was always to ensure "that you get the job done", that clear communication is achieved. Whilst some motivational leaders and managers may show patience and make allowances for poor English (such as that prescribed as ELF by Jenkins, 2015), when it comes down to who they will send to present to the client or lead the team, they will choose a strong communicator who exudes success and professionalism and makes people

feel comfortable – not someone with poor communication skills and sends out confusing messages (Clement and Murugavel, 2018).

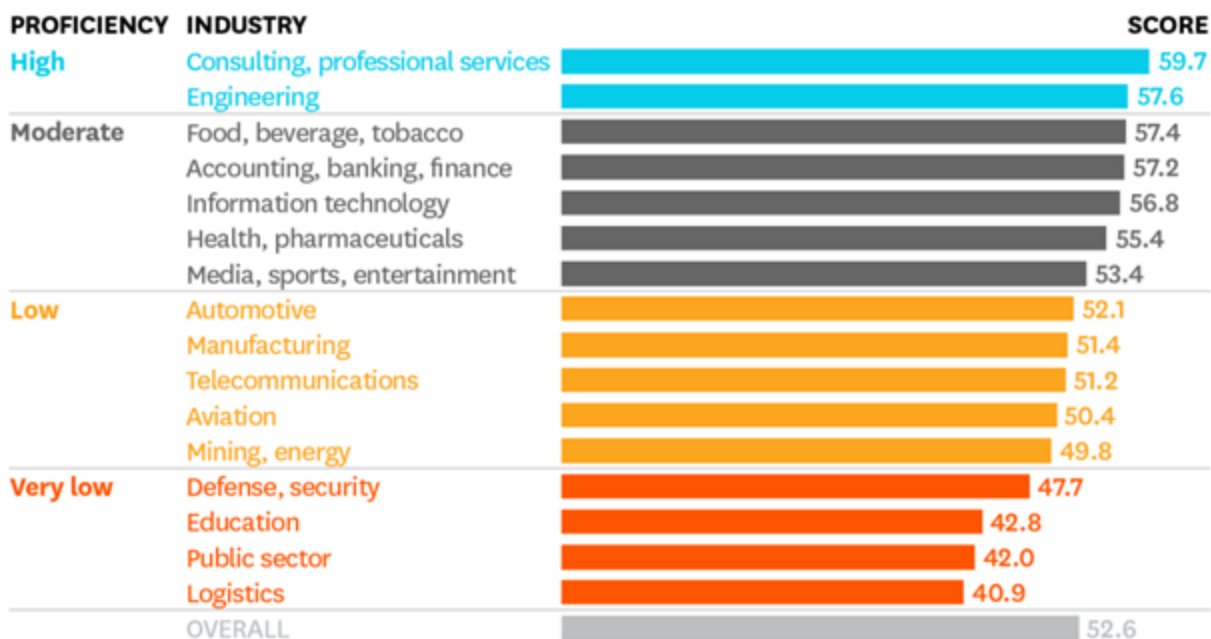
With different standards of English emerging, Crystal (2019) suggests a further term ‘World Standard Spoken English’ (WSSE) and the concept of “diglossia” with different strains of the language being used under different conditions. With this in mind, there are already several languages, such as Arabic, German and Greek, that have what are known as high (H, or standard) and low (L, or vernacular) varieties. English too may in certain instances already be diglossic in a similar way. For example, Standard English (acrolect English) is spoken in Jamaica in everyday commerce, media, government and banking settings which is considered H. Then in everyday life, Patois (the basilect, an ancient form of Creole) spoken amongst Jamaicans of all classes which is L. Jamaicans of all classes switch from one to the other seamlessly in all situations. In parts of the world where Standard English is used, this may be increasing at various levels, whether among NSs (amongst themselves) or between NNS and NS. In view of most people already being ‘multidialectal’, this would allow for people to still relate in their dialects for use within their home country but when communicating with those from other countries, they would change to speaking, as termed by Crystal (2019), ‘WSEE’.

3.7 Second Language Acquisition

The growth of English as a global language in its various forms has increased the focus in language learning (Balla, 2018). Although it has been argued by some as linguistic imperialism (Pennycook, 1995), it is now widely accepted that English has been adopted as the de facto universal language in Business, Science and Technology, Education, Internet and Entertainment (Rao, 2019). Furthermore, MNCs such as Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, SAP, Nokia, Alcatel-Lucent and Microsoft in Beijing have all adopted English as their corporate language. Figure 3.2 below illustrates and rates proficiency levels in English across sectors, according to EF’s 100 point scale:

Workforce English Proficiency, by Industry

It varies greatly, but all industries have room for improvement.



SOURCE EF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX FOR COMPANIES

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(EF English Proficiency Index, as cited by Tran and Burman, 2016)

Figure 3.2: Rating English Proficiency by Industry globally

The scores shown in the Figure 3.2 by the EF English Proficiency Index refer to their standard test against 100 scale. As argued by Tran and Burman (2016), these statistics reveal some interesting results. Company size correlates with level of English ability. Companies with annual sales of \$10-\$60 billion scored higher than those with annual sales of less than \$10 billion. Women with university education scored higher than men with equivalent qualifications. People holding executive-level positions scored higher than the managers who reported to them.

So, it is hardly surprising that there has been “an unprecedented surge” in the motivation to learn English as a foreign language (Boo, Dörnyei and Ryan 2015, p.145, cited by Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2017).

The concept of second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the process by which a human learns a language once their first language has been acquired, during late childhood, adolescence or adulthood; this scientific discipline is not only devoted to the study of how learning takes place but also the learner’s predisposition to learn (Ellis,1986). The additional language, referred to as the second language (L2), may actually be the third, fourth or even fifth language being learned. Much of the research in SLA has focused on the learning of L2 English, however, it is useful to note that

important research findings have been generated in other second languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Dutch and many more.

Some children grow up monolingual, with most of their language being learned between the ages of 18 months and three to four years. It is also important to note the area of bilingual or multilingual - first language acquisition as in many parts of the world, children grow up acquiring two or more languages simultaneously, and these are the majority (Gordon, 2005). The field of multilingual acquisition during early childhood (before the age of four) examines how these two or more languages are represented in the brain and how the individual alternates between these languages according to different circumstances (Kuhl, 2004).

SLA research embraces theories from a number of different disciplines: linguistic, cognitive, psycholinguistic and sociocultural. From the sociocultural perspective, researchers in the field of SLA seek to understand the acquisition of second languages in both naturalistic and instructed contexts. The naturalistic approach encompasses acquiring a second language through informal opportunities in social interaction - multicultural home environments, schools and workplaces without formal instruction. An instructed approach, as the name suggests, embraces a more formal approach to studying a language either at school, university, private tuition and the majority of people learn second languages through a combination of these approaches (Gordon, 2005).

From the cognitive perspective, the central focus in SLA is that of “interlanguage” which serves as a notional bridge between the speaker’s mother tongue(s) (L1) and the language being learned (L2). This bridge is dynamic and permeable; indeed as learners acquire knowledge, they also utilise knowledge of their mother tongue (as well as other known languages) together with their knowledge of the target language to organise their approach into a kind of ‘mental grammar’ (Gordon, 2005). Their challenges may also stem from syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation thinking resulting from their L1. Interestingly, each learner’s interlanguage is systematic. The language learner’s rules may not align with the actual rules of either language but are unique to the individual alone. They may be influenced not only by their native language but also by other languages of which they already have knowledge. This influence, termed “language transfer”, may develop over time with increased exposure to the target language (Loewen and Reinders, 2011). Interlanguage stems from the idea of a dormant psychological framework that the human brain activates when learning a second language (Selinker, 1972).

In SLA, certain processes and mechanisms in conversation can push learners to use and stretch their interlanguage. Pica et al. (1989) claim that when language learners are in conversation with native speakers and receive a clarification request from the native speaker, they are pushed to elaborate

their interlanguage output. Furthermore, it has been noted by scholars that an information gap may push learners in unstructured conversations to use more interlanguage. This supports Long's (1983) claim that in unstructured conversation learners and their interlocutors can avoid difficult subjects and thereby circumvent repair negotiation and pushed output and so maintain the flow of the conversation.

3.7.1 Negotiation of meaning

It is now widely accepted that student engagement in communicative tasks enables language learning in a number of ways (Foster, 1998). As students practise modifying and adapting linguistic structures in conversation to produce the target language, they further their knowledge through input and thereby engage better in expressing their outputs.

One of the many ways in which such interactive learning occurs stems from the "Model of Non-understandings" (Varonis and Gass, 1985). The model has been extensively used to evaluate episodes of negotiation of meaning especially between NS and NNS. The model describes how negotiation of meaning can be set out in two parts: a trigger and a resolution:

TRIGGER	RESOLUTION
T →	I → R → RR

In this situation, a trigger (T) is uttered by the speaker as part of the discourse and is not understood by the hearer. An indicator (I) is prompted by the hearer indicating their non-understanding of the episode and leads to a resolution (RR) but in so doing stops the conversation moving forward. The example by van der Zwaard and Bannink (2014), shown in Table 3.1, based on their data, follows the model by Varonis and Gass (1985):

1.	NS	There's a figure as well	TRIGGER (T)
2.	NNS	A what?	INDICATOR (I)
3.	NA	A figure ... like a little statue	RESPONSE (R) (NS tries to solve the non-understanding by elaborating on the TRIGGER)
4.	NNS	Alright	REACTION TO RESPONSE (RR)
5.	NS	The figure is British	Interaction has popped back up

Table 3.1: Model to show non-understanding of episode, adapted by van der Zwaard and Bannink (2014) from "Model of Non-understandings" (Varonis and Gass, 1985)

As a result of non-understanding, the conversation is interrupted and the interactional repair process begins. The model relies on one of the language learners initiating the negotiation for meaning, confirming their non-understanding and so starting the process of repair and corrective measures. However, following this form of negotiated interaction does not prove to be common, even among native speakers; language learners prefer to wait for the interlocutor to resolve the problem source rather than to ask for clarification or explanation (Schegloff, 2000; Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977, cited by van der Zwaard and Bannink, 2014). The avoidance of face-threatening actions echoes the studies of Brown and Levinson (1978 [1987]) and Goffman (1967) and has been borne out in more recent studies by Foster (1998), Foster and Ohta (2005) and van der Zwaard and Bannink (2014). In a task-orientated activity involving multinational students, engaging in interactive learning, Foster and Ohta (2005) observed students avoiding the breakdown of communication by actively prompting and assisting each other. For them, reaching complete understanding was of lesser importance than keeping a harmonious and supportive discussion.

Similarly, with the use of digital platforms in the learning environment becoming increasingly common, van der Zwaard and Bannink (2014) investigate negotiation for meaning during interaction between NS and NNS speakers of English. They conducted a task-based exercise in an advanced second language classroom via two forms of one-to-one computer-mediated communication through video calling and instant chat messaging. The outcome showed that during the video calls the students reacted more “face appropriately” rather than “task appropriately”, meaning that when they felt both physically and vocally present, they were happier to leave things vague and unresolved. However, in the text chat channel, due to the relative anonymity in this medium, the students reacted more efficiently in completing the task and resolving any potential issues of misunderstanding through actively negotiating meaning with their participant partner.

These examples support the view that one of the most critical aspects for second language learners is clarifying and checking meaning but it does come with the risk – firstly of breaking up the conversation to check meaning and secondly, to lose “face” by being perceived as “deficient” in intelligence, stature, knowledge by the other speaker, who may be a native speaker or someone with a greater knowledge of the language. Such situations do not only occur in the classroom where language is being learned, and in this environment, one might argue that the language learner might be safer in terms of losing face. In the business world, the linguistic knowledge of a NNS can be tested further as misunderstandings can lead to greater consequences as will be examined in this research study set out in the following chapters.

3.8 Summary of literature on language

In the words of James Champy, American business consultant:

“People like to think that businesses are built of numbers (as in the ‘bottom line’), or forces (as in ‘market forces’), or things (the product’), or even flesh or blood (‘our people’). But this is wrong. Businesses are made of ideas – ideas expressed as words” (1995, p. 12).

In order to really understand the power of language, it is important to acquire a general understanding of language and how communication actually takes place. This chapter supplies a foundation of some of the key constituents and complexities of working cross-lingually and serves to build awareness of how language is used in daily interactions. This knowledge will particularly benefit those working with language diverse teams. It is so easy to assume a direct link between language and meaning, to take for granted that if something is said one way, it will always mean the same, no matter the situation or with whom we communicate. However, differences in interpretation can be immensely detrimental when a project deadline is approaching and urgent action is required during a major international business negotiation. These can be problematic when conversing in one’s own native language, but even more problematic when communicating across language barriers with globally dispersed teams.

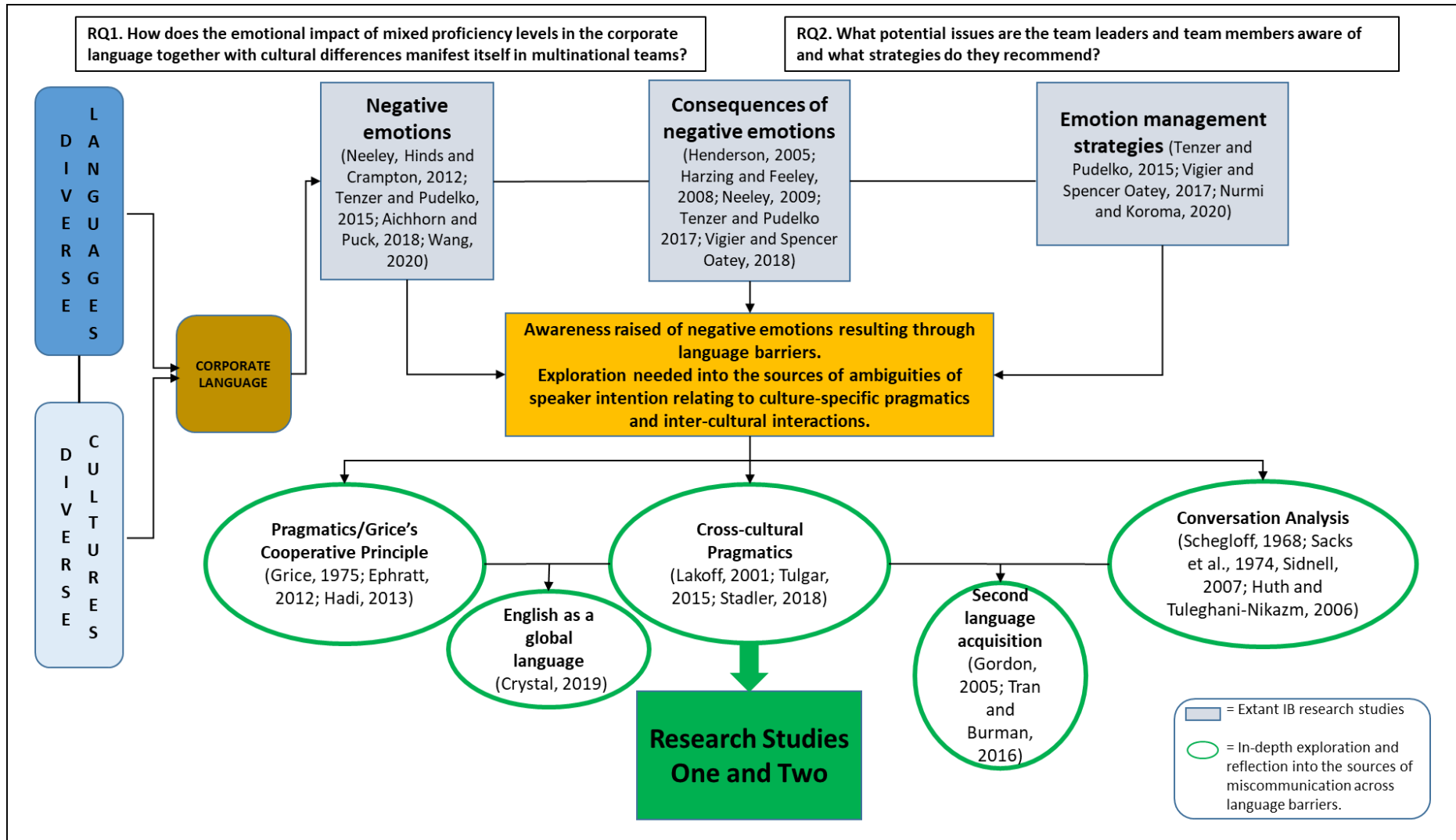
3.9 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in Figure 3.3 below sets out the key interrelated concepts under examination in this study and shows a summary of the IB literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the relevant linguistic theory from Chapter 3.

In the framework, the issues of diverse languages and diverse cultures are depicted as closely coupled unlike IB studies which prefer to detach language from culture. These then feed into the mandate of the corporate language.

From this point, one arrow leads to a top row, indicating three key themes from language-sensitive studies in IB literature which refer to the issue of language-induced emotions, negative emotions, the consequences of negative emotions and emotion management strategies. The themes raised in these studies are highly relevant and have helped motivate the pursuit of this study; they either raise awareness that a problem exists or highlight the consequences of the problem. Although some authors set out the beginnings of strategies team leaders could undertake to relieve the problem, none of the studies scrutinise them in any depth and, in many cases, generally dispel their likely effectiveness.

Figure 3.3: Theoretical Framework setting out the basis for the study



Therefore, to answer the research questions requires further investigation into the triggers of emotion through communicating in a foreign language. The study of social pragmatics studies the issue of sentence meaning and speaker intention. This issue is particularly prevalent in cross-lingual communication. Although some previous studies give a cursory mention, most authors do not consider the issues of speaker intention and the key differences in the conventions of conversation: the conscious choices made by individuals in speech, the key constituents required in order to make conversation a success, the conversational manoeuvres marked by signals of direction which result in anxiety and ambiguity. All of these issues become amplified through differences in language and culture and culminate in language barriers that elicit emotions. This essential new component, encapsulated in Chapter 3, is unique to this study and to date no other studies have drawn from a linguistic enquiry highlighting the important aspects of pragmatics and cultural constraints of linguistic expression. This exploration therefore also feeds into and informs the research conducted in Studies One and Two because these studies explore in depth how language barriers elicit emotions, the issues of which the respondents are aware and how these can be diminished.

This study provides a strong foundation to inform the MNT leader so that they can not only be alert to these potential shortcomings but also source ways to mitigate them. The analysis of the two studies in this thesis draws on this basis to illustrate the use of this linguistic foundation.

Having reviewed the basis for the investigation through the theoretical framework, the next chapter sets out the strategy to undertake the research to answer the two research questions. It evaluates the methods open to conduct the study and why the specific research methods for the two studies were adopted. It also describes the course of action taken to execute the two studies.

Chapter 4: Method and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the specific procedures and techniques used in conducting studies one and two and begins with an outline of the theoretical underpinnings in the use of qualitative analysis. This is followed by a description of the different research methods for studies one and two – the data collection, the process of selecting participants, their recruitment, and the data analysis.

To answer the two research questions, two studies were undertaken both using qualitative data: Study One focuses on data gathered from 12 semi-structured interviews comprising participants from two multinational teams (MNTs). Study Two facilitates a triangulation of the results of Study One, using data gathered from the collective views of a focus group made up of MNT members.

4.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

4.2.1 *Qualitative vs. quantitative research*

The merits and use of quantitative and qualitative research methods have long been a subject of debate. Each research method has largely different objectives and methods but both are important and appropriate, depending on the nature of the research question.

Quantitative research explains phenomena numerically and analyses them statistically. Such research designs are very specific, exploring the “what”, “where”, and “when” questions with the aim of classifying certain aspects to present these statistically (Jones, 2002). They are most often used to test a phenomenon against variables, using statistics to prove or disprove the validity of the theory (Cresswell, 1994; Gay and Airasian, 2000). Quantitative research takes the view that the outcomes of the research are objective and puts a distance between the researcher and the object or phenomena being studied (Yilmaz, 2013), thereby maintaining a neutral status. They allow the researcher to produce universal laws on social behaviour and a generalizable set of findings but fail to provide insight into the participants’ individual feelings or personal experiences. Owing to its neutral stance, quantitative research follows an objective epistemology (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is focused precisely on issues quantitative research fails to bring to the fore. It spotlights the phenomenon under observation and encapsulates the subject’s experiences, thoughts and feelings in their own words through an interview or focus group (Yilmaz, 2013). Qualitative research is often considered “difficult to define” because of it being complex and supported by different paradigms (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p. 26). Hence, the views of several

scholars have been researched in this regard. Drawing on research literature (Creswell, 2007, p.37; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, 2005, p.3; Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp.6-7; Patton, 2002, pp.39-41), Yilmaz (2013) provides the clearest and most succinct description, that qualitative research is “emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world.”

As regards the epistemological, theoretical and methodological underpinnings of quantitative and qualitative research, there are substantial differences here too. Qualitative research is based on constructivist epistemology as the researcher seeks to explore the object under study through its own eyes and the others involved and hence provide it with a deeper meaning - a framework that is value-laden, flexible, holistic and context-sensitive (Best, 1989).

4.2.2 Epistemology: Positivism, relativism (interpretivism) and critical realism

The central concern of epistemology is the view of what counts as legitimate knowledge and how we decide what is meaningful. As mentioned earlier, quantitative and qualitative research designs differ greatly in relation to their epistemological, theoretical and methodological foundations (Yilmaz, 2013). Quantitative research is governed by objective epistemology and aims to measure statistically the cause and effect of variables in a framework that reflects the clear objective truth. Quantitative research goes together with the underlying assumption of positivism that knowledge must be based on fact and value free (Sayer, 2000) believing “scientific knowledge is utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is certain and accurate” (Crotty, 1998).

However, this scientific claim was greatly disputed among researchers as they started to question its appropriateness to social research settings (Robson, 2002). Exploring the multi-faceted world of “real people” is dynamic and far less straightforward, unlike the strictly controlled world of the laboratory (Pawson and Tilley, 2003).

Other philosophies offered alternative approaches to the positivist/mechanistic approach in order to accommodate social sciences and the “world of people”.

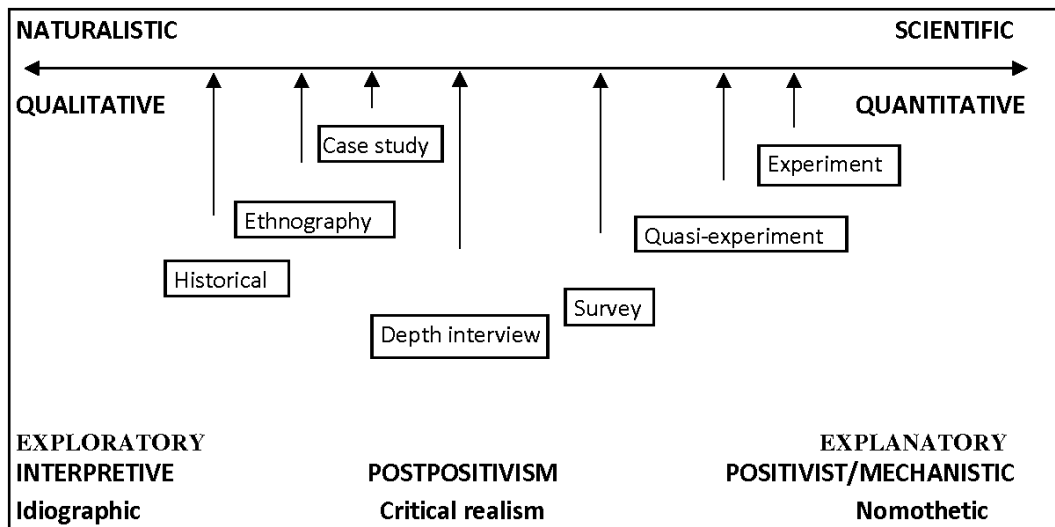


Figure 4.1: The ontology continuum

Source: Cited by Bisman (2010) and adapted from Bright (1991, p.25) and Wiersma (1995, p.14), with the addition of critical realism and various descriptors for other forms of research.

At the right-hand side of the continuum in Figure 4.1, is shown the scientific, quantitative approach described earlier. At the other end is found a very different approach toward the concept of reality in Interpretivism. This approach does not believe that human beings consider reality objectively. Moreover, it sees the knowledge held by the mind as contextual fed by the nature of the environment and culture of the person concerned. Furthermore, the interpreter’s lens opposes the quest for one reality, instead accepting the existence of multiple realities and truths (Robson, 2002). It postulates that people form their views from the language in which they engage, from the perceptions they hold and the different interpretations they attribute to experiences in their everyday lives. Interpretivists support the view that people are not “passive puppets” to be manipulated by the world but actively create their own social realities (Robson 2002).

As can be seen in the continuum, between interpretivism and positivism lies the post positivist movement and critical realism. Critical realism holds that knowledge or “truth” can exist and be common to a group of individuals, but each individual’s experience of truth will be influenced by their own subjective constructions (Robson, 2002). However, the knowledge that people hold founded on culture, environment and experience contributes to the overall account of the social phenomena under examination (Joseph, 2004).

In contrast to interpretivism, critical realism does not support the idea that reality is socially constructed but that the individual’s ideas of reality and methods to explore realities are socially constructed from their own environment (Bhaskar, 1978).

The critical realist approach calls upon a real and knowable world that is positioned just “behind” the subjective and socially located knowledge a researcher can acquire (Madill et al., 2000). The idea that knowledge and reality are inextricably linked fits well when exploring the world of human experiences and considering the impact of the wider social context on their meanings. Whilst interpretivism offers some scope in understanding these experiences, restricting these to a purely subjective stance and ignoring completely the wider social context detracts from the research argument by limiting it to the “micro” level (Sayer, 2000). In the context of this study, the external reality of people’s feelings underpins the substructure for knowledge of how communication across language barriers influences them. Hence, the critical realist approach, which embraces the wider context of the environment together with the context of knowledge and experience held by the individual, is a more balanced approach and is the stance adopted in this study.

4.3 Research Methodology: Rationale for a qualitative design

Given the lack of research to date into the impact of different linguistic proficiency levels on emotions in MNTs, it was decided that a qualitative exploratory and inductive approach was the most appropriate for this purpose. Without any preconceived ideas about the emotional challenges of multilingual settings, it allows one to listen and learn from the research participants’ subjective perceptions based on semi-structured interviews (Study One) and the views of the focus group (Study Two).

4.4 Study One Research Method and Data Collection

4.4.1 The use of semi-structured interviews

In using a qualitative design in the context of MNTs, semi-structured interviews allow for the exploration of the “how” aspects (Pratt, 2009) and to explore in-depth the context that influences the feelings of the participants as well as the events that trigger emotions because of language barriers. Furthermore, they provide access to how the participants make sense of their world by asking open questions and presenting direct quotations from the interviews, demonstrating the depth of feeling expressed by the participants (Yilmaz, 2013). In a social context, this is clearly valuable, and a relatively small number of interviews produces a wealth of information at a personal level which fits perfectly with the aim of this study.

4.4.2 *Methods of qualitative data analysis*

There are several different approaches to identifying the themes and patterns found in qualitative data. In considering the most appropriate for the study, several methods were explored to identify the most appropriate approach.

One approach under consideration is that of the Case Study. Case studies are regarded as a suitable method to describe, explain, predict and control processes involving a range of phenomena (Woodside and Wilson, 2003). The main advantages of case study research are found in its ability to establish in-depth analysis of phenomena in context, to incorporate the specific historical perspectives and thereby produce authentic representations of the reality of the context under focus (Gagnon, 2010). However, the advantage of high internal validity does not necessarily extend externally and thereby has significant shortcomings in that the research results are often difficult to replicate. Furthermore, the narrow focus and pursuit of generalisability may affect the researcher's view of the specific issues of the case under scrutiny (Stake, 1994). Case studies are therefore considered for research projects focused on a particular phenomenon or a specific process (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Another approach is Interpretive Phenomenological Epistemology (IPA) which involves collecting information and gaining an understanding of individuals' subjective experiences of reality (Smith, 2008). Owing to the fact that the analysis is strongly interpretive and focuses highly on the individual characteristics, this was discounted as unsuitable. Pattern-based discourse analysis is also used to analyse interactions with people. However, it also has a strong external focus on analysing the social context in which the communication between the researcher and the respondent occurred and includes the respondent's day-to-day environment in the analysis which would not allow for the deductive identification of themes in the data (Leipold et al., 2019).

Grounded theory, like IPA, is concerned with constructing theory. In the context of this study, it could be used to identify themes and patterns in the data to draw out theory in relation to how differing levels of linguistic proficiency in the corporate language impact emotions in MNTs. However, there are many different variants of grounded theory, some taking a more positivist approach, such as Glaser (1992, 1978) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) more constructivist approach on theoretical orientation and increasingly more dotted along the continuum. However, on closer examination, Grounded Theory has very prescriptive procedures (Braun and Clarke, 2013), for example, "line-by-line coding", "theoretical sampling", "saturation" and not allowing the researcher to engage with theory or the literature before analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) maintain thematic analysis provides a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. Furthermore, the methodology

offers more flexibility and a rigorous process can identify the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and produce unanticipated insights.

4.4.3 Thematic Analysis

The process of Thematic Analysis (TA) allows the researcher to identify, report themes within the participants' understanding and to analyse patterns within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It also allows the opportunity to interpret certain aspects of the research question against the resultant analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), later forming the foundation for the next stage of the research process.

However, criticisms of this approach have been levied in the past due to the lack of clear guidelines for researchers; indeed, in some cases leading researchers have failed to provide clear methods of how their analysis was conducted to reach their results (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Furthermore, many authors have defined qualitative analysis as a phenomenological method (for example, Guest et al., 2012, Joffe, 2011). The different versions of TA tend to share some degree of theoretical flexibility, but can differ enormously in terms of both underlying philosophy and procedures for producing themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) view this as a more flexible approach and hence have named it Reflexive Thematic Analysis as it suits a number of applications.

Braun and Clarke describe a range of possible ways to coding and theme development, as directed by the content of the data, from inductive, deductive, semantic, latent, critical realist and constructionist (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

The critical realist approach has been followed for both studies as this best suits the nature of the two research methods conducted with the MNT members. Both studies explore the assumed reality of the participants as they collaborate with their fellow MNT members both globally and locally. It examines in detail their everyday experiences as they work across language barriers.

The next section presents how the MNT members for Study One were selected as research participants for the semi-structured interviews.

4.4.4 Selection of participants

In view of the planned inductive approach of the project, participants were sourced who would be information rich. Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3 (§ 3.7) illustrates English proficiency levels by industry. This figure indicates that the consulting, professional services and engineering sectors achieve the highest proficiency levels. Literature on language in International Business reveals that studies to date have focused on different industries with, according to the English Proficiency Index for Industries (Figure 3.2), potentially lower proficiency levels (EF English Proficiency Index, as cited by Tran and Burman, 2016). Tran and Burman (2016) also highlight that the larger the business, the greater the fluency

levels. This study investigates the impact on emotions of working with mixed proficiency levels and cultural differences among MNTs with a potentially higher command of the corporate language. Hence, the participants were selected from major international consulting firms in the professional services sector. They were all members of multinational and multilingual teams, working as either native (NS) or non-native speakers (NNSs) of the corporate language (English).

Qualitative researchers have long debated the question of ideal “sample size” and concluded that the answer depends on several factors relating to epistemological, methodological and practical issues (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Sandelowski (1996) recommends that qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to accommodate the disclosure of a “new and richly textured understanding” of the phenomenon under scrutiny, but, at the same time, small enough not to preclude the “deep, case-orientated analysis” (p. 183) required by qualitative data. Furthermore, the more useable the data, the fewer participants required (Morse, 2000). Both studies follow the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006) who posit that the sample sizes should be large enough to capture a range of perspectives but not to the point of being drowned by the dataset.

The researcher enjoyed a 25-year career in international business prior to embarking on her doctoral research. Her personal experience of cross-border collaboration confirmed the importance and relevance of cross-cultural and cross-lingual interaction and why communication impacts outcomes in teamwork. In selecting participants, the researcher turned to her network and posted information on her LinkedIn profile about the study and also put together a short five-minute video posted on YouTube, (Weinzierl, 2018), to raise awareness of the research, highlighting salient points from published literature to date and the potential findings of the study.

The researcher also approached contacts directly who lead or are members of MNTs working across language barriers/differences, and the research proposal attracted a significant level of interest. In particular, two teams from two different global information technology corporations, both engaged in consultancy, showed a particular interest in participating. It should be noted that the information technology sector is a different sector to the one highlighted in the previous study by Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) where the focus was on large automotive organisations based in Germany. For the purposes of this study, the teams from the two multinational corporations (MNCs) are referred to as Tech 1 and Tech 2. Whilst different in sector specialisms, the final teams consisted of consultants, where communication skills are an integral part of their service offering and where, particularly in Information Technology, much of the terminology has been generated in English and shared globally (Ehrenreich, 2010).

The researcher met with the global team leaders Respondent KC and Respondent JM to discuss the nature of the enquiry and the composition of their teams. Both leaders stated that impact of emotions from language and cultural differences is indeed of essential relevance and specifically requested to receive a copy of the final results. The team leaders immediately circulated the information sheet about the study (see Appendix 1) to their team members situated in regional offices globally. Participation was purely voluntary but supported by the team leaders. Within a couple of days, six members from each team volunteered to participate. The members were all senior members of a MNT that not only operates globally and virtually, but also leaders of local teams too. Thus, it was also possible to compare and contrast their experiences from multiple angles. To ensure clarity of expectations and that all matters relating to ethics and confidentiality were clarified and guaranteed, each member completed a consent form. From then, interviews were arranged, **predominantly** via Skype, owing to the international locations the members were based in, for example Japan, US, Germany, Chile.

For both organisations, the corporate language is English. However, locally, the team members communicate **predominantly** in the local language. Of course, it is totally conceivable that had the researcher interviewed all the participants in their native languages, richer results might have been obtained. Speaking about emotions is difficult at any time but in a foreign language can be especially challenging (Von Glinow et al., 2004). The use of a translator was considered but discounted as it might have detracted from building a rapport where the team members felt they could speak freely on a one-on-one basis. Hence, it was decided that the most expedient way was to conduct the interviews in English. This worked very well and the interviews took place in an open and cooperative climate and the participants spoke freely and in great detail about their experiences. The semi-structured interviews took place between August 2018 and November 2018.

4.4.5 The study sample

As can be seen in Table 4.1 below, twelve research participants took part in the interviews – six from Tech 1 and six from Tech 2. Tech 1 participants were members of a global marketing team, specialising in the Industrial sector and part of a large information technology consulting firm, headquartered in the US. Tech 2 participants were members of a global Design Thinking team also from a global information technology firm with headquarters in Germany and the US.

As members of global teams, they came together for global meetings virtually but also were members of their own local and regional teams. The participants comprised nine women and three men and were 75% mid-career and native speakers of the company corporate language, English. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 100 minutes.

Participant pseudonym	Location	Team Leader	Gender	Career level	Level of English (self-assessed)	Interview type
Tech 1						
KC	US	Yes (global)	M	Senior	Native	Skype
KA	Belgium	No	F	Mid	Fluent	Skype
LR	US	No	F	Mid	Native	Skype
SZ	Italy	No	F	Mid	Fluent	Skype
RS	Germany	No	F	Mid	Fluent	Skype
EP	Finland	Yes (regional)	F	Senior	Fluent	Skype
Tech 2						
JM	UK	Yes (global)	M	Senior	Native	Face-to-face
AF	Germany	No	F	Mid	Fluent	Skype
HT	US	No	F	Senior	Native	Skype
ML	Germany	No	M	Mid	Fluent	Skype
HH	Japan	No	F	Mid	Fluent	Skype
FR	Chile	No	M	Mid	Fluent	Phone call

Table 4.1: Summary of Study One research participants

Both organisations have English as their corporate language. Each member of the team was asked to assess their own level of English at the beginning of their interview.

Before embarking on the recruitment of the participants, two pilot studies were conducted in the form of two semi-structured interviews with one team leader and one member of a MNT. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher to reveal how targeted the questions were in relation to the results they disclosed; final adjustments were then made to the questions before actually undertaking the interviews.

4.4.6 Ethical considerations

An application to the St. Mary’s University Ethics committee was submitted and approved prior to the research being launched (see Appendix 3). All participants received full information about the research project and consent forms were completed by each of the participants. All interviewees were voluntary adults, fully informed and aware of their commitment in undertaking the interviews. They were also given opportunities to ask questions prior to the interviews taking place. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured at all times and the use of initials in the analysis masks the identity of the

real participants. Furthermore, the data files were encrypted and only the researcher and her supervisors had access to the interview recordings and the transcripts.

4.5 Data collection

4.5.1 *Design of the interview questions*

The composition of the semi-structured interviews sought to draw on some of the themes identified in the literature review (Chapter 2). The questions were looking for critical incidents, experienced by the interviewees, and the specific triggers that elicited emotions from speaking the corporate language, English, in international team collaboration.

The interviews focused on the matter of working with different levels of linguistic proficiency in the corporate language and cultural differences. A full list of the questions asked is found in Appendix 4. The questions included the following:

1. Introductory question to understand the participant's team activities
 - Global/local team size
 - Nationalities
 - Understanding of the corporate language policy and how they enact it
 - Use of corporate language
2. Feelings in relation to different levels of language proficiency
 - Probe into any emotions mentioned
 - Specific situation in which language proficiency caused them some kind of emotion
3. Their own native language
 - Feelings in relation to having to communicate in a foreign language at work
 - Impact on team collaboration/productivity
 - General feelings of their fellow team members in relation to speaking a foreign language at work (if appropriate)
4. Thoughts on how any issues (mentioned so far) could be mitigated
 - Whose responsibility?
5. Any instances where language proficiency caused emotions in the team
6. Reflection on cultural differences.
7. Reflection on how cultural differences impact the language barriers in their team

8. Different feelings when communicating with some entities of their team in preference to others. Why?
9. Reflection on how they consider the influence of cultural differences within the team in relation to:
 - communication
 - individual workload
 - collaboration
 - personal productivity
10. Reflection on different cultural styles within the team.
11. Further reflection on feelings – are they due to language, culture or both?
12. Reflection on any positive emotions in relation to working in a MNT
13. Impact of bi-lingual team members
14. Thoughts in relation to anything else not talked about that should be included

During the interview process, the tone was kept conversational and informal to allow flexibility for each individual's context. The researcher only occasionally interjected, as and when necessary, to guide the thrust of the conversation and to ensure all the topics in the questionnaire were covered. It was also important to exercise sensitivity and the researcher was aware of the danger of "researcher effects" and care was taken to maintain focus and not to project bias. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) state, "Far from being an impersonal data collector, the interviewer ... is the research tool" (p.88).

4.5.2 Data analysis

In their article (2006), Braun and Clarke set out a series of phases through which researchers must pass on their journey to produce well-defined thematic analysis and these were closely followed during the process of the analysis.

Phase one: Familiarisation with the data. This phase required the researcher to read and re-read the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with responses of each interview candidate. The researcher also listened to the recordings of the interviews over again.

Phase two: Coding: This phase involved generating succinct labels (codes) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research questions. It required coding the entire dataset, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis. This entire coding process was conducted by hand as it is an iterative activity

and allows the researcher to work closer with the data. In this way, it was easier to find commonalities and relationships in anticipation of the next phase (Saldaña, 2013).

Phase three: Generating initial themes: During this phase the codes and collated data were closely examined to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). To advance understanding, not only the frequency of the themes was considered but also the saliency of each individual code in its relevance to the research enquiry (Buetow, 2010). In view of the fact that research focuses on the impact on emotions, events that triggered emotions were investigated further to identify patterns and themes. Then the data was collated into two tables (one table for each research question, see Appendix 6) according to its relevance to each potential theme and the research question. The viability and significance of each potential theme was thus reviewed.

Phase four: Reviewing themes: At this point, the candidate themes were verified against the dataset to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that answers the research question. In this phase, themes were refined again and in some cases split, combined, or discarded. The themes often have a pattern of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea.

Phase five: Defining and naming themes: This phase involved developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the “story” of each. It also requires one to devise an informative name for each theme.

Phase six: Writing up: This final phase required the researcher to weave together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualise the analysis.

These stages appear here as six distinct stages of the process of analysis. However, it must be stressed that this is a highly iterative and reflective process that develops over time and involves a constant moving back and forward between phases.

4.6 Study Two – Research Method and Data Collection

4.6.1 *The use of a focus group*

To triangulate the rich results obtained from Study One, it was decided to convene a focus group discussion with questions exploring further **the key themes** identified in Study One. The aim was to compare the responses from the individual semi-structured interviews in Study One with the responses of a socially interacting group. Focus groups are frequently used in combination with other methods but not often acknowledged as part of a triangulation strategy (Caillaud and Flick, 2017).

In qualitative research, focus groups can be used as a stand-alone method or to supplement other research methods. By drawing on different perspectives or sources, it is possible to utilise different

bearings to attain a correct position and validate the answers to the research questions (Valentine, 2005).

Focus group is a group discussion used widely in participatory research and the approach emerged originally as a qualitative research strategy to bridge the need for scientific research and local knowledge (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) and has been used by sociologists and psychologists since the 1940s (Merton and Kendall, 1946; Merton, Fiske and Kendall, 1956). Focus groups may be regarded as similar to semi-structured interviews as they both have the potential to uncover new material. The difference lies in the dynamics of the meeting. The data is socially constructed within the interaction of the group (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In semi-structured interviews the interviewer adopts a role as an investigator but in a focus group, although a question is tabled, the interviewer adopts a more peripheral role as a moderator (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001; Johnson, 1996; Kitzinger, 1994); this allows for the group to discuss the topics more freely but may be brought back to the agenda by the moderator should the train of discussion stray too widely. Focus groups have the propensity to imitate “real life” and thereby encourage the use of participants’ own words when expressing their views (Kitzinger, 1994; Wilkinson, 1998). Both semi-structured interviews and focus groups are expedient ways to explore complex behaviours, opinions and emotions and for gathering critical incidents. These methods do not provide the researcher a direct road to “the truth” but they do extend partial insights into what individuals actually do and think (Longhurst, 2003).

Conducting a focus group online supplied many benefits for this study. The fact that most global MNTs operate virtually most of the time (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Zander, Mockaitis and Butler, 2012) meant that the participants were familiar with the medium of video conferencing and indeed allowed the focus group meeting to take place. At the time this study was conducted in 2020 amid the COVID restrictions, it would have made it extremely difficult to conduct this meeting face-to-face. Even if it were possible to gather together different members of global MNTs based in the same geography, it would have still been difficult to bring them together in the same room. However, in MNCs with globally dispersed MNTs, mostly operating virtually, this is a familiar environment.

Conducting a focus group as an added layer of research to study one provided another perspective to the data from study one and enrich the contextual nature of it. As highlighted by Reinharz, “the multi-method approach increases the likelihood that ... researchers will understand what they are studying, and that they will be able to persuade others of the veracity of their findings” (1992, p.197). In this sense, focus groups may be used to develop concepts identified through interviews. The notion of the multi-method approach is that they work to heighten understanding by adding layers of information, by employing one set of data to triangulate or cultivate the other (Gaiser, 2008).

4.6.2 Participants and recruitment procedure

In selecting participants for the focus group, the researcher turned to her network to invite new respondents from the professional services sector, the same sector as for Study One. She found significant interest from the respondents who volunteered. As they were not all members of the same MNT, it was possible to gather a variety of viewpoints from different MNT perspectives to draw comparison with the results from Study One.

4.6.3 Study sample

This method required collecting data from a purposefully chosen group of eight individuals rather than a statistically representative sample of a broader population. Table 4.2 shows the composition of the eight individuals who took part in the focus group:

Participant pseudonym	Location	Native Language	Team Leader	Gender	Career level	Level of English (self-assessed)
Focus Group						
AI	India	Hindi	-	M	Mid	Fluent
DB	UK	French	-	M	Mid	Fluent
MW	Germany	Dutch	Yes	M	Senior	Fluent
EY	UK	Korean	-	F	Senior	Fluent
DK	France	French	Yes	F	Senior	Fluent
PM	Germany	English	Yes	M	Senior	Native
SC	Hong Kong	French	-	F	Senior	Fluent
AM	Argentina	Spanish	Yes	M	Senior	Fluent

Table 4.2: Summary of Study Two focus group participants

The respondents were situated in a variety of locations globally, as can be seen in the above table, and therefore the focus group was conducted via Zoom video conference. Participant information sheets were sent to each candidate so that they were prepared for what the process entailed. On agreeing to participate, each participant assessed their own level of proficiency in English (their corporate language). The understanding of fluency for this study will be that it indicates a smooth manner of speaking, calling up linguistic knowledge whilst under the pressure of near instantaneous processing (Lennon, 2000 cited in Foster, 2020).

4.6.4 Ethical considerations

An application for Study Two was also submitted to the St. Mary's University Ethics committee and was subsequently approved (see Appendix 8). Full information was sent to each participant and consent forms completed. Anonymity was assured in relation to the analysis and the use of initials masks the true identity of the participants. Although the participants were asked to treat the discussions as confidential (and this is on record), anonymity and confidentiality could not be guaranteed to the same extent as in a semi-structured interview. The meeting, conducted via Zoom video conference, lasted just over one hour and at the beginning each participant agreed to share some brief information about themselves. The focus group meeting was recorded and subsequently transcribed. The parameters for confidentiality, as described here, were explained and agreed at the recruitment stage.

4.6.5 Data collection

Introductions were given by each participant to the other members of the group to state their name (confidentially) and in what kind of organisation they worked in. Moderation required to stimulate the group to begin talking so questions were prepared to steer the group to cover the areas of enquiry in the study. It is important to remember that the role of moderator was one of facilitation rather than control (Bloor et al., 2001). The discussion was based on the themes and strategies about working with other MNT members with mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language:

1. Introductory question to understand each participant's team activities
 - a. Global/local team size
 - b. Nationalities
 - c. Understanding of the corporate language policy and how they enact it
 - d. Use of corporate language
2. Experience of working with colleagues with different proficiency levels in the corporate language and any issues that arise that cause emotions to bubble up and affect communication. Recommended strategies.
3. Experience, either first-hand or observed, of a fellow team member feeling linguistically constrained or held back because of their proficiency levels in the language.
4. Opinion on the concept of a "safe environment" in that people feel free from judgement owing to their proficiency level in the corporate language.
5. Experience of the perception of power, a feeling of "them and us" relating to proficiency level in the corporate language when collaborating cross-lingually. Recommended strategies.
6. Experience in ambiguity in communication from the language, cultural or both standpoint?

7. Exploration into the theme of uncertainty in understanding from both the speaker and the listener. Recommended strategies.
8. Each participant stated themes they found most significant from the discussion.

The process of data analysis was similar to that described earlier in Section 4.4.3 of this chapter for Study One using thematic analysis. The transcript of the meeting was then scrutinised on an iterative basis, patterns recognised, using critical thinking to identify the key themes which, in some instances, led to more than one idea, as in the case of trust and cultural affinity (see Chapter 8 §8.5.1.3). For each question, the main ideas occurring were noted in the answers. Quotations were also selected to illustrate each theme and compiled in a table (see Appendix 10). The key themes were then compared to those of Study One and the findings and discussion can be found in Chapter 8.

4.7 Trustworthiness and Reliability of Studies One and Two

Assuring the maximum level possible of quality and objectivity in qualitative research is now recognised as essential when validating knowledge creation (Ahmed, Dunya et al., 2011, D’Cruz et al., 2007, Gerstl-Pepin and Patrizion, 2009).

As a qualitative researcher, it is important to be aware of one’s own background and potential biases that might influence how one views the data. As someone who has over 25 years’ active experience in multinational organisations and working in a MNT environment, both as a native speaker (NS) and as a non-native speaker (NNS), care was taken not to anticipate how the participants might respond. Furthermore, as an accredited and experienced business coach, where following a structured, unbiased approach is an essential and integral part of the coaching process, the researcher was able to ensure that a detached view was maintained when carrying out the interviews and data analysis. The researcher was aware of the potential impact of mental state on human behaviour and the need to remain neutral and ready to listen when preparing for an interview or a coaching session.

To enhance the reliability of the analysis, a process of parallel coding and analysis took place with the research results of Study One. The two analysts (the researcher and her supervisor) worked separately to analyse, identify and define initial themes to assure the same or near the same results were obtained (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Before embarking on the whole process of parallel coding, a leading expert in qualitative methodology, verified the alignment of the coding approaches of the two analysts by reviewing a sample. On completion, the two analysts’ results were largely concurrent and, where initial agreement was not immediately present, this was resolved after a short discussion.

4.8 Summary

This chapter sets out the research design for both Studies One and Two within the larger discussion about philosophical, paradigmatic and interpretive frameworks. The rationale is explained for the adoption of the critical realist paradigm and how this is threaded through the choice of a qualitative approach and the use of thematic analysis. The recruitment of the research participants for both studies is also described together with a summary of the research participants and the questions asked. The questions for Study One arose from the literature review and for Study Two from the results of Study One, but tailored to the sensitivities of a focus group setting in a video conference environment. The next two chapters present the findings of Studies One and Two together with examples from the data that support the conclusions of the thematic analysis.

Chapter 5: Study One research findings: Research Question One

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Research Question One: How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language and cultural differences manifest itself in multinational teams?

Chapter 4 set out the research design of studies one and two and the rationale for the adoption of a qualitative approach, in particular, thematic analysis, as this is the method used to identify the key themes from the semi-structured interviews conducted for Study One and the focus group for Study Two. In this chapter, the findings of analysis for Study One in relation to Research Question One are presented.

The three main themes, relating to emotions as a result of the language mandate, identified from the data, were: ***Accommodation, Muted Expression and Opacity***. These were all judged to be frequent themes within the data and salient for most participants. The theme titles do not correspond to the exact quotes by the participants and were assigned by the researcher to describe the themes identified through the analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

5.2 Accommodation

The first of the key themes identified is *accommodation* and is new to the realms of language sensitive studies in IB. It is important to note the existence of different understandings of this term. The term “accommodation” in communication theory in linguistics refers to assuming some of the linguistic features and accent of the dialogue one is part of (Turner and West, 2010). This often occurs when a positive relationship between participants is established. However, where there is conflict, the opposite is likely to occur and people are likely to articulate their differences more emphatically.

