'*This is a problem* (.)'

Discursive construction of the organisational 'problems' in a multinational corporate workplace

by

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I declare that this thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Abstract

Problem solving in the workplace is a high stakes activity that has important implications for organisations and individuals. Although problem-solving has attracted a lot of attention, there is little research on the interactional aspects of problem-solving processes. There are also few attempts to make interactional research relevant to business studies on organisational problems. In this thesis, I adopt a discursive approach and understand problems as locally produced in and through interaction. I draw on one case study and discuss data collected in one multinational company. Through interviews and interactional data, the thesis investigates how organisational 'problems' are constructed (and occasionally solved). The discussion focuses on the discursive resources employees draw upon in formulating problems and their professional roles and responsibilities negotiated in problem solving meetings. Special attention is paid to the meeting event and the HQ-subsidiary context in relation to the ways in which issues are negotiated and ratified as 'problems'.

The findings show that in interviews, language and culture, as abstract concepts, constitute key resources for the construction of organisational problems. In participants' talk *about* language and culture, the individuals' ideologies are enacted, and the abstract concepts become critical means for positioning (them)selves and others in the organisational setting. In problem-solving meetings, I focus on interactional activities which emerge in the timeframe of the meeting event. The patterns of these activities are not linear but shaped by the participants' interactional and institutional positioning through which their professional roles are enacted. I argue that the processes of constructing organisational problems are contingent on the ability of individuals to access and challenge dominant institutional and professional discourses and ideologies. Based on the analysis, I propose a model that visualises interactional moves that constitute problem-solving activities in the meeting event. I conclude the discussion of the data by also proposing a model on the HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in the problem-solving interaction.

1. Introduction

This thesis investigates how organisational 'problems'[1] are constructed in interaction. By drawing on case study data collected in one multinational company, I focus on the discursive resources[2] mobilised in employees' construction of problems and how problem-solving is done in interaction. In the introduction to this thesis, I begin by providing the background of this research that includes my motivation and rationale for the study and a (linguistic) profile of Eco UK and (1.1). I then set out the thesis objectives and scope and articulate the research questions I seek to address (1.2). In Section 1.3, I provide a brief discussion on the main theoretical approaches that I draw upon in conceptualising and analysing the processes of constructing problems. This is followed by the overview of this thesis (1.4).

1.1. Rationale for the study/ Background

Problem-solving is a high stakes activity that has important implications for the organisations and the individuals. Multinational contexts represent a domain in which individuals and organisations operate at the interface of organisational, linguistic, geographic, and professional boundaries (Birkinshaw, Ambos and Bouquet, 2017). Research has shown a range of problems emerge in such context, and employees often find themselves in competing and conflicting roles when negotiating role-responsibilities in teams across different subsidiaries and countries (e.g. Haynes, 2018). Problem-solving is complex, involving the successful negotiation of local norms and practices as well as global organisational ways of doing.

Organisational problem-solving activities have long been studied from a range of non-linguistic perspectives. Organisational behaviourist and cognitivist approaches are common. However, as detailed in Section 2.2, in most cases, those approaches treat the problem as, more or less, given and problem solving as technical and generalizable steps or rules in a linear process (e.g. Felin and Zenger, 2015). This approach typically does not address the role of interaction. It, as a result, leaves out the processes through which problems are negotiated and ratified by the individuals. Hence, there is a need for further research in the sociolinguistics of problem-solving and this thesis seeks to contribute to this area of work. As I discuss in Section 1.3, this thesis draws on discursive perspectives that pay special attention to language

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[1] I have used inverted commas sparingly to indicate that the term carries a range of meanings. I am avoiding excess use for ease of reading and only highlight ambiguity when needed for clarity.

[2] Discursive resources in this thesis refer to a) something on which employees draw on to formulate problems in situation (Watson, 1995); and b) interactional ones used to negotiate situations and problems in problem-solving interaction (see also Jefferson, 1974).

in and through which social meanings and practices are negotiated, and the organisational realities are talked into being. By drawing on interview and workplace interaction, this thesis investigates how organisational problems are discursively constructed in the interactional setting.

The research focus grew out of my initial research interests in social interaction in multinational contexts, and an opportunity to conduct an ethnographic case study in a multinational company, Eco UK (pseudonym). The multinational corporate workplaces provide researchers a rich site for the study of multilingualism, intercultural communication and the institutional context itself. The opportunity to conduct a case study in Eco UK has provided a unique opportunity to look closely at the ways in which employees construct their organisation, enact their professional roles and position self and other. Since I moved to the UK for my PhD degree at the University, I have been part of the UK Korean community which includes a number of local and expatriate Korean professionals, students and their families. I shared my research interests with the community members and one of those who were acquainted with Eco UK expatriate managers introduced me to the company. This is where and how I embarked on my fieldwork for this project.

In the section below, I provide a brief profile of the company as background information for the study. I then discuss how my research focus has evolved through the fieldwork.

(Linguistic) profile of Eco UK and doing fieldwork at the company

Eco is one of the Korean multinational companies with a history of more than half a century. It has expanded its global network with its local offices, plants, and R&D centres in more than 30 countries with over 20,000 employees. Korean multinational companies and their activities in general are considered to be still new since South Korea has a relatively young history of outward foreign direct investment. To establish its position in the European market, the company has a distribution centre and a plant in Europe since 2000 and the European headquarters. Until recently the company has been striving to enhance its global marketing and partnerships with European companies in the same industry in order to improve its brand image and status.

Eco UK comprised 51 staff that included three expatriate managers and 48 local employees. The top management figures were mostly Korean employees transferred from the global head office with an exception of the positions related to sales-marketing which require expertise in the local market. The headquarters periodically sent directors and management to its overseas subsidiaries including Eco UK and changes the management every three to four years for logistical and visa purposes. This is important contextual information which was often addressed by employees in their problem talk. Employees drew upon the transition period

where managers just transferred from the HQ, and this was where language and cultural differences were foregrounded, and power positions were negotiated.

Local employees in the subsidiary consisted of three Korean employees and a Hungarian employee, and the rest were British. Important to note here is that most local employees had longer work tenure at Eco UK than those of the expatriate managers. As informed by my participants, the local Korean employees played a role in providing linguistic support for Korean expatriate managers and/ or the HQ in their communication with the subsidiary employees. When I was at the company, this was also suggested by the seating arrangement in each of the offices where the Korean expatriate managers and the local Korean assistants were sitting next to each other. I also frequently observed the managers requesting their assistants to send out emails or messages and translate or create reports to be sent to the HQ and the managing director. The Hungarian employee was in role of contacting one of the Eco's units in Hungary. These would suggest the roles expected for the Korean and Hungarian local employees were associated with their language ability. I discuss this in light of my data in Section 5.2. In addition to the roles related to the languages, I provide detailed information about the institutional role structure with linguistic profiles of employees in Eco UK in Section 4.4.

Regarding the language use in the company, there is neither an official language policy nor a designated official language in the company. During my fieldwork, I observed that both English and Korean were used in the workplace, and the language choices were made depending on the organisational activities and the people who were involved in them. As my data suggests (Section 5.2), English was assumed to be used as a lingua franca within the subsidiary and between the subsidiary and the headquarters. Yet, Korean was used between Korean employees within the subsidiary and for the communication convenience with the HQ where Korean was used as a primary language. I will provide details about the language use at work as addressed by employees and discuss employees' ideologies about language and its role in the workplace (Section 5.2).

Initiating my fieldwork at Eco UK, I aimed to get to know the employees and understand the local context including workplace interaction and practices. My research was stimulated by a concern for the prevailing perceptions of employees about differences in 'culture' and practices in the workplace. When I started the fieldwork, a managing director told me he was particularly interested in knowing the practices that British employees find 'different'. Essentialist assumptions about the differences between the Korean and the British prevail in my corpus and attracted my interest in terms of their role in positioning 'Self' and 'Other' in interaction. As I discuss later, difference in the data is associate with the abstract concepts of 'culture' and 'language' as well as practices labelled as 'difficult', 'different' or 'unfamiliar'.

It was intriguing to see the way in which employees interpreted and illustrated differences between certain groups, e.g. the HQ versus the subsidiary, the Korean versus the British or European. These were often negatively marked, and importantly made relevant to the organisational roles and activities. In other word, perceptions on culture and language were made relevant to the way Eco employees' work.

This was the initial puzzle that triggered part of inquiry of this thesis to investigate problem talk and employees' ideologies. These were developed further throughout my second phase of fieldwork and follow-up analysis. During this fieldwork, I focused on employees' talk about their organisational roles and activities and audio-recorded a range of meetings that include problem solving ones, according to employees' perception (see methodology for further detail). This was to establish an understanding of employees' professional roles in the organisational setting. Moreover, this has developed further my understanding of employees' problem talk in interviews and workplace interaction settings.

In the next section, I set out the objectives of the research and research questions this thesis seeks to address.

1.2. Objectives and scope

The aim of this thesis is to capture the ways in which organisational problems are constructed in interaction. This stance suggests, in line with the view of discourse scholars, that language does not just represent or express intentions or decisions (i.e. the representational role of language) but 'it makes them' (i.e. the constitutive role of language) (Roberts and Sarangi, 2005:632). I discuss discursive perspectives in detail in the section below.

By drawing on the multiple datasets, including observations, interviews and workplace interaction, this thesis provides a holistic description of the processes of constructing organisational problems situated in the employees' local and broader organisational and social context. The thesis pays special attention to employees' enactment of professional roles and the HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in the processes of constructing problems.

This thesis seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How is the 'organisational problem' constructed in interaction in the case of one multinational company?

This question will be addressed in both the employees' metatalk[3] and problem-solving meetings. In the context of the metatalk, I focus on the symbolic and material resources

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[3] In this thesis, interview talk is conceived of as metatalk wherein participants 'reframe' their lived experiences and opinions by drawing on a range of resources available to them to make them 'credible' to the interviewer (Sarangi, 2003, p. 72) (see Section 4.5.3 for the explanation).

employees draw upon in constructing problems and the speakers' ideologies enacted in interaction (Angouri, 2018). These usefully inform the local understandings of problems in the context of the participants' perceived realities. In the context of problem-solving meetings, I aim to provide a detailed interactional analysis to demonstrate how problem-solving is done in situ. In the problem-solving literature, surprisingly, little attention has been paid to interactional aspects of problem-solving. This thesis makes a contribution to this area. It also looks into the interactional activities emerging in problem-solving meetings and focuses on the different stages of the meeting event. In interactional studies, to the best of my knowledge, with a few exceptions there is scant research that looks into problem-solving in its own right. Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini's (2011) study on problem-solving provides this thesis with a good starting point and foundation to explore how problems are negotiated and ratified in workplace meetings. I expand this work and provide a model which visualises problem solving meetings as emerging through my data analysis.

2. How do employees enact their professional roles in constructing organisational problems?

This question brings into focus the professional roles enacted in problem-solving meetings. 'Role' is conceptualised from a social constructionist perspective and is considered a conduit into the ways in which institutional interactions unfold (e.g. Sarangi, 2010). Participants' institutional/ professional roles are intricately linked to the ways in which the organisations emerge in the interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This brings us to the following related question that calls for an investigation of how HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the processes of constructing problems.

3. How do the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the processes of constructing problems?

The HQ-subsidiary relationships emerged as a key dimension in my participants' constructions of problems in both the interview and the workplace interaction data. Drawing on organisational dimensions (e.g. Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara, 2011; Whittle *et al.*, 2016), this thesis investigates how the HQ-subsidiary relationships foreground participants' constructions of problems and emerge in problem-solving interactions. I theorise the HQ-subsidiary relationships in accounting for how the organisational relationships are negotiated by the employees in constructing organisational problems.

The next section provides the theoretical paradigm and frameworks that underpin this research.

1.3. Discursive perspectives and conceptualising 'organisational problem'

In this section, I begin by introducing the ontological and epistemological position that I adopt in responding to the research enquiry (Section 1. 2), and from which my methodological approach has been derived (Chapter 4). This is followed by a discussion on a potential avenue for bridging linguistic research with organisational studies, and a conceptualisation of organisational problem from a discursive perspective.

This research is positioned broadly within a social constructionist paradigm. It frames realities as discursively constructed by social actors who, 'in particular places, at particular times, fashion meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social interaction involving history, language, and action' (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). It, therefore, takes seriously social interaction in meaning-making and constructing the social structure (Weedon, 1987). Social practices from this approach then, are conceived of as 'a series of acts' brought by actors, 'constituting forms of interaction', and 'constituting structures' pertaining to the communities (Giddens, 1993, p. 110). And organisational knowledge and realities are 'continuously created in the acts of communication between organisational members, rather than being independently out there' (Iedema and Wodak, 1999, p. 7). In this line of approach, as a way of investigating employees' construction of problems, I adopt an interactionist approach to unpack the language use in the process of meaning-making and constructing professional roles and identities (Butler, 1997, 2010).

Underpinned by the discursive approach, for the investigation of the research enquiry, I draw on theoretical and empirical perspectives largely from sociolinguistics and organisational discourse studies. In sociolinguistic workplace discourse studies (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Angouri and Marra, 2011; Schnurr and Zayts, 2011), workplace talk provides the context in which knowledge is constructed, professional identities are negotiated and ways of doing and being are brought to scrutiny. And the social meanings constructed in talk become part of organisation itself. The studies focus on language choices and other semiotic resources in association with social meaning and context. In this sense the studies provide empirical evidence on how people do work and the ways in which complex work practices are co-constructed in different professional settings and industries (Angouri and Angelidou, 2012:79).

In a similar vein, organisational discourse studies (e.g. Fairhurst and Cooren, 2004; Langley *et al.*, 2013; Cooren *et al.*, 2014) argue that language does not merely reflect the status of the organisation. Nor is the organisation conceptualised as an entity. Instead, the studies centre the role of communication in constituting the organisation. For example, Boden (1994, p. 82) conceives of business meetings as 'the accomplishment of the organization'; and Rhodes (2002) sees organisation as a 'socially constructed verbal systems in terms of stories,

discourses and texts' (p. 104). Furthermore, relatively recent studies in organisation communication studies equate the organisation with the communication, highlighting a processual approach to organisations as 'a dynamic construct' emerging through 'actors ongoing collective action' (Lorino, 2014, p. 96). In a similar vein, Whittle *et al.* (2014) state 'communication brings the organisation alive in a continual, never-ending process of interacting' (p. 87).

Given the common interest in the role of language in constructing practices and realities, there is much to share between these disciplinary areas. Relatively recent contributions have been made in the aforementioned fields by moving towards trans-, inter- and multidisciplinary work. For example, Angouri and Piekkari (2018) in their collaboration seek to bring together Sociolinguistics and International business studies to research multilingualism at work. And an emerging field, Communication as Constitutive Organisation (CCO) draws on ethnomethodology and seeks a fine grain engagement with language in understanding organisational phenomena. Nonetheless, to the best of my knowledge, the dialogue between these disciplinary areas seems still scarce. Indeed, Tietze (2008, p. 3) laments that 'there are no institutionalised ways of communicating' across those disciplines, arguing management processes can be studied through a linguistic lens. And I personally have experienced this when presenting my work and communicating with people at conferences in sociolinguistics and organisational studies. I consider this to be an avenue for this thesis by adequately adopting sociolinguistic (workplace discourse) perspectives to enrich the ways of responding to the 'organisational sites of enquiry' (Iedema and Wodak, 1999, p. 6). It is my hope that my work contributes to the multidisciplinary dialogue that the aforementioned scholars advocate, and I return to this point in the conclusions of the work. In the context of this thesis, frameworks from these disciplines are adopted for probing and theorising how organisational problems are constructed, and the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge not only through material capital but also, and primarily, in the discursive processes.

Conceptualising the organisational problem

Grounded in my ontological and epistemological position, my premise in conceptualising problem is that, as Sarangi and Roberts (1999) claim, 'the social facts of workplace life are not givens but are actively constructed out of the discourses and interactions of everyday life' (p. 34). In this sense, organisational problems 'come to life' (ibid., 37) through employees' acts, and are 'not simply out there waiting to be realised in some common-sense way' (ibid., 34).

My conception of 'problem' can be further informed by the similar conceptions of 'issue' and 'organisational strategy' under a discursive approach. From a linguistic perspective, Goodwin

(2002), for example, argues that 'an issue does not simply lie there, rather it is something that we raise, take, put in, press, force, join or frame. An issue arises when we make an issue of it' (p. 86). From an organisational perspective, Knights and Morgan (1991), although their focus is not on the problem per se, emphasise looking into the (strategic) discourse and the process of its formulation. The authors state 'in the process of its formulation (i.e. formulation of discourse), strategy is actively involved in the constitution, or re-definition, of problems in advance of offering itself as a solution to them' (p. 270). By conceiving of problems as being strategic and intentional, the authors highlight the role of individuals and discourses in the process of formulating and negotiating issues and discourses. With emphasis on the role of language, Tsoukas and Dooley (2011) state that 'organisational members are not presented with objective problems, but they help bring them forth through the application of the symbols, categories, labels and assumptions contained in the tools they use and practice they draw upon' (p. 731).

Adopting a discursive approach to organisational phenomena is not to deny material aspects of problems or organisations but to probe further the role of organisational actors and meaning-making processes in constructing problems, and more precisely the discourses[4] in which the individuals engage. Cameron (2001, p. 16) succinctly defines discursive practice as 'the various ways of discussing objects and the practices that go along with them'; and these 'form a network of concepts and beliefs that set the agenda for debate and define what we perceive as reality on this subject'. This usefully conceptualises employees' *doing* of problem in relation to the individuals' engagement with discourses, drawing on a range of symbolic and material resources.

Finally, in conceptualising the organisational problem, I take into consideration 'sociomaterial' aspects of organisational problems (Orlikowski, 2007; Leonardi, 2012; Putnam, Fairhurst and Banghart, 2016). From a sociomaterial approach, the materiality[5] is integral to the social, discursive processes. Leonardi (2012, p. 31) frames materiality as 'created through social processes, and interpreted and used in social contexts', and social actions take place in the presence of materiality in each and every phenomenon. The social and the material acts then should be understood to be mutually constitutive and inextricably linked (Orlikowski, 2007, p. 1437).

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[4] By 'discourse' I refer to Schiffrin's (1994, p. 31) definition of discourse, i.e. 'a socially and culturally organised way of speaking' through which 'particular functions' and meanings are constructed.
[5] By 'the material' I refer to 'the arrangement of an artefact's physical and/or digital materials into particular forms that endure across differences in place and time' (Leonardi, 2012:42).

Taken all previous work in consideration, I adopt as a starting point the definition by Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini's (2011, p. 211) on the organisational problem:

> [Problems constitute] work-related topics associated with potentially negative consequences, raised by an employee and ratified as requiring further or different to current action.

This definition suggests that problems are emergent and situated in interactional processes. In this context, Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini convincingly argue that the roles of actors are critical in the processes of negotiating and ratifying problems. I probe this work and extend further its scope and theoretical underpinning. Based on the analysis of my case study data, I propose a new definition of the organisational problem in Section 8.1 and a model in Section 6.2.

1.4. Thesis overview

Following this chapter, in Chapters 2 and 3, I explore relevant bodies of work for conceptualising and researching the discursive construction of the organisational problem in the multinational context. In Chapter 2, I explore studies on problem-solving from different approaches to position this thesis. I then draw on studies on problem-solving discourse and other relevant workplace discourse studies to identify relevant features of the problem-solving interaction. In paving the way to interactional data, I draw on social constructivist conceptualisations of roles and I discuss empirical studies that look into professional role construction in institutional interaction. In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of theoretical and empirical work that provides different perspectives on the multinational context as well as associated concepts particularly: multilingualism, culture and the HQ-subsidiary relationships. These are relevant to the themes emerging from my corpus as I discuss later. Chapter 3 is particularly concerned with the examination of the resources mobilised in employees' construction of problems.

In Chapter 4, I turn to the methodology and methods to explain and justify the choices I made in the research. I start with the research design, the ethnographically informed case study, followed by the profiles of my research participants which facilitate an understanding of the employees' positioning. I then discuss the datasets collected and the methods employed in the fieldwork. In line with the discursive perspective discussed in the introduction chapter, I provide details of my analytic approach employed to address the research questions and discuss Interactional Sociolinguistics as the main framework to understand problem-solving interaction.

From Chapter 5 to 7, I discuss my findings and address my research questions through the data analysis. In Chapter 5, I examine how employees construct organisational problems and

pay attention to the role of language and culture as key resources mobilised in employees' metatalk. I probe the participants' ideologies which are associated to the ways in which problems are constructed, and their discursive positioning in (im) balancing power relations. In Chapter 6, drawing on problem-solving meetings, I provide a detailed interactional analysis of the meetings and zoom in on the interactional activities which take place in the timeframe of the meeting event. I provide a model which visualises these interactional activities and discuss how these are interrelated with the meeting participants' roles. Chapter 7 follows from Chapter 5 and 6 and is concerned with a close examination of the ways in which the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the process of constructing problems in both the interview and meeting data.

Chapter 8 brings together the findings and themes that emerged from the datasets. I articulate the ways in which this thesis responds to the set research questions. Based on the analysis, I propose a new definition of the organisational problem and provide an interpretive account of the participants' negotiation of roles in problem-solving. Finally, drawing on the discussion on employees' construction of problems, I provide my theorisation of the HQ-subsidiary relationship.

In the last chapter, I provide the summary of this thesis and discuss the contributions this thesis makes to the relevant areas of scholarship. I close the work by indicating areas for further research.

2. Literature review I: Problem-solving and role as discursive practice

2.1. Introduction

Problem (-solving) has long been studied from a range of epistemological and methodological positions in social sciences. This chapter outlines the theoretical and empirical grounds for this thesis in researching employees' constructions of problems in interaction. I first provide an overview of existing models on problem-solving to localise the approach of this thesis to conceptualising problems and researching problem-solving. As I noted in the Introduction, I adopt discursive perspectives in order to understand the problem as discursively constructed in interaction. With this approach, I provide relevant bodies of work to understand problem-solving discourse, which I use as a base to construct theoretical and analytic frameworks in this research. I then turn to conceptualising the professional role within a social constructionist framework. Professional roles are prominent in my corpus, as employees explicitly addressed in interviews and enacted in doing problem-solving. I therefore consider role as an appropriate concept for looking into the ways employees' construct problems, and further themselves and their organisations. I conclude this chapter with a summary which includes a discussion of the

opportunities identified in the existing studies to research employee's constructions of problems at work.

2.2. Approaches to problem-solving

Problem-solving has long been researched from varying approaches in social sciences. Behaviourist and cognitivist approaches are common, and these have shown different perspectives on *what counts* as problems (i.e. the definitional criteria) and *how* problem-solving takes place (i.e. the way in which problems are solved). I discuss here firstly the influential studies from these two approaches with examples of studies in my areas of interest (Table 1), then move onto a discursive approach to understanding problems and problem-solving.

In studies taking a behaviourist approach, one of the most cited is Cyert and March's (1963) *Behavioral Theory of the Firm*. The study looks into managerial behaviours in problem-solving and proposes a model, *problemistic search*, that sequences the course of activity in terms of *problem definition search* and *solution search*. As shown in Table 1, the problemistic search model has been developed in recent studies that examine organisational adaptive behaviours believed to be motivated by the phases of problem-solving (e.g. Hansen, 1999; Greve, 2008; Wennberg and Holmquist, 2008; Tippmann, Scott and Mangematin, 2012; Posen *et al.*, 2018). The key assumption in these studies is that problems are firstly recognised by the discrepancies between organisational expectations and reality (i.e. problem definition search), and this guides the problem solution search (Tippmann, Scott and Mangematin, 2012, p. 747). From this approach, external conditions of the activity are important as they are considered to create the discrepancies that motivate adaptive behaviours, giving rise to organisational problems for the definitional criteria of problems.

The behaviourist approach, which aims to generalise phases of problem-solving activities with behavioural patterns, pays little attention to how the meaning or definition of problems, which are perceived differently for different individuals, are negotiated. In other words, it does not account for how the group of individuals share a common definition of the problems and reach consensus on the problem as well as its solutions. As importantly, the tendency to simplify the activities does not take into consideration a range of situational and contextual factors (e.g. roles, responsibilities and expertise of participants, historicity of the activities, institutional environment, etc.) which are critical in doing problem-solving.

Instead of focusing on behavioural patterns, studies taking the cognitivist approach take meanings more seriously. The most influential is Newell and Simon's (1972) *Human Problem Solving*. The study draws on the information processing theory of human thinking, and it emphasises the role of the mental representation of problems in providing individuals with the

structure and resources for problem-solving. Regarding the mental representation, the authors frame task environments as a 'problem space' that provides the available information and further shapes the individuals' conceptual processes and behaviours (p. 865). This approach has been particularly influential but at the same time leaves out a focus on interaction by treating the information as merely given by the external environment. In this thesis I contend that interaction plays a critical role in not merely conveying but actively constructing knowledge and problems.

Authors	Theoretical base	Methods	Research focus
Smith (1989)	Phase theories	An analysis of individuals' problem definitional statements	Phases of problem definition/ representation: recognition, development, exploration
Gavetti and Levinthal, (2000)	Bounded rationality (Simon, 1990)	Computer simulations of individuals' search/ choice processes	Cognitive representation of problems and the interrelationship between cognition and experiential search
Nickerson and Zenger, (2004)	Knowledge management	A review of the related empirical and theoretical literature	Managing knowledge formation in problems and solution search
Heiman and Nickerson (2004)	The knowledge-based view: the PSP	Cooperative Agreements and Technology Indicators (CATI) database (observations)	The effects of problem complexity on organisational alignment and subsequent technological performance
Macher and Boerner (2006)	The knowledge-based view: the PSP	Statistical analysis of database of institutions' project information	Representation of problem structure: how pharmaceutical firms organize efficiently to solve ill-structured and complex problems in drug development
Hsieh, Nickerson and Zenger (2007)	The knowledge-based view: the PSP, theory of the entrepreneurial firm	A review of the related theoretical literature	Opportunity discovery and entrepreneurship in problem-solving (the exploration for solutions)
Wennberg and Holmquist (2008)	Problemistic search	Surveys on internationalisation processes in firms Interviews	Firms' internalisation processes and activities triggered by problemistic search

Baer, Dirks and Nickerson (2013)	Strategic management	A review of the related empirical and theoretical literature	Strategic problem formulation activity and its structured process (mechanism) in teams
Tippmann, Scott and Mangematin (2012)	Problemistic search	An analysis of semi-structured interviews on problem-solving and archive materials	Managers' adaptive organisational behaviours in (non-routine) problem and solution search
Felin and Zenger (2015)	Strategic management	A review of the related theoretical literature	Value creation in firms' making consequential and forward-looking decisions about problems and solutions

Table 1 Examples of studies on problem-solving from a behaviourist and a cognitivist approach

Business studies in line with the cognitivist approach acknowledge that setting the problem is a problem-solving activity but the discussion remains narrow and fairly linear. As an example, strategic management studies develop a framework called '*problem solving perspective*' (e.g. Heiman and Nickerson, 2004; Hsieh, Nickerson and Zenger, 2007; Leiblein and Macher, 2009) (see Table 1). The studies apply the framework to shed light on the relation between organisational forms and environmental conditions, which can offer individuals access to the information and resources necessary for problem-solving activities. A problem in this regard is treated as measurable in terms of structure and complexity, described as 'ill-structured' and 'well-structured' (Fernandes and Simon, 1999), and the structure of problems becomes an important indicator that determines the extent to which strategic knowledge is generated in problem-solving (Heiman and Nickerson, 2004; Macher and Boerner, 2006).

In addition, as shown in *problem solving perspective* and similar approaches in Table 1, the cognitivist approaches tend to focus heavily on individual cognition processes in representing problems and reduce the role of individuals in cognising and representing information. The role of interaction remains one of representing problems and knowledge. For example, Tippmann, Scott and Mangematin's (2012) work on problem-solving in a multinational context attempts to illustrate problem-solving processes by drawing on participants' accounts of problem-solving. It provides limited views on what individuals actually do during the procedure.

To conclude, both cognitive and behavioural approaches seem to be missing the explanation of interactional process in which interactants share and negotiate knowledge and problems and reach consensus on problems and solutions among the individuals.

This thesis addresses this gap by taking a discursive approach and looking to the way organisational problems are constructed in interaction. Given that it is the individuals who bring to the problem-solving activity varying perspectives from their own positions, I further

argue that the interactional process involves the individuals' negotiations of roles and positions.

Now I turn to studies that look to problem-solving interaction and its relevant activities (e.g. decision-making) and discuss main features of problem-solving discourse.

2.3. Problem-solving discourse

Problem-solving, in general, has been seen to be task- and resolution-oriented, which requires mutual understanding and joint activities of participants (e.g. Måseide, 2007; van de Sande and Greeno, 2012). Interaction then, is central in understanding how problem-solving unfolds in context, and more specifically, how problems are constructed and come to exist. In understanding instiutional interaction, I refer to Drew and Heritage's (1992) framework. The authors characterise instituonal interaction in terms of 'participants' institutional or professional identities' that are 'made relevant to the work activities in which they are engage' (p. 25). The authors characterise instiutional talk with

> a) 'the participants in specific goal orientations to institutional tasks that are tied to their institution-relevant identities'

> b) 'special constraints on what is considered as allowable contributions to the business at hand'

> c) 'special inferences that are particular to specific institutional contexts'

This characterisation suggests the institutionalised and role-structured interaction, which is shaped by both the constraints and the individuals' agendas that operate within the institutional order. Relevance to this thesis is that in problem-solving meetings, the participants enact their professional roles vis-à-vis the insitutions or the institutional order in constructing and solving problems.

Meetings

In looking to problme-solving interaction, I draw on meeting data. Meetings are commonly defined as the 'microcosm' of an organisation. Meetings provide the context where new knowledge is constructed, and professional roles and identities are negotiated. Research on meeting interaction has shown the ways groups make decisions, agree (or not) on problems and bring their practices and processes under scrutiny (e.g. Alby and Zucchermaglio, 2006; Asmuß and Oshima, 2012). The prevalence and significance of meetings in any type of professional environment makes it an ideal candidate for the study of language choices people make at work as well as the ways in which relationships and ways of doing are negotiated in meeting talk. Research has addressed the ways groups make decisions, agree (or not) on problems and priorities and bring their practices and processes under scrutiny. Linguistic work

has also focused power (ab)use and the ways the more or less powerful in professional contexts are silenced, and the power distribution is resisted and challenged.

What counts as a meeting however is not easy to determine. Typically, the term is used to indicate a gathering for professional purposes which despite variation in form and function, participants 'commonsensically' (Cuff and Sharrock, 1985) recognise it as a formal or informal meeting. Numerous attempts have been made to identify common characteristics of meetings and typologies based on the number of participants, purpose of the event, time and place of the gathering proliferate. Angouri and Marra (2010) make a case for a meeting 'genre' which is distinguishable and recognisable to the members of a group. Following from work in the field which attempted to define the "generic features of this fundamental form of communication" (Harris and Bargiela-Chiappini, 1997, p. 205), Angouri and Marra's (2010) research in EU and NZ workplaces shows similarities in the functions and activities (e.g., opening and introducing and explicit or implicit agenda, debating, reporting, accepting/rejecting a position, closing the meeting) rather than specific linguistic features that are context dependent.

In this thesis I continue this line of work by analysing interactional activities that emerge in problem-solving meetigns from opening to closing stages, and the processes by which agreement (or not) on problems is achieved in the interactional events.

In interactional studies, there has been much attention paid to decision-making relative to problem-solving; the decision-making studies that touched upon problems or issues treat problem-solving as either part of the decision-making process or a broader context in which decision-making takes place (e.g. Clifton, 2009, 2012). Yet, as I review the literature below and note in my data, these two are related and share interactional features as they are emergent, embedded and intertwined 'in the flow of events' (Chia, 1996, p. 194). Hence, I consider that there is much to learn from understanding the relation between the two in theorising problem-solving discourses.

In the sections that follow, I draw on both problem-solving and decision-making, as these have much to share, and discuss the relation between them. I then discuss key contextual factors to consider in understanding problem-solving discourse.

2.3.1. Problem-solving and/or decision-making

In interactional studies, surprisingly, there is scant research on problem-solving. The one from which this thesis adopt perspectives is Angouri and Bargielar-Chiappinis' (2011) work on problem-solving meetings. This study focuses on the negotiation and ratification of problems in workplace meetings, and highlights the negotiation of responsilbities and 'ownership' of problem areas become central in managing problem-solving interaction (p. 220). Participants'

professional roles in the authors' work, as well as in this thesis, are critical for understanding problem-solving as the individuals actively draw on their roles specific to responsiblities and expertise in ratifying issues as problems. I explore this further in Section 2.3.2, and also in Section 2.4 where I draw on interational perspectives on roles.

Another relevant study on problem-solving discourse is Måseide's (2007) work on medical problem-solving. This study highlights collaborative processes in which medical problems are presented and dealt with by the participants who 'operate within local, linguistic and interactional contexts' (p. 611). The study focuses on how 'working orders' are negotiated among the professionals, their colleagues and patients in the processes where diverse medical problems are regulated, developed and solved. Drawing on medical discourses, this sheds light on the characteristics of institutional interaction where the profession and the institution encounter each other, and how it shapes problem-solving discourses. The medical doctors who also bear the institutional responsibility regulate the development of medical problems being presented to their patients. What is relevant to this thesis is the professional and institutional discourses emerged in the author's work. Although this work does not explicitly mention how the boundaries between the institutional and professional discourses become ambiguous, it suggests these discourses are interwoven through the medical doctors' performing of their institutional roles. I discuss this point in Section 2.4 in light of the professional role enactment.

Turning to interactional studies on decision-making, I refer to Huisman's (2001) definition of decision, which has been widely cited in the area of studies – the joint 'construction of a commitment to future action' (p. 70). In my reading of the meeting data, decision-making as in 'the construction of a commitment to future action' constitutes a significant part of the problem-solving. More specifically, as I show in Figure 8 (p. 93) and also the analysis of problem-solving meetings (Chapter 6), problems and decisions appear to be achieved in a co-constituve manner, intrinsincally linked to another in the timeframe of the meetings.

In early work in business management studies, studies treat problems as part of the decision-making process. For example, Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Theoret (1976) located the identification of problem as a phase in strategic decision-making and argued that problems must be identified in the 'verbal data that decision makers receive' so that the initiation and selection phase of the decision process can be led (p. 254). In this way the decision-makers become more able to understand the problem to be solved, as they move through the phases. This study, however, does not further the processes of identifying and formulating problems but treats them as an element of the decision-making process. Mintzberg's latter work with Langley (Langley *et al.*, 1995, p. 275) provides a more comprehensive view on the relation between decisions and problems. Seeing decision-making as a process in which issues continuously emerge and interact (ibid.), the study contends that problems emanate from

'parts of an organization combined to produce decisions as they are entangled with each other' (ibid., 262). Although the focus is placed on decision-making and not accounting for the processes of constructing problems, Langley *et al.'s* (1995) work usefully situates the interrelation between decisions and problems. In this thesis, I further attempt to provide emprical evidence on this point and provide a nuanced reading of how these feed into each other within an interactional event.

Prominently, recent discourse-based studies on decision-making pay attention to the non-linear nature of problem-solving and decision-making and the complex relationship between the two (e.g. Clifton, 2009, 2012; Kwon, Clarke and Wodak, 2009). Clifton's (2009, 2012) studies on decision-making, for example, show how decision-making processes are constituted by the negotiation of solutions to an issue defined as a problem. The process of defining issue and problem in this context feeds into the process in which decisions are made. From a reading of my data, the process of defining - hence, constructing problems - can be looked at in the opposite way. In other words, it can be decision-making that constitutes problem-solving. Although not made explicit, Alby and Zucchermaglio's (2006) study on decision-making in the context of problem-solving in managing emergency shows participants make decisions on how to do problem-solving in the context. In this case, decision-making in its turn supports the process of problem-solving.

In looking into the relations between decision-making and problem-solving, I refer to Marra's decision model (2003). Although the main research focus is different, the author's work shares its concerns with interactional activities and approaches to identifying the interactional activities. Marra's model demonstrates the cyclical patterns in decision-making, involving the core moves, 'issues raised', 'solution proposed' and 'decision ratified' (p. 211). The similar interactional activities have been identified in the problem-solving model presented in this thesis; albeit, the terms are different (see Figure 7, p. 93). Through the analysis of problem-solving meetings from opening to closing, I argue how these can be mutually constitutive, emerging in the meeting event.

Another important feature of problem-solving discourse relevant to this thesis can be understood from Atkinson's (1999) view that decision-making in an institutional setting is a 'discursively dispersed and fragmented' process. In other words, decisions as well as problems very rarely can be pinned down to one particular moment in interaction. Empirical studies have shown participants rarely explicitly signal decisions (Huisman, 2001, p. 77; Alby and Zucchermaglio, 2006, p. 961), suggesting that decisions are 'ineluctably embedded' in complex work practices (Alby and Zucchermaglio, 2006, p. 961). This applies to problems. Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini (2011) highlight that it is not straightforward to conclude 'as to whether any specific issues are actually being discussed or resolved' (p. 222). In the same

line, my data has shown such interactional moment is not distinctive as such, but these activities are rather inferred from participants' (linguistic) actions or (dis)aligning or (dis)affiliative moves taken to the issues being raised and negotiated. Given this, as also has been mentioned earlier, I avoid conceptualising problem-solving and decision-making as two distinctive activities but achieved in an emerging and mutually co-constitutive way. I discuss this point in light of my data in Chapter 6.

For unpacking the dynamics of workplace interaction in general and problem-solving in particular, interactional studies pay special attention to expertise and the power of the status quo and look to the way these are negotiated in interaction. The power of expertise and the status quo have an obvious implication on one's professional and institutional roles (-responsibilities), which brings to the interaction specific perspectives and actions. Of particular interest in this thesis is the way employees enact and negotiate their institutional/professional roles specific to expertise and responsibilities in problem-solving meetings, and how the former shapes the latter. I discuss this point in detail in the following sections.

2.3.2. Negotiation of expertise and power

One of the most commonly discussed features in discourse-based studies on problem-solving or similar (e.g. Alby and Zucchermaglio, 2006; Clifton, 2009; Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Asmuß and Oshima, 2012) is disagreement and negotiation in managing divergent views. In the context of problem-solving, Angouri (2012) sees disagreement as 'an inherent and hence unmarked' characteristic of the process, and the process of negotiation as an essential part in constructing a meeting as having a problem-solving function (p. 1568), and this further contributes to the construction of new knowledge in the given setting. In context of my data, I have identified the negotiation processes emerged throughout the interactional process in which interactants negotiate shared understandings of problems and situations.

In instutionnal interaction studies (e.g. Cicourel, 1988; Asmuß, 2011; Angouri and Locher, 2012; Marra, 2012), disagreement has been understood as co-construction between interactants. Marra (2012), for example, argues that disagreement is interactionally achieved as negotiated by the interactants, and hence the negotiation process is context-dependent, and emphasises the importance of looking to interactional contexts including group norms and the setting within which the interaction takes place (p. 1580). Along similar lines, Dall and Caswell's (2017) work on inter-professional team meetings and decision-making sheds light on the complexity of 'negotiated activities' as those activities are 'enacted in situation by the participants, yet highly influenced by the institutional context (p. 484). As the authors

succinctly put it, 'negotiation is not just a matter of reaching agreement between differing professional perspectives on the case at hand; it is also a matter of fulfilling and giving shape to institutional goals' (p. 484).

Negotiations in this way become a space where professional knowledge and authority are challenged. Dall and Caswell's (2017) work identifies two main patterns of negotiation – 'expanding' and 'postponing'. The former takes place 'when professionals hold on to the issue of the negotiation and work to avoid the discussion being closed'; and the latter takes place 'where decisions are delayed or avoided' (p. 487). Similar patterns have emerged in my data, as I illustrate with Figure 7 in Section 6.2. Yet I conceptualise them in terms of formulating and resuming, seeing that formulating work involves expanding formulations of issues and negotiating the formulations, and resumption incorporates the processes of postponing and resuming the prior talk which has been delayed. I explain these two concepts in Section 6.2 as the core interactional activities that emerged in my data.

Negotiation takes place throughout interactional activities, and it provides analysts a critical point where the status and power are enacted and negotiated. Status and power have been one of the key aspects in investigating workplace interaction, and there has been much research devoted to theorising how they manifest in interaction in workplace and institutional settings (e.g. Locher, 2004; Holmes, Schnurr and Marra, 2007). As has also been noted in Section 3.3 on the relations between the HQ and subsidiaries, power from discursive perspectives is not static but 'relational, dynamic and contestable' phenomena (Locher, 2004, p. 37). In other words, the power of the status quo does not always derive from hierarchical position but constructed and negotiated in workplace interaction (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). In sociolinguistic workplace studies, researchers take a bottom-up approach and provide detailed analysis of the discourses in which the power of the status quo shapes how to proceed in forms of 'appeal to proper procedures' or 'an assertion of the inherent rights associated with the existing status hierarchy' (Stubbe *et al.*, 2003, p. 371).

Epistemic status and stance

The importance of expertise in problem-solving for defining problems and searching for solutions has been well recognised in problem-solving literature (e.g. Newell and Simon, 1972; Smith, 1989; Nickerson and Zenger, 2004). Expertise is related to epistemic authority or status in determining 'whose view is the more significant or more authoritative with respect to the matter at hand' (Heritage and Raymond, 2005, p. 15). Epistemic, however, according to Heinemann, Lindström and Steensig (2011), would be broader in its conception, intertwined with social issues involved in activities where interactants engage in sharing knowledge and experiences (p. 112). As Heritage (2013) would argue, epistemic status is highly relevant to

problem-solving activities where interactants have to use and share background knowledge and make sense of their co-interactants' actions. At the same time, as Heinemann, Lindström and Steensig (2011) argue, interactants are subject to display social affiliation by enacting their epistemic stances under such circumstances. Epistemic stance here is relevant to epistemic status but needs be distinguished to understand linguistic acts under investigation.