For the purposes of this study, the term “accommodation” is taken to mean adaptability, making adjustments to facilitate collaboration and communicative action or behaviour in order to “create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction” (Giles and Ogay 2007, p. 293). The focus on communication accommodation extends the concepts of micro-dynamics found in global teams highlighted in other recent studies that describe the communication climate in multinational teams (MNTs) (Glikson and Erez, 2019). The term “accommodation” was first launched by the psychologist Jean Piaget (Wadsworth, 2004) to explain what occurs when new information or circumstances are encountered causing a modification to “schemas” (knowledge). Newly acquired knowledge is

accommodated through a re-analysis of existing knowledge. Although the concept proposed by Piaget originally related to how children learn, accommodation continues to take place through adulthood (Scott and Cogburn, 2020), and evidence of this is also borne out in the data of this study.

There is little literature that directly refers to accommodation of emotions through conscious behaviour change, although an undeniable link exists to emotion management (Hökkä, Vähäsantanen and Paloniemi, 2020). Emotion management, also referred to as emotion regulation in psychology literature, encapsulates what goes before an emotion is expressed or changing one's own emotional responses (Little et al., 2012; Gross and Thompson, 2007) or the management of others' emotions and interpersonal emotions (Niven, Totterdell and Holman, 2009; Finkel and Campbell, 2001).

Contrary to previous IB language sensitive studies, in this study, accommodation of emotions refers to how one adjusts one's behaviour when faced with an emotional response and this study presents clear case for this in the face of events, resulting from different language proficiency levels that trigger emotions. Accommodating or adapting their strategies to allow for the challenge of language proficiency levels, was something highlighted by all of the interview participants in a variety of formats and contexts. Reference was made in some way that either they, themselves, had needed to adapt their reactions in terms of their thinking or behaviour - or they had observed others needing to make some changes in order to achieve better sensemaking when collaborating across language barriers. Hence, this area of impact has been identified as a key theme with sub-themes which relate to how it crystallises itself.

Incidents of accommodation were identified in three different categories: **Practical, Emotional and Cognitive** and hence the theme of accommodation is subdivided into three types:

Practical accommodation denotes the approach of implementing practical measures to work around a certain challenge or set-back to achieve a solution, for example arranging a separate meeting with one national team in order to allow for more time for their linguistic proficiency level.

Accommodation – Emotional – present/absent refers to participants' reactions to register, language or intonation. Accommodation is present when experienced personally by the participant, reacting to an incident in managing their emotions. Accommodation is absent when an emotional reaction to an incident is observed being managed by another person; in this case, emotional adjustments are made by the witness to their own reaction to this observation.

Cognitive accommodation sometimes referred to as cognitive reappraisal (McRae, 2016), denotes the participant changing the way they think in order to change the way they feel or the emotional impact aroused.

These forms of accommodation and adaptation are anchored in the models by Gallois and Giles (2015) and the Intercultural Adaptation Model by Cai and Rodríguez (1997), however, the data of this study has then extended these distinctions in finer detail demonstrating the emotional and 'cognitive' accommodations and adaptations people have to make, as illustrated in the examples that follow.

5.2.1 Practical accommodation

Examples of practical accommodation were shared by both team leaders and team members who had experienced feelings of annoyance, embarrassment, struggling and frustration through situations that stemmed back to language proficiency levels. They described the need to make practical arrangements, such as allowing extra time to ensure that there were no distractions when listening to their non-native speaker (NNS) colleagues.

This is observed as team leader Respondent JM expressed annoyance at his own lack of foresight in adapting his plans to be able to listen to a conference call headed up by a team member from the Far-East with a marked NSS accent. The background noise of driving in the car meant that he could not hear his colleague speaking clearly enough to follow the call to the extent of asking the questions he would have liked and this caused him to feel annoyance.

“It was annoyance really. I should have seen who was presenting and thought a bit deeper into it – rather than this is a call – I should have been more respectful to the person who was presenting and make sure I was in an office like this with a headset on.” (JM)

This lack of foresight then led Respondent JM to feel embarrassment for not planning ahead.

“... that particular colleague of mine in China does exciting stuff ... and he had a slot of 10 minutes ... because 95% of the time listening to this kind of stuff in the car is fine but in that particular circumstance it wasn't. And there were probably lots of questions I would have liked to ask which I couldn't because I wasn't sure if he had already answered them.” (JM)

Collaboration across time zones and with different linguistic proficiencies frequently requires some extra time and preparation, and holding back the pace causes frustration, as in the case of Respondent KC collaborating with his Japanese team members:

“We make sure that the material and the questions we want to go through is sent to them in advance. So, there are additional levels of preparation that we need ... this is part of the work involved in making sure the team works ... so again, on the call with the Japan team ... I think there are frustrations on both sides. I would love to be able to have a more regular discussion at a faster pace perhaps, but I know that that is not feasible.” (KC)

In her study, Neeley (2015) emphasises the advances in translation software offer an increasing number of solutions for almost instantaneous inter-lingual interpretation and there are now a number of options available for video conference calls. As Respondent EP states:

“ ... and the better we get at that, the less pressure builds up in using your native language if you can rely on people having that certain understanding, no matter what the language is.” (EP)

Although technology supports teams working virtually in supplying rapid translation and enhanced communication, harnessing the communication of virtual teams can still present challenges to team leaders and cause team members to struggle in focussing on the overall team goal or mission (Cohen and Cassis-Henderson, 2012). There are still numerous reports of miscommunications, particularly when subtlety is required (Prates, Avarar and Lamb, 2020). The use of the technology for achieving a sense of understanding, as described by EP, does not replace human intervention. Extra preparation is needed to prevent globally dispersed teams becoming distracted by local activity and priorities and extra time and effort is needed to keep them aligned:

“... keeping the team as a unit when they are spread out all over the world is really hard. And I think in terms of communications, it is a struggle keeping everybody focused on the goal of the project and stuck to the mission.” (HT)

Whilst cross-border teams require extra effort to stay connected in addition to the use of translation software, the delivery of a message, albeit grammatically correct, may land differently in another culture to the sender’s intention as can be seen in the next sub-theme.

5.2.2 Accommodation – Emotional – present/absent

In this theme, there is evidence of adapting to the effects of different language proficiency levels. Participants’ reactions to different uses of register, language or intonation were either experienced or observed by NNS – hence this sub-theme is called Accommodation – Emotional - present/absent. The emotional response is present when the participants feel it themselves and absent when changes are expected but do not occur and they fail to adapt their behaviour. The participants described examples of emotions of pain, frustration, empathy and stress.

An example of Emotional accommodation (present) can be seen by the reaction to a linguistic rebuff received by Respondent KA, a team member based in Benelux. The giver of the rebuff was Dutch and Respondent KA, a team member, speaks three languages and is very accustomed to working across languages and cultures – so in this instance does not indicate a lack of language proficiency. However, after escalating a particular work issue in the hope of receiving help from senior management, the

reaction of the Dutch senior manager was simply to send a re-buff, the language of which came across to her as personal criticism.

“... just fix it ... you see, you should be able to fix this yourselves blah blah blah ... it felt more like a personal attack.” (KA)

Respondent KA was able to adapt to her pain and excused her emotional response by saying that perhaps they had a bad day. Again, further emotional accommodation was required and given by Respondent HT as she saw her time slipping away when working with her multilingual team. She felt frustrated that she was delivering the training in English, and they needed extra time whilst they translated for each other, but also empathised with their situation.

“... on the one hand it can be a little frustrating, I have kind of a luxury that I don't have to speak their language ... I feel that because they are working so hard to learn my language or speak my language ... I think it takes some extra empathy.” (HT)

5.2.3 Accommodation – Emotional – Absent

Accommodation of emotions – absent is when the behavioural change to accommodate is expected but does not occur. One participant, EA, highlighted a reaction to an assumed change to a language policy at the Benelux office. Although English is the corporate language, locally the common language spoken on a day-to-day basis had shifted. There had been an assumption about the overriding use of French language and this triggered an irritated response from the Dutch members:

“... when they received a mail in French from upper management, they just replied ‘I don't speak French!’ in English. So, this is a really sensitive thing. One should be really careful when making decisions about a language in which to communicate.” (EA)

This instance clearly touched a nerve in the email recipient and triggered a resistance to adapt or smooth things over. Observing her Dutch-speaking colleague's indignation also had an emotional impact on EA, the observer. The next sub-theme, the accommodation shifts to a conscious reflection on how to adapt.

5.2.4 Accommodation – Cognitive

Cognitive accommodation refers to altering the way an individual re-appraises their thinking about a situation in order to change the way they feel about it and these components are highly interactive (Storbeck and Clore, 2007). Again, the emotions in this sub-theme are all negative in the form of stress, frustration, self-consciousness, and anxiety. Under cognitive accommodation, there is a single instance of a positive emotion, enjoyment. As a result of cognitively accommodating different

language proficiency levels, some participants found enjoyment by being prompted to reflect and alter their focus. Learning through experience caused them to adjust and re-think their actions, making a conscious decision to alter their behaviour in the future. An example of this was provided by Respondent KC; learning from others' feedback provided him with enjoyment (a positive emotion) as described here:

"I enjoy it because it makes me think about my own delivery ... I used to have someone in my team who was from France ... after a couple of minutes she said I am sorry I don't understand anything you are saying ... because I had been back in Scotland for a couple of weeks, I was living and working in a Scottish colloquial environment so obviously my accent had become stronger ... to an extent where somebody, who was not a native English speaker, now couldn't follow what I was saying, even though Caroline's English was extremely fluent." (KC)

Limited vocabulary too can cause frustration and stress when a NNS team member needs to speak out and say something important, as shown here:

"... and you have some difficulties to translate completely sentences. And if you are facing a critical situation, it could be frustrating or an additional difficulty. Also you must be concentrated and try even better to focus on what you want to say and try to say more clear. So it could be a double-faced coin!" (SZ)

Again, when trying to get a point across effectively, it is not uncommon practice to insert subtle nuances from one's native language to add emphasis and colour. Limited proficiency can make this all the more stressful, as highlighted here by Respondent RS, based in Germany:

"... It is difficult when you have a multinational team with many people who are not the native speakers with very different levels of language skills ... and sometimes to get subtle nuances across ..." (RS)

From the other side, another local team leader remarked that paying attention for long periods to a NNS with a marked accent requires concentration and focus from the listener.

It was clear from the participants' responses that energy was required when working and interacting with their non-native-English-speaking colleagues. This was highlighted in several of the responses and will be referenced again in the second main theme, Muted Expression. What is interesting here is that Respondent EP clearly recognised an indication of tiredness in the reaction of her team as they broke up into silos towards the end of a corporate function and Respondent EP stepped in to bring them all together again, shown below:

“... people tend to get tired and would rather talk with people that talk your language and that breaks things up ... And we were having dinner with 8 people at the same table, and I could see people were starting to move to be with people who talked the same language ... the way I stepped in was to pick a subject that was interesting for the entire table and turn the discussion back into English.” (EP)

Leaving the rest of the team to speak together in their own language can also form an example of proactive cognitive accommodation, adapting one’s mindset to allow the rest of the team to express themselves easily in their own language. This example stems from team leader Respondent KC’s feeling of self-consciousness at not speaking another language other than English. He had found himself on a call with four other native German speakers speaking English, simply for his benefit. As a result, he took the decision not to join the call and receive a summary outlining the key points after the meeting.

As highlighted by Respondent EP, listening to NNSs can be challenging for native speakers (NSs) in adapting themselves to the particular pronunciation, accent as well as their grammatical proficiency, pitch fluctuations and general mode of expression of the NNS (Śliwa and Johansson, 2014). Of course, the level of the struggle varies from person to person and depends on the spoken clarity, confidence and experience of the individual speaking a language, as highlighted by Respondent JM when concentrating on understanding colleagues from the Far East:

“... the biggest one [language difference] is the Japanese, Korean, South-East Asia – Chinese. It’s not that their English is not proficient it’s just that over a Skype call, people’s dogs barking in the background and the line dropping in and out occasionally, it requires a lot of concentration to understand them.” (JM)

Adapting to different modes of expression culturally in the corporate language can also cause stress and anxiety and cognitive adjustment, and how one views them can alter an emotional response. Comparing written and verbal communications, one team member from Germany indicated that American verbal communication was friendly, almost too much so, when compared with the German. However, in their written communication, the tone changed completely:

“ ... always very straight to the point, very direct, not a lot of words, even with the beginning of emails – just saying the name - ... bla, bla, bla – without, you know, without Dear ... or Hi, even. So very very short ... you don’t have to feel that something is wrong or somebody is angry at me – just how it is and culturally normal for the American culture – just how they communicate.” (AF)

Learning through experience and developing an adaptive approach helps in cultivating intuition in how to get the best out of one's team when communicating across different levels of language proficiency. When asked how he felt in relation to communicating with different entities, Respondent KC showed how his intuition in this area is growing steadily:

"I would say I do have different feelings – it's not preference. It's just knowing that I have to change my radar my gauge, my sympathies, my frame of reference."(KC)

The process of examination of the emotional responses to collaboration across different levels of language proficiency, has revealed how the team members, through their personal anecdotal summaries, need to accommodate or adapt their approach to certain situations. Exercising cross-lingual sensitivity becomes an essential part of creating an effective working environment on a day-to-day basis. However, some deep-seated feelings of a NNS in expressing themselves can lead to their voice and contribution failing to be heard.

5.3 Muted Expression/Constraint

Feeling constrained or held-back in relation to what one can say when speaking a foreign language is a well-known condition. As highlighted by Descarries (2003), when one cultural and linguistic voice dominates, there is likely to be a danger of misrepresentation and silencing others in the group, whose voice, whether identified or not, becomes swiftly forgotten. In this key theme, it is evident how team members feel constrained when communicating in a non-native language, the corporate language, and how this causes some negative emotions to be felt. When speaking about their feelings in relation to communicating in the corporate language, the theme of expressing themselves in a muted way showed itself in a couple of ways which form the two sub-themes.

The first, *NNS's constraint*, is present in the individual themselves and focuses on the pressure of not being able to say what one wants; individuals also fear not being heard or dismissed through lack of eloquence and against time pressure. As can be seen in these examples, feeling uncomfortable and tongue-tied in a foreign language can also contribute to a lack of belongingness and job insecurity.

The second sub-theme, *observer affected by muted expression*, spotlights observation of a NNS's discomfort in finding difficulty in expressing their thoughts and ideas in some cases to senior management. It also emphasises observation of the consequences of having limited proficiency and highlights the emotions felt by both the observer and the person under observation.

5.3.1 *Non-native speakers' constraint*

A vivid illustration of this constraint, the pressure to perform against the feeling of being held back by language proficiency is from the interview with Respondent FR. He explains frustration at his challenge in being heard by his colleagues in different parts of the organisation around the world:

“... it will be very challenging because I have not enough of the fundamentals in terms of communication skills with other languages in order to obtain this information.” (FR)

Earlier in the interview, Respondent FR refers to his embarrassment at his limited vocabulary and having to communicate in English with other NNSs:

“... I'm afraid we have problems because – I know my English is not the best and their English is not the best too ...” (FR)

Furthermore, the pressure to succeed in a career against the challenges of language proficiency emphasises his fear of job loss:

“... but if I lose this situation, it will be very tight for me. Because we need this information and to do this you need to communicate, but if you don't communicate well, you don't have the knowledge skills to obtain information.” (FR)

The feeling of being held back contributes to his heightened frustration. The participants know that they could make a strong and valid contribution but feel constrained by their lack of vocabulary and lack of time. Respondent SZ is a team member for Tech 1 based in Italy. She knows her market well and is experienced in her role but, when communicating with others around the world in the corporate language, English, she feels frustrated at her powers of expression:

“..... it can happen – you want to say something, but you have a situation that it is not your own language and you have some difficulties to translate completely sentences ... if you are facing a critical situation, it could be frustrating or an additional difficulty.” (SZ)

Presentation skills are another key area where NNSs are doubly exposed. Giving a presentation in one's native language can make one nervous enough, but in another language, there is even more to think about and the level of a NNS's proficiency is further exposed, as highlighted by Respondent AF, based in Germany, at Tech 2:

“... for sure I feel the different levels of language proficiency. I always think I cannot make myself – I am not as eloquent as other people are and I always think that I cannot make myself as clear as I would in German.” (AF)

Feeling nervous about the extent of one's vocabulary and doubting one's ability to express oneself can only make a team member feel sensitive and at a disadvantage within a team. It requires great courage and energy to overcome these doubts and keep going. Speaking a foreign language for some participants was a tiring and even exhausting experience, as pointed out by Respondent ML based in Germany at Tech 2:

“... it's a bit more exhausting to speak in a foreign language ... on some days I have difficulties to express myself even in German, but in English it's even more evident.” (ML)

As mentioned in the first section, the energy that the NNS is exerting when compared to the NS is clearly something to be reckoned with. Not only are these team members concentrating on what words to use to get their point across but also attempting to make their message as engaging as possible, particularly when working with their NS colleagues. This mix of effort can become a struggle, as highlighted by Respondent RS, based in Germany, at Tech 1:

“... They have the advantage that they are native English speakers and that is a big advantage for people from the UK, in that they are not struggling with the language!” (RS)

Recognition of the situation also complements the way the team members also observed the muted expression felt by their colleagues as a result of their lack of vocabulary or proficiency in the language. This is now examined as the second sub-theme and reported in this next section.

5.3.2 *Observer affected by muted expression*

In the same way as for the first sub-theme, NNS constraint, several of the participants also referred to the incidents where their colleagues had experienced emotions as a result of feeling held back by language proficiency. Emotions such as fear, despair, frustration, nervousness, tension, pain (discomfort), self-consciousness, stress and fatigue (tiredness) all bubble up as a consequence of being muted in self-expression – not being able to express exactly what one wants to say. These emotions also affect colleagues and team leaders witnessing such situations.

Respondent FR referred to a member of his local team from Brazil who is struggling in coming to grips with his command of the local language:

“... he is coming from Brazil and his Spanish is not the best and he is frustrated when he is misunderstood. I told him it will get better but I don't know ... but this is one of the common problems we come up against.” (FR)

Respondent FR is clearly trying to offer some encouragement here for his colleague, but he knows the problem and hopes his colleague can learn to adapt. Again, Respondent HT too observes the discomfort in one of her team speaking English, the corporate language:

“... I have seen people speaking in a non-native language getting frightened and very nervous and feel kind of uncomfortable.” (HT)

In one training session, she was delivering, Respondent HT felt bad as she observed a young native Portuguese participant reading out the results of his latest activity. As he tried to read them out in English, his pain and insecurity touched Respondent HT as she listened to him. In the end, Respondent HT offered him the opportunity to deliver the same speech in his native Portuguese. She could still understand a little bit, and his colleagues would totally understand him; for her, that was the most important part. By explaining this situation, she too identifies with the problem and empathises with the pain and discomfort her colleagues face:

“I think it takes some extra empathy – because if I had to speak for a whole day or give a presentation in a language I’m not comfortable in, I would be really nervous and really tired. So it’s a couple of emotions ...” (HT)

As expressed by Respondent HT, multiple emotions bubble up in amongst them nervousness, self-doubt, the belief that one cannot make one’s point successfully. Of course, in Respondent HT’s case with the Portuguese trainee, it worked out well for this individual in that Respondent HT recognised the problem and felt able to allow him to deliver his presentation in his native language for his local colleagues with full confidence. Her empathy and confidence in acting this way saved the situation.

The amount of energy required in managing such situations affects the whole group including the leader. Respondent HT delivers training for a large global client in different parts of the world. The groups are relatively large, and she is aware that many of her group are not just focusing on what they were learning but also in translating for their colleagues.

“... if they are not proficient in English, then they’re translating for themselves or their colleagues most of the time. It takes time for them to translate for one-another but then it is just mentally taxing – I can imagine I’ve been there too.” (HT)

Whilst such empathy is an important factor in making the situation work at all, it highlights the fact that extra time is needed to adapt such activities and allow solutions to develop. Otherwise, time pressure creates added anxiety to convey the right meaning and in so doing can compound emotions still further.

5.4 Opacity/Ambiguity/Misunderstandings

Conveying the right meaning and ensuring that everyone is of the same mind is one of the key constituents in harnessing a productive team (Huisi, et al., 2019). It is also something that becomes undeniably challenging when communicating virtually with members from diverse cultures and varying levels of language proficiency in the corporate language (Gibson and Cohen, 2003). The third theme identified through the analysis of these semi-structured interviews is Opacity, the veil of ambiguity and misunderstandings that surrounds people, when working together but speaking different languages and conversing across language barriers. Several events here prompting emotions arose out of a sub-theme – cultural and linguistic clumsiness.

5.4.1 Cultural and linguistic clumsiness

Projects spanning the globe and different cultures with different affiliations and sensitivities frequently require extra thought on how language is used (Barczak, McDonough and Athanassiou, 2006). A clumsy mistake can awake a number of emotions (damaged pride, embarrassment) and could become costly, especially if it concerns a client. For Respondent KC, the video call, although on a global scale including all his teams worldwide (including Japan), was an internal one. The situation was ironic since his event manager, a nationalistic Irishman, was sensitive to be classed as someone from the UK and always belligerently referred to the UK and Ireland. However, he suddenly started to refer to the projects the team (meaning the Japan team) were doing in China (instead of Japan). The Japanese team were polite and did not mention the mistake. Normally, Respondent KC would have sent an instant message to the event manager – however, due to the call taking place outside office hours, the instant messaging system was not activated. The event manager continued until he had repeated this error four times. Then Respondent KC did step in. However, rather than apologise the event manager continued to dig, probably as a result of embarrassment and pride ...

“In that case, we made light of it a little bit to break the ice and because we had dealt with this team before, they knew, although a bit embarrassing on our side, it was not meant as an insult in any way.” (KC)

Another event demonstrating this cultural and linguistic clumsiness as an area liable to produce emotions was described to the researcher by Respondent HH, based in Japan. As part of her professional development, Respondent HH attends an international course at a German university. Although the course is attended by 90% German participants, 10% are non-German speaking and the course is entitled ‘international’ therefore the course content was expected to be conducted in English. In spite of this, very often the course leader would start addressing the whole class in German,

forgetting 10% of the participants who are non-German speaking. Respondent HH describes how she felt isolated by this, but was reticent to cause a stir by coming forward to let the instructor know that she did not understand. Then one day, when this happened again, another member of the class put up their hand ...

“... so I think it’s unfair that I didn’t say anything even though I felt uncomfortable. In this class, one Swedish girl finally expressed her feeling by saying – “What’s that?” – a little bit ground break! And finally the instructor realised – aah – this is something offensive to foreigners ... ok this is what we are talking about in German. And I was so amazed and somehow thankful to her ... I was afraid to speak up.” (HH)

Respondent HH was afraid to speak up – the fear of loss of face. As a Japanese participant in the course, her cultural background reinforced this emotion significantly. Sitting there, she was not sure if all of the other non-German participants did not understand – or was it just her? To put her hand up and openly state her inability to understand could mean serious embarrassment. She also recognises her frustration at her instructor not recognising this and taking action earlier to maintain the class interaction in the agreed course language – English.

The ambiguity of reading and understanding true responses of others when communicating through different levels of language proficiency in the corporate language leads to significant insecurity and the forming of perceptions. Not only is the speaker communicating a message in translation but how that message lands and is understood by the other person in their own cultural context is completely different, as we see in the case of Respondent AF. Her experiences of working with the Chinese made her feel uncertain in how to read the signs – the language said one thing but clearly there was more to understand:

“... it makes me feel insecure because ... I have experience with Chinese people who say yes, yes, yes! And then afterwards they would not do anything for different reasons, but they wouldn’t say it openly. So that’s a little bit difficult – at least the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty.” (AF)

A similar situation was experienced by Respondent ML. In his case though, he misread that the Japanese client was upset. The simple language indicated one scenario, but a linguistic nuance communicated another:

“... my Japanese colleague came to me and she said – did you sense, in the end, the difference? And I said – no. I think it was something she realised – she sensed that they were upset before.” (ML)

In this instance, it was the upset on the side of the Japanese client that was difficult for Respondent ML to gauge. Linguistic nuances and cultural sensitivities all reinforce the need for knowledge and cultural acuity in order to attain clarity and accommodative measures to render this mindset adjustment. A comparable change of mindset is recommended by Respondent EP in relation to her regional team collaborating with the Romanian team members. Here she highlights encounters with the different view of hierarchical structure and the impact this has on gathering input from her team. The opacity lies in the Romanian team's constraint to voice their opinion in relation to the project. Different cultural views in relation to hierarchy cause them to hold back their judgement. Therefore, in this case, it is not simply a question of language proficiency but also cultural difference:

“... They do not dare to give their opinion, even if they disagree, whereas we give them the permission to disagree. And that's challenging when you primarily work with people (namely Americans and ourselves) who can disagree with our colleagues.” (EP)

Respondent EP also demonstrated how drawing out their opinion is also helping to accommodate these differences and to gain clarity of thinking.

5.4.2 Difficulties in understanding

Frustration bubbles up again in another context in the case of Respondent FR. In this instance, it is his lack of information about how the organisation operates in terms of structure coupled with his limited vocabulary which causes him annoyance as he battles to escalate certain issues:

“... but we need to express this frustration and annoyance – but what is the correct level, considering that the other people could feel frustrated to escalate this?” (FR)

So here there is a lack of accommodation for the NNS causing additional opacity thereby exacerbating frustration and annoyance.

Difficulties in understanding language and cultural concepts can also lead to feelings of frustration when comparing business development strategies between different geographies. Respondent HH's local team in Japan wanted to compare how activities were done in Australia to those done in Japan and Korea. The discussion partly due to the language and cultural difference soon came to a halt:

“... we found that the activities done in Australia are far more effective than those done in Japan and Korea. And we asked what was the difference between us and them ... they have certain KPIs to gather with their sales people and together they talk over very challenging situations for them. But we, the Korea and Japan team, we just gave up on their system with the Sales representative

people because we did not understand what the important point to ask was so we just gave up talking with the sales representatives before we try.” (HH)

Coupled with the diverse levels of language proficiency in the corporate language, cultural differences came into play here too. Australian business concepts operate with more focus on individual targets rather than on the collective success basis found in Japanese and Korean cultures.

Biased translation too can also lead to mixed messages and confusion, as described in Respondent EP’s account of a long-winded email stream sent to her:

“... that definitely raises some emotions of “Oh God ... what the hell are they talking about ?!” ... because if you don’t really understand what’s been at the background of the whole discussion and you’re only getting certain translation ...” (EP)

Ensuring that the right message is conveyed and understood is a constant challenge across different levels of language proficiency in the corporate language. Accommodating these levels of proficiency in the corporate language requires strategies to ensure comprehension. These may include questions about genuine understanding – all this leads to stress and concern among team leaders, as pointed out by Respondent EP:

“... so for myself it doesn’t bother me that Eastern European people don’t speak English as well as I do myself. But it is the other way around more that when I receive a call, I wonder did they really understand what I meant, did I explain it clearly? ... so that’s actually how it affects my emotions.” (EP)

The challenges of working in a virtual team cross-lingually and across cultures were emphasised by the participants; there is a clear need for sensitivity and intuition in order to make this collaboration work well but it also highlighted an underlying sense of insecurity too. Respondent AF, mindful of trying to correctly interpret the emotions of Far Eastern colleagues, recommends face-to-face interaction, wherever possible:

“... I prefer to communicate in person so this is actually what would be my preferred way of communication. I cannot – I find with Chinese or Asian people it’s a little bit difficult to gauge emotion and to understand the real thoughts or feelings of the other person.” (AF)

Respondent AF’s point of view may be idealistic but also shows awareness of working with a lack of transparency and how clarity across language and culture cannot be realised in a cursory fashion and requires accommodative measures to achieve.

5.5 Summary of Key Findings

The results set out in this chapter relate to Research Question One:

How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifest itself in MNTs?

Many of the initial findings here will be developed further and discussed in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

Through the process of thematic analysis three key themes were identified in relation to the first research question: **Accommodation, Muted Expression/Constraint and Opacity – Ambiguity and Misunderstandings**. These themes and their sub-themes enshrine manifold examples of how implementing English as a corporate language in a multinational corporation (MNC) elicits emotions in their MNT members. Examples of how this happens are included with the key findings of the interview data.

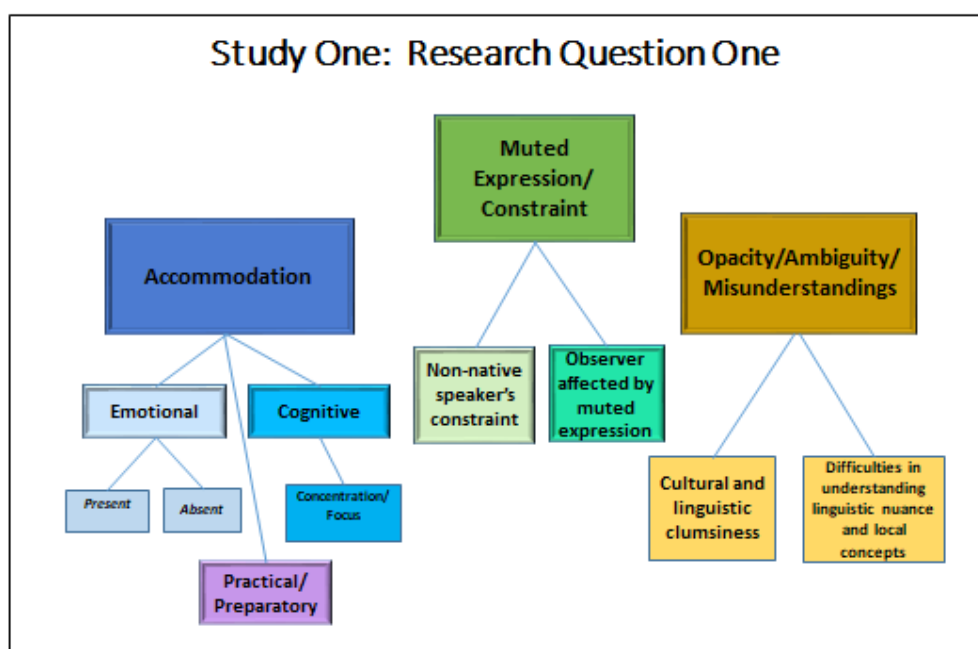


Figure 5.1: Thematic map of Study One highlighting the key themes identified in the findings.

As can be seen in Figure 5.1, all of the participants, whether NS or NNS, recognised the potential challenges arising from collaborating across language and cultural context. Unlike previous IB language-sensitive studies, different types of accommodation in the face of language barriers have been identified after analysis of the interviews: emotional, cognitive and practical. The anecdotal evidence illustrated that some form of accommodation was a key reaction to language barriers. It could be emotional or cognitive, or a practical measure to achieve successful collaboration. Practical measures could take the form of foresight in making practical arrangements to enable better

understanding or simply allowing more time for clear translation. When such practical measures are not implemented, tension was liable to arise that could augment any latent emotions, such as stress or frustration, already present.

Being muted and constrained by linguistic proficiency requires recognition from managers and colleagues alike in making practical arrangements in some form or being observant and mindful of others' needs. Emotions expressed by NNS included fear, frustration, nervousness and sensitivity. To alleviate such pressures and be productive and successful, leaders need to create an open communication where all team members can express themselves both in writing, informally and vocally and to manage time so that such arrangements do become integrated into MNT collaboration. The participants highlighted this either through anecdotes featuring emotions expressed first hand or observing them in others.

Again, in the face of such multilingual communication across cultures, several examples of potential ambiguity, pitfalls and sensitivities are visible – all of which require either cognitive accommodation coupled with the readiness to learn from others or determination to play by the rules to reach the required register for effective communication.

Examination of the three key themes identified in the interviews, reveals an interconnectedness and hierarchy of themes forming in conjunction with emotions common to many of the challenges communicating across language barriers and cultural differences. This study contributes to the research on MNT leaders' emotion management strategies. It presents three key themes resulting from collaboration across different proficiency levels in the corporate language. It also explores the issues MNT leaders face when collaborating with virtual teams spread around the world. These points will be developed further together with the findings in relation to the second research question in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

The next chapter presents key themes identified in relation to the second research question, exploring the other potential issues that the team leaders and team members were aware of and the particular strategies recommended by them. The analysis is also illustrated with evidential examples from the semi-structured interviews with the MNTs.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY ONE RESEARCH FINDINGS: Research Question Two

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Research Question Two: What are the potential issues that the team leaders and team members are aware of and what strategies do they recommend?

Chapter 5 described the findings from the analysis in relation to Research Question One. This chapter presents the findings identified in the thematic analysis of the interview data and relates to the second research question (above). Table 6.1 highlights the essential themes (issues) and sub-themes (outcomes). Figure 6.2 represents the final stage of the analysis and shows the key themes and their relationships, *corporate language policy, varying proficiency levels in the corporate language and cross-cultural/linguistic entanglements*. Each interview transcript was analysed according to the process described in Chapter 4. The supporting data can be found in Appendix 6.

During the interviews, the participants not only shared experiences demonstrating their emotional responses to language barriers but also shared issues that richly inform the context of their cross-border collaboration and in some instances also suggest strategies to mitigate these issues. Where strategies or solutions to the issues are voiced by the participants, these have been included. Where not, it should be noted that awareness of these matters is raised and will be included in the discussion Chapter 7.

Themes / Issues	Sub-themes / Outcomes
Corporate language policy	
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Linguistic hegemony
	Collaboration issues
	Uncertainty over level of understanding
Cross-cultural / linguistic entanglements	Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences
	Adjusting to different cultural norms

Table 6.1: Study One: Key themes and sub-themes identified (RQ2)

6.2 Corporate language policy

The first of the key themes identified is the corporate language policy (shown in blue in Figures 6.1 and 6.2). This theme acts as a protagonist and key instigator of the other themes, projected by it. It

could be argued that as such it should not be classified as a theme but owing to the volume of references to it, voiced by the participants, it merits allocation of this central status. In the context of the interviews, this theme refers to the recognition of a corporate language policy.

“... so the language policy normally in the Benelux office is English and in Belgium this is normally the case because of the different languages and because it is easiest for all – just to use English in meetings and in communications etc. In the Netherlands, it is most of the time Dutch because there is only one native language unless there are other native language speakers when then we switch to English.” (KA)

Although the common everyday use of the corporate language in the company of non-local language speakers and native English speakers is highlighted, the issue of linguistic identity is seldom raised. The use of the corporate language is primarily referred to in relation to accommodation by both parties, and the need to adapt and ensure that no-one is isolated from the communication.

“... If we have some English native speaking people who prefer to speak English, we all switch to English ...” (AF)

One of the participants, Respondent KC, chose to avoid this obligation. Aware that the speakers on the scheduled call were all native German speakers, he chose to decline joining it, to avoid the discomfort of compelling the entire group to speak English for his benefit alone. He was content to await the call summary circulated after the call had taken place.

“I knew that if I joined the call, then that call would be conducted in English.” (KC)

Again, this shows awareness of how, although the corporate language is there to enable collaborative communication, at times, it could be perceived as an awkward approach to ensure one non-native speaker (NNS) speaker of the common language (in this case German) is included.

6.3 Varying proficiency levels in the corporate language

Respondent KC, the global team leader of Tech 1, is aware of a clear disparity of English proficiency levels amongst his team members. To remedy this, he ensures that this does not detract from the overall collaboration by setting up separate calls for his Japanese team. This allows him to conduct a weekly call with his other global teams at the usual pace but to instil sufficient time to hold a meaningful dialogue with the Japanese team:

“They (Japanese team) have the lowest level of English language within the team and so my view is that they would find it difficult to keep up with the discussion that we have on the regular calls.” (KC)

However, it was not only the Japanese team for which separate arrangements were required. Another Nordic team leader, Respondent EP, in collaboration with a Romanian marketing team chose to use follow-up calls to ensure clarity of the discussion and that a collective understanding prevailed.

“... So you actually have to go back and explain everything a little bit differently with different words to get the same understanding.” (EP)

The frustration of not being articulate to the same standard as one is in one’s native language was also expressed.

“ ... so although it is not a real problem to say things in English, I think it can lead to misunderstandings sometimes if you are not able to express things – explicitly, as you can do it in German.” (ML)

Whilst having a strong command of the language facilitates knowledge sharing and smooth communication, it can create a barrier to mutual understanding between heterogeneous groups (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999).

Respondent FR, based out of Latin America, also believes that his education and background have impacted his level of proficiency in the corporate language, and this has disadvantaged his career advancement and constrains him from working for the organisation anywhere else in the world.

“... if you can’t talk in other languages, you can’t communicate your ideas – it’s more difficult to grow in this kind of company ... it’s more difficult to show your skills. For me it is difficult to look for other opportunities outside my region because I feel that my English is not the best (FR).

The theme “Varying proficiency levels in the corporate language” has three sub-themes: *Linguistic hegemony*, *Collaboration Issues* and *Uncertainty over level of understanding*.

6.3.1 Linguistic hegemony

As discussed in Chapter 3, language is frequently entrenched in social processes and power tussles and thereby a distinct connection forms between language and assertive behaviour (Fairclough, 1989; Foucault, 1998). This often gives rise to perceptions of status inequality, linguistic hegemony, by the team members with stronger command of the corporate language having a distinct advantage to convey their views effectively, as claimed by Respondent AF:

“... I am not as eloquent as other people are and I always think that I cannot make myself as clear as I would in German ... sometimes I think that people don't come across as proficient as they could be.” (AF)

Here, Respondent AF clearly raises her concern that she is potentially marginalised and unable to show her full potential due to her proficiency level in the corporate language. She then turns this notion around stating that if the native speaker (NS) of the corporate language were to have to express themselves in her language, German, their utterances would create a different impression, implying that the status of the NS might look different.

Self-consciousness over one's linguistic proficiency in the corporate language affects the individual themselves but also is observed by others in the team. Whilst some members and team leaders may be patient when it comes to internal collaboration, there was, at the same time, emphasis on the potential impact to the business brand when the speaker fails to convey the organisation's message externally in a professional manner. In this quotation, Respondent KA of the Dutch team points out the importance of one's proficiency level in representing the company's image.

“... it does not affect the collaboration. But it does show – I mean it is visible. When someone really does not speak English very well, I personally think it does not give a good impression – especially if that person is asked to speak externally to an external.” (KA).

From another angle, Respondent KC, conscious that he does not speak another language other than English, is also aware of his advantage of being a NS of the corporate language. In recognition of this he gives an example of how he alters his style to let other speakers feel more comfortable with the situation. This example was of a presentation given to a multinational audience at an external event where it was simultaneously translated:

“So, a few times I've allowed that to happen [when giving a speech] - I've adapted my style and played a different role in order to let somebody or a group of people feel more comfortable with the situation ... So I am very conscious that I am pitching to 3 different audiences in the room: I am pitching to the people who can understand English, I am pitching to the translators ... to the people who are listening to what the translators are saying in Czech.” (KC)

To mitigate the fraction of a second difference through the simultaneous translation, the speed of the delivery has to be reduced. Respondent KC also meets with the translators in advance to inform them of any phrases that do not require translation or terms, better left in English. Often, if the audience fails to understand everything, certain technological terms from within the group would still be distinct. For similar reasons, Respondent KC omits humour as part of his delivery at such events, for

fear of a ripple effect or the impact that a humorous phrase would have on the three different audiences.

6.3.2 Awareness of potential Dualities: NS vs NNS/Loss of status/“Them and Us”

The propensity for clusters to form was also reported by both NS and NNS in the teams. Respondent LR, a NS participant from New York, also voiced her experience of exclusion when surrounded by other linguistic clusters:

“... where it might prove negative – when you are in another country and then the conversation goes to a language which you don’t speak. Then you really feel left out ... in the more social settings around, that is dinners and things like that – or it could be in a side conversation that might be happening, maybe at a conference or an event.”(LR)

Respondent EP, a team-leader in the Nordic region, also experienced this when she brought together a project team in a social setting. She noticed the extra effort some of her less linguistically proficient team members put in when having to speak the corporate language all day long. By evening tiredness and fatigue caused them to prefer to return to their native languages. Respondent EP reported an instance at a dinner where this caused her team members to form small diverse groups of different Nordic language speakers. To bring everyone together, Respondent EP selected a topic that would be of interest to the entire table, turned the discussion back into English and watched the effect on the team:

“... they kind of woke up and understood that we have a person here or a couple of personnel here who cannot join the discussion if a discussion is going on in any other language that they do not understand ... It is part of my job to ensure that everybody in the team first of all understands each other and secondly gets along. If they can’t do that, then at least I make sure that everybody understands each other.” (EP)

For Respondent EP, it is the team-leader’s responsibility to guard against the formation of silos and to ensure that a collaborative environment is maintained. Of course, the effort for a NNS in presenting their contribution in front of a group is tiring. One other team-leader, Respondent HT, also experienced this and put forward the notion of providing a “safe-space” for the speakers in order to encourage confidence and reduce the anxiety that accompanied their speech:

“... my colleagues who have the most difficult time with English are definitely my colleagues from Asia ... and when they do speak up, it’s like very broken English – so yes, I think it’s a combination

of both (language and culture). I think it's my job as facilitator and co-worker to create a space where you know your ideas are valid so whatever you need to get the message across, do it." (HT)

Interestingly, not all groups required a "safe-space" to air their language skills, as observed by Respondent HH. She and her Japanese colleagues were impressed to observe a group of NNS Japanese speakers attempting to express themselves in Japanese.

"... If you look at the other regions, they are much more brave than us to communicate using other languages. If they communicate with Japanese, they use simple Japanese words that they know, even though they are not fluent in Japanese. There is the possibility that their pronunciation is not correct, they somehow try to use Japanese. That is the very opposite to our side, I think." (HH)

It is also of note that her NNS Japanese speaking colleagues were attempting a language, devoid of a proficiency requirement by the organisation. However, it does highlight a cross-cultural comparison in how the Japanese and colleagues from other regions view themselves. Respondent HH was highlighting her admiration for her colleagues' courage to even utter a few words in a foreign language where the potential to make mistakes is ever present. Respondent HH was also keen to emphasise the difference of her own team's climate when compared to those in most Japanese teams; in their environment the information communicated was of ultimate importance rather the correctness of the delivery:

"... So we are a little bit different kind of people from our other Japanese colleagues. In this team we are very open-minded and don't mind making mistakes." (HH)

The form of English described here reminds the reader of the research by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013), pinpointed in Chapter 3 (§3.6.3), where the goal orientation of the business environment surpasses the requirement for correct grammar. The meaning of the discourse is also very situation-specific, and a clear understanding of the situation is beneficial. The open and receptive culture of such environments essentially removes the potential for status loss and marginalization due to linguistic proficiency, as described by Respondent HH.

Varying levels of fluency in the corporate language are likely to cause social distance and frequently those with greatest fluency have the most influence (Neeley, 2015). Respondent EP's awareness and strategy combatting the natural tendency among language diverse teams when left at leisure, demonstrates her desire that her team members re-appraise language diversity by conveying appreciation for everyone's input by switching back to the corporate language.

6.4 Collaboration issues

6.4.1 Time delay

Factoring additional time was an issue and a practical accommodative requirement voiced by several of the participants. The time was absorbed in various tasks, either prior, during or post meeting debriefings.

Respondent HT highlights the need to use time effectively during the meeting and regrets the lack of time to build relationships through social introductions and thereby enhance the collaborative relationship.

“... I think it adds a little more time getting objectives clear, ensuring deliverables are clear, making sure everybody understands what’s going on and then, even in terms of coordinating touch points with my colleagues, it definitely takes more time ...” (HT)

6.4.2 Translation challenges

The process to ensure an accurate and meaningful message is communicated is clearly a contributor to time delay. Respondent KC, aware of how the conversation may become stilted, re-thinks the planning of the meeting in order to ease the flow of exchanges and maintain engagement with one of his regional teams.

“... we also know that they’re using a simultaneous translation which causes a delay between questions and answers but also causes some fractures in the discussion as well ... when we do that, it adds time delay to the activity, it means that we have to think about how things are designed.” (KC)

Respondent KC emphasised how translation can become a cumbersome process and as a result he uses simpler language when directing a sentence to a NNS, to minimise the potential adjustments for understanding. The need for preparation was also emphasised by Respondent JM who also had concerns about the language used in workshops; often the true sense of the communication dissipated when translated as a result of overuse of use of idiom or colloquialisms.

“... And of course, when you facilitate workshops, the way you say things is deliberate so when it’s translated, it’s quite likely that some of the meaning is going to be lost.” (JM)

Humour always presents a significant challenge for linguists and can never be explained in absolute terms (Duch, 2014). It can manifest itself as language-related, in puns, or culture related, the translation of which could, in some instances, lead to offense (Low, 2011).

Much of the simultaneous translation for online meetings is through computer software, the quality of which is generally thought to be improving, though not entirely perfect. Respondent EP found this to be of great support knowing that it provided the team with some understanding, no matter what the language was.

“... the good thing is that technology is actually helping quite a lot nowadays ... and the better we get at that, the less pressure builds up in using your native language if you can rely on people having that certain understanding, no matter what the language is.” (EP)

Respondent AF also identified that advances in technology were moving fast and that the addition of subtitles in solution technology as a future support solution.

“... a range of technologies to translate. A system for simultaneous translation with subtitles or something like that could be a technical solution ...” (AF)

6.4.3 Technology

Naturally, multinational teams (MNTs) operating virtually place heavy reliance on hi-speed communication systems but when the connection falters and one is straining to hear utterances with a heavy accent, this presents difficulties for colleagues to participate remotely, as expressed by Respondent JM:

“... the quality of the connection is the critical thing ... so there’s a lot of people frustrated by using Skype ... I think it’s more acute when you’re dealing with people whose native language isn’t English.” (JM)

For Respondent JM, the clarity of speech against a poor connection with a NNS, who is struggling with the language, causes serious setbacks in communication.

Respondent AF highlights the constraints experienced in collaboration with groups of team members attending meetings from inconsistent platforms. In this sense, some group members attend in person whereas others remotely via video conference or conference call. For Respondent AF, this creates a feeling of division and constrains the remote team members ready to put their views forward as they feel ostracised.

“I have almost the feeling that it is not so much the language barrier but there is also the barrier of technology – so if everyone is on the same platform, I think it’s even better because everyone has the same chance to speak – everyone is either on remote location or in the same location.” (AF)

6.4.4 Speech attributes (accents/speed)

Listening to speakers with different speech modulation at speed with different accents proves challenging for the participants, as described by Respondent FR.

“... and their English is not the best too and their way to express something is sometimes different because the way that people normally talk in India is very fast but is not very defining – it is very monotonous, very flat in the tone ...” (FR)

Adjusting to such a different mode of speech necessitates complete attention as recognised by LR:

“... and almost all of those are native English speakers although have different accents.” (LR)

6.5 Level of understanding

6.5.1 Uncertainty about whether messages understood

Uncertainty over whether the sender’s intended message had been understood by the receiver was an area highlighted by several participants. Speaking slowly to support less proficient English speakers’ understanding was a strategy suggested by Respondent RS.

“... so depending on who you have on the call, I find myself trying to speak slower or trying to find a more simple wording and just to ensure that if there are people on the call, who don’t understand, they can follow and understand what I am trying to get across.” (RS)

6.5.2 Loss of information

Lack of comprehension can lead to knowledge and information being lost if not communicated which is of course critical to knowledge sharing and evaluation amongst teamwork. From this quotation can also be drawn how information loss through lack of understanding can also potentially contribute to a “them and us” situation.

“... they don’t maybe get all the information ... they don’t get everything I would expect.” (ML)

Again, Respondent HH emphasises the use of follow-up emails, sent to ensure clarity of the discussions.

“... the only issues we would have were in meetings and stuff – having to clarify information or maybe if we sent an email across and somebody needed to clarify some information that wasn’t super clear.” (HH)

6.6 Cross-cultural/linguistic entanglements

International projects over the last couple of decades have significantly increased in complexity and are inherently staffed by individuals collaborating from teams with diverse backgrounds brought together in anticipation of the new ideas and fresh approaches they bring to problem solving (Ochieng and Prince, 2009). Not surprisingly, the success of these initiatives relies heavily on effective knowledge sharing and sense-making. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 (§ 3.3.3) in relation to cross-cultural pragmatics, language acquires meaning through context and through its sociocultural roots. Hence, a message uttered by one speaker in one cultural context may land very differently in the cultural space of another speaker, even when the latter is in possession of an adequate command of the language in which the message was delivered. Such situations, be they certain behavioural expectations or speech nuances, creating uncertainty and ambiguity for several of the participants, hinge on an awareness of source and language culture.

Therefore, all utterances are fashioned, to a certain extent, by the context in which they are spoken (Stadler, 2018). Yus (2011, p.2) even emphasizes that “the main contribution of pragmatics is, precisely, the certainty that it is impossible to analyse language outside the context in which it is produced and interpreted.” Therefore, meaning in a message is never innate but always derives from the context in which it originated.

All utterances are subject to cultural variables in their construction and in comprehension and the more divergent the cultural values, norms and behaviours in the source context, the greater the likelihood for miscommunication and misunderstanding (Warren and Lee, 2020). Therefore, adjustment to linguistically and culturally diverse communications requires flexibility and readiness to adapt, as emphasised by many of the participants in this study.

6.7 Sociolinguistic/context-related differences

An initial example of the need for socio-linguistic competence in addition to linguistic competence was provided by Respondent RS. Respondent RS observes a clear instance of communication failure or misunderstanding involving NNS English speakers due to a lack of linguistic competence (vocabulary and grammatical competence) and pragmatic competence the ability to use language successfully in achieving a specific objective and to comprehend language in context, (Thomas, 1983).

“... another funny thing I have observed is that sometimes I hear German colleagues trying to speak English on the call... and sometimes you need to understand German very well to understand what they mean in English!” (RS)

Respondent RS continues to observe how patient her native-English speaking American colleagues are on the call and applauds this empathetic, encouraging approach in response to the efforts made by her German colleagues.

Another example highlighted by Respondent KA compares her Dutch team's direct approach to exchange of ideas. Members of her team based in Netherlands collaborate closely with members based in the Romanian office and detect a marked difference when drawing feedback from more junior members of the team.

“... it can be an issue – it can be a bit intimidating for people from Belgium or Romania, for example, because they're even more careful how to put things ... they (Romanians) tend to have a lot of respect for management and seniority in a certain job level, while we here in the Benelux tend to treat everybody equal.” (KA)

Not only is this an example of power distance and visible respect for hierarchy through use of language but also indicates concern over being misunderstood.

6.7.1 Ambiguity and speech nuances

Reading communicative signals across cultures to understand the positivity of an outcome was something that had challenged Respondent ML when running a workshop in Japan. The programme had come to a conclusion, and he and his colleague were about to depart when their Japanese colleagues hinted to him that the Japanese clients were not satisfied with the way things were left.

“... they didn't say it although they were asked – but somehow the Japanese colleagues sensed that they were not satisfied yet. That is a situation where I felt there are a lot of intangible things in the room I could not sense, which the Japanese colleague could sense – a lot of invisible communication – which for me is challenging ... Now I am more mindful of others and aware that they can understand things completely differently which are obvious to me. They are different.” (ML)

Respondent ML believes that this episode has heightened his awareness for the future. As a consequence, the understanding of distinctive expressions and styles of etiquette across cultures is essential to his cross-border projects. A comparable account was also given by Respondent AF when working on a project in China.

“... I was on a project with people from Shanghai and so we agreed on certain steps that we wanted to achieve and afterwards nothing happened. So eventually we found out that through other channels and nobody was talking to us. So there was no open communication around why things didn't happen.” (AF)

Respondent AF also drew positive conclusions and formed a strategy in relation to how things would proceed based on her native German culture. She believed that if agreement was given, the steps would be carried through. However, the actual result was different and hidden from the surface - not expressed in language.

Similar ambiguities were mentioned by other participants with the overriding premise that once learned, they were added to their knowledge for use in adjusting to better cross-lingual understanding.

6.7.2 Adjusting to different cultural norms

Of course, the difference in cultural context does not necessarily have to be across languages although a cross-lingual dissimilarity brings added complexity. Respondent FR describes the contrast, in general terms, of cultural differences in Latin American countries using the same language. His comments echo Hofstede's description of Chile and Peru as countries with high Power Distance (2001). In these countries, Respondent FR reports no-one would dare to challenge their leader but, in Argentina, when the leader speaks - everyone speaks! He relates an example from a course delivered in Peru where the group's silence caused him to develop concerns about how his presentation had been received. On following up with the team leader and the team members individually afterwards, the feedback was excellent. In Peru, not speaking up in the classroom was considered normal and respectful to the teacher or trainer.

“... in Latin America we talk the same language but the expressions and the way that we communicate is very different – but we speak the same language ...” (FR)

Respondent FR also notes socio-contextual differences when reaching agreement. Hall (1981) describes the differences in communication style in countries that rely on implicit information and non-verbal cues as “high-context”. Countries that use a more direct, explicit style of communication are considered to be “low-context”. Respondent FR refers to the high-context style of communication of his Mexican colleagues as he describes his experience:

“... you need to check and re-check that this “OK” is real and not simply to make you happy and that it means – yes, I am going to do this in this time.” (FR)

This is reminiscent of Respondent AF's encounter with her colleagues also from a high-context culture in Shanghai (Chapter 6, § 6.7.1). The urge to create harmony is greater than the urge to tell the truth.

As Respondent HH describes, fear of loss of face and reluctance to speak up stem from her Japanese background. However, working in an organisation with Western values, Respondent HH has, over

time, adjusted her fear of speaking up and negotiating meaning, particularly amongst colleagues she knows. She gave an example of attending a network gathering in Australia where the conversation became evermore peppered with local expressions:

“... and you know because these are mostly my colleagues and so I was relaxed in this circumstance – so I just said, “slow down” or “explain what you are talking about.” I can easily share my honest feeling about this situation.” (HH)

6.7.3 The issue of “face”

Another sub-theme, highlighted by Respondent HH, was the perception of “face”. In the West, “face” refers to an individual’s ego and the images held of them by others and therefore people are considered to be more assertive about their existence and self-esteem when sharing their success or achievements with others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Ho, 1998; Crocker and Park, 2004). However, in Confucian societies and in this case, Japan, “face” focuses on how one treats others, and can be given or earned but can also be taken away (Heine et al., 1999, 2000; Han, 2016). Moreover, as a collective society Japan stresses great importance on family – hence the concept of “face” is also embedded with the honour that each person brings to their collective social group (Hofstede, 2001). Poor performance is not just associated with the individual but with the group to whom the individual belongs, as encapsulated by Respondent HH in describing her Japanese colleagues:

“... they think they cannot speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes – kind of Japanese culture. We are very very easy to feel ashamed of ourselves! Yeah.” (HH)

Saving face for others is also emphasised. Again here, this example indicates how Respondent HH’s Japanese colleagues protect “face” for their customers.

“... yes, sometimes customers even with a very good command of English are afraid of using it in front of the others so they rely on us because we are better at communicating in English and we work for the company.” (HH)

6.7.4 Behavioural expectations

East-West collaborations frequently uncover a number of differences for which both sides need to adapt if their teamwork is to run smoothly. Research has shown that in contrast to the West, Japanese decision making usually takes longer, due to the contrast of individualist versus collectivist value orientations (Schwartz, 1992; Triandis, 2001). In the West, the emphasis tends to be on obtaining the answer to a question but in Japan the tendency generally is to scrutinise the question in great detail before deeming it worthy of the process of decision making (Drucker, 1971).

This is also reflected in local teamwork for an international project. The example below describes a challenge for the Japanese team, the results of which are not shared with their international counterparts until the Japanese team is totally satisfied that they have the right or the best solution.

“... they [the Japanese people] tend to spend more time to come to one conclusion and after they have a complete status quo of a certain goal, the level of work is very, very, high, probably. The big problem of working with Japan, is that other people have more time to iterate along the way, their level of completeness is not that great along the way ... Japanese tend to be very perfectionist – before they are ready, they will not share the result.” (HH)

Respondent HH sees some similarity of the deferment in decision making reflected in the Japanese grammar thereby meaning that the receiver of the message must wait longer to understand the essence of the communication:

“... if you look at the Japanese language, we have a verb in the very last bit of the sentence – this is in our philological structure. This means we can postpone a decision until the very end of the sentence. Our language differentiates our way of thinking ... I think this philological format affects our behaviour.” (HH)

By highlighting such differences, Respondent HH wanted to increase awareness of the different approaches, with decision making as an example, linked mainly to the collective nature of their culture.

The American use of language in email versus their approach to spoken communication brought to light inconsistency in approach and contradicted expectation. Respondent AF describes her experience as it left her startled and concerned:

“... so for instance I had a feeling in personal conversations – Americans always tend to be very friendly and, for German taste, a bit exaggerated, amazed – and then in the written communication, it feels the other way around – always very straight to the point, very direct, not a lot of words, even with the beginning of emails – just saying the name – A, blah, blah, blah, without Dear A or even Hi. So very, very, short!” (AF)

As demonstrated by these examples, awareness of cultural context-related differences can counteract uncertainty and prepare the way for knowledge sharing with MNTs. Sometimes, this may require allowing more time at an earlier stage in the process, as described by Respondent HH in her example of a Japanese decision making. The other group may have spent more time interacting over earlier versions to reach a similar result. Sudden changes in communication style can also cause surprise and

concern when not expected. An openness to another context is key in managing expectations for cross-border collaboration.

6.8 Summary of key findings

The results presented in this chapter relate to Research Question Two, what potential issues are the team leaders and team members aware of, and what strategies do they recommend?

In a similar way to Research Question One, by following a process of thematic analysis, three key themes were identified: Corporate language policy, Varying proficiency levels in corporate language and Cross-cultural/linguistic entanglements. These themes and their sub-themes encompass numerous diverse issues stemming from the obligation to speak the corporate language when communicating amongst MNTs – either virtually or face-to-face. The participants narrate examples supporting these issues, often weighing up different perspectives, both culturally and linguistically, defining strategies to prevent vicious cycles of harmful emotions.

Clearly highlighted in this chapter is the importance of context in language and cross-lingual ambiguity. The examination of this issue is new to language sensitive studies in IB and examples have been provided to illustrate each theme. The participants do not suggest a solution for every issue; in some cases, the essential message is one of raising awareness. From the responses, there are a number of perspectives supporting effective team leader intervention to improve the outcomes of MNTs. The documentation of many of these ideas is new to IB language-sensitive literature and these recommendations will be explored further in Chapter 7.

In Figures 6.1 and 6.2 overleaf, the corporate language policy is shown in blue as the protagonist of the scene. Varying proficiency levels and Cross-cultural / linguistic entanglements are shown in pink as the other key themes. The green sub-themes linked with blue lines represent outcomes of the main themes and are made up of contributory categories (detailed in orange in the thematic maps). Proposed strategies are highlighted in yellow and featured with red arrows on this diagram. Evidential examples of this structure are presented in the following sections.

Chapter 7 brings together the key concepts highlighted by the analysis in answer to Research Questions One and Two and explores these in more depth.

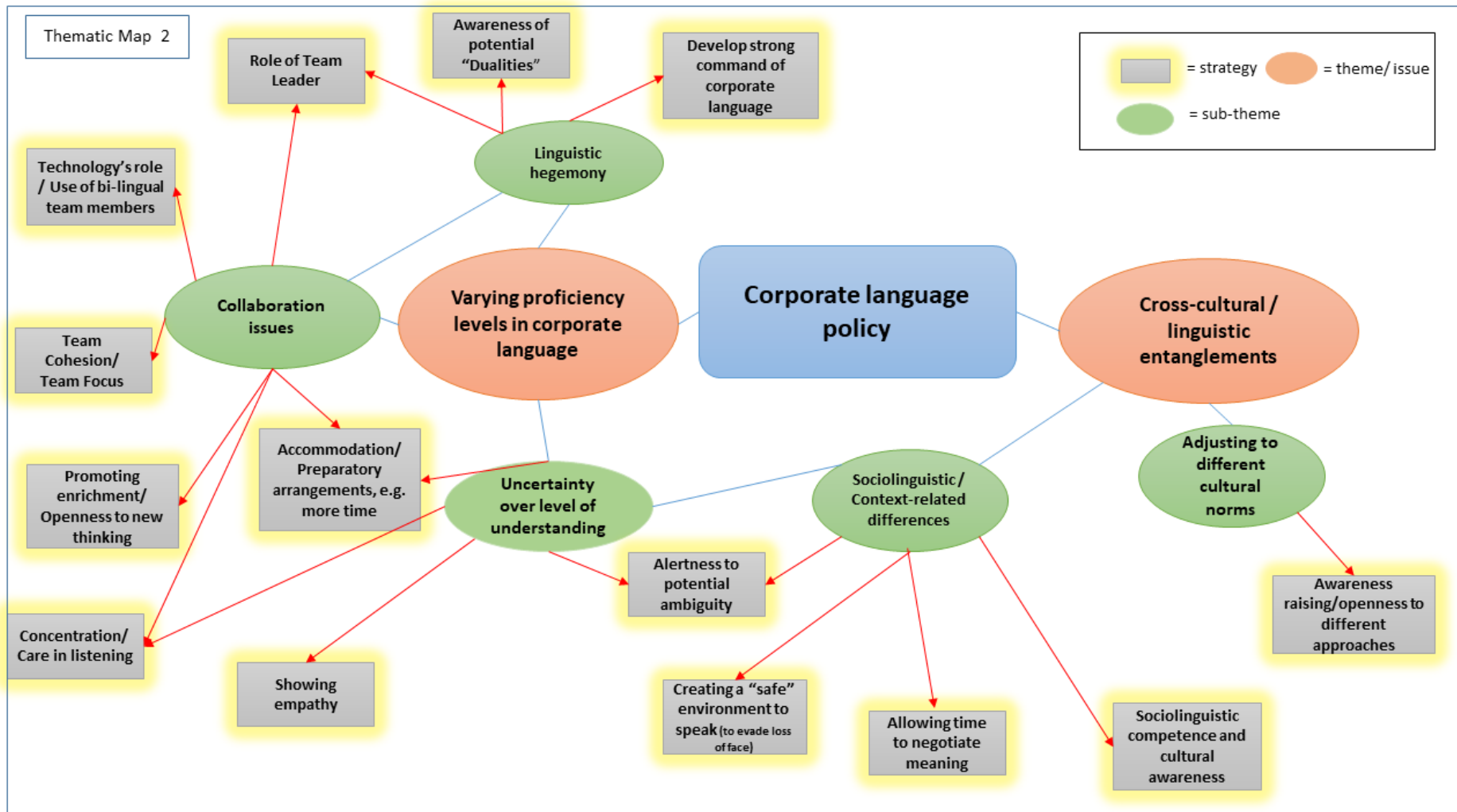


Figure 6.2: Thematic map showing final key themes and strategies RQ2

Chapter 7: Discussion of Study One: Research Questions One and Two

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 presented the findings of the thematic analysis in relation to Research Questions One and Two. The analysis is undeniably idiographic, drawing on the individual experiences of the multinational team (MNT) members, in preference to a comprehensive investigation that might suggest a more extrapolative model of behaviour.

This chapter follows the principal objective of the research which is to explore the critical incidents described by the participants in the interviews to reveal the key drivers for emotional responses when working across language barriers in multinational teams (MNTs). In light of the diverse cultural contexts, the second research question explores the issues embedded in cross-border collaboration and investigates the suggested strategies by the participants. Closer examination of some of these strategies and their alignment with another new key concept identified in relation to multi-lingual teams, Cultural Intelligence (CQ) incorporating cross-lingual sensitivity, will also be reviewed.

7.2 Review of the Research Questions

1. How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifest itself in MNTs?
2. What potential issues are the team leaders and team members aware of, and what strategies do they recommend?

At this stage, it is appropriate to ask whether the questions have been answered or whether the research wandered too far into other fields. Although the literature review covers a range of challenges relating to corporate language policy and the language-sensitive issues experienced by cross-border collaboration of international teams, the research design and interviews gather a rich collection of opinions and experiences in relation to these questions.

The analysis of the data in relation to the first research question identifies three key themes *Accommodation*, *Muted Expression* and *Opacity* as significant players in inciting language-induced emotions in the team members. Each theme includes sub-sets relating to how the emotions were felt or experienced. Events that triggered emotions were sometimes prompted by emotions felt by the individual themselves and in other cases observed in others. It was found that cognitive processes can alter feelings too, recognising the opportunity to rethink one's response to a situation. The cultural

linguistic background of both speaker and receiver also led to messages plummeting into misunderstanding and confusion. Cultural contextual information was also gathered to capture the issues highlighted by the participants from their day-to-day collaborative interactions in the corporate language. Careful analysis of these issues elicited two key themes in the form of *mixed levels of proficiency in the corporate language* and *cross-cultural and linguistic entanglements*.

The researcher also collected numerous strategies suggested by the participants to help alleviate the challenges faced in daily cross-border team communication, such as empathy, cross-lingual sensitivity, the creation of a “safe” climate, the openness to new thinking, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

7.3 The paradox of collaborating in a multinational team

A high-level overview of the interview content emphasises that language diversity cuts both ways. Multilingualism proves both an asset and a liability in a multinational business environment.

Recognition of English as the corporate language policy and the need for a common language for business across the world was voiced by the majority of the participants although in their own regional offices, their local language was spoken on a day-to-day basis. This indicates a common flaw in the enforceability of a policy in that although senior leadership may designate a corporate language for use within an organisation, this does not necessarily mean that it will be spoken exclusively by all staff in all offices on a daily basis (Fredriksson et al., 2006). In sociolinguistics terms, this compares to English as the H (high) variety and the local language as the L variety and is common practice in bi-lingual environments. This refusal could of course be linked to a lack of proficiency in the language or alternatively to the sensing of a threat when faced with the imposition of another language through which regular communication is expected (Bordia and Bordia, 2015). Participants acknowledged that they were constantly aware of the need to switch from their local language to the corporate language (English) should another non-native speaker (NNS) of their language enter their conversation. It is worth noting that the appropriate level to hold professional conversations is C1 level in the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR) and in most languages requires an active vocabulary of 5,000 words and a passive vocabulary of 10,000 words (Council of Europe, 2020).

The participants all reported that language diversity brings significant benefits for global organisations and there was generally a positive attitude towards challenges that led to re-evaluation of assumptions and the adoption of new approaches. This debate led to well-informed judgement with better outcomes and a more rigorous rationale. Not surprisingly, it has been found that colleagues in mono-linguistic environments are less likely to question one another and take part in groupthink (Mäkela et al., 2007).

Nonetheless, there was no doubt in the minds of the participants that language diversity, although advantageous and fruitful long-term, led to considerable communication challenges and emotional and cognitive issues, as highlighted in the thematic tables in Chapters 5 and 6. These challenges stemmed from mixed English proficiency levels, lack of semantic transferability of vocabulary into English as well as dissimilarities in lingua-cultural discourse practices.

In view of the key themes expressed by the participants, this chapter not only focuses on the challenges and issues faced in a global team environment, but also on potential leadership strategies to alleviate them. To some extent, these strategies may additionally be applicable to other MNT members. In Study One, this approach is indeed a reasonable one as many of the global team respondents were also functional team leaders in regional offices of Tech 1 and Tech 2 around the globe.

Figure 7.1 overleaf shows a model encompassing the key themes identified in response to the Research Questions in Study One. The themes feed into the topic of accommodation as an overriding step towards easing the situation. The study identifies different forms of accommodation of emotions in response to language barriers and scrutinises them to greater depth than in other extant IB studies which mostly highlight foreign language anxiety (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015). As mentioned in Chapter 5, the term accommodation of emotions is utilised in the sense of making adaptations, modifying strategies to manage a problem or challenge successfully. Indeed, accommodation has several facets as part of this model. As a concept, accommodation not only embraces resourcing viable solutions to facilitate better communication and collaboration but it also manifests itself in self-management, managing emotions in response to messages communicated from a different linguistic and cultural mindset. Building awareness and understanding the perspective of other team members with different native languages, cultures and living in other geographies has been supported in a manifold of research already but, in this study, the key factors have been compiled in relation to emotions resultant of social interaction between MNT members. These factors have been examined for their impact on collaboration as well as the strategies suggested to combat the most prominent issues.

What is detected here from the analysis is the need to compile explicit strategies for MNT leaders in building a culture that supports accommodation of mixed levels of language proficiency. The following sections discuss the key themes and also review how some of the suggested strategies in Study One contribute to better collaboration, a more motivated team and improved performance.

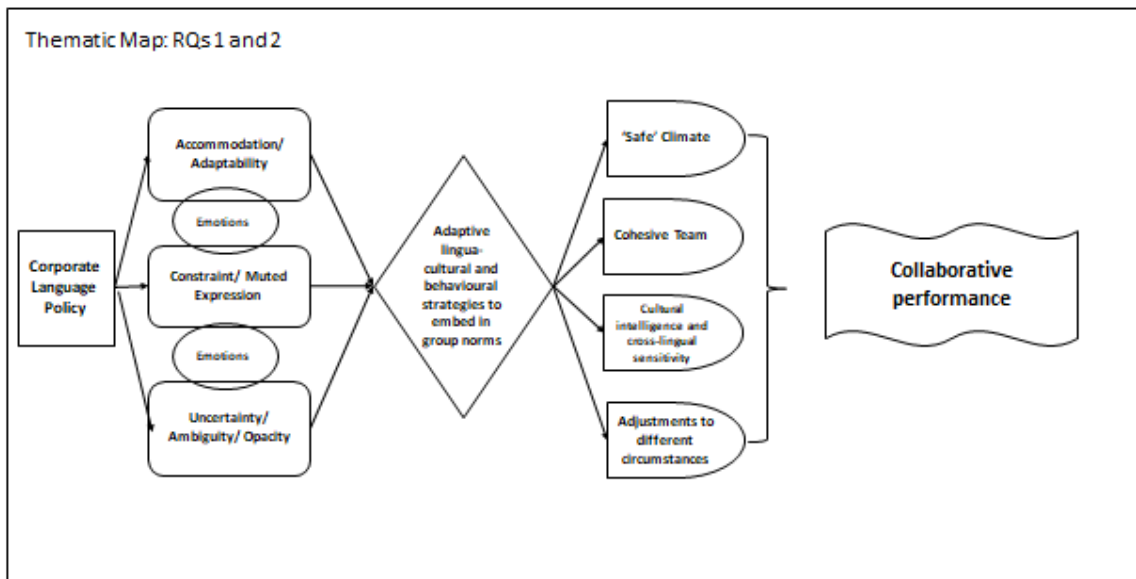


Figure 7.1: Overview of the research results from Research Questions One and Two

7.3.1 *Lingua-cultural accommodation/adaptive approaches*

Without exception, the native English-speaking participants clearly appreciated the efforts made by their colleagues in speaking their language irrespective of the fetters of the corporate policy, and some also made efforts to make conversational introductions in the local languages. They found it helped to build relationships and bridges between different regional groups. This is also endorsed by the second language learners' theoretical accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991) which refers to the practice of code-switching to attraction – similarity theory (Byrne, 1971). The theory suggests that individuals feel positivity towards those who adjust their language in favour of the way they speak and less positively towards those who do not.

Indeed, a lack of positivity was clearly visible in Tech 1's Benelux office when the French Belgian speakers started to invoke French as the local language. In response to emails in French, the Dutch members of the Benelux office responded with an abrupt email in English, denying any knowledge of the French language. Although in this instance, the root cause for this emotional outburst was likely to stem, in part, from historical sensitivities over language in Belgium and a deep-seated sense of social identity (as discussed by Reid and Ng in Chapter 3 §3.5), a directive to speak in another language again prompts a heated response (1999).

One key aspect of lingua-cultural accommodation is the focus on adapting or bending to circumstance, to avoid the emotional impact of language barriers coupled with any inherent anxiety or embarrassment. In both organisations, the team leaders and members of the global teams reported instances where, despite the global policy, they had suggested the local language be spoken to ensure conversations in comfort without the stress of having to speak a foreign language. Extant studies in IB

language-sensitive literature fail to report accommodative themes of this nature in relation to language differences. For example, Tenzer and Pudelko report more about the existence of self-directed anxiety triggered by language barriers and resentment of an interpersonal nature (2015). Neeley, Hinds and Cramton also indicate resentment of native speakers' strong command of the corporate language and propensity to dominate meetings (2012). These studies generally report on presence of foreign language anxiety in teams. This study builds on these results (from lower reported proficiency sectors, such as the automotive sector) by researching a different sector with the highest reported language proficiency – the professional services sector (Figure 3.2) (EF English Proficiency Index, as cited by Tran and Burman, 2016). In this study, the new theme of accommodation suggests actions of empathy and trust between leader and team member and the ability to switch between task and relationship orientation by recognising a potentially challenging situation and acting accordingly (Zander and Mockaitis, 2012). Highly empowered teams frequently demonstrate higher performance than those under close monitoring (Kirkman et al., 2004).

For the participants, the policy of a corporate language was an accommodative tool to create a level playing field among NNSs. Moreover, the participants naturally changed to English to include a new arrival to the group who did not speak their language or the matter under discussion was work-related. The data indicates that the participants frequently switch between the native languages of their interlocutors and English for several reasons – usually this was simply to ease communication challenges and to build an amenable and trustworthy climate.

Another aspect of lingua-cultural accommodation embraced not only adaptation of language choices but also practical arrangements to ensure optimal understanding, for example, the forwarding of preparatory material ahead of the meeting and holding virtual team meetings separately with the Japanese team. Another aspect not reported in the extant IB language-sensitive literature, highlighted by the participants, was practical accommodation. Allocating more time ensured that the Japanese team members could voice their perspectives and report on their activities. Such foresight requires strong organisational skills and anticipation of potential communication challenges and, as a team leader, ample awareness of the skills and attributes of one's team members. Of course, a team leader may not anticipate every possible communicational hazard as in the case of Respondent JM's decision to listen to his Chinese colleague's presentation whilst travelling home, but building this foresight into a leader's mindset demonstrates how practical accommodation should be integral to MNT leadership.

Some comments made by the respondents in reference to the accommodative measures made to overcome certain challenges in their work arrangements could potentially be upsetting to some team members. For example, in the findings reported in Chapter 5, one local team leader commented that

she found listening to a colleague’s Indian English for several hours affected her emotions because it was tiring. As discussed in Chapter 3 § 3.6.2, Indian English follows certain different rules in comparison to Standard English, and such differences may require an adjustment to one’s active listening. Furthermore, such comments by a MNT leader or a MNT member, could also be hurtful to a NNS and even be deemed racist, triggering feelings of Muted Expression, as described in Chapter 5. Even if the comments were not directly referring to the individual overhearing them, they could then consider them re-directed to their own speech structures and pronunciation. Such situations are likely to elicit emotions of frustration and resentment even lead to a lack of trust. Indeed, it could be argued that the responsibilities of leading a multinational team are even greater than those of leading a mono-lingual team in view of the additional linguistic and cultural challenges and the accommodative arrangements that are required in order to ensure optimal performance.

Awareness of team composition and the harnessing of diverse skills against a backdrop of language and cultural diversity is key to unleashing the potential and steering the team to success. As one might expect, listening to English which listeners perceive to be accented is more taxing due to the unfamiliarity of the sounds and pronunciation. The utterances may be partially or completely misinterpreted because listeners are unable to distinguish phonetic segments, words, or larger units, spoken with an accent. Moreover, utterances articulated at speed are also likely to contribute to lower comprehensibility for NNSs, (Munro and Derwing, 1995). This often leads to loss of information (Flege, 1988), and highlighted by the participants in the next couple of paragraphs.

Not surprisingly, the difference of syllables per minute in conversation may vary by as much as 90 syllables per minute comparing average and fast speeds shown in the Table 7.1 below, adapted from Tauroza and Allison’s study in British English conversation (1990).

Fast	Above 320
Moderately fast	280-320
Average	230-280
Moderately slow	190-230
Slow	Below 190

Table 7.1: Estimate of standard rates of speech (syllables per minute), adapted from Tauroza and Allison (1990)

Drawing on local knowledge from team members responsible in key markets is crucial in order to maintain outputs in different geographies. However, such activities, conducted through a veil of potential muted expression, are likely only to be viable using accommodative management. As set out by Hinds et al. (2014) in their study, the hazard of language asymmetries through different levels of proficiency has the propensity to lead to intense emotions which are then reflected in behaviours and

anxieties of the non-native English speakers (Hinds et al, 2014). Sub-groups start to form (Neely, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015) and then individuals feel excluded and evade contact as borne out in the findings in Chapter 5. The frustration at not matching the levels of lucidity in English of their colleagues, either at NS or NNS levels, can result in the domination of weaker speakers by those with a stronger command of the language and in a position of influence. Such groups form clusters (often in regional offices of multinational corporations (MNCs)) of individuals feeling marginalised and disappointed that their voice is not heard (Brett et al., 2006; Holden, 2002; Kassis-Henderson, 2005; Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

A significant contributor to the anxiety and ambiguity between multilinguals is the insecurity over levels of understanding, an aspect highlighted by the participants of this study but not raised in the extant literature. As discussed in Chapter 3, very often individuals, even with strong language proficiency, (i.e. a mastery of the rules of phonology, syntax and semantics and ability for clear expression) still fail to communicate across languages. The reason for this is because in addition to “language” competence, “sociolinguistic” competence is also required when operating across language boundaries (Hymes, 1971, cited in Kassis Henderson, 2005). To elaborate on this, as illustrated by Usunier, the word “standard” has different associations in France where (in certain contexts) it refers to conformity, the removal of differences and absence of imagination, whereas in the US, it proposes homogeneity and absence of discrimination (2001, p. 46). Furthermore, forms of meta-communication contextual cues, such as tone of voice, pauses, interruptions and silences (Pan et al. 2002) can also contribute to confusion and when such conventions are misinterpreted, hostility and miscommunication (Scollon and Scollon, 1995, p. xiii) often contribute to anxiety and lack of trust in teams working cross-border. This was observed in Respondent AF’s experience in liaising with the team in China where she felt uncertain and insecure knowing that in China ‘yes’ does not necessarily mean affirmative agreement and, after hearing this, she was unsure what to expect.

The insecurity stems from the feeling that, as a team member, one is still expected to fulfil one’s responsibilities to the team but that the basis of communication is not on a level playing field, neither from the language perspective nor from the cultural values perspective.

Trust is a key component in developing a cohesive team. Furthermore, Respondent AF’s reactions align with Tenzer and Pudelko’s study (2014) which underlines that goodwill in multilingual environments depends mainly on the emotional impact of the trustee behaviour. Such situations require support from leadership in building *awareness* from both sides to develop trust. Only through informed levels of perspective taking, pre-empting the thoughts, feelings and motives of the other person, can awareness be built (Williams, 2007).

Beeler and Lecomte (2017) explored the social power prevalent with mixed levels of proficiency in a corporate language in a multinational environment - the darker side of language. Their study utilised Bakhtin's dialogical perspective to explore the underlying linguistic hegemony in multinational groups, investigating the responses contributing to new understandings triggered by highly context dependent interconnected chains of utterances. Their conclusion was that neither a corporate language nor a multilingual policy have the key to suppress linguistic hegemony, and that it is for fluent team leaders and team members to promote a dialogical culture fostering equal relations between team members. This view aligns with the responses by the participants with team leader responsibility in how they resolve situations of potential exclusion or dominance by stronger English speakers. In her interview, Respondent EP recounted details of an event where group members returned to their native language and that other members were excluded, and she had led the conversation back to the corporate language and to topics common to all. Afterwards, she added that, for her, maintaining this common communication platform was part of her team leader responsibility.

7.3.2 A "safe" climate

Operating and collaborating in a team culture characterised by respect and empathy was a quality highlighted by several of the research participants as important for team productivity.

The tendency to cluster amongst NSs of the same language has already been reported by other scholars (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Aichhorn and Puck, 2018) as well as by local team leaders Respondent EP in §6.3.2. Individuals feel safe when interacting with speakers of their own language. The clustering that occurs when mixing individuals in a cross-cultural, language-diverse environment requires careful management as the propensity to be excluded linguistically or experience status loss can occur on a number of levels (Feely and Harzing, 2003). As highlighted by Neeley (2013), in organisations with corporate languages, this usually impacts the NNS.

There are several instances where Respondent HT emphasises her role as functional leader to facilitate an atmosphere of inclusion of all levels of proficiency, acceptance and empathy to create a less threatening environment. Invoking a psychologically "safe" climate for team members shows recognition for the essential theme "Muted Expression" raised in Chapter 5 in relation to Research Question One. Although already reported in a few extant studies for language-sensitive research in IB (Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert, 1999; Aichhorn and Puck, 2017), it is crucial for a MNT leader to be alert to this potential problem.

Furthermore, showing empathy and support for colleagues whilst recognising their efforts in mastering the corporate language is likely to help NNSs feel less threatened by the corporate language policy (Nurmi and Koroma, 2020; Neeley et al, 2012). Language acts as a conduit for a team in

understanding and transferring tacit and explicit knowledge (Piekkari et al., 2014). Hence English proficiency is crucial to the value of the information being exchanged in teamwork.

Whilst the study by Nurmi and Koroma (2020) proposes a collective coping environment embodying a psychologically “safe” climate, without direction, the level of English is likely to become overgeneralised and not rich enough for use in business pursuits. However, it is important that the overriding premise of a “safe” climate should be developed by the team leader in that it advocates the creation of a shared perception of a supportive, inclusive communication climate where the members feel genuinely respected for being a NNS and comfortable speaking in a foreign language without fear of negative appraisal.

7.3.3 Cohesive Team

The global team leaders and regional team leaders all acknowledged their strong desire to foster good relationships and collaboration amongst their team members. They expressed their awareness of the unique challenges faced by the team members and the urgent need to build collaborative relationships in light to geographical distance, cultural difference and language difference and the opacity that can disrupt true communication. As highlighted in Chapter 2 (§2.2.3), establishing a common ground and including small talk can help to build trust and knowledge sharing (Pullin, 2010;

As shown in the findings, the emotional dynamics of a team, whilst essentially social and interactive, are inherently accompanied by the transmission of internal states through the expression and acuity of emotion. Whilst other studies have alluded to the disruption of teams, few have directly pin-pointed the projection of emotional states on collaboration. Making sense of a communication is an emotional judgement, not only considering the intended meaning of a specific interactive event but also the individual’s subjective meaning of an event that triggers and influences emotions (Scherer, 1997). What elicits emotion in one culture may prove totally neutral in another and appraised indifferently (Mesquita and Frijda, 1992). Pleasant events very often elicit the same emotions cross-culturally (Mauro et al., 1992) but complex matters requiring a deeper evaluation such as accountability and endeavour assume different dimensions across cultures (Mauro et al., 1992; Scherer, 1997b; Mesquita and Walker, 2003). This can again lay the intended meaning open to subjective perception, particularly where accountability is concerned, as expressed by KA in Chapter 5 § 5.2.2.

The governance of feelings has a major influence on a person’s emotional experience and can vary across cultural settings (Campos et al., 1989). People from individualistic cultures, such as in the United States and many countries in Western Europe, view their emotional states in terms of positive and negative, preferring the positive ones. However, people in collectivistic cultures such as China and Japan view their emotions in terms of the level of social engagement (for example, annoyance) as

opposed to disengaged states (for example, pride) (Kitayama, Karasawa and Mesquita, 2004; Kitayama, Markus and Kurokawa, 2000; Scollon, Diener, Oishi and Biswas-Diener, 2004, cited in Efenbein and Shirako, 2006). So, for example, in Japan if a team leader were to praise a member of their team publicly for winning a new client, depending on the feeling rules engaged, the team member could interpret this outcome as pride for projecting themselves and humiliation for not blending in. An example of this reluctance to stand out is illustrated in Respondent HH's interview:

“... as I get older I think it gets easier I am not afraid to express my own feelings – but when I was in my twenties or thirties I was a little bit afraid of making mistakes in front of public situation ... and ... uh try to shut my mouth and align with the opinion of the people who were with me.” (HH)

Not surprisingly immersion in another culture may cause a focus on events triggering emotions of pleasantness or stress coupled with consideration of how they resonate against native cultural values; over time regular immersion, prompts some gradual adjustment both cognitively and emotionally (Thomas and Inkson, 2004). As one of the essential competencies of cultural intelligence, this aspect will be explored in relation to MNTs later in this chapter.

To function effectively and efficiently, MNTs need to adopt a shared common culture. Achieving this in a team with a homogenous cultural background and one native language requires clarity, courage, decisiveness, self-awareness and humility but in a MNT, it also requires the ability to disentangle elements of culture and cultural linguistics and from personality (Efenbein and Shirako, 2006). It has been suggested that the introduction of rules and practices to new team members (particularly in relation to project teams) (Applebaum et al., 1998); Pazos, 2012) lessens the effects of power disparities and enables members to establish relationships where they can accomplish their tasks effectively (Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013; Mathieu et al., 2008; Tjosvold et al., 2014, as cited in Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2018). Moreover, where new groups start work before establishing some ground rules, conflict and problems can quickly bubble up to the surface (Lau and Murnighan, 2006).

Even teams where there is no language factor require a period of development, as highlighted in Bruce Tuckman (1965) in his theory – Form, Storm, Norm, Perform. Although dating back over 50 years, this theory remains recognised and referenced by team leaders in organisations today. Whilst this theory may not mitigate power struggles forming completely, established ground rules agreed by the whole team at the outset and modelled by leaders, helps to establish team cohesiveness. Furthermore, where language issues arise, these should not be ignored or only raised on an individual basis, complete awareness and openness helps to build confidence and comfort within the team (Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2018). Such ground rules are likely to incorporate an inclusive use of language. First of all, they allow for the instilling of strategies to recognise that, despite the “surface” language

(English) used to interact, each NNS has a variety of communicative and interpretive mechanisms originating from their own language systems. Secondly, they learn to adjust to each other's modes of communication to negotiate strategies for better collaboration (Kassis-Henderson, 2005). To date only a few studies have been done in this area, exploring how language management at a senior level can increase more inclusive attitudes. Luring and Klitmøller (2015) conducted a study illustrating a positive connection between the inclusive use of language with creativity and performance in multinational organisations.

7.3.4 Awareness of different circumstances

Examples of cultural and linguistic accommodation were highlighted by all of the research participants. However, for some, a cognitive shift in deep cultural values was particularly noticeable as they explained how they had altered the way they thought to change the way they felt when operating in an Anglophone environment. An example of this is highlighted in Chapter 6 (§6.3.2) by Respondent HH's conscious adjustment to her thinking and behaviour over time in adapting toward to her team's attitude towards making mistakes.

This theme echoes one of the key themes in answer to Research Question One, Cognitive accommodation, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, as it is also an illustration of a positive orientation to change after exposure to a foreign culture. In this case, the example of adapting to the Anglophone culture of a large Western-centric multinational, Tech 2, aligns with the study by Akkermans et al. (2010) where it is argued that living or working in another culture may, over time, partially impact behaviour long-term. Furthermore, the scholars also discuss the association of speaking a foreign language and assimilation of cultural attitudes. This theory is also rooted in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that originally posited that individuals who speak different languages "live in different worlds, they do not live in the same world with different labels for objects, events and concepts" (Hulin and Mayer, 1986, p. 83). This theory is not generally accepted today as it stands but the general sense that language might influence the way we think is recognised in psycholinguistics (Crystal, 2010).

Although the Japanese team members showed readiness to adjust their guard over linguistic errors, they were not ready to assimilate all aspects of the Anglophone culture of Tech 2. For example, when engaging in decision making, more time is required and sharing deliberations or results before due diligence has been completed is not something to be expected.

"... whereas other people can go back to certain points so that they can change direction ... they can fix their perception of a certain goal or target ... yes, Japanese tend to be very perfectionist. Before they are ready, they will not share the result. (HH)"

Consensus is essential in Japanese decision making, and the dismissal of a proposal could mean a major upset for the individual initiating it (Branine, 2011). The approach outlined by HH equates with the Japanese practice, “Nemawashi”, a process throughout which an individual actively builds agreements and consensus for the final result. The outcome of effective use of “Nemawashi” is that by the time a proposal is finalised, every flaw in the argument or unforeseen wrinkle has been smoothed out through one-on-one meetings and pre-meetings following this technique (Sagi, 2015). Sharing their results outside their local team to the wider global team is closely guarded before the local team is satisfied that the proposal represents the best possible result from their group. Of course, in a similar way to Westerners, Japanese take many of their own work practices for granted (Otsuka, 2019). Therefore, when faced with the Western concept of brainstorming, requiring lateral thinking in a collective environment, the Japanese preference for linear thinking and respect for hierarchy does not sit well with this technique (Kidd, 1999). For the Japanese, good ideas need time to mature and undergo consultation with the stakeholders before a decision can be reached.

In building awareness of different circumstances for better collaboration in MNTs, one strategy can be to label an individual so that they fit into someone’s subjective notion of national stereotypes. Awareness of different cultural differences may in some instances result in the assumptions of stereotypes as portrayed by Respondent RS’s view in relation to Americans.

As discussed in Chapter 6 (§ 6.7.4) when considering behavioural expectations, there are several examples of judgements raised by the research participants included references to the Americans’ “directness”, the Germans’ exactness and punctiliousness, the Japanese use of implicit communication, and so on. This practice, when the behaviours of nationalities are pre-judged and labelled, can give way to threats of stereotyping (Walton et al. 2015). The indexing of certain behaviour attached to certain nationalities stems back to the studies in cross-cultural awareness developed over the last 50 years by researchers such as Hall (1976) and Hofstede (2001). Whilst it cannot be denied that such concepts may help to build awareness of likely differences in others, such perceptions of different national cultures have been criticised as fixed, restricted and conclusive and do not allow for “cultural diversity, change over time and space, shifting multiple intersecting identities and agency” (Nathan, 2015 p. 102).

This neat and essentialist paradigm forms a useful model for organisational studies and much of the language sensitive literature has embraced the standard national models of culture and language (Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2017). However, whilst other scholars have highlighted a shift away from the essentialism of nationalist/regional cultures ascribed to monolinguals, bilinguals of a particular language, people working internationally tend to hover and manoeuvre between different

languages drawing on diverse communicative resources (Fredricksson et al., 2006). Linguistics studies by Gumperz (2001) and Scollon and Scollon (2001) of the impact of linguistic and cultural diversity on communication in multicultural environments have focused on pragmatic competences and strategies to adapt. These studies show how aspects beyond culture, for example personal background and experience, affect verbal behaviour and shape individual's expectations and reactions. For Gumperz, culture refers to "the personal background that might account for variations in individual verbal behaviours, whether they be attributable to a national, racial or ethnic culture or the culture of a particular social class, generation or gender" (Gumperz 2003, p. 226).

This opinion supports the view that in a globalised world, multi-lingual team members in IB may be composites of different cultures; it is a call to re-adjust the standard view of cultural stereotypes. Whilst cultural knowledge informs the likelihood of certain cultural values, an individual may come from several cultures, affecting from their personal background and experiences.

7.4 Use of cultural intelligence (CQ) and cross-lingual sensitivity

Study One evaluated the key triggers for emotional responses to working across language barriers. Whilst in the case of muted expression, the results built on the findings of a couple of earlier studies (Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert, 1999; Aichorn and Puck, 2017), this study advances current understanding of the role of accommodation in language diverse teams. It also opens up new solutions in relation to ambiguity by drawing on linguistics to understand lingua-cultural issues, in the context of MNTs, which until now have not been addressed. During the interviews, respondents highlighted several strategies to alleviate the difficulties and some of these reminded the researcher of the importance when working cross-border of cultural knowledge and the knowledge of language.

The construct of CQ has been inserted into the model as it encapsulates the strategies and behaviours enacted by all of the research participants in response to challenges working with mixed proficiency levels in a MNT. The term Cultural Intelligence builds on earlier concepts such as the intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ). Earley and Ang (2003), the originators of the concept, describe Cultural intelligence (CQ) as the capability to interact effectively across cultures. Their model incorporates three domains: knowledge, motivation and behaviour. CQ-knowledge is "concerned with the structure and interrelatedness of cognitions that are relevant for comprehending and functioning within a culturally dissimilar context" (Bhagat, 2006, p. 490). Portraying this as a new concept provides this theory with added support as it replaces familiar ideas in cognitive psychology with more current concepts that have appeared in international management literature (Thomas et al., 2008). Furthermore, it separates the individual difference construct from the institutional and environmental influences on effective cross-cultural behaviour. Its identification as an intelligence aligns with several

theories of intelligence that identify it as a multifaceted construct (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg et al., 2003), and a system of interacting abilities (Sternberg, 1997). These elements contribute to an ability to adapt to or to accommodate a particular environment and hence, as described by Thomas et al. (2008), “the construct of CQ appears as a continuum of capability explaining why some individuals are more effective in this regard than others”. Other studies into the effectiveness of CQ with MNTs have shown affirmative results in creating shared values, particularly among culturally heterogeneous teams (Adair et al., 2013).

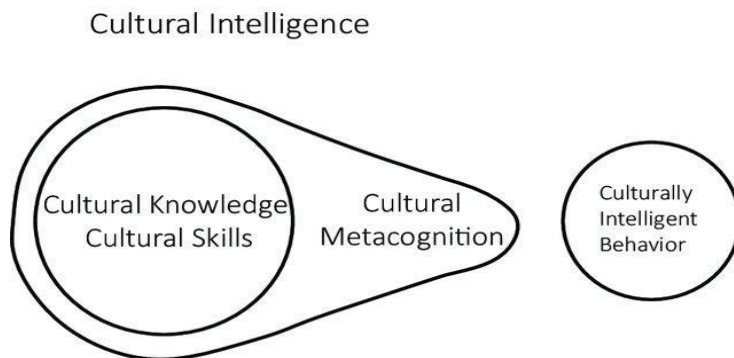


Figure 7.2: The domain of cultural intelligence (adapted from Thomas et al. (2008)).

However, CQ has not been applied to cross-lingual situations. Given the inherent link between culture and language, the equipment of cultural knowledge and the creativity of cultural metacognition would enable leaders to introduce CQ as a behaviour to which MNT members should aspire and embrace as a core value of their team. Several of the interview participants gave vivid examples of CQ (unknowingly), cultural knowledge, thoughtfulness and empathy in how they accommodated the proficiency levels and initiated measures for effective interpersonal communication, for example, when KC creates a separate call for his Japanese team.

Respondent KC allows more time to engage with the Japanese team, which has a lower proficiency level in the corporate language. Respondent KC alluded to the fact that joining the main global call, might cause them to feel less comfortable in presenting their contributions and their voice may be misunderstood or there may be difficulties caused by the timing. Respondent KC did not state whether the Japanese ever were invited to the main global call. It could be argued that being singled out might give rise to a feeling of ostracism. However, the simpler approach reported by Respondent KC, appears to have alleviated the stress of miscommunication.

In their study into leading across language barriers, Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) refer superficially to the term *cross-lingual sensitivity* but omit to offer a clear definition. *Cross-lingual sensitivity* draws from the concept of cross-cultural pragmatics (as discussed in Chapter 3, § 3.3.3). The skill requires

acuity in understanding how language acquires meaning through context and alertness to the idea of intended meaning and curiosity for the communicative process among people from different cultures, speaking different first languages.

In a reference to both linguistic and cultural issues, Respondent EP highlighted the matter of sociolinguistic capability in negotiation of meaning (Chapter 3, §3.7.1) and understanding language against cultural context. Fluency in a language can easily be seen as a form of cultural intelligence. Unravelling the intended meaning against the context is essential to avoid misinterpretation. Hence, Respondent EP also saw the value in taking time to ensure complete understanding – an essential element for collaboration and a key quality in CQ and cross-lingual sensitivity.

“... So you actually have to go back and explain everything a little bit differently with different words to get the same understanding. It’s not just a cultural or a language thing – that’s both.” (EP)

As explained earlier in this chapter, CQ refers to a person’s capability to operate effectively in intercultural environments (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008; Earley and Ang, 2003). This definition centres on a person’s propensity to adapt in a wide range of intercultural contexts. It illuminates the fact that one cannot operate very effectively in a culture without being able to share knowledge or learning with the individuals from the other culture. This requires the skill of being able to appraise different approaches and being able to react instantaneously. This capability to operate in a culturally diverse setting can be measured on the CQS scale (Ang et al., 2007). For example, a female project manager from Korea might be very successful in the US but would struggle when posted to Russia. Leaders with high CQ possess the ability to observe and identify the need and use creativity in introducing the best team strategies. CQ differs from social and emotional intelligence in that it requires adaptation by the individual across cultures (Earley and Ang, 2003). Habitual strategies need to be adjusted, adapted, or reinvented depending on the situation and culture. Thus, CQ places a heavy emphasis on metacognition, or “thinking about thinking” (see Figure 7.2). Similarly, the activities required in new cultures, unlike behaving in the same way one does within one’s own culture, may require individuals to cultivate and expand their own behavioural repertoires. That is, CQ reflects a person’s capability of growing entirely novel behaviour (e.g., speech sounds, gestures, etc.) as required (Early and Peterson, 2004). These adjustable patterns of behaviour embrace adaptive strategies towards lesser proficient speakers of English, for example by avoiding jargon, obscure language and assumptions about other people’s comprehension. Therefore, individuals who are high in CQ may adapt their language to achieve harmony with the utterances of the other speaker’s vocabulary and style and thereby mitigate the likelihood of events eliciting negative emotions.

Curiosity and an enthusiasm to learn by listening and engagement are other key qualities which contribute to success. As stated by Respondent FR.

“... I feel that not only my language defines me but the definition of each person is about their experience of where they were born.” (FR)

The discipline of CQ uses cultural knowledge but does not lose sight of the individual. In Respondent FR's interview, he reflects on an individual's language as a testament to their background and experience in the same way as an individual being a composite of national culture(s), education and professional experience. Knowledge of national culture is a starting point, building on one's own culturally based assumptions in a mindful and creative way, allows the application of CQ and cross-lingual sensitivity to build better collaborative communication strategies across cultures.

CQ has been recognised by many MNCs to increase awareness of cultural value differences for their expatriate managers (Livermore, 2015). In their study, Atiku and Fields (2017) recommend that for global firms, cross-cultural skills and the growth of a global mindset should not be confined to expatriate development schemes but extended throughout the organisation. They emphasise that all managers require broader international, cross-cultural and diversity capabilities, termed by Caligiuri and DeSanto (2001) and Atiku and Fields (2017) as “cosmopolitanism”. This is evident in the results of Study One also supports their view, but with the important additional dimension of cross-lingual sensitivity. In conclusion, to create smoother collaboration, HR directors and senior leaders of MNCs should work more closely to increase such awareness throughout global organisations.

7.5 Summary

This chapter brings together the rich themes extracted from the analysis of Study One in relation to the two research questions. The results of the analysis not only focus on the challenges and issues faced in a global team environment, but also on some viable leadership strategies to relieve them.

Compared with studies that have included some analysis of the relationship between emotions and language barriers in MNTs (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015; Aichhorn and Puck, 2017; Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2018), these results contribute to a deeper understanding and knowledge of this area.

The identification of *accommodation* in different forms as either a reaction to language barriers, that is to say, emotional (present and absent) and cognitive are new to language-sensitive research in IB, as well as the theme of practical accommodation which contributes to strategies to mitigate emotional reactions. The identification of the second key theme, *muted expression*, recognised in one of the

aforementioned studies (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012), takes a more detailed view in recognising the emotions felt by the NNS, and the emotions felt by the observer of the NNS. The third theme, *Opacity/Ambiguity*, also reported in a cursory manner by other scholars in language-sensitive studies in IB, is examined with greater depth in this study. The study explores the results, identifying the implications of clumsiness and linguistic nuance. In response to the second research question, the key themes of *corporate language, varying levels of proficiency and cross-cultural entanglements* have been explored in greater depth than in previous studies, particularly in relation to IB, MNT leaders and their teams.