In interactional studies, epistemic status, like the other social constructivist conceptions such as status and role, is treated as something that is enacted and negotiated by the interactants. In Heritage's (2012) framework, epistemic status is 'an inherently relative and relational concept concerning the relative access to some domain of two (or more) persons at some point in time' (p. 4). The author sees epistemic status as a salient factor in determining and hence understanding social actions, in that interactants are aware of relative epistemic status, 'distribution of knowledge and of rights to knowledge between them' (ibid., 24). Epistemic status, then, as Heritage (2012) argues, should be understood as 'consensual and thus effectively real state of affairs, based upon the participants' valuation of one another's epistemic access and rights to specific domains of knowledge and information' (p. 7).

Enacting epistemic status necessarily involves epistemic stance and relevant role enactment. According to Heritage (2012), epistemic stance concerns 'the moment-by-moment expression' of the relative status (p. 6). As linguistic features that index epistemic stances, studies on interactional stance identify question-answer sequences, *oh*-prefacing (Heinemann, Lindström and Steensig, 2012), (no-)knowledge claims (Asmuß, 2011; Keevallik, 2011), asserting, requesting information, and declaratives (Heritage, 2012). As I discuss in the analysis of problem-solving meetings in Section 6.3, those features with the speakers' epistemic domains prevail in my findings. In my data, these usefully work to (re)formulate issues, situations and actions, and ratify the issues as problems or not, indexing their (perceived) professional roles. As emerged in the data analysis, I discuss further how epistemic stances can link interactants' temporal roles in the interactional setting and professional roles that goes beyond the immediate interactional context.

Now I turn to the social constructionist perspectives on the professional role, which will facilitate an understanding of employees' constructions of problems.

2.4. Professional role as a social, emergent process

Interactional studies highlight interactants' roles and status as most relevant to the ways interactants enact and negotiate their views and examine the way professional, institutional and discursive roles are enacted (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Sarangi, 2010; Schnurr and Zayts, 2011; Angouri, Marra and Holmes, 2016). Influenced by Goffman's work (1959), these studies understand role as something that needs to be performed by individuals, rather than

pre-defined social facts. This is in line with the thesis's position that brings to the fore the role of language, and more broadly the role of agency of individuals (Section 1.3). In my corpus, professional roles are talked in interview settings and enacted in the context of problem-solving. In this section, I explore social constructionist concepts of roles and identity as related concepts then turn to theoretical and empirical studies that explain how professional roles are negotiated in institutional interaction.

2.4.1. Role and identity

Within a social constructionist paradigm, which this thesis adopts (Section 1.3), a similar and perhaps interchangeable concept is identity. The constructionist approach rejects a static view of identity as a stable property that one possesses but sees identity as something that individuals 'actively *do*', construct and negotiate in interaction (e.g. Holmes, Stubbe and Vine, 1999; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin, 2011; De Fina, 2012). *Doing* and *being* then, are intimately linked (Marra and Angouri, 2011, pp. 1–2). The studies look to linguistic choices and their creation of meaning in interaction, i.e. the association of language with ideas and ideologies (De Fina, 2012, p. 269).

In this way, the concepts of role and identity share common features, and studies have recognised the relation between the two, sometimes using them interchangeably. Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck (1999), for example, argue that identities are negotiated as individuals enact their roles in relation to social expectation; the role, in turn, is '(re) confirmed through situated identity work' (p. 228). Marra and Angouri (2011, p. 3) define role as 'a resource for self-identity' as individuals draw on professional roles in constructing the self, and self-identity in this way is understood to derive from the roles. As the authors claim, the analysis of the professional role enactment can throw light on one's identity.

Considering the research context and the setting, the focus of this research is placed on professional roles in exploring participants' accounts and workplace interaction. As Mantere (2008) argues that situated in the organisational setting, 'roles *are* a part of everyday strategy discourse and practice. Practitioners *do* think and communicate, relying on the concept of a role' (p. 297). Angouri and Mondada (2018) state that individuals bring to the (interactional) event their own role perspectives, expertise and responsibilities, and simultaneously negotiate their roles in relations to their team and organisations (p. 474). Role, defined as unfixed and dynamic positions, is 'constructed through a set of discourse practices', negotiating and balancing the immediate interaction with broader organisational and social context (ibid.). I draw on this conception of role in unpacking dynamics of problem-solving interaction, and in doing so, I contend individuals' role enactments shape and are shaped by problem-solving interaction.

2.4.2. Negotiating professional roles in interaction

Interactional studies on professional roles demonstrate how the role is negotiated and hence jointly achieved by both the speakers enacting the performances and the audiences understanding the performances in context (e.g. Sarangi, 2010; Asmuß and Oshima, 2012; Halvorsen and Sarangi, 2015). In professional settings, the complexity of role enactment is evident in that individuals are subject to balancing their roles in the institutional setting, shifting them strategically from one to another in appealing to one's responsibility, positioning and achieving interactional goals (Sarangi, 2011). The complexity can be explained in light of Sarangi and Roberts's (1999, p. 15) framework on professional and institutional discourses. The authors provide a similar conceptualisation of institutional discourse to the one of Drew and Heritage (1992) discussed earlier (Section 2.3), yet it throws further light on the role of the professional:

> what the professionals routinely do as a way of accomplishing their duties and responsibilities can be called professional discourse […] what counts as legitimate professional discourse will depend on the range of discourses available within an institutional order.

In this sense, the authors see the institution and profession as mutually co-constitutive. Hence, instead of seeing them as a dichotomy or focusing on the tensions emerging between the two, as the authors suggested, it would be more comprehensible to see them in terms of 'the interplay between the institutional and professional discourses' (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p.16).

Of interest to this thesis is the way the institutional and professional discourses are (strategically) enacted and negotiated in the processes of constructing problems. Although these two discourses are not always distinguishable in my data, employees actively draw on them in achieving the individuals' agendas. The social constructivist concept of role provides a useful lens to capture this dimension as employees draw on professional knowledge and institutional norms in enacting and negotiating their professional/ institutional roles. This underpins my analysis of employees' talk in association with the organisational controls and resistance dialectics (Chapter 6) and problem-solving meeting interaction (Chapter 7).

Performing roles involves the 'negotiation of common ground' between participants in the interactional and the broader social context (Marra and Angouri, 2011, p. 3). Asmuß and Oshima's (2012) study on making proposals in strategy meetings shows participants' discursive strategies such as sequential patterns in (re)negotiating the speaker's institutional role vis-à-vis entitlement to make or accept the proposal (p. 72, 82). Sarangi's (2010) work on medical doctors' role performance in a consultation setting makes a case for the complexity

of the process as the doctors are subject to '(re)configure relevant roles according to the character and expectation of the patients' (p. 54). Hence, as the author notes, individuals are 'exposed to a repertoire of professional roles in their institutional and social context' and have to 'momentarily and cumulatively configure relevant roles' according to social expectation (ibid.).

According to Henriksen (2008, p. 49), organisations, in turn, are enacted by interactants' 'role perspectives onto the issues of the context', seeing role as 'dynamic representations of structural perspectives'. Roles enacted in interaction can 'bring structural issues into the interaction' in a sense that 'by enacting a role, its socially legitimated rights, duties, values, norms and perspectives are brought into play' (ibid., 48). In examining the ways the institution is interactionally invoked, Nielsen *et al.* (2012) have demonstrated how the procedure of invoking the institution brings about certain actions in talk, thus indexing the situated expertise embedded in professional roles and responsibilities. In this sense, I contend that role should be conceptualised as dynamic positions that are both interactional and structural. In other words, role emerges in the interplay between social structure and the agency of individuals.

My use of the concept 'professional role' encompasses both professional and institutional versions in the sense that these two are interlaced, enacted in interaction and situated in the institutional setting. Empirical studies have shed light on the complex ways in which the institutional and professional discourses and orders come into interactional processes in institutional settings. Mehan's (1983) study on team meetings concerning children with special needs relates authority in decision-making to institutional role as in speaking for the institutional and professional role as psychologist expert. The study demonstrated how the institutional and professional roles are linguistically enacted, projecting one's authority in making claims and decisions. Griffiths (1997), in a similar vein, demonstrates the interconnection between institutional and professional roles by analysing different ways of organizing teamwork and providing their implications for the authority of different professions. Måseide (2007)'s studies on medical problem-solving further demonstrates how doctors manage professional and institutional problems in interaction and negotiate the institutional and professional orders. While acknowledging the relation between the institutional and professional roles and discourses, Graham (2009) illustrates the tension between the two by illustrating how competing hierarchies of institutional and expertise-based characteristics are manifested and managed at the interactional level. The analysis highlights participants' *perceptions* of hierarchical status – 'the ways in which people see themselves in relation to one another' – as an important factor for investigation (p. 15).

Halvorsen and Sarangi's (2015) work that focuses on role in decision-making context reveals the dynamics in decision-making contingent on participants' shift between roles available

within the activity. Although the authors provide a detailed analysis that provides nuanced understanding of role-positioning that is 'accomplished situationally and in activity-specific ways' (p. 2), the focus of analysis on discourse and activity roles remaining at the participation level does not provide much information about the institutional and professional characteristics of the participants. In other words, it does not account for the interactants' roles specific to expertise and responsibilities – 'anchored positions outside the temporary context' of the interactional event which individuals draw on (Angouri and Mondada, 2017, p. 474), and which I consider to be crucial in understanding how problem-solving interaction and other relevant workplace interaction unfold.

As I discuss in my analysis, organisational role-responsibilities and expertise are valuable concepts that individuals discuss in their own terms in interviews and when enacting problem-solving interaction. Interactants project or claim roles specific to their responsibilities and expertise, while ratifying issues as problems and offering solutions to the problems at hand and balancing professional expertise with interpersonal issues. Such interactional activities, in turn, provide the analyst with a frame for studying how participants, through specific discourse practices, take positions and are *being* positioned by others in relation to specific roles and identities, and, therefore, the organisation emerges.

2.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed relevant scholarships in the problem-solving domain and institutional interactional studies. These together establish the theoretical framework of this thesis to conceptualise problem (-solving) and professional roles from a discursive perspective. In the review, I also have noted the gap and opportunities in the existing studies which this thesis seeks to explore. In Section 2.2, I have noted that in the domain of problem-solving, much of the existing literature treats the problem as a given and hence overlook the processes in and through which problems come into existence. This is the research gap this thesis aims to address and makes a contribution to problem solving domain by providing interactional perspectives.

As reviewed in Section 2.3, in sociolinguistic work, surprisingly, there is scant interactional research that probes problem-solving in its own right in everyday workplace settings. In the majority of cases, the existing research concentrates on decision-making or treats problem-solving as either part of the decision-making process or within a broader context in which decision-making takes place. Although studies on decision-making provide much insight into interactional analysis, relatively little attention has been paid to the interactional mechanism of problem-solving. This is where this thesis can add to the existing workplace discourse and organisational communication studies. It will explore in detail interactional activities that

emerge in problem-solving, and further investigate the relations between problem-solving and decision-making in meeting events.

Regarding the concept of role, many interactional studies have provided insight into understanding it as a dynamic position. The conception has been usefully drawn on in my analysis of problem-solving meetings. Yet in interactional studies, there seems to be little research into professional role enactment in multinational, inter-organisational contexts. At the same time, in international business studies little work has probed how professional roles are negotiated in interaction between employees. This is another important area that this thesis addresses. In using the concept of roles, I suggest role can be explored in an interdisciplinary frame drawing on both sociolinguistics and organisational perspectives (Section 1.3).

Now I move onto the second part of the literature review that provides theoretical and empirical perspectives on the multinational context and discuss them in relation to the 'problems' perceived and articulated by my participants.

3. Literature review II: The multinational corporate workplace

3.1. Introduction

Researching work-related problems or business activities requires an understanding of the workplace context, encompassing organisational structure, norms, ideologies and local team practices (Roberts, 2010, p. 221) and specifically employees' understanding of local practices – how they perceive, categorise and explain things (Zhu and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013, p. 382). By this account, this chapter provides theoretical and empirical work that provides perspectives on the multinational corporate workplace context and sheds light on issues and problems emerging in such a context in relation to my data.

Multinational corporates are distinguished from any other type of corporation for their complexity as situated in external environments, including the local and global market and networks, and in the internal corporate environment with organisational, linguistic, geographic, and professional boundaries (Meyer, Mudambi and Narula, 2011; Angouri and Miglbauer, 2014; Hoenen and Kostova, 2014). Employees in this context perceive and are subject to coping with a range of issues and problems (Foss, Foss and Nell, 2012; Tippmann, Scott and Mangematin, 2012). Moreover, research has argued that employees often find themselves in competing and conflicting roles (Schotter and Beamish, 2011; Ferner, Edwards and Tempel, 2012). These studies focus on language and the HQ–subsidiary relationships in exploring problems and the roles of the organisational actors. These are core concepts for the reading of my findings that follows and hence the chapter is organised into two parts that also correspond to the data discussion in Chapter 5.

Figure 1 provides a first visualisation of the key aspects of the multinational corporate workplace context relevant to the resources employees mobilise in constructing the organisational problems. This paves the way for Chapters 5 and 7 (see Figure 5, p. 67, and Figure 6, p. 78) wherein I discuss symbolic and material issues employees draw on in constructing the organisational problems and positioning themselves and others.
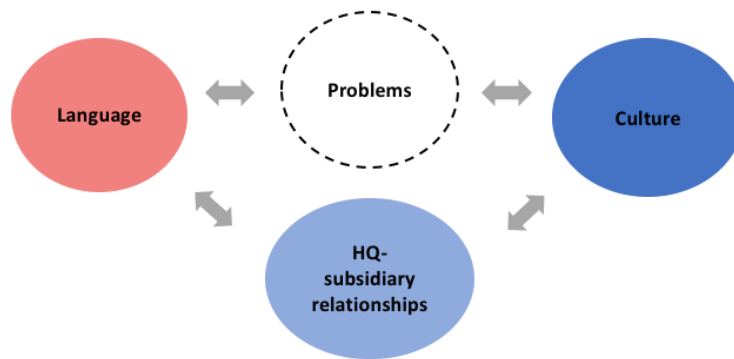
Figure 1 Visualisation of the key relevant aspects of multinational corporate workplace context

As shown in the figure, language, culture and the HQ-subsidiary relationships are most relevant aspects that frequently emerge in my corpus and foreground employees' construction of problems. The linkage between culture and HQ-subsidiary relationships are largely suggested by MNC literature as I will explore in Section 3.3.2 and Section 3.4, and also in my data analysis (Section 5.3).

I the sections that follow, I firstly explore multilingualism and language ideologies to provide views on language as situated at the interface between the local, organisational and social contexts (Section 3.2). In Section 3.3, I provide different approaches to culture – cultural essentialism, culture as a discourse and communities of practice. I discuss here how I understand culture emerging in my interview data, and the relevance of the communities of practice framework to understand problem-solving as an ongoing professional engagement. Regarding HQ-subsidiary relationships, which emerge in my data as one of the key contextual factors, I explore theoretical and empirical studies that conceptualise the HQ-subsidiary relationships (Section 3.4).

The literature discussed in this section provides perspectives on not only issues that emerge in multinational context but also individuals' discursive positioning in and through which the issues are ratified as problems, and their surroundings are negotiated. Drawing on the literature, the final section summarises the gaps and opportunities identified in the existing research, which this research aims to address.

3.2. Multilingualism at work

Multinational corporates have been conceptualised as 'multilingual communities' constituted of languages of the HQ and its geographically dispersed units and markets (Luo and Shenkar, 2017, p. 59) in which employees are to perform their roles 'at the interface of language, professional as well as national boundaries' (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018, p. 10). In international business studies, language has been conceived of as one of the key constructs constituting the organisational life (e.g. Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014). In linguistically diverse organisations, specific languages or English are often mandated as the common corporate language in a range of communication practices (Logemann and Piekkari, 2015).

As emerged in my data in Section 5.2, problems associated with language(s) in this context are articulated in terms of language barriers (e.g. Harzing and Feely, 2008), individuals' language competence (e.g. Harzing and Pudelko, 2013; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014) and work and socialisation processes (e.g. Roberts, 2010). The talk about language as problems in this regard can provide important implications for multilingual realities which the members encounter, and further indicate the individuals' ideologies about language – e.g. how communication should be done at work. In the sections that follow, I explore literature on multilingualism (Section 3.2.1) and language ideologies (Section 3.2.2) and discuss this in relation to my data wherein language is mobilised as a resource in constructing organisational problems.

3.2.1. Multilingualism

Studies on multilingualism take a dynamic approach and see language as a resource people mobilise, and thus, situated in the context of the particular activities and interaction (e.g. Kramsch and Whiteside, 2008; Roberts, 2010; Wodak, 2012). Those studies see language as 'part' of dynamics of the local language practices and multilingual realities as emergent phenomena from the practices (Angouri, 2013, p. 574). In this context, Angouri and Piekkari (2018)'s concept of the linguistic ecosystem can be useful, suggesting that multilingual realities emerge in a linguistic ecosystem that interacts with broader social conditions. The conception of 'linguistic ecosystem' allows 'a holistic and context sensitive approach' (p.4) to understand multilingualism in the workplace where categories and relevant meanings emerge. This foregrounds my analytic approach to employees' talk about language in connecting local practices with dominant language ideologies.

In international business studies, scholars conceptualise MNCs from language perspectives. For example, Tietze, Holden and Barner-Rasmussen (2016) claim languages, including national languages and specialist discourses, 'form the highly complex transnational business communication capital of MNCs' (p. 312), suggesting that 'language mapping' can provide

an understanding of 'language standardisation' in the corporate context, and the language use at both individual and organisational levels (p. 313).

In this line of approach, empirical studies demonstrate how languages in the multinational corporate context work to (im)balance power by looking to the corporate language policies and practices (e.g. Vaara *et al.*, 2005; Logemann and Piekkari, 2015). For example, Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch's work (1999) shows how language works as a facilitator and/or a barrier in corporate communication, and how it 'imposes its own structure on communication patterns, flows and informal networks' (p. 431). This is relevant to my data in which employees talk about the Korean language dominantly used by the HQ and between the HQ and the employees who are able to speak Korean. In addition to Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch's findings, my data shows, furthermore, this language dynamic can potentially influence formal networks, in that employees link the use of Korean to specific organisational roles and activities. I will discuss this point in light of my data.

Relatively recent work looks to the ways language is mobilised in (im) balancing power. Vaara *et al.*'s (2005) study on a post-merger corporate language policy demonstrates languages mobilised as 'concrete examples, signifiers and emblems of national identification' (p. 598), and how the corporate language policy that favours one language over another promotes 'superiority-inferiority' relationships between groups of members who share the same language (p. 619). This study brings to the fore how language becomes a resource that the organisational members can draw on in positioning themselves and others, and it emerges in my data, in which employees mobilise language in challenging and reconstructing the institutional order.

Another area of work relevant to this thesis is the negotiation between local and global languages that are 'socially and locally valued', and hence situated in the local dynamics of language use in the workplace setting (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018, p. 18). Mahili's (2014) study on language use in the corporate context shows that the choices of local and global languages are not straightforward but negotiated among the members, and this is dependent on the way the individuals perceive their roles and tasks. The local and global languages then become unfixed in the way they manifest and function. In this sense, as Kirilova and Angouri (2017) argue, the phenomena of language use including language competence should be understood 'in a dynamic, situated way that goes beyond static view of language, lists of can/cannot do' (p. 551), and in relation to the organisation and the broader socioeconomic environment (pp. 554-555). Wodak, Krzyżanowski, and Forchtner's (2012) work on multilingual practices in institutions furthers this point by highlighting the 'context-dependent multilingual practices' characterized by different patterns of language choice in serving a range of functions (p. 157). From the authors' point of view then, multilingualism is something

that professionals perform in everyday work in the institutional setting, and the multilingual practices are shaped by dynamics at a micro level and language ideologies at a macro level (p. 159).

Relevant to this thesis is the way employees construct specific language and language competences in relation to the professional roles and positions. This demonstrates 'a commodifying effect on the understanding of language' as certain language is valuated in association with the organisational roles and activities, and symbolic power is attached to the language and the speakers (Kirilova and Angouri, 2017, pp. 550-551). Language use and its role, then, need to be investigated in association with organisational activities and practices through which material and symbolic resources are produced, circulated and consumed. In other words, the symbolic value/power attached to specific linguistic resources needs to be understood in the context in which the value is recognised and ratified.

3.2.2. Language ideologies

Language is an important site through which ideologies and power manifest. According to Gal (2006, p. 6), language ideologies can be defined as 'cultural ideas, presumptions and presuppositions with which different social groups name, frame and evaluate linguistic practices'. In this regard, languages can become 'important means of creating shared social identities and of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse, e.g. by establishing hegemonic identity narrative or by controlling the access to specific discourse' (Wodak and Meyer, 2016, p. 25).

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the native speaker ideal/hegemonic status of the English language that emerges in employees' discursive practices. Tietze (2008) points out the conceptualisation of a business lingua franca that treats English language as an 'exchange mechanism' in sharing knowledge and conducting business' (p. 75). Phillipson's (2009, 2014, 2016) concept of linguistic imperialism can be usefully drawn upon here. The author critiques the dominance of the English language as producing the social order in a range of linguistic markets. Drawing on the concept of linguistic imperialism, he points out that the economic and political forces that underlie English operate 'through structures and ideologies, entailing unequal treatment for groups identified by language' (2016, p. 2). The hegemonic status of the English language emerges largely in my data where my participants treat the language as something that one should have and naturalise the valuation of the language and the speakers by relating them to professional roles. In the similar vein, work on ELF has reported political implications of the English hegemony on, for example, communicative practices and the (post-colonial) identity of language speakers (e.g. Bhatt, 2010; Mufwene, 2010; Pennycook, 2014). Martin Rojo (2017) furthers this line of thought by pointing out a set of practices that

promote 'the standard norms (native speaker ideal), from which it is possible to measure gaps and determine levels, and the correlative discursive representations that undervalue those who failed are taken as true' (p. 89). By this account, discourse as social practice is actively involved in the exercise and the legitimation of power (ibid.). The native-speaker ideal appears to be promising in my data, wherein my participants assess the English language competence of certain individuals and groups. In doing so, the speakers put forward their linguistic authority, positioning oneself as 'powerful' and the others as 'powerless'.

Speakers' mobilisation of language in its essentialistic meaning, then, is deeply related to ideologies about language as a commodity in a sense that the dominant language enforces a linguistic capital, (re)producing the social order (e.g. Heller, 2010a, 2010b; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010; Pennycook, 2014). Studies examine how language as a socio-economic resource that can (dis)empower organisational actors in the globalised economy (e.g. Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014; Logemann and Piekkari, 2015; Luo and Shenkar, 2017; Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2017) and have shown perceptions of language issues and problems related to ideologies about 'how much' language employees should have (Lippi-Green, 2011) in their professional context. Language competence in this way is treated as an asset in order to access organisational activities including decision-making, roles and positions and other critical resources, and further becomes 'basis for deciding one's worth' as an employee (Heller, 2010b, p. 102).

Of interest to this research is how the language as an abstract notion is mobilised in formulating one's language competence as a problem. A relevant approach can be drawn from studies (e.g. Blommaert, 2005; Park, 2013; Pennycook, 2014) which look to 'semiotic processes that produce and authorize the valuation of language and speakers and that regulate their access to the resources' (Del Percio, Flubacher and Duchêne, 2017, p. 56). This is a premise that such valuation is ratified in interaction and in the organisational and socio-economic settings (Heller and Duchêne, 2012; Del Percio, Flubacher and Duchêne, 2017). The valuation processes indicate one's strong ideological positioning around the language competence in the local/global language/s of an institution (Angouri and Miglbauer, 2014).

Language ideologies then should be conceived of as (re)produced and negotiated in social processes in which knowledge about language, linguistic competence and skills are 'being articulated, formed, amended, enforced' (Blommaert, 1999, p. 1). This is prominent in my corpus wherein participants articulate language uses and competences as a problem under their ideologies. As Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005, p. 213) emphasise, it is important to scrutinise 'interactional' aspects of the talk/ discourse as a 'regime' in order to emphasize 'the necessarily emergent nature of social processes; in other words, that the conditioned and normative nevertheless unfolds in the contingencies of situated activity'.

In the multinational institutional context, empirical studies demonstrate members' ideological positioning. Wodak, Krzyżanowski, and Forchtner's (2012) study on multilingual practices in an institutional setting shows participants' language practices (e.g. the choice of language and controls of the interaction flow) are shaped by their ideological positioning and the contextual factors, and power manifested through the practice. Focusing on employees' talk about language practices in MNCs, Angouri and Miglbauer's (2014) study shows that the employees' talk does not merely reflect communication difficulties at work but indicates power struggles. The enactment of a native speaker ideal in their study is associated with issues of power (im)balance between local/global staff. Along these lines, Park's (2013) study on discourses of commodification highlights the significance of speakers' discursive practices and ideological positioning in that the ideologies are not only involved in the valuation of language and the speakers but also affect one's performance at work, constraining one's beliefs about communication in the workplace, how one is supposed to engage in communication across language boundaries (p. 559-560).

3.3. Approaches to culture

Culture is a widely and commonly discussed concept in everyday contexts and in academia. The concept of culture has a range of definitions and has been approached in very different ways. I will not provide here an exhaustive list of definitions of the term (see Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009 for the definitions). In this section, I focus on approaches to culture under different paradigmatic positions: cultural essentialism, culture as a discourse and communities of practice. Although cultural essentialism is a position this thesis eschews, it can shed light on employees' mobilisation of culture mobilised in constructing the organisational problems, critiquing the organisational hierarchical structure and procedures. Drawing on but taking a critical stance on cultural essentialism, I then provide a discursive approach that sees culture as a discursive resource that underpins my analysis of employees talk about culture (Section 5.3), and an alternative conceptualisation of culture, communities of practice that can shed further light on problem-solving activities at work (Chapter 6).

3.3.1. Cultural essentialism

Culture from an essentialist point of view is defined as the inherent characteristics of social groups. This conceptualisation has been often found in the cross-cultural field, and representative ones would be, for example, Hofstede's (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 1991) much cited model, which defines culture as 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others' (p. 5), and House's (2004), which sees culture as 'entities' (e.g. the legal, educational, political, and social systems) that 'induce the common (or shared) attributes among members of the

collective' (p. 484). These approaches conceptualise culture as uniformities that (pre-)exist within the collective that affect its members and emphasise the coherence of a society.

Such tendencies to equate culture with a collective, however, are problematic. As studies provide criticism on this approach, one of the main problems is its lack of capacity to explain diversity within a collective. Even in the cross-cultural discipline, Fischer and Schwartz's (2011) survey, for example, points out that there is little within-society consensus about values that are internalised in the society by demonstrating that individuals' value priorities vary depending on their experiences, social locations, and genetic heritages. Nonetheless, the conception of culture as common attributes of collectives, often countries, has been much used in cross-cultural studies in an attempt to 'measure' culture and this measurement has been utilised in defining societies and explaining individuals' perceptions and behavioural patterns (see Table 2).

In measuring culture across different countries, shared values as characteristics of the society are used, and the most widely known one is Hofstede's (1984, 2011) cultural value dimensions. Through conducting value surveys across different counties, Hofstede develops dimensions of cultural values through which individual countries are scored in relation to other countries. For example, as one of the cultural values, he proposes '*power distance*' defined as 'the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9). The model provides 'statements' that characterise the small and large power distance societies. The statements for the former include, 'use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil' and, 'hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience'; those for the latter include: 'power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant' and 'hierarchy means existential inequality' (ibid., pp. 9-10). Interestingly, as I will show in Chapter 7, the dimension and statements of *power distance* emerge in my data as employees draw on hierarchical structure and relationships in essentialising the national group, Korean.

Although Hofstede argues 'the statements refer to extremes' and situations would be identified in between the extremes, and the association between a statement and a dimension is 'statistical, never absolute', it nonetheless does not justify the model pre-assuming the homogeneity of members of the society in conceptualising the culture, and the relation between the "culture" and the members' expectations of, for example, the way power is distributed.

Authors	Theoretical base	Methodology	Research focus/ key findings
Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars (1996)	· Value-based cultural dimensions	· A value survey of managers in 43 countries	· Differences in employees' event management behaviours according to the value profiles of power distance and individualism – collectivism
Mitchell *et al.* (2000)	· Cross-cultural cognitive model of venture creation (Busenitz and Lau, 1996) · Value-based cultural dimensions	· A survey on venturing scripts of entrepreneurs, employees and business students in seven countries	· Individuals venturing cognitions across borders · Individualism and power distance positively related to cognitive scripts associated with venture ability, willingness and arrangements
Tinsley (2001)	· Conflict management strategies · Cultural values	· A two-party conflict simulation/a survey of cultural value dimensions	· Differences between managers from Japan, Germany, and the US in negotiation strategies for workplace conflict · Individualism positively related to using interest strategies and negatively related to using power strategies
House *et al.* (2004)	· Value-based cultural dimensions	· A survey of managers in 62 countries	· The differential effects of leadership and organisational practices and values in 62 countries · Values associated with leadership behaviours (e.g. performance-, assertiveness- and future orientation, institutional collectivism)
Bond *et al.* (2004)	· Social axiom-based cultural dimensions	· A social axioms survey, factor analysis of the survey responses, interviews	· The cultural representation of social axioms and five-factor structure within each of cultures (e.g. cynicism, social complexity, reward for application)
Stephan and Uhlaner (2010)	· GLOBE cultural descriptive norms (House *et al.*, 2004)	· Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Adult Population Survey	· The relationship between entrepreneurship and cultural descriptive norms (socially supportive culture and performance-based culture)

Murayama et al. (2015)	· Conflict-Management Behavior (Blake and Mouton, 1964)	· A scenario experiment of Japanese and American students	· Differences between Japanese and American in perceived relationship and task conflict and preferences for active and agreeable conflict-management behaviour
Saucier et al. (2015)	· GLOBE normative practices (House et al., 2004) · Social axioms (Leung et al., 2002)	· Online survey of students of higher education institutions from 33 countries	· Differences between populations in religion-related beliefs and regularity-norm behaviours

Table 2 Examples of empirical studies on culture from a positivist approach

As the example studies in Table 2 show, the value dimension framework has been commonly used in cross-cultural management and psychology domains in explaining workplace behaviours such as decision-making (e.g. Mitchell *et al*., 2000), leadership (e.g. House *et al*., 2004) and negotiation behaviours (e.g. Tinsley, 2001). By bringing to the fore societal (cultural) values and seeing them in ways that affect individuals' behaviours, those studies make and reinforce the direct relation between individuals' behavioural patterns and nationalities.

The essentialist cultural conception, however, has been criticised for its assumption of cultural causality in assuming culture as the only factor that influences organisational practices or individuals' behaviours (McSweeney, 2002, 2009, 2016; Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007) while lacking a valid account for the influence of culture on behaviours. As an example, Tinsley's (2001) study on cross-cultural differences in managers' negotiation strategies used the value profiles of individualism-collectivism and power distance for data sampling and set hypotheses based on the nationalities of managers as an independent variable to examine the participants' different use of negotiation strategies. The study's use of nationalities as a category in the data collection and analysis, as well as an explanatory variable that accounts for patterns of practices or behaviours, rules out the other important contextual and situational factors at the expense of the generalisation of individuals' behaviour based on the cultural dimensions (McSweeney, 2009).

National categories are abundant in my corpus mobilised in employees' interpretation of organisational activities and practices, in which I read the speaker's ideology. The cultural essentialism comes into play in employees' talk that attributes 'the cause of the perceived problems encountered in the workplace to an abstract concept of culture' and cultural difference' (Angouri, 2010, p. 209). It is important, therefore, to take a critical stance on the

ways lay users make culture relevant to the perceived problems and create a 'stereotypical view' of certain groups or individuals by (re-)representing them in certain ways.

This contention leads to the next section that sees culture as a discourse.

3.3.2. Culture as a discourse

Studies under social constructionism or post structuralism conceptualise culture as a discourse – the ways lay users mobilise accounts of culture in everyday interaction (e.g. Benhabib, 1995, 2002, Carbaugh, 2007, 2014). Hall succinctly articulates that

> a national culture is a discourse, a way to construct meanings which influence and organise both our actions and our perceptions of ourselves. National cultures construct identities by creating meanings of 'the nation', with which we can identify; these are contained in stories that are told about the nation, in memories which link its present (Hall, 1994, p. 201 cited in Wodak, De Cillia and Reisigl, 1999, p. 155).

Hall's conceptualisation of national culture implicates how culture becomes a resource involved in meaning-making and constructing self and others, creating ideologies through the discourses about culture. On the similar line, Wodak, De Cillia and Reisigl (1999) claim that (national) culture is drawn upon as a symbolic resource for communicating identities; and Bucholtz and Hall (2004, p. 382) see the mobilisation of culture as a mode of identity work through which *sameness* of and *differences* between groups are constructed. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2004), the *sameness* (or *similarity*) allows individuals to 'imagine themselves as a group' and the construction of sameness involves '*adequation*' as a tactic through which 'differences are set aside in favour of perceived or asserted similarities that are taken to be more situationally relevant' (p. 384). For *difference* that produces 'social distance' between specific groups (ibid., 369), *distinction* is involved in creating a dichotomy between social identities as 'oppositional or contrastive'; and this effectively reduces the complexity of the social variability to the us - them binaries (ibid., 384).

Cultural identity then, is 'fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon' that emerges from discursive practices (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 588) and 'a contextually situated unfolding process in which individuals come to know who one is' in relation to others in everyday interaction (Lahti, 2013, p. 23). Given the process is relational and dialogic, the sameness and differences should be seen as constantly changing, transformed in the context within which members enact their discursive positioning.

As an example, Schnurr and Zayts's (2012) study on the identity construction in multinational context demonstrates how participants bring up cultural issues and negotiate local practices,

through which cultural differences are constructed and the binary pole of 'us' and 'them' is created. Participants position themselves in relation to the 'other culture and construct their identities in relation to the wider sociocultural context' (pp. 294-295). By emphasising the complexity in the process of constructing identity and culture, the authors provide insights into understanding members' practices and ideologies as they emerge from social interaction and culture mobilised as a resource for the construction of identity and social categories.

On the similar line, organisational studies situate culture in political struggles and demonstrate how the meanings of culture is transformed in challenging the perceived power relations (e.g. Ybema and Byun, 2009; Koveshnikov, Vaara and Ehrnrooth, 2016; Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017). Ybema and Byun's (2009) study demonstrates how employees' notion of national culture becomes a symbolic resource for creating 'a sense of identity and cultural distance' in struggles over power, income, and advancement opportunities in multinational firms (p. 340). Along the line with Bucholtz and Hall's (2004)'s view on difference as a tactic, Ybema and Byun's (2011) work reveals employees' positioning of self and others is achieved 'through invoking stark contrasts – good versus bad, management versus staff, the West versus the Orient' which involves invoking moral judgement to position oneself as (morally) superior to the others (pp. 317-318). In this way, the authors see identity discourse as an instrument 'to establish, legitimate, secure, or challenge the prevailing relationships of power and status' (ibid.). In a similar vein, Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara's (2017) work demonstrates subsidiary employees' deployment of cultural stereotypical talk serves to (im) balance power relations between the HQ and subsidiary. These findings are abundantly present in my corpus wherein employees draw on culture in creating distinctions between HQ and subsidiary relationships, suggesting the significance of the context within which 'culture' is mobilised. HQ-subsidiary relationships indeed importantly foreground employees' talk about culture and also language. I discuss the HQ-subsidiary relationships in Section 3.4.

The meanings ascribed to such cultural distinction between the organisations and between the individuals are 'ideologically produced, plural and ever shifting' (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 54), dependent on the context and intention of the speakers in drawing such distinctions (Young, 2011, p. 171). By this account, the cultural essentialism discussed earlier then must be challenged and understood in the specific social contexts and situations in which the speakers (re)produce and circulate the meanings of the categories. This requires a close examination of 'the arrangement of key or cultural terms into statements which are interpretations of local, taken-for-granted knowledge about personhood, relations, actions, feelings, and dwelling' (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 169) and further detailed analysis of individuals' talk situated in interaction that can also account for the broader organisational and social context (Angouri, 2018).

In the section below, I provide an alternative way of conceptualising culture from a social constructionist view.

3.3.3. Communities of practices

From a social constructivist view, eschewing the essential quality of group categories, culture is conceived to emerge from members' local practices. Workplace discourse studies (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Kendall, 2008; Fletcher, 2014) draw on a communities of practice framework which originates from the social theory of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In this framework, Wenger (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) describes the three interlinked dimensions – mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire – that characterize practice, defining the community. It therefore requires a bottom-up approach to define communities of practice in terms of the members' 'social engagement' whereby individuals of the community actively engage in shared local practices. In other words, communities of practice are locally created in ways that are meaningful to those participating in them (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006, p. 27).

Drawing on this conception, sociolinguistic studies focus on the ways in which workplace communities develop a common set of discourses in the lifecycle of common activities. Business events such as problem-solving meetings provide prime contexts for the negotiation of organisational knowledge and practices. In such events, by engaging in (linguistic and other) practices members develop a collective identity. Flecher (2014), for example, draws on interaction among IT professions and investigates how participants 'do' collegiality towards establishing relationships while sharing norms and experiences, and developing ideas (p.351). The author highlights how the collegial relations are developed by communities with the dialogue. Along similar lines, Marra and Holmes (2016) apply the communities of practice framework to the socialising processes and demonstrate how participants deploy 'constructed dialogue and common ground' (p.151) and certain ways of talking mobilised in sharing understanding and practices among the participants. On this account, communities of practice provide a useful framework to understand the processes in which members acquire knowledge and skills through their social experiences and how culture in the form of a social collective emerges in and through the processes.

The communities of practice framework can then be applied to problem-solving to understand the ways participants share and negotiate local knowledge and practices in creating meanings. Through the members' mutual engagement, problem-solving as a joint enterprise – a domain that creates common ground and purposes – is defined and negotiated by the individuals, and in turn creates 'relations of mutual accountability' (Wenger, 1998, pp. 78-79). In this way, the problem-solving becomes 'a resource of coordination, or sense-making, of mutual engagement' (ibid., 81-82).

To sum up, having discussed different approaches to culture, culture in this thesis is understood in terms of a) a resource that participants mobilise in constructing problems, and b) social collectives that emerge from members' mutual engagement in activities and develop in contexts – historical, social and institutional – with resources and constraints. The former, the mobilisation of culture, can take into account diversity within any (perceived) collectives; the latter can account for the processes wherein individuals bring their habitus and ways of doing things and negotiate them in social interaction in general, doing problem-solving, specifically. It also brings to the fore the individuals as 'agents of culture rather than merely bearers of a culture that has been handed down to them' (Ochs, 1996, p. 416). In context of problem-solving, individuals share and negotiate knowledge and common ground and, in the process, ratify their team membership.

3.4. The HQ-subsidiary relationships and the actors

One of the focuses of this thesis is on how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in employees' construction of the organisational problems. Many international business studies have discussed the relationships between the HQ and its sub-units in terms of the hierarchical structure and procedures (e.g. Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara, 2011; Dörrenbächer and Geppert, 2011; Mudambi, 2011). In this area of studies, one of the common assumptions is that the HQ can exercise power over material and symbolic resources, and over meanings via institutionalisation of corporate procedures and practices (e.g. Ferner, Edwards and Tempel, 2012), and subsidiary processes and decisions through the authority structures (e.g. Mudambi and Pedersen, 2007). At the same time, the studies see subsidiaries negotiate and achieve power from their expertise and performance, providing access to the market (e.g. Ambos, Andersson and Birkinshaw, 2010; Dörrenbächer and Geppert, 2011). Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara (2011) add a range of factors such as 'embeddedness in local markets, external and internal legitimacy, and initiative taken by the subsidiary', which can affect the negotiations of power relations, and all of which can contribute to the dynamics in the power relations between the HQ and its subsidiary (p. 767).

The HQ-subsidiary relationships, then, cannot be explained by the organisational hierarchy alone (Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013) but the ways the relationships are enacted and negotiated by organisational actors. In other words, such relationships are contingent on the purposive actions of subsidiaries and their actors seeking their own interests (Mudambi and Pedersen, 2007) and negotiating their right to make decisions which can challenge dominant institutional norms and frameworks (Ferner, Edwards and Tempel, 2012, p. 172). From this approach, power must be understood as relational phenomena (Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips, 2006), and further a dynamic and discursive process tied to members' (communicative) practices (Fairclough, 1992). Power is a very important concept in

understanding organisational phenomena. This, however, is not what I am going to focus on, but a crucial factor in my reading of employees' interpretations and enactments of the organisational structure.

In the sections below, I explore theoretical perspectives on the agency and structure that foreground my understanding of HQ-subsidiary relationships and the role of organisational actors. This is followed by theoretical and empirical studies that conceptualise the HQ-subsidiary relationships.

3.4.1. Agency-structure

Looking to the ways the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge, I usefully draw on the agency-structure framework. It also underpins my understanding of the professional role enactment in institutional settings (Section 2.4). The influential theorists are Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Giddens (1984). Berger and Luckmann (1966) put forward that the 'typification' of individuals' social actions, through which institutional order is established, in turn provides a key source of structure of social action (p.111). The institutional order is legitimised through the linguistic processes that justify and legitimise institutional practices (ibid.). Institutional roles, then, as the authors usefully put, become 'modes of participation' that 'transcends and includes the institutional order' (ibid., p. 114). In other words, it is through the roles individuals performed that the institutional order and the organisation emerge (p.74-75).

Giddens (1984, 1993) furthers this line of thought by emphasising the role of human agency and practices in (re)constituting institutions. According to the author, 'the key to understanding social order is not the internalisation of values, but the shifting relations between the production and reproduction of social life by its constituent actors' (1993, p. 108-109). I adopt this view in order to understand the ways the HQ and its subsidiary emerge in the local professional practices, suggesting that the individual members are capable of reflecting on the social conditions and hence capable of transforming those conditions. Given the role of actors in constructing the social structure, as Giddens (1984) argues, the conceptual distinction between the institutions and the actors becomes ambiguous; rather, these two should be seen as mutually constitutive of each other. As will be specified in the section that follows, Giddens' framework here foregrounds the actor-centred approach to understanding the HQ-subsidiary relationships.