Cultural knowledge and cross-lingual awareness affect the prospect of particular cultural values being present in a given cultural context. However, individuals may be a composite of many cultural values acquired through their personal background and experiences. These findings, drawing on the strategies proposed by the participants, provides support for the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) with cross-lingual sensitivity being incorporated into the model (Figure 7.1, § 7.3), which will be discussed further in Chapter 8, employing the findings of Study Two.

Chapter 8: Study Two – Research Results and Discussion of Studies One and Two

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 brought together the findings of Study One in relation to both research questions.

1. How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifest itself in MNTs?
2. What potential issues are the team leaders and team members aware of, and what strategies do they recommend?

In respect to the first research question, the findings illustrate the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language and how it manifests itself into three key themes: *Accommodation, Muted Expression and Opacity*. The three themes were then scrutinised together with the findings relating to Research Question Two highlighting the strategies suggested by the multinational team (MNT) members to mitigate the issues and to diminish negative emotional responses.

Not surprisingly, each respondent in Study One raised aspects of cultural difference relating to the context of their interactions between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) in the corporate language, thus emphasising the importance of considering language and cultural context together when exploring language-sensitive issues. The first part of this chapter explores the experiences and perceptions of a separate group of MNT members. Although not members of the same MNT or the same multinational corporation (MNC), these individuals are from the same industry sector and interact daily in a common corporate language. They came together to share their experiences in an online focus group discussion which forms the basis of Study Two. To set the scene, the reasoning behind the study is presented, together with the composition of the group.

The findings are then described and discussed drawing comparisons with to the results of Study One.

8.2 Basis for Study Two

In view of the richness of the findings of Study One, a second study was undertaken to triangulate the understanding of the research results.

Focus group discussion is a method of collecting data from many participants at the same time (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Focus groups allow participants the freedom to challenge, ask questions and agree

or disagree. In this environment of social interaction, the focus group can reduce the artificiality and disassociation of some other forms of qualitative data collection (Wilkinson, 1999). It provides an additional, collective dimension to the perceptions of MNT members of speaking a common corporate language with different levels of language proficiency. Hence, in this study the participants can discuss their opinions and experiences with other MNT members who share a similar working environment.

In Study Two, a focus group of eight participants from the professional services sector but working in different MNTs was brought together via a Zoom video conference call to participate in a discussion focused on the results of Study One. Members of different global MNTs in the professional services sector responded to a LinkedIn invitation to take part in the study. More details in relation to the focus group approach are in Chapter 4 but an overview of the group’s composition is given in Table 8.1.

Participant pseudonym	Location base	Native Language	Team Leader	Gender	Career level	Level of English (self-assessed)
Focus Group						
AI	India	Hindi	-	M	Mid	Fluent
DB	UK	French	-	M	Mid	Fluent
MW	Germany	Dutch	Yes	M	Senior	Fluent
EY	UK	Korean	-	F	Senior	Fluent
DK	France	French	Yes	F	Senior	Fluent
PM	Germany	English	Yes	M	Senior	Native
SC	Hong Kong	French	-	F	Senior	Fluent
AM	Argentina	Spanish	Yes	M	Senior	Fluent

Table 8.1: Overview of Study Two focus group sample

During the focus group meeting, questions were put to the members of the group based on the key themes of Study One, to elicit their views and shared experiences of collaborating in English (their common corporate language). As confirmed in Chapter 4, each participant assessed their own level of proficiency in English (their corporate language) when they agreed to participate. For the purposes of this study, the term “fluency” indicates a smooth manner of speaking, calling up linguistic knowledge whilst under the pressure of near instantaneous processing (Lennon, 2000).

The focus group meeting was recorded and transcribed immediately, and the same process of thematic analysis employed to identify patterns and themes. Analysis of the transcript identified key issues and effective strategies suggested by the participants and can be found in Appendix 10. The

participants were not members of the same MNT, so it was possible to gather a variety of viewpoints from different experiences of the MNT members.

The table below sets out the discussion guide, which comprises questions relating to both research questions. All participants were invited to respond to each question and the subsequent question was not posed until all participants had had the opportunity to respond.

General perceptions of the issues that arise from working with mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language within a multinational team:

1. Introductory question to understand each participant's team activities
 - a) Global/local team size
 - b) Nationalities
 - c) Understanding of the corporate language policy and how they enact it
 - d) Use of corporate language
2. Experience of working with colleagues with different proficiency levels in the corporate language and any issues that arise that cause emotions to bubble up and affect communication. How do they deal with any issues that arise?
3. Experience, either first-hand or observed, of a fellow team member feeling held back because of their proficiency levels in the language.
4. Experience of power structures forming, a feeling of "them and us" relating to proficiency level in the corporate language when collaborating cross-lingually. Recommended strategies.
5. Exploration into the theme of uncertainty in understanding from both the speaker and the listener. Recommended strategies.
6. Each participant stated themes they found most significant from the discussion.

Table 8.2: Study Two focus group discussion guide

The following section sets out the themes identified in the focus groups. These are divided into issues. They are presented together with suggested strategies to help mitigate the respective problems.

8.3 Themes identified

From the focus group discussion, two categories of themes were identified. These were:

Issues: Uncertainty, Cost of speaking up, Lack of trust, Hierarchies,

Strategies: Flexibility, Providing clarity, Allowing more time, Cultural and linguistic sensitivity, Cultural leverage.

8.3.1 Issues raised

8.3.1.1 Uncertainty

The first issue, uncertainty, refers to uncertainty over levels of understanding or miscommunication from other team members. Respondent AI described a conversation with his Chinese colleagues. He had assumed that 'OK' denoted agreement by them to carry out a specific piece of work, only to discover one week later, on the planned delivery date, that the work agreed had not even been started. Moreover, the Chinese maintained that they had never agreed to do the work:

“... and we said – but on the call you said OK - and that can be frustrating. Later we learn that in China it's common to say OK and it means 'I am hearing you', but you still need confirmation.” (AI)

A similar problem was experienced by other participants, who highlighted emotions such as the frustration and tension that occur when the intended message is not understood by the receiver (in spite of the appearance of agreement having been reached).

Respondent DK explained how she discovered the need for performance feedback delivery to be adjusted when sent to an English manager. Her reason for this was that when it was conveyed in the French way, it was likely to cause offence, due to cultural expectations.

“...take the French, they are very assertive and contradicting, if you would speak the way you would normally speak, so just translate it, you would be extremely aggressive and possibly cause offense. ... an English manager will always start with, what worked well, what didn't work so well and so on. As a French, not used to the British culture, you will hear what worked well and your focus and ears will be closed when the actual feedback comes. So, they think it is all going very well when it is not.” (DK)

8.3.1.2 Cost of speaking up

The participants expressed an awareness of certain factors that prevent NNS fellow team members from speaking up in the corporate language:

“ ... Of course it depends on the people as well but at work sometimes you can feel people turning silent in calls or do not answer questions.” (DB)

Such situations raised suggestions from other participants as to the root cause, debating whether this was due solely to feelings of vulnerability related to proficiency levels in the corporate language or to wider issues, such as cultural hierarchy:

“ ... I think we also have to think about the cost of speaking up – some people could be uncomfortable with speaking in front of the manager in a country that is big on hierarchy so I think it is often difficult to learn the meaning from a wider aspect and a broader issue when it comes to language.” (MW)

This comment suggests that the “cost of speaking up” could be due to a fear of “loss of face”, possibly as a consequence of poor proficiency level or cultural reasons. For example, in the Far East, team members do not speak up in front of their managers in collective meetings (Kitayama, Karasawa and Mesquita, 2004).

Another participant, Respondent AM, based in Argentina recalled a situation where his research manager who, up until just before the sales pitch was to take place, was understood to have the ability to present his research in English. At the last moment the research manager suddenly declared that he was unable to do so. Respondent AM had to step in. Respondent AM felt exposed on two counts. Not only was he unfamiliar with the presentation of his colleague, who was a specialist in the field, but he also felt anxiety at having to present it in a foreign language at short notice.

8.3.1.3 Lack of Trust

The need to feel safe and in an environment where one is not threatened was also highlighted by the participants:

“ ... so starting creating an environment where there is trust and people don’t feel judged.” (DK)

In this instance, Respondent DK proposes holding meetings with local translation support to facilitate an environment where individuals do not need to concern themselves with expressing themselves in the corporate language as support is present to mitigate this concern. Lack of belief in ability to express oneself in the corporate language can manifest itself in withholding trust in another party. Respondent EY related a situation where her client was an English company and the opponent was a Korean company. When, during the negotiations to reach the final deal, the Korean company realised that she was South Korean, they would confide in her matters that they were withholding from their own lawyers, even though she was not acting on their behalf but on behalf of their opponent.

“ ... they would be very open and honest and they would tell me exactly what they want. So, the negotiation went really smoothly because I knew what the other side wanted and I could adjust the expectations from my client. I don’t know whether that is the trust because of the language but I did feel some sort of trust issue there.” (EY)

This example not only demonstrates a transformation from a position of initial lack of trust to one of open expression, Respondent EY's account provides an example of how cultural and linguistic affinity have the potential to supersede formal parameters.

8.3.1.4 Hierarchies

Another aspect of the cost of speaking up is perception of hierarchies linked to corporate language proficiency levels. Here, Respondent DK describes working with a client where it is assumed that below a certain level in the corporate hierarchy, English (the corporate language) will not be spoken:

“... we tend to consider that below a certain level of hierarchy, it has to be in the local language and when it's corporate teams, project teams, transversal teams, the assumption is that they can speak the corporate English, and they don't have to speak their local language. So, there is a correspondence between the level and the hierarchy and the ability to speak English.” (DK)

8.4.1 Strategies

Several strategies were suggested by the participants as a means of mitigating issues relating to the language barrier, avoiding misunderstandings and aiding communication.

8.4.1.2 Flexibility

Cognisant of the potential for uncertainty, misunderstandings and potential loss of information, several participants proposed a collection of strategies to avoid misunderstandings:

In this example, insufficient time to achieve complete understanding and consideration of the requirements by a regional team during a planning meeting, caused Respondent SC's central team to be forced to perform a last-minute relocation of the training venue for the roll-out of a new module:

“... It's really about trying to be flexible and understanding and make it as easy as possible for the teams to do that they have to do and being easy about the ask you need from them and by when, and to give them support and then provide that support in an as simple and flexible way as possible.” (SC)

8.4.1.3 Providing clarity

The participants suggested several strategies to ensure a common understanding when communicating across language barriers. One NS, Respondent PM, recommended a strategy of practical accommodation in adapting language when communicating with NNS:

“... keep it simple. Don't use too complicated structures” (PM).

To maintain clarity, there were also recommendations to follow up discussions in writing:

“... I always leave it in writing, so that I say – in summary, this is what we agreed.” (EY).

Further support for this strategy was provided by Respondent DB, who emphasised that after a long call, visual clarity of discussions in writing was useful. Respondent SC also suggested the use of visual captions, providing sub-titles during presentations:

“... I mean now for virtual meetings, you’ve got certain tools that give you a caption ... so that people see subtitles as the presenter talks and I think that’s quite good at being able to remind people that at the beginning of the meeting ... if you would like to have the captions, this is what you do.” (SC).

Respondent SC also highlighted the context of some large-scale video conference calls. She emphasised the need to allow team members to digest information and consider the meaning of the discussion for their particular country or region:

“I find this a lot in the current project I work in – there’s a lot of large deployments of systems, there’s a lot of people on the call – sometimes over 100. Not everybody is a) extravert, b) able to digest the information and c) think what that means for their country and have time to ask a question. So I think it’s important that you give people the opportunity to reflect and then play back and ask additional questions – so maybe have a follow-up, multiple times in French with the French team or give them time to join another call with another team.” (SC)

Respondent PM also stressed the need to follow-up on meetings with certain attendees, with a call to ensure all attendees have a common understanding of the meeting. In providing clarity, these measures often require extra time, so the provision of extra time was suggested as a strategy.

8.4.1.4 Allowing more time

A follow-up call to clarify the points discussed may be of comfort to NNS mystified by the discussion in the corporate language, particularly when many people are on a call and listening to a high-speed conversation.

As a team leader or convenor of the meeting, Respondent MW highlighted the need to raise awareness of the different language backgrounds of the team on the call and to allow for extra time and gather opinions:

“...You have to act as a moderator and make it clear that there is a big mix of languages in the group that people are given more time and ask for their opinion.” (MW)

8.4.1.5 Cultural and linguistic sensitivity

Several participants promoted the need to raise awareness and, in so doing, create an open, judgement-free environment. One of the participants acknowledged that having knowledge and competence in English as a second language did not guarantee being able to understand the language spoken by native British people.

“It is a mistake to think that working internationally is just sharing the same language because English as a foreign language is certainly very different from the native English spoken by the Brits. You need to know what group you are in and what the cultural levels are.” (DK)

The issue of proficiency levels contributing to MNT members holding back from contributing to teamwork was raised. Respondent DK highlighted a solution she had used in helping to include some individuals who had self-perceived lower proficiency levels in English, with the aim of creating an environment where the individuals do not feel judged:

“... What I have seen is that you could have a workshop or a meeting that is in English but with local language support – so starting creating an environment where there is trust and people don’t feel judged but they are happy to express themselves in their language and someone will do the translation – so they can choose either or. So an alternative to making it fully local.” (DK)

Respondent DK also highlighted the need to build team cohesion. Working in a virtual environment creates an environment which is devoid of immediate and close communication and mutual knowledge of team members. To help ease this problem, Respondent DK recounted a team activity used to help open up team members’ perspectives of cultural differences in a light-hearted manner:

“ ... And one thing we did, unfortunately too late, it was a fun exercise for the French to describe a typical German and a typical Brit and the Brits to describe a typical German and so on ... It was a lot of fun because of course it was of course, as you say in French “des caricatures”.

Respondent DK’s proposal met with appreciation from one or two other members of the group who also intended to try it out. The notion of an open and judgement-free environment was supported by several participants. Respondent PM also reinforced the importance of being able to feel people could speak up, or even interrupt, when they did not understand:

“... But I think the other thing that comes across is the need for offering openness for discussion and acceptance for which language can be a barrier. It is important that people feel they can push back and ask for clarification and those ground rules need to be set very early on in the game so that people always feel comfortable about asking for confirmation or for an explanation.” (PM)

Respondent EY also supported these recommendations, adding that creating an open atmosphere allowed teams to see differences more positively:

“... So, I think the openness, we accept that language is a different area and what DK said in connection with openness is good – I mean we laugh about the cultural differences but we don’t take it too seriously to the extent that we can’t say anything. We understand the cultural differences and need to be able to use them in a working environment in a positive way.” (EY)

8.4.1.5 Cultural leverage

Using cultural competence to advance an intervention and showing the ability to operate at multiple levels flows naturally to another strategy suggested by members of the group - cultural leverage. This strategy requires the application of cultural perspectives to improve the situation. It was suggested that such a mind-set could help to mitigate differences.

“..., so I guess being in a multinational environment, having a common language and having a common basis and confirming that this is solid – that’s the understanding but also playing the strength of cultural language intimacy and proximity to get to a good result. So, working in a multinational environment, not thinking only about what’s common but what’s different and can be used as an opportunity.” (DK)

Respondent EY’s earlier example of turning her native cultural understanding to advantage attracted considerable interest within the group. This was because it highlighted that with cultural awareness and knowledge, coupled with cross-linguistic sensitivity, such obstacles can be turned to advantage.

“... if you look at the efficiency of a project or a meeting, you may be taking longer but overall the value that multinationals bring to the whole organisation or the project weighs much higher and overall I believe it saves time, in fact because you don’t learn the language and cultural differences that quickly and you would have to start with someone who has those abilities.” (EY)

Respondent EY’s comment emphasises the rewards derived from the extra time and effort that may be invested in working with linguistically diverse team members. It highlighted the benefit of cultural diversity, even though this might produce language problems.

Figure 8.1 presents a summary of the thematic analysis of Study Two. The issues are shown with sub-themes (in parentheses), which include the emotions suggested by participants in relation to the issues raised.

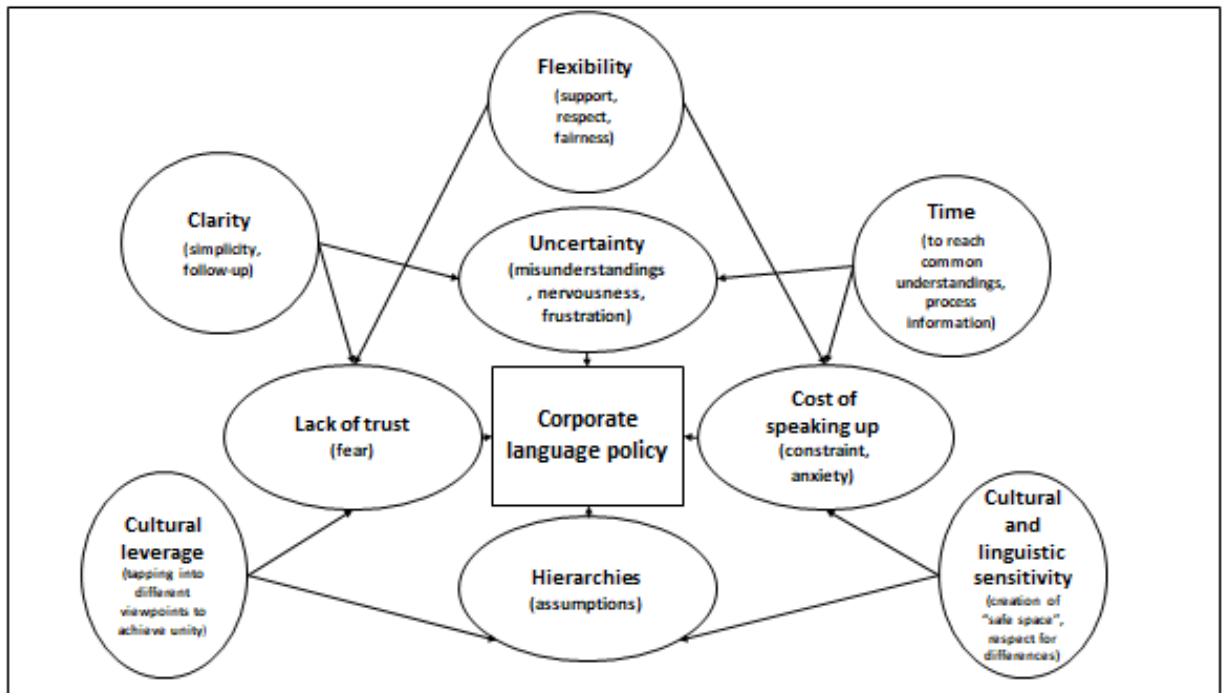


Figure 8.1: Study Two: Themes and Strategies identified by the focus group members

8.5 Discussion

As highlighted in Figure 8.1, focus group participants identified a wide variety of experiences and strategies. In light of these as well as the results from Study One, the following discussion draws together these concepts and compares them with material from the literature review.

The key issues identified in Study Two are

- Uncertainty
- Cost of speaking up
- Lack of trust
- Hierarchies

Strategies to mitigate some of the issues include:

- Flexibility
- Providing clarity
- Allowing more time
- Cultural and linguistic sensitivity
- Leveraging cultural diversity

The advantage of using two qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews and a focus group, is the opportunity to compare different perspectives of meaning and sense-making arising in two different ways. Closer examination of the themes and strategies identified in the focus group reveals similarity

between the two studies, although themes are expressed differently with different levels of emphasis. This aligns with the critical realist theoretical approach adopted for this study in that reality perceived through experience is multi-layered and complex and as such can affect behaviour (Fleetwood, 2005).

8.5.1 Issues

8.5.1.1 Uncertainty

Uncertainty caused by language-induced misunderstandings and mistranslations was highlighted in some form by all the participants in the focus group. Certain instances highlighted how language is never expressed in a vacuum; context is necessary for full meaning to be established. For example, Respondent AI's description of a conversation with Chinese colleagues where 'OK' is assumed to denote agreement to carry out a specific piece of work only to discover one week later, on the delivery date, that the work had not even been started because agreement from the Chinese perspective had not been reached, aligns closely with Respondent AF's account in Study One of her experience where she received verbal agreement from her Chinese colleagues, only later to discover that this was not the intended message (see Chapters 6 and 7). It illustrates how language is never expressed in a void and needs to be understood against the context and culture in which it is used. As described in Chapter 3 (§3.3.3), this is a vivid example of cross-cultural pragmatics. Thus, Chinese children are taught from a young age to develop their ability to understand implicitly, for in Chinese culture, inference is a key part of interpretation (Meyer, 2014). From the perspective of an outsider to the culture, the words cannot be taken at face value. Their interpretation requires knowledge of the culture and context.

Another example of uncertainty in interpretation was recounted by Respondent DK from her experience of adjusting her approach to performance feedback when delivering it to an English manager. She explained that when feedback was conveyed in the French way, it was likely to cause offense, due to cultural expectations.

In the UK, a popular social science concept is the "feedback sandwich", used by a feedback giver to highlight to the feedback receiver their good performance followed by some constructive feedback (declaring lower-level performance), finishing again in a positive vein with generally good news (Schartel, 2012). This supports pragmatic theories of intended meaning, common ground and cooperation (as discussed in Chapter 3 §3.3.2), which are found in English culture - a high-context culture (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001). It suggests that in the UK, a feedback receiver should not consider their performance to be excellent when the feedback giver softens the initial approach with some positive feedback prior to reporting on weaker performance. This is an interesting example, highlighting the low-context communication culture in France (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001), where an explicit and direct approach to communication in performance management discussions is preferred.

Uncertainty over levels of proficiency was also identified as leading to other issues, for example, the cost of speaking up (being held back by the potential consequences of lower proficiency in corporate language). This theme is also reinforced by other concerns, revealed in the following section.

8.5.1.2 The cost of speaking up

The cost of speaking up as a source of anxiety and uncertainty has been raised by other researchers (Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert, 1999; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015). Aichhorn and Puck highlighted in their study (2018), that insufficient proficiency in the corporate language leads to significant anxiety which may be increased by comparison with others whose level of proficiency is greater or who are native speakers (Clement, Dornyei, and Noels, 1994, Ewald, 2007; Tóth, 2010; Young 1992). In alignment with Study One, the participants in Study Two reported their NNS colleagues feeling threatened by the consequences of speaking up in the corporate language, describing situations where NNS team members felt constrained in contributing to meetings. Whilst acknowledging reticence in speaking up, Respondent MW highlighted that there may be other root causes, for example, cultural norms in group settings. An example of this in the Far East is “multiple face” where social obligations force individuals “to be many things to many people” (Lewis 2012, p.95).

The anxiety generated when team members are forced to present their colleague’s work at short notice, emphasises the vulnerability and potential loss of face felt by NNSs when asked to speak in front of an audience without due preparation. Presenting another’s research at short notice is challenging even as a NS, but the exposure is greater for a NNS. This highlights the need to accommodate the requirements of other team members when faced with such tasks (Baider and Cislaru, 2014). Another example of this theme is provided by Respondent HH in Study One Chapter 5 (§5.4.1) where she expressed her vulnerability in sharing her lack of understanding with her colleagues and was fearful of losing face.

8.5.1.3 Lack of Trust

In their study (2017), Tenzer and Pudelko highlight the potential impact on trust formation and knowledge sharing from negative emotions that result from different linguistic proficiency levels in MNTs. The issues of uncertainty, the cost of speaking up and the anxiety produced in these situations can create a barrier to sharing information. In exploring further examples of stilted collaboration, Respondent EY told of her experience of legal negotiations moving from a position of reticence to share information to one of openness and trust when her client’s opposition recognised not only her fluency in the Korean language but also a sense of cultural affinity. Respondent EY recounts the negotiations as follows:

“... I think that was a huge contribution to them. They felt that they could trust me, not only because of the language, but because I could read the sensitivity between the two cultures.” (EY)

This example shows how leveraging cultural knowledge and affinity can reduce challenges in negotiations in business situations.

Knowledge exchange is significantly influenced by the perceived trust between individuals and the extent to which an overlap exists between members of dyads within a group (Yildiz, 2016) and, in light of the fact that the speakers of different native languages hold different ‘bundles’ of knowledge, this only reinforces the advantage of language diversity in MNTs (Harrison and Klein, 2007). Furthermore, trust is the glue that holds most collaborative relationships together (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2014). As highlighted in Chapter 6 (§ 6.3.2), a lack of trust can also be triggered by a negative perception of language competency and its relationship to one’s position in the organisational hierarchy.

8.5.1.4 Hierarchies

The idea that organisational hierarchy is related to proficiency levels was also highlighted by one participant in Study Two. In the context of multinationals, this function has been identified as “gatekeeping” that can divide NS (often in the context of home country nationals working in the corporate language) from local employees operating in their home contexts (Piekkari, Welch and Welch, 2014; Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze 2014). As expressed by Respondent DK, there is an expectation that below a certain level within the organisation, proficiency in the corporate language was unlikely. This reinforces a sense of perceived superior status by corporate language speakers and may lead to the disempowerment of employees who lack language competence (Vaara et al., 2005; Logemann and Piekkari, 2015).

Such perceptions of language proficiency level corresponding to organisational hierarchy are not uncommon and are known to affect the organisational hierarchy (Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2015).

A strong command of the corporate language allows employees to transfer knowledge and collaborate with their fellow team members with ease. This is an important way for the organisation to achieve competitive advantage, by operating efficiently through its intra-organisational set of connections (Kogut and Zander, 1993, cited in Peltokorpi, 2014). Knowledge transfer often requires a process of expression that makes tacit and explicit knowledge held by the individual becoming more explicit and accessible to others, thus enabling collaboration and exchange of thoughts and ideas (Welch and Welch, 2008). In international negotiations, multilingual skills are essential to achieve a successful outcome (Govindarajan and Gupta, 2001; Kassis-Henderson, 2005; Schweiger et al., 2003, cited in Beeler and Lecomte, 2017). However, as one might expect in an international setting, language not

only emboldens fluent speakers of the common language, but also handicaps those who are the less adept (Bourdieu, 1991; Vaara et al., 2005). This view is endorsed by the interview participants. The variance in English proficiency by the NNS English speakers in the team required both team members and team leaders to adapt, making supplementary arrangements to ensure that the smooth flow of communication, essential to team collaboration, continues.

8.5.2 Strategies

The participants suggested many strategies to mitigate the issues experienced in their interactions between NS and NNS in MNTs. These are now examined and compared to the literature review and results of Study One.

8.5.2.1 Flexibility

Several members of the group emphasised the need for flexibility in approach toward working with language diversity. The potential for misunderstandings and ambiguity was ever present. An attitude of “helping out” coupled with respect and tolerance, as highlighted by Respondent SC, was suggested as necessary to ensure smooth operation. This supports the findings of other scholars in promoting linguistic awareness to support productive group collaboration (Krulatz, Steen-Olsen and Torgersen, 2018; Ngo and Loi, 2008).

8.5.2.1 Providing Clarity

In light of the ever-present possibility of misunderstandings and ambiguity, the participants emphasised the need to provide clarity. A recommendation by one participant, Respondent PM, to keep language simple is reminiscent of the suggestion by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013), discussed in Chapter 3 §3.6.3, that grammar and structure are less important and what matters is shared understanding of specific expertise. The importance of grammatically correct language was also debated in the study by Nurmi and Koroma (2020), who found that when language was over-simplified, it failed to convey the accuracy required. However, the overall recommendation from the focus group participants was to use simple sentence constructions and vocabulary wherever possible.

Differences in time-zones, available technology and diverse working practices provide constant challenges in working cross-border virtually (Henderson, Stackman and Lindekilde, 2016). One participant, Respondent AM (Study Two) recommended a post-call review with team members either by phone or in writing to ensure that a common understanding had been established. This approach supports Respondent HH’s strategy (Study One) who ensured clarity by following up with an email, giving a short summary, (Chapter 6, § 6.5.1). In addition to following up video and conference calls in writing, one participant, Respondent SC (Study Two), recommended that captions be displayed on the

screen during video-conference calls to enhance clarity of content (Chapter 8, § 8.4.1.2). Meeting recordings were discussed to aid digesting large amounts of information, particularly on large-scale calls of 100 participants or more.

A post-meeting call to clarify the points discussed may help the NNS, mystified by discussion in the corporate language, particularly when many people are on a call with high-speed conversation. This supports the comments by Respondent EP and Respondent HT in Study One (Chapter 6, § 6.3.2). They endorse the need for additional intervention by a team leader, both as observant facilitator and moderator, who alerts the team to the mix of languages present and allows for more time for NNS contributions.

This view aligns with Respondent KC's approach in Study One who is also very aware of the need to adapt to cultural norms, as highlighted in Chapter 6, § 6.2.

8.5.2.2 Allowing more time

The strategies, highlighted in both Studies One and Two to ensure more clarity and a common understanding is reached, take time to implement. Extra time needs to be allowed to facilitate a shared understanding (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). This was also emphasised by Respondent DK (Study Two) (§ 8.1.2) and borne out by Respondent HH's concerns in Study One, expressed in Chapter 6 (§ 6.7.4), which emphasises the value of being ready to take time to achieve a common understanding.

In Study One (Chapter 6, § 6.7.2), Respondent KC and others emphasise the requirement for additional flexibility by all members of the team, to facilitate common understanding. This may be needed due to misinterpretations or missed deadlines. The very nature of working in a multinational environment calls for adaptability, also stressed by Respondent RS in Study One (Chapter 6, § 6.5.1).

8.5.2.3 Cultural and linguistic sensitivity

As highlighted in earlier sections, the issue of the cost of speaking up led to several suggestions from Study Two respondents, in particular, the need for cultural and linguistic sensitivity. Indeed, given differing proficiency levels leading to a reticence to speak up, Respondent DK highlighted a solution she had used to include colleagues with perceived lower proficiency levels in English to create an environment where the individuals do not feel judged or threatened. Respondent PM, in support for a climate of openness, recommended the introduction of ground rules early on, so that that team members feel sufficiently comfortable to speak up and even "push back and ask for clarification" without being judged. This supports the idea of negotiation of meaning, the process by which two interlocutors identify and resolve communication breakdown with requests for clarification to address

comprehension difficulties (discussed in Chapter 3). Such sensitivity helps to establish trust but can only be created when promoted by the team leader with ground rules, as set out by Respondent PM.

The early adoption of ground rules to support cultural and linguistic differences has long been supported by researchers (Earley and Gardner, 2005; Gluesing et al., 2003). Indeed, when new groups are formed and begin work on projects before considering rules and procedures, conflicts are more likely (Lau and Maurnighan, 2005). However, few substantive empirical studies support these claims (Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2017). In their study, Vigier and Spencer-Oatey (2017), test the implementation of rule development in three culturally and linguistically diverse project teams. Where differences in language proficiency levels were greater, it took longer for the rules to become established, while feelings of inequality and imbalance were stronger. Although the study appeared slightly artificial in nature, in that the teams were only formed for a short internal corporate programme and solely observed in their early stages, it indicated the need for further research into the use of leadership and ground rules in establishing a non-judgemental “safe” climate.

Several participants (Respondents DK, PM, EY, DB and AM) called for greater awareness of emotions of fear and mistrust that can occur in a language-diverse team and strongly advocated cultural awareness and knowledge in cross-border interactions, particularly socio-pragmatics. For example, Respondent DK supported the need for an awareness of socio- and cross-cultural pragmatics when she highlighted that a knowledge of the English language from the non-native speaker perspective was very different to that spoken by English NSs.

The importance of raising awareness of differences was emphasised by many participants, in particular by Respondent DK, who described a team-building exercise she had experienced which used caricatures of the different nationalities in the team. In spite of the light-hearted vein in which this was expressed and the support received from the rest of the group in relation to team building through humour, such exercises risk reinforcing prejudices, prevalent in MNTs (Kassis Henderson, 2005).

Indeed, whilst the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980, 2001) and House’s (2004) GLOBE project may supply a reference point in relation to general cultural knowledge, there is a danger of stereotyping at individual level, causing offence (Brewer and Venaik, 2012). Stereotyping and generalisation often arise innocently in MNTs. Similar remarks to those, expressed in jest by Respondent DK, were echoed by Respondent AF in Study One in Chapter 6, (§ 6.7.4) where she expressed views on different nationalities, culminating in the creation of generalisations. Initiatives are needed to steer away from such concepts and promote the concept of the individual as a composite of many cultures, as promoted by Rosinski (2003).

The concept of composite cultural identity, sometimes termed as a “glocal identity” (Robertson, 1995), stresses the “local” within a global environment and embraces the idea that people become integrated into two, three or more cultures. This may happen as a result of exposure to a variety of environments, for example, frequent business travel, educational initiatives, immigration and international partnerships. The concept of a global citizen is not new, but is recognised today as including previous and new local ethnic identities. In this sense “glocal identity” may be considered as a new ethno-cultural identity, complemented by acculturation strategies (Tomlinson, 2003; Tubin and Lapidot, 2008). Multilingualism plays a significant role in facilitating this social and multicultural freedom of movement and contributes to world-wide collaboration (Soldatova and Geer, 2013).

The practice of code-switching (alternating between two or more languages in conversation) is often regarded as an instance of the expression of ethnic and cultural identities and instances of this can lead to negative emotions in NSs. Indeed, this was reported as an example of foreign language anxiety by other scholars (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015; Aichhorn and Puck (2018). Although a couple of instances were reported in this study, it was not a predominant concern for the participants. Ethnography-orientated sociolinguists and psycholinguists consider code-switching an expression of ethnic identity, the product of voiced social meanings, shaped by the speaker by code-switching (Gumperz, 1982). Nevertheless, every act of speaking or even keeping silent can signify choice of an identity (Lepage and Tabouret-Keller, 1985). The speaker selects the language that represents the most convenient recourse for them at the time. Therefore, together with the language they select, the most convenient identity is adopted at the same time (Ponterotto, Utsey and Pedersen, 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 6, the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) is the capability to cross boundaries and work effectively in multiple cultures. Therefore, it requires the ability to interact effectively with individuals from all cultural backgrounds. As a cognitive and behavioural concept, CQ effectively operates “above cultures” and encompasses twenty items and four different theoretical dimensions (Metacognitive, Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioural) that correlate with each other and can be measured on the CQ scale (Early and Ang, 2003). Considerable research has taken place in recent years into practical applications of CQ in organisational psychology in the areas of leadership and intercultural adjustment (Ang, Van Dyne and Rockstuhl, 2015). These mainly take the form of addressing bias and of openness to experience and are included in the fundamental four dimensions or capabilities (intellectual efficiency, ingenuity, curiosity, aesthetics and depth) (Amhadi et al., 2011). Assessments have been made as to how each of the dimensions correlate to competencies. Although all sub-factors of behavioural CQ relate to verbal and non-verbal or prosodic (tone, rhythm, pauses, pose and imitation by the speaker) communications skills, few scholars have directly addressed the

correlation between language proficiency and CQ. However, a positive relationship has been identified between foreign language fluency and overall CQ (Khorakiwala, 2008).

CQ covers not only knowledge of the world, but also of cultural diversity and cultural settings. So, it can support the formation of identity in a multilingual environment and thus with a MNT. Through meta-knowledge and meta-skills (in the form of CQ, described in Chapter 7), an individual may retain their primary cultural values whilst adopting a new vision of the world. Adding a dimension of specific language sensitivities and an understanding of cross-cultural pragmatics to the concept of CQ would allow provide a more complete construct, measuring and developing culturally intelligent international managers in MNCs.

8.5.2.4 Cross-cultural leverage

In her example of using her understanding and linguistic knowledge to create a better solution for both sides of a negotiation, Respondent EY gave a vivid example of cross-cultural and cross-lingual leverage to achieve unity in diversity taking advantage of and developing tangible differences and alternative points of view to bridge cultural and other boundaries. By considering cultural orientations and different mind-sets, one can avoid stereotyping and achieve mutual understanding (Roskinski, 2003).

Chapter 7 explores how cross-border interaction in a corporate language can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, if managed with knowledge, intelligence and sensitivity, it can produce many benefits. However, managed without awareness and sensitivity, the consequences can be detrimental. Striking this balance is a challenge.

Few studies have explored the area of cultural and cross-lingual leverage. Distefano and Maznevsky (2000) conducted a study of cross-cultural teams with scant reference to language but highlighted the aspects that can be employed to create a leverage of ideas in MNTs. Whilst acknowledging that every team is unique, they compiled a set of principles that map differences developed within the team with a view to synergising them. In the process, compromise is avoided and new approaches are reviewed in order to develop a fuller understanding.

As reported in the study by Brannen and Salk (2000), negotiations appear to be a common context for cross-cultural leverage, as in the case of Respondent EY's experience in negotiation with her client's opponent. The study by Brannen and Salk reports the testing of assumptions in the context of creating a group culture in a German-Japanese joint venture, showing how negotiated outcomes are possible (2000). Another study reports the use of boundary spanning and cultural leverage in relation to negotiating cultural identity (Yagi and Kleinberg, 2011).

8.6 Comparison of Study Two and Study One findings

Although the two studies followed different methods of data collection, the context of working cross-border in a MNT, raised the same issues and similar strategies. The richness and abundance of data in Study One exceeded that of Study Two due to the time spent in data gathering.

In reviewing both sets of results, it is important to recall the research questions:

3. How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifest itself in MNTs?
4. What potential issues are the team leaders and team members aware of, and what strategies do they recommend?

Study One, by using semi-structured interviews, elicited some rich and distinct data in response to both questions. The environment of a semi-structured interview allowed the establishment of rapport between interviewer and interviewee to share thoughts, feelings and experiences that were not brought to the fore in the group environment.

To match both analyses, the final thematic maps from Studies One and Two are presented together in Figures 7.1 and 8.1 for comparison (below).

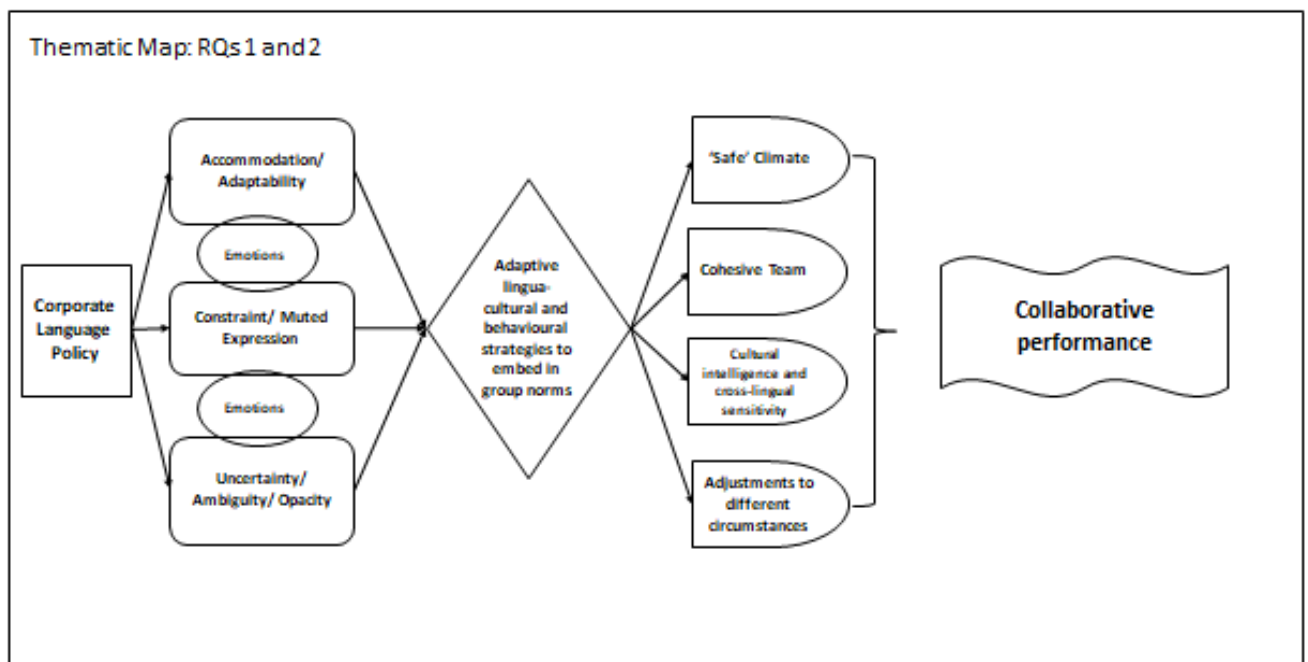


Figure 7.1: Study One Overview of the research results from Research Questions One and Two.

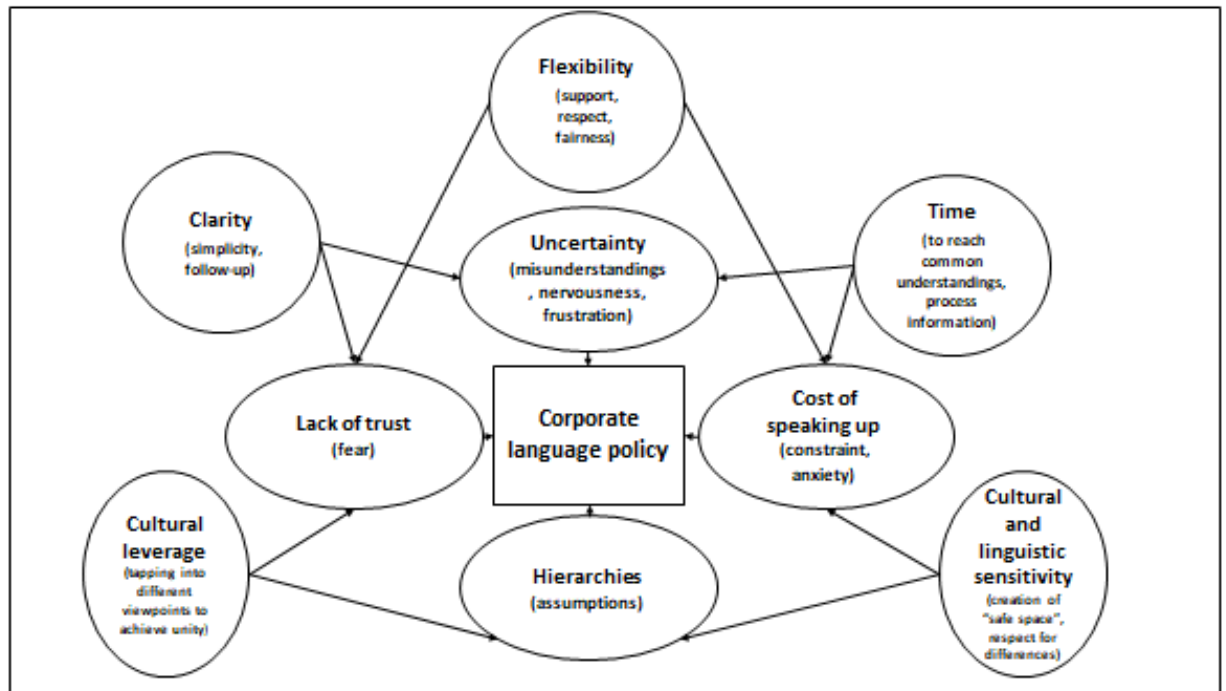


Figure 8.1: Study Two: Themes and Strategies identified by the focus group members

Examination of the salient themes identified as issues from Studies One and Two shows commonality and alignment, although some difference in the terminology is evident. As emphasised in Chapter 1, although the theoretical framework for this thesis is based in the literature of International Business (IB), this study draws on the disciplines of psychology and linguistics. In Study One, the data addressing Research Question One highlights the key themes that featured in emotional responses from the participants. Chapter 5 reports incidents that triggered the accommodation of emotions as a major theme, although in the focus group setting of Study Two, little is reported in the sense of individuals feeling emotions personally. Emotions are mentioned in the impersonal passive voice, for example:

“... and we said – but on the call you said OK - and that can be frustrating. Later we learn that in China it’s common to say OK and it means ‘I am hearing you’, but you still need confirmation.” (A1)

The second key theme in Study One is *muted expression or constraint*. This was the term used in the coding analysis for feeling constrained to make contributions or speak up as a NNS and aligns with the theme in Study Two, *cost of speaking up*. The feelings of anxiety or nervousness were also referenced by Respondent AM as he recounted his colleague’s last-minute refusal to present his research findings in the corporate language. The respondents in Study One also expressed their anxiety at presenting in the corporate language. For example, Respondent AF and Respondent ML also expressed feeling at a disadvantage when speaking in English formally in front of others. There is also linkage to the fear of loss of face which is also raised by the participants in Study One.

The third major theme in Study One is *Opacity/Ambiguity/Misunderstandings*. This also resonates with the reports from the Study Two participants. Study One reports issues of misunderstandings and bewilderment from issues due to cross-lingual contextual settings, similar to the participants of Study Two.

The participants of Study One offered numerous strategies to mitigate these issues and many of these formed a clear match with strategies recommended by the participants in Study Two.

Interestingly, the theme identified as leveraging cultural differences integrates with the initiation of accommodative strategies in Study One. Leveraging cultural differences requires cultural intelligence and cross-lingual sensitivity, to enable MNT members operating cross-border to adapt their language to achieve a smooth interaction with the counterpart and thereby mitigate the likelihood of events eliciting negative emotions.

8.7 Contextual positioning of the themes from Studies One and Two

The alignment of themes identified in Studies One and Two highlights the cogency of the findings of Study One. Nevertheless, it is important to draw comparison with the difference in weighting of the themes in the focus group discussion. The respondents were asked about the emotions felt in relation to having to communicate in a corporate language (English) when collaborating with other team members. Some included emotions, particularly as the result of misunderstandings and exposure in speaking up. However, emotions were not raised as frequently in Study Two as in Study One. Furthermore, the variety of critical incidents where emotions are expressed is not as visible in Study Two; their statements are more inclined to take the position of an observer, for example “that can be frustrating” (Respondent AM) or “... and there is some tension” (Respondent AI). Furthermore, the emphasis, particularly at the beginning of the discussion, is on opacity, ambiguity and misunderstandings, and practical accommodation (including techniques to work around the issues). Emotions (observed) are then raised to describe the feelings resulting from the ambiguity, the cost of speaking up or constraint (muted expression) and trust in a similar way to Study One.

The reasons for the difference in emphasis are likely to stem from two areas, namely, the collaborative experiences of the participants working with multi-lingual team members and the group environment. A semi-structured interview is more intimate. The interviewee can share personal experiences. The online focus group environment has a different ambience. In this case, a group of eight participants from around the world who had not met each other before came together online. Although the focus group participants were all happy to share experiences from their collaboration cross-border, nothing

shared was of a particularly sensitive nature or from a situation where respondents made themselves vulnerable. Furthermore, the focus-group meeting lasted just over one hour, while the semi-structured interviews in Study One lasted over 14 hours and were one-to-one meetings with guaranteed anonymity.

The themes were couched in questions that would stimulate a response easily. Direct questions for incidents where the participants had experienced emotions resulting from proficiency levels in English were unlikely to elicit an immediate response. Therefore, the moderator introduced the relevant issues in such a way as to be both accessible and targeted, to extract the data, for example:

“Tell me about your experience of working with colleagues with different proficiency levels in the corporate language and any issues that arise that cause emotions to bubble up and affect communication. How do they deal with any issues that arise?”

Although focus groups and semi-structured interviews are similar in that they are conversational and informal in tone (Longhurst, 2003), semi-structured one-on-one interviews allow one to build rapport and trust more rapidly - interviewees are prepared to give details of events that are more sensitive to them. However, focus groups provide a setting that is closer to ‘real life’, because the discussion runs freely with minimal intervention from the moderator (Kitzinger, 1994; Wilkinson, 1998).

When directly compared, the key themes identified in Study Two produce distinct matches with those of Study One. The data of Study One, due to its volume and richness, gives more critical incidents and strategies than Study Two, but, as shown in Table 8.3 below, the key themes highlighted in Study Two were also raised in Study One.