Along the lines of Giddens' views on agency and structure, organisational theorists highlight the interplay between the organisational actors and structure. Knights and Morgan (1991) succinctly claim 'social order is contingently accomplished through the skilled actions of subjects […] discourses change as actors adopt and change the conditions of the process of reproduction' (p. 254). The authors in this way highlight the emergence of the new

discourses, constructing social relations. This underpins my reading of participants' engagement with discourses, and it is through these discourses that the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge: in other words, it is through the actors who enact their professional roles (Section 2.4) in enacting or challenging the organisational norms and frameworks to the interaction according to their own interactional agenda. As Garud, Hardy and Maguire (2007, pp. 961–962) argue, the structural environments then, 'do not simply generate constraints on agency' but also 'provide a platform' for the activities of actors.

Empirical studies (e.g. Nadai and Maeder, 2008; Dall and Caswell, 2017) demonstrate how interaction is dependent on and, simultaneously, shapes the organisational structure. Dall and Caswell's (2017) work on inter-professional team meetings shows interaction unfolds by participants negotiating shared understandings of the situation across professional and institutional contexts (p.486). Actors in this context are capable of negotiating the professional and institutional order through their interaction (ibid., 495). This resonates with Sarangi and Roberts's (1999, p. 16) framework on professional and institutional discourses, wherein the authors suggest the interplay between the institutional and professional discourses. Moreover, professional roles are enacted in the negotiation between the discourses (Section 2.4.1). By this account, it is arguable that the organisational structure and the actors' professional role enactment are intricately linked. I will discuss this point in light of my data (Chapter 6).

(Socio-) linguistic work here can provide empirical evidence of how human agency and social structure are enacted in social interaction (e.g. Ahearn, 2001; Duranti, 2004; Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin, 2011). The studies demonstrate the ways human agency are (linguistically) enacted in responding to social constraints in the processes of resisting and challenging linguistic and social norms (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004, p. 373). Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin (2011) explain the interplay between the agency and structure in terms of 'agency dilemma' - 'whether it is the person, the I-as-subject, who constructs the way the world is or whether the me-as-undergoer is constructed by the way the world is' (p. 178). With this conception, the authors conceive of individuals as 'the speaking subject' who 'agentively engage in small-d discourse' (ibid.), and through the linguistic choice made from the existing repertoire, the individuals can be positioned on the continuum between 'recipients (i.e. low-agency)' and 'agentive (i.e. high-agency)' (pp.187, 189).

Now I turn to the theoretical and empirical work that conceptualise HQ-subsidiary relationships in relation to actors' discursive practices.

3.4.2. HQ-subsidiary relationships as a discursive practice

A stream of MNC literature looks to political dynamics in the negotiation of HQ-subsidiary relationships (e.g. Vaara and Tienari, 2008, 2011; Clark and Geppert, 2011). Those studies look to the processes whereby the structural environment is interpreted and produced by the organisational actors (Ferner *et al.*, 2004, p. 363), which organisational theorists frame as sense-making and sense-giving. The sense-making approach in this regard is interested in looking to the discursive strategies of actors involved in the processes, whereby 'political interests and stances' are interpreted and enforced (Clark and Geppert, 2011, p.396). Although this thesis does not much focus on the political processes, I usefully draw on the actor-centred approach that emphasises the role of organisational actors in negotiating the HQ-subsidiary relationships. As discussed in the introduction chapter, this thesis conceives of organisational actors as active agent in enacting their surroundings (Tietze, 2008, p. 47). In this vein, MNC actors should be understood as agents capable of navigating and operating their environment (Drori, Honig and Sheaffer, 2009) and creating the rights of professions to practise in such environments (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2012). As Drori, Honig, Sheaffer (2009) put it, organisational actors are 'a vehicle for constructing legitimacy' (p. 719) having the ability to shape legitimatory discourses – how things should be done in the institutional and social context (Morgan, 2011, p. 416).

In the multinational context, and also in my data, tensions between the global and local emerge in negotiating legitimatory discourses in which the speakers resist or challenge the institutional order. According to Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara (2011), MNCs 'must continuously balance as an organisational form, manifested in structures where subsidiaries are both interdependent and independent' (pp. 767-768). In reading such tensions and the balance between the controls and resistance, I usefully draw on a dialogic approach to controls and resistance. According to Mumby (2005), a dialogical approach provides understandings of the ways control and resistance are 'mutually implicative and co-productive' (p.21). The author highlights 'the discursive conditions' as they foreground the dynamics of control and resistance, arguing that 'all forms of organisational behaviour- discursive or material – can be understood through the frame of discourse' (ibid.). In other words, organisational actors are subject to 'competing efforts to shape and fix its meaning', and the analytic focus then should be placed on the ways that the actors 'engage with, resist, accommodate, reproduce, and transform the interpretive possibilities and meaning systems' (Mumby, 2005, pp. 21-22). This approach is useful in understanding my participants' talk about the organisational controls and also culture (Chapters 5 and 7) which can be seen as the speaker's act of resisting the institutional order.

Relatively recent discourse-based studies (e.g. Vaara *et al.*, 2005; Vaara and Tienari, 2008, 2011; Koveshnikov, Vaara and Ehrnrooth, 2016; Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017; Whittle *et al.*, 2016) demonstrate how the HQ-subsidiary relationships are discursively produced and circulated in the form of accounts and narratives and shed light on the discursive dimension of control-resistance dynamics. For example, Vaara and Tienari's (2011) work on a cross-border merger illustrates how narratives are employed as central discursive resources in legitimating or resisting the organisational change. The findings identify types of antenarratives such as 'globalist storytelling' and 'nationalist storytelling' mobilised in legitimating or challenging the merger, and creating the MNC, national and regional identities (p. 371).

With focus on the roles of organisation in the MNC integration, Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara (2011) elucidate 'resistance and reconciliation as mechanisms through which subsidiary roles are enacted', arguing that resistance forms a critical part of the MNC integration (p. 766). The study identifies three types of discourses – selling, resistance and reconciliation discourses – mobilised in (re)balancing the subsidiary–HQ relationships. The selling discourses involve strategies that focus on the 'benefits of integration' linked to more general business discourse about appropriate responses to globalisation which legitimate the organisational control mechanism (p. 773). The resistance discourses counteract the selling discourse. In resistance discourses managers argue for 'local adaptation' and the autonomy by using the notion of 'uniqueness' of the market that justifies the local adaptation and provides rationale for questioning a strategy being globally imposed (p. 777). The reconciliation discourses are mobilised in resolving tensions between the HQ and the subsidiary by emphasising 'the need for integration but also respected local expertise' (p. 779).

Vaara and Tienari (2011) and Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara (2011) provide insights into understanding how the power balance between the organisations is achieved through the members' discursive resources that centre the subsidiary. These studies suggest a close examination of employees' framings of the organisational roles and relationships (e.g. integration, centralisation, localisation) in their rhetorical arguments and strategies. In my data, the resistance discourses are frequently observed as my participants brought to the fore the importance of the local expertise in a range of situations. In this sense, the resistance discourses are intertwined with their professional discourses, positioning themselves as expert. I contend here that the deployment of discursive resources should be understood in relation to the speakers' interpretation of their professional roles.

Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara's (2017) work on managerial discourses shows patterns emerging in narratives similar to those in my data in terms of the struggle over control versus autonomy in relation to both 'symbolic and material issues' (p. 250). The authors view that

the organisational relationships are constructed through the constant struggles. In the findings, they illustrate the struggles with discourses the participants mobilise: 'the struggles over decisions and actions' are enacted by participants' rationalistic discourses concerned with the benefits of company, who hence position themselves as 'rational and good corporate citizens' (ibid., 257). 'The struggle over power relations' are enacted by participants' delegitimation of the ways authorities and responsibilities are delegated, seeking their interest in the subsidiary autonomy (ibid., 257-258). These types of discursive struggles prevail in my data but are not distinctive as such. They appear to be rather interrelated in employees' talk as the power struggles emerge in their understanding of their roles and authorities situated in the organisational activities. In Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara's (2017) work, another relevant one to this thesis is 'the struggles over world views' enacted by the mobilisation of cultural (pre)conceptions (e.g. stereotypes, prejudice) in their interpretation of organisational practices (ibid., 235), suggesting employees' interests in balancing power between the HQ and subsidiaries. In a similar way, in my data, as also discussed in Section 3.3.2, culture becomes an important resource in challenging and critiquing the institutional order. I discuss this point in light of my data in Chapter 7.

Whittle et al.'s (2016) work furthers the views on narratives in their legitimation function by demonstrating the HQ-subsidiary relationships constructed as 'social facts' can make 'practical and material differences' to the organisational knowledge flows and learning, and strategy diffusion within the MNC (p. 1342). The findings suggest the enacted HQ-subsidiary relationships influence the subsidiary managers' actions in the sense that the managers draw on power and politics in their reasoning procedures, transforming their preferred, strategic actions due to 'anticipated reactions or counter-actions' (ibid., 1323). Although this study makes a valuable point in highlighting the role of discourses, relying on narratives as a data source does not account for whether and how the HQ-subsidiary relationships affect the managers' actions in the actual situation.

In my data the organisational relationships largely emerge across the datasets, as I will show in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Furthermore, my interview data analysis partly supports the views and findings of the MNC studies on the HQ-subsidiary relationships. Yet, in addition to employees' accounts, I draw on their workplace interaction to show how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge and the 'centralized and decentralized modes of operation' (Ferner et al., 2004, p. 363) are negotiated *among* the interactants.

3.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have explored the literature on multilingualism, culture and the HQ-subsidiary relationships to establish understandings of multinational context, and more

specifically, perceived multinational realties. This not only suggests the complexities of 'real world' cases of problems in multinational context but also foregrounds my reading of resources employees draw on in constructing problems and problem-solving in the HQ-subsidiary frames.

In the review, I have emphasised multilingual realities, culture and HQ-subsidiary relationships as enacted by individuals and constructed out of their discursive practices. This however is not to assume these are purely discursive but to conceive that the material conditionings are linguistically enacted by actors. It therefore emphasises the role of actors in enacting their social environment. The discourse-based studies reviewed in this section takes the actor-centred approach in conceptualising HQ-subsidiary relationships. Those studies provide revealing insights into how organisations are talked into being through employees' discursive practices, which this thesis supports. These work however, in most cases, draw solely on individuals' narratives (e.g. Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara, 2011; Koveshnikov, Vaara and Ehrnrooth, 2016). Narratives are an important source of data to unpack perceived organisational realities and the speaker's ideological positioning. Yet, my analysis of workplace interaction shows the HQ-subsidiary relationships are actively negotiated *among* the employees while engaging in their professional practices. It therefore suggests need for drawing on multiple dataset in aiming to understand the organisational relationships more fully. In this way, it can enrich the dialogic perspectives on the organisational relationships which the organisational discourse studies pursue in theorising the HQ-subsidiary relationships.

In the following chapter, I explain methodology and the methods employed in researching the construction of organisational problems.

4. Methodological approach and the methods

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the methodological approaches with which I sought to investigate the way organisational problems are constructed in interaction. I begin with the case study design that is ethnographically informed (Section 4.2). I then discuss ethical and procedural considerations in the research process in association with the role of the researcher (Section 4.3). In Section 4.4, I provide details of my participants, followed by the datasets and the data collection methods used during the fieldwork (Section 4.5). In Section 4.6, I turn to my data analysis approach and processes.

4.2. Research design: case study with an ethnographic approach

In qualitative studies, the case study design is considered as an empirical enquiry that provides holistic and multiple perspectives of the phenomena and context researched (Duff, 2008; Yin, 2009). In particular, as Yin (2009, p. 18) states, the case study design is useful for investigating 'a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident'. By this account, central to the case study approach is understanding the context within which the social phenomenon is situated. Indeed, Yin (2009) contends that phenomenon and context are 'not always distinguishable in real-life situations' as the former is pertinent to and influenced by the context (p. 18). In this sense, given that problems do not emerge in isolation or in a vacuum but situated in the local and broader environment, the case study design is particularly useful for this research.

The qualitative case study design involves a holistic description and a thorough analysis of cases that include individuals, communities, events, processes, and so on. (Merriam, 1998; Gillham, 2000; David and Sutton, 2011) by gathering and organising multiple sources of data relevant to the case and converge them in seeking triangulation (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 556). Defining 'case', however, is not always straightforward and they seem 'never fully bounded' (Gillham, 2000, p. 1). According to David and Sutton (2011), it would be 'naïve' to conceive of groups being studied as 'singular' or 'bounded' since 'there are no absolutely isolated units of social life' (p. 166). This is especially true for this project, in which I observe individuals and teams constantly engaging in a range of activities through which grouping naturally occurs. In this context, it is possible to see a case as 'a located one, existent in some particular geographic, political, and cultural space and time' (Dyson and Genishi, 2005, pp. 119–120).

The case in this thesis is conceptualised as a naturally occurring team of HQ-subsidiary employees. The case has taken shape in the course of the research that includes the fieldwork and iterative analysis of the data. Initiating the fieldwork, I started with a broad interest in a multinational company as a case. Then, the case became more space- and time-bounded, as I had come to stay in two offices at specific times and observe interactions between employees taking place in the specific location. As my research aims became more concrete, the second phase of fieldwork focused more on details of individuals' roles and organisational activities at work. The cases, the individuals and the teams naturally occurred, and to a certain degree were (role-)structured through being involved in the processes of constructing problems with which the individuals engage.

The case in this thesis, then, can be understood in light of the communities of practice framework (Section 3.3.3), which conceives of community as being defined by the members' 'social engagement', whereby individuals of a community actively negotiate shared local practices (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006, p. 27). In this sense, the communities of practice framework can facilitate framing problem-solving activities that involve the process through which the members develop a common set of discourses, their shared repertoire of resources, and create their social meaning (De Fina, 2011, p. 269).

Nonetheless, the qualitative case study design also had certain limitations. One of them is their generalisability to other settings, partly due to their relatively small sample size and thick description of contexts. This research however neither aims to produce general, context-independent theory nor conducts analysis of a largely decontextualised collection of single examples. Instead, it aims to achieve concrete, 'context-dependent knowledge' to provide the nuanced view on problem as discursive practice in this context (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224). An ethnographic approach adopted in the research project, as I discuss below, contributed to constructing the knowledge.

Ethnographic approach

The approach adopted here combines an ethnographically informed work – audio-recording of workplace interaction – and ethnographic techniques of observation and interviews. The ethnographic approach allows the researcher to explore participants' practices as situated in the setting and the way individuals engage in and perceive their social and cultural context. This is particularly useful for this case study, in that understanding the language used at work necessarily 'requires understanding of the workplace context encompassing organisational structure, ideologies and local team practices' (Roberts, 2010, p. 221). Although I acknowledge the researcher can face limits in the local knowledge or perceptions of the participants, the ethnographic approach certainly provides 'the socially acquired and shared knowledge available to the members of the setting' (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 539). The opportunities to have conversations with participants at given moments enable the researcher and the participants to co-construct findings and uncover the latent meanings of their accounts and acts (Schwandt, 1994). These are essential for this research to contextualise and read employees' constructions of problems. In addition, a mixture of data collection methods that supplement each other produced a thick description of participants' activities (e.g. talk, the use of social space). It facilitates capturing the complexity of the phenomena being researched.

In relation to my ethnographic approach, in the following section I discuss further ethical considerations and role of the researcher in the research process.

4.3. Ethical considerations: Role of the researcher

Ethical concerns directly relevant to ethnographic research concern the autonomy, dignity, and privacy of research participants. The researcher needs to protect the confidentiality (Duff, 2008) and minimise disruption of the participant's work flow during fieldwork. In my study, prior to data collection, I provided the participants with the information sheet and the consent form. On the information sheet, I specified the research topic and aim, procedures and methods involved in the research, benefits and risks entailed in participation, how privacy or confidentiality (anonymity) is ensured, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants were informed of the research topic at the general level (see Appendix 1). On the consent form, the participants were asked to indicate whether they agree to the use of recordings and transcriptions of interviews and interactions and written data such as emails for research purposes (see Appendix 2). The forms were approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Warwick and were sent to the managing director before my first visit. I printed the forms in order to present and obtain a signature from each of the participants on my first visit to the company. To ensure the participants' comprehension, I also conversed with them about the use of data after they had read through the forms and during my fieldwork.

In addition, pseudonyms for the company and the participants were used to protect their identities, names, and specific roles and to keep what they shared with me confidential. I sought to not include any relevant information specific to the roles of the teams and individuals. To reduce the disruption of their work, my observation and interview schedules were set in the least intrusive manner possible by taking into consideration my participants' needs and concerns. The observation schedule for each office was informed the week before, and a week's notice was given to the interviewees. The interviews were conducted at a time and place chosen by the participants. Throughout the data collection phases, I often had casual conversations about the rationale of the research to make sure everybody is fully aware (and ideally is positive about) the scope of the study.

Turning to issues emerged throughout the fieldwork, and given the nature of the research design that intimately involves the researcher in the research process (Section 4.2), it is important to address: a) the positionality of the researcher and its impacts on the research setting and processes (e.g. Madison, 2011; Bjørkeng, Carlsen and Rhodes, 2014; Berger, 2015); and b) 'ethics in practice' that pertain to 'the day-to-day ethical issues' emerging in the research process (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 264). Addressing these issues of positionality and ethics embedded in the research practice requires researchers to engage with 'reflexivity' – 'awareness' or 'self-appraisal' of positionality of the researcher in their research

context (Elliott, 2005, p. 153; Berger, 2015, p. 220). Researchers see fieldwork as a social process (e.g. Van Manen, 2016) and pay attention to the politics of research processes, acknowledging power differential between the researcher and the researched (e.g. Piekkari and Tietze, 2016; Angouri, 2018). The power relations from this perspective is relational, situated in the research setting. Researchers then, as Angouri (2018, p. 68) argues, need to take into consideration multiple roles and identities of themselves and their participants. These are not fixed but negotiated in a range of research encounters, constituting 'interpretation processes' and 'the representation of participants' realities in and throughout the data' (ibid).

In line with this view, I do not see the researcher as an objective or detached actor in the encounter but situated and positioned with the research. Furthermore, negotiations of roles and identities of the researcher and the participants as a process of establishing common ground between the interlocutors in the research activities. In this regard, my own appearance, as a Korean and the access to the company I gained through the managing director would have led my participants to perceive me as an ally of the management. This would have impacts on the ways participants formulate specific issues (e.g. the HQ-subsidiary relationships) as they might fear sharing information which might have negative consequences for their career in the company or, conversely, they may attempt to 'use' the study for own agendas. In dealing with this, whenever I had opportunities to talk about my research I emphasised my position as an independent researcher and my intent to secure the anonymity of the participants. These were also good opportunities for me to discuss further practical implications that this research would generate. Looking back, this, together with my day to day interaction with them throughout the extended period of time helped me build trust to the extent that they appeared to talk openly about their struggles at work, which established my in-depth understanding of a range of organisational issues emerged in the local context.

Accounting for the researcher-participant relationship, 'relational ethics' (Ellis, 2007) requires reflecting further on the ethical obligations of the researcher towards participants in terms of interacting with them 'in a humane, non-exploitative way while at the same time being mindful of one's role as a researcher' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 264). My roles and relationship with participants shifted over time. In the beginning, I was remained as a complete outsider observing and taking down every detail of what's going on in the research setting. I then felt more and more secure in terms of interacting with them and becoming part of the community. For example, I was invited to a range of informal settings such as commuting, having lunch or dinner and celebrating the company's anniversary and staff's birthdays. Over the course of the fieldwork, I noticed a social, emotional bond created with the participants, which requires balancing of my roles in the field. Leaving the field, in order for them not to feel being 'used', I suggested them that I could provide feedback from my

research at general level that they would find useful in their context. Since I had left the field, I kept in touch with some of the participants and sent new year messages to all the participants via email to express my gratitude for their support.

When it comes to interactions with the participants and dealing with the information shared, I took caution in deciding how much to probe sensitive or 'difficult' issues that can discomfort the participants, and to report information that can cause harm to them in various ways. In cases where they exhibited discomfort with their answers or continuing a discussion on certain topics or revealing certain talk they had shared, I avoided carrying on the discussion and sought to prevent disclosure of personal issues. Reflexivity again here becomes a useful concept to be incorporated into research practice. As Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue engaging with reflexivity in an ongoing manner helps account for and further shapes ethical practice in research, dealing with 'ethical dilemmas and moments that arise in the everyday conduct of research' (p. 276).

In association with the ethical considerations, I sought to provide detailed accounts throughout this thesis as to how I obtained and analysed the data, my choice of theoretical frames and how my understandings have been shaped throughout the processes. This process in turn demonstrates the situated nature in the (co-)production of knowledge.

Now I turn to the profiles of my participants.

4.4. The participants in Eco UK

In this section, I explain the teams – operations, marketing and accounting teams – and individuals whom I observed, audio-recorded and interviewed during my fieldwork. The figure below has been constructed from two organisational flow charts that I obtained from the first and the second phases of my field work. While using the same formats as the original charts, I replaced the names of the employees with pseudonyms and the mother tongue of the individuals.

In the context of this thesis, the organisational hierarchy and role-structure provide key contextual information to understand the way employees construct problems in interaction, as employees frequently draw on in their talk. I will discuss this point in light of my data. As shown in the charts, there were four teams in Eco UK: sales, accounting, marketing and operations. Since the sales team members worked in their own sales territories, the teams I observed and interacted with were the operations, marketing and accounting teams.
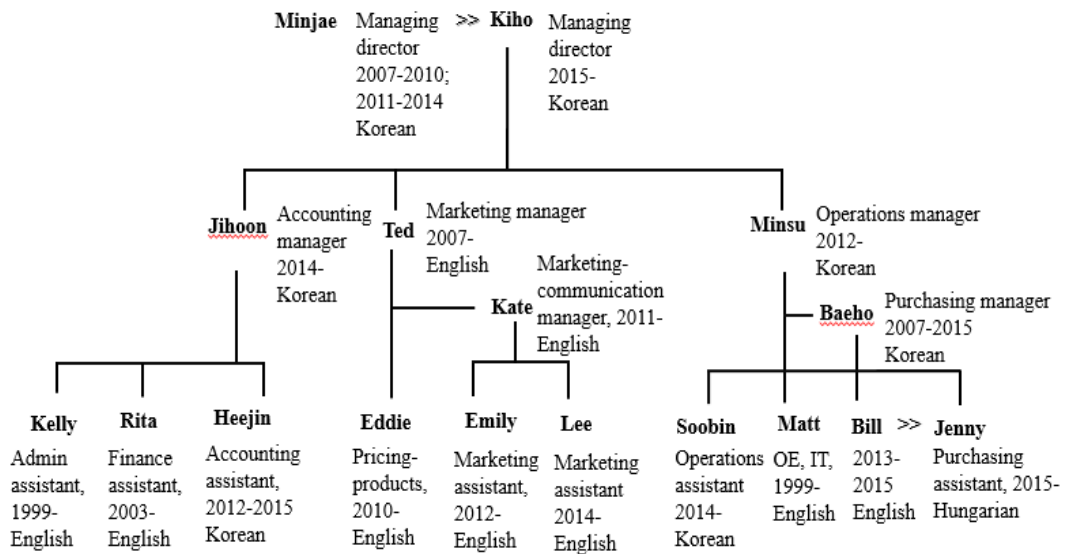
Figure 2 **Role-structure and mother tongue of the participants**

In the following, I brief the teams with roles that will foreground understandings of individual employees' roles and activities.

The teams and their roles

The operations team, also called the commercial team, had sub-functions of purchasing products and technical servicing. Yet the team appeared to undertake a broad range of activities that supported logistics, sales, and marketing. The operations team communicated with the Korean and German head offices, and factories based in Hungary, Korea and China. Depending on the staff members' roles (e.g. creating orders, tracing purchasing histories, reporting sales outcome), they regularly contacted each of the institutions via different means of communication. Communication often involved phone and video calls, emails, and other online communication tools. Within Eco UK, the team released the sales results with the grade of incentives for the sales team on a monthly basis. With the marketing team, in particular, the operations team manager (Minsu) shared information and discussed pricing products and marketing strategies, which were eventually communicated to the head office.

The marketing team had two sub-teams: product pricing, and marketing communications. The product pricing section was responsible for analysing prices of products and the availability of their products within the UK market. As mentioned previously, in supporting the sales activities, the product pricing staff members worked closely with the operations and the sales managers to discuss the results of their market analysis and special offers. They also communicated with the European head office to report their analysis, to set planning and pricing strategies, and to exchange information about market trends in Europe. The marketing

communications staff members were in charge of above-the-line and below-the-line marketing communication. In order to set marketing strategies and plans, the marketing staff members had discussions with the managing director during September. They also interacted with the global head office to get their expense documents approved via an online system, called 'Eco-i', which is used among the Eco head offices and subsidiaries.

The roles of the accounting team included tax accounting, making and processing payments, and reporting financial statements. Along with such roles and responsibilities, the accounting staff members constantly monitored and interacted with the other teams. This was necessary to keep track of invoice payments and make enquiries on a range of payment activities. Based on these activities, financial results were reported to the global head office on a monthly basis. Within the accounting area, the credit administration team was placed in and managed by the accounting manager (Jihoon). The credit administration team dealt with credit control, human resources and organising department events.

As shown in Figure 2, some of the employees changed over the two periods of my fieldwork, from October 2014 to December 2014 and from July 2015 to August 2015. For example, Minjae, a managing director who had worked for Eco UK, moved to the European head office, and the new managing director, Kiho, transferred to Eco UK from the Korean headquarter in 2015.

The participants

My participants included the former and current Korean managing directors and members of the accounting, operations and marketing teams, whom I observed and interviewed throughout my fieldwork. In the following, I describe the participants' profiles as informed by the organisational charts and the interviews with the individuals.

A previous managing director of Eco UK, Minjae had worked as an expatriate manager and MD at Eco UK for eight years prior to moving to the European head office in 2015. Since he had dedicated his entire career to Eco in the UK and South Korea, he had the extensive knowledge and experience required to support both the head office and the subsidiary. While working at Eco UK, he became fluent in English to the point where he was able to chair meetings and give direction to British staff members without any difficulty. He also became well acquainted with many staff members including Rita, Kelly, Ted and Matt, who had worked in the company for over ten years.

When Minjae moved to the European head office a new managing director, Kiho, transferred from the HQ to Eco UK in 2015. In contrast to Minjae, Kiho had little experience of working in a Korean company but rather considerable overseas experience. He used to work in several different countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Dubai, Sudan and Ethiopia before

working for Eco and attained an MBA degree in the USA. Since he completed his degree, he started to work for Eco HQ in S. Korea for a year then transferred to Eco USA where he worked for seven years. After staying at the Korean HQ for another year, he moved to Eco UK. As he had stayed at the different regions working and studying, he was easily able to communicate with British staff members from the beginning.

i. The operations team members

In the operations team, the Korean expatriate manager, Minsu had ten years of experience working at the HQ and Hungarian subsidiary before moving to Eco UK in 2012. In Eco UK, he was responsible for managing a range of sales and marketing activities by reporting outcomes of the activities to the head offices and implementing guidelines for purchasing and retailing their products. A Korean local assistant, Soobin, who had lived in the UK since 2012 and attained an MBA degree in England, had experienced working for a multinational company based in S. Korea. While supporting Minsu, her main tasks included preparing monthly reports on sales results that were shared with the sales director and the MD, updating order processes from Eco factories, and performing other secretarial duties. Matt, who had the longest work tenure, was in charge of IT services and processing Original Equipment (OE) orders. Having worked for five Korean expatriate managers at Eco UK, he got involved in various activities to provide goods and services in addition to fulfilling his assigned tasks.

ii. The marketing team members

In the marketing team, a marketing manager, Ted, dedicated his entire career to market analysis at MNCs based in the UK in the automobile industry. In Eco UK, he managed product-pricing tasks and marketing activities, the latter were also under the responsibility of marketing communications manager Kate. Kate has worked in marketing or PR, and event management for over ten years. The marketing communications staff members – Kate, Emily and Lee regularly interacted with the European and Korean head offices to discuss marketing activities and expenses. A pricing analyst, Eddie, used to work on product function but then changed to work on product pricing within the UK market after a new staff member, John, joined their team. Eddie and Ted often communicated with Minsu, Kiho and a sales director, Ben, as well as the European head office regarding their analysis outcomes and strategies.

iii. The accounting team members

Jihoon, the accounting manager, had worked for Eco HQ for three years and had no previous overseas work experience before he transferred to Eco UK in 2014. He was responsible for managing not only accounting and finance but also credit, administration, warehouse and shipping. A local Korean accounting assistant, Heejin, had lived in the UK for eight years and attended a university in England yet had no previous work experience. Her job included monitoring shipping processes and costs to report to Jihoon and creating monthly reports on

their profitability for the Korean HQ. Additionally, she helped Jihoon to write emails to British staff members and customers. Alongside Heejin, Rita and Kelly worked on taxation accounting and bookkeeping respectively. In contrast to Jihoon, Rita and Kelly had a decade of experience in their field. Ever since Rita and Kelly had started to work for Eco UK, they had worked continuously under Korean expatriate managers; one of whom was Minjae, who became managing director afterwards. After working for such a long time in the same team, they considered themselves to be close friends.

My participants informed me that the managers of the operations, marketing and accounting teams had cross-roles looking after several functions of the company, and some of the staff had to communicate with not only staff from Eco UK but also staff from the Korean and European head offices on a regular basis. In terms of the work tenure of the participants, as described in Figure 2 (p. 47), the staff's hierarchical status did not necessarily correspond to their local work experience, as Korean expatriate managers transferred from the HQ every three to four years.

The following table summarises the profiles of participants of both the interviews and the problem-solving meetings discussed in Chapters 5 to 7:

Participants	Role-profiles
Kelly	Accounting team assistant. In Eco UK for 15 years.
Rita	Accounting team assistant/expertise in accounting. In Eco UK for 12 years.
Ted	Marketing manager/market analysis expert. Product pricing and marketing activities-line manager for Kate. In Eco UK for nine years.
Jihoon	Expatriate accounting team manager. In Eco UK for about a year and in the HQ for five years.
Brad	Tech service manager being part of the operations team. In Eco UK for about 15 years.
Kate	Marketing communication manager/expertise in marketing and public relations, advertisement and communications. In Eco UK for five years.
Minsu	Expatriate operations manager. Managing sales and marketing teams. Three years in role at Eco UK, three years at Eco Hungary, and six years at the HQ.
Matt	IT manager. Developing and maintaining IT service. Placing and tracking orders. In Eco UK for about 15 years.

June	Credit/admin manager. Credit-checking and delivering other administrative duties. In Eco UK for about 15 years.
Minjae	Expatriate managing director. Four years in role and another four as a middle manager at Eco UK.
Emily	Marketing team assistant. Responsible for supporting marketing activities including brand promotion. In Eco UK for three years.
Soobin	Operations team assistant. Responsible for producing reports for the HQ. In Eco UK for three years.
June	Credit/admin manager, part of the account team. In Eco UK for about 15 years.

*Table 3 **Summary of profiles of participants in interview and problem-solving meetings***

The information about the participants' roles, expertise and experience are obtained from the organisational chart, as elaborated in this section, and interview data where employees talked about their areas of work. This is particularly important in understanding the way individuals construct themselves and others in doing problem(-solving) talk.

Now I turn to the datasets collected from the company and the methods that I used for data collection.

4.5. The datasets and methods

As shown in the table below, the datasets have been established throughout two periods of field work. The fieldwork conducted over two periods of time helped me build a rapport with participants and provided me time enough to reflect preliminary findings and refine my research focus and data collection methods. Initiating the field work, the original design of this project was to look for differences between Korean and British managers in their work practices and to focus on culture in particular. During the field work, however, I noticed the complexity of the issue and the importance of the processes of negotiating roles and drawing on categories for positioning self/other. This led to developing my project design in terms of the data collection methods and its focus. Although some of my interview questions (Appendix 3) reflect my original interest in cultural difference, I do not consider this to be a limitation as the researcher's focus always influences the elicitation of data (Angouri, 2018). Also, the core themes emerged both in interviews as well as meeting talk and observation data. It also gave me good datasets to reflect on the accounts of difference my participants chose to put forward to construct their realities at work.

The datasets from the initial period of fieldwork identified the workplace setting, and my participants and their interactional patterns (e.g. who talks and works with whom), as well as topics emerging in a range of interactional settings. As the project design developed in the second period of my fieldwork, I intended to capture more closely participants' roles and responsibilities as well as their work relations and interaction.

The table below summarises my datasets, data collection methods and the specific questions that led to the overarching research questions.

	1st Fieldwork (October – December 2014)	2nd Fieldwork (July – August 2015)	Questions that led to the overarching research questions (RQ)
Observation	App. 80 hours Field notes (31,444 words)	App. 144 hours Field notes (44,853 words)	· What are the work-related issues that participants talk about at work? (RQ 1)
Interviews	15 interviewees: 35 to 50 minutes for each interviewee (App. 600 minutes in total)	11 interviewees: 35 minutes to an hour 15 minutes for each interviewee (App. 500 minutes in total)	· What are the resources mobilized in constructing the organizational problems in interview settings? (RQ 1) · How do participants talk about their professions and the organisations? (RQ 2, 3)
Audio-recording workplace interaction	A meeting among a managing director and two managers (App. 1 hour)	Interactions in accounting team (App. 20 hours (5 days) in total) Interactions in operations team (App. 36 hours (9 days) in total)	· What are the resources mobilised in constructing the organizational problems? (RQ1) · What are the core interactional activities emerged throughout the meetings? (RQ 1) · How do participants negotiate their roles in the interactional activities? (RQ 2) · Whether/ how do the HQ and subsidiary relations

				emerge in problem-solving interaction? (RQ 3)
Organisational chart of Eco UK	1		1	· How do participants talk about and enact their roles given in the chart? (RQ 2 and 3)

Table 4 **Summary of the datasets of the case study**

The interactional data included over 20 hours of interview and 57 hours of workplace interaction, which has been fully transcribed and annotated. This exceeds the typical datasets for interactional research.

In terms of the physical space, I collected the data while staying at most of the time in the accounting/ marketing and the operations offices, and also some of the communal areas. In the company building, the sales team was located on the ground floor; and the rest of the teams were located on the first floor: the accounting team shared an office with the marketing team, which was adjacent to the managing director's office. The communal areas were a staff lounge and kitchen on the first floor and a canteen on the ground floor; employees from all departments could interact.

In the sections that follow I explain each of the data collection methods in detail.

4.5.1. Workplace observation

Observation of workplace interactions helps the researcher navigate various workplace activities including who works and interacts with whom, and identify whom to interview, what to ask, and what and how to investigate further. Workplace and organisational communication researchers recommend direct observational studies of those individuals and teams involved in social phenomena being researched (Down and Reveley, 2009, p. 398). This is because it provides the researcher with a powerful tool for studying the rich context and employees' (inter)actions and interpretations dependent on that context (Langley, 2009; McInnes and Corlett, 2012). It importantly supplements my reading of what was portrayed in interviews and participants' interaction situated in workplace events.

For the observations, I was given two seats in two different offices – accounting/marketing and operations – next to the two expatriate managers in each of the offices. The seats were originally used when the Eco UK employees from different offices come to talk to the managers, or sometimes HQ employees come to visit the company. Although I moved from office to office and walked around the communal areas, the fixed locations in the setting might have largely reflected what the expatriate managers saw and heard. Nonetheless, the locations

allowed me to observe interaction among staff members from different teams and the managing directors.

In the initial stage of my research, the observation began with a range of interests in the workplace and was open to unexpected information in order to obtain ethnographic understandings of the participants, activities, and settings (Blommaert and Jie, 2010, p. 32). Undertaking the phases of fieldwork, I developed an observation log (see Appendix 4) in which I recorded participants' interaction in terms of space, time, events, actors, topics and goals. This was to identify more systematically how interaction takes place. From my first visit to Eco UK, I observed employees in two offices, one shared by operations and credit-admin teams, and another shared by accounting and marketing teams. I stayed at each of the offices for half a day and reversed the schedule in order to observe and record the different activities and practices of the teams occurring throughout the day. The observation took place near the expatriate managers. That means what I observed is rather from the position of where the managers were seated.

From conversations I had with my participants while commuting or having a meal, I was able to get perspectives of several participants, including the managing directors, expatriate managers, Soobin, Heejin, Baeho, Eddie and Jenny. After each conversation, I wrote the participants' accounts as soon as I returned to my seat in the office or arrived at home. At the end of the day, I also added reflective notes about what I found interesting, what I wanted to find out more about and who I wanted to talk with for the next round of fieldwork. Following the second round of fieldwork, I kept in contact with some of the employees via emails and messages.

4.5.2. Audio-recording the workplace interaction

Workplace interaction data is central for this research in order to investigate how employees *do* problem-solving talk, how problem-solving can be done in interaction. In my first phase of fieldwork, I was invited to a meeting between Minjae, Ted and Kate, and audio-recorded the meeting while doing my observation. The audio-recording also included the conversation between the researcher and Minjae commenting on the meeting.

In my second phase of fieldwork, I discussed and obtained the permission from the participants to audio-record their day-to-day conversations in each of the offices from my seats, which were next to the expatriate managers, Jihoon and Minsu. This means the recordings captured the interaction that took place around the managers. Although limited in its range in terms of the workplace interaction recorded, it provided an opportunity to focus on the interaction of the expatriate managers with employees whose roles were relevant to those of the managers.

Among the range of topics and discussions, the work-related ones were often situated in the activities between the HQ and the subsidiary, involving the managers as a participant. The audio-recordings in this way provided a range of topics that cover what was going on not only within the subsidiary but also between the subsidiary and the HQ, and the talk from various participants including managing directors. The audio-recorded data was complemented by my field notes in which I also wrote down the timeline of the audio-recording of interactional events. This helped me to a great degree to track down each of the recordings and identify the parts to transcribe and refer back to my observation of the event that had been recorded. This all resulted in the datasets analysed in Chapters 6 and 7.

In utilising the method of observations and audio-recordings, some scholars caution, with reference to *observer's effect* or *observer's paradox*, that the presence of a fieldworker or recording equipment affects or contaminates the data being collected and analysed, especially in studying the 'naturalness' of human interaction (Merriam, 2009); moreover, it prevents the researcher from exploring 'how people speak when they are not being observed' (Labov, 1972, p. 97). Considering the researcher being there to observe and audio-record interaction and interact with the participants, I pursue a reflexive approach in the course of the research (Section 4.3). More specifically, as Gordon (2013) suggests, the study continues an in-depth examination of 'interconnections between methodology, context, and data' that can provide a lens to look into (p. 315). This shall enrich the contextual knowledge and provide reflexive accounts of the way the organisational reality is constructed.

4.5.3. Interviews: metatalk

Underpinned by my epistemological positioning (Section 1.3), interviews in this thesis are treated as interactional events in and through which 'ways of knowing' are co-constructed by the interviewer and interviewees (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p. 125). More spcifically, in the context of this thesis, interview talk is conceived of as metatalk wherein participants 'reframe' their lived experiences and opinions to make them 'instiutionally credible' by providing 'rational accounts' (Sarangi, 2003, p. 72). Interviews in this way afford the interviewees 'opportunities' to achieve 'the interview agenda within the bounds of social-interactional resources available to them' (ibid., 68). And the resources are critical for the interviewer/ the analyst as 'inferencing resources' in making sense of the data (ibid., 64). In this way, interviewees and the interviewer share and negotiate such resources in coproducing the realiteis.

It then is critical to take into account the roles of both an interviewer and interviewees involved in the meaning-making processes, orienting to their own agenda. For instance, the interviewer can propose or invoke identity categories in questions or responses to the interviewees and the categories can be taken up by respondents. This was the case where I brought up certain

categories such as '*Korean* (managers)' and '*local*'. This means the interviewer and the interviewees 'share presuppositions about indexical associations related to categories', and further jointly participate in positioning the self and the others (De Fina, 2015, p. 361). This implicates the importance of the researcher's critical engagement with the ways questions are asked and more broadly with positioning herself/himself and being positioned by the interviewees. This then leads us to the notion of the reflexivity of the research which I discuss in the following section.

Having conceptualised interviews as co-constructed, meaning-making processes, the language of the interviews is an important factor to consider: I used English and Korean languages according to my participants' preference and self-identified dominant language. With one participant, whose main language is neither English nor Korean, I preferred English as our main common language. Using the languages with which the language users felt most comfortable and natural to use facilitated the processes of producing and co-constructing meanings (Welch and Piekkari, 2006). This is further in line with my position that sees language as a resource which actively constitutes processes of producing and negotiating knowledge (Section 1.3).

Given my use of Korean language, it is worth discussing here my approach to translation in the research. The interviews were transcribed in the source languages that had been used for the interviews. I delayed translation processes until the writing up phase of the research in order to capture more fully how the interviewees constructed meanings and avoid potential distortion of meanings in the translation process (Van Nes *et al.*, 2010). In other words, I maintained the transcribed data in Korean as long as possible for the data analysis and translated them once I selected excerpts to be used for reporting the findings. In the stage of editing this thesis, I had further discussions with a proof reader about translated words and phrases to ensure meanings were translated in accordance with the speaker's use of the words in context. In addition, since English is my second language, I acknowledge the limits of my ability to capture fully the meanings produced in and through the English interview data. I shared the transcribed English data and my interpretations of it with my supervisor to ensure my interpretation of participants' language use in context.

While in the field, I interviewed 17 employees in total. Some of those were interviewed during both of the field work periods, depending on their availability. In conducting interviews, I aimed to obtain diverse narrative resources such as stories and views to explore a range of perspectives on the organisational activity and practices, and issues that are pertinent to the participants' organisational life. Since my fieldwork consists of the two phases, and as my research focus and questions developed, I developed two sets of general interview questions for each phase (see Appendix 3). In the first phase, my interviews were focused on the

participants' experiences at work that includes the length of their time working for the company, whom they work with, and issues around workplace practices and communication. In the second phase, the focus was placed on the participants' roles and responsibilities. I asked them for further examples or detailed descriptions of activities at work. The interview data with my field notes provided not only topical themes but also contextual information regarding professional roles and profiles of the employees, and the details of the organisational practices. The information helped to a great degree my analysis of the interviews and meeting events.

In the following I provide detailed accounts of my analytic approach and process.

4.6. Analytic approach and processes

The analysis initially involved transcribing interviews and workplace interaction data and iterative readings of the datasets to familiarise myself with the data and conduct and manual coding (Appendix 6). The workplace interaction data were transcribed verbatim. After the identification of analytical themes and patterns, selected parts of the material were re-transcribed in detail with reference to transcription conventions (Appendix 9). As the analysis focused not only on what is being talked about but also the way problems are talked about, the analytic process involved both thematic and interactional analysis to interpret how meanings are constructed and negotiated in interaction (Holmes, Marra and Vine, 2011, pp. 20–21).

Using MAXQDA and thematic analysis

I used the MAXQDA software programme for systematic coding and visual mapping of the interview data (see Appendices 7 and 8). This was to identify a range of organisational topics that emerged locally, and the broad themes that emerged from the coding.

When using MAXQDA, I coded the data with an open mind and created as many codes as possible to fully record my participants' perspectives. In the meantime, new codes were constantly emerging, evolving, declining and integrating, and focal points were mapped out based on the code system (Appendix 8). By activating each of the codes and sub-codes, segments for the individual code were retrieved. When revisiting the segments, I removed the codes which appeared to be of little relevance to the segments and coded them with newly emerged and evolved codes (Creswell, 2013). It was to ensure that they were coded in such a way that they could represent the codes. The process was iterating and non-linear. This process helped me reconsider relations between the codes and identify the key concepts emerging from the data. The segments were used for developing the taxonomy of organisational problems. Then, I focused on the key concepts and looked for their links with other concepts in order to obtain as a complete picture as possible and visualised the relation between them

(Appendix 8). This level of analysis was intended to code the full material and provide a descriptive frame for the datasets upon which I built the interaction analysis of selected interview excerpts as well as the conceptual framing of the 'problem' in the thesis.

In the sections that follow, I introduce discourse analytic approaches and explain how I adopted the approaches for the data analysis, explaining key analytic concepts that I have drawn on in analysing employees' *construction of problems* (Section 4.6.1). I then discuss interactional sociolinguistics, a main analytic framework employed to engage critically with the interactional data and the context (Section 4.6.2). I then move onto how I analysed the interview data as metatalk, linking 'analytic themes from linguistics and sociology to focal themes relevant to a professional domain' (Roberts and Sarangi, 2005, p. 633).

4.6.1. Discourse analytic approaches

Discourse studies often distinguish macro and micro discourse in applying the terms. Discourses at a macro level, i.e. capital-D discourse, refer to the wider ideologies, stances and positions that are available to members of any group (e.g. Habermas, 1970, 1999, 2015; Foucault, 1971; Clegg, 2013). Studies focusing on capital-D discourses highlight the macro-categories of social and institutional conditions such as power, norms and structures that shape local settings as well as what is being said and how. Hence those studies emphasise power of language in an imposing way that 'inscribes patterns of sensemaking and affects what people see, what gets silenced, and what is regarded as reasonable and acceptable' through 'labelling or naming a discursive practice' (Putnam and Fairhurst, 2001, p. 111). Relevant to this thesis is the employees' ideological positioning and enacting of institutional order in constructing organisational problems.

Whereas discourses at a micro level, i.e. the small–d discourse, refer to the situated here-and-now of interaction. In the context of workplace and organisation research, scholars seek the essence of workplaces and organisations in instances of social interaction and thus privilege the details of the interaction (e.g. Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Holmes, 2015). From this perspective, interaction is the building block for the emergence of organizations constituted of the 'continuous social and discursive processes' (Taylor and Van Every, 2000). Researchers focusing on the small-d discourse seek the ways in which the subjects 'process text and talk' (Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin, 2011, p. 181), and, therefore, attend more empirical investigations of 'the relation between what is said, how exactly it is said, and the functions that such utterances serve' in their local context (ibid., 182).

Although the perspectives on macro and micro discourse are different, there are overlaps in their approaches. For example, similarly to the capital-D discourse tradition, small-d discourse theorists assume that when engaging in talk the 'choices that speakers can make are limited'.

The distinction made here is that small-d discourse theorists seek the 'actual choices' being made by the participants in the form of performance, rather than choices being imposed (Cameron, 2001).

In this thesis, by drawing on interactional sociolinguistics, which I discuss in the section below, I sought to connect the small-d and capital-D discourses, looking to the dynamics in the local interaction and connecting it to the dominant organisational norms, discourses and ideologies. This is critical in my analytic approach to understanding employees' constructions of problems, in that the ideologies and underlying assumptions of participants are not necessarily explicitly conveyed. Both the details of the local and broader sense of discourses can feed into understanding 'how meaning is negotiated, and judgements made in interaction' (Roberts and Sarangi, 2005, p. 633).

4.6.2. Interactional sociolinguistics

Interactional sociolinguistics, pioneered by John Gumperz, is a discourse analytic approach which attempts to 'bridge the gap' between a 'bottom-up' social constructivist account and 'top-down' theoretical approaches which privilege 'macro-societal conditions' in accounting for communicative practices (Gumperz, 1999, pp. 453–453). Interactional sociolinguistics looks to 'the way localised interactive processes work' and focuses on the 'meaning-making process and the taken-for-granted, background assumptions that underlie the negotiation of interpretations' (Gumperz, 2015, pp. 312–313). Although interactional sociolinguistics draws on conversation analysis techniques in its micro-level interactional analysis to examine the way conversation unfolds, these two differ in their views about the importance of sociocultural context in understanding interaction (Stubbe *et al.*, 2003, p. 378). Talk, from the interactional sociolinguistic point of view, 'only has meaning in context' and the meaning 'has to be actively constructed as the interaction proceeds' (Roberts and Sarangi, 2005, p. 634).

As much discussed in an interactional sociolinguistic framework, Goffman's concept of framing underpins the framework and its conceptualization of interaction. Framing is understood as 'definitions of a situation' people create in making sense of social experiences (Goffman, 1974, p. 10), in other words, people's understandings or premises of 'what it is that is going on' (ibid., 247). Frames, then, are mobilised as 'structures of expectation associated with situations, objects, people' in interaction, and provide analysts with a lens to see how interactants mean what they say (Tannen, 1993, p. 6), and social rules that govern the conversation. In this way, frame 'incorporates both the participant's response and the world (s)he is responding to' (Goffman, 1974, p. 85).

In line with the concept of framing, from the interactional sociolinguistic approach, interactants entering a conversation are assumed to 'make situated inferences about one

another's communicative intentions and goals' (Stubbe *et al.*, 2003, p. 378) to be able to take part in the conversation. Interactants negotiate their subjective views of a situation and meanings and 'construct the contextual ground for situated interpretation' through the linguistic cues (Gumperz, 2015, p. 315). This process involves the knowledge and the ability to interpret and respond to 'the linguistic and paralinguistic cues which call up social knowledge and associations', which is termed a 'contextualisation cue' (Sarangi and Roberts, 2003, p. 200).

Contextualisation cues

Interactional sociolinguistics has developed a linguistic understanding of framing by employing the concept of 'contextualization cues' that 'signal meanings' and are interpreted for the identification of situational definitions (Gumperz, 2015, p. 315). With the notion of indexicality, contextualisation is central in the interactional sociolinguistic framework, in unpacking the interactional, inferential processes. Indexicality refers to 'the function of language to point to some object or association in the immediate situation' (Sarangi and Roberts, 2003, p. 199). Interactional sociolinguists conceive of context as a setting that is not only physical and social but also enacted by the interactants' language use indicating the institutional and social contexts (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Ochs, 1996). Indexicality here works to examine the contextualisation cues that include a range of (non-)verbal signs in serving to 'construct the contextual ground for situated interpretation' (Gumperz, 2015, pp. 315-316).

The analytic focus here then is the 'contextualisation work' – 'the ways in which context is both brought along and brought about in a situated encounter' by the speakers (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 30) – to signal and provide information to their interactants, framing the local interaction in association with the wider context (Gumperz, 2015, pp. 315-316). Furthermore, as Sarangi and Roberts (1999) note, contextualisation work can be 'a means of categorising activities, knowledge and, in particular, professional identities within a given institutional order' (p. 25). Interactants shape the context to put forwards one's authority, one's own framing of the activity or topics or certain interactional norms within which interactional goals and tasks are negotiated (ibid.). Given these points, the contextualisation work is critical in this research to understand the unfolding of problem(-solving) talk, for example, as the interactants have brought to the interaction the institutional framework for doing problem-solving or dominant ideologies, which shapes the ways problems are co-constructed by the interactants and the outcomes of the processes.

In this way interactional sociolinguistics have been applied to analysing problem-solving meetings, and I discuss this in the following section.

4.6.3. Applying the analytic approach to the metatalk and meeting talk

Analysing metatalk

For analysing employees' metatalk, based on the themes and concepts emerging from the datasets, I looked into the ways problems are constructed in interview encounters. In addition to the themes, as noted in Section 4.5.3, what is critical in the analysis is probing 'what inferencing resources are available to discourse analysts in order to make sense' of the interview situations and the data (Sarangi, 2003, p. 64). In line with the interactional sociolinguistics framework (Section 4.6.2), the analytic procedure involves connecting the local talk with the institutional and social order. In doing so, I usefully drew on Angouri's (2018; with Piekkari, 2018) analytic model (Figure 3) that allows to relate language choices made in the here-and-now to interaction with 'the language resources available in the broader institutional- and social context'.
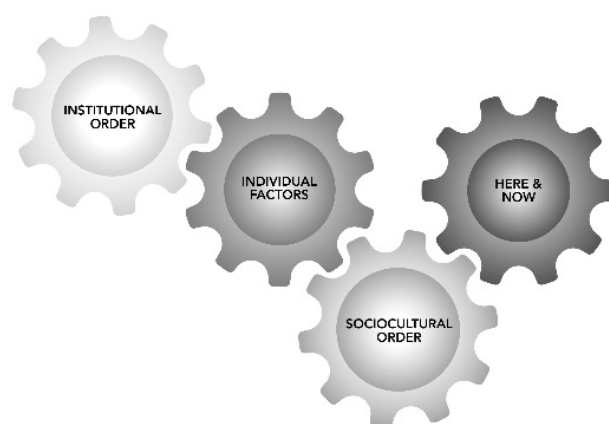
Figure 3 ***The interplay of factors in constructing organisational problems (Taken from 'The interplay of factors influencing language choice', Angouri, 2018)***

The framework is useful for unpacking the dynamics of the ways the interactants operate at the interface of these three orders in constructing and negotiating meanings. To capture the linguistic resources (e.g. categories and shared assumptions) available to and mobilised by participants, I paid close attention to recurring discourse patterns and ideologies within and across employees' talk (De Fina, 2013), which in their turn enact the individuals' ideological positioning.

I linked the analysis of metatalk to further workplace interaction to examine not only whether and how the same or relevant issues emerged in both datasets but also how the speaker's assumptions and ideologies are enacted in the workplace interaction (Chapters 6 and 7). The

analytic procedure enhances my robust reading of the context within which the discursive practices are situated, and, hence, the way problems are constructed in interaction.

Analysing problem-solving meetings

For the analysis of problem-solving talk, I drew on three problem-solving meetings in Eco UK (see Table 7, p. 90). The meetings were chosen as they represent the (local understanding of) professional roles emerging in my corpus and showcase the similar issues and problems emerged from the employees' metatalk. The individual participants and the teams involved in problem(-solving) talk in this context emerge as a case that naturally occurs through the activities taking place in a specific time and space situated in the context.

In analysing how a problem is negotiated and ratified, I looked for linguistic features that index specific interactional activities and moves emerging from the problem-solving meetings. I paid special attention to the linguistic cues that are recurrent across the meetings, exhibiting particular functions, such as raising or negotiating issues, and resuming prior talk, etc. In Section 6.2, I explain in detail the linguistic cues and interactional activities as emerged in the analysis of problem-solving meetings and how these were drawn in establishing the model of problem-solving interaction (Figure 7, p. 93). The linguistic features include discourse markers, pauses and gaps, and lexical choices and 'chunks of text that evoke prior texts, genres, circulating discourses, or domains of practice' (Jaffe, 2014, p. 217). To understand a range of linguistic features, I have referred to theoretical and empirical interactional studies.

In the process of analysing the problem-solving meetings, as Stubbe *et al*. (2003, pp. 358-359) noted, there were tensions between interactional goals and agendas observed in the problem-solving process. In this context, the information about the participants' roles in particular was useful in understanding the way a problem-solving meeting unfolds, 'what is communicatively intended and understood at any one point in the interaction' (Gumperz, 2015, p. 313). I obtained the information from the interview data and the organisational chart and examined how it emerged in the problem-solving meeting talk.

In addition, I paid attention to the linguistic cues and interactional moves that enact the interactants' role-positioning. In line with the interactional approach, my understanding of positioning is situated in interaction which involves Goffman's concept of footing. According to Goffman (1981), footing refers to 'the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance' (p. 128). Thus, through talk, individuals present themselves to others, and 'self' is interactionally constructed (see further, Goffman's (1981) 'participation framework' for footing of a speaker and hearer). Footing therefore projects speakers' stance towards the talk, the interactional events and the other interactants (Levinson, 1988). Of interest here is that a shift in footing

implicates shifts in alignment or distance among interactants, as well as one's social roles (Goffman, 1981). The shifts in footing can have both temporary and (more or less) enduring implications for the way social relations are built and the interactional activities unfold. Interactants in the context of problem-solving shift footings as they change their alignments with each other and the organisational perspectives, and 'shifts in footing involves a shift in language use' (Goffman, 1981, p. 126) and further index the individuals' role-positioning.

The analysis of meeting talk as well as metatalk showed interactants' categorisation of, for example, the HQ or the local or the team. The analytic concept of membership categorisation can be usefully drawn on to understand 'the common-sense knowledge' about 'what people are like, how they behave' (Schegloff, 2007, p. 469): 'Peoples' membership in certain groups (and not others), which is often related to certain status, appears to be among the factors that shape their organisation experiences' (Cameron, 2001, p. 170). In organisational settings, membership categories are important for understanding the organisational environment and, furthermore, 'membership categories form background knowledge members use with them form a key element of the work of organising' as members assign meaning to the ongoing activity (Whittle *et al.*, 2014, p. 71). Recent MCA studies (e.g. Housley and Fitzgerald, 2009; Stokoe and Stokoe, 2012) see categories as more than labels and highlight inferential aspects of the ways in which membership categories are invoked. In the context of the problem-solving in my data, such common-sense knowledge is enacted in the form of shared repertoire by the interactants referring to the categories of the HQ. Of interest to this research is the way categories are made relevant to and emerge in the interactional process (Angouri and Mondada, 2018).

To conclude, in this Chapter I have explained the ethnographic case study design combined with a discourse analytic approach. The research design has produced the multiple datasets that allows to capture the complex nature of the organisational phenomena being researched, and details of the context including social and professional characteristics and histories of my participants, and the work place practices and activities (Jaffe, 2014, p. 217). These establish the important basis for selecting events reflecting representative sets of interaction relevant to the research focus at hand (Gumperz, 2015, p. 317), and feed into the analysis of employees' problem(-solving) talk. In explaining my analytic approach and processes, I have emphasised my commitment to interactional analytic approach in investigating and theorising employees' constructions of problems in the case study data.

The following chapters, Chapters 5-7, will introduce the data with my analysis and discussion.

5. Language and culture as a problem

5.1. Overview of the resources mobilised in constructing the organisational problems

In this section, I provide an overview of the resources employees draw on in constructing the organisational problems that emerge in my corpus. As illustrated in the figure below, within interview settings, the problems have emerged mainly from employees' talk about language, culture and the organisational controls. This figure was constructed based on thematic analysis of interview data (Section 4.6), and in relation to Figure 1 (p. 26), which visualises the key aspects of the multinational context as discussed in the literature (Section 3.1). In the sections that follow, I elaborate on language and culture become useful resources for employees in constructing the organisational problems, and further how these enact their perceived realities.
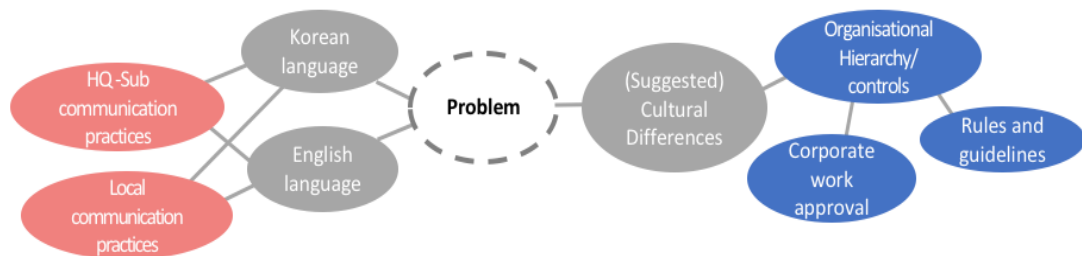
Figure 4 **Visualisation of key resources mobilised in the construction of organisational 'problems'**

Employee's mobilisation of language (s) is largely situated within the local and between the HQ and subsidiary communication practices which, obviously are associated with the organisational activities and roles. In my data, as also Section 3.2 notes, talking one's English competence as a problem is directly related to the speaker's ideologies. In Section 5.2, I investigate how language in its essentialised meaning as a set of skills (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018) is mobilised in constructing language competence or use as problems, and how the 'problems' are then associated with organisational processes and activities. I also investigate how the global and local language(s) are negotiated as situated in the complex linguistic ecosystem within the organisational setting

Culture, in its essentialist meaning, is a recurrent theme in my corpus as employees frequently draw on in articulating a range of material and symbolic issues as problems. Prominently, and not surprisingly, cultural essentialism emerges as employees mobilise culture as 'a sense-making tool' (Schnurr and Zayts, 2017, p. 5) or resource (Angouri, 2018), which effectively creates distinctions between individuals and between social groups. Yet, as shown in Figure 4, culture is drawn on in talking about the organisational hierarchy/ controls. It suggests employees' mobilisation of culture is not neutral but imbued with power relations (Ybema and Byun, 2011). Section 5.3 focuses on the ways employees mobilise essentialist meanings

of culture in constructing organisational hierarchical structure and procedures as problems, and how culture becomes a resource in challenging the power relations (Angouri, 2018).

In my analysis of metatalk (Chapter 5) and the problem-solving meeting (Chapter 6), the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge as one of the key contextual factors in employees' construction of problems. It provides the context within which individuals interpret their surroundings and categorise social groups. In Chapter 7, I focus on the organisational controls and hierarchy emerged in my corpus including interviews and meetings to investigate further how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the processes of constructing problems. This is in line with the literature that conceives of HQ-subsidiary relationships as employees' discursive practices (e.g. Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara, 2011; Whittle *et al.*, 2016; Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017). I further this point by drawing on employees' meeting talk and analysing whether and how the HQ-subsidiary relationships are negotiated *between* the employees.

In Sections 5.2 and 5.3, I present firstly a taxonomy of problems including coterminous notions (e.g. challenges, difficulties and barriers) as they emerged in my corpus (Tables 5 and 6). The taxonomy was constructed through the thematic analysis of the interview data and organised in a three-order structure. The first-order concepts include illustrative quotes that reflect employees' language use in constructing problems. I aggregated the similar and recurring concepts under broader categories, i.e. the second-order concepts. Then, I produced the third-order concepts as an overarching analytical category that I used to relate the findings to the literature. The taxonomy was established for analytical purposes to have an overall grasp of the themes and the ways problems are talked, and some of the same problems will sit under multiple constructs as codes are rarely mutually exclusive in the coding of qualitative data (Maxwell and Miller, 2008). Based on the concepts in the taxonomy, I provide detailed analysis of the ways problems are addressed.

I begin with participants' mobilisation of language in constructing the organisational problems.

5.2. '*We had a language barrier problem.*' Language as 'a problem'

Language, especially in a multilingual context, is considered as one of the key constructs in international business studies (Section 3.2) as it constitutes an 'ongoing sequences of decisions and resource commitments that characterise day-to-day organizational life' (Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014, p. 495). Employees' mobilisation of language then, has much to inform the perceived multinational realties situated in the local dynamics and broader institutional and social context.

As shown in the figure below, the mobilisation of language is associated with organisational processes and activities within and between the organisations, which are made relevant to the organisational roles.

Figure 5 The mobilisation of language in constructing 'organisational problems'

In line with the studies on multilingualism, in my data, employees' talk about language use shows the individuals' conception of local and global languages, and these are negotiated in relation to the local understanding of organisational activities and roles (Kirilova and Angouri, 2017). Moreover, those conceptions emerge under the individuals' ideologies about language (e.g. Phillipson, 2009; Heller, 2010a; Tietze and Dick, 2013). The taxonomy below illustrates employees' quotes that articulate the English/Korean language use and the language competence. The quotes are categorised into *native speaker ideal* and *local/global language(s)*, which together underpin employees' ideologies about language as a commodity.

First-order concepts	Second-order concepts	Third-order concepts
· I think language is an initial barrier and sort of understanding because I know I've been in difficult conversations in past years with Korean colleagues. And they said… you've been asking a question and they said 'yes' 'yes' 'yes' and then…this can be in front of the customers as well. But what they are actually saying is that 'yes we've understood your questions' but not necessarily "yes we agree with what you are saying". So, there's a certain difference. · Usually… when I first came over, we had a language barrier problem and… Not like Minjae, who speaks to everybody, Minho when he first came, the one before Juhoon, he didn't speak very good English at all at the beginning. And that was really quite hard to get, sometimes trying to get your point across. It's very hard, and then it gets frustrating because we know what we mean that we're trying to get across. · […] with Jihoon sometimes you are a bit like "Can you say it again?" "Can you say it again?" You know some words… I'll say to him "Can you just write it?" "Write it down!" And then I get it. It might be just the	Native speaker ideal	Commodification of languages

way he pronounces.		
· If somebody asks…say Kate came over and asked him a question. And he may look a bit confused… I would notice that… So, I would talk like and say to him "Look Josh, she wants…" I try to break it down more for him. Not just necessarily Jihoon, previously Minho as well. So, you sort of get to know…Especially when they first come, we all talk very quickly… you know… you have to tend to slow it down a little bit, you have to try to understand them to begin with…		
· […] I should be more able to understand the English language. It is one of my main concerns. In practice, if I can communicate with my staff members in English a hundred percent fluently, I can shorten the process and I don't need to ask anyone for anything. I can just make phone calls and confirm, then I can get immediate responses. This has improved gradually, but still this is the most difficult.		
· So, it's probably easier for certain people if you communicate via email or via messenger or whatever they (HQ employees) can perhaps read or even put it into a translator […] sometimes even it gets lost in translation as well.		
· Language is one of the major issues. […] A Korean staff is necessary in this company and their ability to report to HQ in Korean is crucial. This is because all emails sent out by the HQ are in Korean and, thus, all information is in Korean and communicated in Korean.	Local/ Global languages	
· It seems that Korean expatriate managers' ability to report in Korean seems to be more important than their English competence. This is problematic. How can they (expatriate managers) give the other employees direction if they can't speak English properly? [….] This consequently causes problems in operating the company overall. For example, in the middle of the meeting, the expatriate managers often tend to stop speaking English and speak Korean to other Korean employees.		

Table 5 Language as a resource for constructing 'problems'

I provide the findings below in terms of the key themes that emerged. I focus on employees' ideological positioning under which language use and competence are marked as a problem in the workplace setting. Language ideologies in my data appear to influence/constrain beliefs about accessing roles and activities, (de)valuating and (dis)empowering the language speakers (Heller, 2010b). I therefore pay attention to how language becomes a resource for claiming or projecting roles in the workplace.

In the following, I draw on seven excerpts that illustrate the language(s) articulated under employees' native-speakerism (Holliday, 2015) and employees' conceptions of the local and global languages.

Native speaker ideal: assessing the language competence

In response to my question about the practices she found difficult to adjust to, Kelly, who is an accounting assistant, talked about *a language barrier problem*:

Ex. 1

```
1    Kyoungmi   What practices have you found difficult to adjust?
2    Kelly      Usually… when I first came over, we had a language
3               barrier problem and… Not similar to Minjae, who
4               speaks to everybody, Taeho when he first came,
5               the one before Jihoon, he didn't speak very good
6               English at all at the beginning. And that was really
7               quite hard to get […]
8    Kyoungmi   How did you deal with this issue?
9    Kelly      Very frustrated. very frustrated ((laughter))
10   Kyoungmi   So…just…?
11   Kelly      Just keep going and going and going… or walk away…
12               because we've got frustrated…. And then we go back
13               again and try to explain… and eventually they
14               understand. It's only really… I would say…. in the
15               beginning of the first six months they are trying to
16               adjust… because we don't speak proper English
17               ourselves. We speak slang so it's hard for them
18               sometimes to even understand what we are saying.
19   Kyoungmi   Do you tend to speak to them slowly sometimes?
20   Kelly      I forget. But yes, I'm supposed to. But I don't wanna
21               speak too slowly so they think I think they are stupid
22               or anything. I think they all speak pretty good
23               English. We probably speak fast. We have accents so
24               sometimes it's harder for them to understand. I think
25               mainly that's probably the beginning… language barrier.
```

In mobilising '*a language barrier problem*' (line 2-3), she reflects on her experiences of working for the previous and current '*Korean*' managers and evaluating language competence of the managers in lines 3-7. The assessment of language competence of the managers essentialises the English language competence of the group of managers, characterising them as linguistically incompetent (Coupland, 2010, p. 242). The ideological representation apparentlly does not account for Minjae '*who speaks to everybody*' (line 3) which does 'not fit' her 'interpretive structure' (Irvine and Gal, 2000, pp. 37–38). Language (competence) mobilised in this excerpt works to define and differentiate who *we/they* are by characterising how *we/ they (don't) speak* (Wodak, 2012).

What is important here and prominent in my data is the assessment of language competence of the managers which is underpinned by the native speaker ideal, 'from which it is possible to measure gaps and determine levels' of the others (Martin Rojo, 2017, p. 89). From line 16, I read the native-speakerism in her mobilisation of the native speaker symbols of competence, *slang* (line 17) and *accents* (line 23) that are *hard for them (the managers) to understand* characterize her own lingusitic group. In this way, the native speaker ideal works not only to assess one's own language competence but also to undervalue those who do not share the linguistic competence. The act of assessing language competence of (groups of) individuals is commonly observed in employees' talk, as shown in the excerpt below. Also, while I was sitting in the accounting team office, it was frequently observed that the team members jokingly talked about Jihoon's English language competence and that of his predecessor.

Under the native speaker ideal, it is important to note Kelly's positioning of the managers as newcomers '*trying to adjust*' (lines 15-16) to the local (linguistic) norms and practices in '*the beginning of the first six months*' (Roberts, 2010). The specific time window is interesting as the newcomers are given a 'grace' window to 'pick up'. By allocating time resource to the adjustment process, old timers claim a position of power and arguably claim control of access to specific discourses (Wodak and Meyer, 2016, p. 25). This suggests the managers' transition period can become an important resource for (im)balancing power relations.

Similar ideological positioning is enacted in the following two excerpts. In our interview, Rita talked about the differences between her current and previous companies. In response to my question asking her to elaborate on the *differences,* she brought up *the language* made relevant to working *for the Korean managers* which she found *very hard*:

Ex. 2

```
 1   Kyoungmi   What differences have you found?
 2   Rita       I suppose it's just different. I work for the Korean
 3              managers. So, of course, it's very hard. Before… I
 4              always used to work for English managers. And of course,
 5              since I've been in Eco, I've always reported to Koreans…
 6              I suppose it's different in every way… you know…
 7              the way you communicate and you talk… you know that sort
 8              of things... the language… […] You know (when)
 9              Jihoon's arrived, his English wasn't very good in the
10              beginning… When Taeho worked, his predecessor,
11              when Taeho arrived, he hardly spoke any English.
12              But I think it's a confidence thing with the Korean
13              staff when they have first arrived because they have to
14              use it constantly. Then every time Taeho got really
```

```
13            good … And Jihoon puts himself down a little bit because
14            he says "My English isn't too good" "Yeah… It's fine. We
15            understand what you are saying." You tend to speak for
16            them. You know what they want to say. You tend to speak
17            for them really…
18  Kyoungmi  Do you have any strategies to communicate better…?
19  Rita      No… […]  If somebody asks…say Kate came over and
20            asked him a question. And he may look a bit confused…
21            I would that…. So I would talk like and say to him
22            "Look Jihoon, she wants…"  I try to break it down more
23            for him. […] Taeho as well. So you sort of get to
24            Know especially when they first come, we all talk
25            very quickly… you know… you have to tend to slow it
26            down a little bit, you have to try to understand
27            them to begin with… being a mother to them… really,
28            looking after them. That's all. Bless them. (laughter)
```

As was the case in Excerpt 1, Rita's talk in this excerpt is foregrounded by the representation and assessment of the English competence of individuals and groups represented by *the Koreans* (line 5). Her difficulty emerges with the differences in '*the way you communicate, and you talk'* and '*the language'* (lines 5-7). These are attributed to the problem with working for *the Korean managers*, and her remark, '*it's just different'* (line 2) enacts the us-them dichotomy according to one's mother tongue. '*O(o)f course'* (lines 3) here signifies the difficulty and the differences as the taken-for-granted realities.

Here, again, the representation of the Korean involves the assessment of English competence of the managers, and the way she portrays Jihoon and herself here becomes an important resource in (im)balancing power relations between her and the managers (Westwood, 2006). From line 13, Jihoon is portrayed as being neither competent nor confident with the language, whereas Rita herself is portrayed as being able to *understand* and *speak for* the managers.

The power positioning is made clear from line 19. Her provision of the situation effectively constructs Jihoon as being incapable of participating in the local communication practices, and hence powerless. Whereas Rita constructs herself as '*a mother', 'looking after'* the managers (line 27-28), being capable to exercise control over the communication practices (Angouri and Miglbauer, 2014, p. 164). This shows explicitly how language becomes a resource in controlling one's access to specific discourse and legitimate roles, hence (dis)empowering the individuals. Moreover, the local communication practices in this regard become a potential site through which power (im)balance is achieved, and the institutional order is challenged (Bourdieu, 1991).

In Excerpts 1 and 2, under the speaker's native speaker ideal, English is constructed as the standard linguistic norms in the local communication practice (Martin Rojo, 2017). The linguistic authority operates in their acts of assessing one's language that position themselves as a 'legitimate owner' of the language with the right to 'put a price on' other's linguistic competence (Del Percio, Flubacher and Duchêne, 2017, p. 63). As Tietze and Dick (2013, p. 122) claim, such practices operate ideologically and rather unconsciously, producing and naturalising the hegemonic status of English, manifested at the local level.

The hegemonic status of English language is enacted in the talk about the communication practice between the HQ and the subsidiary. In our interview, Ted talked about his experience about communicating with the HQ employees:

Ex. 3

```
1    Ted       Eco, I think, likes that (emails) as an organisation
2              anyway. They like to communicate via electronically rather
3              than voice to voice. Well, from an English point of view to
4              a Korean point of view, I actually, it's sometimes easier
5              to read an email I suppose for… We are lucky. English is
6              the global language. So we are lazy.
7    Kyoungmi  ((laughter))
8    Ted       We are… But… So it's probably easier for certain people
9              if you communicate via emails or via messengers or
10             whatever. They can perhaps read the email or even put it
11             into a translator to try to gather what you are trying
12             to say. Sometime when you're speaking to someone and…
13             sometimes even it gets lost in translation as well. And
14             the only reason I say that is recently I have two or
15             three occasions where I've tried to explain
16             something((laughter)) and they just got lost and I ended
17             up with having an email to the person.
18   Kyoungmi  The Korean personnel in European head office…?
19   Ted       Oh that's actually the global head office but ((laughter))
20             yeah…
```

In this, Ted represents the language competence of the HQ (employees) in a way suggesting they are incapable of engaging in communication practices with the subsidiary (lines 10-17). As shown in the two previous excerpts, the dichotomy is constructed between us (line 5) and them (line 2), between the subsidiary and the HQ in terms of the English competence.

Important to note here is his remark, '*We are lucky. English is the global language. So we are lazy*' (lines 5-6), which indexes his ideology about the hegemonic status of English. This

importantly positions '*English*' and accordingly its speakers as being privileged relative to '*Korean*' and its speakers. Such positioning is commonly observed in employees' talk where their ideologies are enacted. For example, Emily's comment, '*we are lucky because English is the language people speak*' and Matt's comment, '*I feel like we're a bit lazy. We don't make any effort to learn different languages*' suggest the hegemonic status of English is circulated, ratifying the status of the language and the speakers and naturalising the hierarchical relation between the languages and between the speakers (Heller, 2010b).

The ideologies appear to affect his belief about the language speaker. From line 8, the illustration of the problem indicates his assumption of the nature of the speakers (e.g. *can perhaps read*, *put it into a translator*, *gets lost*) that denigrates and essentialises the linguistic competence of the HQ employees. As is the case in Excerpts 1 and 2, the national categories are mobilised in differentiating the linguistic group in the beginning (lines 3-4). Interestingly though, in response to my question (line 18), his clarification with '*the global head office*' suggests the mobilisation of language does not merely work to represent the social group sharing the language but perhaps to challenge power relations (De Fina and King, 2011) between the HQ and the subsidiary. The communication practices between the headquarters and the subsidiary in this context can become a potential site for the organisational relations to be (re)negotiated.

The excerpts thus far show the talk about how the language attributed to problems can be seen as intentional acts through which 'language, linguistic competence and skills are being articulated, formed, amended, enforced' (Blommaert, 1999, p. 1) under their ideologies. It can serve to position themselves and others in (de)legitimating power and authority and, thereby, challenging the institutional order (Martin Rojo, 2017, p. 89), which is made visible in employees' talk about organisationl relationships (Chapter 7).

As discussed in Section 3.2, however, the hierarchical relations between the languages and between the speakers are unfixed but dependent on the context and the members' ideological positioning (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018). In the following section, I explore further how the knowledge about language use and competence are associated with employees' understanding of the organisational activities and their roles in the organisational setting.

The global and local language(s) and the organisational roles

The excerpts in this section are chosen to illustrate how the global/local language(s) are conceptualised and valuated in close relation to the individuals' understandings of roles and tasks. Employees' drawing on 'language' in their talk often conveys a static conceptualisation of the language equated with lists of can/ cannot do, and further one's organisational roles (Mahili, 2014). It is equally important, then, to investigate the local understanding of the

organisational activities and roles, and further how the global and local language(s) can be negotiated in a situated way.

In our interview, Jihoon elaborated on his linguistic concerns at work since he moved to Eco UK from the HQ. This is significant as it shows the native speaker ideal was served by both the British and the Korean participants in my data in line with other literature in the field:

Ex. 4

```
1    Kyoungmi   What's your main concern in working in the team?
2    Jihoon     The top priority is to acquire knowledge relevant to my
3               job […] when they ask their manager something and the
4               manager doesn't know basic stuff, they tend to look down
5               on their manager. So I tried to learn them in details,
6               and I should be more able to understand English language.
7               It is one of my main concerns. In practice, if I can
8               communicate with my staff members in English a hundred
9               percent fluently, I can shorten the process and I don't
10              need to request someone for anything. I can just make
11              phone calls and confirm, then I can get immediate
12              responses. This has improved gradually, but still this
13              is the most difficult.
                [11 lines omitted]
25   Kyoungmi   You said your language skill has improved…?
26   Jihoon     Yes. My language skill has improved. In the beginning,
27              when I was in a meeting, it was very difficult because I
28              had no idea what they were talking about. Meetings were
29              very difficult. Everyone spoke English… like a listening
30              test… I needed to understand everything discussed in the
31              meeting.
```

In this, Jihoon's linguistic concern emerges in his assessment of his own English competence. As shown from line 2, where he brings up his institutional position as a manager, the conceptualisation of language competence is directly related to his professional role performance at work (lines 9-12, 26-31). In the relevance made between the language and role, I read his ideologies about English language as a global commodity. Under the ideology language becomes a key enabler or a constraint in accessing critical resources such as institutional roles and activities (Heller, 2010b; Roberts, 2010).

In line with Park's (2013) work on language commodification, Jihoon's concern shows how the ideologies can affect his performance at work and constrain him in his belief about how he is supposed to engage in the communication practices (p. 574). His description of meetings

with the lexical choice, '*a listening test*' (lines 29-30), in which he '*needed to understand everything*' (lines 30-31) suggests his perceived communicative demands, which perhaps are 'greater than those of the job itself' (Roberts, 2010, p. 211). For example, his remark, '*I should be more able to understand English*' (line 6) explicitly shows Jihoon constructing himself as being responsible for not only being the linguistic marginality (Del Percio, Flubacher and Duchêne, 2017) but also his institutional role position in the workplace.

English is often equated with being a manager in the employees' talk. For example, Soobin, who is a local operations team assistant, in the following excerpt draws on the English language competence of the expatriate managers in constructing it as a problem:

Ex. 5

```
How can they (expatriate managers) give the other employees
direction if they can't speak English properly? [….] This
consequently causes problem in operating the company overall.
For example, in the middle of the meeting, the expatriate
managers often tend to stop speaking English and speak Korean
to other Korean employees.
```

Along the lines of Excerpt 4, this excerpt indicates Soobin's ideological positioning, which values the English language and language speakers in association with the organisational roles and activities. In both Excerpts 4 and 5, concerning the ideology treating language as a commodity, symbolic value is attached to English as situated in meeting activities or the local team interaction.

English language competence here becomes equated with the roles of Korean local employees, too. The following excerpt reflects this point from a different angle. In our interview, Minsu, who is an expatriate operations manager, explicitly ratified the relation between the English language competence and roles of the *Korean employees*:

Ex. 6

```
I had an expectation of the Korean local employees to be
competent in English and have local knowledge. That's the
reason why they (Eco UK) hire Korean local employees. He had
been disappointed with his previous Korean local employees,
who were not fluent in English
```

Minsu's expectation of '*the Korean local*' in this excerpt indicates his language ideology, which creates a direct link between language competence and 'one's worth as an employee' (Heller, 2010b, p. 102). This was a recurrent topic in conversations in which I was engaged

while doing field work in the company. English lanaguage is often talked as one of the qualities required for job commitments (Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014, p. 495), especially for assisting the expatriate managers or for communication between the HQ and the subsidiary.

However, in the following excerpt, where Soobin illustrates communication activities between the HQ and the subsidiary, Korean language becomes an asset in the activities where Korean is predominantly used. The conceptualisations of the local and global language here become ambiguous, suggesting that the ways languages function should be understood as situated in the particular organisational activity in the particular setting:

Ex. 7

```
[…] language is one of the major issues in the company.
Korean employees are necessary in this company because their
ability to report to HQ in Korean is crucial. Because all
the emails and information between the headquarters and the
subsidiary are communicated in Korean, it seems that the
expatriate managers' ability to report in Korean is more
important than their English competence. […] Also, local
employees' reports should be submitted after being
translated in Korean. So it becomes my job to translate all
the reports in Korean […] Given that it is the multinational
company, this is inappropriate and inefficient […] Eco as a
global company should communicate in English with
subsidiaries all over the world so that any employees can
get access to information.
```

Although this excerpt negatively marks the predominant usage of the Korean language as "*inappropriate*" and "*inefficient*", it illustrates Korean as a resource that affords access to critical resources including information from the HQ and communication practices between the HQ and the subsidiary. It further appears to affect the way she perceives specific roles and positions (Mahili, 2014, p. 118). This is in line with literature that sees local and global languages as negotiated by members' perception of roles and the organisational setting (Kirilova, 2013; Kirilova and Angouri, 2017).

In addition, in the interpretation of the Korean language dominance in relation to the organisational structure, I read how the Korean speakers can be in a privileged position, structurally linked to the HQ. This contrasts with Excerpt 1-3, in which English speakers are being privileged. This echoes Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch's (1999) work on structural effects of language as it 'imposes its own structure on communication flows and

personal networks' in a multinational corporation (p. 431), conceiving of language as informal power source.

To conclude, in this section I have investigated the ways in which participants draw on language (s) in constructing language competence and language use as 'problems'. These then are related to the local understanding of the organisational roles and activities. The investigation allows to read 'the nexus of ties between language systems and discourses' and how these, through the problem talk, inform the employee's 'making' of the multilingual realities (Tietze, 2008, p. 184). What prevails in my corpus is participants' native-speakerism (Holliday, 2015) underpinning participants' acts of assessing linguistic competence of certain individuals and groups, which often devalue the others while constructing power images of themselves (Vaara *et al.*, 2005; Angouri, 2013). The mobilisation of language in problem talk then can be a means of challenging the power relations between the HQ (employees) and subsidiary (employees).

Another prominent one is the complex relations between global and local language(s), suggesting language(s) and the speakers 'acquire value' in relation to the individuals' understanding of the activities and roles (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018, pp. 17-18). The symbolic values attached to the languages then are not transferable across different contexts but need to be understood in the context in which the value of the language emerges and is ratified (Del Percio, Flubacher and Duchêne, 2017, p. 56). It suggests further a complex linguistic ecosystem within the organisational setting wherein dominant ideologies are clashing.

Now I turn to employees' talk that draws on culture in formulating organisational problems and discuss how culture becomes a core resource in problem talk.

5.3. '*We are just an arm of that culture from Korea.*' Cultural differences as 'a problem'

In line with Section 3.3.2, discourse research has repeatedly argued that culture is a resource particularly relevant in constructing meanings about Self/Other. The meanings ascribed to culture are never neutral but ideological and situated in context (Dhamoon, 2009). In my corpus, as shown in the figure below, 'cultural difference' kept emerging in employees' framing or critiquing of the organisational hierarchy and controls. In another word, culture in its essentialist notion is mobilised in constructing the hierarchical structure and procedures as problems.
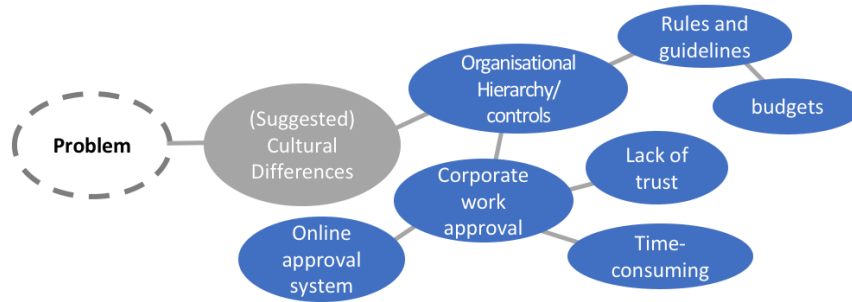
Figure 6 The mobilisation of culture in constructing 'organisational problems'

The material resources, rules and guidelines and an online approval system are also mobilised, and these in metatalk are negatively marked in the processes where employees draw on 'cultural differences' in constructing the organisational procedures as a problem. The guidelines and budgets also emerge in the problem-solving meetings; and these are assessed and negotiated between the meeting participants (see Excerpt 1.1, p. 100; Excerpt 1.4, p. 109). And this is in line with the literature which contends the materiality is integral to and created through the discursive processes in situ (Leonardi, 2012), and supports my views on problem as sociomaterial as discussed in Section 1.3.