Key themes	Study One (example quotation)	Study Two (example quotation)
Accommodation (practical), Flexibility, Adaptability	“... on one hand it can be a little frustrating because I know it’s eating up precious time that you have with people. I also feel that, as an American, I have kind of a luxury that I don’t have to speak their language ... I feel that because they are working so hard to learn my language or speak my language.”(HT)	“... It’s really about trying to be flexible and understanding and make it as easy as possible for the teams to do that they have to do and being easy about the ask you need from them and by when, and to give them support and then provide that support in an as simple and flexible way as possible.” (SC)

Key themes	Study One (example quotation)	Study Two (example quotation)
Muted expression, Cost of speaking up	“... for sure I feel the language differences. I always think I cannot make myself – I am not as eloquent as other people are and I always think that I cannot make myself as clear as I would in German.” (AF)	“ ... I think we also have to think about the cost of speaking up – some people could be uncomfortable with speaking in front of the manager in a country that is big on hierarchy so I think it is often difficult to learn the meaning from a wider aspect and a broader issue when it comes to language.” (MW)
Opacity, Uncertainty	“... it makes me feel insecure because I don’t get really a lot of feedback and I don’t know how to deal with the things they say because ... I have experience with Chinese people who say yes, yes, yes! And then afterwards they would not do anything for different reasons but they wouldn’t say it openly. So that’s a little bit difficult – at least the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty.” (AF)	“... and we said – but on the call you said OK and that can be frustrating. Later we learn that in China it’s common to say OK and it means ‘I am hearing you’, but you still need confirmation. If you hear OK, it does not mean that I will deliver the work in the time specified, but OK I hear what you are saying.” (AI)
Hierarchies	“... I feel that the person speaking English as their native language has more confidence or feels more in control of the situation as they know how to deliver the message ... and I think for the non-native speaker they feel that not only can they deliver their point effectively, but they think – am I doing it properly? And this makes people self-conscious.” (HT)	“..., we tend to consider that below a certain level of hierarchy, at least for our generation, the coming generations might be better, but when you go below a certain level, it has to be in the local language and when it’s corporate teams, project teams transversal teams, the assumption is that they can speak the corporate English, they can speak English and they don’t have to speak their local language. So, there is a correspondence between the level and

Key themes	Study One (example quotation)	Study Two (example quotation)
		the hierarchy and the ability to speak English.” (DK)
Lack of trust	“... it was really nice because you talk about something else and you get to know the person as a person which immediately improves the relationship and you discover new anchor points that you have on a personal basis ... you connect there on a certain level. It improves the working relationship because you also tend to be more responsive to that person if you get to know them better.” (KA)	“... So the negotiation went really smoothly because I knew what the other side wanted and I could adjust the expectations from my client. I don’t know whether that is the trust because of the language but I did feel some sort of trust issue there.” (EY)
Clarity	“... If you have the feeling that they have not understood it, you might then repeat it several times, without making them lose their face.” (ML)	“... you can have a meeting and probably the best thing to do is to follow up that meeting with some individuals to check that everyone has a common understanding and the instructions are clear. So I think if you were doing that kind of team meeting just with a single nationality, you probably wouldn’t need to have quite so much follow-up to ensure that everybody has the same outcomes. So, I would say follow-up and the kind of personal touch – there’s probably more work there than one might have with the same nationality in the team.” (PM)
Time	“... it takes time in terms of getting information across and making sure that they understand what’s being said and I think I always have this	“...You have to act as a moderator and make it clear that there is a big mix of languages in the group that people are

Key themes	Study One (example quotation)	Study Two (example quotation)
	lingering thought – did they really understand what I meant by this?” (HT)	given more time and asked for their opinion.” (MW)
Cultural leverage	“... so, we hear all the differences and we realise maybe we are not doing this right because we are trapped in our – fixedness. When we about ways people are working in other countries, we think – maybe this is the way forward for Japanese – maybe we can try this, maybe we can do this. Yes. Or maybe we think we cannot do this.” (HH)	“...if you look at the efficiency of a project or a meeting, you may be taking longer but overall the value that multi-nationals bring to the whole organisation or the project weighs much higher and overall I believe it saves time, in fact because you don’t learn the language and cultural differences that quickly and you would have to start with someone who has those abilities.” (EY)
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity/Cross-lingual sensitivity	“... it’s like a heightened level of consideration and concern to make sure that what you are communicating is effectively received ... my name begins with an L and an R. The letters are really difficult to pronounce for Japanese people. So even just saying my name is difficult.” (LR)	“...Absolutely. It is a mistake to think that working internationally is just sharing the same language because English as a foreign language is certainly very different from the native English spoken by the Brits. You need to know what group you are in and what the cultural levels are.” (DK)
“Safe” climate	“... and it was very clear we have been talking about it for months and she had been thinking about it, but she didn’t think it was her place to test something different to what the rest of the team was thinking ...” (EP)	“...But I think the other thing that comes across is the need for offering openness for discussion and acceptance for which language can be a barrier. It is important that people feel they can push back and ask for clarification and those ground rules need to be set very early on in the game so that people always feel comfortable about asking for confirmation or for an explanation. (PM)

Key themes	Study One (example quotation)	Study Two (example quotation)
Cohesive team	"... but what I want to promote is how do these countries learn from each other – not only in a positive way but I want them to feel engaged with us as a worldwide team." (KC)	"...We all think in a different way so we can all have a right to different solutions for the same problem. So we going to have difficulties; we might have to do a pre-meeting and sometimes also a post-meeting but what we take out of it is so much greater than if we were to work in one specific country to draw out a solution for whatever it is we are doing." (AM)

Table 8.3: Study Two key themes matched to participant responses from Study One

Figure 8.2 below shows the issues and suggested strategies from Studies One and Two diagrammatically.

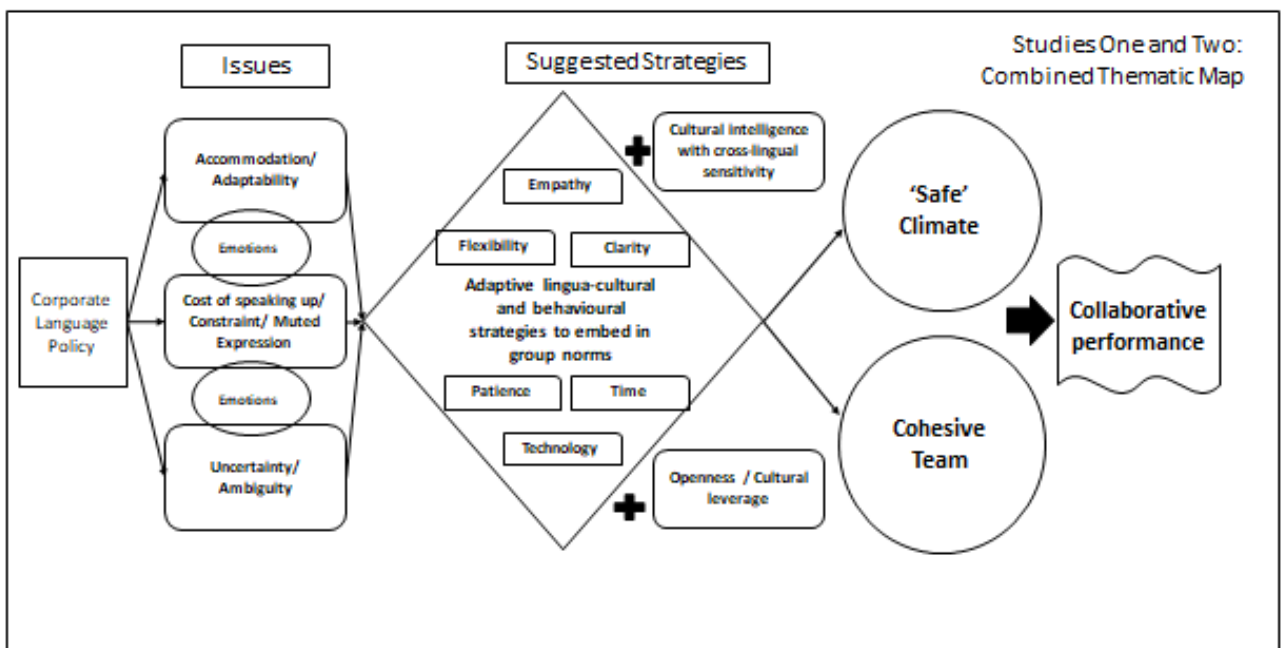


Figure 8.2: Illustration of key themes and strategies identified in Studies One and Two

8.8 Summary

This chapter reviews the findings and the key themes identified by the focus group in Study Two. There is clear alignment of the themes identified in Study One. The participants of both studies also suggested strategies to alleviate the linguistic challenges experienced working in a MNT. Whilst a strong alignment of the themes is evident, a different emphasis was identified in relation to how

emotions were expressed. In Study Two, the accounts of emotions are always given as observers rather than experienced. This may be due to the fact that a focus group setting allows for groups to discuss openly and does not safeguard privacy to the same extent as a one-on-one interview. Furthermore, in Study Two an interesting strategy, also raised in Study One, receives emphasis, which crystallises as cultural leverage, learning from cultural difference, the reframing of cultural norms to allow an individual to see a cultural difference to their advantage. Some focus group members also raised the matter of national cultural stereotypes humorously. This was discussed in conjunction with the notion of composite cultural identities and the use of CQ to develop better collaboration. Although CQ does not correlate with cross-lingual sensitivity, the concept, brought together in combination or as an extension, is a new concept and definitely calls for further research.

8.9 Theoretical Framework and Key Findings Tables: Contribution to IB language-sensitive literature

The following 10 pages comprise a full and final version of the theoretical framework which brings together the essential themes from the literature review and the results from the analysis of Studies One and Two. Immediately after this are six key findings tables, pinpointing what is new and unique to this study and the concepts that have been explored further from previous studies.

8.9.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework (Figure 8.3) is an engrossed version of the theoretical framework at the end of Chapter 2 (Figure 3.3). Here the results of the analysis of Studies One and Two have been incorporated and it now shows the novel contribution to IB language-sensitive studies in language-induced emotions in MNTs.

Studies that have reported negative emotions as a result of language barriers have raised awareness that an issue exists. This study highlights the key themes of **accommodation**, **muted expression** and **opacity/ambiguity** which elicit emotions in the face of language differences. In contrast to previous IB language-sensitive studies in this area, this study identifies the key theme of **accommodation** and subdivides it into three categories in which team members display accommodative behaviour: emotional (present/absent), cognitive and practical. It also reports **muted expression** as a key theme which, although alluded to in other studies, this study highlights how emotions are triggered not only in those feeling inhibited in speaking a foreign language but also how emotions are triggered in those observing them as well. The third theme identified is **opacity/ambiguity**. Again, also termed as uncertainty (as highlighted in Study Two), has been raised in a couple of extant IB language-sensitive studies but not directly in relation to emotions. This study demonstrates how this linguistic ambiguity

can elicit emotions. It also explores why this is so and provides detail and examples of sociological aspects of language that are directly related, such as speaker intention, cross-cultural pragmatics, negotiation of meaning, to enable recognition of these instances for future studies and MNT leaders.

Both studies highlighted strategies to mitigate the challenges faced by MNTs in the face of language barriers. On closer analysis and in consideration of the emphasis of accommodation, some of these results suggested similar actions to those of CQ but with greater knowledge of language (language intelligence). Other strategies emphasised strongly the need for an environment where they felt “safe” and not judged by their language proficiency. This would also diminish the feeling of being constrained from speaking up and allowing an individual to speak up in the case of misunderstandings. Other strategies focused on a feeling of open-mindedness and readiness to build a cohesive team. These align with other MNT studies but nonetheless are especially important in a multi-lingual team environment where sensitivities may easily be exposed. One other strategy was that of leveraging cultural diversity. Already widely reported as a key to innovation and borne out in this study, this aspect can greatly contribute to building new synergies and improved cross-border collaboration.

8.9.2 Key Findings Tables

The key findings tables (Tables 8.4-8.9) provide a full description of each of the findings and include a small extract from a relevant quotation. The importance of each finding is highlighted and linked as closely as possible to the Literature Review. What is new and unique to this study has also been emphasised and discussed as although literature in different contexts may have covered some of the ground in psychology and linguistics, several concepts identified in this study, when linked to language barriers in MNTs, are new and unique, such as accommodation, opacity and cross-lingual sensitivity/language intelligence.

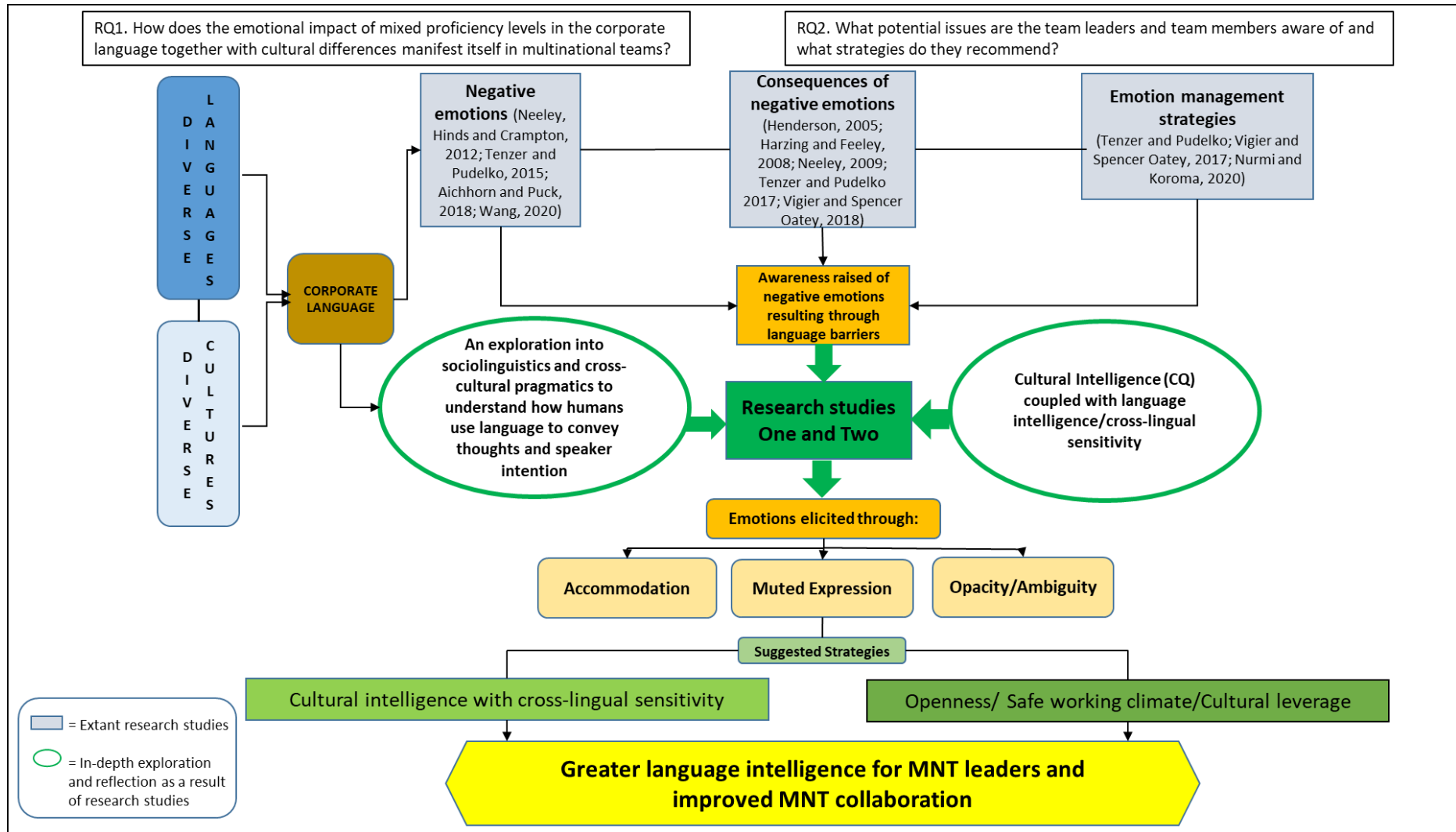


Figure 8.3: Theoretical framework in full

Key findings (using themes identified in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key items from literature that do not support the finding and alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
Accommodation (Emotional)	<p>"... that definitely raises some emotions of "Oh God ... what the hell are they talking about ?!" ... because if you don't really understand what's been at the background of the whole discussion and you're only getting certain translation ..." (EP)</p> <p>"... just fix it ... you see, you should be able to fix this yourselves blah blah blah ... it felt more like a personal attack." (KA)</p> <p>"... on the one hand it can be a little frustrating because I know it's eating up precious time that you have with people. I also feel that, as an American, I have kind of a luxury that I don't have to speak their language ... I feel that because they are working so hard to learn my language or speak my language, and I can't even meet them half-way ... I think it takes some extra empathy." (HT)</p>	<p>Reports of miscommunications (Prates, Avalar and Lamb, 2020). Reliance on technology can exacerbate miscommunications – key issue for virtual teams (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). Challenges in achieving overall team communication. (Cohen and Cassis-Henderson, 2012)</p> <p>Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012)</p>	<p>Highlights advances in technology and promotes these to help the way forward (Neeley, 2015)</p>	<p>Some adaptability has been touched on in IB language-sensitive literature but not examined in depth. Although emotions have been identified in IB literature in MNTs, <u>accommodation as an emotional or cognitive trigger or reaction has not been considered before in relation to language barriers.</u></p>	<p>Important because emotional accommodation, both internalized and externalized, may affect the individual's performance.</p>	<p>Study highlights accommodation is a key theme as part of the impact of emotions as a result of mixed proficiency levels in MNTs, and also shows, by giving examples of how it manifests itself in different forms: emotional, cognitive and practical. This widens awareness for leadership of the extent of the issue.</p>
Accommodation (Cognitive)	<p>"And if you are facing a critical situation, it could be frustrating ... you must be concentrated and try even better to focus on what you want to say ..." (RS)</p> <p>"... so that's actually how it affects my emotions. It can sometimes mean listening to somebody's Indian English for an hour and a half but when it goes on for 4 hours, it is actually quite tiring" (EP)</p>	<p>(Storbeck and Clore, 2007) in Psychology literature refer to reappraising thinking to alter the way one feels about something. Cognitive accommodation not mentioned in IB literature.</p>	<p>Does not apply.</p>	<p><u>Cognitive accommodation has not been recognized in language-sensitive IB research studies before and is a new finding in this study.</u> Psychology refers to cognitive accommodation in relation to interpersonal communication but not in relation to language barriers in teams.</p>	<p>High importance due to impact on emotions and individual's concentration.</p>	<p>Important to raise awareness in developing leadership awareness to improve knowledge sharing and concentration.</p>
Accommodation (Practical)	<p>"It was annoyance really. I should have seen who was presenting and thought a bit deeper into it ... and make sure I was in an office like this with a headset on." (JM)</p> <p>"We make sure that the material and the questions we want to go through is sent to them in advance. So there are additional levels of preparation that we need ..." (KC)</p>	<p>Needs further research</p>	<p>Does not apply.</p>	<p><u>Not recognized before in extant research studies.</u> Theme was reported as an important factor by participants and is new.</p>	<p>Foresight to accommodate language barriers makes collaboration effective.</p>	<p>Avoiding discomfort in situations where emotions could be elicited due to language barriers.</p>

Table 8.4: Study One Key Findings RQ1: Accommodation

Key findings (using themes identified in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key items from literature that do not support the finding and what alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
<p>Muted Expression (Non-native speaker constraint</p> <p>- pressure to succeed against challenges) / (Non-native speaker constraint - limited by vocab/ confidence/ time-pressure</p>	<p>“..... it can happen – you want to say something but you have a situation that it is not your own language and you have some difficulties to translate completely sentences ... if you are facing a critical situation, it could be frustrating or an additional difficulty.” (SZ)</p> <p>“... but if I lose this situation, it will be very tight for me ... but if you don’t communicate well, you don’t have the knowledge skills to obtain information.” (FR)</p>	<p>Proficiency in foreign language causing anxiety reported by (Aichorn and Puck, 2017; Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert, 1999).</p> <p>Out-group formation through communication (Giles & Ogay, 2006; Scott, 2007).</p> <p>Occurs as a result of the hegemony of one cultural and linguistic voice in Sociology literature (Descarries, 2003).</p>	Does not apply.	Finding recognized in extant literature as an issue in forming anxiety in individuals.	Significant problem due to emotions preventing contribution to team discussion.	Findings support literature on this aspect of muted expression.
<p>Muted Expression Observer affected by individual’s communication apprehension</p>	<p>“... he was just taking a lot more time to read it out. Also he was stammering a lot and had this overall look of insecurity ... I felt bad because you could tell that he was uncomfortable and especially, in a business setting, if you are pitching an idea or something, you are not going to be as confident and effective as speaking in your own language.”(HT)</p>	<p>Position as observer being affected is not supported in extant IB language-sensitive literature.</p>	Does not apply	Recognition of impact of foreign language anxiety on observers’ emotions not covered in extant literature.	Recognition of this aspect is important to trigger a solution to problem	Findings prepare leaders to anticipate these issues.

Table 8.5: Study One Key Findings RQ1: Muted Expression

Key findings (using themes identified in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key items from literature that do not support the finding and what alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
Opacity (Cultural and linguistic clumsiness)	"... so I think it's unfair that I didn't say anything even though I felt uncomfortable. In this class, one Swedish girl finally expressed her feeling like by saying – "What's that?" – a little bit ground break! And finally the instructor realised – aah – this is something offensive to foreigners ... and somehow thankful to her ... I was afraid to speak up." (HH)	Model of non-understandings to evaluate negotiation of meanings (chap 3) Varonis and Gass, 1991). Avoidance of face threatening actions, borne out by (Foster, 1998; Foster and Ohta, 2005; Zwaard and Bannink, 2014).	Not reported as IB strategies suggested make no reference to culture or 'face'	Already recognized in linguistics studies in classroom settings, but <u>not applied in IB studies to date</u> .	Important link between issue of face and language proficiency.	Need to test for understanding as lack of comprehension can cause team members feeling excluded and left unable to contribute.
Difficulties in understanding local nuance and linguistic concepts	"... it makes me feel insecure because I don't get really a lot of feedback and I don't know how to deal with the things they say because ... I have experience with Chinese people who say yes, yes, yes! And then afterwards they would not do anything for different reasons but they wouldn't say it openly. So that's a little bit difficult – at least the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty." (AF)	Statement cannot be interpreted literally across languages (linguistics) (Stadler, 2018). The less common ground culturally/ personally, the more likely misunderstandings occur (Gass and Varonis, 1991). Need for understanding (Alcón and Safont Jordá, 2008). Understanding of context (Tulgar, 2015)	Does not apply	Already recognized in socio-linguistics but <u>not in IB literature</u> .	Vital importance for Team leaders of MNTs.	Need for pragmatic competence (understanding conventions in speech specific situations). This will enable leaders to inform expectations of team members so that they can behave accordingly. Need for sensitivity and understanding of cultural context and setting.

Table 8.6: Study One Key Findings RQ1: Opacity/Ambiguity

Key findings (using themes identified in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key items from literature that do not support the finding and what alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
Collaboration Issues	"... most countries we deal with are quite sufficient in their ability to communicate in English but we do have Japan which is probably the area where we might have the most difficulty and part of that is cultural and part of that is the language difference – this so big." (LR)	Language difference impact on knowledge sharing (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999). Less common ground (Gass and Varonis, 1991)	Does not apply.	Recognised as an issue in IB literature	Issues in collaboration recognised as a significant problem in relation to instances highlighted: Time Delay, Translation Challenges, Technology, Speech Attributes	Leadership needs to lead and act in anticipation of these issues.
Uncertainty over levels of understanding	"The French are sometimes hard to understand and – again I think this could be a personal assumption – when they are missing an English word, they just use a French one." (RS) "... the only issues we would have were in meetings and stuff – having to clarify information or maybe if we sent an email across and somebody needed to clarify some information that wasn't super clear." (HH)	Code-switching (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015; Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2017; Wang et al., 2020) Negotiation of meaning (Foster, 1998; Foster and Ohta, 2005)	Does not apply.	The use of code-switching has been reported in IB language-sensitive literature. Although well-recognised in linguistics, the concept of negotiation of meaning has until now not been reported in IB literature – therefore <u>New to IB literature.</u>	Code-switching reported as significant problem. Negotiation of meaning, ie to speak up and halt a conversation to check for understanding, may be problem due to potential loss of 'face'.	Implementing rules in relation to code-switching has been shown not to work. Use of negotiation for meaning when code-switching occurs as well as checking understanding may prove an effective team leadership tactic.
Linguistic hegemony	"... I think it's a bit unfair for native English speaking English people that they have a big advantage ... for sure I feel the language differences. I always think I cannot make myself – I am not as eloquent as other people are and I always think	Social power of language in (Beeler and Lecomte, 2017). Power in conversational turn-taking (Ng and Deng, 2017). Power tussles	Does not apply.	Finding supported in IB literature.	Significant problem as can lead to formation of in-groups and out-groups (based on language-bias).	An important factor to be monitored by leadership to maintain fair unbiased and safe team climate.

Key findings (using themes identified in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key items from literature that do not support the finding and what alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
	that I cannot make myself as clear as I would in German.” (AF)	(Fairclough, 1989; Foucault, 1998)				
Sociolinguistic/ Context-related differences	“... another funny thing I have observed is that sometimes I hear German colleagues trying to speak English on the call and I am really struggling with what they are trying to say ... and sometimes you need to understand German very well to understand what they mean in English!” (RS)	Example of cross-cultural pragmatics (see Chap 3) Cultural context (Stadler, 2018). Potential example of Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975).		This aspect is not covered in IB language-sensitive literature but well document in linguistics. <u>New to IB literature</u>	Important to increase awareness of these factors in IB	Important for team leader to be sensitive to ambiguity and speech nuances, the matter of speaker intention and aware that language acquires meaning through context.
Adjusting to different cultural norms	“... So we are a little bit different kind of people from our other Japanese colleagues. In this team we are very open-minded and don’t mind making mistakes. ...” (HH)	Potential for stereotyping (Walton et al., 2015; Cohen and Kassis-Henderson, 2017). Importance of context (Fredrickson et al. 2006; Gumperz, 2001)	Studies that bundle national cultures (Hall, 1957; Hofstede, 2001)	The point of the quote is not adequately supported in IB literature but recognized in linguistics. <u>New to IB literature</u>	Highly relevant as MNT members today are more likely to be composites of multiple cultures. Understanding of culture is key.	Important for team leader to understand the matter of composite cultures and not to apply stereotypes.

Table 8.7: Study One Key Findings Table RQ 2

Key findings (using themes from in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key literature items that do not support the finding and alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
Uncertainty	" ... Sometimes, it makes you nervous as it can be lost in translation even if we believe people understand, the meaning of a word can be understood differently from a country to another." (DB)	Speaker intention – cooperative principal (Grice, 1975). Cultural context – cross-cultural pragmatics (Stadler, 2018)	Does not apply.	Misunderstandings reported in IB language sensitive literature. This theme correlates with Opacity in Study One. Deeper cause recognized in linguistics and brought to IB literature through this study.	Application of one context on another cultural context through language can lead to misunderstandings.	Awareness of cross-cultural pragmatics and the importance of speaker intention.
Cost of speaking up	" ... I think we also have to think about the cost of speaking up – some people could be uncomfortable with speaking in front of the manager in a country that is big on hierarchy so I think it is often difficult to learn the meaning from a wider aspect and a broader issue when it comes to language." (MW)	IB literature (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudenko, 2015). From Psychology literature highlighting potential loss of 'face' through speaking up in meetings (Kitayama, Karasawa and Mesquita, 2004). From linguistics, possible issue of Negotiation of meaning (Foster, 1998; Foster and Ohta, 2005)	Does not apply	Issue already reported in IB language sensitive literature. The theme correlates with Muted Expression, as described in Study One. This study draws on closer detail from psychology literature and linguistics to examine the issue.	Recognised as a significant problem and one that deprives a team of the contributions from some members who fear speaking up for reasons stemming from either culture, language or both.	Leaders need to create a safe space/ climate where NSs and NNS can communicate and collaborate without fear of being judged on their linguistic proficiency levels.
Hierarchies	"... a correspondence between the level and the hierarchy and the ability to speak English." (DK)	Perception of superior status held by native speakers of corp. language (Vaara et al. 2005; Logemann and Piekkari, 2015). Divisive among employees (Piekkari Welch and Welch, 2014; Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014) Linguistics – power of the birthright of native	Does not apply.	Issue already reported in IB language sensitive literature. New closer detail drawn from psychology literature and linguistics.	Recognised as a significant problem that can divide teams and has the potential to lose contributions from less proficient speakers of corporate language.	A clear issue to be considered by team leaders. Threat to knowledge exchange. Importance of implementing a <u>safe</u> team climate.

Key findings (using themes from in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key literature items that do not support the finding and alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
		speaker Bonfilio, 2013) Position of power (Morita, 2012)				
Lack of trust	"... I think that was a huge contribution to them. They felt that they could trust me, not only because of the language, but because I could read the sensitivity between the two cultures." (EY)	Trust formation threatened by language proficiency levels in MNTs (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017). Knowledge exchange (Yildiz, 2016)	Does not apply.	Issue recognized in IB literature	A compelling lingua-cultural issue that affects emotions and can erode team cohesiveness.	A clear issue to be considered by team leaders. Threat to knowledge exchange. Importance of implementing a universal climate, taking time to demonstrate empathy, ensuring members can communicate in a safe space.

Table 8.8: Study Two Key Findings Table

Key findings (using themes from in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key literature items that do not support the finding and alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
Cultural Intelligence with Cross-Lingual Sensitivity/Language Intelligence	“... So you actually have to go back and explain everything a little bit differently with different words to get the same understanding. It’s not just a cultural or a language thing – that’s both.” (EP) “I love to understand how the people communicate, how they experience things to reach this position – they need to do a lot of things to reach this position.” (FR)	Shown to be effective in preparing individuals for international assignments (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Ang et al., 2007; Van Dyne, Ang and Koh, 2008)	Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) separate language from culture and thereby completely omit this key aspect. Instead, they suggest allocating more speaking time, moderate code-switching, use humour and highlight common goals.	Cultural intelligence is recognized to improve task performance in international settings. <u>Cross-lingual sensitivity is new</u> as Cultural Intelligence fails to address this issue sufficiently. Cross-lingual sensitivity and knowledge (a form of ‘Language Intelligence’) draws on aspects from linguistics, such as cross-cultural pragmatics, emphasizing context and speaker intention. This should be integrated into the area of Cultural Intelligence or recognized officially as a standalone concept.	Incidents of linguistic and cultural ambiguity and misunderstandings form the majority of the triggers for emotions as a result of language barriers.	Instilling an understanding of cross-lingual sensitivity will provide leaders to manage their teams with a more informed approach and adapt their language and communication accordingly.
Openness/Cultural Leverage	“... if you look at the efficiency of a project or a meeting, you may be taking longer but overall the value that multinationals bring to the whole organisation or the project weighs much higher and overall I believe it saves time” (EY)	No reference to language but employed in teams (Distefano and Maznevsky, 2000). No reference to language but often discussed in relation to negotiations, e.g. negotiation of joint venture culture change (Brannen and Salk, 2000)	Does not apply.	This finding has not been included in extant IB language-sensitive studies. It is often overlooked but not new. It provides a valid background for the message of this study.	Rewards of applying different cultural perspectives emphasized by participants as saving time and increasing innovation.	A key skill for MNT leaders to bring better team performance and embed respectful team culture.

Key findings (using themes from in thematic analysis)	Quotes that support it or reference to section of thematic analysis that covers it	Key items from literature that support the finding and how they support it	Key literature items that do not support the finding and alternatives they suggest	Conclusion: Whether finding is new to or substantially modifies the literature	Conclusion: Importance or severity of the problem	Conclusion: Impact on behaviour, leadership etc.
Creating a 'safe' team climate	"It is important that people feel they can push back and ask for clarification and those ground rules need to be set very early on in the game so that people always feel comfortable about asking for confirmation or for an explanation." (PM)	(Nurmi and Koroma, 2020) support the creating of a psychologically safe environment where NNS team members can speak without concerns over their linguistic proficiency level.	Does not apply.	This is not new to IB language-sensitive literature but highly relevant. This strategy counteracts the feeling of muted expression or the cost of speaking up. It supports the term in sociolinguistics, often used in second language acquisition "negotiation of meaning".	In a safe climate, should a misunderstanding occur, the listener feels unconstrained in stopping the speaker to check their understanding. Also, NNSs feel free to speak up and voice their contributions without the feeling of being judged on their language	Setting ground rules for a non-judgmental climate is a key strategy for MNT leaders to employ in reaping the benefits of diversity for an effective multinational team.
Cohesive Team	"... I think that was a huge contribution to them. They felt that they could trust me, not only because of the language, but because I could read the sensitivity between the two cultures." (EY) "... but what I want to promote is how do these countries learn from each other – not only in a positive way but I want them to feel engaged with us as a worldwide team." (KC)	The introduction of ground rules to build security and confidence within team (Vigier and Spencer-Oatey, 2018) (Applebaum et al., 1998). It can also diminish power disparities (Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013; Mathieu et al., 2008; Tjosvold et al., 2014)	Does not apply.	This is not new to IB language-sensitive literature but is highly relevant. This is another strategy to counteract silos and feelings of resentment forming	Strategies to build a cohesive team included the setting down of ground rules to assure openness help to build confidence and security within the team.	A key strategy for MNT leaders to unleash the potential from their linguistically diverse team members.

Table 8.9: Studies One and Two Key Findings Table: Strategies

Chapter 9: Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Introduction

The key aim of this study was to understand how the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifests itself in multinational teams (MNTs). The investigation also required examination of the potential issues of which multinational team (MNT) leaders and members were aware of in relation to language barriers and the strategies used to mitigate these issues. To achieve this aim, the following research process was followed:

1. A review of the language-sensitive literature in International Business (IB) was conducted with particular reference to the root cause of the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in MNTs - the impact of the language mandate. The examination also includes a review of existing studies into language-induced emotions in MNTs and the issues experienced as well as some of the strategies and measures proposed to mitigate the emotional effects of cross-lingual collaboration in MNTs.
2. Given the significance of language in IB, it is essential to gain an understanding of the socio-cultural conventions in relation to the structure of language, pragmatic maxims, cross-cultural pragmatics, English as a global language and second-language acquisition. This basis provides a strong footing to explore the importance given by humans to language and how it expresses human thought across different native languages and cultural contexts.
3. To answer the two research questions, two studies were undertaken – both qualitative, using members of MNTs. The first study required the collection of data from 12 semi-structured interviews with MNT members, working globally, from two multinational corporations (MNCs) in Information Technology Consulting/Professional services sector. The interviews were analysed thematically to derive key themes and identify patterns of meaning. The themes generated were then analysed and evaluated. A second study was undertaken to triangulate the results of Study One. This took the form of an online focus group with eight members of different MNTs working globally from the same sector as the Study One participants. The data collected was analysed in the same manner as for Study One.

9.2 Main conclusions

The inductively generated findings in this study have revealed several new key factors related to how emotions are affected when people are collaborating in a lingua-culturally diverse team environment.

9.2.1 Issues

Contrary to an earlier study specifically on this topic (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015), the findings revealed a tightly coupled relationship between language and cultural factors which culminate in three distinct areas that triggered emotions:

- a. *Accommodation/Adaptability*: In daily team collaboration, both team leaders and members regularly employ measures to work around, make space for and adapt to the challenges of interaction with team members with differing levels of proficiency in the corporate language. Study One identified that these fell into three distinct categories:
 - i. Emotional: The emotions elicited are either felt by the individuals themselves or at a distance, through observing others.
 - ii. Cognitive: Feelings can be changed by altering the mode of thinking.
 - iii. Practical: Practical measures are undertaken to allow for potential challenges.
- b. *The cost of speaking up/Constraint/Muted expression*: Language proficiency levels were shown to inhibit the voices of less proficient speakers of the corporate language in contributing to team discussion. This constraint was likely to trigger emotions; these emotions were either felt by the individual themselves or felt by others observing the constraint in their colleagues.
- c. *Opacity/Uncertainty/Ambiguity*: Incidents provoking uncertainty and ambiguous responses were also a key theme in eliciting emotions. The ambiguity was either the result of cross-cultural pragmatic misunderstandings or misread cultural signals.

9.2.2 Strategies

This study highlights several highly practical, adaptive and constructive strategies to mitigate the issues deriving from language barriers in MNTs. Whilst some established strategies are also included in the discussion, what is new is the identification of strategies that take the form of adaptive lingua-cultural and behavioural measures which, when embedded in team ground rules, suppress tension in intergroup dynamics and set down the foundations of a psychologically “safe” climate for a potent and creative team.

9.3 Theoretical Significance - Linking Language, Culture and Emotions

This study provides a unique contribution to the field in several factors.

1. It identifies key triggers of emotions, not reported by earlier studies. This study identifies the key theme of **accommodation**, breaking it down into three categories in which team members show accommodative behaviour: emotional (present/absent), cognitive and practical. It also

reports *muted expression (also referred to as the cost of speaking up)* as a key theme which, although mentioned in a few other studies, this study highlights how this can elicit emotions not only in those feeling reticent to speak a foreign language but also how emotions bubble up by those observing them as well. The third theme identified is *opacity/ambiguity*. Again, also termed as *uncertainty* (as highlighted in Study Two), has been raised in a couple of extant IB language-sensitive studies but not directly in relation to emotions. This study demonstrates how this linguistic ambiguity can elicit emotions. It also provides full detail and examples of sociological aspects of language that are directly related, such as speaker intention, cross-cultural pragmatics, negotiation of meaning, to enable recognition of these instances for future studies and MNT leaders. To date, no other study in the field of IB has provided this level of linguistic background to illuminate the concepts, questions and theory before embarking on a language sensitive research journey.

2. The theme identified as leveraging cultural differences intersects with the initiation of certain accommodative behaviour in Study One. Leveraging cultural differences requires cultural intelligence but this alone is not adequate to mitigate negative emotions as a result of language barriers. The knowledge of language, as highlighted by this study, is vital for MNT leaders and could help to provide a firm basis on which to develop cross-lingual sensitivity (language intelligence). It will enable MNT members operating cross-border to adapt their language to achieve a smooth interaction with the counterpart and thereby mitigate the likelihood of events eliciting negative emotions.
3. The selection of MNTs from the professional services/consulting sector, as a basis for the research study, is new. In contrast to previous studies (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015) who chose sectors with lower levels of proficiency, Automotive and Telecom, according to the Workforce English Proficiency by Industry Index (EF Proficiency Index, cited by Tran and Burman, 2016), this decision supports the notion that even with higher levels of proficiency in the corporate language, emotions continue to bubble up when collaborating across language barriers. MNTs made up of members with mixed proficiency levels impact emotions across all business sectors, even when the interlocutors are from a sector identified as demonstrating the highest level of fluency in English - professional services, consultancy (Figure 3.2) (EF English Proficiency Index, as cited by Tran and Burman, 2016).
4. Thirdly, this study differs from some studies which seek to uncouple language and culture (Brannen et al., 2014; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015). Cultural context is essential for the understanding of meaning in language and the roots of human responses, as borne out

through the results (Jiang, 2000; Yağiz and Izadpanah, 2013). This study, by conserving the cultural link, provides a fuller representation of the bond between language and culture, as illustrated by the many examples of cross-cultural pragmatics and contextual scenarios provided by the participants of both studies. Furthermore, as highlighted in Chapter 4, by viewing the world through the “prism” of critical realism it can be detected that the way knowledge is held and communicated by individuals originates from their culture, environment and experience (Joseph, 2004).

5. Fourthly, this study employed a multi-methods approach, which highlights the impact of the data collection method on the emphasis of the results. To the researcher’s knowledge, this is the first study in IB language-sensitive literature to collect data using a focus group. This approach emphasises a different **dynamic** through gathering the perceptions of different team members in a group environment. The team members discussed how they felt about the challenges of collaborating in the corporate language, English, in a multilingual environment. This **dynamic** highlighted the open environment where the moderator facilitated the discussion.
6. Using two qualitative methods also raises awareness of two different **dynamics** in reporting the findings. Interviews yielded more incidents where distinct emotions were personally experienced and observed. The perceptions of the focus group reflected findings through a group **dynamic**. As discussed in Chapter 8, the issues and strategies correlated and reinforced those of the first study as well as proposing a slightly adjusted emphasis with additional strategies to mitigate the critical issues.
7. Both studies generated several strategies, suggested by the participants, to combat many of the root causes of emotional triggers in MNT collaboration. In contrast to other studies that suggest reactive measures to deflect emotions (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015), many of them promote preventative measures to halt the root cause.

9.4 Managerial relevance

The core findings of this study highlight the need for MNT leaders to gain deeper awareness of the emotional impact of mixed proficiency level speakers of the corporate language in their teams.

The key findings of both studies, encapsulated in the tables in Chapter 8, provide a solid basis for better sensemaking by mitigating many of the emotional triggers bubbling up in a language diverse team environment.

This study advances research into MNT leadership by highlighting several lingua-culturally adaptive behavioural strategies to be incorporated into the international leadership repertoire. Essential

contributions from the participants, when reviewed holistically, suggest that leaders are capable of more than simply avoiding misunderstandings within their teams, as suggested by Tenzer and Pudelko (2015). Recognised capabilities, such as openness to understanding another culture are emphasised in this study as well as introducing new skills, not reported before in this context, such as, re-shaping thinking to create empathy, competence across a range of situations in choosing the appropriate behaviour; such approaches evoke aptitudes found in CQ and cross-lingual sensitivity.

9.4.1 Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Academic research into CQ and leadership has been remarkably limited to date and yet so many of the strategies, proposed in the data, called for the critical skills embodied by this approach. It should also be emphasised that whilst CQ, so far, makes scant provision for language diversity, cross-lingual sensitivity, an area significantly developed in this study, is an area that definitely deserves integration.

9.4.2 Cross-lingual sensitivity

Cross-lingual sensitivity was identified as a key component for MNT leadership development. The findings of this study strongly support the need to raise awareness in MNT leaders of how language acquires meaning through context and consideration of speaker intention. Lack of acuity for the different norms of interaction cross-culturally gives rise to issues, such as power distortions, the cost of speaking up, ambiguity and frustration.

9.4.3 Cultural leverage

Cultural leverage as a strategy to reduce cultural and social difference was highly recommended by the participants. From the leadership perspective, it suppresses attitudes underpinning behaviours that are not conducive to a productive team climate and unleashes the potential for a wider knowledge base. Leveraging cultural difference not only increases self-awareness and cultural competence but also develops a certain cultural agility and openness to re-frame situations and thereby improve outcomes, as demonstrated in Study Two, Chapter 8.

9.4.4 “Safe” climate

The study also reinforces the need for MNTs to adopt a psychologically “safe” climate with ground rules that allow their team members to freely contribute to the team without judgement relating to their proficiency in the corporate language. Where this is absent, valuable contributions from less proficient team members may be lost, and tensions may rise as stronger more dominant speakers consistently take the floor in team meetings. The cost of speaking up was raised several times in the data. Whilst the reasons behind constraint in putting forward a view in a group setting may be down to a range of factors, such as proficiency level or culture (or even challenges similar to Groupthink), it

is crucial that MNT leaders be aware and monitor the frequency of contributions of their team members and encourage regular engagement so that the practice of speaking up (even with less proficiency in the corporate language) becomes the norm.

9.4.5 Cohesive team – maintaining a common vision

Evidence from the study also reinforces the need for team leaders to keep their teams focused. In today's climate of MNTs being formed on a short-term basis for projects, disbanded after a number of months and then re-grouping, this is a very topical challenge. Nevertheless, team cohesiveness in language diverse environment is essential to maintain performance. Group cohesiveness is often defined with two dimensions – emotional and task-orientated (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992). As discussed in Chapter 7, strategies to encourage engagement, minimise conflict and build trust must be addressed by the team leader in laying down ground rules and modelling behaviour in the early stages of a team's life. It is as important as clarifying roles and expectations.

9.5 Awareness of the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in MNTs

This study contributes to the literature of building awareness of emotions triggered by multi-lingual team diversity and highlights key incidents indicating how issues arise. The themes identified as well as the suggested strategies to mitigate emotional conflict are not only of theoretical significance to MNT leaders, but also of great practical value too; it has been recognised that anxiety, ambiguity, lack of trust coupled with team cohesion can lead to poor decision making and lower employee engagement (Mooney et al., 2007). Furthermore, a preponderance of negative emotions have also been reported to lead to higher staff turnover and general absenteeism (Little et al., 2012) and reduced performance outcomes (McColl-Kennedy and Anderson, 2002).

The leadership knowledge raised by this study equips the MNT leader to navigate the challenges of communication through a corporate language within MNTs.

9.6 Contributions to research on language barriers in MNCs

This study contributes to the growing literature on language diversity in MNCs by emphasising the crucial role of leadership in managing emotions and resultant issues in MNTs. It also brings to the fore an added layer of complexity in relation to the concept of diversity in the workplace. Whilst much of the literature promotes the ease of knowledge sharing and communication through the adoption of a common corporate language, many of the challenges continue to be dismissed. This in-depth investigation shows that MNCs cannot simply assume that they have written off communication

challenges by using a corporate language, but that its use needs to be tempered by specific leadership behaviours and lingua-cultural strategies. The study advances the research into emotions as a result of language barriers by highlighting key triggers that elicit emotions and also providing a basis to understand the fundamentals of language that contribute to the challenge.

9.7 Cross-lingual sensitivity development for MNTs and MNT leaders

The findings of this study have the potential to form part of a development programme for MNT leaders with the aim to increase understanding of how language acquires meaning through context. As discussed, the ability to speak a language fluently still does not guarantee comprehension of speaker intention when utterances are expressed in a language. Translation software transfers a message from one language to another. However, as a computational programme, fed grammatical rules and limited dictionary definitions, much of the figurative knowledge and idiomatic expressions is missing and this can result in a stilted and even nonsensical output. All human language is bound by context, and all humans instinctively know that. Utterances are in themselves explicit, however, utterance meaning, on the other hand, can often be implicit, and this is because in an interaction is safer when implied than when expressed directly. Hence in everyday language, without native-speaker knowledge, speaker intention can often elude the non-native speaker (NNS), or vice-versa for the native speaker (NS) on hearing speaker intention translated literally from another language. Acuity to speaker intention and knowledge of the inherent issues should form an essential part of the leadership development of a MNT leader.

A development initiative for cross-lingual sensitivity could take the form of in-class training to raise awareness in the first instance, or even, for team leaders to explore specific cross-lingual issues, in the form of mentoring or cross-cultural coaching. Such initiatives could also form fundamental components of international leadership programmes facilitated by HR development teams.

9.8 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

This study has several limitations, which suggest directions for future research in this area. The results of the interview study benefited from the triangulation of results from the second study - the focus group. Added focus groups might have added to the results' cogency, but as commonality of the themes confirmed no new material save a different emphasis, saturation was attained.

The interviews in Study One were carried out in English and this may have influenced the data results. As highlighted by Welch and Welch (2006), the quality of the data may be impacted and lack depth when NNSs are required to speak English in such settings. The requirement to speak in their non-native language may have also impacted their ability to build rapport and trust with the researcher (interviewer) as pointed out by Zhang and Guttormsen (2016). However, in consultation with the global team leaders of Tech 1 and Tech 2 ahead of the interviews, the researcher gained a knowledge of the context in which the teams operated and so could interpret the key aspects and structure of the teams' operations. The two teams participating in the semi-structured interviews of this study came from large consulting firms in the professional services sector. Speaking English was an integral part of their day-to-day communication, both externally and internally. In the case of the focus groups, there was no option but to use English; English was the commonly spoken language for all participants and was utilised in the same sense as a corporate language.

The proficiency levels of the MNT members of both studies were self-reported as 'fluent'. Working arrangements did not allow the testing of linguistic proficiency. An opportunity to test proficiency levels might have provided greater clarity in relation to the precise proficiency level in the corporate language of each team member. However, the degree to which this would have influenced the findings is debatable. This is because the findings of previous studies (Neeley, Hinds and Cramton, 2012; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015) (using different sectors with lower proficiency levels) and of this study (using data from a sector with generally higher proficiency level in English) indicate that collaborating with team members of mixed proficiency levels elicits emotional responses in MNTs. What is key to this study is how these emotional responses manifest themselves in the key themes, not reported in previous studies. The suggested strategies presented through this study focus primarily on recommendations for MNT leadership to enact and develop through their team leadership style. Emotions continue to play a role even at higher levels of proficiency. The researcher recommends further research in the form of studies, using different industry sectors with different proficiency levels, to demonstrate their value in diminishing language proficiency asymmetries and to extend the insights from participants.

Study One's interviews were based on global MNTs operating mostly virtually. An opportunity, to carry out additional studies with MNTs operating physically together would have allowed a comparison between the results of virtual teams with face-to-face teams.

The researcher encourages further investigation into individual characteristics as variables, for example, age, education and global experience. Bearing in mind shifts in educational policy and changing markets, age and global working experience may have an impact on non-native speakers' language proficiency and acuity for CQ. Although the sample included variety of ages, the two teams

were too small to allow comparison between experiences of younger and older generations; only three respondents had entered the labour market before all the cross-border mergers of the 1990s. Furthermore, different sectors, such as international retail and manufacturing, might yield useful results because, so far, very little language-sensitive research has been conducted in these sectors.

Whilst the interviews and focus group data have captured dynamic data in relation to critical incidents triggering emotions, it would be useful to explore additional research designs, for example, capturing emotions in real-time, as proposed by Gooty et al. (2009), who proposes the exploration of intra-individual differences under observation and through the use of diaries, text messages and other means. Stimulated recall is another instrument, used to gather what people are thinking as they interact. Research participants either listen to a recording or view a video recording of their behaviour in a certain situation and are then invited to reflect on their cognitive processes during the recorded event (Dempsey, 2010).

9.9 Final Thoughts

A common thread running throughout this study is the call for MNCs to invest time in the development of language management in organisations. Misunderstandings and ambiguity, reluctance to speak up, misfired communication and uncertainty can result in loss of information and strategy misalignment. Whilst the mandate of a standard language allows the ease of a universalist approach in general communication, it is vital that MNT leaders are ready and equipped to help guide their team members in communicating across language-cultural barriers by leading with empathy in creating a “safe” climate, setting down ground rules, demonstrating CQ and cross-lingual sensitivity. By following these strategies, negative emotions will be minimised, and team productivity will grow.

Appeals for diversity awareness currently embrace gender, age, ethnicity and race. Inclusion of language diversity would elevate the importance of the role of language and highlight how humans transfer thought in all social interactions both in the workplace and personally and should be integrated into International human resources management diversity initiatives.

This study responds to the call to explore further how language diversity in MNTs can lead to events eliciting an array of emotional responses with respondents from the professional services sector. It not only makes evident how processes of interpretation and socialisation can challenge individuals in unexpected ways but also presents a multitude of strategies to alleviate them.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Study One: Research project information sheet
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Appendix 1: Study One Research Project Information Sheet



RESEARCH INTO HOW LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AFFECT HOW MULTINATIONAL TEAMS WORK

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

I am researching for my doctorate in the Department of Management and Social Sciences at St. Mary's University, London. My research focuses on the impact of diverse cultures coupled with language differences within multinational teams. With advances in technology and the increasing pace of globalization, multinational organizations increasingly rely on the collaboration of teams around the world. These teams may operate virtually, across time zones and may be required to use a common language. But how good is the communication?

Research has uncovered serious negative emotions fuelled by diverse cultures coupled with language differences. Depending on language competence, team members can feel insecure and embarrassed when communicating with colleagues. A feeling of exclusion and even communication avoidance may lead to disruption in the team and loss of trust between native and non-native speakers. Usually, bridging the language gap falls to the team leader.

The results of my research will help to identify leadership strategies to mitigate these issues and to develop effective tools for sense-making, better collaboration and a more productive team climate across the globe.

I am looking to interview leaders and members of multinational teams. So, if you are a leader of one or more such teams, or a member of one or more teams where the corporate language is not your native language, or where the corporate language is your native language but there are several non-native speakers of your language, please take part in my study.

If you take part in this study, you will be interviewed for at least half an hour, face to face or by Skype or a similar channel. You will also have the opportunity to receive a copy of my research report and training/briefing/development for your team leaders in line with the research findings. To know more, please contact me on:

Contact: Luisa Weinzierl (research leader)

Mobile: +44 7887 984874

Email: 176092@live.stmarys.ac.uk Also see my video at:

<https://youtu.be/RI42meuJcEc>

Cont'd ... /

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

You have been invited to take part in my research project because of your membership or leadership of a multinational team which is the focus of this research project. Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with or to comply with any of the interviewer's requests or expectations. You can withdraw from the project at any time during the interview by communicating this to the researcher. After the interview has taken place, you are free to ask for your data to be withdrawn contacting the primary researcher with the name of the study and your participation number.

Your participation will involve one semi-structured interview lasting at least half an hour, face to face or via Skype or a similar channel. There are no disturbing or upsetting questions or risks to your health or wellbeing by taking part in this study. The answers you provide will be analysed with other similar ones to identify any common themes that may underlie negative emotions related to language differences experienced in a multinational environment (such as stress, anxiety, frustration). The results from this study may be included in scientific publications and doctorate material.

To guarantee anonymity the information and data collected from you will be stored against a neutral participation number and no identifying information (e.g. names) will be recorded. Only the organisation will be identifiable, but codenamed in written reports. All material will be accessible to Luisa Weinzierl, the primary researcher and her supervisor (Dr. Lubna Ahmed) and stored on password-protected St. Mary's University servers and locked cabinets. For the purpose of publication, anonymous information may also be stored on a public data repository, but never retained for longer than 10 years.

All participants will be given the opportunity to receive a report of the study and the results. Team leaders will also have the opportunity to receive 2 coaching sessions in line with the research results.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

Appendix 2: Study One Research Project Consent Form



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Name of Participant: _____

Title of the project: __

Main investigator and contact details: _____

Members of the research team:

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant (print).....

Signed..... Date.....

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: _____

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _

Consent Form June 2018

Appendix 3: Study One Research Project Ethics Approval



St Mary's University Ethics Sub-Committee

Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor, and forwarded to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one document (in order of the checklist) and named in the following format: '**Full Name – School – Supervisor**'

Please note that for all undergraduate research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

Please note:

In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or School Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff).



St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application. Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

Document	Enclosed?*	Version No
1. Application Form	Mandatory	
2. Participant Invitation Letter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Participant Information Sheet(s)	Mandatory	
4. Participant Consent Form(s)	Mandatory	
5. Parental Consent Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
6. Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of posters, newspaper adverts, emails	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
7. Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct study on the premises)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
8. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

	<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
9. DBS if required (to be provided separately)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
10. Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
11. Certificates of training (required if storing human tissue)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	

*Double click the check boxes to check them

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one document (any DBS check to be sent separately) named in the following format:

'Full Name - School – Supervisor'

Signature of Proposer(s):	N/A	Date:	
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	N/A	Date:	



Ethics Application Form

1. Name of proposer(s)		Luisa Weinzierl
2. St Mary's email address		176092@live.stmarys.ac.uk
3. Name of supervisor		Prof. Emanuela Todeva
4. Title of project		The Emotional Impact of Language Differences in Multinational Teams
5. School or Service	<input type="checkbox"/> A&H <input type="checkbox"/> ETL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MSS <input type="checkbox"/> SHAS	
6. Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> UG <input type="checkbox"/> PG (taught) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG (research) Name: PhD	
7. Type of activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> UG student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG student	
8. Confidentiality		
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. Consent		
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants/participants' representatives?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
10. Pre-approved Protocol		
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable Date of approval:
11. Approval from another Ethics Committee		

a) Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
12. Identifiable risks	
a) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are participants over 65 years of age?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
c) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
d) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
e) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
f) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
g) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
h) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
i) Will highly personal, intimate or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
j) Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details:

<p>k) Could the relationship between the researcher/ supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>l) Are you working under the remit of the Human Tissue Act 2004?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>13. Proposed start and completion date</p>	
<p>Please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the study is due to commence. • Timetable for data collection. • The expected date of completion. <p>Please ensure that your start date is at least four weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.</p>	
<p>The study is due to commence in June 2018 with 2 pilot interviews.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews will commence in September and I expect to be complete with data collection by end of April 2019.</p>	
<p>14. Sponsors/collaborators</p>	
<p>Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include your supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project. • Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support. 	
<p>None</p>	
<p>15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval</p>	
<p>Please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. an NHS Research Ethics Committee). • Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee. 	

Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project.

None

16. Purpose of the study

In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study. [100 word limit]

My research focuses on "The Emotional Impact of Language Differences in Multinational Teams". This area has been neglected by scholars and practitioners to date. Specifically, I am looking at how the work process is affected as a result of language differences/barriers within multinational teams, the emotional impact of language barriers and successful leadership strategies that may help address the impact of language-induced emotions bringing positive outcomes for multinational team collaboration.

17. Study design/methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

- a) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
- b) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
- c) The requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
- d) Details of where the research/testing will take place, including country.
- e) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

The approach is a qualitative one. The semi-structured interviews will be carried out with the teams, made up of multinational, multilingual members, who communicate regularly across language barriers. The interviews will be carried out on a 1:1 basis and last 30 mins approx. They will be conducted either face-to-face or via Skype. The materials I am using are original.

[Please add a bit more on the methodology – e.g. type of questions, topics of both pilot and research interviews, etc.]

The questions are devised to elicit the emotions arising out of language differences, such as stress, anxiety and frustration etc. For example, these may occur as a result of different levels of

competence. I plan to analyse the emerging themes and look for patterns. Examples of these questions include:

- How do you feel about having to communicate in a foreign language at work?
- How does this impact collaboration?
- How do cultural differences impact the language barriers in your team?
- What does your leader do to mitigate the difficulties caused by language barriers
- Could you describe a specific situation where your MNT leader successfully addressed language-related emotions in your team?

I plan to carry out thematic analysis based on the data from the semi-structured interviews.

18. Participants

Please mention:

- a) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex.
- b) How they will be recruited and chosen.
- c) The inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- d) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants.
- e) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken.
- f) Please state any connection you may have with any organisation you are recruiting from, for example, employment.

I am recruiting adult participants from multinational teams in international business. They will freely volunteer for participation in my study. The organisations I am approaching are ones where I have a contact or connection. I have also posted on LinkedIn to invite interest and volunteers. Please see the link below + my video:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-language-differences-multinational-teams-luisa-weinzierl/>

[Please add a bit more on participants – e.g. how many, their required profile, age and how you'll verify it, your connection with the participants/companies, etc.]

I plan to carry out 30-40 interviews with members of multinational teams working in multinational corporations. They will be adult business people. Age is not a significant factor here.

19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet clearly makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

- a) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done.
- b) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?
 - Children under 18
 - Participants with learning disabilities
 - Participants suffering from dementia
 - Other vulnerable groups.
- If any of the above apply, state whether the researcher/investigator holds a current DBS certificate (undertaken within the last 3 years). A copy of the DBS must be supplied **separately from** the application.
- c) Provide details on how consent will be obtained. This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

[Here you must explain how participants will give consent to participating and how you will inform them of their rights. A copy of the consent form with the information provided to participants (info sheet) must be attached. You can find an example on the website where you found this form.]

Attached is a copy of my information sheet and consent form. Also attached are the 2 consent forms from my pilot studies. These documents clearly inform the participants of their rights so that they are aware of what they are signing up for.

20. Risks and benefits of research/activity

- a) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.
- b) Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.
- c) Do you have an approved risk assessment form relating to this research?
- d) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver

these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.

- e) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).
- f) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).
- g) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research?

The process does not involve any invasive procedures and the content of the open questions does not include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting.

There are no foreseeable risks for the participants and no sensitive information will be requested. Participants will be made aware from the start that they do not have to provide any information that they are not willing to volunteer, and that they are free to withdraw at any point.

The aim is to sample multiple teams across organizational context to strengthen the research design. Participants will be entitled to receive a copy of the report at the end of my study and I will also offer training to team leaders in the resultant leadership strategies recommended by the results of the study.

In compiling the questions, I plan to use a gently-guided approach so that it forms a one-sided conversation that explores the participant's experience in communicating across language barriers. These questions will refer back to the conceptual framework and will help to answer the research questions.

As stated earlier, I am planning 2 pilot studies in June to support my research questions.

21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection

- Outline what steps will be taken to ensure participants' confidentiality.
- Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored (please state that all electronic data will be stored on St Mary's University servers).
- If there is a possibility of publication, please state that you will keep the data for a period of 10 years.

- Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others' data.
- Describe how you will manage data using a data management plan.
- You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publically available once the project has ended.
- You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating to data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.
- Identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).
- Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?
- Explain what information will be identifiable.
- Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.
- Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.

I will have written consent from all participants and their organisations. I will confirm confidentiality of all results which will be securely stored, to which only my supervisor and I will have access. Only the organisation will be identifiable but codenamed in my thesis.

Any information will be handled according to the Data Protection Act (2003), the Freedom of Information Act (2000), the Intellectual Property Act (2014), and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2016).

[Please be more specific about all the confidentiality procedures – e.g. where data is stored, how it is secured, how participants will be anonymised and how you can identify their records to withdraw them, who (their names) will have access to info, etc.]

To guarantee total anonymity all data, including personal information (e.g. names), will be stored against a neutral participation number.

The information and data collected from you will be accessible to Luisa Weinzierl, the primary researcher, and her supervisor (Dr. Lubna Ahmed) and handled according to the Data Protection Act (2003), the Freedom of Information Act (2000), and the Intellectual Property Act (2014). They will be stored on St. Mary's University servers and consent forms in a locked cabinet. For the purpose of publication, anonymous aggregate scores may also be stored on a public data repository, but never retained for longer than 10 years.

All data management and anonymity procedures will be made explicit before the participant's consent is given.

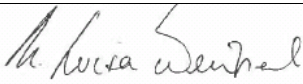
22. Feedback to participants

Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:

- As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriately written.
- Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

The participants will be given the opportunity to request a copy of the report.

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Signature of Proposer(s):		Date:	18 July 2018
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	Lubna Ahmed	Date:	18 July 2018



Approval Sheet

Name of proposer(s)	Maria-Luisa Weinzierl
Name of supervisor	Dr. Lubna Ahmed
Programme of study	PhD
Title of project	The emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in multinational teams

Supervisors, please complete section 1. If approved at level 1, please forward a copy of this Approval Sheet to the School Ethics Representative for their records.

SECTION 1: To be completed by supervisor.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to School Ethics Representative for consideration at Level 2 or Level 3.			
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	Lubna Ahmed	Date:	18 July 2018

SECTION 2: To be completed by School Ethics Representative. Not applicable			
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 consideration is required by Ethics Sub-Committee.			
Signature of School Ethics Representative:		Date:	

Appendix 4: Study One Interview Questionnaire

Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews

1. Tell me about your team's composition and context.
 - a. What does your team do?
 - b. How many of you are there in the team?
 - c. How long have you been team leader of the team?
 - d. What nationalities are there in the team?
 - e. Is there a language policy at your organisation?
 - f. Are you expected to communicate in a foreign language with the other members of your team?

2. Do you feel that there are language differences? How do they affect you?
 - a. Could you take a minute to reflect on how these language differences affect you and when you are ready, tell me about them.
 - b. I've heard you say these emotions []. Can you confirm that these are due to language differences.
 - c. Are there any other feelings?
 - d. Could you describe a specific situation in which language differences caused you some kind of emotion.

3. Is English your native language?

How do you feel about having to communicate in a foreign language at work? **OR**

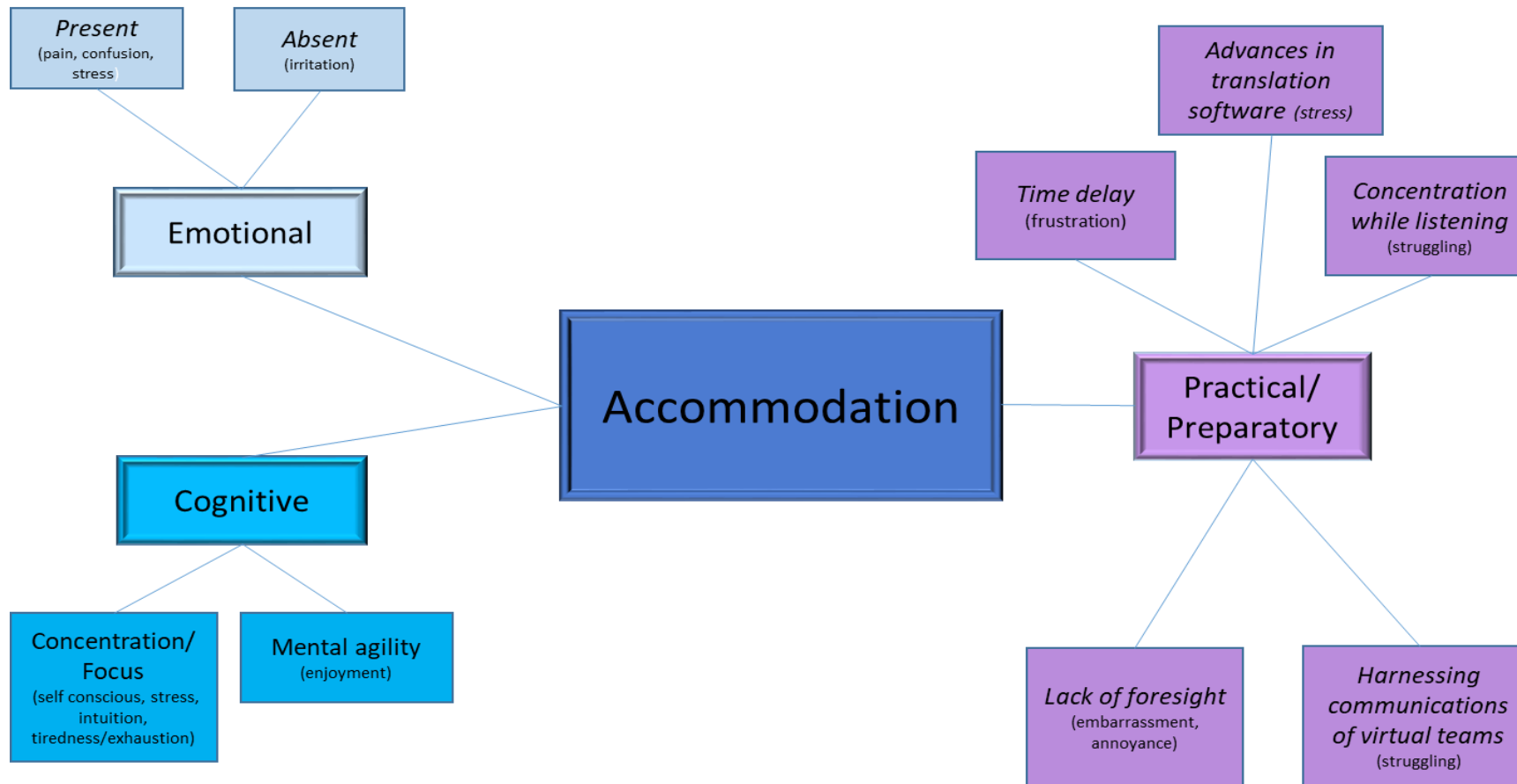
How do you feel about working with people who have different levels of English in your team?

- a. How do you rate your level of English? What is the highest qualification you hold in English language?
 - b. How does it impact team work and collaboration?
 - c. How does it impact your personal productivity and achieving your goals?
 - d. How do you think your team members feel about these issues?
4. How do you think these issues can be mitigated?
 - a. How responsible do you feel to help mitigate these issues?
 - b. How much training have you been given in dealing with multinational teams?

5. Could you take a moment to think of an instance where language differences caused some emotions in your team?
6. So far I've talked about language. I'd like to think about cultural differences in your team. Do you think there are cultural differences in your team?
 - a. Can you explain what these are?
7. For you, how do cultural differences impact the language barriers in your team?
 - a. Are there cultural differences in your team
 - b. Can you describe what you mean by this?
8. Do you have different feelings when communicating with some entities of your team in preference to others? Why is this?
9. How do you think cultural differences influence communication within the team?
 - a. How do you think cultural differences influence team collaboration?
 - b. How do you think cultural differences influence your individual work load
 - c. How do you think cultural differences influence your personal productivity?
10. What are the different cultural styles within the team?
11. Can you take a moment to reflect on the feelings you told me about. Are they due to either language, culture or a combination of both?
12. Are there any positive emotions you feel from working in a multinational team? Do you promote these emotions?
13. How do bilingual team members impact you and the team? Do they have a mitigating effect in any way?
14. Is there anything else we have not talked about that you think we should include?

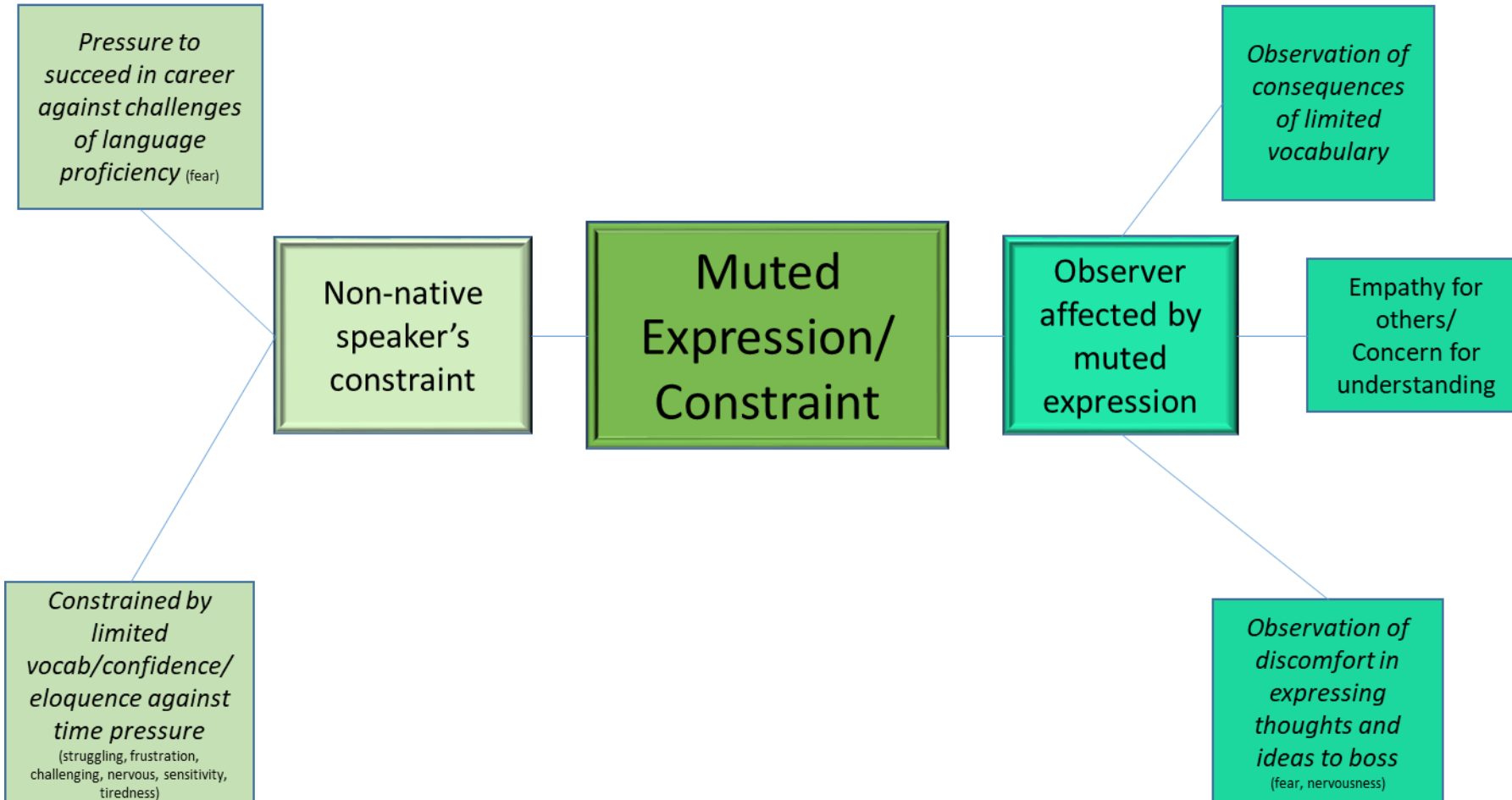
Appendix 5: Studies One and Two Thematic Progression Maps

Study One Thematic Map 1 - Accommodation

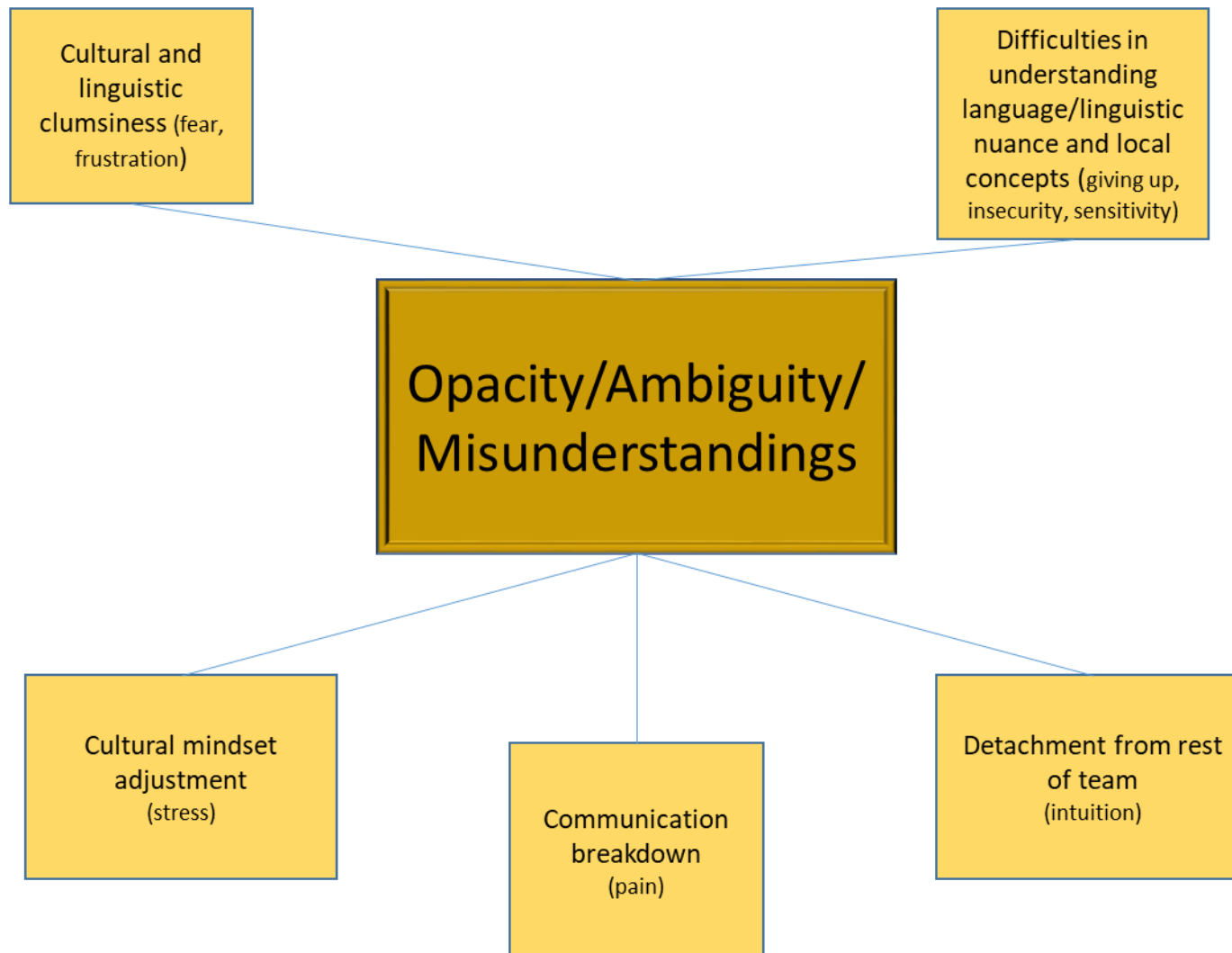


Study One - Thematic Map 2

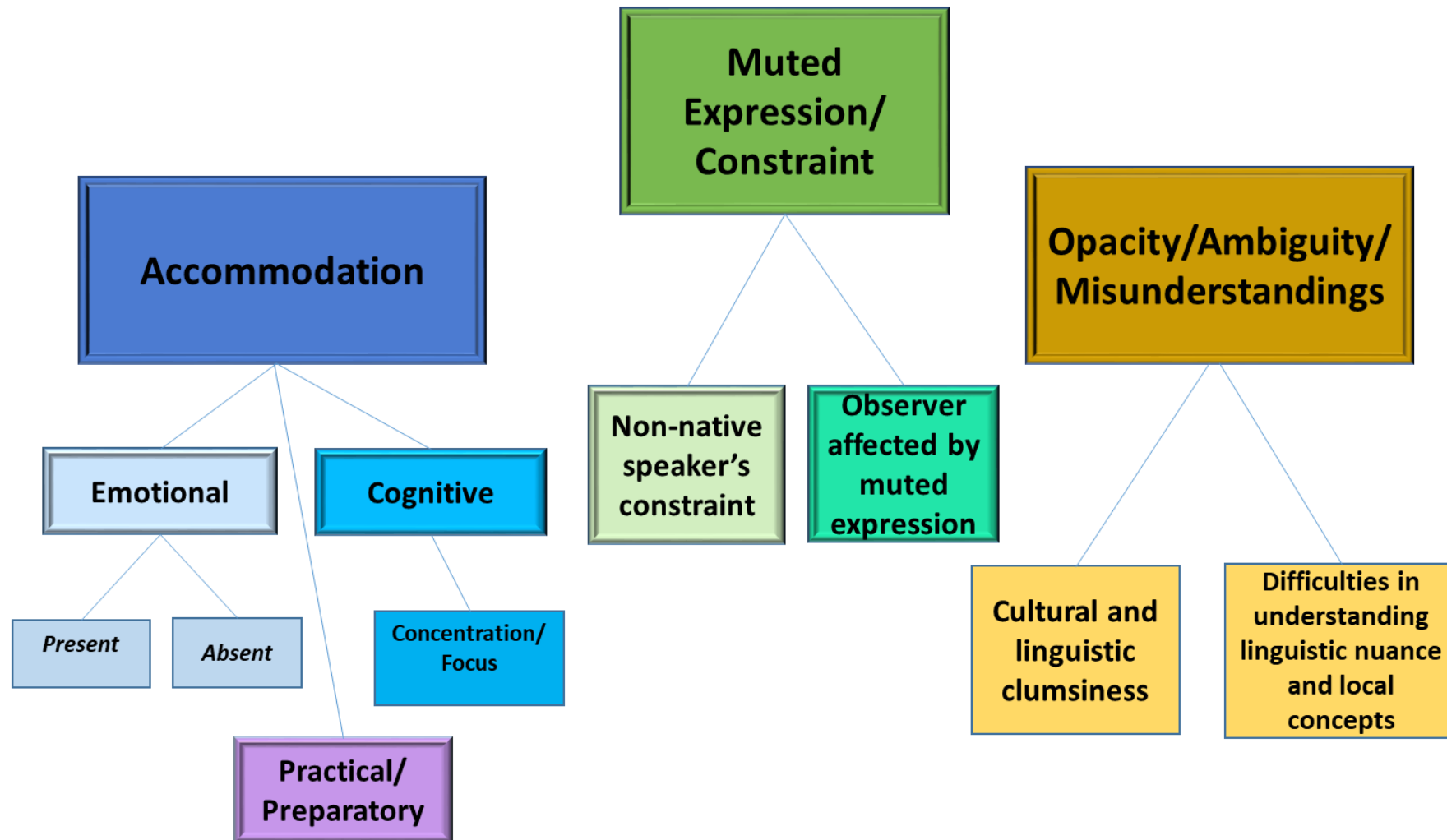
Muted Expression / Constraint

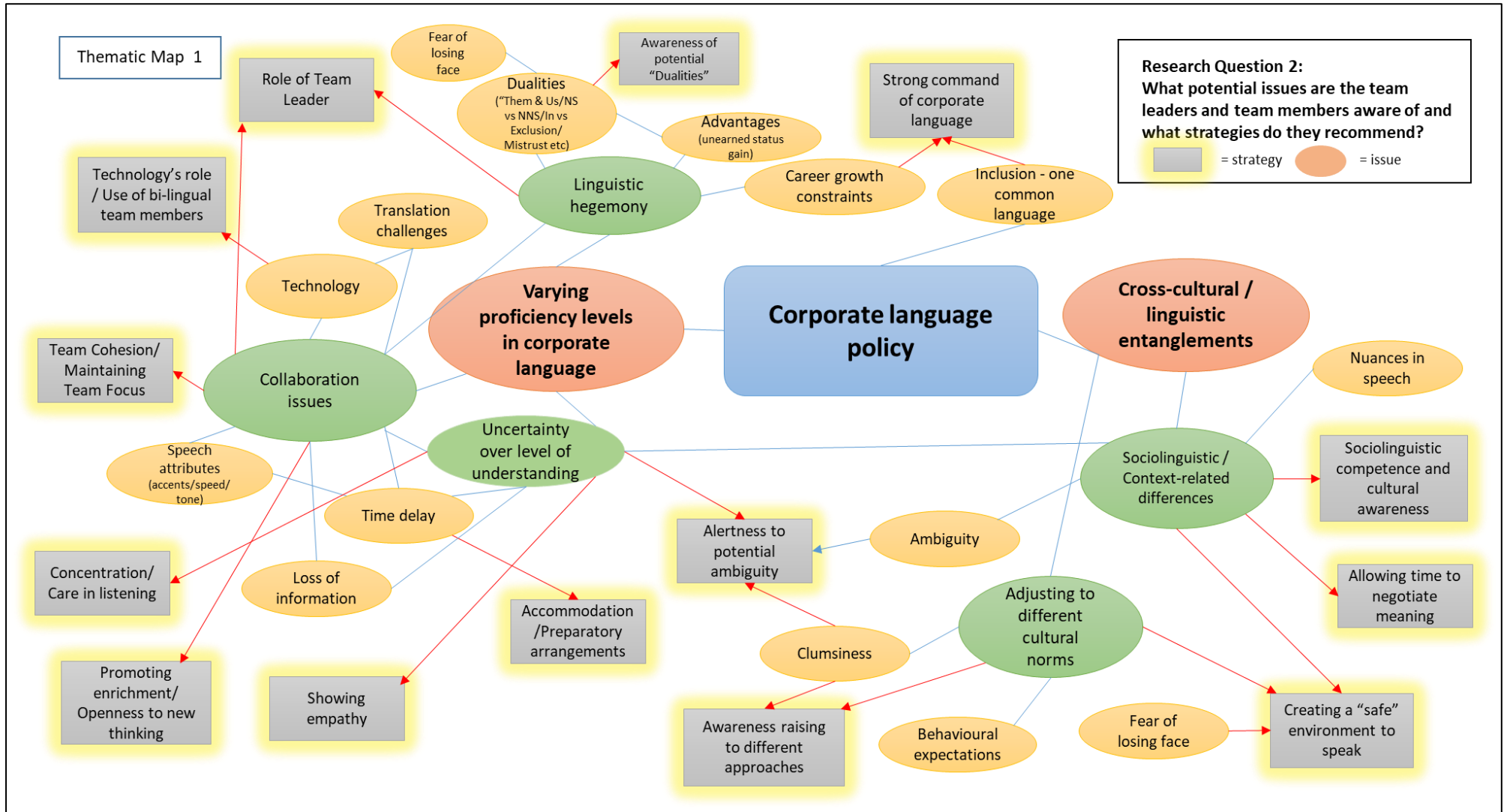


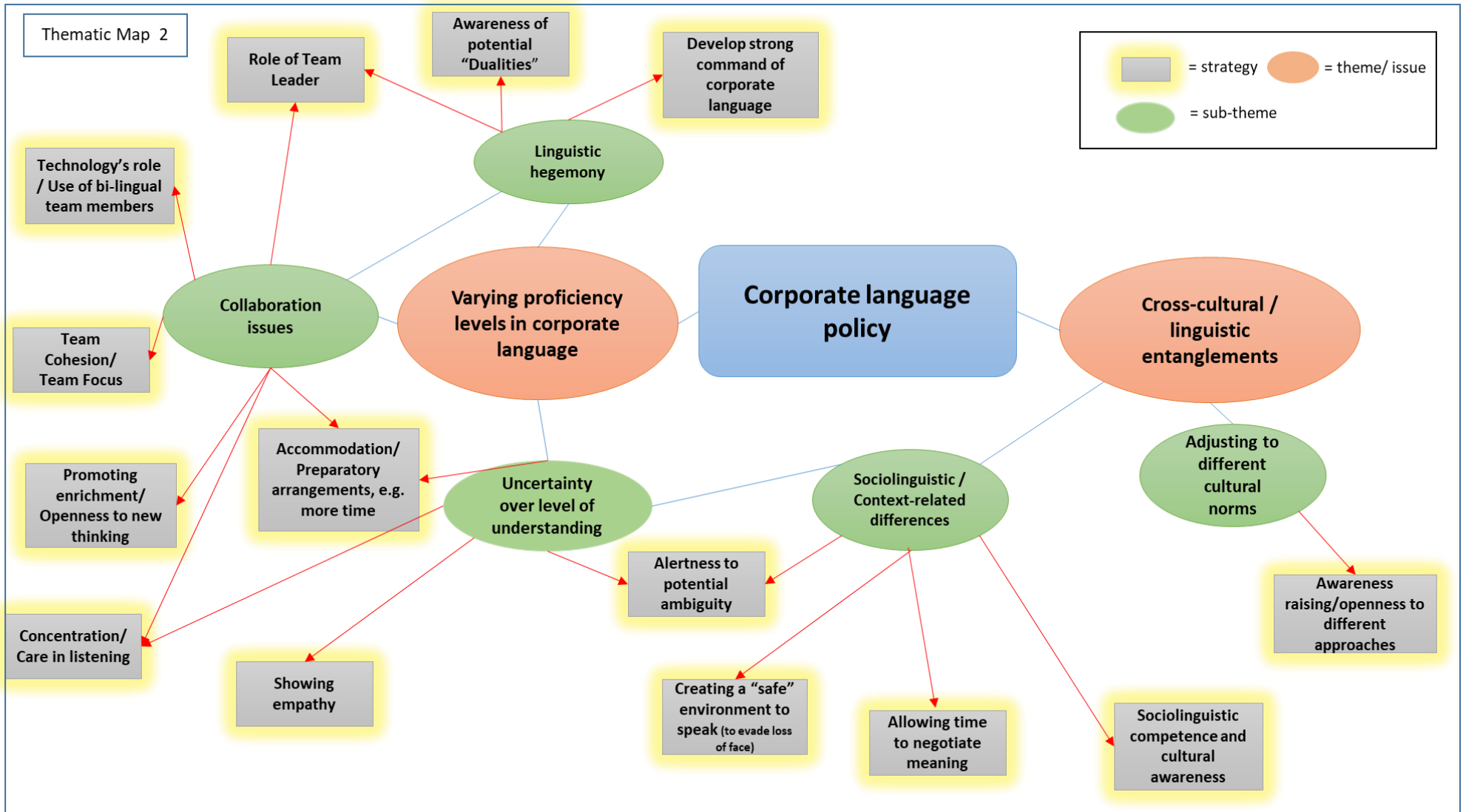
Study One - Thematic Map 3 – Opacity/Ambiguity



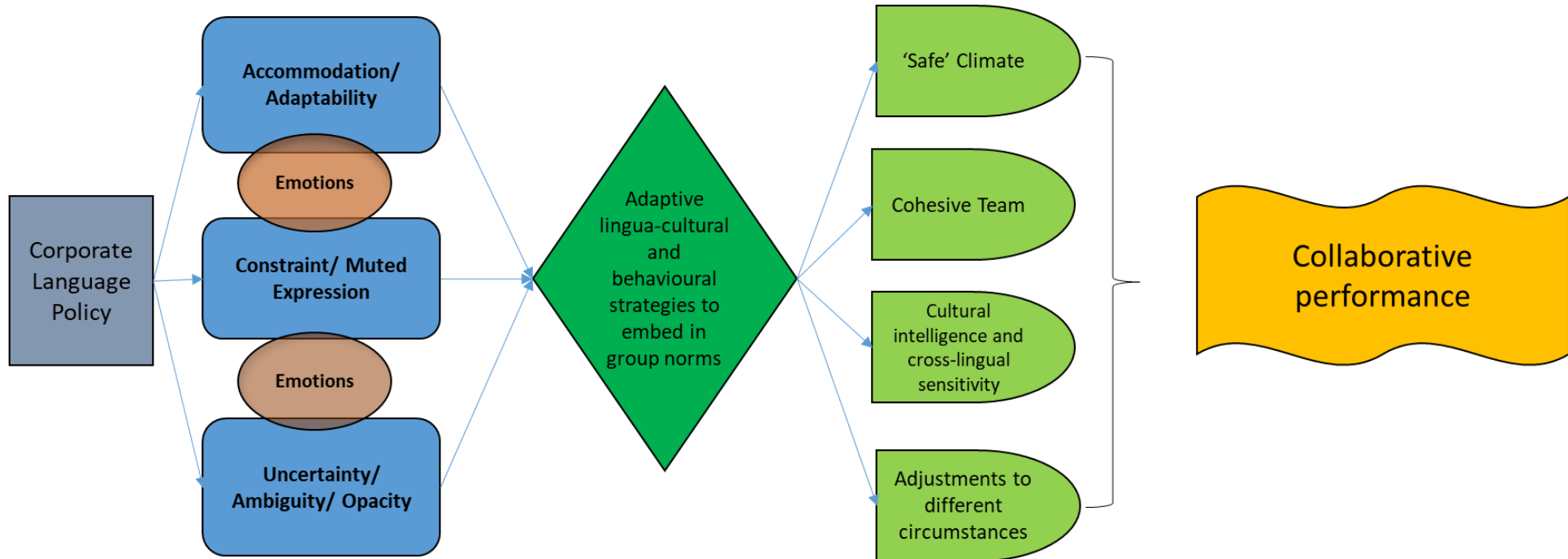
Study One: Thematic Map 4



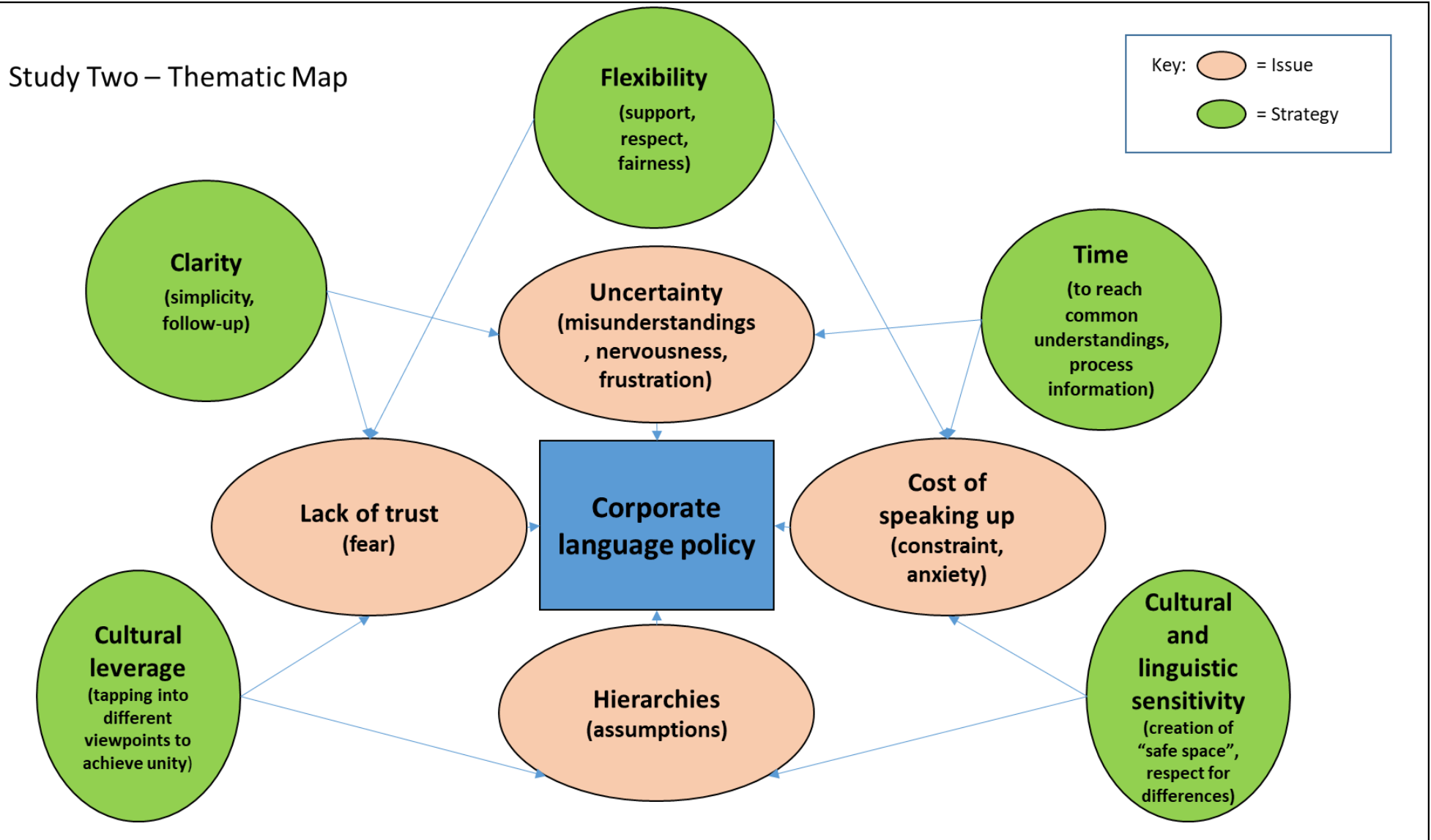




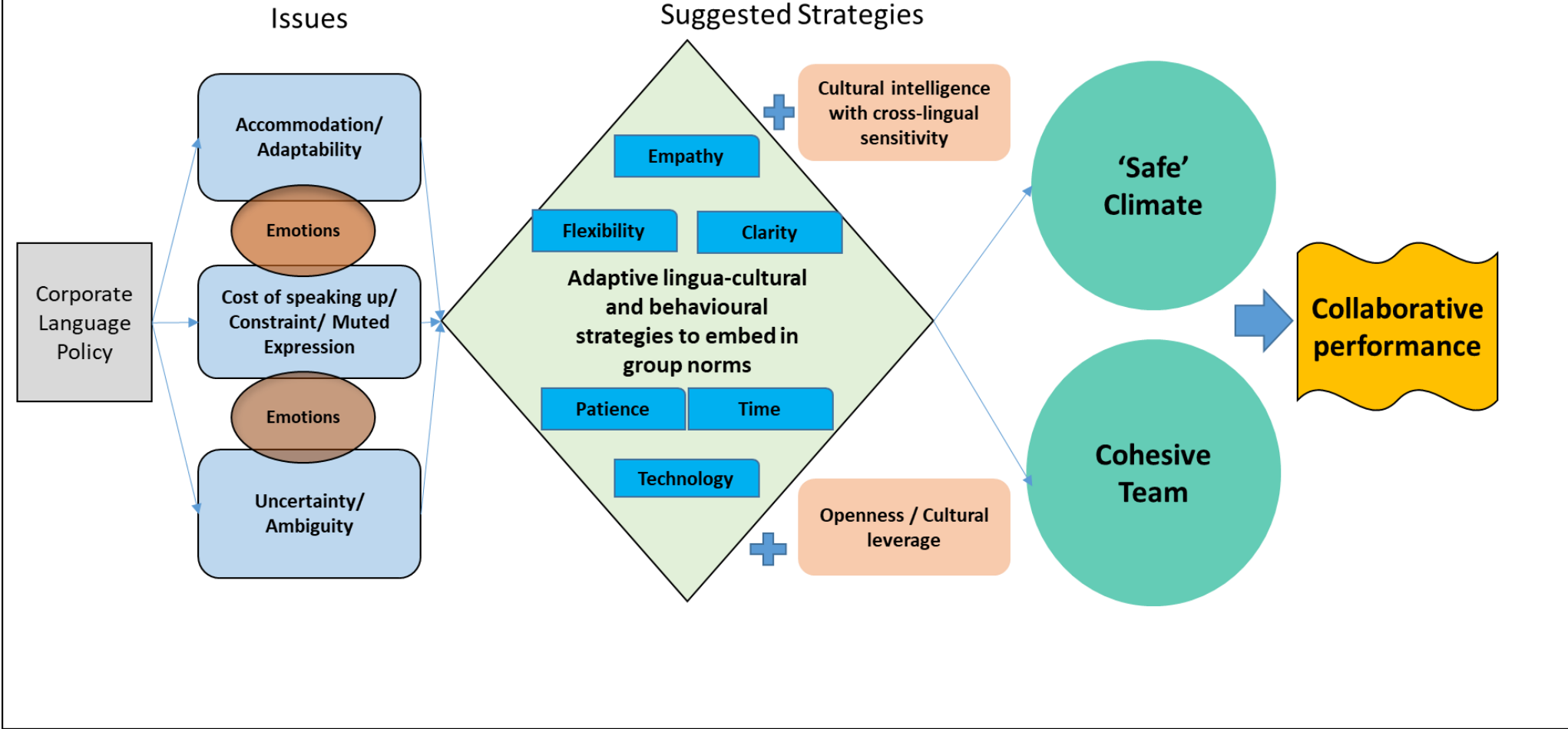
Thematic Map: Research Questions 1 and 2



Study Two – Thematic Map



Studies One and Two: Combined Thematic Map



Appendix 6: Study One: Research Questions One and Two Thematic Analysis Tables

Research Question One: How does the emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language together with cultural differences manifest itself in MNTs?