As also shown in the taxonomy below, the mobilisation of culture is situated in the HQ-subsidiary frame. In another word, the HQ-subsidiary relationships provide an important context for enacting employees' ideology about culture. As the HQ-subsidiary relationships are frequently addressed when talking about culture (and also languages) in association with a range of symbolic and material issues in my corpus, I will focus on how the organisational relationships emerge in the processes of constructing the organisational problems in Chapter 7.

The taxonomy below illustrates employee's quotes that draw on the (suggested) cultural differences and how it serves to make distinctions between certain groups and individuals, and to challenge or reify the institutional order.

First-order concepts	Second-order concepts	Third-order concepts
· When we have to do approval documents […] we have to do the documents which give all the information what's gonna cost, who's going, quite detailed documents that go on to this 'Eco-'' which is globally used sort of Korean system. […] He's really helpful because this is where the cultural differences come in… because he sees the document as perhaps if the Korean senior person would see it.	Cultural distinction	Cultural essential -ism

· I suppose it's obviously the Korean culture. Because it's completely different, isn't it? You know, and obviously their procedures, how long the procedures are different. because a lot of control now… you know… getting everything authorised and everything has to be in consultation form		
· Hierarchy is very different from any other companies I've been in... So the Structure in this company is very sort of very well set. You can't go above the rank. If it makes sense… You know… You have to go through a correct channel so on and so forth… There are a few differences….		
· […] from a Westerner's point of view and think why you went around massive circles and why the person didn't go straight there. […] From my point of view, I talk to my managers, we straight go there. […] if there's something the Koreans need to get involved in and may be Minjae needs to know, then I will report to Minsu and email it to him then he will take that.		
· I think you have this blind obedience of hierarchy or understanding. And the way I jokingly understand it: if the MD wanted everyone to stand on their heads every Wednesday, all the Korean staff would do it without questions but we will go… why are we gonna do that?	Challenging or reifying the institutional order	
· I had no idea about the Korean culture… but because I'm a Korean, my Korean managers wanted sort of Korean processes and attitudes from me… That kind of things were hard. In the UK, because I don't need to call someone with their position, I was not aware of this… he (Jihoon) told me to call him 'sonbae' (which means senior in Korean) I just called him 'sonbae', without knowing there is a formal way to call this		
· Work differently… Sometimes what they do… what I would do seems more logical. I've done this job in the previous companies. I've always done it in a way I found the easiest and most effective way. […] It just seems to be a bit more pronounced here. Some of the ways they do things compared to the way we do things seems a bit illogical.		

Table 6 Culture as a resource for constructing 'problems'

As in the case of language, the quotes in this taxonomy show that culture is mobilised in employees' positioning, distancing themselves from specific groups or individuals, from those they perceive to be different, and hence, creating the *us* and *them* binaries (Bamberg, 2004). Through discursive positioning, culture is mobilised in challenging or reifying the status quo (Angouri, 2018). As noted in Section 3.3.2 and 3.4.2. from an organisational perspective, the mobilisation of culture should be understood in associated with the power issues in the

organisational setting (e.g. Ybema and Byun, 2009; Koveshnikov, Vaara and Ehrnrooth, 2016).

In this section, I draw on six excerpts that illustrate the key themes in the corpus: *the Korean* hierarchy and the corporate work approval in the corpus. I look into how these are constructed as a problem in relation to cultural essentialism. I also investigate how cultural essentialism is associated with participants' perceived surroundings within which they position themselves and others.

'*The Korean'* hierarchy

Brad, who is a tech service manager, in our interview mobilised '*the Korean way of culture'* in representing 'the Korean staff/ management' and the HQ:

Ex. 8

```
1    Brad       I think the Korean way of culture is slightly different
2               to ours because I think you have this blind obedience to
3               hierarchy or understanding. And the way I jokingly
4               understand is that if the MD wanted everyone to stand on
5               their heads every Wednesday, all the Korean staff would
6               do it without questions but we will go… why are we gonna
7               do that? Do you understand?
8    Kyoungmi   You mean, even younger manager?
9    Brad       Yes. You accept that you are working for a Korean company
10              designed by Korea. So, all the controls and disciplined
11              culture coming from the head office and we are just an arm
12              of that culture from Korea. Then obviously you've gotta
13              respect the Korean management style. It's sometimes… if I
14              said you now, if you go through that door and go to the
15              next door and it is locked, you'll still go through that
16              door and try to see if it's locked. You'll not take what
17              I say for truth. Sometimes I just feel that… It's
18              frustrating for me that all the training that has been
19              given is by other companies. Eco has bought my experience.
```

The way he mobilises culture here is revealing as he made a direct link between the nationality and the hierarchical relationships or the management style. At the same time, as evidently shown in his remark, '*the Korean way of culture is slightly different to ours*' (lines 1-2), the mobilisation of culture creates the us-them dichotomy (Wodak, De Cillia and Reisigl, 1999) between the HQ and the subsidiary employees. By characterising '*the Korean*' with '*blind obedience to hierarchy*' (lines 2-3) whereas '*We*' as not subscribing to '*the culture*' but being able to take critical stance towards it; he positions the former as inferior to the latter.

The culture, then, not only represents the social group but also works to balance the perceived power asymmetry between the HQ and subsidiary. '*The Korean',* as I will elaborate further in Chapter 7, is frequently mobilised in representing the power position. In this sense then, the national culture mobilised in this excerpt (lines 9 -13) is a motif in 'delegitimising the distribution of power' (Ybema and Byun, 2009, p. 354). In this excerpt, Brad makes the organizational hierarchy and controls relevant to the national culture, whereas this is 'not unfamiliar characterisation' in organisational settings (Ybema and Byun, 2009, p. 353).

The comment, '*we are just an arm of that culture from Korea'* (lines 11-12) conveys his frustration (line 18) that has emerged from the institutional order, and I read the perceived power relations further in his problematizing of the power of the status in that his experience and his words are not accepted, and his expertise is not acknowledged (lines 13-19). The mobilisation of culture here indexes his struggles over power relations between himself and those higher in the organisational hierarchy (Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017).

Talking about culture, then, allows for performing an act of resisting the status quo through articulating a range of the symbolic and material conditions relevant to the specific situation and context. This is in line with recent work showing how 'narratives of cultural difference are political acts of projecting, claiming or resisting power' (Angouri, 2018). This is made evident in the same interview as Brad went on to elaborate further on his experience and the power of the status quo. In doing, he also projects his professional identity:

Ex. 9

```
1    Brad      […] When it comes down to my experience, you just don't
2              trust anyone. I feel I'm not trusted. My experience… Even
3              if I notice something wrong or not correct and I can report
4              that and it just because someone higher up in the company
5              says they have to do it then you have to do it. So, you just
6              tend to say "Okay fine. Let's go all wrong" This is what
7              we all to do. That's what I find. So, my experience within
8              this industry for 34 years doesn't matter […]
9              (17 lines omitted)
10   Brad      How would you deal with such situations?
11   Kyoungmi  Just I'd let it go through the event, and just accept that
12              the higher authority wanted to do in that way no matter what
13              I wanted to do. Okay fine, we will do it in your way.
```

In this, Brad's way of talking about the institution and his profession is revealing as it clearly shows his struggles over the power relations between '*someone higher up'* (lines 4-5) and himself. The former is positioned as being able to impose decisions and action on the latter. This is important as it appears to constrain his belief about his professional role performance,

complying with '*the higher authority wanted to do*' (line 12). As importantly, Brad portrays himself as a knowledgeable employee with experience (lines 8-9). Although the expression, '*let's go all wrong*' (lines 13-14) conveys him having to conform to the institutional authority, his judgement of the authority involved here delegitimises and challenges the institutional order.

A similar way of talking about the institution and the profession emerges in employees' talk about the HQ-subsidiary relationships in Chapter 7, suggesting, again, the culture is a symbolic resource for employees to 'cultural distance in political struggles in multinational corporations' (Ybema and Byun, 2009, p. 340). The HQ-subsidiary relationships, in turn, emerge in employees' talk that articulates cultural differences between the HQ and the subsidiary.

The struggles over power relations are also reflected in an interview with Heejin, who is an accounting team assistant, in which she talked about her challenges at work. In the excerpt below, similarly to Brad, in articulating the hierarchical relationship, she emphasises the organisational hierarchy as a trait of the Korean culture. Yet, the struggles emerge from where she positions herself as belonging to '*the Korean*':

Ex. 10

```
 1   Kyoungmi   What did you find most difficult to adjust when starting
 2              to work here?
 3   Heejin     Since I have been here in the UK for a long time, I didn't
 4              have any difficulty with British culture at all. I found
 5              it difficult to adjust to Korean culture.
 6   Kyoungmi   What were the difficulties?
 7   Heejin     I had no idea about the Korean culture… but because I'm a
 8              Korean, my Korean managers wanted sort of Korean processes
 9              and attitudes from me, which I had no idea about… That
10              kind of things were hard.
11   Kyoungmi   How did you deal with this?
12   Heejin     I was just told off (laughter). Just… I've been getting
13              used to it …
14   Kyoungmi   Have you asked them about this?
15   Heejin     Rather than asking questions, I just observed how the
16              Korean managers communicate with each other and with the
17              managing director and followed it.
18   Kyoungmi   Can you tell me more about the Korea process and attitude?
19   Heejin     Before Jihoon came, there was another Korean expatriate
20              manager who worked here for seven years… Although he is
```

```
21              Korean and belongs to the Korean culture, I didn't think it
22              Wasn't difficult to work with him… But Jihoon, who worked in
23              South Korea ever since his employment, he was like a highly
24              disciplined employee. So when he first came he wanted me
25              to behave in a way he learned from his senior staff but I
26              didn't know what that is… that makes me difficult… it was
27              not misunderstanding but…. me not being able to adjust
28              myself to what he wanted…
29  Kyoungmi    Can you give me an example?
30  Heejin      This is a very simple example. In the UK, because I don't
31              need to call someone with their position, I was not aware
32              of this… As he told me to call him 'sonbae' (senior in Korean)
33              I just called him 'sonbae', without knowing there is a formal
34              way to address this, which is 'sonbaenim' […] But later I
35              found out that the way I had called him did not accord with
36              the hierarchy. I didn't know this, but he explained this to
37              me.
```

In this, working with the '*Korean managers'* and the relationship with them are constructed as a problem, and the problem is attributed to '*the Korean culture'* which she '*found difficult to adjust to'* (lines 4-5) and '*had no idea about'* (line 7). She distances herself here from the national group. Her positioning, however, is subject to contradiction. While she portrays herself as rather being familiar with '*British culture'* (lines 3-4), simultaneously, in the following remark, '*because I'm a Korean'* (lines 7-8) positions herself as (considered or expected to be) belonging to the national group.

Together with cultural essentialism, the positioning as being '*a Korean'* appears to affect her belief about what is expected from the managers – '*Korean process and attitudes'* (lines 8-9) – and further the way she deals with the situation (lines 12-17). As Hall (1994, p. 202 cited in Wodak, De Cillia and Reisigl, 1999, p. 155) would argue, the national culture becomes a resource in constructing meanings that 'influence and organise' conceptions of herself and others and her actions. The abstract ideas or assumptions about the national group, do not, apparently, explain her experience of working with '*another Korean expatriate manager',* whom she did not find difficult to work with, although she categorises him as within '*the Korean culture'* (lines 19-22).

From line 22, where she elaborates on her experience of dealing with Jihoon, the hierarchical relationship is made visible. She attributes the perceived problem situation to herself, '*not being able to adjust'* herself to his expectation (lines 26-27). From Heejin's reflection of the incident where she had to address Jihoon in a formal way according to '*the hierarchy'* (lines

30-37), he is portrayed as someone who would expect her to behave in certain way, e.g. addressing him in a formal way, and she herself as someone who is supposed to comply with it.

Apart from the excerpts presented here, it is worth mentioning that the *Korean hierarchy* is widely circulated in employees' talk about the organisational relations. The example is illustrative of a recurrent narrative:

```
I've heard some horror stories that the Koreans have done
to each other […] I've witnessed where…you can't talk back
to you sort of boss […]
```

The remark, *'Koreans have done to each other […] I've witnessed'* here again draws upon the cultural while distancing one from the culture. And, at the same time, I read here a form of resistance (Scott, 1990), by attributing the hierarchical traits to *the Koreans*. This was also observed in Excerpt 8. These metatalk talk show how *the Korean* as an imaginary construct is mobilised and at the same time being constructed as involved in the meaning making processes (Lahti, 2013, p. 23).

I now turn to the corporate work approval also constructed as a problem in the participants' metatalk where culture is drawn on.

The corporate work approval

Kate also mobilised the construct, *the Korean*, but on a different issue, the corporate work approval, which suggests organisational hierarchy in the procedure. The work approval is one of the most frequently emerging topics where ideologies about culture or differences kept emerging in this section and also in Chapter 7, the work approval procedure is criticised in terms of the corporate controls. In the case of Kate, below, she highlighted cultural differences in illustrating practices and the roles of employees involved in the procedure. Although the excerpt below does not explicitly suggest the power relation, I draw on this excerpt as an example that shows how the dominant ideologies about culture (and also language, as discussed in Section 5.2) construct the environment within which my participants operate, and affect one's understanding of organisational activities and professional roles:

Ex. 11

```
1   Kyoungmi   Do you also sometime interact with Korean expatriate
2              managers?
3   Kate       Yes. Minsu… helps… Minsu is really helpful actually.
4              When we have to do approval documents […] we have to do the
```

```
5         documents which give all the information what's gonna cost,
6         who's going, quite detailed documents that go on to this
7         "Eco-i" which is globally used sort of Korean system. What
8         we have to do is pre-approval, so we send out the document
9         to Minsu. He reviews it and tells us "perhaps change this…"
10        He's really helpful because this is where the cultural
11        differences coming… because he sees the document as perhaps
12        if the Korean senior person would see it […] What happens
13        with our approval process is that Minsu sees it and it makes
14        any changes or not. It goes to a gentleman, Kitae, who
15        works in Korea. […] And sometimes they disagree on points,
16        which… you know… is difficult for us […] So it's a long
17        process. Because obviously they… the Korean staff… they
18        understand their culture better than we do. So, it takes
19        time. I definitely think I've got a better understanding of
20        the culture and it'll take us getting used to. But still
21        they know how (to present) things […] It's like how you
22        present things. It seems to be quite common. Sort of… Koreans
23        quite like to see things in a table rather than… we would
24        perhaps just list in bullet points. Then Minsu would say
25         "can you put this in a table?" little things like that
26        obviously make the documents go through quicker.
```

In this excerpt, Kate's ideologies about the national culture, '*the Korean',* shape her interpretation of the corporate approval that involves the approval system, the Korean system (line 7), and the approval line, the Korean staff and the way they *see* and *present* approval documents (lines 12, 22-23).

The national culture here further rationalises her interaction with Minsu in doing approval documents (line 8) and the role of Minsu and Kitae in the approval procedure. Her claim that the *Korean* employees have better understanding of '*their culture'* (lines 9-15) necessitates the roles and positions of the employees in the authorisation. Although the national category of '*Korean*' was invoked by the researcher's question (line 1 - see also, the rationale in Section 4.5.3), the frequency of narratives show that the culture category is commonly used to make sense of differences in practices and ideologies (see also Angouri, 2018).

Her remarks such as '*Koreans quite like to see things in a table […] we would perhaps just list in bullet points'* (lines 23-24) show stereotypical talk and ideological group representation at the workplace. By characterising the way '*Koreans'* do the approval documents as 'rooted' in the cultural group and describing the culture as something the employees '*will get used to'* (line 20), she distances herself from the Korean and draws a distinction between '*Koreans'*

and the '*we*' to which she belongs. Yet in lines 19-20, she portrays herself as an employee who '*got a better understanding of the culture'*, being adaptable to the work approval practice by partially accepting local practices while constructing them as different (Schnurr and Zayts, 2012).

On the same topic, the corporate work approval, Emily, a marketing team assistant, in the excerpt below conveys a critical stance. Her illustration of the work approval involves the moral judgement of the HQ setting up the procedure:

Ex. 12

```
1    Emily      In terms of processes, most probably it's something that
2               first you might see is, something which is a bit of
3               hindrance, maybe something, cultural differences you just
4               get used to. Because it's like how things work, […], so
5               you kind of start to understand the processes in place
6               from… Maybe it's global headquarters and European
7               headquarters.
8    Kyoungmi   The process you mean…?
9    Emily      To be fair, it's probably one of our main processes, to
10              be honest […] It's like the trust element of things. I
11              think in the UK, I think in any market, you only do
12              something that you feel it's going to be good for the
13              brand. […] So, I think sometimes, I kind of feel like
14              there's no trust in our work approval whatever it may be.
15              But it's how we work, how we operate so it's just something
16              hurdles that we jump over just to get something done.
```

Emily in this excerpt negatively evaluates the company's '*work approval'* describing it as '*hindrance'* and '*hurdle'*, and attributes the problems encountered in the work approval to '*cultural differences'* (line 3) in how things work (line 4) and the trust element of things (line 10).

Her criticism directed towards the HQ went on. From line 9, her interpretation of the work approval involves a moral judgement – 'what is proper to do and reasonable to expect' (Wuthnow, 1987, p. 14) – in '*the UK* and *any market'* (line 11). Emily's comment here makes a categorical distinction between the HQ and the UK (or any market), and through the distinction which makes the HQ as a unique case delegitimates the work approval (Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara, 2011).

Furthermore, through conveying the criticism, she constructs herself, or the collective to which she belongs, as possessing 'attributes of moral worthiness' (Koveshnikov, Vaara and Ehrnrooth, 2016, p. 1370); hence, superior to the head office. Not only in this excerpt but also in the other employees' talk, employees draw on 'moral issues which people judge as being good and bad as the quality of certain social groups to which they claim (not) to belong' (Van Langenhove, 2017, p. 3). Through the discursive positioning of the HQ in contrast to the self, employees challenge the institutional order.

What follows from line 15 is important to note. Her comment, '*it's just something hurdles that we jump over*' (line 16) provides several possible interpretations. On the one hand, it portrays Emily herself as underlining her commitment to the Eco approval procedure. On the other hand, this is just a hurdle that must be overcome but one which does not help the brand, this can be read as her 'ambiguous accommodation', which does not directly confront the institutional authority but still conveys her resistance (Prasad and Prasad, 1998, p. 36).

Ted, who is a marketing manager in the same team with Emily, reflected on the work approval in our interviews, and similar moral judgement and positioning to those of Emily emerged in the following excerpt:

Ex. 13

```
To be perfectly honest, this (work approval) is certain lack
of trust […] I believe genuinely that everybody who works
for the company, they have their own interests at heart…
because they want to… But they also have the company's best
interests at heart. They want to see the company grow and as
the company grows they should prosper with the company […]
It can be frustrating, but we just have to get on with it.
```

These two excepts bring together procedure and trust, which are related to constructing an us/them distinction, as untrustworthiness is invoked to justify their stance on the approval procedures (Koveshnikov, Vaara and Ehrnrooth, 2016). Portraying the company's work approval (authority) as '*lack of trust*', Ted constructs '*everybody who works for the company*' as 'good corporate citizens' who are concerned with the company's interests (Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017, p. 257). The metatalk on work approval affords an opportunity to place the HQ, setting up the procedures, in an inferior position through the discursive positioning.

Nevertheless, in both Emily and Ted's excerpts, while challenging the institutional order, the speakers also modulate their positioning in the remark, '*but we just have to get on with it*' in this excerpt from Ted, and '*we jump over just to get something done*' (line 16) in Excerpt 11.

As Mumby (2005, p. 35) would argue, the modulation made here may seek 'possibilities for different subject positions' that include 'a conformist subjectivity' while critiquing the specific procedure, and more broadly the authority.

To conclude, this section has investigated the ways in which employees mobilise culture as 'a symbolic resource' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 82) in constructing 'the organisational problem' – the organisational hierarchy and the corporate work approval. Through the discursive processes, participants position themselves and others, and contest or reify the institutional order. *'The Korean culture'* is largely associated with being hierarchcal and controlling in my corpus (see also Chapter 7). The organisational hierarchy and controls, however, are not unfamiliar characterisation but commonly emerge in the context of multinational corporations (Mudamby, 2007). The use of culture in its essentialist meaning then should not be treated at its face value but understood as situated in the local, organisational and social contexts; specifically in the context of this thesis, the power relations in the HQ-subsidiary frame. I will elaborate on this further in Chapter 7 that looks into the HQ-subsidiary relationships.

The essentialist approach, as discussed in Section 3.3.1, then should be avoided in reading the lay conception of culture and also language. Culture and language as an abstract notion are involved in participants' meaning-making, in constructing organisational problems, and further reifying or contesting the instiutional order. Instead, the articulation of the culture in context of my data needs to be seen as a concept that is fluid and 'contextually bounded' (van Marrewijk, 2010, p. 371). Its use is dependent on the speaker's discursive strategies in seeking their own interests or agenda (Wodak, De Cillia and Reisigl, 1999).

Moving into problem-solving, participants' metatalk in this chapter shows how language and culture are central in constructing problems. These importantly inform participants' perceived realities, the local and institutional context and accordingly, my reading of problem-solving meetings.

Now, I turn to the analysis of problem-solving and discuss how problem-solving can be done in interaction.

6. Problem-solving meetings

6.1. Introduction

As I aim to understand how problem-solving is done in interaction, this chapter provides detailed analysis of problem-solving interaction by drawing on three problem-solving meetings at Eco UK. I examine here the interactional activities that emerged in the meetings, and the ways in which the interactants enact and negotiate their professional roles in the activities. As shown in the table below (Table 7) in the context of the problem-solving meeting,

organisational problems are dealt with as situational tasks. Important to note, as I will show in the analysis of the meetings, these tasks involve the HQ and subsidiary decisions and actions, which provide important context for the interactants to negotiate their role-positioning. Interactants enact and negotiate their views in relation to their professional roles specific to their expertise and institutional responsibilities (Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Halvorsen and Sarangi, 2015) (Section 2.4). Importantly, this is where the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge. I discuss this in detail in Chapter 7, wherein I focus on the ways the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the construction of problems.

In the following, I provide details of the problem-solving meetings to be discussed in this chapter.

Problem-solving meetings

Three problem-solving meetings are chosen to illustrate the interactional activities emerging in the data (Section 6.2.1) and the ways employees enact their professional roles in interaction, which emerged from the coding of the interview data. As summarised in the table below, the meeting participants dealt with problems as situational tasks – budgeting and planning social media activities (Meeting 1), setting out product prices (Meeting 2), and managing sales invoices and customer credits (Meeting 3). Each of the meetings involves both local employees and expatriate managers, and the topics operationalise in the activities between the subsidiary and the HQ. These together can elucidate how the meeting participants negotiate their roles in relation to the organisation's perspectives on managing problem-solving.

The meeting participants enact and discuss issues and problems that are specific to the activities and relevant to their roles and responsibilities as well as those of the organisations (see Figure 2 for the role-structure).

	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
Space	Minjae's office: Minjae sitting in front of his desk and Kate and Ted sitting across from Minjae	Operations team office: Ted sitting next to Minsu's seat	Operations team office: Participants moving around between Minus's and Matt's seats and the middle of the office.
Participants	Minjae, Kate, Ted	Ted and Minsu	Minsu, Matt and June
Topic(s)	· A reduced local marketing budget · Guidelines on social media	· Sale-pricing strategy · Pricing requests from the sales team	· Invoicing errors · Managing customer credits

	· Planning of social media activities		

*Table 7 **Summary of problem-solving meetings***

In the following sections, I explain how I analysed the interactional activities that emerged in and across the problem-solving meetings, then provide a model that visualises the interactional activities (Figure 8) and discuss the linguistic features that demarcate the interactional activities (Section 6.2). I then turn to the analysis of the problem-solving meetings and illustrate how the interactional activities unfold in each of the meeting events (Section 6.3).

6.2. Interactional activities in the problem-solving meetings

In this section, I propose the interactional activities that emerged through the timeline of the problem-solving meetings. By timeline I refer to the material context of the meeting event, involving the presence of the participants and the researcher in the physical space. The recurrence of activities identified across the meetings provides the foundation of the model that represents the interactional mechanism of problem-solving interaction (Figure 7).

6.2.1. Analysis of interactional activities in problem-solving interaction

To analyse the interactional activities, I examined each of the meeting events from the opening to closing phases by focusing on recurrent interactional activities, and linguistic acts and cues that mark transitional moves and interactants' role-positioning. My use of positioning here is associated with roles in a sense that roles have implications on interactants' positioning (Henriksen, 2008, p. 50) that is both interactional and institutional. In another word, positioning is the means of enacting roles in the context.

As shown in the figure below, I summarised the activities in each of the meetings and compared them in order to identify the core interactional activities that constitute problem-solving interaction. In the figure, I present interactional activities (with numbering of turns) that emerged throughout time in each of the meetings.

Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
Summarising and raising I-s&b (3-10)[6]: social media activities (I-s) & reduced ATL budget (I-b)	**Raising and identifying I-u** (4-15):uncertainty in sales-pricing	**Summarising I-c** (91-100) **& Identifying I-c&o** (-111): customer credit limits (I-c) &undelivered sales orders (I-o)
Proposing actions for I-s (7-12)	**Raising and Identifying I-r** (16-24): pricing requests from the sales	**Proposing action 1 for I-c**

---

[6] The numbers in the parenthesis are turn numbers. These therefore do not correspond to the line numbers in the excerpts presented in Section 6.3.

Summarising I-b (13)

Raising I-b (14-15)

Negotiating I-b (13-37)

Raising & identifying I-sg (38-48): guidelines on social media

Proposing action 1 for I-s (49-61)

Raising I-sg (62-70)

Proposing action for I-sg (71-74)

Negotiating I-s (75-87)

Proposing action 2 for I-s (87-96)

Re-attending I-sg (96-101)

Resuming the discussion of action 1 for I-s (102-104)

Negotiating action 1 for I-s (105-120)

Resuming the negotiation of action 2 for I-s (121-132)

Orienting towards action 3 for I-s (129-134)

Constructing action 3 (135-154)

Orienting towards action 3 (153-181)

Resuming the identification of I-b (182-184)

Resuming the discussion of action 3 for I-s (185-196)

Resuming the identification of I-b (197-218)

Re-attending an issue of expenses for a PR agency (208-213)

Orienting towards action 1 for I-b (219-235)

Negotiating actions for I-b (233-278)

Resuming the negotiation of I-b (279-282)

Summarising I-bm (283-285)

Orienting towards action 1 for I-bm (286-336)

Resuming the negotiation of action 1 for A (49) (337-359)

Resuming the identification of I-b (360-364)

Re-attending I-b (365-377)

Resuming the identification of I-u (24-30)

Negotiating of I-u (25-37)

Proposing an action for I-u (38-43)

Resuming the identification of I-u&r (43-44)

Ratifying I-r as a problem (45-63)

Resuming the negotiation of I-u&r (47-62)

Orienting towards actions for the issue I-r (63-)

Taking actions for the issue I-r (66-75)

(101-120)

Raising and negotiating issue I-o (113-120)

Resuming the proposal of action 1 (118-120)

Re-attending issue I-o (121-130)

Proposing action 2 for I-c (131-6)

Re-attending I-o (137)

Proposing action 3 & negotiating actions (138-142)

Resuming the negotiation of I-o (143-156)

Proposing & Negotiating actions for I-c&o (149-161)

Resuming the negotiation of I-c (162-174)

Proposing & Negotiating actions (174-184)

Resuming the negotiation of action 1 (185)

Closing the negotiation of action for I-c&o (185-194)

Ratifying I-b as a problem (378-388)
Taking action 3 for I-b (389-411)
Re-attending I-b (412-415)
Proposing action (415-418)
Taking action 3 for I-b (417-431)
Resuming the negotiation of I-b & actions (432-455)
Orienting towards action 4 for I-b (454-462)

*I-s: Issue about social media, I-b: Issue about the budget, I-u: Issue about the uncertainty in sale-pricing strategy, I-r: Issue about the pricing request, I-c: Issue about customer credits, I-o: Issue about undelivered sales orders

*Figure 7 **Visualisation of the analysis of interactional activities***

Although this is a process of simplification, the process is to identify and compare the activities across the meetings. As shown in Figure 7, the activities that appeared to be recurrent in and across the meetings are raising issues, proposing actions, negotiating issues and actions, and resuming. The activities, although not linear, signal the timeline of the meetings working to establish common ground and (re)negotiate problems and a commitment to actions. Throughout the timeline of the meetings, issues are raised, recycled and (not) ratified as a problem, leading to the action commitment at the end stage of the meetings.

Based on the analysis of interactional activities, I have constructed a model in the figure below to visualise the interactional activities. The interactional activities in this model show the spiral nature of the interaction in line with interactional studies (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Although these do not fit a neat pattern, they are recognisable through the interactants' linguistic acts and cues. In the previous section, 2.3.1, I cited Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini's (2011) problem-solving model and Marra's (2003) decision-making model. These provide the complex processes employed in negotiating and ratifying problems and decisions. The value of the spiral model is that it allows cyclical patterns of interactional activities to be represented, in which interactants return to and renegotiate issues and problems and orientations to action. I develop this approach further by probing the interactional activities that emerged throughout the entire series of meeting events and relating them to interactants' negotiations of their professional roles.
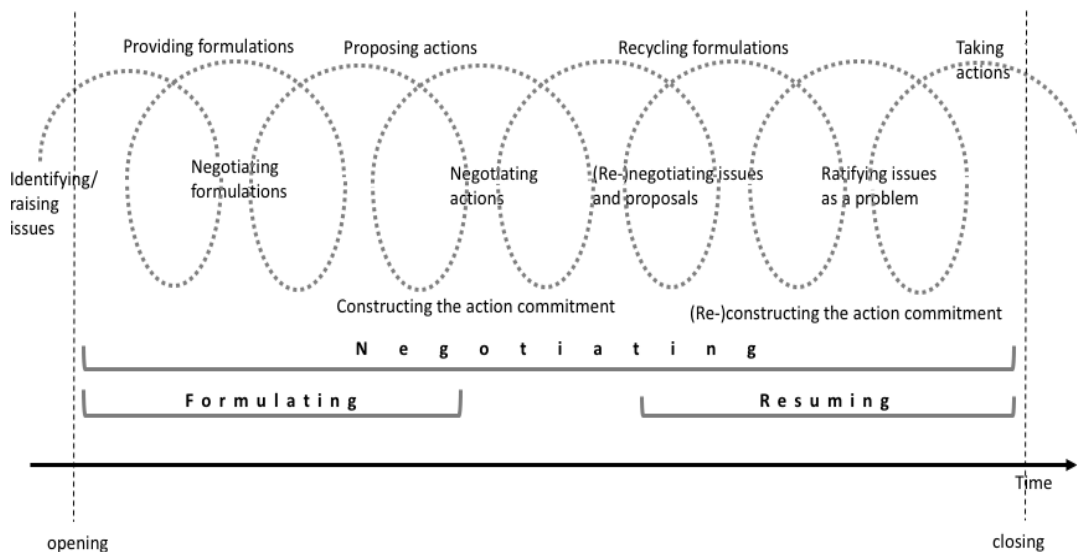
*Figure 8 **Representation of interactional activities in problem-solving interaction***

This present model explicates the process of cumulative construction of problems (i.e. ratifying issues as a problem) and decisions (i.e. constructing the action commitment), as interactants jointly establish the common ground of the issues and problems and reach (or not) consensus on the problems and a commitment to actions. This also supports the view on the complex relationship between problem-solving and decision-making. Interactional studies see these two as emergent and parallel in the flow of actions and meetings embedded in complex workplace practices (Alby and Zuccermaglio, 2006; Chia, 1996), and acknowledge it is difficult to pin down one particular moment at which problems are ratified and resolved and decisions are made (e.g. Boden, 1994; Huisman, 2001).

In my analysis, formulating and resuming take specific meanings in the context of a problem-solving interaction, while, in their turn, these practices construct the meeting as having a primarily problem-solving function. Accordingly, I organise the analysis according to the interactional activities in each of the meetings in order to show how they serve and unfold in each meeting, and how the activities are shaped by the interactants. This allows for an anatomy of the 'problem' to be studied on a turn-by-turn basis.

Before moving into the analysis of the problem-solving meetings, in the following section I provide theoretical perspectives on the core interactional activities identified in the data: *formulating, negotiating* and *resuming*.

Formulating

In *formulating*, situated in the early stage of the meetings, interactants raise and summarise issues and propose actions relevant to the respective organisational activities. Formulating in

conversation analysis studies (e.g. Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970; Heritage and Watson, 1979; Drew, 2003; Barnes, 2007) is seen as an activity or a practice that provides a summary of points, involving a process of 'preservation', 'deletion' and 'transformation' of elements/information in the prior talk while 'recasting' it (Heritage and Watson, 1979. p129). The uses and the organisations of formulations vary (ibid., 128) depending on the interactional context in which the formulation takes place. In my data, at the opening stage of problem-solving meetings, interactants do formulating work in raising and summarising issues and proposing actions relevant to the respective organisational activities (see Figure 7). Individuals formulate issues and actions from their role perspectives, and recycle the formulations established in the mid and later stages of the meetings in pursuit of their own interactional agenda – ratifying issues as (not) a problem. In this regard, formulation becomes a crucial interactional resource to 'define reality' (Clifton, 2006. p, 203) and achieve support and consensus (Barnes, 2007; Månsson, 2015), and a 'device through which the practice is mobilised' (Drew, 2003. p,296).

Negotiating

Negotiations in my data take place throughout the meetings. As shown in Figure 8, formulating and resuming constitute parts of the negotiation as interactants build on common ground and (re)negotiate issues and proposals (Huisman, 2001). As discussed in Section 2.3, studies suggest opposing views and deviating opinions are inherent and a necessary part of problem-solving interaction in reaching a commitment to an action, as 'interactants introduce, negotiate and challenge diverse views and opinions' (Angouri, 2012, p. 1565). In my data, through negotiations interactants develop further issues and situations are identified. Simultaneously, the interactants negotiate their interactional and institutional positions that are anchored on their roles specific to expertise, responsibilities, and the status (Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011, p. 213). As shown in Figure 7, my data has shown recurrent negotiations of the same or different issues and future actions. These signal the topic/future action development in progress or postponing the negotiation by moving onto different interactional agenda or terminating the negotiation without consensus on the action commitment.

Resuming

In the later stage, resuming activities occur in a sequential environment where interactants return to previous talk after an expended discussion of other issues, recycling the issues and proposed actions suspended at the earlier stage of the meeting (Local, 2004; Sutinen, 2014). As shown in Figure 7, resumptions in my data emerge as a recognisable pattern with the

formulates constructed at the earlier stage in reviewing issues and re-orientating towards negotiations (Heritage and Watson, 1979, p. 150). In resuming, interactants connect with earlier positions in affirming or challenging earlier positions. The meetings show interactants do not always achieve consensus. Yet, it is through the resumptions that interactants either reach agreement on the problem (problem ratification) and the action commitment (Meeting 1 and 2) or manage to close the meeting without achieving affiliation (Meeting 3). By closing I refer to the temporary termination of the interaction as interactants physically leave the space where discussions have been taking place.

In the next section, I provide the linguistic acts and markers used in identifying the interactional activities in problem-solving meetings.

6.2.2. Linguistic features of interactional activities

To illustrate each of the interactional activities, I draw on three to four excerpts from each of the meetings. The division between the interactional activities (e.g. raising issues, providing formulations, proposing actions) are not always marked. However, as shown in the table below, the close analysis identified linguistic cues and acts marking the transitions between the interactional activities.

This table aims to show how the interactional activities in Figure 8 are marked by linguistic cues and acts in the flow of each problem-solving meeting. In addition, the linguistic markers signal interactants' role-positioning and aligning and affiliative moves.

Activity (Excerpt) / Meeting	Formulating issues (1.1)	Proposing and negotiating action (1.2)	Resuming issues (1.3)	Resuming and ratifying a problem (1.4)
Meeting 1	· Discourse markers (e.g. *so, You know, I mean, well, but*) · Stance markers	· Discourse markers (e.g. *but, well*) · Stance markers	· Discourse markers (*so, well, okay, yeah*) & topic orientation markers (e.g. before we go) · Pauses and gaps · Stance markers	· Repetition · Stance markers · Latching · Pauses and gaps
Meeting 2	Formulating issues (2.1)	Negotiating issues and actions (2.2)		Resuming and ratifying a problem (2.3)
Meeting 2	· Discourse markers (e.g. *so*) · Stance markers · Questioning · Metacomments (e.g. *the genuine reason for asking, I just want to know*)	· Discourse markers (e.g. *so, but, I mean*) · Pauses and gaps · Lexical choice (e.g. *problem*)		· Discourse markers (e.g. *so, I mean*) · Pauses and gaps · Stance markers · Metacomments (*I'm raising it*) · Repetition
Meeting 3	Formulating issues and actions (3.1)	Negotiating issues and actions (3.2)		Resuming the negotiation (3.3)

· Discourse markers (e.g. *so, You know*) · Stance markers	· Discourse markers (e.g. *so, but, anyway, you know*) · Lexical choice (e.g. *problem*) · Pauses and gaps	· Discourse markers (e.g. *so, anyway*) · Repetition

*Table 8 **Linguistic features emerged in interactional activities in problem-solving meetings***

As noted in Section 4.6.2, linguistic features are important contextualisation cues that 'channel the inferencing processes in a particular direction by calling up the frames and affecting the footing of each moment of an interaction' (Roberts and Sarangi, 2005, p. 634). As shown in this table, among the linguistic cues, discourse markers most frequently emerge as the indicators of 'boundaries' (Maschler and Schiffrin, 2015, p. 194) that signal transitions in interactional activities, topics and participants. Defined as 'sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk' (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31), discourse markers in their meanings and functions vary depending on their position and combination with other linguistic cues and acts. Along with the discourse markers, other linguistic features such as declaratives, stance markers, or deontic modal verbs emerge in the interactional activities. These also signal interactional activities the individuals draw upon as they denote individuals' role enactments or floor management in the meetings. I will explain them as they emerge in the data in Section 6.3.

In the following, I explain the linguistic features that facilitate the identification of transitional moves within the problem-solving meetings. Across the meetings, as shown in Table 8, the commonly observed features are discourse markers (e.g. *so*, *okay*) including other topic-orientation markers, and pauses and gaps. I discuss how these are associated with and demarcate interactional activities with the examples of their use in the meetings.

"So-"

1) "***so*** *well let me go through [...]*"
2) ***so::*** *the local budget is correct*
3) *Right. **So**:: (2.0) it's the ATL we will be looking at now*
4) ***so*** *anyway(.) current status is just ((amount)) over=*

Studies on discourse markers suggest *So* is frequently used for conveying different meanings and functions depending on its position and combined elements (e.g. Schiffrin, 1987; Maschler and Schiffrin, 2015). For example, within or between turns, *so* works to link elements indicating semantic relations (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 202) and the stand-alone *so* functions in prompting the hearer 'to acknowledge the completion of' prior turns and actions (Raymond, 2004, p. 196). As shown in Table 8, *so* is prominent in my data, conveying these

functions. In particular, in identifying the interactional activities, *So-* prefacing turns usefully demarcate raising issues through formulating and resuming prior talk.

CA studies have shown that interactants' use of "*so-*" prefacing goes beyond semantic relations, marking 'a transition, boundary, or connection between one activity and another' (Raymond, 2004, pp. 188-189). 1) and 2) exemplify the usage of *so* in denoting transition between participants (1) and topics (1, 2) (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 318; Johnson, 2002, p. 96) wherein participants provide formulations in summarising issues and situations from their role perspectives.

In a similar way, the "*so-*" prefacing turns mark interactants' resumption in combination with attention marker *Right (3)* and topic orientation marker *anyway* (4) (Fraser, 2009). In addition, combined with the discourse markers, repetition that recycles topics appears to be an important cue for resuming (Local, 2004). By indicating (the orientation towards) the relevance of acts, *so* becomes an important resource for enacting 'pending interactional agendas' (3) and pursuing one's own interactional agenda (4) (Bolden, 2009, p. 981). The example 4) is more of the repetition of the formulation imposing the speaker's views.

 "Okay (.)"

1) ***Okay*** *(.) and what (.) would you like me to do about::*
2) ***Okay, okay (.)*** *yeah (.) Before we go into this*
3) ***Okay (.)*** *I can- I can see your ideas*
4) ***Okay*** *(4.5) I will- I will go have a look now*

As is the case with *So*, *Okay* is used in various practices in different positions. Here I focus on *Okay* employed at 'moments of transition, by recipients and current speakers' (Beach, 1993, p. 327). 1) and 2) exemplify the interaction is about to move from one topic to another (Marra, 2003, p. 88). Situated in the talk, 1) indicates the speaker's moving on to an on-task topic, orienting towards an action whereas 2) exemplifies the speakers' degenerating from the current topic (Beach, 1990) resuming his prior talk. 3) and 4) exemplify closing down the current topic (ibid.). In the context of the talk, 3) serves to temporarily close down the negotiation of actions, and 4) conveys the closure for sequences; the end point has been reached (Fraser, 2009, p. 897), followed by taking an action.