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Annoyance	Lack of foresight to accommodate non-optimal language.	Accommodation practical/preparatory	... it was annoyance really. I should have seen who was presenting and thought a bit deeper into it – rather than this is a call – I should have been more respectful to the person who was presenting and make sure I was in an office like this with a headset on.	JM [page 3]
Enjoyment	Learning from others	Accommodation <i>cognitive</i>	I enjoy it because it makes me think about my own delivery ... I used to have someone in my team who was from France ... after a couple of minutes she said I am sorry I don't understand anything you are saying ... because I had been back in Scotland for a couple of weeks, I was living and working in a Scottish colloquial environment so obviously my accent had become stronger ... to an extent where somebody, who was not a native English speaker, now couldn't follow what I was saying, even though Caroline's English was extremely fluent.	KC [page 4]
Enjoyment	Learning from others	Enrichment through Diversity	... for me it's all positive. I like a lot to work with multinational teams. I think you learn from each other. And you enrich each other very much.	KA [page 6]
Enjoyment	Communicating globally	Enrichment through Diversity	... Yes, the other feelings that I have I can say are positive. I like the feeling to work in a global company and to have the chance to be able	SZ [page 3]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			to communicate globally ... a 1-year programme and I was in New York twice during this year and I worked at Headquarters ... we were 70 colleagues from all over the world and I was the only Italian in the team ... regardless of one's frustrating performance, the predominant feelings are definitely positive ... to pick up the global environment and the common language, the instrument to be able to communicate.	
Enjoyment	Communicating globally	Enrichment through Diversity	... I like to communicate in different languages and I am used to work across cultures at Tech 1 ... I do that every day so it's normal for me.	SZ [page 6]
Enjoyment	Relationships related to personal fit	Mental agility	... there are some colleagues with whom I love to interact and others where it is a little more difficult. I cannot really translate that back to their culture – it's more on a personality level, I would say ...	AF [page 6]
Challenging	Need for translation to accommodate resulting in time delay	Accommodation <i>cognitive</i>	Then there was a mix of languages ... and then there were different levels of language proficiency in English ... It was challenging because I was trying to teach them how to do the exercises ... and where the exercise would normally take 20 minutes, it took 2½ hours ... so I think it was because of the language barrier.	HT [page 4]
Challenging	Limited vocab	Muted expression/Constraint: <i>NNS mutation</i>	... it will be very challenging because I have not enough of the fundamentals in terms of communication skills with other languages in order to obtain this information	FR [page 6]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Embarrassment	Limited proficiency on both sides (speed, tone, style in corp. language)	Muted expression/Constraint: <i>NNS mutation</i>	... I'm afraid we have problems because – I don't know my English is not the best and their English is not the best too ...	FR [page2]
Embarrassment	Clumsy mistake	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	In that case, we made light of it a little bit to break the ice and because we had dealt with this team before, they knew, although a bit embarrassing on our side, it was not meant as an insult in any way.	KC [page 4]
Embarrassment	Lack of foresight	Accommodation: Practical/Preparation	that particular colleague of mine in China who does exciting stuff ... and he had a slot of 10 minutes ... because 95% of the time listening to this kind of stuff in the car is fine but in that particular circumstance it wasn't. And there were probably lots of questions I would have liked to ask which I couldn't because I wasn't sure if he had already answered them.	JM [page 2]
Fear	Fear of upsetting others because of higher command of corporate language		... I don't want to annoy people by letting them feel that my English skills are maybe better than theirs. It depends on how people think about their own skills and I don't want to be in a position that I make someone feel that my English is may be better than theirs. So if they are asking me to help, then I help but if not then I try to help in a way that they don't notice that I am trying to help or I just don't help.	RS [page 10]
Fear	Cultural and linguistic clumsiness	Opacity/Ambiguity: <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... so I think it's unfair that I didn't say anything even though I felt uncomfortable. In this class, one Swedish girl finally expressed her feeling like by saying – “What's that?” – a little bit ground break! And	HH [page 2]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			finally the instructor realised – aah – this is something offensive to foreigners and he suddenly offered some explanation – ok this is what we are talking about in German. And I was so amazed and somehow thankful to her ... I was afraid to speak up.	
Fear	Observation of discomfort in expressing thoughts and ideas to boss	Muted Expression: Observer affected by muted expression	... the difference between Peru and Chile is more – I think the social levels are more defined and the people do not express a lot their ideas - I feel they fear to express them.	FR [page 6]
Fear	Pressure to succeed in career against challenges of language proficiency	Muted Expression: NNS lack of proficiency/vocab/eloquence/confidence	... but if I lose this situation, it will be very tight for me. Because we need to obtain this information and to do this, you need to communicate, but if you don't communicate well, you don't have the knowledge skills to obtain information.	FR [page 6]
Frustration	Constrained by limited vocab against time pressure	Muted Expression: NNS lack of proficiency/vocab/eloquence/confidence	... it can happen – you want to say something but you have a situation that it is not your own language and you have some difficulties to translate completely sentences ... if you are facing a critical situation, it could be frustrating or an additional difficulty.	SZ [page 2]
Frustration	Constrained by language proficiency + confidence to contribute to discussion	Muted Expression: NNS lack of proficiency/vocab/eloquence/confidence	... So sometimes you feel if you depend on solving that situation through a decision at global level to communicate in a language that is different from your local one, maybe you feel a sense of <u>urgency</u> and definitely you feel <u>frustrated</u> if it is difficult and to put yourself in a discussion ... maybe I am not able to translate exactly what I want	SZ [page 3]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			to say so maybe they are not able to understand this sense of urgency. I get frustrated.	
Frustration	Collaboration across time zones and different linguistic proficiencies	Accommodation practical/preparatory	We make sure that the material and the questions we want to go through is sent to them in advance. So there is additional levels of preparation that we need ... it's just part and parcel if you want to work on a global scale, this is part of the work involved in making sure the team works ... so again, on the call with the Japan team, they took me through some great initiatives they had done. ... I think there are frustrations on both sides. I would love to be able to have more regular discussion at a faster pace perhaps but I know that that is not feasible.	KC [page 5]
Frustration	Offence at instructor speaking German in front of a class with non-German speakers	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... In this class, one Swedish girl finally expressed her feeling like by saying – “What’s that?” – a little bit ground break! And finally the instructor realised – aah – this is something offensive to foreigners and he suddenly offered some explanation – ok this is what we were talking about in German ...	HH [page 2]
Frustration	Need to build in extra time to ensure trainees’ understanding	Accommodation practical/preparatory	on one hand it can be a little frustrating because I know it’s eating up precious time that you have with people. I also feel that, as an American, I have kind of a luxury that I don’t have to speak their language ... I feel that because they are working so hard to learn my	HT [page 3-4]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			language or speak my language, and I can't even meet them half-way, unless it's Spanish ... I think it takes some extra empathy.	
Frustration	Limited vocab	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... but we need to express this frustration and annoyance – but what is the correct level, considering that the other people could feel frustrated to escalate this?	FR [page 4]
Frustration	Lack of empathy from other departments to listen	Isolation	... it is difficult and I feel frustrated. I remember I was talking about the deliverable and I feel these people don't understand or don't want to understand.	FR [page5]
Frustration	Observation of consequences of limited vocab	Muted Expression/ Constraint: Observer affected by muted expression	... he is coming from Brazil and his Spanish is not the best and he is frustrated when he is misunderstood and people say to him – you don't need to say this, you need to say it this way etc ... he is frustrated and disparing. I told him it will get better but I don't know ... but this is one of the common problems we come up against	FR [page 9]
Giving up	Difficulties in understanding language and concepts	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... we found that the activities done in Australia are far more effective than those done in Japan and Korea. And we asked what was difference between us and them ... they have certain KPIs to gather with their sales people and together they talk over very challenging situations for them. But we, the Korea and Japan team, we just gave up on their system with the Sales representative people because we did not understand what the important point to ask was so we just gave up talking with the sales representatives before we try.	HH [page 6]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Nervousness	Observation of discomfort in expressing thoughts	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	I think it takes some extra empathy – because if I had to speak for a whole day or give a presentation in a language I’m not comfortable in, I would be really nervous and really tired. So it’s a couple of emotions ...	HT [page 4]
Nervousness	Bi-linguals in neutralise the nervousness in others	Neutralising effect of bi-lingual team members	... I do think that bi-linguals help a great deal because there is a proper dynamic that a native English speaker holds in some ways and I feel that people speaking a non-native language feel timid or more nervous doing that and so the bilingual person acts like a neutral party.	HT [page 11]
Nervousness	Observation of discomfort in speaking corporate language	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	[page 12] ... I have seen people speaking in a non-native language getting very nervous and feel kind of uncomfortable.	HT [page 12]
Nervousness	Disadvantage of poor command of corporate language	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... so they don’t deliver it properly, their message is not going to be understood ... or that wasn’t actually what they meant ... or the cultural thing – that they might insult somebody. There is quite a bit of insecurity between non-native speaker and native speaker ...	HT [page 12]
Nervousness	Observation of lack of confidence in linguistic proficiency	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... his native language was Portuguese and he had to read it out in English and you could tell – he was just taking a lot more time to read it out. Also he was stammering a lot and had this overall look of insecurity.	HT [page 12]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Nervousness	Empathy for trainees	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... I have been in that situation too and I really felt empathetic – it's fricking nerve-wrecking!	HT [page 13]
Nervousness	Disadvantage of poor command of corporate language	Muted Expression: NNS lack of proficiency/vocab/ eloquence/confidence	... I am always a little bit nervous or excited when I have to do presentations and I know that this is also true for German – that I sometimes do a lot of “urs ... ums ... and urs”, and it's even worse in English.	AF [page 2]
Insecurity	Difficulties in reading true responses cross-culturally	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... it makes me feel insecure because I don't get really a lot of feedback and I don't know how to deal with the things they say because ... I have experience with Chinese people who say yes, yes, yes! And then afterwards they would not do anything for different reasons but they wouldn't say it openly. So that's a little bit difficult – at least the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty.	AF [page 6]
Tension	Limited vocab	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... in my team there is a guy coming from Brazil that has problems here with the rest of the team and I need to adapt to him and try to build a relationship with him and the rest of the team. He is more reserved, explodes more easily and his way of working is worrying.	FR [page 9]
Pain	Personal criticism across cultures	Accommodation: Emotional (Present)	... just fix it ... you see, you should be able to fix this yourselves blah blah ... it felt more like a personal attack.	KA [page 5]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Pain	Empathy for communication break-down	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... and there has been a break-down in conversation – and that’s why I feel so bad ...	HT [page 11]
Pain	Discomfort over proficiency level	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... I felt bad because you could tell that he was uncomfortable and especially, in a business setting, if you are pitching an idea or something, you are not going to be as confident and effective as speaking in your own language.	HT [page 12]
Self-conscious	Adapting style to allow others to express themselves in their own language	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... I feel very self-conscious that I don’t have language capabilities, especially into something like that situation, where the others on the call are very comfortable being able to discuss on the call in English, but sometimes you can be just that little bit more eloquent in your own language.	KC [page 9]
Self-conscious	Self-doubt in delivering message	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... I feel that the person speaking English as their native language has more confidence or feels more in control of the situation as they know how to deliver the message ... and I think for the non-native speaker they feel that not only can they deliver their point effectively but they think – am I doing it properly? And this makes people self-conscious	HT [page 12]
Stress	Triggers of acceptance	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... I also need to have eye-contact with the translators who might be in a booth at the back and am looking to them to give an indication of yes, you’re going too quickly or no you need to speed up. So it is a little bit stressful in that environment.	KC [page 10]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Stress	Limited vocabulary/proficiency	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... Also you must be concentrated and try even better to focus on what you want to say and try to say more clear. So it could be a double-faced coin.	SZ [page 2]
Stress	Acceptance of cultural style	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... and this is something I learned actually at the beginning of my career at Tech 2 and the way it is. And that you don't have to <u>feel that something is wrong or somebody is angry at me</u> – just how it is and culturally normal for the American culture – just how they communicate.	AF [page 5]
Intuition	Accommodating different frames of reference	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	I would say I do have different feelings – it's not preference. It's just knowing that I have to change my radar my gauge, my sympathies, my frame of reference	KC [page 11]
Intuition	Virtual team working – detachment from rest of team	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... it feels like a piece of the puzzle is missing in the team dynamic, or ... I think – yeah – that's what really the challenge was – I never had that social interaction with my team members on the other side of the world.	HT [page 8]
Sensitivity	Self-doubt in powers of expression	Muted Expression: NNS lack of proficiency/vocab/ eloquence/confidence	... for sure I feel the language differences. I always think I cannot make myself – I am not as eloquent as other people are and I always think that I cannot make myself as clear as I would in German.	AF [page 2]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Sensitivity	Disadvantaged speaking in corporate language	Muted Expression: NNS lack of proficiency/vocab/eloquence/confidence	... having this feeling of you know being a bit more handicapped than other people are – I don't know how you can diminish it ...	AF [page 11]
Sensitivity	Increased understanding when speaking in person	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... I prefer to communicate in person so this is actually what would be my preferred way of communication. I cannot – I find with Chinese or Asian people it's a little bit difficult <u>to gauge emotion and to understand the real thoughts</u> or feelings of the other person.	AF [page 5]
Confusion	Biased translation	Accommodation: emotion (present)	... you might actually get, for example, an email stream that can be from weeks back, which is very long, which completely in Danish and you are forwarding it with a few lines in English, saying OK, so can you please give your comment on this one and then there are a few lines translated with Google Translate below – that definitely raises some emotions of “Oh God ... what the hell are they talking about ?!” as in the background because if you don't really understand what's been at the background of the whole discussion and you're only getting certain translation ...	EP [page 2]
Stress	Concerned that others understand	Accommodation: emotion (present)	so for myself it doesn't bother me that Eastern European people don't speak English as well as I do myself. But it is the other way around more that when I receive a call, I wonder did they really understand what I meant, did I explain it clearly? ... or were there too	EP [page 3]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			many words in a complex way? <u>So that's actually how it affects my emotions</u>	
Stress	Tiring listening to strongly accented language	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... listening to somebody's Indian English for an hour and a half but when it goes on for 4 hours, it is actually quite tiring.	EP [page 3]
Stress	Difference in proficiency levels holding back team progress/Time Delay	Accommodation: Practical/preparatory	Their English is not at the same level but on a general level it <u>frustrates</u> the other team members every now and then when the Romanian colleagues don't necessarily understand everything as well as the others.	EP [page 3]
Stress	Difference in proficiency levels holding back progress/Time Delay	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... I'm extremely fast and my team members are not as fast. So I could do much more and much faster if everybody were at the same level.	EP [page 4]
Stress	Advances in translation software	Accommodation: Practical/preparatory	... and the better we get at that, the less pressure builds up in using your native language if you can rely on people having that certain understanding, no matter what the language is.	EP [page 4]
Stress	Cultural mindset adjustment	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... They do not dare to give their opinion, even if they disagree, whereas we give them the permission to disagree. And that's challenging when you primarily work with people (namely Americans and ourselves) who can disagree with our colleagues.	EP [page 7]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Stress	Cultural mindset adjustment	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... And that's a challenge to remind all the other team members that they don't think the way we think.	EP [page 7]
Stress	Limited vocabulary	Accommodation: cognitive/ concentration/focus	... It is difficult when you have a multinational team with many people who are not the native speakers with very different levels of language skills ... and sometimes to get subtle nuances across	RS [page 2]
Stress	Concern that others understand	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... and when we are discussing this in a group, there are people who may not be very fluent in English, it can become a little bit tricky trying to understand what they are talking about when you don't know 100% if they understand ... and then the other way round!	RS [page 2]
Stress	Invisible as virtual team member	Opacity in virtual collaboration	[page 13] ... and then sometimes I also get very self-conscious because I get worried that they just think that I'm sitting on the beach with a drink in my hand!	HT [page 13]
Tiredness	Energy required to interact as NNS	Accommodation required: <i>concentration/focus</i>	... people tend to get tired and would rather talk with people that talk your language and you don't have to think about it and that breaks things up.	EP [page 5]
Tension	Requirement for mutual flexibility to collaborate across time zones	Need for cognitive accommodation	There are also tensions that are caused by trying to juggle with time zones.	KC [page 5]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Tension	Requirement for mutual flexibility to collaborate across time zones	Need for cognitive accommodation	You are asking people to get up earlier in the morning to join a call ... people are joining from home – so there are minor tensions in there	KC [page 6]
Tension	Requirement for mutual flexibility to collaborate across time zones	Need for cognitive accommodation	... there are tensions you have to balance – time zones, job roles and job functions, expectations of those job roles and then a sensitivity and sympathy for someone whose domestic situation is difficult ...	KC [page 6]
Tiredness/Exhaustion	Energy required to interact as NNS	Muted expression: NNS's mutation – lack of vocab/proficiency/eloquence	... it's a bit more exhausting to speak in a foreign language ... on some days I have difficulties to express myself even in German, but in English it's even more evident.	ML [page 2]
Tiredness/Exhaustion	Energy required to interact as NNS	Muted expression: NNS's mutation – lack of vocab/proficiency/eloquence	... then I realise people are depending on me to speak in another language, and it becomes even more challenging to express myself. But it depends on what shape I am in as to how exhausting it is, and it depends on the situation	ML [page 2]
Tiredness	Energy required to translate	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	... if they are not proficient in English, then they're translating for themselves or their colleagues most of the time. It takes time for them to translate for one-another but then it is just mentally taxing – I can imagine I've been there too.	HT [page 3]
Tiredness	Energy required to interact as NNS	Muted expression: observer affected by muted expression	I think it takes some extra empathy – because if I had to speak for a whole day or give a presentation in a language I'm not comfortable in,	HT [page 4]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			I would be really nervous and really tired. So it's a couple of emotions ...	
Tiredness	Energy/concentration required to interact as NNS	Muted expression: NNS's mutation – lack of vocab/proficiency/eloquence	... [understanding] it's sometimes harder and more tiring especially if it is a difficult environment, a lot of noises going on, a business dinner or something like that.	AF [page 2]
Good feeling / Positive emotion	Languages pave the way culture is lived	Enrichment through Diversity	... the importance to find the way to communicate keeping and bringing our life and values in balance. It is a good exercise that makes you a better person – not just a better professional.	SZ [page 7]
Good feeling	Learning/collaborating with others	Enrichment through Diversity	... It is a good feeling to know that we are all trying to understand each other and get to a joint conclusion at the end of the day.	RS [page 3]
Struggling	Advantage – NS	Muted expression: NNS's mutation – lack of vocab/proficiency/eloquence	... They have the advantage that they are native English speakers and that is a big advantage for people from the UK, in that they are not struggling with the language!	RS [page 7]
Struggling	Concentration in listening to NNS	Accommodation required: <i>practical/preparatory</i>	... the biggest one [language difference] is the Japanese, Korean, South-East Asia – Chinese. And that's more when you're on the call, you really struggle sometimes to understand the message they are trying to communicate. It's not that their English is not proficient, it's just that over a Skype call, people's dogs barking in the background and the line dropping in and out occasionally, it requires a lot of	JM [page 2]

Emotions	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			concentration to understand them ... I suspect they are completely comfortable listening to a native English speaker or a proficient English speaker from their side. But the other way you do struggle.	
Struggling	Harnessing communications of virtual teams	Accommodation required: <i>practical/preparatory</i>	... keeping the team as a unit when they are spread out all over the world is really hard. And I think in terms of communications, it was a struggle keeping everybody focused on the goal of the project and stuck to the mission	HT [page 5]
Struggling	Limited proficiency/vocab	Muted expression: NNS's mutation – lack of vocab/proficiency/eloquence	... I am starting to hold sessions for a group of international people and I want to do it in an entertaining way but I feel because of the language barrier I cannot do it as entertaining as I would like it to be ... you know. So this is a struggle for me.	AF [page 2]
Irritation	Impact of an act of cultural clumsiness/inertness	Accommodation required: <i>emotion (absent)</i>	... when they received a mail in French from upper management, they just replied "I don't speak French!" in English. So this is a really sensitive thing.	KA [page 8]
Upset	Linguistic nuance	Opacity/Ambiguity <i>Misunderstandings</i>	... my Japanese colleague came to me and she said – did you sense, in the end, the difference? And I said – no. I think it was something she realised – she sensed that they were upset before.	ML [page 5]

Research Question Two: What potential issues are the team leaders and team members aware of, and what strategies do they recommend?

(1) Potential Issues raised:

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Corporate Language policy	Policy following	Common language / policy	... When I communicate with people in my team from outside Germany, I am expected to communicate in English. And English is the official language of [Tech 1]	RS [page 2]
Corporate Language policy	Inclusion – one common language	Common language / policy	... so the language policy normally in the Benelux office is English and in Belgium this is normally the case because of the different languages and because it is easiest for all – just to use English in meetings and in communications etc. In the Netherlands, it is most of the time Dutch because there this is only one native language unless there are other native language speakers when then we switch to English.	KA [page 2]
Corporate Language policy	Benelux social contract	Common language / policy	... The social contract outlines the desired behaviour you wish your team to choose when they do their daily work ... one of the things that is stated there is we communicate in a way that everybody understands that we use English and that we really try to avoid that we switch to our native language when there are other people, who don't speak Flemish or Dutch present, for example, when we discuss things ... it is supported by the management.	KA [page 3]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Corporate Language policy	Language of business	Common language / policy	... English is the primary language for business. Although when we are in a country working with the local clients, our marketing campaigns events etc are delivered in the local language.	LR [page 1]
Corporate Language policy	Global language vs local language	Common language / policy	... So regarding my job, I am used to communicate in English with the counterpart at a global level. In country – we work in Italian ... and I think we could have two levels regarding the daily job with colleagues locally and at a global level.	SZ [page 2]
Corporate Language policy	Recognition of best solution for int. communication	Common language / policy	... So that is why I think the decision for English to me is obvious and it is the best communication language we have at the moment, but it is something really sensitive – true.	KA [page 9]
Corporate Language policy	Strong knowledge of English at “C” level position	Importance of strong knowledge of English	... and what we can notice is having assets in local language should be more effective but we can’t afford in terms of budget and resources to localise all the assets ... but what I can add having a typical view on the last few years is that ... it is less important today to have all the assets localised because people who enter “C” level job roles are more and more used to read documents in English, especially maybe for Information Technology.	SZ [page 2]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Corporate Language policy	Mixed feelings - English as common language	Common language / policy	I think there are advantages and disadvantages to working with language diversity ... there are difficulties but there are also rewards ... sometimes definitely you feel frustrated if it is difficult to put yourself in a discussion and to say more clear... so I think that regardless of one's frustrating performance, the predominant feelings are definitely positive to feel the different opinions ... to pick up the global environment and the common language, the instrument to be able to communicate.	SZ [page 3]
Corporate Language policy	Avoidance of being the cause for colleagues to change language	Adapting/ Accommodation	I knew that if I joined the call, then that call would be conducted in English.	KC [page 9]
Corporate Language policy	Documentation in English. Integration of international colleagues in Germany learning local language	Integration of colleagues (in Germany)	... so this documentation has to be done in English. As you are asking this, I am getting aware that we were more international at that time and many of the international colleagues were not able to speak German. But over time, as we spent more time together, we use more and more German in our everyday communication.	ML [page 2]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Corporate Language policy	German spoken locally in German offices	English – global language	... outside Germany, English is the language of the company.	JM [page 1]
Corporate Language policy	Ensuring all are included in understanding language spoken	Respect for others/ Adapting vocabulary	... so we have a passive understanding that we do not use the terminology that is not easily understandable for each other – I mean in words – in this environment.	HH [page 2]
Corporate Language policy	Global language	Corporate language	... yes the premier language for all our meetings is English.	HT [page 2]
Corporate Language policy	Inclusion of all – one common language	*Global language/ Accommodation	... If we have some English native speaking people who prefer to speak English, we all switch to English – although they should also speak German.	AF [page 3]
Corporate Language policy	Habitual learning of corporate language	Habit	... in Italy, the language barrier depends on the individuals but I think as a team since we work at Tech 1, we have to speak in English every day, we are used to better.	SZ [page 5]
Corporate language policy	Easier when vocab restricted	Restricted language terminology	... when you speak for a working group, it is easier because your business environment and vocabulary is restricted and usually you know it so you almost every time are able to catch some key words and so to get the sense of what is being said. It could happen to misunderstand, but ...	SZ [page 4]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Corporate Language policy	Flexibility / Adaptability / Modification of language	Collaboration issues	... being in such a small country with 3 native languages – we are used to it. We are used to switching, we are used to translating.	KA [page 3]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Despite policy, not all teams have a strong command of English	Collaboration issues	Although the business policy by Tech 1 is English, there are challenges in that not every team has a strong command of English ...	KC [page 1]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Low proficiency levels detracting from wider team collaboration	Low team collaboration due to language	They (Japanese team) have the lowest level of English language within the team and so my view is that they would find it difficult to keep up with the discussion that we have on the regular calls.	KC [page 2]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Comfort with strong proficiency enabling wider team collaboration	Strong team collaboration due to language	... the girl in Hong Kong, her level of English is much stronger so she is very comfortable with joining in with those multiple person discussions	KC [page 2]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Extra measures to ensure team understanding	Alertness to potential ambiguity	... So you actually have to go back and explain everything a little bit differently with different words to get the same understanding.	EP [page 4]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Uncertainty over whether message understood	Alertness to potential ambiguity	... and when we are discussing this in a group, there are people who may not be very fluent in English, it can become a little bit tricky trying to understand what	RS [page 2]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			they are talking about when you don't know 100% if they understand ... and then the other way round!	
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Ambiguity in use of language	Ambiguity/ Uncertainty	... but sometimes I come across certain wordings, statement where I am trying to figure out what that means	RS [page 2]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Uncertainty over whether message understood	Alertness to potential ambiguity	... so depending on who you have on the call, I find myself trying to speak slower or trying to find a more simple wording and just to ensure that if there are people on the call, who don't understand, they can follow and understand what I am trying to get across.	RS [page 3]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Fear of upstaging colleagues through strong proficiency level in corp. language	Aware of potential perception of power through language proficiency	... I don't want to annoy people by letting them feel that my English skills are maybe better than theirs. It depends on how people think about their own skills and I don't want to be in a position that I make someone feel that my English is may be better than theirs. So if they are asking me to help, then I help but if not then I try to help in a way that they don't notice that I am trying to help or I just don't help.	RS [page 10]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Awareness of colleagues varying proficiency levels in how they	Alertness to potential ambiguity	... another funny thing I have observed is that sometimes I hear German colleagues trying to speak English on the call and I am really struggling with what are they trying to say ... and sometimes you need to	RS [page 3]

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	contextualise in translation		understand German very well to understand what they mean in English! Sometimes when they are speaking English, I don't have a clue what they are talking about.	
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Awareness of advantages of NS in understanding	Awareness of power of native English speakers	... They have the advantage that they are native English speakers and that is a big advantage for people from the UK, in that they are not struggling with the language!	RS [page 7]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Following up over translation nuances	Alertness to translation challenges	... There are language differences – especially between, as I already mentioned, between the Dutch-Flemish and the Dutch-Dutch. So for example, sometimes we translate pages on the website from English to Dutch so to use in the Netherlands but then what I mostly do is a check of the translation and then I have it checked with the Dutch-Dutch native speaker to see that it is really Dutch-Dutch because there are differences in the way we use certain words.	KA [page 2]
Varying levels of proficiency levels in corporate language	Proficiency important in corporate external communication	Proficiency affects company's reputation	... it does not affect the collaboration. But it does show – I mean it is visible. When someone really does not speak English very well, I personally think it does not give a good impression – especially if that person is asked to speak externally to an external audience ... and their English is not very good. For me I would take	KA [page 7]

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			it personally as an action point and try to improve that a lot, because I think that it is important	
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Checking the meaning of what has been said	Adapting/ Accommodation	... and I heard them go back and speak to each other in Portuguese and Spanish and then kind of like – Oh – OK, and then that moment of – so that’s what we need to do!	HT [page 4]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Aware of own proficiency level	Collaboration issues	... I’m afraid we have problems because – I don’t know my English is not the best and their English is not the best too ...	FR [page 2]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Aware of own proficiency level	Collaboration issues	... you don’t totally understand the other people and the other people don’t totally understand you.	FR [page 2]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Aware of own proficiency level	Collaboration issues	... I always thought my English was at Business Intermediate level – not higher.	FR [page 8]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Frustration – cannot speak as well as in other tongue	Collaboration issues	... for sure I feel the language differences. I always think I cannot make myself – I am not as eloquent as other people are and I always think that I cannot make myself as clear as I would in German.	AF [page 2]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Feels cannot express self as well as in German	Collaboration issues	... there’s a language barrier and they can’t be that eloquent in English and I think the same is true for me ... whereas if I experience them speaking German, it might have a different impression.	AF [page 3]

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Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Despite regular conversations in English, lang. barrier exists	Collaboration issues	... You know there is some natural tendency to talk in English and I think it is well accepted and so it works. But of course there is a barrier	AF [page 3]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Career static, difficult to grow	Career constraint due to proficiency level	... For me it is difficult to look for other opportunities outside my region because I feel that my English is not the best and I feel that I don't have the ability in other skills in order to develop a very well work in another place. Because I don't have the skills, I feel that my career is more static or difficult to grow it and I see the guys who had a good education, a higher education with the parents who work outside Latin America, have the best chance to grow. This can affect the language.	FR [page 3]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Aligning / Adapting to others	Adapting / Accommodation	... I'm extremely fast and my team members are not as fast. So I could do much more and much faster if everybody were at the same level.	EP [page 4]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Losing patience	Adapting / Accommodation	... I have to admit that sometimes when I am in a hurry, I get a bit impatient with the Americans and I tend to or I try to jump in and help – I try to avoid that of course	RS [page 3]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Losing patience with having to take measures	Allow more time	... It's time consuming ... and since we are not in the luxurious situation that we know what to do, it can become annoying.	RS [page 7]

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Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Language barrier	Showing empathy	I think it's also that people take note that there is a language barrier.	AF [page 7]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Ensuring clarity of message	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... I'm trying to think about my team in Singapore. I had to make a more conscious effort to connect with her, making separate calls and likewise to catch-up with her. And then my teammate in Germany, his English language is not as efficient as hers – so maybe, just looking back on it now it takes extra time to translate information and make sure that they understand a clear message ...	HT [page 7]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Language proficiency powerful element in career advancement	Career growth constraints	... if you can't talk in other languages, you can't communicate your ideas – it's more difficult to grow in this kind of company. If you have not enough skills in different language, it's more difficult to show your skills through your capacity, in other aspects of the work.	FR [page 2]
Varying proficiency levels in corporate language	Lingua-cultural differences	Collaboration issues	... most countries we deal with are quite sufficient in their ability to communicate in English but we do have Japan which is probably the area where we might have the most difficulty and part of that is cultural and part of that is the language difference – this so big.	LR [page 2]
Varying proficiency levels in the corporate language	Awareness of potential	Collaboration issues	... it's not that we have misunderstandings because we cannot explain it well – we did not have that! Maybe	KA [page 7]

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	difficulties but not affecting regional team		once or twice, but not a major thing. In the end we all understand what we want, what the goal is and what we need to do to explain it internally.	
Varying proficiency levels in the corporate language	Proficiency level can affect exact intended meaning of speaker	Collaboration issues	... so although it is not a real problem to say things in English, I think it can lead to misunderstandings sometimes if you are not able to express things – explicitly as you can do it in German.	ML [page 2]
Collaboration issues	Translation	Time delay	... we also know that they using a simultaneous translation which causes a delay between questions and answers but also causes some fractures in the discussion as well.	KC [page 2]
Collaboration issues	Use of delay for positive reflection	Time delay utilised for reflection	When we do that, it adds time delay to the activity, it means that we have to think about how things are designed.	KC [page 3]
Collaboration issues	Use of delay for positive reflection	Time delay utilised for reflection	You have to think about the delay in having something translated and verified by the native speaker.	KC [page 3]
Collaboration issues	Use of delay for positive reflection	Time delay utilised for reflection	... it makes me think about my own delivery because it probably makes me slow down a little bit.	KC [page 4]
Collaboration issues	Recognition of parameters	Time delay / Time zones	I would love to be able to have more regular discussion at a faster pace perhaps but I know that that is not feasible. There are also tensions that are caused by trying to juggle with time zones.	KC [page 5]

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Collaboration issues	Preparation	Time / Accommodation / Preparation	It does take a little bit of time preparation. So, for example, if I come back to the call that we had with the Japanese team, make sure that we know what we are going to talk to them about in advance. We make sure that the material and the questions we want to go through are sent to them in advance. So there is additional levels of preparation that we need.	KC [page 5]
Collaboration issues	Slow down for translation	Time factor	There's a fraction of a second difference in each one so the speed of delivery has to be reduced.	KC [page 9]
Collaboration issues	Respect for people working in different time zones	Adapting / Accommodation	... time zones and acknowledging that certain people are talking to them at 6 in the morning ... and obviously it may be 11 at night for them so obviously you need to be a bit respectful of them for that and obviously it might be inappropriate to switch on the video camera! If it is a regular call, try to change the time so that sometimes it is at a reasonable hour.	JM [page 9]
Collaboration issues	Ensuring clarity	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... I think we did have to take time and take measures to ensure that everything was clear there on the team in terms of messaging or whatever our meeting notes were on the meeting.	HT [page 2]

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Collaboration issues	Ensuring clarity	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... it takes time in terms of getting information across and making sure that they understand what's being said and I think I always have this lingering thought – did they really understand what I meant by this?	HT [page 3]
Collaboration issues	Ensuring clarity	Allow more time	... and where the exercise would normally take 20 minutes, it took two and a half hours because there was time between when I would read the instructions and say – everybody clear on what the instructions are, OK? And then there was time when they needed to go back and de-brief with one-another on what were the instructions and how do we do this ...	HT [page 4]
Collaboration issues	Making sure time is well spent on the call	Use of time productively	... I'd rather use that time to make sure our work gets done ... vs taking time for how are you? ... Because I can't – when I only have 30 minutes with them, I can't use their time to pursue stuff which ... although I know it's important in a lot of cultures as well but ...	HT [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Making sure time is well spent on the call	Use of time productively	... I think it adds a little more time getting objectives clear, ensuring deliverables are clear, making sure everybody understands what's going on and then, even in terms of coordinating touch points with my colleagues, it definitely takes more time.	HT [page 9]

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Collaboration issues	Malfunctioning technology exacerbating lower linguistic proficiency in corporate language	Technology issues	... the quality of the connection is the critical thing ... so there's a lot of people frustrated by using Skype ... I think it's more acute when you're dealing with people whose native language isn't English.	JM [page 4]
Collaboration issues	Broad Scottish accent causing difficulty in understanding	Speech attributes	After a couple of minutes, she said, I am sorry I don't understand anything that you are saying. Because I had been back in Scotland for a couple of weeks, I was living and working in a Scottish colloquial environment so obviously my accent had become stronger, the speed at which I was speaking had increased to an extent where somebody, who was not a native English speaker, now couldn't follow what I was saying, even though Caroline's English was extremely fluent.	KC [page 4]
Collaboration issues	Different Accents cause problems in understanding	Speech attributes	... and almost all of those are native English speakers although have different accents.	LR [page 3]
Collaboration issues	Different accents require concentration to understand. Need	Speech attributes	... that particular colleague of mine in China who does exciting stuff ... and he had a slot of 10 minutes ... because 95% of the time listening to this kind of stuff in the car is fine but in that particular circumstance it	JM [page 2]

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	for quiet concentration		wasn't. And there were probably lots of questions I would have liked to ask which I couldn't because I wasn't sure if he had already answered them.	
Collaboration issues	Different accent and register in speech	Speech attributes	... and their English is not the best too and their way to express something is sometimes different because the way that people normally talk in India is very fast but is not very defining – it is very monotonous, very flat in the tone ...	FR [page 2]
Collaboration issues	Different speed difficult to understand	Speech attributes	... when I talk with the US guys or in London, for example, because in this case they speak faster with other kind of tempi.	FR [page 2]
Collaboration issues	Neutral text of email	Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	... there are so many unconscious things happening and an email that is just neutral text and unemotional ...	ML [page 5]
Collaboration issues	Exclusion of others due to colleagues speaking local language	Power / "Them and us"/Inclusion due to language barrier	... personally I don't have that because I can think in English all the time, but I can see that that can happen where we worked. And we were having dinner with 8 people at the same table ... naturally left alone because they were not speaking the same Nordic languages as all the others	EP [page 5]

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Collaboration issues	Exclusion of others due to colleagues speaking local language	Power / "Them and Us"/Inclusion due to language barrier	... they kind of woke up and understood that we have a person here or a couple of personnel here who cannot join the discussion if a discussion is going on in any other language that they do not understand.	EP [page 5]
Collaboration issues	TL to be alert to potential silos arising due to language barrier	Team Leadership to ensure cohesion and maintaining focus	It is part of my job to ensure that everybody in the team first of all understands each other and secondly gets along. If they can't do that, then at least I make sure that everybody understands each other.	EP [page 5]
Collaboration issues	Example of Finnish colleagues switching to English when English speaker joins call	Role of team leader to suppress potential "dualities"	... if you and me would be having a Webex and other people joined who were speaking Finnish, for example, the minute somebody else joins, that discussion ends – I'd end it and we would switch the language to English.	EP [page 5]
Collaboration issues	Exclusion of others due to colleagues speaking local language	Power / "Them and us"/Inclusion due to language barrier	... where it might prove negative – when you are in another country and then the conversation goes to a language which you don't speak. Then you really feel left out ... in the more social settings around, that is dinners and things like that – or it could be in a side conversation that might be happening, maybe at a conference or an event.	LR [page 5]

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Collaboration issues	Enthusiasm to communicate and enriched through positive team culture	Awareness of potential "dualities".	... Every time I have a call or an exchange, I never felt under examination ... or maybe I have always been lucky but the feeling I have always perceived is the aim to communicate ... and from the practical point of view, every call is usually recorded so we have the chance to listen again so I think we are in a good way to communicate and I never felt excluded or in any difficulty from not understanding.	SZ [page 4]
Collaboration issues	Example of potential exclusion	Power / "Dualities"	... they don't maybe get all the information when some discussions are done in German – they don't get everything I would expect. With English and German here I don't have any disadvantage.	ML [page 3]
Collaboration issues	Exclusion	Power / "Dualities"	... the situation I remember is when these people did not feel involved in something where they felt they should be valued, they should be involved ...	ML [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Isolation	Power / "Dualities"	... so they are sometimes using German language to communicate funny stories if the conversation falls at that point and we don't understand what they are laughing about or talking about, so we feel kind of isolated from the group.	HH [page 2]

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Collaboration issues	Handicapped because of language barrier	Power / "Dualities"	... having this feeling of you know being a bit more handicapped than other people are – I don't know how you can diminish it ...	AF [page 4]
Collaboration issues	Calls with global and local team members	Power / "Dualities"	... but especially when it comes to mixed [global/local] teams and there is this communication barrier between people who are in the same pace and people who are remote.	AF [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Awareness of cultural difference in respect of hierarchy	Dualities "Them and us"	... I mean it doesn't happen very often but when it happens, it confirms the assumption we have about Americans – that they don't necessarily say ... telling what they say. I mean I don't want to give the wrong impression but we are such a large company but sometimes, we don't always get – when you expect something to happen and it just doesn't happen and you keep asking and asking ... you don't necessarily get a note when a schedule is delayed. This makes things sometimes difficult in teamwork.	RS [page 6]
Collaboration issues	Awareness of cultural difference in respect of hierarchy	Dualities "Them and us"	... I think this is the cultural difference, it doesn't happen all the time. I mean when a German says something, we do that.	RS [page 6]

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Collaboration issues	Calls with global and local team members	To diminish the issue of Power/ "Dualities"	... if everyone is on the same platform, I think it's even better so everyone has the same chance to speak.	AF [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Maintaining team focus	Challenge of maintaining team cohesion on virtual basis	... keeping the team as a unit when they are spread out all over the world is really hard. And I think in terms of communications, it was a struggle keeping everybody focused on the goal of the project and stuck to the mission	HT [page 5]
Collaboration issues	Open-minded culture	Open-minded culture	... the culture here in the company is that we try to be very open-minded and adapt to talk and communicate and to accept different people.	FR [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Team reflection over learning from cultural difference	Promoting enrichment / Openness to new thinking	... so we hear all the differences and we realise maybe we are not doing this right because we are trapped in our – fixedness. When we about ways people are working in other countries, we think – maybe this is the way forward for Japanese – maybe we can try this, maybe we can do this. Yes. Or maybe we think we cannot do this because we are just talk about the topic with Japanese people.	HH [page 6]
Collaboration issues	New team member from Brazil	Adjustment to different cultural norms	... in my team there is a guy coming from Brazil that has problems here with the rest of the team and I need to adapt to him and try to build a relationship with him	FR [page 9]

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			and the rest of the team. He is more reserved, explodes more easily and his way of working is worrying.	
Collaboration issues	Everyone either remote/Eve Equal opportunities to express themselves. Potential unfairness when some groups in person and some remote.	Team cohesion	... if everyone is on the same platform, I think it's even better so everyone has the same chance to speak.	AF [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Consideration of how much remote working takes place	Team cohesion	... this was actually something which was a very hot topic in the past months – how much do we do remotely? When is it required to be on-site? Interesting questions because it has a huge impact on the communication and the teams.	AF [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Awareness of NNS Ger/Eng at disadvantage in Ger office	Loss of information	... they don't maybe get all the information when some discussions are done in German – they don't get everything I would expect. With English and German here I don't have any disadvantage.	ML [page 3]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Collaboration issues	Lack of fairness when some on video conference and some face to face / Feeling of stiltedness in video conferencing	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... I have almost the feeling that it is not so much the language barrier but there is also the barrier of technology – because it makes a huge difference if you all communicate on a video call or in the same location. So if everyone is on the same platform, I think it's even better because everyone has the same chance to speak – everyone is either on remote location or in the same location.	AF [page 8]
Collaboration issues	Uncertainty of local projects due to remoteness	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... and even getting people focused because they are all in different areas and time-zones where they all have their own local projects going on. It's almost like you have to keep people accountable because you aren't physically there to keep them accountable and you have to do it in other ways – email reminders or check-ins or something more – just kind of like extra steps to make everything clear.	HT [page 9]
Collaboration issues	Preference for face to face but recognition of PowerPoint + Tech to support	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... it's more difficult if the communication is by telephone because you can't use your hands, your expressions, it's more difficult to express yourself, but at times, it is possible to use some other stuff to support the situation, for example, Powerpoint or video. These technologies help us to communicate.	FR [page 2]

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Collaboration issues	Concern on missing part of communication eg real thoughts, feelings of other person	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... I prefer to communicate in person so this is actually what would be my preferred way of communication. I cannot – I find with Chinese or Asian people it's a little bit difficult to gauge emotion and to understand the real thoughts or feelings of the other person.	AF [page 5]
Collaboration issues	Clarity in understanding	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... it's more difficult if the communication is by telephone because you can't use your hands, your expressions, it's more difficult to express yourself, but at times, it is possible to use some other stuff to support the situation, for example, Powerpoint or video. These technologies help us to communicate.	FR [page 2]
Collaboration issues	Face-to-face meetings vs virtual meetings / Preference for face to face meeting	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... I mean you often have to communicate via our conference call or video conference like we are doing now, which is necessary, as we are so spread over the entire world. But I always find it easier when you have had the chance to meet people in person and sit at the same table and then you understand better	RS [page 10]
Collaboration issues	Preference for face to face meeting	Uncertainty over level of understanding	... It is the hearing. I realise when I am watching films that are not dubbed; it is the noise of the voices, the music and it is difficult for me. I don't often see films that are not dubbed because the way I am hearing	RS [page 10]

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			makes it difficult to understand. And when we are in meetings on conference calls, for example, and people talk over each other, it is really hard to understand for a non-native speaker. For a native speaker, it is OK. But sitting at the table, you can identify where the voice comes from so that makes a difference.	
Linguistic hegemony / Power	NS confidence in expressing self	Dualities “Them and us”	... I feel that the person speaking English as their native language has more confidence or feels more in control of the situation as they know how to deliver the message ... and I think for the non-native speaker they feel that not only can they deliver their point effectively but they think – am I doing it properly? And this makes people self-conscious.	HT [page 12]
Linguistic hegemony / Power	Revelation of what is being said	Awareness of potential dualities	... there is quite a lot of insecurity between non-native speaker and native speaker. So ... when a bilingual person comes in, they know what both of them are talking about and they can explain it really clearly and hopefully create a “ooh” moment and get rid of that power dynamic. That is what you meant – ok this is what is going to happen.	HT [page 12]
Linguistic hegemony / Power	Dichotomy of NS vs NNS	Dualities “Them and us”	... I think it’s a bit unfair for native English speaking English people that they have a big advantage ...	AF [page 4]

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Uncertainty over level of understanding	Code-switching / Using native language word when instead of English word	Speech attributes	The French are sometimes hard to understand and – again I think and this could be personal assumption – when they are missing an English word, they just use a French one.	RS [page 8]
Uncertainty over level of understanding	Follow-up	Check understanding / Show empathy	... the only issues we would have were in meetings and stuff – having to clarify information or maybe if we sent an email across and somebody needed to clarify some information that wasn't super clear.	HH [page 3]
Cross-cultural / linguistic entanglements	Language in Benelux can be politically and socially sensitive issue	Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	... Language is a really sensitive thing ... So for example, we (the Benelux team) have been shipped around many times ... what we noticed when we were together with France: for the French speaking people in Belgium, it is not an issue as in France the main communication language is French. But for the Dutch speaking people in Belgium, this was really an issue – really sensitive – even to the fact once there were work colleagues at the time, when they received an email in French from upper management, they just replied, “I don't speak French”, in English. So it is really a sensitive thing. One should be really careful when making decisions about language in which to communicate.	KA [page 9]

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Cross-cultural / linguistic entanglements	Impatience – denial of language issue	Adjusting to cultural norms	I get a bit impatient with Americans and I tend to or I try to jump in and help ... but it doesn't happen very often ... It's useless to get excited about that – so emotions ... of course, I am getting emotional in meetings but not because of language!!	RS [page 3]
Cross-cultural / linguistic entanglements	Language in Benelux can be politically and socially sensitive issue	Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	... and for example, when we then switch to being together with France to being together with the Netherlands and some of the French speaking people wrote emails speaking French because it was a common practice at the time, when we were together with France and that mail was forwarded to a Dutch manager, they did not appreciate that at all! Then it really becomes a sensitive thing. But that improved now that we are with the Netherlands – when mails are sent out in French to Dutch speaking people in Belgium in the beginning sometimes, we had those reactions, please communicate in English or stuff like that ... so this is a sensitive point, I think to people.	KA [page 9]
Cross-cultural / linguistic entanglements	Translation and context	Sociolinguistic / Context related differences	... So you actually have to go back and explain everything a little bit differently with different words to get the same understanding. It's not just a cultural or a language thing – that's both.	EP [page 4]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Cross-cultural linguistic entanglements	Missing out on information through cultural barrier	Ambiguity	... we found that the activities done in Australia are far more effective than those done in Japan and Korea. And we asked what was difference between us and them ... they have certain KPIs to gather with their sales people and together they talk over very challenging situations for them. But we, the Korea and Japan team, we just gave up on their system with the Sales representative people because we did not understand what the important point to ask was so we just gave up talking with the sales representatives before we try.	HH [page 6]
Sociolinguistic / context-related differences	Admiration for other nationalities in trying out their Japanese	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... If you look at the other regions, they are much more brave than us to communicate using other languages. If they communicate with Japanese, they use simple Japanese words that they know, even though they are not fluent in Japanese. There is the possibility that their pronunciation is not correct, they somehow try to use Japanese. That is the very opposite to our side, I think.	HH [page 4]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness that things can be understood differently across	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Now I am more mindful of others and aware that they can understand things completely differently which are obvious to me. They are different.	ML [page 6]

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	language and culture			
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Nuance from English understatement (a big problem could be expressed as “a little problem”)	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	We had a Managing Director who was Northern European ... but it was an understatement of problems and it took him quite a little while to understand that a little problem can be a big problem and things like that ... but it was a genuine thing that he did not understand that the English people do understate things ...	JM [page 3]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Understanding speaker intention against different languages	Potential ambiguity	... there are obviously cultural differences and the way a German would word things differently to someone from Italy or somebody from the US ... because at the end of the day, we are dominated by the American business culture to a certain extent.	RS [page 5]
Sociolinguistic / context-related differences	Awareness that things can be understood differently across language and culture	Awareness of contextualisation in understanding language	so for example in England if you’ve had a tough day, maybe you’ve been at the office at 8 and had a workshop for 9 hours, at the end of it, an English person might say, “God, I need a drink!” – whereas an American would say that, that would be inappropriate to say at the end of a long working day – you might be thought of as an alcoholic or something ...	JM [page 6]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Speaking out as felt safe with colleagues	Allowing time to negotiate meaning	... you know because these are mostly my colleagues and so I was relaxed in this circumstance – so I just said “slow down” or explain what you are talking about”. I can easily share my honest feeling about this situation.	HH [page 3]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Age and experience has strengthened courage to speak out	Allowing time to negotiate meaning	... as I get older I think it gets easier I am not afraid to express my own feelings – but when I was in my twenties or thirties I was a little bit afraid of making mistakes in front of public situation. I was more shy and ... uh try to shut my mouth and align with the opinion of the people who were with me.	HH [page 3]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Linguistic deferment of verb/judgement	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... if you look at the Japanese language, we have a very in the very last bit of the sentence – this is in our philological structure. This means we can postpone a decision until the very end of the sentence. Our language differentiates our way of thinking ... I think this philological format affects our behaviour.	HH [page 8]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Different use/approach to communication	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... in Latin America we talk the same language but the expressions and the way that we communicate is very different – but we speak the same language ...	FR [page 4]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Example of cultural difference what	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... you need to check and re-check that this “OK” is real and not simply to make you happy and that it means – yes, I am going to do this in this time.	FR [page 9]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
	people say vs what they mean			
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Comparison of high- and low-context communication	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... with Argentinian people, if they don't want to do something, they say. Mexican people, it is always important to follow up with them.	FR [page 9]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Linguistic definition of identity	Awareness and interest in cultural/linguistic differences	... I feel that not only my language defines me but the definition of each person is about their experience of where they were born, where they had education or their main experience – all of this makes a person and how they communicate ... I love to understand how the people communicate, how they experience things to reach this position – they need to do a lot of things to reach this position.	FR [page 10]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness of high- and low-context communication	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... some people phrase things more directly and other people are more diplomatic so to speak. But it is a cultural thing as well.	AF [page 5]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness of high- and low-context communication	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... so for instance I had a feeling in personal conversations – American always tend to be very friendly and, for German taste, a bit exaggerated, amazed – and then in the written communication, it feels the other way around – always very straight to the	AF [page 5]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			point, very direct, not a lot of words, even with the beginning of emails – just saying the name – A, blah, blah, blah, without Dear A or even Hi. So very very short!	
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Difficulties in pronunciation of L&R	Awareness for cross-lingual ambiguity	... it's like a heightened level of consideration and concern to make sure that what you are communicating is effectively received ... my name begins with an L and an R. The letters are really difficult to pronounce for Japanese people. So even just saying my name is difficult.	LR [page 2]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness of different cultural norms based on language use	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... I was on a project with people from Shanghai and so we agreed on certain steps that we wanted to achieve and afterwards nothing happened. So eventually we found out that through other channels and nobody was talking to us. So there was no open communication around why things didn't happen.	AF [page 6]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness of how understanding of what is said affects outcome	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... There are huge differences in terms of how people react to what you say and where they are coming from ... you know that the way that they perceive what you say can affect the outcome of the discussion and then on top of that you bring in the personal feelings towards people and together it can be very positive or	EP [page 6]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			it can be to some extent negative depending on the combination ...	
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness of how understanding of what is said is context related	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... Now I am more mindful of others and aware that they can understand things completely differently which are obvious to me. They are different.	ML [page 6]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Challenge of translating humour	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	So if there is, for example, something that is better to leave in English, because even though the audience don't understand everything, they would understand this particular part, especially if it came down to technological terms. It then means that maybe if I were to use humour as part of my delivery at such an event, I can't really do that because again there would be the ripple effect of a joke or a humorous phase that you have used – when you've got 3 different audiences, it does not have the same impact. So again, my delivery style has to change.	KC [page 9]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Opportunity to expand linguistic knowledge through language challenge	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... you start thinking about words, you start thinking about how the other translation is done ... I mean, you can express one word in one language for which you need entire sentences in another language ... and you learn how those different nuances mean different	RS [page 9]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			things when speaking both languages and I find this very exciting. It's an experience I wouldn't have in another team.	
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	German – long-winded sentence structure	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... I mean I see that when we are localising certain messages, we have in English, say 3 or 4 words. And then when you try to put the same message with the same meaning in German, you need 8-12 words. It never happens that it is the other way around.	RS [page 9]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Does OK agreement really mean an agreement?	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... you need to check and re-check that this "OK" is real and not simply to make you happy and that it means – yes, I am going to do this in this time.	AF [page 9]
Sociolinguistic / Context-related differences	Awareness of difficulties in understanding due to contextualisation and attempt to resolve	Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	... when I have this kind of situation, I try to listen to what this colleague was trying to say and to find particular aspects that I can elaborate on and just jump in as if I had just had the idea – I am not trying to correct anybody or speak over anybody. I am just trying to find some aspect or topic we can pick on and start to talk about this and try to get across whatever I think it was.	RS [page 4]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Ambiguity intercultural for German working	Behavioural expectations	... they didn't say it although they were asked – but somehow the Japanese colleagues sensed that they were not satisfied yet. That is a situation where I felt there are a lot of intangible things in the room I could	ML [page 5]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
	with Japanese client		not sense, which the Japanese colleague could sense – a lot of invisible communication – which for me is challenging	
Adjustment to different cultural norms	Ready to remind colleague when making undiplomatic mistake	Awareness raising to different approaches	I had to step in and say he had mentioned China and of course he meant Japan – just to make sure that the Japanese team didn't feel that we were mixing things up. Then rather than just apologise, he continued to dig a little bit. We got there in the end and had a little bit of a laugh about it. So it's about understanding local nuances and just making sure that you are aware and not treading on anyone's toes deliberately.	KC [page 4]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Bridging gaps between cultures	Alertness to potential ambiguity	... we try to make sure in our social contract that we bridge the gaps between the different cultures and really try to understand each other and be aware that, it can happen and to be vigilant that there might be an issue and make sure that they feel free to speak up.	KA [page 4]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Different attitudes towards hierarchy affecting collaboration	Behavioural expectations	... it can be an issue – it can be a bit intimidating for people from Belgium or Romania, for example, because they're even more careful how to put things ... they (Romanians) tend to have a lot of respect for management and seniority in a certain job level, while we here in the Benelux tend to treat everybody equal.	KA [page 4]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Awareness that things can be understood differently across language and culture	Awareness of contextualisation in understanding language	... you would ask the participants, are you satisfied with the results and if they were not satisfied, then they would say – no we are not satisfied – very direct.	ML [page 6]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Awareness that things can be understood differently across language and culture	Intangible culture	... I think language can be dealt with – typically people if people can't speak English that well, you can somehow overcome it, work with interpreters, visualise things but the underlying culture is so fuzzy, intangible, in that there is much more potential for being misunderstood for conflicts or anything else. I think that is a much bigger obstacle.	ML [page 6]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Communication in one cultural context and understood in another cultural context	Awareness raising to different approaches	I remember I was trying to get a storyboard written in India and I wanted the artist to draw a snow angel and of course they didn't know what a snow angel was so they drew a beautiful piece of art work of a kind of snowman in the snow! You do have to empathise with the hill that they are looking at the world from and try to foresee things that a person from a western European or North American would know what the term means and try to predict ...	JM [page 3]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Awareness that terms can be understood differently across language and culture	Awareness of contextualisation in understanding use of terms	... part of the story required a person being picked up from Frankfurt in an Uber. They wanted the Uber to be a Mercedes or something and visualised it as they would an Indian taxi. So just another example of how you've got to be one step ahead ...	JM [page 4]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	After nine years learning English at school - fear of making mistakes	Fear of loss of face. Need for safe space	... they think they cannot speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes – kind of Japanese culture. We are very very easy to feel ashamed of ourselves! Yeah.	HH [page 3]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Cultural differences: High/Low Power Distance	Awareness raising to different approaches / Creating a safe environment to speak	... if you look at the Nordic people I have in my team we are more or less equal even if I weren't their leader so the hierarchy is extremely low in the sense that I don't consider myself as a manager even if I would be, but we are equal to each other and we make equal decisions The challenge with the Eastern Europeans is that they have a very hierarchical system They do not dare to give their opinion even if they disagree, whereas we give them the permission to disagree. And that's challenging	EP [page 7]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Cultural differences: High/Low Power Distance	Awareness raising to different approaches / Creating a safe environment to speak	... she didn't dare say that she thinks that, in her mind, that we have been doing this in the wrong way.	EP [page 8]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Cultural differences: High/Low Power Distance	Awareness raising to different approaches / Creating a safe environment to speak	It is not in the culture to challenge	EP [page 8]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	High/Low Power Distance	Awareness raising to different approaches / Creating a safe environment to speak	... and it was very clear we have been talking about it for months and she had been thinking about it but she didn't think it was her place to test something different to what the rest of the team was thinking ...	EP [page 8]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Observance of the chain of command (cultural difference)	Behavioural expectations	... when there's a challenge with a project – in Germany you would go to someone whom you need to help you resolve that ... but in the US, the people who you had bypassed would have wanted to be informed about	JM [page 7]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			that problem in a way that kind of protects their personal brand. They would wish to have more control of the messaging to their superior than the people in Germany. I don't deal too much with people in the UK but I think it's somewhere in-between.	
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Cultural observation. Confidence in giving presentations	Fear of loss of face	... American and Australian people are good at doing presentations. They are good at being in front of other people. They are confident and not afraid of speaking up ... South-east and North-east Asian people are afraid of standing up in front of many people – particularly until they have enough or have a lot of information about certain topic. After this, they will speak up. Until that point they tend to be very very silent.	HH [page 5]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Adjusting to German punctilious approach	Behavioural expectations	Meeting times can be kind of fluid ... with my German colleagues, they are very punctual and very regimented in terms of when things take place – to a fault sometimes! So I have to factor this in.	HT [page 9]
Adjusting to different cultural norms	Colleague repeatedly making an insensitive mistake on a global teams call	Clumsiness	[anecdote page 4 – colleague lumping regions together] ... our Japanese team were very polite and didn't mention it. But once he had mentioned it for about the 4 th time during the discussion, I had to step in and say he had mentioned China and of course he	KC [page 4]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			meant Japan – just to make sure that the Japanese team didn't feel that we were mixing things up. Then rather than just apologise, he continued to dig a little bit. We got there in the end and had a little bit of a laugh about it.	
Promoting enrichment through language diversity and use of corporate language to communicate	Good and bad. Chance to reflect on values through intercultural interaction. Appreciation of cultural diversity.	Openness and Enrichment	I think there are advantages and disadvantages to working with language diversity... there are difficulties but there are also rewards ... because language is part of culture and words are instruments of communication and to express culture. So I think it helps to work in this kind of environment; it helps to understand that languages are really the way to live a culture and so the importance to find the way to communicate keeping and bringing our life and values in balance.	SZ [page 7]