Topic orientation markers

1) *it's **a- anyway** it's Kiho's decision.*
2) ***well before-*** *that's what I'm about to go through quickly*
3) *Mm:: <u>always</u> we have to consider(order requirements)=*

=**But- but at the <u>moment</u>** *(.) if (.) we'd say::*

4) *It's case by case what we have to review is::(xxx) market.*

   But- *but what I'm asking is ...*

Interactants also use topic orientation markers, i.e. *anyway, well before* and *but* in the examples above. The deployment of the markers conveys their 'intentions concerning the immediate future topic of the discourse' (Fraser, 2009, p. 893), which does not align with the one of the hearers. In cases of 1) and 2) in the problem-solving talk, it signals the speakers' resuming of their topics while digressing from the present topic (ibid., 894). *But* 'marks an upcoming unit as a contrasting action' (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 152), signalling a semantic relationship between sentences and between acts (Fraser, 2015). *But* in example 3) and 4) denotes the recipient's challenging the acts (Fraser, 2015, p. 50), in a context of problem-solving talk, raising issues in negotiating a commitment to actions.

Pauses or gaps

In addition, extended pauses or gaps within and between the turns appear to useful indicators of transitional moves, as shown in the example below:

1) *I think that's a good idea. Perfect.* **(4.0)**
   ⇨ *Ted: Right. So:: (2.0) it's the ATL we will be looking at now*

2) *because we haven't spent lots of budget(.) Yeh? Lots of remaining budget, yeh?* **(3.0)**
   ⇨ *Unfortunately with the ATL budget(.) the biggest part of*

As Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) identify, given the uptake, the gap in example 1) signals the closure of the current topic and creates a turn for the next speaker to resume, as indicated by the resumption marker *So* and the repetition of the topic. The case of 2) signals an opportunity provided to the next speaker to move to further issues, leading to a move to ratify the issue as a problem.

The linguistic features discussed here not only demarcate the transitional moves, but also provide understanding of the local interactional processes. These function as important cues that facilitate understandings of the contextualising work done by the interactants at each moment of the interaction (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 25). Situated in problem-solving interaction, the features channel important processes in and through which meanings vis-à-vis interactants' role-positioning are negotiated. This then indicates that problem-solving is best approached as a process involving the actors and their agendas in context.

In the following section, I provide analysis of the problem-solving meetings.

6.3. Problem-solving meetings

Responding to my first research question, how problem-solving can be done in interaction, I organise this section according to the problem-solving meetings. In each of the meetings, I discuss how the interactional activities identified in Section 6.2.1 unfold. And addressing the third research question, I discuss how employees enact and negotiate their professional roles in doing problem-solving.

6.3.1. Meeting 1. A reduced local marketing budget and doing social media activities

Meeting 1 began with the three interactants sitting together in Minjae's office. In the setting, both Kate and Ted were holding documents, and Minjae was using his computer screen and a calculator from time to time. The audio recording began with the two major issues of this meeting: planning of the social media activities, which Kate briefed, and the reduced local ATL (above-the-line), which the interactants believed to be caused by the unimplemented social media activities. As informed by Minjae, the discussion about the social media activity planning took place between himself and Kate in his office on the same day before the audio-recorded interaction.

The issues raised, and the problem ratified in this meeting (and also Meeting 3) illuminate employees' talk about the controls of the HQ over organisational procedures (Chapter 7) and also reflect the literature on the controls of the HQ over resources and processes (Ferner, Edwards and Tempel, 2012). Noteworthy in this meeting, then, are the competing discourses – the HQ controls and the subsidiary autonomy (Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017). These are negotiated by the interactants who agentively engage with institutional and professional discourses, enacting their professional roles (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999).

I start with the interactants' formulating work.

Formulating issues

This excerpt illustrates interactants' diverging formulating work on the same issue – the reduced budget. Situated in the opening stage of this meeting, the activity is important for constructing the common ground of the situation. The formulations constructed here are important resources throughout the meeting in negotiating the problems and the future actions, and through the formulating work, the interactants' role-positioning is actively enacted.

Ex. 1.1 (Transcription conventions are provided in Appendix 9)

```
 31    Minjae    And: all the budget wise (.) I have seen Jiwoo's email this
 32              morning ↑ Overall our ATL and BTL all the subsidiary local
 33              budget wise(.) nearly similar to last [year](.)plan wise(.)
 34    Ted                                            [Well-]
```

```
35              Well [it- (2.0)] well it is(.) but it isn't(.)
36    Kate           [no it's not]
37    Minjae    It is↑ it isn't (.)
38    Ted       Because it's in Euro(.) If you convert it back to GBP, it's
39              lower [.] by quite a bit.
40    Minjae    Ah::
                ((8 lines omitted))
49    Minjae    It's- it's not(.) a great deal of difference(.) four
50              percent(.)
51    Ted       Yeah(.) bu[t
52    Minjae            [It's- it's not a great (.) deal of difference(.)
53              Our budget remains similar(.) yeah? (3.0)
54    Ted       Well(.)the ATL budget hasn't(.)I mean (.) because we didn't
55              do anything with social media this year(.)
56    Minjae    Mm
57    Ted       the- the difference between what I've planned (.)
58    Minjae    Mm mm
59    Ted       and:: what they've come back with is ((amount)) pounds=
60    Minjae    =So (.) isn't that enough? Or we need to (.) ask them to
61              increase our budget(2.0)
62    Ted       Well(.)this is a part [of]
63    Kate                           [Yeh::] So(.) well(.)let me go
64              through just quickly if I can(.) Sort of social media and-
65              and- and the guidelines which were presented to sort of the
66              workshop (.)and m- my thoughts (.) really on next year(.)
67              So (.) now there is an obviously gap in the guidelines (.)
68              for this which I found it very complicated(.)and
69    Minjae    Mm
70    Kate      ah: it put a lot of markets off ↑ Umm now (.) in all degree
71              (.) to have social media, obviously our initial plan was to
72              have a PR agency and social media work in different agency
73              of one umbrella. Now as it stands(.) of course(.) we are a
74              little bit up in the air as we wait for (.) decisions from
75              (.) Europe and global on whether or not we will have a PR
76              agency (on our retail in 2015) (.) So without that (.) we're
77              certainly not in the position to start=
78    Minjae    =Social media wise(.) are they ready (.)↑ to launch↑ […]
```

<div align="right">

ATL: above-the-line advertising

BTL: below-the-line advertising

</div>

In this opening phase, Minjae provides the summary of an email from Jiwoo at the European head office. By formulating it in terms of the '*overall*' local budget (line 32) which is '*nearly similar to last year*' (line 33), he provides an assessment on the allocated budget as unproblematic. This, however, is followed by Ted and Kate's disagreement, indicated by their disconfirming responses (lines 34-36). In Ted's turn, the *well-* prefacing response (lines 34-35) denotes his upcoming contributions are not going to fully agree with Minjae's formulation (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 102) as shown in his following remarks from line 38 onwards that enact and problematise the reduced budget. Minjae, however, continues to formulate it as unproblematic by assessing it as '*not a great deal of difference*' (lines 49, 52). His remark in line 53 perhaps invites Ted to agree with his view to elicit a confirming answer (Heinemann, 2008, p. 57).

Ted's role-positioning is enacted in the negotiation, wherein he continues to raise the reduced ATL budget and formulates it by drawing on his team, who '*didn't do anything with social media*' (lines 54-55), and his role, one responsible for the marketing budget (lines 57-59). The role Ted enacts here is informed by his comment in our interview, '*From my area [...] budgets and marketing plans, I have, sort of ATL marketing plans, started communicating now with the head office copied in European office*'. Ted's formulating of the ATL budget reduction seemingly appears to be aligned with Minjae: Minjae's minimal response tokens (lines 56, 58) afford Ted the floor until the completion of the formulation (Stivers, 2008, p. 34), and the uptake (line 60-61) engages with Ted's problematisation. On the other hand, given Ted's following turn in line 62 that attempts to identify the issue further, Minjae's '*so'*- prefacing uptake can be seen as his act of concluding the issue that is in progress to move on to more on-task talk.

Ted's attempt to develop the issue is interrupted by Kate initiating her formulating work from line 63. In the formulation, by mobilising '*the guidelines*' (line 65) and '*the workshop*' (lines 65-66) that are 'primarily known' to Kate, she enacts her epistemic status as well as the marketing communication expert role (Heritage, 2012, p. 9). The enactment of the expert role is crucial, especially the early stage of this meeting event, for the interactants to establish common ground on the situation. A similar pattern is observed in her role enactment in Excerpt 1.2, where she conveys information and shares views. The role enacted here entitles Kate to diagnose the current situation where the '*guidelines*' are attributed to the problem of social media activities (lines 67-68), and the HQ therefore becomes accountable for the local team's undelivered activities. Kate's formulation in this regard can also be seen as her attempt to pre-empt a situation whereby she can be criticised for the unspent ATL budget. Given Ted's comment on the undelivered social media activities (lines 54-55), for which the local team or Kate is primarily responsible, the role accountable for the budget issue is still in negotiation at this interactional stage.

Important to note is Kate's account in lines 73-77, which engages with the institutional discourse. Denoted by '*now as it stands (.) of course'*, the account enacts the institutional order as shared social facts among the interactants (Geppert and Dörrenbächer, 2016). As shown in Kate's claim, '*we are certainly not in the position to start*' (lines 76-77), this importantly affects their interpretation of the situation and the construction of the future action. The institutional order enacted here is negotiated throughout the meeting by the interactants making relevant and legitimate claims to the context and through their 'specific courses of action', which are accountable to the organisational norm circulated and shared by employees (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 16).

This brief account suggests problem-solving interaction is socially situated, and the HQ-subsidiary relationships, in turn, emerge in employees' problem-solving interaction. I discuss the emergence of the HQ-subsidiary relationships in Chapter 7. In addition, my reading of the institutional order (and the professional roles) in the meeting data is usefully informed by the interview data: for example, Excerpt 17 wherein Ted claims, '*there is too much controls of the head office level*'.

Whereas existing studies in the problem-solving domain often take for granted the existence of problems (Section 2.2), this excerpt exemplifies the complexity in the processes of defining problems involving interactants' professional role enactment and negotiation of the formulations. Moreover, the problem in this meeting is ratified in Excerpt 1.4, in its later stage. This suggests the importance of interactional perspectives in theorising problem-solving.

Before moving on to the problem ratification, in the following, I look at the interactants' construction of actions (i.e. decision), and how this activity is contingent on their positioning.

Proposing and negotiating actions

In this excerpt, the interactants discuss their planning of the local social media activities using a PR agency.

Ex. 1.2

```
237  Minjae   Agencies might help us(.) to a certain degree(.)yeah?
238  Kate     yeah↓ This- this is with an agency(.)=
239  Minjae   =yeah
240  Kate     They said you need four hours a day(.) That's only (.) you
241           know (.)Eco employees(.) four hours a day(.) That's not an
242           agency, that's ah:: Eco (.)
243  Minjae   Who's- who's (.) saying that (.) this four hours a day?
244  Kate     This has come from the guidelines (.) from the European
245           PR(.)
246  Minjae   ((cynical laughter)) why do they designate four hours a
247           day? Somebody(h)- somebody(.)[who is(.)]
248  Kate                                 [I don't] think that's
249           realistic though:=
250  Minjae   =Somebody who is- who is doing their job very well can- can
251           spend only one hour a day(.) […] It really depends (.) on
252           (.) who is doing those responsibilities(1.5)I think! That
253           is just general guidelines(.)We don't need to abide by that!
254  Kate     well (.) if we do: as discussed if that's agreed (.) umm::
255           to review it(.)
256  Minjae   Mmmhm
257  Kate     sort of(.) halfway through next year(.) then(.) of course
258           we can call upon the other subsidiaries and ask them (.)
259           have you employed someone:: who manages this(.) you
260           know↓how many hours a day you spend on it(.)So it would be
261           a good gaze (.) to see what our colleagues are doing [in
262           their market(.)]
263  Minjae                                                      [Do
264           you- do you think]it will be acceptable from (the) head
```

```
265          office?
266  Kate    Sorry?
267  Ted     Going midway through the- halfway through the year(.)
268  Minjae  Yeah
269  Kate    It's our decision(.) They said-[they made] it very clear
270          (.)=
271  Ted                                     [isn't it-]
272  Minjae  =yeah
273  Kate    throughout the entire workshop(.)=
274  Minjae  =yeah
275  Kate    that it is ultimately (.) whatever we do with the social
276          media is our decision (.) it's down to each and every
277          subsidiary's and their MD's(1.5) so it's our decisions(.)
278          it's not- not being forced policy anyway (.)
279  Minjae  It's kind of(.)ah:: (1.0) We have asked (.) European head
280          office(.) to give us guidelines (.) as quickly as possible
281          (.) and then as soon as the guidelines are available (.) we
282          don't wanna do it right now (.) [But] it's kind of
283  Kate                                    [yeah::] we've lost
284          our PR agency(.) So we- we- we've gone back (to the
285          point where) we had selected an agency over a year ago (.)
286  Minjae  yeah::
287  Kate    So:: you know, unfortunately we obviously didn't predict
288          that happening so::
289  Minjae  Okay(.) I can- I can see your ideas what you are talking
290          about=
291  Kate    =Yeah (.)
292  Minjae  But (.) let's put it aside (.)
293  Kate    Mmhm
294  Minjae  and go through PR agency plans(.)
295  Kate    Go through?
296  Minjae  Our PR agency (.)
297  Kate    Oh (.) where we are at?
298  Minjae  yeah (.)
299  Kate    what we have done following the marketing workshop […]
```

Kate's provision of formulation of what '*they* (the head office) *said*' in the '*guidelines'* (lines 240-241) conveys information and establishes common understanding of the guidelines. The uptake, pointing out '*four hours a day'* (lines 241, 243), and cynical laughter (line 246), indicate Minjae taking a critical stance toward the guidelines, and distancing himself from the head office. Kate's following comment (lines 248-249) affiliates with Minjae by joining the negative assessment of the guidelines. Overlapping (lines 247-248) and latching (lines 249-250) talk here contribute to establishing 'the sense of unanimity' on the problem with the guidelines (Sarangi, 2012, p. 306).

In providing a perspective on the guidelines and the future action, Minjae enacts his standing in the subsidiary, and its authority over the action through the claim featured a deontic modal verb, '*don't need to'* (line 253). As denoted by the expression, '*well (.) if we do:'* (line 254), the enactment of the local authority appears to provide Kate an environment to propose a future action, i.e. doing the social media activities at the discretion of the subsidiary, which is in line with her interest. Kate's proposal formatted with the mobilisation of '*we'* (lines 254-

255) transforms her own opinion into the matters that are (to be) collectively agreed (Angouri and Mondada, 2017) and serves to assure that the interactants have shared common ground or agreed on the action. The proposal is also heavily mitigated with the mobilisation of '*if*' (line 254) and the hedging devices, '*umm*' (line 254) and '*sort of*' (line 257). Mitigation is commonly observed in Maseide's (2007, p. 637) work on medical problem-solving as a form of polite or careful ways of formulating opinions in case interactants may have different viewpoints. In this way Kate perhaps exercises caution in proposing actions in line with her interest, i.e. doing social media activity at the local discretion, without sounding too aggressive while seeking agreement (Asmuß, 2011, p. 208).

From line 263, the discourses shift following Minjae's questioning (lines 263-265) concerning the compatibility of Kate's proposal with the HQ management perspective. The enacting of the HQ perspective suggests Minjae is required to balance the local and global management roles, and his role enacted as an intermediary in coordinating the interests of the HQ and the subsidiary (Johnson and Duxbury, 2010). The hedging device '*kind of (.)*' (lines 279, 282) in his account indicate professional ambivalence in enacting roles and institutional positioning in the given interactional moment (Sarangi, 2016).

Following Minjae's questioning, Kate, from line 269 onwards, makes claims about the local decision ownership. Her explicit claim-making here enacts her expertise as well as her standing in the subsidiary in line with her interest in pursuing local discretion. The claim is supported by her following formulation of what '*they said*' (line 269) '*throughout the workshop*' (line 273), which again draws upon her primary epistemic domain. It therefore enacts her authority to construct the proposal. The enactment of the local expert role here is important as it brings to the interaction its 'legitimated right' (Henriksen, 2008, p. 48) to determine the local actions as shown in the formulation (lines 275-278). The remark, '*It's down to each and every subsidiary's and their MD's (.) so it's our decision*' (lines 268-269) conveys explicitly the authority of the local team while constructing the authority of Minjae (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012). By positioning him as the local authority and the team member, Kate may intend to invite Minjae to approach the situation in his capacity, and she also makes appeals to take her position into account.

The process of negotiation demonstrates how the HQ and the subsidiary emerge through the roles the individuals embrace (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 92). Interactants' role enactment, projecting the perspectives of the organisation and their own interests, becomes critical in shaping the way future actions are proposed and negotiated.

Ted in the meantime, as shown in lines 267 and 271, takes a minimum participation role. This would be because the planning of local social media activities being discussed here is not his area but Kate's. This point is further supported by the latter stage of this meeting, in which he actively participates in the interaction by drawing on his topic (i.e. the local budget) (Excerpts 1.3, 1.4).

Marked by *'But'* (line 282) with the hedging devices, *'kind of (.) ah::'* (lines 279, 282), Minjae's following response (line 279) indexes himself not fully agreeing with Kate and perhaps his difficulties in positioning himself between the local and the global management, eliciting Kate's justification for the action proposal (lines 283-288). Given Minjae's earlier acts in representing the local authority, his later acts that draw on a HQ perspective to which he has long been committed demonstrate the fluidity in Minjae's institutional footing between the local and the global management. The discursive positioning here provides an example of how the shift in individuals' footings simultaneously shifts the talk, the formulations of the situation, which obviously affects the interactants' construction of their future actions. Furthermore, it demonstrates the dialogic and intersubjective dimension of the roles constructed between the interactants (Marra and Angouri, 2011, p. 3) and of the fluid boundary of the role-positioning

In terms of roles, the shift in footing indicates Minjae may encounter further professional ambivalence in the role enactment (Sarangi, 2016), as he is expected to meet both the local demands and the requirements from the HQ, which are often competing (Morgan, 2011). Alternatively, it can be seen as Minjae's role is constructed as an intermediary bridging between the two organisations, being 'acted upon and shaped by organisational and institutional dimensions' (Simpson and Carroll, 2008, p. 45). In this context, his roles in global and local management may not be necessarily in conflict but rather complementary, requiring him to balance the roles that are in constant negotiation (Sarangi, 2016).

In relation to the institutional positioning in the negotiation of the situation and (the commitment to) future actions, what is worth noting is the interactants' mobilisation of personal references: firstly, the shifts in the interactants' mobilisation from '*I*' (e.g. lines 248, 252), referring to an individual stance, towards '*we*' (e.g. lines 253, 254, 258, 275, 279) serve to transform individuals' opinions into the matters that are (to be) collectively agreed (Mondada, 2015; Angouri and Mondada, 2018). Secondly, the mobilisation of '*we*' versus '*they*' with reference to the local subsidiary and the headquarters respectively (e.g. lines 237, 240, 246, 253, 269, 275, 284, 287) denotes the organisations emerging through the interactants' positioning. Through the roles interactants embody and perform, the local subsidiary is constructed as influential and the headquarters emerges as significant to the degree which the

organisations' future actions are determined (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 92).

Marked by '*unfortunately*', Kate conveys her disaffiliative moves (lines 287-288) from Minjae with an attempt to continue negotiating future actions. Nevertheless, marked by Minjae's '*okay-*' (line 289), the negotiation is delayed or temporarily closed. As exemplified earlier, *okay* is one of the key features that indicate transitional moves (Section 6.2.2). In the case of Minjae's '*okay*'- prefacing, the turn degenerates from the current topic – when to start doing social media activities – to '*PR agency plans*' (line 294), discussed earlier (Beach, 1990).

In addition, Minjae's uptake here constructs Kate as someone who can contribute '*ideas*' to the decision (line 289), and. Kate's subsequent minimal response (line 291) does not necessarily display Kate's affiliation but her alignment with Minjae's transitional move in closing the negotiation. The transition in the interactional activities is further jointly achieved by Kate (lines 295, 297, 299) not being against Minjae's interactional move but displaying her collaboration to '*go through PR agency plays*'. This indicates Minjae's 'powerful' position achieved by exerting a considerable degree of control over the agenda despite the expertise and epistemic authority of Kate that have been enacted.

In Excerpt 1.1, we have seen the interactants' formulating work. It was put on hold, interrupted by a relatively long discussion on social media plans. (See Figure 7, p. 93 for the interactional activities). In the following I examine how the resumption is achieved whilst the discussion on social media is ongoing.

Resuming the issue

This excerpt, marked by the "*okay*" employed by Kate (line 423), begins with the interactants' construction of their action to do a pitch to deliver a PR agency for their social media activity. Ted here attempts to resume the unsolved budget issue (see Excerpt 1.1) as relevant to the planning of the social media activity. And *So* in lines 459, 463 *usefully*, as discussed in Section 6.2.2, usefully marks Ted's resumption acts.

Ex. 1.3

```
428    Kate    Okay (.) and what (.) would you like me to do about:: (name
429            of an agency)(.) and advertising (.) and what budget (do
430            We want to) give them?
431    Ted     well before- that's what I'm about to go through [quickly]
432    Kate                                                     [alright
433            okay]
434    Ted     have a look at that (2.0) [this is]
435    Minjae                            [Okay, okay] yeah (.) Before we
436            go into this (.) so
437    Ted     ((clearing throat))
438    Minjae  social media wise and PR agency (.) ah::: my feeling (.) my
439            personal feeling is PR agency wise (.) ah::: it will be
```

```
              (15 lines omitted)
455   Minjae   But PR agency wise... may be a good idea to do that as much
456            as we [can]
457   Kate          [do that] sooner (.) if (.) we can (.) Yes, I agree.
458            I think that's a good idea. Perfect (4.0).
459   Ted      Right. So:: (2.0) it's the ATL we will be looking at now
460            then (.) because (,) we had an advice (.) on our local
461            budget=
462   Minjae   =okay
463   Ted      so:: the local budget is correct (.) the HR budget is now
464            correct
```

Before looking to Ted's resumption attempt, it is worth noting the affiliation being achieved between Kate and Minjae as an environment for Ted to achieve the resumption. The remark, '*what would you like me to do*' (line 428) exhibits her orientation towards Minjae's authority. This is observed further in the subsequent exchange where Minjae's talk in lines 438-456 about his '*personal feeling*' (line 439), which displays little assertive directive, is taken to be a directive by Kate projecting the future action and expressing her strong affiliation with Minjae (lines 457-458). The silence following Kate's affiliative move indicates the current topic is closed (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1978) and hence provides Ted with an opportunity to take the floor in resuming his talk (line 459).

Situated in the exchange between Kate and Minjae constructing (the commitment to) the actions, Ted's resumption is not achieved at first. The first attempt at resumption is marked by an attention marker '*well before*' (line 431) signalling his orientation to a topic (Fraser, 2009, p. 893) – the local budget – he brought up earlier in this meeting; and made visible by his metacomment, '*that* (*the budget*)*'s what I'm about to go through* (line 431). This is confirmed by Kate's confirmation (lines 432-433) yet interrupted by Minjae's overlapping statement prefacing '*Okay, okay*' (line 435). '*Okay*' here temporarily closes down (Beach, 1990) the topic Ted tries to resume, while '*before we go into this*' (lines 435-436) is an attention marker (Fraser, 2009, p. 893) signalling Minjae's orientation to the main activity he and Kate have been engaged in. Ted's following act of clearing his throat (line 437) may express his dissatisfaction with Minjae's move.

Ted's resumption is achieved successfully following the extended talk from line 438 to 458, wherein the affiliation on the commitment to actions between Minjae and Kate is completed, marked by a relatively long gap (4.0), which may establish the condition for the 'actual resumption phase' (Sutinen, 2014, p. 159). This is indicated by Minjae's compliance token '*okay*' (line 462) that signals his alignment with Ted's act of resumption (Beach, 1995, p. 130). Minjae's response tokens overall are weighed in ways that enable the interactional transition in which the interactants move on to the resumption phase. In returning to his intended activity – problematising the local social media budget allocation – Ted's prefacing '*So*' in line 459

functions as 'a linguistic resumption cue' (Bolden, 2009) for the resumption (see also line 504) followed by the recycling of the topic, *'ATL (budget)'*. In this way, '*So*', mobilised in the resumption, denotes not only a connection between his turns with another but also a transition within the interactional activity (Raymond, 2004, p. 189).

Ted's acts of resuming show resumptions are not always achieved easily, but once they are achieved, it provides interactants with an 'interactional resource' (Sutinen, 2014, p. 137) that serves interactants' interactional goals and agenda. In the following, I further explain the resumption as a resource through which problems are ratified.

Resuming and ratifying a problem

In this excerpt, Minjae and Ted resume formulations established earlier in negotiating whether the reduced budget is a problem or not, suggesting the formulations are important interactional resources for the negotiation. The resumption here is important as it affords interactants to renegotiate issues in reaching consensus on the problem, leading to a commitment to an action.

Ex. 1.4

```
781   Minjae    Overall budget wise (.) are you happy with that?((name of
782             Eco UK's branch))'s budget allocated in there? (1.5)
783   Ted       Yes quite.
784   Minjae    Quite a big portion?
785   Ted       Yeh (2.0)
786   Minjae    We don't know […] we cannot be that aggressive to secure
787             all the budgets because we haven't spent lots of
788             budget(.)Yeh? Lots of remaining budget, yeh? (3.0)
789   Ted       Unfortunately with the ATL budget(.) the biggest part of
790             that social media which will allow to do (xxx) So I feel a
791             bit, not a bit, I feel a lot disappointed to actually be
792             taken away (.) the ATL budget (.) Because it's out far too
793             controlled(.)
794   Kate      It's come out during our conversation and (.)
795   Minjae    O[ur]
796   Kate       [we] were waiting for our guidelines.
797   Minjae    Our ATL total budget is that much decreased?
798   Ted       The ATL budget is decreased by ((amounts)) nearly
799             ((amounts)) pounds.
800   Kate      That's the social media.
801   Ted       Which is effectively social media content(.)
802   Kate      Which is a bit unfair(.) because it's out of control(.)
803   Minjae    Not because of the currency?
804   Ted       No(.) total budgets(.)
805   Minjae    Euro decreased at the same time?
806   Ted       Yes(.) and it's gone into the local budget.
807   Minjae    Jiwoo, Jiwoo, Jiwoo.((making a phone call))
```

Situated in the interaction wherein Ted has been persistent in problematising the ATL budget allocation through resumption (see Excerpt 1.3), Minjae resumes his prior talk about the '*overall budget*' (line 781) takes place in Excerpt 1.1. Minjae's resumption here, adding the evaluative predicate '*quite a big portion*' (line 784) to the formulation in the prior talk, can be

seen as a resource to pre-empt Ted's further problematizing of the local ATL budget. This appears to be temporarily achieved as Minjae successfully elicits preferred responses from Ted (lines 783, 785) in acknowledging some other local budget has been allocated, '*quite a big portion*' (line 784). His agenda is made clear in Minjae's following turn, in which he claims '*we cannot be that aggressive to secure all the budget*' (lines 786-787). In this account '*we*' with reference to the local team is being held accountable for the unspent, '*lots of remaining budget*' (line 788), recycling the formulation of Ted (see lines 54-55, Excerpt 1.1), which effectively justifies his claim. Through the recycling of formulations, Minjae affirms his position towards the situation and his institutional standing, through displaying his understanding of the budget allocation from the perspective of the head office, which cannot allocate more budget to the subsidiary for social media.

Minjae's proposal, however, is resisted by Ted and Kate. This is, firstly, signalled by the gaps in lines 782 and 785 indicate there may be 'a trouble with agreeing with' Minjae's formulation of the budget situation (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011, p. 22). Ted's minimal acknowledgement, '*yeh*', in line 785 followed by the gap (2.0) may express that he was not fully convinced and therefore elicit Minjae's further justification of his positioning (lines 786-788). Ted's disaffiliative moves away from Minjae continue and simultaneously develop the issue of the local budget. '*Unfortunately*' (line 789) in Ted's turn conveys his attitude (Fraser, 2009, p. 892), disagreeing with Minjae, and returning to 'what the problem is' with the local ATL budget. His positioning on the problem is (re)affirmed through the use of an affective predicate (Du Bois, 2007, p. 142), '*a lot disappointed*', in line 791. The conveyance of the emotion here indexes his embracing of the marketing management role responsible for securing the local marketing budget, and it demonstrates how (institutional) role identities are 'linked to affective stances' (Ochs, 1996, p. 424). Ted's evaluation of the situation as being '*far too controlled*' by the head office (lines 792-793) is supported by Kate's following turns where the head office, not the local team, is being held accountable for their unspent budget (lines 794 and 796).

It is worth noting here while such affiliative moves between Ted and Kate have been implicit in the previous Excerpt 1.1, their affiliation is made explicit this time as shown in their joint (re)formulation of the decreased social media budget from lines 798 to 802. Kate's evaluation of the situation as being '*a bit unfair because it's out of control*' (line 802) shares a stance with Ted and his complaint about the '*too much controls*' of the head office. In addition, their mobilisation of '*which is*' in their turns in lines 801 and 802 explicitly frames their collaborative formulating work and conveys the congruence of stances (Steensig and Drew, 2008, p. 9). Their affiliative moves foreground the interactional goals of Kate and Ted in the

following talk, wherein the interactional moves constitute the interactants' joint act of making appeals to take their position into account. And some are emotionally charged.

Minjae's statement using the evaluative predicate, '*that much decreased*' (line 797), signalling that the significance of the issue is being recognised, marks and provides an entry for the interactants' transitional move into their joint construction of and reaching agreement on the problem with the marketing budget (lines 797-806). The statement in line 797 firstly implicates his take up of the claims made by Kate and Ted (lines 789 to 796) and his engagement with the activity of (re)evaluating their reduced budget, indicating that the issue is being ratified as a problem. The issue being ratified as a problem requiring specific future actions is further indexed by Minjae's immediate act of 'making a phone call' (line 807) to Jiwoo, a European head office employee. Minjae's action commitment here projects what is expected from Kate and Ted having accused the head office of their reduced budget (lines 798-802). Through the act, Minjae enacts his role as a local representative by making enquiries about the budget allocation, as discussed in the phone call between himself and Jiwoo or an intermediary, communicating between these two organisations. Such role enactment is often observed in expatriate managers who tend to spend a considerable amount of time reaching out to the head office through phone/video calls on a range of occasions (Johnson Duxbury, 2010).

This meeting illustrates the complexity of the process in which the local budget issues are negotiated and ratified as a problem, which is largely situated in the relation between the HQ and the subsidiary. In line with Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini's (2011) view on problem-solving talk as the interactants' negotiation of 'ownership of issues', the process of negotiating the issue and ratifying it as a problem illustrates the interactants' negotiation of roles specific to their responsibilities and expertise. Kate explicitly draws on her epistemic domain (Heritage, 2012), the marketing workshop and guidelines on social media. Also, Ted draws on his responsibilities in managing the local marketing budget when he ratifies the budget issue as a problem. In doing so, these two interactants clearly show their standing in the local subsidiary. In terms of Minjae's role enactment, as illustrated in Excerpt 1, it is interesting to note the shift in the institutional footings through which the interaction shifts. This can also be seen as his balancing of his roles of local managing director and global management (Sarangi, 2010), which brings to the interaction the perspectives of the organisations in doing problem-solving (Henriksen, 2008, p. 48). This suggests a) the significance of the interactants' role-positioning in problem-solving meeting, the way problem-solving unfolds, and how the organisation emerges through the individuals' role-positioning, and b) that roles are not static but dialogically and intersubjectively constructed in interaction.

Also noteworthy in the meeting is that, unlike the literature on problem-solving that puts definition of problems at the beginning of the meeting (see Section 2.2) for the example studies), as shown in Excerpt 1.4 and also Figure 7, problems are ratified at the latter stage of the meeting as interactants resume their prior talk re-attending the issues in seeking their interactional agenda to ratify the budget issue as (not) a problem. The moment where a problem is ratified is not clearly marked (e.g. Boden, 1994; Huisman, 2001) but indexed by the interactants' affiliative move in reaching consensus on the problem, the reduced marketing budget as a problem, and Minjae's following action, contacting an employee at the HQ.

The similar gradual process, wherein the interactants achieve consensus on problems and the action commitment, is observed in Meeting 2. In the following section, I discuss further this process in light of the interactants bringing to the meeting the institutional framework and strategies through enacting and negotiating their roles.

6.3.2. Meeting 2. Sales-pricing strategy

Meeting 2 differs from Meeting 1 in terms of the participants' relatively symmetrical power relations, as Minsu explicitly mentioned '*the marketing manager is at the same level as me*' when talking about the hierarchy. Also, when I was at the company, I observed these two people talked to each other in a casual manner on various occasions. As I discussed in Section 2.4.2, I usefully draw here on epistemic status and stances.

Informed by the interview data, the roles of Minsu and Ted in pricing are closely related as they provide the perspectives of manufacturing and market, respectively. The issues raised in talk are further made comprehensible by Eddie, a product-pricing team member, talking about the role-relationship between the product-pricing team and Minsu: '*Minsu deals with the cost prices, um, about our products. So generally whenever we change our sale prices to our customers, our cost prices will move the same. So, we have a margin that remains the same between them*'. Given the interview excerpts, both Minsu and Ted are expected to play roles in implementing strategies in setting their product prices but from different perspectives embedded in their role responsibilities.

Meeting 2 started as Ted came over to Minsu in the operations team office and sat comfortably next to Minsu. In this meeting, the interactants discuss two relevant issues – the company's sales-pricing strategy and a pricing request from a sales director – which are raised by Ted. What is promising in this meeting event is that Ted's comments are made at a meta-level, through which he brings to scrutiny the organisational strategic knowledge 'for renewal' and constructs himself as 'the competent member' of the workplace community (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 3). In their interaction, tensions emerge between institutional and

professional frames that interactants bring to the interaction in enacting their roles (Mäkitalo, 2009). In the same process, the individuals' roles are actively negotiated.

In the following, as will be shown throughout this meeting, two relevant issues – the corporate pricing strategy, and pricing requests from the sales team – are formulated and developed in parallel, suggesting the multiplicity of the problems as, importantly, interactants' roles are negotiated in their joint formulating work.

Formulating issues

Excerpt 2.1 begins with the opening of the meeting where Ted comes over to Minsu and questions their pricing strategy. This excerpt illustrates how formulating is jointly done by the interactants in a patterned way by establishing common ground, then providing information and a summary of points (Heritage and Watson, 1979, p. 129).

Ex. 2.1

```
1    Ted      What's the strategy at the moment?
2    Minsu    What strategy?
3    Ted      Exactly (.) that's why I'm asking ya.
4    Minsu    What do you mean?(1.0)
5    Ted      Sales (.) (strong) price (1.0)
6    Minsu    Price? (2.5) sa- sales strategy is always the same(.) big
7             volume(.)
8    Ted      Mmhmm=
9    Minsu    =good price (.)
10   Ted      Right (.) what comes (.) first? volume (.) or price?
11   Minsu    volume is the first(.) but (.) at (.) the moment (.) our
12            subsidiary's (xxx) status is very serious=
13   Ted      =I know (.) I noticed (.)
14   Minsu    mm so::
15   Ted      No the reason(.) the- the genuine reason for asking is (.)
16            because (.) I saw that email from (.) Ben (.) this morning
17            (.)
18   Minsu    yeah?
19   Ted      How much is the special pricing (.) for requests (2.0)
20            yeah?
21   Minsu    Yeah (.)
22   Ted      but (.) and I responded today (.) is that- is that a net
23            price or does that include rebates? (1.0) But some of those
24            um:: materials (.) and our margin is down to about
25            ((number)) percent (.) So:: I just want to know what our
26            net margin requirement is (.) Somebody needs to tell-
27            somebody needs to tell Ben (.)(8.0) if- it- if somebody
28            says that if (it's) the volume […] if somebody needs to say
29            something (2.0)
30   Minsu    Mm:: always we have to consider(order requirements)=
31   Ted      =But- but at the moment (.) if (.) we'd say:: the margin::
32            is […] so:: because volumes become more important (.)So
33            I just want to (.) say (.) It's- it's not a reasonable
34            request (.)because I'm getting annoyed a bit (3.5)
35   Minsu    how- how- how-[how- he- he- keeps then]
36   Ted                    [well (.) I don't know- how-(.) how Ben he
37            will keep margin]I don't know that's (.) ((clearing throat
```

```
38              ))(3.0) so he just said that in the email(I forward) […]
                (2 lines omitted)
41              So (.) I just want to know what the guideline is.
```

From the beginning, Ted's expectation of Minsu's role is placed, conveyed through the question-response patterns; Ted enacts 'relative epistemic access to a domain or territory of information' between himself and Minsu (Heritage, 2012, p. 4), which is embedded in the individuals' role responsibilities. In doing so, Minsu, as one of the company's pricing approval lines, is being held responsible for the situation being identified and problematized. Ted's questioning indicates that Minsu should have known the sale-pricing strategy (Heinemann, Lindström and Steensig, 2012, p. 112). The roles here are informed by an interview with Ted wherein he discusses how his own and Minsu's roles are situated in the procedure of setting product prices, and an interview with Minsu where he talked about his expatriate, global managerial role in managing both sales and marketing teams. This is important for understanding Ted's acts of requesting information (i.e. sales-pricing strategy), claims for information Minsu is supposed to provide and Ted, in turn, is supposed to be provided with throughout the interaction in this meeting.

Noteworthy here is Ted's opening up with questions without providing any context, which implies the two interactants' close role-relations, as also informed by Ted in his interview, saying, '*Because my role is closely linked with their roles from a commercial point of view […] I tend to have a close working relationship with [….] commercial (operations) department I have a lot to do with them'.* Ted's questions (lines 1, 10) and Minsu's uptakes jointly identify the sales-pricing strategy and the subsidiary situation. Hence, Ted's questions throughout this interaction function more than seeking information. The question in line 1, for example, elicits Minsu's view on '*the strategy*', and Minsu's response (line 2) to the question is preferred by Ted, as indicated by Ted's response '*Exactly (.) that's why I'm asking ya'* (line 3). The question in this regard may be intended to 'align and fit' Ted's own view to Minsu's turn (Monzoni, 2008, p. 74) in pointing out the company's lack of sales-pricing strategy, or their uncertainty in it (see also Excerpt 2.3 for the claims), thereby developing the subsequent discussion.

From line 6, Minsu enacts the organisational framework in formulating the situation (lines 6-12) and the future action (line 30). This enacts his roles in balancing between manufacturing and sales perspectives in doing pricing, which are informed by an interview with Ted. Minsu's formulating of the sales-pricing strategy and the subsidiary situation from lines 6 to 12 mobilises throughout the entire meeting, providing the interactants with common ground on which shared understandings of the issue and the requirement of future actions are built.

The response, '*the volume is the first*', declaratively formulated in line 11 enacts Minsu's epistemic access to information from the HQ. In another words, it enacts his 'primary rights' to the information about the sales-pricing strategy that is primarily known to him (Heritage, 2012, p. 9). In the same turn, the formulation about the subsidiary's status serves to support or back up his provision of the definitive knowledge claim, '*volume is the first*'. The formulation becomes a resource in Excerpt 2.2 when justifying his claim about the uncertainty around '*the strategy*' (lines 43-51) and the construction of the future actions.

Confirming the formulation (line 13), Ted's expression, '*the genuine reason for asking is*' (line 15), introduces his perceived problems with '*a special pricing request*' (line 19) from Ben, a sales director, which requires a specific action. This indicates further the initial question-response organisation (lines 1-12) is employed to foreground the issue he intends to raise in the following interaction. This is evidenced by his *so-* prefacing statement with '*I just want to know*' (line 25) in the same turn. Ted, from lines 22 to 29, raises issues and simultaneously proposes actions, through which the interactants' rights and obligations to know the '*net margin requirement*' are enacted (Heritage, 2012; Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2012). By enacting a role, its socially legitimated rights, duties, values, norms and perspectives are brought into play (Henriksen, 2008, p. 48).

Ted's proposal of action, '*somebody needs to tell Ben*' (line 26), which may refer to Minsu, again positions his expectation of Minsu's role in talking to Ben about his pricing request. Moreover, this is ratified in Excerpt 2.3. Minsu's response (line 30) in the form of a suggestion, however, does not confirm the action proposed by Ted. Ted continues the negotiation by providing the evaluation of the request from the sales director, which also draws on the formulation provided by Minsu (lines 31-34).

Ted's act of assessing the situation as '*not reasonable*' (line 33) and '*annoyed*' (line 34) enacts his epistemic and affective stance that aligns with his institutional role (Ochs, 1996). The problem being raised is justified on the grounds of Minsu's formulation, as indicated by Ted's claim '*if we'd say […] because volumes become more important*' (line 32). This, given Minsu's uptake (line 35), may '*obligate*' Minsu to join him in the activity of evaluation to affiliate with his stance toward Ben's request (line 33) (Heritage, 2011, p. 160). The response in the question (line 34) conveys Minsu's empathy for Ted's stance and the comprehension of the problem being raised (Heritage and Watson, 1979, p. 130). In other words, Ted's formulation of the problem becomes recognisable or confirmed as an 'adequate in-common understanding' (Barnes, 2007, p. 281), achieving, albeit temporarily, alignment with Minsu on the problem being identified.

In this excerpt and throughout this meeting, Ted's metacomments, such as *'I just want to say'* and *'I just want to know',* are prominent. These effectively enact Ted's epistemic rights/responsibility to know the strategy (Heritage, 2012; Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011) and, accordingly, his role as a local marketing manager, having the right to know the sales-pricing. Simultaneously, Minsu is positioned as global management, constructed as someone supposed to have and offer 'sufficient knowledge' about the questions and issues being raised (Leighter and Black, 2010, p. 552). Minsu therefore is being held responsible for the question regarding the company's lack of pricing strategy, and responsible for dealing with the situation (i.e. the pricing request from Ben). It therefore further generates 'a set of rights and obligations to talk' in the setting (Markaki and Mondada, 2012, p. 34). Noteworthy in Ted's claim is the adverbial use of '*just*' situated in the comments, indicating Ted as 'merely' delivering what he needs to say, distancing himself 'from an investment' in the assertion (Kiesling, 2011, p. 10). This suggests that his right to know the company's '*net margin requirement*' (line 26) is not something to be asserted but taken for granted. *'So'* (lines 25, 32, 41) in prefacing metacomments denotes the connection between the talk-so-far and his role-positioning in the turns.

The interactants' formulating work here provides a good illustration of the way the common ground is built through their role-positioning, and more specifically their enacting of epistemic status and rights.

The excerpt below shows how the interactants achieve consensus on one of the issues formulated here through the negotiation and development of the issue. I also look to how their affiliation is gradually achieved.

Negotiating issues and actions

In this excerpt, Ted and Minsu continue developing the issues, the uncertainty in the company's strategies for sales pricing and Ben's pricing request in parallel. Here, 'the relative epistemic status' of the interactants (Heritage, 2012, p. 7) becomes a resource for achieving the affiliation towards the pricing request issue being ratified as a problem.

Ex. 2.2

```
41    Ted     So (.) I just want to know what the guideline is.
42    Minsu   we cannot- we cannot ah:: fix any price and (.) just
43            [(xxx)]. It's case by case what we have to review is::(xxx
44            market)
45    Ted     [But] but what- what=
46            =mm=
47    Ted     =What I'm asking is what is the acceptable level(.) then?
48            yea? we don't know?=
49    Minsu   =No (.)=
50    Ted     =Okay (.) I will just leave it then (.) (++)
```

```
51   Minsu   (the) current- current our status is very (.)[serious so we
52           can't get ah::(the) additional] rebates from the factory
53           (.)or the head office(.)
54   Ted                                                  [I know- I
55           know (.) that's why I'm asking you the question]
56           ((clearing his throat))
57   Minsu   and:: we cannot get ah:: our profit [target but]
58   Ted                                         [yeh I understand
59             that(.)]
60   Minsu   so::
61   Ted     that's why I'm asking the question(.) (2.5) because
62           whenever I say(.) mm:: the questions (sort of) in case (6.0)
63   Minsu   So we need to prepare (.) some:: (of) our margin
64           structure (.) or let's say:: ah::: customers' ah::: deepest
65           (.)sale(s) price (.) currently (customer A) [if it]
66   Ted                                                  [Yea Kiho] we'
67           ve both got orders (.) we supply them all:: (.) so we know
68           What the (net margin is) =
69   Minsu   = but ah:: currently (customer A)'s business is negative
70           margin (.) so we cannot- we cannot use (.) ah: (customer A)
71   Ted     So the- the net (.) best of what we are having in market
72           (.) ongoing is (.) mm:: (customer b)(.) =
73   Minsu   =(customer b)?
74   Ted     Because of the deals we have (.) So:: if that's an acceptable
75           margin (.) do we say we can't go below those margins?
76   Minsu   if- if we keep them (.) internal- internal marketing and
77           (.) ah::: Kiho (.) had to do this (xxx) but if the sales
78           (.) part (.) and:: (xxx) (.) [they would need] to reduce
79           their old [price(xxx)]
80   Ted                               [but-but-]
81           [but- Ben- but-] the problem is- but the problem is (.)
82           Ben knew that anyway (.)
83   Minsu   ((laughter)) yeah (.)(5.0)
```

Ted's metacomment, '*I just want to know*' (line 41), which keeps emerging throughout this meeting serves to consolidate the legitimated rights specific to his role as a strategy practitioner pricing- products.

Minsu's response, again, projecting the collective action commitment, '*we have to review*' (line 43), does not directly address what is being questioned, '*what the guideline is*' (line 41) but implicates there is no such guideline, only a '*case by case*' basis (line 43). From line 45, Ted's questioning challenges Minsu by returning to the issue of the lack of guidelines, not knowing '*the acceptable (margin) level*' (line 47). His questioning, '*we don't know?*' (line 49) and the subsequent claim (line 50) enact what Minsu and Ted are supposed to know and further their institutional role responsibilities. The mobilisation of 'we' here perhaps formulates knowing the pricing strategy as a collective matter but also mitigates his face-threatening acts.

In appealing to Ted, Minsu recycles his formulation of the subsidiary's *current status* (line 51) (see line 12, Excerpt 2.1 for the formulation). Ted's responses '*I know*' (lines 54-55) and '*I understand that*' (lines 58-59) express his empathy towards Minsu, aligning their positions. The use of stand-alone '*So*' in Minsu's turn (line 60) perhaps invites Ted to make connections

between Ted's aligning acts in his preceding turns (lines 54-55, 58-59) and the course of action (Raymond, 2004). From line 54, a similar pattern of negotiation emerges to the one in Excerpt 2.1, featuring Ted continuing to develop the issues with the mobilisation of metacomments (lines 55, 61, 74-75), and Minsu continuing to project the collective action in ways that are compatible with the organisational framework.

Their relative epistemic status becomes apparent from line 66, where Ted provides detailed information regarding Minsu's proposal for the action – i.e. '*to prepare the margin structure*' – and Minsu in line 73 presents 'unknowing epistemic stance' (line 73) (Heritage, 2012, p. 6). Ted's uptake (lines 66-68), engaging with Minsu's proposal, gradually achieves alignment and further affiliation towards ratifying Ben's request as a problem (Craig and Tracy, 2005, p. 18). Ted's enacting of his product-pricing expert role is important in narrowing a gap in epistemic status between Minsu and Ted in order to reach agreement over the situations that the interactants have been bringing up, and further moving onto the task, as shown in Excerpt 2.3.

The aligning moves between Minsu and Ted continue, indicated by their ongoing development of problems (Craig and Tracy, 2005, p. 18). Through the aligning move made in lines 66 -74, Ted, denoted by '*So*' (line 74), manages to bring back and further develop (Bolden, 2009, p. 976) the issue, '*the acceptable margin level*' he previously questioned (lines 47-48). Minsu's continuation of the topic, the acceptable margin level (lines 77-79), conveys his aligning moves towards Ted in questioning the margin level, which has an implication on the pricing request from the sales department. Informed by Ted's epistemic status, his remark, '*the problem is*' (line 81) conveys his entitlement to ratify Ben's request for special pricing as a problem, and this seemingly appears to achieve agreement with Minsu as indicated by his laughter (Clift, 2016) with the preferred response that follows (line 83).

In the following section, I discuss how the affiliation achieved in this excerpt provides common ground for the subsequent interaction activities – ratifying the request as a problem and constructing a commitment to action – and how these activities unfold with the interactants affirming their role responsibilities.

Resuming and ratifying a problem

Interactants in the following excerpt recycle the formulations and gradually reach agreement on the problem with Ben's pricing request, continuing to construct the problem and future action while transitioning into the action commitment.

Ex. 2.3.

```
86   Ted    Because it's volume(.) that's why I want to know (.)(3.0)
87   Minsu  We have to keep different kinds of target (.) but [profit-
88          target is] not only- not [only profit]
89   Ted                                              [Well I
90          think- I think]          [I think it's] gonna be (.)
91          profit-related (.)
92   Minsu  Mm (.) (if) we have to consider not only volumes but
93          [((mumbling))]
94   Ted    [I mean (.)] I'm not(in sales) I'm not sure (.) if it means
95          (xxx) I would probably do what he is doing at the moment
96          (.) (5.0) It- it just started to get annoying(.) because
97          (.) at the moment(.) there's no (.) (3.0) sort of question
98          (.) the sort of (.) have we looked at whether we made it
99          (.)(xxx)((company name)) but we actually lost money on
100         that (.) so:: what's the point of doing it (.) but it's
101         also (.) but then when we consider(.)[…]it is too late to
102         retract the offer (.)
103  Minsu  If we give:: uh:: this special price[…]then it has any
104         effects on our normal payer,(company name)?
105  Ted    I assume:: so? (4.0)
106  Minsu  but according to Ben's email (.)
107  Ted    Mm
108  Minsu  I- I cannot catch (.) how many percentage he wanna keep
109         [them]
110  Ted    [but-] but what we would (pay)
111  Minsu  normally- normally (number) percent we- we kept [them
112  Ted                                                    [it's
113         more- it's more than that=
114  Minsu  =more than that
115  Ted    =yea (.) because it's effectively (.) ah:: their current
116         net (.)price (.) effectively so:: effectively if we've got
117         ((number)) percent (of) retailer (.) incentives (.) and
118         ((company name)), probably not ((number)) (++)
119  Minsu  Difficult (.)
120  Ted    I know it's difficult (.) but (.) I- I- have reached a stage
121         now (.) where (10.0) somebody needs (.) I mean I don't mind
122         keep going back to Ben (.) and say (.) (5.0) questions (.)
123         but it's too late to question him (then everybody is
124         talking) to their customers (.) I mean it- it is difficult
125         out there (.) Yes I appreciate that (.) and I do know that
126         Eco(is evolving) so:: Eco has to consider (.)[…]and we
127         need to put proper requests into (.) get this cross the
128         questions (.) which is difficult doing it (6.0)
129  Minsu  hhhh (4.0)
130  Ted    I know (.) I'm raising it because(5.0)
131  Minsu  just- just this- this size?
132  Ted    ((clearing throat))
133  Minsu  ((number)) size?=
134  Ted    =YEA (.) that would be the volume (.) for him I guess
135  Minsu  Mm mm special price (.) and (.) plus (.) normal rebates-
136         (or all) rebates=
137  Ted    =YES (.) (2.0) so::
138  Minsu  ((making a phone call)) (sound of voice message)
139  Ted    not there?(.)
140  Minsu  mm::
141  Ted    Okay (4.5) I will- I will go have a look now (and) bring
142         you with our net margin (.)
```

In this excerpt, Ted recycles the same formulation provided by Minsu (line 11, Excerpt 2.1) that he has already drawn on in constructing the future action (line 27, Excerpt 2.2). The same

formulation, however, works differently. Given Minsu's uptake (lines 87-88, 92) that orientates towards the actions, the formulation here serves to review and renegotiate the issues and actions, as it justifies his perspective on the problem. This again demonstrates how formulations work to manage transitions (Barnes, 2007, p. 284).

Subsequent to Minsu's turn (lines 92-93), which exhibits his uncertainty in the action commitment, Ted's turn (lines 94-102) provides an evaluation of the situation. Through the evaluation, the issue he raised earlier (e.g. lack of/uncertainty in the sale-pricing strategy) is reformulated as '*at the moment there's no question*' (line 97), which alludes to the action required. The claiming here enacts Ted's epistemic stances and affective stance (annoying) in line with his role as one with the right to formulate and ratify the situation as a problem.

The reformulation of the situation is collaborative, achieved through the pattern of Minsu seeking relevant information and Ted providing it, from line 103. The statements, e.g. '*If we give:: uh::*' (line 103) and '*I cannot catch*' (line 108), enact Minsu's 'unknowing' epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012, p. 6), being uncertain about Ben's special pricing request, and the margin Ben '*wanna keep*' (lines 108-109). Ted's subsequent responses (lines 112-113, 115-118) enact his relatively more 'knowing' epistemic stance (ibid.) (see also lines 63-74 in Excerpt 2.2, for the pattern). Minsu's evaluative predicate '*difficult*' (line 119) alludes to the problem situation and elicits Ted's alignment (line 120), which displays his empathy for Minsu (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011, p. 21). The following '*but*' enacts Ted's institutional positioning, which allows him to gradually move into the construction of the action commitment from line 121.

In the construction of action commitment, '*somebody needs*' (line 121) projects the action formulated at an early stage of the meeting (see lines 26-29 in Excerpt 2.1. for the formulation). Although the action is not fully formulated in this excerpt, given Minsu's response in line 130 with his following action taken from line 138 indicating the recycling of the action formulation, perhaps it serves to invite Minsu to the action commitment. Similar to Ted's previous extended turn (lines 94-102), his other extended turn (lines 120-128) affirms his perspectives on the situation upon which the interactants reach agreement and enacts his right to formulate actions, indicated by the deontic modal verb, '*we need to*' (lines 126-127), along with his epistemic stance, marked by '*I do know*' (line 125). The aspiration (line 129) situated in between the long gaps indicates a difficulty in determining the future action, which again elicits Ted's response (line 130), '*I know*', which conveys his alignment with Minsu's stance. Although incomplete, Ted's use of metacommemts, such as '*I'm raising it*', serves to affirm his institutional positioning, given his accounts of personal stances (e.g. '*I have reached*'), and enacts his institutional role identities having 'the right to voice' through his 'legitimate

participation in a communicative process' (Craig, 2012, p. 125). The gap (5.0) that follows may indicate the closing of his own talk (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1978).

Minsu's subsequent turns, which identify the size of the product for which Ben requests special pricing (lines 131, 133) and his action taken (line 138), indicate his explicit take up of Ted's construction of the action commitment. This indexes the interactants reaching agreement on the problem and the action commitment (i.e. decisions).

To sum up, this meeting started by Ted and Minsu negotiating two relevant issues – requests from the sales director and the company's lack of pricing strategy – in parallel. The processes of formulating and negotiation issues unfold through the interactants' negotiation of their roles specific to expertise and responsibilities that are largely enacted by their epistemic status. Through the processes, the interactants reach consensus on the sales request as a problem and a commitment to the future actions (Huisman, 2001; Kwon, Clarke and Wodak, 2009). This illustrates how problem-solving and decision-making are mutually constitutive as they unfold in the interactional event. And the achievement of the problem and the decision is rather implicit, indexed by their affiliative moves and actions taken in the closing of the event.

In the following section, Minsu, as one of the participants of the meeting, exhibits a similar role-positioning by appealing to an institutional procedure or norm, which diverges from the other two participants. I focus on the process through which the commitment to a future action is negotiated and discuss whether and how employees reach consensus on the future action.

6.3.3. Meeting 3. Managing the customer credits

The situational task in this meeting is managing the errors; and accordingly, the focus of the analysis of this meeting is on the process through which the interactants negotiate future actions after the errors have been identified (Clifton, 2006). What is interesting in this meeting is that a problem emerges in the process of problem-solving, more specifically negotiating their diverging orientation towards the institutional authority (Excerpt 3.2). And this is where tensions emerged between professional and institutional orders. According to Dall and Caswell (2017), such tensions are expressed in 'subtle forms of conflict and negotiation rather than through overt pressure, manipulation and persuasion' (p. 485). I look to this perspective in terms of their professional role-positioning and more specifically the way they enact and negotiate their situated expertise.

In this context of problem-solving, the interactants' formulations become an important resource for the negotiation of the future actions and of who has the authority to make decisions (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012) throughout this meeting. This appears to have a significant impact on achieving the affiliation among them.

The following excerpt is taken from an ongoing interaction where Matt and Minsu were identifying errors in invoicing sales orders, and June joined the interaction as Jihoon had asked her to talk to Minsu about the invoicing error. June had been involved in the previous talk where the three of them were identifying undelivered sales orders in relation to the errors made in their invoicing and credit management system.

Formulating actions

It is interesting to note in this excerpt that Minsu's formulating work defines who has the authority in deciding future actions.

Ex. 3.1

```
142  Minsu   So ((amount of money)) is (.) almost (.) over. ah:: as I
143          remember last month I asked you to:: invoice ((company
144          names)) order (.) but ah:: these two are not arrived.
145  Matt    Mm
146  Minsu   So in that case can you make return credits?
             ((inaudible - copy machine noise))
147  Matt    Ah::
148  Minsu   Can you make (+++)
149  Matt    Do you want me to do credit return?
150  Minsu   I will- I will- I will ah:: (+++) I will- I will ask Kiho
151          (.) to make return credits (.)
152  Matt    Just credit invoice (.)
153  Minsu   yeah::
             (4 lines omitted)
158  June    ((coming to Matt and Minsu)) You know (.) the um:: the two
159          (.) ((company names)) are they delivered?
160  Minsu   No- no (.)
161  June    Since this ((number)) sitting on the account hasn't arrived
162          yet. So these two (.)
163  Minsu   Mm
164  June    They haven't happened yet. But it was of course(.) so
165          really (.)
166  Minsu   Ah [it's, it's] a- anyway it's Kiho's decision.[ah: so] so
167  June       [it's]                                      [yeah]
168  Minsu   I'm gonna- I'm gonna ask him to do credit [.] for these two
169          orders (.)
170  June    Mmhmm
171  Minsu   and (.) make block (.) and (.) (++)
172  Matt    Did you credit (.) both ((company name))?
173  June    Yeah probably I would (.)
174  Matt    But I- I can't find (it sitting) here. it's a system
175          error=
176  June    =System error!=
177  Minsu   = It's not a system (.)
178  June    ((laughter))
179  Minsu   It's- ((laughter)) it's my error (.) my error when- when-
180          when I choose that order (.) ah::  [I]
181  June    [No::] no::, it's not your error (.) because when Josh
182          brought it to me, I said to him don't do it with (company name)
183          (.) choose some others [because] but Josh
184  Matt                          [Yeah I suppose (Company name)]
185  Minsu   [Clearly] i- i- ga- gave it to him to make invoice [so]
```

Having identified the issue behind the invoicing errors, Minsu proposes an action (line 146) to deal with the situation where their error occurred (lines 142-143). Minsu shows here his orientation towards the authority of Kiho, who is a managing director, to '*make return credits*' (lines 150-151). Minsu's orientation is perseverant throughout this meeting and mobilised through his formulation, e.g. '*it's Kiho's decision*' (line 166). However, Matt's adverbial use of '*just*' in his evaluative claim trivialises doing '*credit invoice*' (line 152), implying that it can be easily done without the authority of Kiho and, hence, disaffiliating from Minsu's orientation towards the decision-making authority in managing the customer credits.

In lines 158-165, in coming to Minsu, June attempts to clarify the error being identified, and this does not develop further, as it is interrupted by Minsu's formulation of the situation (lines 166-171). Minsu formulates the situation in a way that is up to '*Kiho's decision*' (line 166), projecting that the future activity he proposes (lines 168-169) is relevant. The formulation imposes Minsu's 'version of reality', which can limit the possible future actions proposed (Clifton, 2006, p. 215) and (pre-)close the topic to be developed (Barnes, 2007, p. 283). The formulation provided here becomes a significant interactional resource, as it is further recycled in the latter interaction (lines 223-224, 234-246 in Excerpt 3.2 and lines 260-261, 272-273 in Excerpt 3.3) in constructing the future action. The discourse marker, '*anyway*' (line 166) denotes Minsu's orientation towards his own previous proposal of action (Fraser, 2009, p. 896) made in lines 150-151, disqualifying June's further identification of the error. The formulation is confirmed temporarily by June's responses. In line 167, the first overlap might be seen as June's attempt to interrupt Minsu's formulation, but the second overlap with '*yeah*' as well as her preferring response, '*Mmhmm*' (line 170) indicates her alignment in terms of 'the structural level of cooperation' (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011, p. 21).

The marked silence in line 171 may suggest the topic closure, denoting transitions to the next topic (Barnes, 2007, p. 186) as shown in Matt's question (line 172), which prompts the identification of who is accountable for the error. This can also be read as Matt not confirming Minsu's formulation, given his latter act in Excerpt 2.3 (lines 186-189) - proposing the future actions that are divergent from Minsu's formulation.

Prompted by Matt's claim of '*a system error*' (lines 174-175), June's declaratively framed latching talk, '*system error*!', (line 176) and Minsu's declarative turn (line 177) indicate the 'known in common' epistemic status of the interactants (Heritage, 2012, p. 24) – the interactants independently know how the error has occurred. June's laughter in line 178 serves to convey indirect agreement with Minsu's claim that it was his own error, not a system error (Clift, 2016), mitigating her potentially face-threatening act by admitting Minsu had caused the error. In identifying himself as the source of the error (lines 179-180), Minsu's laughter

(line 179) here may be a sign of embarrassment, indexing Minsu as accountable for the situation identified in this meeting.

Built on the formulating work about the action, and where the error occurred, in the following section, the interactants negotiate situations and actions. The tensions between the professional and institutional order become visible in this process as interactants put forward their role or organisational perspectives.

Negotiating situations and actions

In the excerpt, interactants continue negotiating diverging views of the situation and the future actions to handle the error in invoicing and managing their customers' credits on their online system. In the process, Matt and June enact the local expert role, and Minsu enacts the organisational procedure in negotiating what is (in)compatible with the institutional framework in constructing their action.

Ex. 3.2

```
186  Matt                                                  [So
187        you] don't need to credit (the two of) them when you
188        eventually […] [it does]
189  June                [Yeah if] you- if you are still gonna take
190        delivery of these two in August (.) then you can invoice them […]
191  Matt   Yeah when we are in September (.)
192  June   Yeah (.)
193  Minsu  Hhh
194  Matt   I'm pretty sure one of those (will be arrived)
195  Minsu  The main reason is::  [our]
196  June                         [can't] you just sign it off to go
197        (.) so we can go?
198  Minsu  Mm?
199  June   Can you not just sign and say okay (.) we will [be
200  Minsu                                                 [But (.)
201        it's i- i- in my point of view (.) it's fine (.) but (.) um
202        the head office is monitoring this credit status
203        (.) and ah (.)
204  Matt   They start flashing (out) their own (error) ha
205  Minsu  so last- last month I asked Matt to make invoice around
206        seven containers (.) uh:: before arrived:: to the customer
207        (.)because of [that] last month's sales was too low(.) ha
208  June                 [sales]
209  Minsu  (.) so I keep- keep- ((laughter)) at that time I keep (.)
210        mistake ((laughter)). [I- i- chose]
211  Matt   ((laughter))
212  June                         [You were] there (.) when I said to
213        Jihoon (.) to choose another customer that's got plenty of
214        credit (.) don't use(company name), didn't I? you were there!
215  Matt   When is the credit used (.) so when it is eventually
216        (delivered to company name)? (2.0) I can't invoice the same
217        sales order again on- unless you cancel out the system=
218  June   =See? this is a problem if we- [constantly (xxx)] how we
219        are [gonna do-]
```

```
220   Matt                                    [There are two ways]
221   Minsu      [Not- ] not cancel [.] just can't- can't we make
222          return credit?
223   June    Yeah (.) but then I will have it signed and booked then,
224          […] if it's already invoiced?=
225   Minsu   =Please another- another ((mumbling))
226   Matt    It's a long way again
227   Minsu   ((laughter))
228   Matt    You know- you know (.) what I will do (.)=
229   Minsu   =Yeah
230   Matt    If we could (.) (and I know it) can be done (.) we could
231          reverse all it out=
232   June    =Reverse (.) yeah
233   Matt    [Because]
234   Minsu   [Current-] current status (.) we found uh::: the- one- one
235          uh:::: old order (.) so he- he blocked that order (.) so
236          totally uh::: the limit is around three thousand over (.)
237          three thousands pound (.) not- not this amount (.)
```

Marked by prefacing '*so*' (line 186), he attends to the prior talk (lines 146-153, Excerpt 3.1) by proposing actions (Barnes, 2007, p. 283). The action proposed by Matt, i.e. not to credit but to invoice when the sales order delivery is done (lines 186-192), challenges the one proposed by Minsu (see lines 150-151, 166-169, Excerpt 3.1). Through the deontic modal verb, '*you don't need to*' in constructing the future action, the act enacts his epistemic stance vis-à-vis his expert role in providing Minsu with advice on dealing with the problem.

One of the important patterns throughout this meeting is the affiliation between June and Matt engaging in professional discourse. For example, their exchange from lines 186 to 192 shows their affiliation is being achieved through their collaboration in formulating the action, visible through the mobilisation of the preferred responses (lines 189, 191, 192). Minsu in his subsequent turns conveys his disaffiliative move: the response '*hhh*' in line 193 indicates Minsu's difficulty or hesitancy in agreeing with the perspectives on which Matt and June are affiliated. Minsu's attempt to justify his stance in line 195 is interrupted by June's action proposal. The proposal formatted with '*Can't you*' followed by '*so we can go*' (line 196) invites Minsu as the local authority to sign off the credit status, determining future actions of the team (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012) in resolving the issue. Her language use, '*just*' (line 199), suggests the activity of approving their customer credit status can be done and hence the error can be handled within the local discretion (Kiesling, 2011).

In the subsequent turn, Minsu's overlapping talk in lines 200-203 disapproves June's proposal, formatted in a rather cautious way: '*in my point of view*' displays his personal preference for agreement on the action proposed by June, yet the following statement projects his orientation towards the authority of '*the head office*' in constructing their action commitment (line 202). The exchange between June and Minsu here (lines 196-202) suggests that interactants

negotiate roles in relation to their teams, and 'balance the here and now of interaction and issues that go beyond it' (Angouri and Mondada, 2017, p. 474). Minsu's orientation is challenged by Matt's following comment, '*They start flashing out their own error ha*' (line 204) wherein he problematises the HQ.

Instead of collaborating with Matt's act of problematising headquarters, Minsu digresses from the topic by drawing on his account of error. '*So*' (line 205) here marks the connection between his current talk to the prior talk (see line 142-144, Excerpt 1.3). Minsu's returning to the issue is temporarily achieved by Matt producing laughter (line 211), and June joining the activity (lines 212-214). The talk, however, shifts markedly towards (re)negotiating future actions through Matt's question and comments (lines 215-217) drawing on his anchored position, his role-responsibility in invoicing. This brings the discussion back to whether or not to '*cancel out the system*' (line 217) and hence (re)negotiate the future actions. June, again, collaborates with Matt by providing latching talk. The talk marked by '*see*?' (line 218) addresses and challenges Minsu, and in the same turn June's evaluative stance as enacted by '*this is a problem*' affiliates with Matt's position (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011, p. 21). Again, the affiliation achieved between Matt and June and their disaffiliation from Minsu emerge as a recognisable pattern not only in this excerpt but throughout this meeting (see also lines 258-264 in Excerpt 3.3 for the pattern).

The (re)negotiation of the future action appears to be closed temporarily, as indicated by Matt's response in line 226 to Minsu's appeal (line 225), and Minsu's laughter (line 227) following the comment, which serves as an affiliative resource (Clift, 2016) by Minsu expressing his empathy with Matt. However, Matt's subsequent statement, indicated by '*you know*' (line 228), carries on projecting his proposal of a future action which was put on hold by Minsu's interruption in line 221. '*what I will do*' in the same turn enacts Matt's expertise and experiences and renegotiates the way of distributing the right to determine future actions. Matt's proposal is formatted with '*we could*' (line 230) in collective form, enacting collective rights to pursue the actions in resolving the issue. Minsu in the subsequent turn (234-237) disaligns from the activity drawing on '*current status*' (line 234), which does not share the topic with the one established by Matt and June.

The negotiation with disaligning moves continues in the following excerpt. I focus on whether and how the interactants (do not) reach consensus on commitment to an action, resuming the talk and closing the meeting.

Resuming the negotiation

Unlike the other two meetings, interactants in this meeting do not achieve affiliation on the orientation towards a future action. Matt continues proposing future actions that challenge the stance of Minsu in dealing with errors made in their credit management.

Ex. 3.3

```
230  Matt    If we could (.) (and I know it) can be done (.) we could
231          reverse [all it out]
232  June            [Reverse (.) yeah]
233  Matt    [Because]
234  Minsu   [Current-] current status (.) we found uh::: the- one- one
235          uh::::: old order (.) so he- he'd block that order (.) so
236          totally uh::: the limit is around three thousand over (.)
237          three thousand pound (.) not- not this amount (.)
238  June    =not that=
239  Minsu   =not- not that amount (.) three thousand over (.) so (.)
240          ah::: anyway
241  June    yeah because we've got this ((amount))because we don't […]
             (4 lines omitted)
246  Matt    […] yeah there was an order back in 2013 (.) as far as I
247          concern it was sit there since 2013=
248  Minsu   =somebody might make double- double credit
249  Matt    but that's ((amount))
250  Minsu   so anyway(.) current status is just three thousands over=
251  June    =okay=
252  Minsu   =mm (.) and if we remove this three thousand anyway (.) we-
253          we have to make ah:: the other process, return credit (.)
254          or cancel ah this [((mumbling))
255  Matt                      [Call them (.) and tell them (.) to
256          destroy invoices (.)
257  Minsu   mm?
258  Matt    Tell them to destroy invoices.
259  June    I know (somebody's got) invoices.
260  Matt    or they haven't even got the invoices (.) they just got
261          statements=
262  June    =They just got statements=
263  Matt    =We will reverse it all out
264  June    Just reverse it (.)
265  Minsu   but (.) last month process [is]
266  Matt                               [or::] we need to see:: (xxx)=
267  Minsu   =Anyway- anyway I'm gonna- I'm gonna ask [Kiho about the
268          solution (.)]
269  Matt                                            [they are closed
270          in July (.) aren't they?] July is closed (.) you need to do
271          it now (.)
272  Minsu   if- if this is [July (.)
273  Matt                   [the same month]
274  Minsu   mm it- it- is okay. mm:: but (.) August sale[s]
275  Matt                                               [affect] those
276          (.) July (.) sales (.) I think (.) figures (.)((laughter))
277  June    ((laughter))
278  Minsu   Don't tell (.) anybody ((laughter))
             ((June and Minsu walked away from Matt's seat))
             ((Minsu back to his seat sighing))
```

In this excerpt and throughout the negotiations of this meeting (see Excerpt 3.2), Matt's orientation towards future actions (e.g. lines 230-231, 255-256) challenges that of Minsu, whereas it is often the case that affiliation between Matt and June is achieved around their views on the future actions as well as the local (collective) authorities (e.g. lines 230-232, 263-

264). Minsu's resumptions in this context appear to function in managing discourse, orienting towards his interactional agenda.

From line 230, Matt conveys his orientation towards a collective action commitment formulated with '*we*'. While June affiliates with Matt's stance through her overlapping preferred response (line 232), Minsu delivers his disaligning move (lines 234-237). Minsu's disalignment here is indirect, as it is done through resuming the talk, which does not contribute to the foregoing talk. Minsu's resumption links back to the talk about the '*current status*' (line 234) and the authority of the managing director (line 235), which he has formulated earlier in this meeting (see lines 142-144 and 166-171 in Excerpt 1.3).

The resumption is achieved by June and Matt joining the talk and returning to and developing the situation being identified (lines 238-249). The activity of dealing with the issue is yet again interrupted by Minsu's resuming (lines 250), employed to move onto the construction of action commitment (lines 253-254). '*Anyway*' in the resumption statement (line 250) serves to return to the prior topic, the *current status* (Fraser, 2009, p. 897) (see also line 267). The resumption is, again, jointly done by June's latching compliance token (line 251) and Matt (255-256) contributing to the topic development. Noteworthy here is that Matt's subsequent turns in the assertive directive form (lines 255-256, 258) display certainty in the knowledge about the situation when advising Minsu. These are confirmed by June repeating (lines 262, 264) and completing (line 259) the information Matt provides. Through this interactional pattern, Matt's relatively 'knowing' epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012, p. 6) vis-à-vis his expert role is enacted and further affirmed.

A similar pattern of resuming is observed in lines 267-268, situated in the interactants' negotiation of action commitments. While affiliative moves between June and Matt are observed, indicated by the latching talk of June and Matt (lines 262-263), the 'fit' response is constructing the action commitment (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011). Marked by '*But*' (line 265), Minsu disaligns with Matt and June and disqualifies what is being discussed between them through resuming the talk (lines 267-268). By recycling the formulation in prior talk (see line 166, Excerpt 3.1), Minsu's resumption serves to close down the foregoing discussion (Gafaranga and Britten, 2004, p. 162) by enacting the authority of the managing director in determining their future action. Minsu's move here disaffiliates from Matt's orientation towards an action formulated in a collective matter, e.g. '*we could*' (line 230), '*we need to*' (line 266).

In comparison with the other two meetings, the interactants' disaffiliation over 'who determines what is acceptable/allowable' (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012, p. 299) appears to

make this case unique, in that the interactants do not reach consensus on a commitment to action.

From the point where the resumption takes place, the end of this meeting is signalled by the interactants' aligning moves at the level of activity (lines 269-278), not stances, in discussing Minsu's orientation towards the action, i.e. to ask the managing director. Although the interactants do not reach agreement on (who has the right to decide) the future actions, Matt's overlapping assertive talk (lines 269-271, 273, 275), which challenges Minsu, is still engaged in Minsu's activity constructing the commitment to action. In the process of construction (lines 269-278), Minsu and Matt together focus on concern about the potential problem/error in their July sales figures (lines 274-277). In addition, the three of the interactants' laughter in lines 276-278 is a critical interactional resource in closing the activity without achieving affiliation.

This meeting shows how the dominant organisational procedure and norm are enacted by Minsu and challenged by Matt and June. Matt and June enact the local expert role in providing alternative actions to the one proposed by Minsu. The institutional order emerged in this excerpt and also in Meeting 1 (Excerpt 1.1), although emerging in a different manner, suggests, firstly, the HQ-subsidiary relationships constructed as 'social facts' through members' enactment of the relationships, affecting the way problem-solving unfolds. The present meeting displays further tensions emerging from the negotiation of institutional and professional orders (Graham, 2009). My analysis adds a further point to the complexity in the process wherein the interactants negotiate the organisational norm about who has the right to decide future action. This becomes a critical matter for this meeting in achieving consensus on a commitment to future actions.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined interactional activities that emerge in the problem-solving meetings. With 'role-positioning' as an analytic concept, the analysis provides empirical evidence on the interrelation between interactants' interactional and institutional positioning and interactional activities. The role enactment in problem-solving then, is significant to the extent that it can bring about different outcomes for the activity. And it is dependent on the situation and contextual factors including the interactants' intentionality and perception of authority/rights, responsibilities, epistemic status, 'orientations to self-other relations', etc. (Sarangi, 2012, p. 313).

By examining employees' role-positioning in interaction, I further attempt to elucidate how organisations are talked into being, which is in line with workplace discourse and organisational discourse studies as addressed in Section 1.3. I contend here that it is not the organisation that has the 'power' but rather it is the actors who represent and actualise it by

embracing institutional roles and standings in the organisation (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The commonly observed one throughout the meetings is expatriate managers often enact a HQ representative role in making problems or decisions compatible with their dominant organisational norms, whereas it is often the case that the local employees enact an expert role in doing strategy or creating procedures in the local context.

In addition, the meetings, as illustrated in Figure 7 (p. 93), show problems and a commitment to action (i.e. decisions) are dialogically shaped by one another. And the moment where problems and decisions are ratified are not explicit as such (Angouri and Bargiela-Chiapppini, 2011; Huisman, 2001) but indexed by the interactants' affiliative moves or the actual actions taken by them. The present model shares features with decision models that show cyclical patterns in interactional studies (Section 2.3.1). For example, Marra's (2003) decision model shows the patterns in decision making, involving 'issues raised', 'solution proposed' and 'decision ratified' (p. 211). My analysis here contributes to existing decision-making models in interactional studies by illustrating problem solving and decision making as mutually co-constitutive, as emerged in the meeting event. As an example, in Excerpt 2.3 (p. 118), the interactants reach consensus on the sales pricing request as a problem, achieving affiliation, and simultaneously engage with the actions required for the problem. The actions taken here in their turn index the problem has been ratified.

In the next chapter, as emerged in this chapter and Chapter 5, I focus on how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the process of constructing the organisational problems.

7. HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in constructing the organisational problems

7.1. Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, the HQ-subsidiary relationships are frequently addressed by participants drawing on language and culture in constructing problems. In other works, the HQ-subsidiary relations foreground the participants' metatalk about language, culture and also their professions. Chapter 5 has shown how the category' *the Korean'* is employed when representing the HQ or the management transferred from the HQ, articulating a range of the symbolic and material conditions, such as the language use, and the company's authorisation process and the '*controls'* (from the HQ) which have been attributed to culture (see Excerpt 8, p. 80 for an example). In this context, '*the Korean'* and '*the HQ'* are often drawn on when the speakers challenge the power relations between the HQ and the subsidiary and delegitimise the institutional authority. In Chapter 6, in the problem-solving meetings, it is prominent that the HQ-subsidiary relationships frequently emerged in the meeting participants' interpretation

and formulation of the situation (Whittle *et al.*, 2016) in negotiating problems and their commitment to actions.

This chapter looks closely into the ways the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in the processes of constructing problems, and how '*the Korean*' and '*the HQ*' emerge in this context. I draw on employees' metatalk and meeting interaction wherein the organisational relationships emerge and focus on employees' discursive practices in the processes. As discussed in Section 3.4, there is a rich body of discourse-based studies looking at the dynamics in the process in which the HQ-subsidiary relationships are constructed through members' discursive practice (e.g. Vaara and Tienari, 2011; Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017). Although those works provide insights into understanding the organisational relationships from a dialogic perspective (e.g. Mumby, 2005), they tend to rely solely on self-reported data in understanding employees' discursive practices. In this chapter, in addition to interview data, I examine workplace interaction data to explore how the HQ-subsidiary relationships are negotiated between the employees.

What is prominent in my corpus is subsidiary employees' positioning as being knowledgeable and experienced, conveying their professional roles. Such positioning can also be suggested by the context of Eco UK, where most employees have relatively long work tenure (Figure 2, p. 47). In relation to the analysis of metatalk, I examine how the professions and institutions emerge through meeting interaction, suggesting the interrelation between the processes of interaction and the structure. Through the analysis of the datasets, I argue that the HQ-subsidiary relationships are situated and negotiated in the interaction among the interactants; and interactional analysis can unpack interactants' interactional and institutional positioning through which the organisational relationships are negotiated.

In the sections that follow, I explore firstly how '*the Korean*' is represented in terms of the power positions, and whether, and how, the power position can shift. I then explore how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in employees' discourses.

7.2. '*The Korean*' in the power position?

In Section 5.3, we have seen employees' ideologies about culture enacted in their creation of social groups, '*the Korean*' and/or '*the HQ*'. In this section, I look into how these are linked to power position in employees' talk about corporate approval and institutional authority. The literature has suggested there is a perceived structural inequality and that specific national groups hold hierarchically higher positions in the multinational context (Watanabe and Yamaguchi, 1995; Ybema and Byun, 2009). In addition, my findings show the structural

inequality emerging in employees' interpretation of the institutional environment is closely related to the local understanding of their professional roles in the institutional context.

Ted, who is a marketing manager, for example, enacted his professional role in our interview where he talked about procedures of pricing products. In the same interview, he told me

> It's my entire working life in this industry in products and pricing. So, I understand product trends, and I understand pricing within our market, from our competitors' point of views, things like that. So... that's where I am, yeah...

The comment made here is useful for understanding this excerpt, whereby Ted illustrates the corporate approval procedure, suggesting the struggles over authority in his area of work, where his expertise needs be more respected:

Ex. 14

```
 1   Ted       […] we haven't had lots of experiences with European
 2             communication directly um... up until recently um… Because it's
 3             being done by Minsu, and... So we do all the work and the
 4             analysis sent it to Minsu and Minsu gets it approved […] but
 5             um... recently, Eco sets a... marketing director in the European
 6             Office. […] To have a European marketing director who is
 7             non-Korean suggests we may change slightly. So a lot of the
 8             requests go directly into him… maybe we are… becoming more
 9             responsible for our decision making…. This is what we need to
10             do for our business.
11   Kyoungmi  You think you will be more directly talking to your European
12             colleagues rather than going through Minsu?
13   Ted       We don't know yet. I'm assuming with the pricing, yes. […]
14             But because of the importance, it will always have to go
15             through Minsu for approval anyway or the Koreans' approval
16             because it's business critical […] Because from a manufacturing
17             point of view, it's below the production cost, so we always have
18             to have sort of links between Minsu's department and the
19             pricing department and both Europe locally and the
20             manufacturing. So…we can make requests or show the reasons why
21             we want to have this pricing and it still has to be approved
22             by Minsu and his um… The Europeans will never be able to… We
23             will never, in my opinion, be able to implement a pricing
24             strategy without having the pre-authorisation, approval of
25             the Koreans like Minsu […]
```

In this, '*the Korean*' is constructed as having authority for devising pricing strategy, whereas he is positioned as having the central role in the work but no authority to implement it. Moreover, the way he describes the organisational roles and responsibility delegation is largely tied to the nationalities; '*Korean*', '*non-Korean*' and '*European*' are mobilised in illustrating the work procedure and role-responsibilities. In this regard, his conceptualisation of the role here is in form of 'dispositions' in the structure (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 65), constructing the status of the social groups.

As depicted in lines 3-4, and 20-22, the role-structure is depicted with '*we*' or '*the European*' referring to himself and his team members that '*do all the work*', and Minsu and '*the Korean*' having the final say in implementing the strategy. The institutional order is enacted here as Ted positions himself as '*non-Korean*' not having authority to implement a pricing strategy '*without having the approval of the Koreans*' (lines 22-25), and hence subordinate to the latter in the procedure. Ted's remark here suggests his frustration with the authority delegation situated in the approval procedure (lines 22-25) and indexes the struggles over the power of the status quo in making decisions. Prominently, Ted's remark here and Brad's comments in Excerpt 9 on his '*experience within the industry for 34 years*' suggest a disparity between their professional ambitions and the way their professions are treated in the institutional environment.

The mobilisation of '*the Korean's approval*' (lines 15, 24-25) is important, signifying Ted's interpretation of '*the Korean*' as intricately linked to the HQ having the 'symbolic privilege' (Knights and Morgan, 1991, p. 251) in terms of the roles responsible for '*business critical*' matters (line 16). In contrast, '*the Europeans*' and Ted himself are constructed as those who '*will never be able to […] implement a pricing strategy without having the pre-authorisation approval of Koreans*' (lines 22-25). The categorisation here exemplifies how the national categories are usefully drawn on in enacting the organisational structure associated with legitimate rights and authority (Dhamoon, 2010, p. 52). In other words, the structural environment is enacted by Ted's interpretation of the approval procedures, which position the national groups as having more or less authority, placing '*the Korean*' at the centre. The institutional order, which has also emerged in Excerpt 9 in Chapter 5 and the excerpt below, then should be understood to be 'held together not by particular forms of social organisation but by regulating discourses' (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 16).

It is noteworthy that Ted's anticipation of '*a European marketing director who is non-Korean*' (lines 6-7) and the remark, '*we are becoming more responsible for our decision making. This is what we need […]*' (lines 8-10) imply his professional ambition, having the authority or the local autonomy in making decisions. This suggests how the organisational problem or the

struggles emerging in association with the local understanding of the professional roles, and the structural environment interpreted here, might restrict his professional role performance.