(2) Team Leader Strategies:

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Team Leadership responsibility	Role definition	Global overview	... so I would be responsible not only for market by market but collectively as a global team	KC [page 1]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
To lead by example	To make the environment as effective as possible	Responsibility	... very very responsible. I don't believe I can conduct my role and lead this team if I don't do as much as I can to make the environment in which people are working and operating as effective as possible. It's all about being able to lead by example – so I don't expect anyone to do anything that I would not feel comfortable doing myself.	KC [page 6]
To lead by example	Adherence to policy (following social contract)	Team cohesion	... The social contract outlines the desired behaviour you wish your team to choose when they do their daily work ... one of the things that is stated there is we communicate in a way that everybody understands that we use English and that we really try to avoid that we switch to our native language when there are other people, who don't speak Flemish or Dutch present, for example, when we discuss things ... it is supported by the management.	KA [page 3]
To show empathy	To make the environment as effective as possible	Awareness of what is happening	I think what I try to bring to this role with my worldwide team in a US based organisation is to maintain that understanding, that sympathy and that empathy with what's happening	KC [page 6]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
To show empathy	Versatility in approach	Accommodation / Preparatory arrangements	So we change – we adapt to make it suitable for them – just to give them something that is of value.	KC [page 2]
To show empathy	Getting meaning through understanding of similar language	Achieving understanding	... it was helpful too because Spanish and Portuguese are close enough for them to understand each other and for me to understand them.	HT [page 4]
To show empathy	Team member frustrated at being at a disadvantage because of language proficiency level	Promote understanding of being out of comfort zone, of being a NNS	... I guess something like having empathy for the person who is not speaking his or her native language, is also something that we can also encourage to have. Maybe also switching to different languages ... to see how it feels not to be in your comfort zone.	AF [page 4]
To show empathy	Allowing team member to give speech in native Portuguese	Empowerment	... I actually said to him – you know what – if you're more comfortable doing this in Portuguese, go ahead ...	HT [page 12]
Empowerment	To gather opinion from team	Team coaching	... So this means that you sometimes have to push a little on the team to say – to get the best performance out of this team, you guys need to tell your opinion because I am not an expert in this area so you need to tell me.	EP [page 7]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Empowerment	Awareness of the cost of speaking up against language barrier	Adapting / Practical accommodation	... I need to give them a platform and ask them to contribute vs expect them to step up/speak up to say – I that is wrong or I think we need to change that ... I need to consider these aspects when working with them and this affects how I communicate with them.	HT [page 10]
To facilitate understanding	Rephrase to ensure understanding	Alertness to potential ambiguity	It does impact when we work with our Romanian colleagues every now and then. Their English is not at the same level but on a general level it frustrates the other team members every now and then when the Romanian colleagues don't necessarily understand everything as well as the others. So you actually have to go back and explain everything a little bit differently with different words to get the same understanding.	EP [page 3]
To create a "safe" environment to speak	Empower/ Encourage by offering options	Empowerment	... but part of the preparation for that was to say to the Japanese team – what works best for you?	KC [page 3]
To create a "safe" environment to speak	Versatility in approach	Empowerment	So we have a very different approach when we are working with Japan. We have a shorter call, we send them the material in advance, we also know	KC [page 2]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			that they are using a simultaneous translation tool at times as well which causes a time delay.	
To create a “safe” environment to speak	NNS to speak freely without interruption	Saving face	You can come to us with a problem and say – I’m thinking about this particular situation, I need the collective brainpower of the people on the call to help me work this through but it’s also to make sure that everyone at some point feels as though they’ve got their air time as well. So if somebody does not feel as strong at communicating in English, then they get their free time and the only interruptions will be people asking about the work that they are doing.	KC [page 13]
To create a “safe” environment to speak	Colleagues unease at speaking English	Sociolinguistic / context-related differences / Saving face	... my colleagues who have the most difficult time with English are definitely my colleagues from Asia ... and when they do speak up, it’s like very broken English – so yes, I think it’s a combination of both (language and culture). I think it’s my job as facilitator and co-worker to create a space where you know your ideas are valid so whatever you need to get the message across, do it.	HT [page 11]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
To encourage recognition of synergies between regional teams	Encouraging recognition of affinity / recognising a similar occurrence or situation	To encourage knowledge sharing	... Or that challenge that you've just articulated from Benelux is very similar to something that we've just had to deal with in Canada.	KC [page 14]
To encourage knowledge sharing	Statement of intent	Team cohesion	... but what I want to promote is how do these countries learn from each other – not only in a positive way but I want them to feel engaged with us as a worldwide team.	KC [page 13]
To encourage speaking up to share knowledge	Raising awareness of different approaches	Adjusting to different cultural norms	... but if we are doing something specific and I tell you to do something and you think in your head – this is a really stupid way of doing this – but you do it anyway because I tell you to do it, that's not the way to become the best of the best. We have to remember to tell this constantly because is in the nature and in their culture in that we do what we are told in our team. And that's the challenge	EP [page 7]
Team cohesion/ Maintaining team focus	Team collaboration	Encourage building common understanding	... I think basically that everybody in the team should help to overcome any issues that result from the impact of different languages so I would not see this as the responsibility of the team leader alone ... I mean the first priority is that we are a	RS [page 4]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			team working together, no matter where we come from or what language we speak. So we have to find a way to understand each other and ways to work with each other.	
Team Cohesion	Getting to know team members beyond work issues	Building relationships to facilitate collaboration and trust	... it was really nice because you talk about something else and you get to know the person as a person which immediately improves the relationship and you discover new <u>anchor points</u> that you have on a personal basis ... you connect there on a certain level. It improves the working relationship because you also tend to be more responsive to that person if you get to know them better.	KA [page 6]
Team Cohesion	Recognition of local team on the global call	Facilitating collaboration through local team recognition	... every time there is a space for a local team to present and promote local activities and so it helps having an exchange of questions and so discussion, interactive discussion and recognising the role of each country.	SZ [page 7]
Team Cohesion	Maintaining team focus	Facilitating collaboration through building strong relationships	... so I need to keep a check and manage them (Mexicans), to be more close to them. And if they are uncomfortable with this, you need to make less meetings with them but more strong meetings!	FR [page 10]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Team Cohesion	All presenting together in front of each other weekly	Inclusion / Encouraged to speak up	... twice a week we have a stand-up where everybody enters a circle and everybody talks about what he or she is currently working on and we are doing this in German in spite of the fact some of the colleagues can only speak basic German – but they do it in German as well.	ML [page 2]
Team cohesion	Conscious effort to connect	Accommodation / Practical arrangements	... I'm trying to think about my team in Singapore. I had to make a more conscious effort to connect with her, making separate calls and likewise to catch-up with her. And then my teammate in Germany, his English language is not as efficient as hers – so maybe, just looking back on it now it takes extra time to translate information and make sure that they understand a clear message ...	HT [page 7]
Team cohesion	Appreciation of different cultural backgrounds of members of the team	Awareness of different cultural approaches	So again ... little differences there that I think add to the richness of the team and help the team recognise not just cultural differences for ourselves but make us more empathetic to our clients and the marketing teams that we work with in the other countries. So I find it very valuable – challenging, but valuable.	KC [page 8]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Team cohesion	Highlighting cultural differences in collaborating with different culture in relation to power distance	Awareness of different cultural approaches	... if you look at the Nordic people I have in my team we are more or less equal even if I weren't their leader so the hierarchy is extremely low in the sense that I don't consider myself as a manager even if I would be, but we are equal to each other and we make equal decisions The challenge with the Eastern Europeans is that they have a very hierarchical system They do not dare to give their opinion even if they disagree, whereas we give them the permission to disagree. And that's challenging	EP [page 7]
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Thinking of how language will be received	Adapting one's own language / Delivery approach to support NNS understanding	So again, just little phrases that would be business as usual if I was talking in the UK with somebody who was from a predominantly UK culture. When I come over here, I might use different terminology. So, for example there are sporting terms that creep into our everyday language and may not mean anything to someone who is not familiar with Cricket or Rugby or what's happening in terms of that timeframe.	KC [page 3]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Thinking of how language will be received	Adapting one's own language / Delivery approach to support NNS understanding	So it's all those little things that I probably have to change day by day in terms of how I would normally talk, how I would normally deliver things on the business, whether it's UK English to American English, or English for someone for whom English is at best their second language (lots of different layers on that one.)	KC [page 3]
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Thinking of how language will be received/ Modification of language used	Adapting one's own language / Delivery approach to support NNS understanding	So a few times I've allowed that to happen [when giving a speech] - I've adapted my style and played a different role in order to let somebody or a group of people feel more comfortable with the situation ... So I am very conscious that I am pitching to 3 different audiences in the room: I am pitching to the people who can understand English, I am pitching to the translators ... to the people who are listening to what the translators are saying in Czech.	KC [page 9]
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Thinking of how language will be received / Modification of language used	Adapting one's own language / Delivery approach to support NNS understanding	I would meet with the translators in advance to tell them if there are any phrases that don't need to be translated.	KC [page 9]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Thinking of how language will be received / Modification of language used	Adapting one's own language / Delivery approach to support NNS understanding	So again my delivery style has to change. I would also adapt how I approach certain cultures – Japan for example, is a very hierarchical society – not wishing to put people on the spot or to challenge people in a particular way, where as having dealt with people in Israel, for example, the Israeli business approach is much more abrupt and can come across as very gruff, direct, challenging.	KC [page 9]
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Awareness of changing style and there needing to be a compromise	Self-aware of changing style to ensure best possible delivery	So having to make those adaptations, being aware of it, building it in, changing my style to what's best and I am sure I am painfully aware that the people I am dealing with are probably changing their style a little bit as well to accommodate us, it's a <u>two-way thing</u> ; it's all about compromise.	KC [page 10]
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Adapting by holding calls separately to accommodate language differences at different times	The need to adapt / accommodate varying proficiency levels in the corporate language to facilitate collaboration	Sometimes that compromise can be significant as with the Japan situation which we talked about – having to structure meetings in different ways, doing calls at different times of the day, knowing that our delivery has to be different. At the same time it can be a force for good ...	KC [page 14]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Team leader aware that clumsy colleague is potentially causing offense	Awareness of cultural clumsiness. Taking steps to correct the situation	[anecdote page 4 – colleague lumping regions together] ... our Japanese time were very polite and didn't mention it. But once he had mentioned it for about the 4 th time during the discussion, I had to step in and say he had mentioned China and of course he meant Japan – just to make sure that the Japanese team didn't feel that we were mixing things up. Then rather than just apologise, he continued to dig a little bit. We got there in the end and had a little bit of a laugh about it.	KC [page 4]
Sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness	Challenge to find correct terminology to give right impact	Lingua-cultural sensitivity	Language to me is all about being understood and being understood effectively ... I need to check that the example of how something has been disturbed or shaken up – how do I use a Japanese relevant example or a global example rather than a US or German-centric example? ... easy to talk about Fukushima Nuclear Reactor but that would be both culturally and nationally insensitive so I need to find something that is relevant ...	KC [page 16]
Accommodation / Preparatory arrangements	Verification through written communication to	Following up to avoid misunderstandings	... I try to do it in text or in emails so that I can check my understanding is correct or that their	HH [page 3]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
	ensure understanding		understanding of mine is OK. So I will double check communication.	
Accommodation / Preparatory arrangements	Sensitively repeating things in case NNS has not understood	Repetition to bring clarity and save face	... If you have the feeling that they have not understood it, you might then repeat it several times, without making them lose their face.	ML [page 5]
Accommodation / Preparatory arrangements	Inability to understand webinar by NNS due to accent etc.	Speech attributes	... it was annoyance really. I should have seen who was presenting and thought a bit deeper into it – rather than this is a call – I should have been more respectful to the person who was presenting and make sure I was in an office like this with a headset on.	JM [page 3]
Accommodation / Preparatory arrangements	Conscious effort to connect	To ensure understanding	... so I try to build extra time in for translation and I'll ask some clarifying questions eg can you tell what the goal of this exercise is? – more clarifying questions than instructions.	HT [page 3]
Accommodation / Practical arrangements	Conscious effort to connect	Allow time to ensure understanding	... I think it was really helpful because if they didn't take time to de-brief, they probably wouldn't get the value of the activity and do it properly	HT [page 3]
Awareness of different cultural approaches	Awareness to be aware of cultural differences when expecting local input	Different behavioural expectations to hierarchy	... she didn't dare say that she thinks that, in her mind, that we have been doing this in the wrong way ... it is not in the culture to challenge	EP [page 8]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Awareness raising to different approaches	Aligning expectations across cultures/Statement of intent for collaboration	Behavioural expectations	... so sometimes they need a reminder that not everyone is exactly like what you are and this needs consideration.	EP [page 8]
Awareness raising to different approaches	Building relationships at work. Wanting to spend time on good relations	Awareness of different values	... as I said, Romanian people put high importance – well that’s my feeling – they put high importance on good relations at work. They really want to have a good team ... it’s important for them to have a good atmosphere on the work floor.	KA [page 6]
Awareness raising to different approaches	Different approach to communicating with management	Different behavioural expectations: High/Low Power Distance	... it can be an issue – it can be a bit intimidating for people from Belgium or Romania, for example, because they’re even more careful how to put things ... they (Romanians) tend to have a lot of respect for management and seniority in a certain job level, while we here in the Benelux tend to treat everybody equal.	KA [page 4]
Awareness raising to different approaches	Decision making only when all the facts are known in Japan	Adjusting to different cultural norms	... the Japanese people need some time to say it’s OK – I’m done! Maybe they’re more conservative or they need more time to be precise or prepared for a situation. They tend to spend more time to come to one conclusion and after they have a complete	HH [page 6]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			<p>status quo of a certain goal the level of work is very very high, probably ... the big problem of working with Japan, is that other people have more time to iterate along the way, their level of completeness is not that great along the way, they will still share their results whereas other people can go back to certain points so that they can change direction so that they can fix their perception of a certain goal or target ... yes, <u>Japanese tend to be very perfectionist. Before they are ready they will not share the result.</u></p>	
<p>Awareness raising to different approaches</p>	<p>German work culture</p>	<p>Different approaches to time</p>	<p>... the German colleagues seem to be very productive in a way – they spend less time to achieve same goal because – in their culture they are not afraid of saying to their staff I will leave the office by 4 pm ... here it is not that kind of situation. It's not that you have to be in the office until 6 or 7 pm if you don't have that much task for you. But if you find that your task is done, you are somehow expected to help the others with his or her job – we are expected to help other people with their work. Yep, normally they segregate – this is his</p>	<p>HH [page 7]</p>

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			<p>task, this is her task and they are OK with this situation, but here it is not like explicitly divided and we are more fair in this area.</p> <p>As team worker and team leader it is many more times better the German way but this is one of the big factors and of course – if you are a customer of this company I would prefer to take service from Japan ...</p>	
Awareness raising to different approaches	Different approach to communicating with management	Different behavioural expectations to hierarchy	... when the boss talks, the rest of the people is quiet to hear. But for example in Argentina it is different. In Argentina when the boss talks, the rest of the people talk at the same time too. Then in a meeting you can find 5 different conversations going on at the same time ...	FR [page 3]
Use of simultaneous translation	Through simultaneous translation – ensure meaning communicated	Effective approach in teams to convey meaning	... I mean they mitigate in a sense in that they slow down the communication if we work in teams where sometimes there is a fast phase where everyone is talking very fast in German and sometimes they have the effect of slowing down the pace which I think is also good thing.	AF [page 7]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Use of simultaneous translation	Use of simultaneous translation in team event	Heightens awareness of language barrier	... I think it's also people take note that there's a language barrier.	AF [page 7]
Use of technology in team collaboration and knowledge sharing	Progress in translation software online / Speed in simultaneous text translation	Certain level of understanding achieved through simultaneous translation	... the good thing is that technology is actually helping quite a lot nowadays so you can translate relatively quickly even more screens of text into your native language to a good enough level to understand ... and the better we get at that, the less pressure builds up in using your native language if you can rely on people having that certain understanding, no matter what the language is.	EP [page 4]
Use of technology in team collaboration and knowledge sharing	Video conferencing	Enhanced collaboration	... we have become a more integrated company than we were before and also because of collaboration tools such as this (video conferencing) have made it much easier to diminish cultural differences ...	EP [page 9]
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	Video conferencing	Enhanced collaboration	... it helps when people see each other, see how they react – whether you smile or frown when I say something and that makes a huge difference	EP [page 9]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	Cross-cultural collaboration supported by technology	Time saving. Efficiency.	The way that we're working with access to the outside world with different cultures and looking at things in different ways and best practices, it actually diminishes time to market on certain things and diminishes effort because you get to pick the "cherries" on top and look at best practices that have done all the work. So it is actually a positive effect which you don't think in a normal life.	EP [page 9]
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	More translation options	Improved translation options	... a range of technologies to translate. A system for simultaneous translation with subtitles or something like that could be a technical solution ...	AF [page 4]
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	Poor video connection can deteriorate collaboration across members with mixed proficiency levels in corporate language	Importance of fully functional connection and technology	... the quality of the connection is the critical thing ... so there's a lot of people frustrated by using Skype ... I think it's more acute when you're dealing with people whose native language isn't English.	JM [page 4]
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	Use of technology to aid understanding / being able to see	Facility to see facial expressions	I think the one I have just said about the use of video conferencing facility like the one that we are using now helps a huge deal – so the fact that you	KC [page 12]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
	mannerisms supporting understanding		can see somebody and read their mannerisms is better than voice on its own.	
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	Videoconferencing / See expressions on faces	Facility to see facial expressions	... it helps when people see each other, see how they react – whether you smile or frown when I say something and that makes a huge difference.	EP [page 9]
Use of technology in team communication and knowledge sharing	Texting – use of emojis to help support understanding	Aids in understanding	I think other things that have helped strangely are “instant messaging” so that we use instant messaging a lot (<i>see example – ie not festering over email – message instantaneous</i>). I also think that the use of emojis has helped in that you can now understand things like it’s always difficult over here – the Americans don’t do irony in the way that the British do.	KC [page 12]
New Technologies	Virtual light board: Simultaneous visual option to facilitate faster interaction on project work	Simultaneous exchange of ideas with less use of language	... I think when you are dealing with people whose native language isn’t English, it’s easy to say “I think such and such” and just whack it on a post-it and say “how about using a different voting system?” Just by them being able to see where you are typing onto Mural (virtual light board) and to be able to structure it is a way that will help, particularly NNSs.	JM [page 12]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Working with worldwide team	Team cohesion / Knowledge sharing	... but what I want to promote is how do these countries learn from each other – not only in a positive way but I want them to feel engaged with us as a worldwide team.	KC [page 13]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Working with worldwide team / New ideas	Knowledge sharing	... I get a broader view of how things could be done in a different way instead of going through a very long journey of developing something and then eventually somebody somewhere says – you don't have to do it like ... because that's how we're doing it.	EP [page 9]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Working with worldwide team / New ideas	Team cohesion	... so it is actually a positive effect which you don't think in a normal life!	EP [page 9]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Working with worldwide team / New ideas	Team cohesion / Knowledge sharing	... I don't see it as a challenge – because I think there's a lot of value that the different experiences bring to the overall team.	LR [page 2]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Working with worldwide team / New ideas	Team cohesion / Knowledge sharing	... I feel that it's so inspiring with international colleagues – learning from their habits, from their experiences, hearing their stories. I think that brings a lot of value and different perspectives to the team ... maybe it's just one aspect that comes to one person which adds up to a different idea.	ML [page 7]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Working with worldwide team / New ideas	Innovation through diversity / Openness to new ideas	... A lot of innovation comes from the necessity and the continent of Africa has lots of examples of where they need to innovate because they have not got the infrastructure that other places have got.	JM [page 11]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Conscious decision to embrace diversity	Openness to new ideas	... It goes back to the fact I went to a multicultural high school. ... I love this ambience and I love this environment. And I chose classes in the High School class with many foreigners from many countries ... and I wanted to help them get used to this High School	HH [page 8]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Effort in achieving understanding across language and culture well spent	Knowledge sharing	... on the one hand it does take more time to eliminate or clarify things with people from different cultures, it does hinder productivity and I would say at the same time it does increase the quality of my work because I have from different perspectives looking at the work which I really really enjoy.	HT [page 9]
Promoting Enrichment through Diversity / Improved team collaboration	Effort to speak English is beneficial	Team cohesion / Knowledge sharing	... I also think it is refreshing to have new perspectives from all over the world in your team ... I think it was great to have this frequent interaction where people were working closely	AF [page 7]

Theme	Event	Subtheme	Quotation	Page No.
			together for a certain amount of time because then you also get used to speaking English all day long and grasping some of the expressions and so on ... I think it is very beneficial.	

Appendix 7: Study Two Research Project Information Sheet



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Research into how language and culture affect how multinational teams work

The Research Project

I am researching for my doctorate in the Department of Business and Law at St. Mary's University, London. My research focuses on the impact of mixed proficiency levels coupled with diverse cultures in the corporate language within multinational teams. Advances in technology and the increasing pace of globalization have compelled multinational organizations to rely increasingly on the collaboration of teams around the world. These teams may operate virtually, across time zones and are frequently required to use a common language. But how good is the communication?

Research has uncovered serious negative emotions fuelled by diverse cultures coupled with language barriers. Depending on language competence, team members can feel insecure and embarrassed when communicating with colleagues. A feeling of exclusion and even communication avoidance may lead to disruption in the team and loss of trust between native and non-native speakers. Usually, bridging the language gap falls to the team leader.

The results of my research will help to identify strategies to mitigate these issues and to develop effective tools for sense-making, better collaboration and a more productive team climate across the globe. They will also contribute to diversity studies which currently do not address cross-lingual sensitivities.

I am looking for leaders and members of multinational teams to participate in focus groups. So, if you are either a leader or member of one or more such teams, where the corporate language is not your native language, or where the corporate language is your native language but there are several non-native speakers of your language, please take part in my study.

The purpose of the focus groups is to provide insights into how people think and provide a deeper understanding of their experiences as members of multinational teams. It is hoped that group interaction between members during focus group sessions will encourage participants to make

connections to various concepts through the discussions that may not occur during individual interviews.

If you take part in this study, you will be included in a focus group (6 to 10 members). These will be guided discussions held via Zoom or a similar channel and last between 45 minutes and one hour. You will also have the opportunity receive a copy of my research report and training/briefing/development for your team leaders in line with the research findings.

Cont'd ... /

To know more, please contact me on:

Contact: Luisa Weinzierl (research leader)

Mobile: +44 7887 984874

Email: 176092@live.stmarys.ac.uk

Also see my video at: <https://youtu.be/RI42meuJcEc>

Your Participation in the Research Project

You have been invited to take part in my research project because of your membership or leadership of a multinational team which is the focus of this research project. Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with or to comply with any of the facilitator's requests or expectations. You can withdraw from the project at any time during the focus group session by communicating this to the researcher. After the session has taken place, you are free to ask for your data to be withdrawn contacting the primary researcher with the name of the study and your participation number.

Your participation will involve you being a member of a focus group for a guided discussion lasting at least 45 minutes to an hour or so; this will take place either face to face or via Skype or a similar channel. There are no disturbing or upsetting questions or risks to your health or wellbeing by taking part in this study. The answers you provide will be analysed with other similar ones to identify any common themes that may underlie negative emotions related to language differences experienced in a multinational environment (such as stress, anxiety, frustration). The results from this study may be included in scientific publications and doctorate material.

To guarantee anonymity the information and data collected from you will be stored against a neutral participation number and no identifying information (e.g. names) will be recorded. Only the organisation will be identifiable, but codenamed in written reports. All material will be accessible to Luisa Weinzierl, the primary researcher and her supervisor (Dr. Lubna Ahmed) and stored on

password-protected St. Mary's University servers and locked cabinets. For the purpose of publication, anonymous information may also be stored on a public data repository, but never retained for longer than 10 years.

All participants will be given the opportunity to receive a report of the study and the results. Team leaders will also have the opportunity to receive 2 coaching sessions in line with the research results.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

Appendix 8: Study Two Research Project Participants' Consent Form



Name of Participant: _____

Title of the project: The emotional impact of mixed proficiency levels in the corporate language in multinational teams (Focus Group)

Main investigator and contact details: Luisa Weinzierl / Email: 176092@live.stmarys.ac.uk

Members of the research team:

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant (print).....

Signed..... Date.....

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: _____

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 9: Study Two Research Project Ethics approval



St Mary's University

Ethics Sub-Committee

Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor, and forwarded to the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one document (in order of the checklist) and named in the following format: **'Full Name – Faculty – Supervisor'**

Please note that for all undergraduate and taught masters research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

Please note:

In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff).



St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

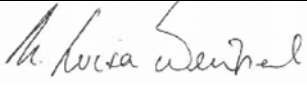
The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application. Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

Document	Enclosed?*	Version No
1. Application Form	Mandatory	yes
2. Participant Invitation Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
3. Participant Information Sheet(s)	Mandatory	yes
4. Participant Consent Form(s)	Mandatory	yes
5. Parental Consent Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
6. Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of posters, newspaper adverts, emails	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	

7. Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct study on the premises)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
8. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
9. DBS certificate available (original to be presented separately from this application)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
10. Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
11. Certificates of training (required if storing human tissue)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one document (any DBS check to be sent separately) named in the following format:

'Full Name - Faculty – Supervisor'

Signature of Proposer:		Date:	26.08.2020
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	Pauline Foster	Date:	26/08/20



**St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London**

Ethics Application Form

1. Name of proposer(s)	Luisa Weinzierl
2. St Mary's email address	176092@live.stmarys.ac.uk
3. Name of supervisor	Pauline Foster

4. Title of project	The emotional impact of language barriers on multinational teams	
5. Faculty or Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EHSS <input type="checkbox"/> SHAS <input type="checkbox"/> Institute of Theology	
6. Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> UG <input type="checkbox"/> PG (taught) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG (research) Name of programme: Business Studies	
7. Type of activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> UG student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG student <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting <input type="checkbox"/> Associate	
8. Confidentiality		
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 2018?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. Consent		
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants/participants' representatives?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
10. Pre-approved Protocol		
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable Date of approval:
11. Approval from another Ethics Committee		
a) Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
12. Identifiable risks		
m) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
n) Are participants over 65 years of age?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
o) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

p) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
q) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
r) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
s) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
t) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
u) Will highly personal, intimate or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
v) Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details:
w) Could the relationship between the researcher/ supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
x) Are you working under the remit of the Human Tissue Act 2004?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
y) Do you have an approved risk assessment form relating to this research?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
13. Proposed start and completion date	
Please indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the study is due to commence. September 2020 • Timetable for data collection: One or two zoom focus group meetings • The expected date of completion. October 2020 Please ensure that your start date is at least five weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.	
N/A as this will be signed off at level one	

14. Sponsors/collaborators

Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include your supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.

- Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.
- Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support.

n/a

15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval

Please indicate:

- Whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. an NHS Research Ethics Committee).
- Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.

Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project.

The Ethics Committee at St Mary's gave approval for study one, wherein interview data was collected.

16. Purpose of the study

In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study. *[100 word limit]*

Having completed a thematic analysis of the interview data gathered in study one, the focus group(s) will enable a finer-grained exploration of the major themes that were identified in the interview data, in an interactive between-participant format.

17. Study design/methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

- f) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
- g) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
- h) The requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
- i) Details of where the research/testing will take place, including country.

<p>j) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.</p>
<p>The design of the study is qualitative.</p> <p>The method for data-gathering will be focus group discussion, through zoom technology. The participants will meet on zoom for approximate 90 minutes, from their home or workplace.</p>
<p>18. Participants</p>
<p>Please mention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex. h) How they will be recruited and chosen. i) The inclusion/exclusion criteria. j) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants. k) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken. l) Please state any connection you may have with any organisation you are recruiting from, for example, employment.
<p>The focus group(s) will consist of between 6 and 8 people whose professional work is in international teams. The main inclusion criterion is that they use a corporate language for their professional interactions. This may be a mother tongue, or a second or foreign language. Age and gender are not considered to be main variables, though they will be noted. An exclusion criterion is age under 18; this will be verified by on screen appearance; no-one who appears to be a child under 18 will be included.</p> <p>The participants will be recruited through the researcher's contacts within international corporations.</p> <p>The researcher has no employment connection with any of the organisations from which participants will be recruited.</p>
<p>19. Consent</p>
<p>If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet clearly makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done. e) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?

- Children under 18
- Participants with learning disabilities
- Participants suffering from dementia
- Other vulnerable groups.

If any of the above apply, state whether the researcher/investigator holds a current DBS certificate (undertaken within the last 3 years). A copy of the DBS must be supplied **separately from** the application.

- f) Provide details on how consent will be obtained. This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

a) none

b) none

c) see consent form attached

20. Risks and benefits of research/activity

- h) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.
- i) Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.
- j) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.
- k) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).
- l) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).
- m) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research?

a) none

b) none

c) no

d) no

e) The researcher can send a private chat message to any participant who seems to be uncomfortable during the focus group. A participant will be reassured that he or she can leave a focus group discussion at any moment, if they wish to.

21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection

- Outline what steps will be taken to ensure participants' confidentiality.
- Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored (please state that all electronic data will be stored on St Mary's University servers).
- If there is a possibility of publication, please state that you will keep the data for a period of 10 years.
- Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others' data.
- Describe how you will manage data using a data management plan.
- You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publically available once the project has ended.
- You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating to data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.
- Identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).
- Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?
- Explain what information will be identifiable.
- Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.
- Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.

Apart from age and place of work, participants' personal information will never be sought, and thus cannot be shared with anyone. The zoom recordings will not display names. After the recordings have been transcribed, they will be deleted. The transcriptions will use code IDs and not names of speakers; it will not be possible to connect the speakers in the transcripts to any person. The transcripts will only be shared with the supervisory team.

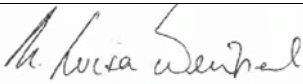
22. Feedback to participants

Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:

- As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriately written.
- Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

A summary of the focus group analysis will be offered to each participant. There is no intention to provide other individuals or organisations with feedback

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Name of Proposer:	Luisa Weinzierl		
Signature of Proposer:		Date:	26.08.2020
Name of Supervisor (for student research projects):	Pauline Foster		
Signature of Supervisor:	Pauline Foster	Date:	26/08/2020



Approval Sheet

(This sheet must be signed at all relevant boxes)

Name of proposer(s)	Luisa Weinzierl
Name of supervisor(s)	Pauline Foster, Lubna Ahmed, Eleni Aravopoulou
Programme of study	PhD
Title of project	The emotional impact of language barriers on multinational teams

Supervisors, please complete section 1. If approved at level 1, please forward a copy of this Approval Sheet to the Faculty Ethics Representative for their records.

SECTION 1: To be completed by Supervisor			
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to Faculty Ethics Representative for consideration at Level 2 or Level 3.			
Name of Supervisor:	Pauline Foster		
Signature of Supervisor:	Pauline Foster	Date:	26/08/20
SECTION 2: To be completed by Faculty Ethics Representative.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 consideration is required by Ethics Sub-Committee.			
Name of Faculty Ethics Representative:	n/a		
Signature of Faculty Ethics Representative:		Date:	

Appendix 10: Study Two: Research Questions 1 and 2: Thematic Analysis Tables

1. Main ideas that occur in the answers to topics raised

	Question	Ideas/Themes
1.	Experience of working with colleagues with different proficiency levels in the corporate language and any issues that arise that cause emotions to bubble up and affect communication. How do they deal with any issues that arise?	Yes (to emotions) –tension, frustration. Cross-lingual sensitivity . Adapt language. Awareness of potential misunderstandings. Check Understanding. Clarify. Confirm in email
2.	Experience, either first-hand or observed, of a fellow team member feeling held back because of their proficiency levels in the language.	Sense people turning silent Constraint. Misunderstanding. Words being interpreted differently across language. Stress. Loss of face. Uncertainty – not knowing background. Need for more time. Code-switching.
3.	Experience of power structures forming, a feeling of “them and us” relating to proficiency level in the corporate language when collaborating cross-lingually. Recommended strategies.	Nervousness. Use of translation. . Non-judgemental environment
4.	Exploration into the theme of uncertainty in understanding from both the speaker and the listener. Recommended strategies.	Relationship between hierarchy and ability in English (local language and corporate language). Cultural affinity superseding formal parameters in building trust. Leveraging cultural affinity to achieve understanding.
5.	Have you experienced any attempts to get around this issue?	Trust . Environment where safe to express selves. Translation. Alternatives to make local. Adapt .
6.	Has anyone else experienced anything similar?	Cross-cultural pragmatic differences in expression/understanding – false impression. Offense. Cross-lingual knowledge. Need for training. Follow-up. Personal touch. .

7.	<p>I can see the theme of uncertainty in understanding pops up a lot, do you sometimes wonder if the understanding from both sides is clear?</p> <p>Are there any strategies that you recommend?</p>	<p>Slide-deck to hand. Visuals. Email confirmation. Time to reflect and ask questions. No blame culture for proficiency level. Adapt to environment. Flexibility. More work than for national team (some potential challenge from SC). Pre-meetings. Time well-spent – Leverage. Appreciation for overall sum of outputs. Translation. Ground rules. Team building to break down barriers open perspectives. Safe climate facilitated by TL. Cultural linguistic awareness</p>
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2. Themes and sub-themes

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
ISSUES		
Uncertainty	Words being interpreted differently. Misunderstandings	... and we said – but on the call you said OK and that can be frustrating. Later we learn that in China it's common to say OK and it means 'I am hearing you', but you still need confirmation. If you hear OK, it does not mean that I will deliver the work in the time specified, but OK I hear what you are saying." AI [page 3]
Uncertainty	Nervousness over potential misunderstandings	" ... Sometimes, it makes you nervous as it can be lost in translation even if we believe people understand, the meaning of a word can be understood differently from a country to another." DM [page 4]
Uncertainty	Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	"...take the French, they are very assertive and contradicting someone isn't perceived as aggressive; it is perceived as constructive in a fairly new topic and as co-constructive if you oppose ... you would express yourself as openly and using negative terms that do not mean a negative attitude but from the British point of view, it is perceived as extremely negative but as French professionals, if you would speak the way you would normally speak, so just translate it, you would be extremely aggressive and possibly cause offense. And the other way, if we as French professionals are giving feedback to an English manager, because it is always so balanced, you need to listen a lot more carefully, because an English manager will always start with, what worked well, what didn't work so well and so on." DK [page5-6]
The cost of speaking up	Nervousness over speaking up. Potential loss of face.	" ... Of course it depends on the people as well but at work sometimes you can feel people turning silent in calls or do not answer questions." DB [page 3]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
The cost of speaking up	Potential loss of face	“ ... I think we also have to think about the cost of speaking up – some people could be uncomfortable with speaking in front of the manager in a country that is big on hierarchy so I think it is often difficult to learn the meaning from a wider aspect and a broader issue when it comes to language.” MW [page 4]
The cost of speaking up	Presenting on a subject not familiar with + in foreign language - emotion	“...Guys, I am not going to present this because I don’t speak English, I don’t speak English well. And everyone in the team gets nervous and says ... but you’ve got to present this, you’re the one who made the presentation – you know everything about it.” AM [page 4]
Cost of speaking up / Need for non-judgemental environment/Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	Cultural affinity supersedes formal parameters. Safety in trusting team. Create “safe climate”.	“ ... I think we also have to think about the cost of speaking up – some people could be uncomfortable with speaking in front of the manager in a country that is big on hierarchy so I think it is often difficult to learn the meaning from a wider aspect and a broader issue when it comes to language.” MW [page 4]
Hierarchy over language proficiency	“Them and us” assumptions. Need for a “safe climate”	“..., we tend to consider that below a certain level of hierarchy, at least for our generation, the coming generations might be better, but when you go below a certain level, it has to be in the local language and when it’s corporate teams, project teams transversal teams, the assumption is that they can speak the corporate English, they can speak English and they don’t have to speak their local language. So there is a correspondence between the level and the hierarchy and the ability to speak English.” DK [page 4]
Emotions (frustration, tension, stress, nervousness) as a result over misunderstanding	Lack of cross-lingual sensitivity	... and we said – but on the call you said OK and that can be frustrating . Later we learn that in China it’s common to say OK and it means ‘I am hearing you’, but you still need confirmation AI [page 3]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
Emotions	Pushing for clarity can elicit emotions	"... Very often e-mail just doesn't cut it because very often what our stakeholder is wanting is not always the same as what we predict and there is some tension." AI [page 3]
Stereotyping	National division – emotions?	"...After all whatever the Italians say, it always comes down to emotions whereas when the Germans speak, it's an order. So it can have on the emotional level kick-backs for sure." MW [page 9]
STRATEGIES		
Clarity	Use simple language	"... keep it simple. Don't use too complicated structures" PM [page 2]
Clarity	Ensure common understanding	" ... you need to clarify and make sure that the other person understands exactly what you are trying to communicate". AI [page 3]
Clarity	Put message into writing	"...When you have a long call, for example, some calls go on for 2 hours and then maybe part of it is lost – so I always like to have something written." DB [page 6]
Clarity	Avoiding uncertainty	"... I always leave it in writing, so that I say – in summary, this is what we agreed – this is what you are going to do, this is what I am going to do, so that we have something in writing." EY [page 3]
Clarity	Ground rules	"I think it's a bit of an etiquette and I think the etiquette is going to help the logistics. " SC [page 8]
Clarity	Follow-up (more with NNS)	" ... you can have a meeting and probably the best thing to do is to follow up that meeting with some individuals to check that everyone has a common understanding and the instructions are clear. So I think if you were doing that kind of team meeting just with a single nationality, you probably wouldn't need to have quite so much follow-up to ensure that everybody has the same outcomes. So I would say follow-up and the kind of personal touch – there's probably more work there than one might have with the same nationality in the team. PM [page 7]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
Clarity	Pre-meetings to prep people and ensure alignment	“ I can still think of situations where I have to do a lot of pre-meetings, for example, which is not necessarily language-driven but politics-driven, where you actually meet with people before the real meeting to kind of prep them and ensure alignment.” SC [page 7]
Clarity	Follow-up in writing.	“ ... When you have a long call, for example, some calls go on for 2 hours and then maybe part of it is lost – so I always like to have something written. DB [page 6]
Clarity	Beware of “false friends”	“... I believe sometimes it is due to a misunderstanding or the words we use can be interpreted in a completely different way from one country to another – for example, ‘to demand’ in English and ‘demander’ in French has a different level of importance and could even cause stress because it is wrongly translated - there are many different words like that. DB [page 3]
Clarity	Avoid misunderstandings / Clear language	“...most people said today is that culture and understanding we need to make sure that what has been said or told is understood in the same way by everyone – and also in such a way as not to confuse or cause offense to people too. But that is a level of cultural awareness.” DB [page 10]
Clarity	Pushing for clarity can elicit emotions	“... Very often e-mail just doesn’t cut it because very often what our stakeholder is wanting is not always the same as what we predict and there is some tension.” AI [page 3]
Time	Follow-up/Allow time	“I find this a lot in the current project I work in – there’s a lot of large deployments of systems, there’s a lot of people on the call – sometimes over 100. Not everybody is a) extravert, b) able to digest the information and c) think what that means for their country and have time to ask a question. So I think it’s important that you give people the opportunity to reflect and then play back and ask additional questions – so maybe have a follow-up, multiple times in French with the French team or give them time to join another call with another team.” SC [page 6]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
Time	Make allowances	"...You have to act as a moderator and make it clear that there is a big mix of languages in the group that people are given more time and asked for their opinion." MW [page 4]
Time	Allowing time	"... it takes more time and you need to confirm that everyone has understood the same thing. That's very fundamental and including the time to get things right." DK [page 9]
Flexibility	Adapting. Making practical/cognitive arrangements. Flexibility. Allowing time to reflect. Preparation (build alignment).	".... It's really about trying to be flexible and understanding and make it as easy as possible for the teams to do that they have to do and being easy about the ask you need from them and by when, and to give them support and then provide that support in an as simple and flexible way as possible." SC [page 7]
Flexibility	"	"...Well, you have to be flexible – I think if you have to work a lot with the US, with the UK and Australia, you could be on calls 24/7. You just need to balance that and take turns." SC [page8]
Flexibility	Supportive to help others work around.	"... Sometimes, you just need to kind of help out and not be – oh you have not met the deadline. SC [page 7]
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	Leverage diversity	"...if you look at the efficiency of a project or a meeting, you may be taking longer but overall the value that multi-nationals bring to the whole organisation or the project weighs much higher and overall I believe it saves time, in fact because you don't learn the language and cultural differences that quickly and you would have to start with someone who has those abilities." EY [page 7]
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	Socio-pragmatic knowledge	"...Absolutely. It is a mistake to think that working internationally is just sharing the same language because English as a foreign language is certainly very different from the native English spoken by the Brits. You need to know what group you are in and what the cultural levels are." DK [page6]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	“	“... It would be the same, as EY said, we would now also ask the team in China to send back confirmation email so that they confirm all the asks that we have provided and we are sure that they have understood what they will be delivering specifically” AM [page 3]
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	Creation of a ‘safe space’. Allow negotiation for meaning.	“...But I think the other thing that comes across is the need for offering openness for discussion and acceptance for which language can be a barrier. It is important that people feel they can push back and ask for clarification and those ground rules need to be set very early on in the game so that <u>people always feel comfortable about asking for confirmation</u> or for an explanation. PM [page 9]
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	Openness	“...So, I think the openness, we accept that language is a different area and what DK said in connection with openness is good – I mean we laugh about the cultural differences but we don’t take it too seriously to the extent that we can’t say anything. We understand the cultural differences and need to be able to use them in a working environment in a positive way.” EY [page 10]
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	Using the benefit of cultural affinity and knowledge of both cultures + languages to advantage for firm.	“... I have an experience where the opponent, when I was in a meeting, when my client was an English company and the opponent was a Korean company and they are negotiating a final deal. When the other side realised I am South Korean, they would tell me things that they were not telling their own lawyers – but I am not their lawyer, I am their opponent’s lawyer. They would be very open and honest and they would tell me exactly what they want. So the negotiation went really smoothly because I knew what the other side wanted and I could adjust the expectations from my client. I don’t know whether that is the trust because of the language but I did feel some sort of trust issue there.” EY [page 5]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	Cultural affinity	"... So the negotiation went really smoothly because I knew what the other side wanted and I could adjust the expectations from my client. I don't know whether that is the trust because of the language but I did feel some sort of trust issue there." EY [page 5]
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	Pre-conceptions (team building exercise) Re-inforce stereotypes? Opening up team-members perspectives on other nationalities	" ... And one thing we did, unfortunately too late, it was a fun exercise for the French was to describe a typical German and a typical Brit and the Brits to describe a typical German and so on ... It was a lot of fun because of course it was of course, as you say in French "des caricatures". It was pushed to the extreme but very funny and it was very healthy in helping each other understand what some of the cultural differences are. It was also extremely quick – one thing I remember is from what the French and Brits said of the Germans is that they need a plan. And I remember this always thinking for my customer they need to see something that looks like a plan, otherwise they think they are in a vacuum." DK [page 8]
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	"	"...For me, what DK said just now about finding a fun way to get to know every team member – from different backgrounds and countries and then how their stereotype or caricature is perceived in each country." AM [page 9]
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	"	"... I think that was a huge contribution to them. They felt that they could trust me, not only because of the language, but because I could read the sensitivity between the two cultures." EY [page 5]
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	"	"..., so I guess being in a multi-national environment, having a common language and having a common basis and confirming that this is solid – that's the understanding but also playing the strength of cultural language intimacy and proximity to get to a good result. So working in a multi-national environment, not thinking only about what's common but what's different and can be used as an opportunity." DK [page 10]

Key Themes	Sub-themes	Quotations
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	Profit through diversity	"...if you look at the efficiency of a project or a meeting, you may be taking longer but overall the value that multi-nationals bring to the whole organisation or the project weighs much higher and overall I believe it saves time, in fact because you don't learn the language and cultural differences that quickly and you would have to start with someone who has those abilities." EY [page 7]
Leverage cultural differences/knowledge/awareness	Appreciation for sum total of outputs from MNTs and leveraging differences	"...We all think in a different way so we can all have a right to different solutions for the same problem. So we going to have difficulties; we might have to do a pre-meeting and sometimes also a post-meeting but what we take out of it is so much greater than if we were to work in one specific country to draw out a solution for whatever it is we are doing." AM [page 7]
English as corporate language	Appreciation of the benefits of English as a corporate language	"...Just as an anecdote in relation to what we were talking about as for most of us the corporate language is English, I actually just observed a project where the corporate language and there was a big big German unit in the project and the workshop was in Spanish and there were no efforts to translate or do anything so the Germans opted out of the whole project – it was incredible. So this is a nice way to show how important English is." MW [page 9]
English as corporate language	Appreciation of the benefits of English as a corporate language	"...Thank God there is a global business language and it's English. It could have been another one but it's English." DB [page 10]