The institutional authority of '*the Korean*' also emerges within the local context. Eddie, who is in charge of pricing products and in the same team as Ted, articulated the status quo situation as '*the only problem with local*', enacting the power relation between '*the Korean staff*' and '*the local*' (line 4). The excerpt below is taken from an interview with Eddie during which he and I talked about the change of managing director that had taken place in Eco UK:

Ex. 15

```
Everything's changed ((laughter)) So, that's the only, only problem
((laughter)) with, obviously all the local, ah the Korean staff
coming over and then they go again, somebody else new comes in. He
wants to, or she wants to put his or her stamp on things and, you
know, make it their own style.
```

His expression, '*that's the only problem with obviously all the local*' clearly marks the Korean staff coming over as the ones who change everything. Here, again, the disposition of the Korean staff and the local in the structure emerges, as the former has the legitimate authority to put his or her stamp on things, whereas the latter is affected by the former. '*Obviously*' (line 3) in the remark indicates the power of the status quo situation as a social fact, a taken-for-granted reality.

It is noteworthy that, as can be read from his expression, '*somebody else new*', the management transfer turnover from the HQ has been often one of the topics emerging frequently in my data that constructs the managers as newcomers or lacking linguistic competence (see Excerpts 1 and 2) and local work experience. The timeline of the turnover then can be a useful resource in framing or critiquing or even challenging the perceived power asymmetry.

On the same topic, the management turnover, Rita, however, put it differently. She had been working for the company as an accounting assistant for over 10 years. She illustrated the situation which is *hard* for her for a different reason than Eddie, as follows:

Ex. 16

```
You have to do it for 12 years. It's hard for me at the moment
because I have been training people. And a lot of time it's just
automatic for me and I have to show it to somebody […] every five
years, you know, they turn over and you have to start again […] So
sometimes it is hard to begin with when they first come in because
```

```
        they have so much information that they have to take in to learn
        here, isn't it? It's hard so…
```

In this she conveys her professional role, positioning herself as an expert in '*training people*'. As was the case in Excerpt 1, she draws here on the timeline, '*when they first come in*', where the tensions might emerge between the institutional and professional orders. Subsidiary employees' positioning as experts is commonly observed in the metatalk and problem-solving talk meetings as they adopt professional discourses in constructing problems. And Rita's similar positioning seems coherent, as shown in Excerpt 2, whereby she constructs herself as being '*mother*' to her line managers in providing linguistic support. '*The Korean*' in the power position described in the previous excerpts, then, can be challenged by the speaker's discursive positioning while engaging with the professional discourse.

In the section below, I explicate further the employees' discursive practices in enacting the HQ-subsidiary relationships and challenging the institutional order.

7.3. The HQ-subsidiary relationships emerged

In Section 7.2, we have seen '*the Korean*' in power positions situated in the HQ-subsidiary frame, and as was the case in Excerpts 14 and 16, the power positions can be shifted through employees' discursive positioning (Levina and Orlikowski, 2009). In this section, by relating metatalk and meeting talk, I investigate the ways the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in employees' problem (-solving) talk wherein the organisational controls are reified or resisted, and how these are related to employees' construction of the organisational problems.

Ted, in our interview, constructed the corporate approval with its rules and regulations as a *problem*, articulating the controls of the HQ (lines 3, 20-21) which prevent the subsidiary from reacting to the market quickly (line 7-8). In contesting the institutional order, what is important to note in this excerpt is the ways Ted talks about the HQ and his profession in delegitimising the institutional authority and simultaneously constructing himself as the local expert:

Ex. 17

```
1    Ted  In this company…. The rules and regulations… I'm looking from
2         my own department's point of view. They become so… tight. It's
3         so controlling. To be perfectly honest, this is certain lack of
4         trust […] I will quote an example… and this is where we have to
5         listen to the local people […] our idea was […] because of the
6         internal (asking) what are we doing it for […] it's dragged on
7         and on. But the problem is by as a company not being a bit
8         different occasionally or not responding to things quickly, we
```

```
9          loose our opportunities against our competitors. […] as
10         importantly we stop trying to be proactive to our customers. If
11         our customers would say can you do this for us, then people
12         would say it's too difficult. You are in danger not doing things
13         because it's too hard to get it through approval I don't know…
14         Controls? Trust? […] it's so difficult to get this... to
15         understand what the issue is and how we can, sort of, (make)
16         changes going forward. And I sort of understand what Eco on a
17         global basis is doing with their brand identity, guidelines and
18         that. But there is no flexibility at all or appeared to have no
19         flexibility at all making everything so difficult […] these are
20         my words, nobody else's, it's, there's too much controls of the
21         head office, head office level, I suppose.
```

In this, Ted draws on material resources, the corporate '*rules*' and '*regulations*' (line 1) in constructing '*too much controls of the head office*' (lines 20-21) as problems. It is noteworthy that the *controls* and (lack of) *trust* largely emerged in employees' talk about the (Korean) culture (Excerpts 8, 9, 12 and 13 in Section 5.3), signifying their struggles over power relations and actions. In the similar line this excerpt illustrates Ted's struggles over the subsidiary decisions and actions (Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017, p. 275) as he raises here who has the authority in making decisions. From line 4 he critiques the '*internal*' (line 6) referring to the HQ approval authorities constructing them as a burden for '*the local*', the subsidiary in their market activities (lines 5-13). By contrast, from line 7, in ratifying the controls as 'the problem' (line 7), Ted constructs himself as being professional, concerned what is (not) beneficial for the company, and able to make '*changes going forward*' (line 16). Positioning the HQ authorities vis-à-vis the local in this way, he delegitimises the former and legitimises the latter being entitled to decide and implement the subsidiary actions in the '*European market*' at local level.

In challenging the status quo of the HQ authorities, Ted engages with the business rationale that concerns business strategy and operations that benefit the company (Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017). In doing so, he enacts his professional role as an expert in implementing strategies in the local market (lines 8-11). The business rationale here supports his construction that the expert position of '*the local people*' (line 5) needs be respected (Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara, 2011). As noted in the excerpts in Section 7.2 and Excerpt 9, the HQ-subsidiary relationships are enacted in the processes in which employees talk that critiques the power asymmetry. And it is through this process, their professions and institutions are talked into being. Employees' engagement with the construction of

'organisational problems', then, can be seen not only as their resistance to the power relations (Scott, 1990, 2008; Prasad and Prasad, 1998) or the organisational dominant norms but also as constructing themselves as capable agents (Tietze, 2008, p. 47) renegotiating the institutional order.

The institutional order in the form of organisational controls also is enacted in the meeting data. I have selected the excerpt below as it showcases how the power relations between the HQ and the subsidiary are assumed as a taken-for-granted reality in formulating participants' situation (Barnes, 2007) and constructing a commitment to actions. This excerpt is taken from Meeting 1 where the meeting participants – Minjae, a managing director, and Kate, a marketing communication manager, were discussing when to deliver a pitch to get a PR agency for the local social media activities:

Ex. 18

```
1    Minjae   When is gonna be… let's say… timing wise… Let's say…. we- we
2             have to agree with our head office first, or we will do the
3             pitch first?
4    Kate     Well…. We are in the hands of global and European (head
5             office) because until they tell me if we meet that target,
6             and Paul has done this formula…
7    Minjae   Okay.
8    Kate     I don't know.
9    Minjae   We'll wait until (the) European head office says to us…. if
10            they give us a green light to go for pitches, then we'll go.
11   Kate     Yeah…
```

In this, the meeting participants' lexical choices, '*we are in the hands of global and European*' (line 4) and '*they give us a green light to go […] then we'll go*' (lines 9 -10) illustrate the HQ-subsidiary relationships. These comments frame their taken-for-granted realities, whereby the subsidiary actions and decisions are up to the head office. This brief exchange shows that, in the context of meeting interaction among the employees, the HQ-subsidiary relationships are constructed as a social fact through the interactants' joint formulation of their 'version of reality' (Clifton, 2006, p. 215) as they draw on their perceived organisational dominant norms. And this importantly shapes the employees' expectations (Hernes, Bakken and Olsen, 2006) in dealing with the situational tasks. In other words, it is the actors who draw upon the organisational relationship in interpreting their situation, engaging with the institutional discourses. In this context, the institutional order or the controls, then, can be seen as 'regulating discourses' within which employees engage (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 16).

As literature suggests, employees in this way play an important role in conveying the dominant institutional norms (Drori, Honig and Sheaffer, 2009, p. 719). This, however, should not be understood as the employees merely responding to the dominant discourses but enacting their

professional roles by engaging with 'legitimate professional discourse' that are 'available within an institutional order' in the organisational setting (Roberts and Sarangi, 1999, p. 16). This, then, suggests that the boundary between the professional and institutional roles is not always straightforward (ibid.). To illustrate, in this meeting context, who has the final say in deciding when to deliver a pitch is largely assumed among the interactants and seen as the 'truth' by them. Then, drawing upon such a form of shared knowledge can be seen as the participants' engagement with the professional discourse – 'what professionals do as a way of accomplishing task' (Roberts and Sarangi, 1999, p. 15). It then becomes a resource in effectively enacting their professional roles at the moment and in the situation where the HQ having authority is legitimised.

The institutional norm however, in the excerpt below in the same meeting and by the same participants, is delegitimised. In this excerpt, Kate and Minjae jointly assess and problematise the guidelines on the use of PR agency to manage social media activity. In doing so, they enact the subsidiary's autonomy in doing social media activities, resisting the institutional order in pursuit of the interests of the subsidiary:

Ex. 19

```
1    Kate     They said you need four hours a day(.) That's only (.) you
2             know (.)Eco employees(.) four hours a day(.) That's not an
3             agency, that's ah:: Eco (.)
4    Minjae   Who's- who's (.) saying that (.) this four hours a day?
5    Kate     This has come from the guidelines (.) from the European
6             PR(.)
7    Minjae   ((cynical laughter)) why do they designate four hours a day?
8             Somebody(h)- somebody(.)[who is(.)]
9    Kate                            [I don't] think that's realistic
10            though:=
11   Minjae   =Somebody who is- who is doing their job very well can- can
12            spend only one hour a day(.) […] It really depends (.) on
13            (.) who is doing those responsibilities(1.5) I think! That
14            is just general guidelines(.)We don't need to abide by that!
```

The guidelines vis-à-vis the head office providing it are being critiqued, assessed as not being '*realistic*' (lines 9-10). The participants' delegitimising of the head office is clearly indexed by Minjae's cynical laughter (line 7) and the adverbial use of '*just*' (line 14) with the emphasis on '*general*' that trivialise the guidelines. From an organisational perspective, the participants' discourses here are read as a resistance practice to the HQ that attempts to standardise the way its subunits work, and their engagement with the professional discourses works to maintain their 'sense of autonomy' and the team identity (Mumby, 2005, p. 36).

The institutional order here then is clearly challenged by employees' engaging with the professional discourse and enacting their epistemic stances regarding the guidelines. It effectively enacts their professional roles. As discussed in Chapter 6, the enactment of epistemic stance is an important resource in enacting professional roles. Given the excerpt above, which contrasts to this presented excerpt, professional roles, in turn, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) claimed, become an important 'participation mode' in negotiating the institutional order. As importantly, these two meeting excerpts show how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerging in the interaction can result in 'practical' implications for the employees' actions (Whittle *et al.*, 2016, p. 1342) and the outcomes of the organisational activities. The HQ-subsidiary relationships then should be understood as 'the pattern of expectations that keeps old and new options open', and, therefore, as something to be used, rather than constraining, for the unfolding of activities, which in turn produce the structural basis of the organisation (Hernes, Bakken and Olsen, 2006, p. 52).

Compared to the previous excerpts where the meeting participants achieve affiliation in (de)legitimising the HQ authorities, the excerpt below shows subtle tensions emerging between the professional and institutional discourses among the participants in Meeting 3: June, who is in charge of managing customer credits; Minsu, who is an operations team manager; and Matt, who is an IT manager but also assists Minsu in the team. The participants discuss how to deal with the errors made in the system which they use for managing customer credits and sales invoicing:

Ex. 20

```
1  June   Can't you just sign it off to go (.) so we can go?
2  Minsu  Mm?
3  June   Can you not just sign and say okay (.) we will [be
4  Minsu                                               [But (.)
5         it's i- i- in my point of view (.) it's fine (.) but (.) um
6         the head office is monitoring this credit status (.) and ah (.)
7  Matt   They start flashing (out) their own (error) ha
```

This captures the dialogic perspective of the controls and resistance, as the organisation emerges in the 'the contingent oscillation between the centralised and decentralised modes of operation' (Ferner *et al.*, 2004, p. 363) through the negotiation *among* the actors. The HQ-subsidiary relationships here emerge in two competing discourses – HQ controls and the subsidiary autonomy (Mudambi, 2007) as the meeting participants engage with institutional and professional discourses. Having identified the error made in their customer credits, June initiates a proposal conveying her orientation towards the local autonomy in approving the customer credits on the system. Again, it is important to note here that the work tenure of June

and Matt is over 10 years, as employees' metatalk clearly shows the local expertise is an important resource for them in positioning themselves in relation to the HQ (employees).

In response to June, Minsu's positioning (lines 4-6) is interesting as he expresses firstly his affiliation with June's orientation towards the subsidiary autonomy yet draws on the head office *'monitoring'* the credit status, which therefore disaffiliates from June's orientation. Minsu's action can be read as a balancing act (Sarangi, 2016) in acknowledging the local autonomy and simultaneously conforming to the institutional order, and an 'affiliation activity' (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011) belonging to both the local team and the HQ management. Interactional perspectives drawn here provide empirical evidence of how the balance between the 'centralised and decentralised' modes can be achieved by the actors, and how it can make actual implications on the participants' professional practice.

Another possible reading here would be that Minsu engages with the institutional discourse in achieving his own interactional agenda and mitigates his acts by expressing his affiliation with June. Matt's following comment in line 7 ridicules the HQ who '*start flashing out their own error*' (line 7), resisting compliance with the institutional norm enacted by Minsu. As shown in Excerpt 3.3 in Meeting 3, Matt goes on to propose future actions orienting towards local autonomy. It then, clearly shows the HQ-subsidiary relationships are subject to the ongoing negotiation between the employees who engage in and negotiate their professional practices. The processes then are contingent on the employees' ability to adopt the discourses to the situation being presented.

To conclude, in this section, I have discussed how the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in employees' discursive practices. In association with Section 5.3, where I have examined the employees' talk about (national) culture, I also have discussed how '*the Korean*' emerges in relation to power positions in the organisation. This supports and expands the findings in Section 5.3, where the culture is mobilised in critiquing the hierarchical structure and processes, by elucidating the HQ-subsidiary frame. Excerpt 14 and 16 in Section 7.2 also show how the power positions may shift through employees' discursive positioning, drawing on professional discourses, suggesting that power is a situated and relational phenomenon (Clegg, 2013). The analysis of meeting interaction shows the dynamic and temporality (Langley *et al.*, 2013) in the ways the organisations emerge and emphasises the role of organisational actors. I expand this point further in Section 8.2 where I theorise the HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in constructing the organisational problems.

Now, I move onto the discussion chapter.

8. Discussion: constructing problems and the HQ-subsidiary relations

The aim of this chapter is to bring the findings together and articulate the ways in which this study responds to the research questions in Section 1.2. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focus on the processes in and through which the organisational problems are constructed in interaction and the HQ-subsidiary relations emerge. This chapter follows the same structure: it starts with the organisational problem as constructed in interaction and then moves to the HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent and negotiated.

In Section 8.1, I begin by addressing the first research question, *how organisational problems are constructed in interaction*. I propose here a definition of the 'organisational problem' based on the analysis of the employees' metatalk. I then draw further on the thematic analysis of the metatalk which allowed me to develop a taxonomy of the work-related issues that are ratified as problems in my data. This provides an insight into the employees' perceived realities, setting the background for moving into problem solving interaction. Next, I turn to the second research question; I provide an interpretive account of the participants' negotiation of roles in problem-solving in relation to their positioning in the HQ-subsidiary frame. Finally, regarding my third research question, I provide a visualisation of the HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in employees' problem talk and elaborate on my approach to understanding the organisational relationships in context.

This chapter also aims to highlight the thesis' contribution to existing research in problem-solving processes and to workplace discourse and business studies, also pointing to areas for future studies. I discuss this further in the conclusions chapter that follows.

8.1. The organisational problems constructed in interaction

Through the thematic analysis of my corpus (see Figure 4, p. 65 for the visualisation) and informed by the literature in Chapter 3 (see Figure 1, p. 26 for the visualisation), I have established a holistic picture of the organisational meaning system (e.g. discursive resources, ideologies and power) through which the organisational problems and realities *are talked into being*. The figure below attempts to show a range of discursive and material resources that my participants drew upon in construting problems. As noted in Section 1.3, it, firstly, suggests that organisational problems are socio-material, i.e. the materials become integral to the social, constructed through the social processes (Leonardi, 2012).
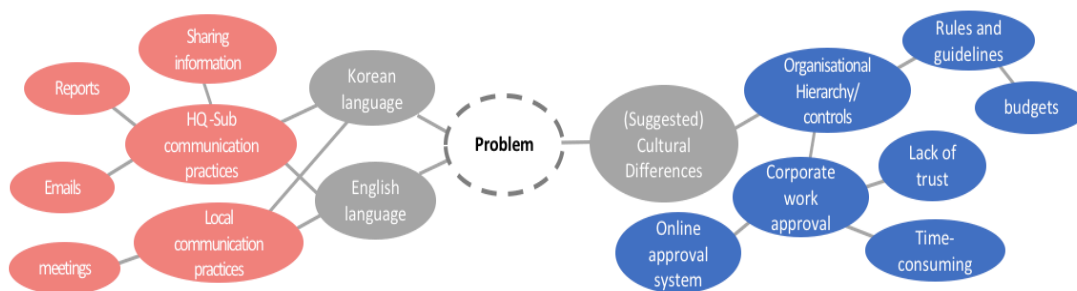
Figure 9 Visualisation of resources mobilised in the construction of organisational 'problems'

In my corpus, participants' problems have to do with guidelines, an approval system, meetings, emails and others as discussed earlier; and these are articulated in defining their realities (Cameron, 2001) within which they discursively position themselves and others. As shown in this figure, language and culture become critical resources in constructing specific organisational structures and procedures as 'problems' in the specific dataset. Chapter 5 has demonstrated this. The analysis has shown that these abstract notions are mobilised in constructing the organisational problems. This is particularly useful for employees to provide a neutral colouring to their critique (or ratification) of the existing status quo. The process of elevating an issue as a 'problem' is ideological and has a lot to do with the (im)balance of power in the HQ-subsidiary context. Hence resources ~~that~~ allow the participants to distance themselves from others, challenging/or reifying existing power structures and blame any issues on 'language skills' or 'cultural difference' (see also Angouri, 2018).

Accordingly, the meanings of language and culture in the data are 'amended' according to the speaker's intention (Blommaert, 1999, p. 1) and ideological positioning. *The Korean* (see Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 7.2) is a case in point. As illustrated in Chapters 5 and 7, this imaginary construct is deployed to represent the HQ employees in association with a range of symbolic and material conditions that are labelled as problems and to position self/other in relation to the established hierarchies. This allows to (de)legitimise the institutional authority. This has been shown in the ways employees talked about the organisational controls and power and also their professions in Chapter 7.

For the analysis of metatalk in Chapter 5 and 7, I usefully drew on the model, the interplay of factors in constructing organisational problems (Figure 3, p. 62) which is adopted from Angouri's (2018) model, 'the interplay of factors influencing language choice' (Section 4.6.3). This allows a multi-layered analysis to capture the resources available and mobilised in the interactional settings, connecting them to the broader institutional and social context. Moreover, in the context of this thesis, employees' metatalk underpins the analysis of problem-solving meetings. This is significant for current research that looks to the dynamics

in the multinational context in general organisational problems in particular as it draws attention to need of combining different datasets. It makes a contribution to business literature on the organisation problem by foregrounding its dynamic nature.

Further on this, in Chapter 6, I have examined how problems are dealt with as situational tasks in interaction. The analysis of the meetings has shown the temporality of issues that are ratified as problems in the spatiotemporal context of the meeting event. As Tietze (2008, p. 47) argues, social actors are capable of utilising discourses in interpreting and enacting their surroundings 'in particular ways'. In other words, the actors do not merely react to the surroundings or discourses in a 'pre-given way' to solve problems or perform their roles. Rather, they are 'active agents who draw on their discursive resources available to them' in (re)producing their environment (ibid.). I argue here that the processes of constructing problems are dependent on the ability of actors to strategically engage with institutional and professional discourses and adapt them to the situation presented.

Drawing on the analysis of metatalk and meeting talk, the definition of 'organisational problem' I propose is:

> Work-related *material or symbolic issues* that are negatively marked and negotiated in situ in relation to dominant ideologies (linguistic/cultural or structural) and discourses in a local context.

This definition expands the one of Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini (2011) (Section 1.3) by drawing attention to the material conditioning as well as discursive and ideological nature of work-related problems. With this conception of organisational problem, in the following section, I discuss problem-solving further and in relation to employees' negotiation of roles.

Problem-solving and professional roles

In Chapter 6, I have argued thatee individuals actively enact their professional role-positioning and construct their organisational context by drawing on professional and institutional discourses. As Section 2.4.2 has suggested, the professional and institutional discourses, however, are not distinctive as such but rather interwoven (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 16) through the interactants' enacting of professional roles. For example, in Excerpt 1.4 (p. 109), Minjae in line 786-788 assesses the reduced budget as not a problem. This is not merely seen as invoking the organisational framework (Nielsen *et al.*, 2012). Minjae is enacting his professional role and by doing so he is creating a legitimate procedure within the institutional order (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 16) where power is allocated to the HQ to adjust the budget of the subsidiary. Minjae's agenda is disaffiliated by Ted and Kate enacting their expertise through their 'known epistemic stance' (from line 789) (Heritage, 2012), assessing the situation as being controlled by the head office.

This interactional process illustrates how the legitimate institutional/ professional practices are negotiated by the interactants who draw on institutional and professional discourses. And it is this process through which their professional roles are negotiated. Role then, is more than 'modes of participation' (Berger and luckmann, 1966, p. 114) or 'part of everyday strategy discourse' (Mantere, 2008, p. 297). As Section 2.4 has argued, it is a dynamic position 'constructed through a set of discourse practices' negotiating and balancing the immediate interaction with broader organisational and social context (Angouri and Mondada, 2017, p. 474). I find the concept of the 'role' a particularly appropriate concept for looking into the ways organisations emerge and something business and sociolinguistic research could explore jointly in an interdisciplinary frame.

Although professional roles have been researched as dynamic positions in institutional interaction studies, scant work is conducted in multinational inter-organisational context. The multinational setting provides a rich context in which actors negotiate and balance their professional roles in relation to the HQ-subsidiary relations (Section 3.4). It therefore can contribute to the theoretical framework in interactional studies that conceive of 'role' as operational in interactional and institutional levels.

Doing problem-solving talk is directly related to the roles of the participants as I have already argued (Section 2.3). The extended model below aims to represent the fluid nature of the organisations problem and its relevance with the participants' roles, and the material context of the business event which super imposes a start and an end point. The model (Figure 7, p. 93) was first introduced in Section 6.2. It expands Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini's (2011) work by going in more detail in the processes in which problem-solving unfolds in the time and space of the meeting event. Here I further develop the model by looking closer to the stages of the problem-solving meetings which are shaped by the participants' role positioning.

Moreover, my data show the interplay between the temporary roles in the meetings with the professional roles and responsibilities the participants hold in the company.
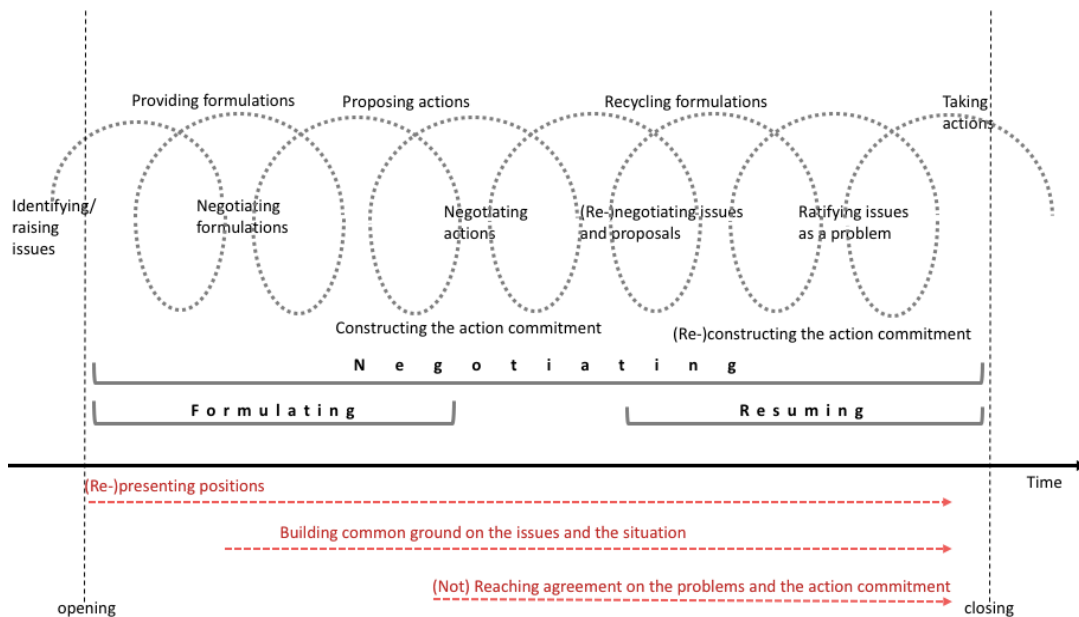
Figure 10 Visualisation of the interactional processes of problem solving

As shown in the figure, in my analysis, formulating and resuming have been identified as the core activities and interactional resources for the negotiations of problems and a commitment to actions throughout the meetings. The patterns of the activities are not linear but shaped by the interactants' role-positioning (Halvorsen and Sarangi, 2015).

For example, in Meeting 1 (Section 6.3.1), we have seen how the issues are formulated in relation to the speakers' roles specific to their expertise and responsibilities (Excerpt 1.1, p. 100), and the same issues are resumed by the same speakers (Excerpt 1.3, p. 107; Excerpt 1.4, p. 109). Formulations established in the opening of meetings are critical resources mobilised for interactants' positioning throughout the meeting event. In closing of the meetings, the formulations are actively drawn on in re-orientating towards negotiations (Heritage and Watson, 1979, p. 150). The chair of the meeting takes a position that aligns with their role in the event but at the same time uses closing sequences for ratifying their position. Ted's resumption acts in Excerpts 1.3 and 1.4, for instance, provide a clear example of how one's professional role-positioning shapes the interactional patterns and serves to one's interactional agenda, e.g. ratifying issues as problems.

Overall, in the meeting context, the participants negotiate temporal roles, e.g., the chair of the meeting, the presenter and elicitor (Halvorsen and Sarangi, 2015) while negotiating their professional roles in the organisation and the wider HQ-subsidiary ecosystem. These two levels are linked to their enactment of epistemic status and stances – what is known to whom (Heritage, 2012, p. 9), and their 'un/knowing' epistemic stances (ibid., 6). As argued in Section 2.3.1, the epistemic status and stances are significant in understanding the interactants'

linguistic acts in the processes whereby interactants share and negotiate their knowledge in establishing the common ground.

Meeting 2 (Section 6.3.2) provides a good illustration of this. In Excerpt 2.1 (p. 113), their joint formulating work unfolds dependent on Ted's taking on the elicitor and Minsu's responder roles in question-answer sequences (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011) which indicates the interactants' relative epistemic status. This effectively enacts Ted's right to know the pricing strategy and Minsu's obligation to provide the infromation (Markaki and Mondada, 2012). In another words, the formulating work is done through the interactants' negotiation of their epistemic status. And it is through this process their professional roles specific to expertise and responsibilities are re-enacted.

Doing problem-solving then, is 'learning how to be a particular type of 'employee/ manager/ team member within the organisational setting' (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p. 37). It then, can be understood in light of the communities of practice framework (Section 3.3.3). Through the ongoing professional engagement, the actors construct a collective identity which becomes a 'collective framework' (Hardy, Lawrence and Grant, 2005, pp. 63–64) to, for example, construct their professional/ institutional practices relevant to themselves and the organisation. This can usefully inform other organisational activities that are based on mutual professional engagement by providing insights into dynamic ways in which meanings and (dis)preferred ways of doing and being are negotiated and indexed in the organisation. They also foreground how organizations develop a symbolic capital which is circulated and becomes part of the organisation.

Looking further into the HQ-subsidiary relations, in the section below, I draw on earlier discussion (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) and provide a model to theorise HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent, contributing to the existing HQ-Subsidiary theories (Section 3.3.4).

8.2. The HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in constructing of problems

Existent international business studies take the structural and material aspects of HQ-subsidiary relations as a departing point to explore organisational actors' discursive practices (e.g. Vaara *et al.*, 2005; Ybema and Byun, 2009, 2011). Those studies, as a result, do not reveal how the organisational relations emerge in the local interaction among the employees in their professional practices. In Chapters 6 and 7, by taking a bottom up approach, I have shown that the HQ-subsidiary relations are situated and negotiated in interaction. This is in line with the position that conceives of the organisation as a discursive construct (e.g. Langley and Tsoukas, 2010; Cooren *et al.*, 2014), which I discussed earlier (Section 1.3). My findings add to this by showing that the processes of problem-solving is a fertile site for negotiating

zones of responsibilities, and power issues become explicit and actively negotiated between the participants.

By synthesising the analysis of metatalk and problem-solving meeting interaction, in the figure below I visualise the HQ-subsidiary relations as emergent in employees' construction of problems in different interactional settings.
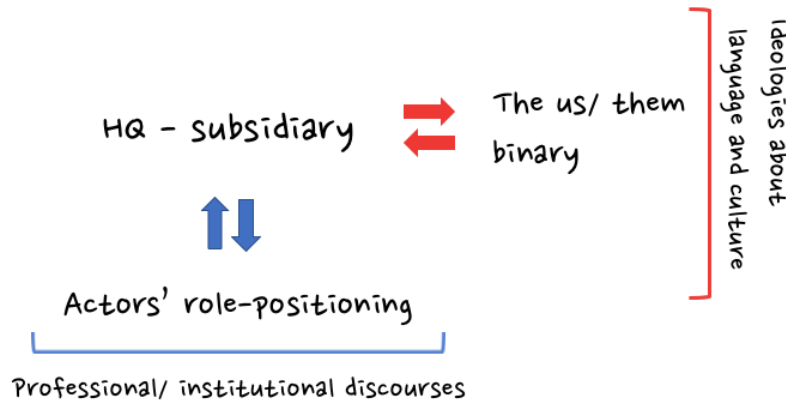
Figure 11 Visualisation of HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in the processes of constructing the organisational problems

My approach here is that the HQ-subsidiary relations emerge in the encounter of linguistic and sociocultural ecology in which the employees' ideologies are (re) produced, and their engagement with the professional and institutional discourses. Materiality is of course important in a sense that the HQ-subsidiary relations provide a fertile ground for creating the us-them dichotomy. The HQ-subsidiary frame provides the context in which problems are marked under employees' ideologies about language and culture (Chapter 5). My approach here adds to the organisational processual approach that conceives of organisation as a dynamic construct (Section 1.3). As Tsoukas and Dooley (2011) state, 'organization is not only imposed from outside but is also immanently generated from within – self-organization is an irreducible feature of social systems' (p. 731). As noted in Chapter 6, the organisational contexts in general and the organisaitonal relationships in particular emerge in the interaction. In turn, these frames become part of the institutional realities and are re-enacted in core business events such as the meeting. I illustrate this point in the following paragraphs with examples.

In terms of the us-them binary, a good illustration is a quote in Excerpt 8 (p. 80) from an interview with Brad, '*all the controls and disciplined culture coming from the head office and we are just an arm of that culture from Korea'*. This quote represents how the speaker's ideology about the culture, under which the power relations are critiqued (Angouri, 2018), is foregrounded by the HQ-subsidiary relationships. The ideology produced here, in its turn, reinforces the us-them binary between the HQ and the subsidiary and reify the status quo. In

addition, drawing on the HQ-subsidiary relations as a structural condition, employees position themselves as being knowledgable and experienced whilst delegitimising the HQ authorities. In Exerpt 17 (p. 135), for example, in critiquing the controls of the HQ, Ted brings to the fore his expert role in implementing strategies in the market, concering the corporate strategy that can benefit the company. In doing so he effectively positions himself as being legitimate and further a capable agent in challenging the institutional order.

Regarding the instiutional and professional discourses, Section 8.1 has argued that employees draw on dominant discourses in enacting their institutional environment and by doing so they perpetuate or challenge the status quo. The HQ-subsidiary relations then, should be understood as fluid and negoatied. An illustrative example is Excerpt 1.2 (p. 103) wherein the organisational relations shift through the negotiation between the interactants. In this excerpt, from line 243 to 263, by assessing the guidelines as 'not realistic' (line 248-249) for their practice, Kate and Minjae delegitimise the authority of the HQ and put forward the subsidiary autonomy. The discourse here shifts from line 263 as Minjae's question tackles Kate's proposal, conveying his concern with the HQ management perspective. Following this, Kate's claims from line 269 bring to the fore the subsidiary's authority in making the decision. Her linguistic choice '*It's down to each and every subsidiary's and their MD's (.) so it's our decision'* (lines 268-269) is strategic as it enacts the legitimate right of Minjae and simultaneously the one of the subsidiary as well as her professional role responsible for doing social media activities. Given the agency that the interactants exercise through the discourses, as shown in Figure 11, the conceptual distinction between the organisations and the actors becomes ambiguous, as these two operate in ways that are mutually constitutive of each other (Giddens, 1984).

To conclude, problem-solving meetings are a site where the HQ-subsidiary relations emerge and are negotiated by the employees' interactional and institutional positioning (Chapters 6 and 7). The us/them binaries that emerge in the problem-solving meetings then, are rather temporary, 'made endogenously relevant in a situated way at a given interactional moment' (Angouri and Mondada, 2017, p. 473). This of course does not mean to say there are no material elements of HQ-subsidiary relations but to reveal the dynamic ways the organisational relations are negotiated by the organisational actors. It emphasises the value of studying 'the continual flow and flux of organizing' by concerning it as 'the ongoing social processes' (Whittel, *et al.,* 2014, p. 87).

In theorising the HQ-subsidiary relations, I argue that a linguistically informed methodology can capture the dynamics and temporality in the ways the organisational relations are negotiated in interaction. In particular, this can throw new light on existing work that solely relies on self-reported data in unpacking the dynamics in the organisational relations.

Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1999, 2015) can usefully connect the local interaction with institutional context (Section 4.6.2). Within this framework, looking closely to the interactants' linguistic choices and acts provides an empirical evidence on employees' interactional and institutional positioning through which the institutional order is negotiated.

Now I turn to the conclusion of the thesis.

9. Conclusion

The thesis has discussed how organisational problems are constructed in interaction in the case of one multinational company. Multinational corporate workplaces have become increasingly complex. They are simultaneously local and global and bring together employees and teams in an ecosystem of HQ-subsidiary organisations. Employees in this context are required to operate at the interface of organisational, linguistic, geographic, and professional boundaries. I looked here into the ways employees discursively position themselves and others within the team, the subsidiary, and the broader institutional and social context in *doing* problems. My work makes a contribution to problem-solving research by looking into the affordances of interactional analysis and contributes to the discourse approach to problem-solving by showing the ways in which problem-solving is done in the temporary context of business events. The analysis has shown that employees' doing of organisational problems is directly related to their professional roles and the HQ-subsidiary relationships. Accordingly, this thesis has theorised a) organisational problem-solving as interrelated to the professional role enactment and b) the HQ-subsidiary relationships as emergent in employees' construction of problems. In the sections below, I provide the summary of this thesis (Section 9.1), followed by the contributions the work makes to the relevant areas scholarships. I conclude with limitations and suggestions for the future research (Section 9.2).

9.1. Summary of the thesis

Chapters 1-4 laid a theoretical and methodological foundation for the investigation, firstly by articulating the research objectives and questions and a discursive approach that underpins this thesis (Chapter 1). In Chapters 2 and 3, I explored the theoretical frameworks relevant to problem solving process in a multinational context. I have argued that problem solving should be examined from a discursive perspective, as situated in the interactional and institutional context, and in relation to the participants' negotiation of professional roles (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, I have debated the agency of individuals in enacting their multinational/ organisational realties by drawing on literature on multilingualism, culture and organisational relationships. I have argued that such realties should be understood in relation to the local dynamics and in connection with their broader institutional and social context. In Chapter 4, I

provided details of the case study design with an ethnographic approach and elaborated on the datasets and the analytic approach to metatalk and problem-solving meetings.

In addressing the research questions investigated in the analysis, Chapters 5-7 focused on the findings. I began my analysis by looking to the core resources – language and culture – mobilised in the construction of organisational problems (Chapter 5). Following a bottom up approach, I paid attention to employees' ideologies in relation to which the problems are constructed and their discursive positioning in challenging the institutional order. Moving from the employees' metatalk, in Chapter 6, I turned to problem-solving meetings to demonstrate how problem solving is done in and through interaction. I examined key interactional activities – formulating, negotiating and resuming – that emerged in the meetings and discussed how these are shaped by interactants' role positioning, temporary and general. In Chapter 7, as the HQ-subsidiary relationships emerged as a key contextual factor in Chapters 5 and 6, I investigated how the organisational relationships emerge in the processes of constructing problems. I focused on the ways employees talked about the organisational power and controls in metatalk and how these emerge in problem-solving meeting talk. Here I have emphasised the value of looking to the interaction among the employees to understand the dynamics and temporality of the HQ-subsidiary relationships.

Finally, turning to the discussion in Chapter 8, I articulated the ways this thesis has responded to the research questions. Drawing on relevant scholarships in workplace discourse and international business studies, I have provided two models to theorise problem-solving interaction, and the HQ-subsidiary relationships that emerge in the construction of the organisational problems. I discussed how this thesis has expanded existing theories of problem-solving, role and the HQ-subsidiary relations. I highlighted the value of a bottom-up approach to capture how interactional activities are done in relation to the participants' roles, and the ways in which organisational relationships negotiated by employees in their context.

Now I turn to the contribution this thesis makes to studies in problem-solving process in general, and relevant scholarship in sociolinguistic and organisational discourse studies.

9.2. Contribution to the field

The main theoretical implication of this thesis is that problem-solving processes are discursive and locally produced by the participants who agentively engage with dominant ideologies in their immediate context. Approaching problem-solving from an interactional perspective, this thesis makes a contribution to sociolinguistic studies on problem-solving discourse as well as business studies on organisational problems (e.g. Tippmann, Scott and Mangematin, 2012). As argued in Chapter 2, in problem-solving research, a rich body of studies take non-linguistic

perspectives. This research typically spends little time on what constitutes a problem (though studies have acknowledged the complexity of what 'counts' as a problem) and it follows a (post) positivist model which aims to come up with generalisable steps of activities in doing problem solving. This leaves out the role of interaction and significance of context. This is a gap this thesis has addressed.

Turning to the interactional processes of problem-solving, this thesis brings to the fore the agency of participants in constructing problems, arguing that problem-solving is dependent on the ability of participants to draw on professional and institutional discourses. It is through a bottom-up approach that I have been able to analyse interactional activities emerging in the timeframe of the meeting event. Employees' talk *about* their roles and the organisation, has contextualised the problem-solving interaction, facilitating my reading of the meeting participants' role-positioning.

This detailed analysis and the multiple positions the participants negotiate, highlights the difficulties and limitations in providing general templates for problem solving as they hardly reflect what employees actually do in context. This does not mean that patterns do not emerge. However a context sensitive interactional approach to the discourses of problem solving can produce alternative models for workplace practitioners and provide space for joint research between academics and other professionals (Candlin and Candlin, 2014).

Turing to the existing scholarship on problem-solving discourse (e.g. Måseide, 2007; Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011), this work takes an interactional approach and examines the role of participants in the unfolding of the problem-solving event. This scholarship provides revealing insights into problem solving and sheds light on the value of looking into the linguistic processes. This work however, often excludes interview data which I found valuable in my work. By combing the analysis of metatalk and meeting talk, I have been able to expand the existing frameworks and construct a model to explicate interactional activities in the time and space of the meeting events. With the model, I have provided a nuanced picture of the participants' negotiation of professional roles through the analysis of their role-positioning in interactional and institutional level.

The analysis of the professional roles and the HQ-subsidiary relations as emergent in problem talk leads to a two-fold contribution to business studies on organisational (role-) relationships and interactional studies on roles. In international business studies, to the best of my knowledge, there is yet no existing scholarship that investigates how HQ-subsidiary relationships emerge in interaction among the employees. Most international business studies focus primarily on interview data and take the structural aspects of HQ-subsidiary

relationships as a starting point to illuminate employees' discursive practices and the control-resistance dynamics (e.g. Vaara and Tienari, 2011; Koveshnikov, Ehrnrooth and Vaara, 2017). Through the interactional analysis of problem-solving, I have been able to examine the organisational relationships as emergent in the negotiation between employees who draw on professional and institutional discourses.

This leads to my contribution to interactional studies on professional roles. By drawing on the inter-organisational dimension, I have been able to examine in detail the participants' professional role positioning while negotiating the HQ-subsidiary relationships. Existing scholarship (e.g. Halvorsen and Sarangi, 2015) has provided valuable insights into how institutional interaction unfolds in relation to participants' role positioning. Yet, there is little work on multinational inter-organisational settings. The analysis of the meetings shows the HQ-subsidiary relationships provide an important context in which participants negotiate their professional roles. This can be further supported by my data wherein employees talked about their professions as situated in the HQ-subsidiary relationships. I would argue that this represents a valuable contribution to the scholarship on professional roles in institutional interaction studies, as well as expatriate managerial roles and performance in international business studies (e.g. Haynes, 2018).

Another contribution of this thesis lies in its attempt to combine perspectives form sociolinguistic and organisational studies, making relevant interactional research relevant to business studies. Bringing together the theoretical and empirical work has allowed me to explore the research enquiry more fully and to create 'intellectual synergy' between the disciplinary areas (Tietze, 2008, p. 4). Sociolinguistic workplace discourse perspectives provide subtle and nuanced understanding of employees' positioning in the multi-layered context. Organisational perspectives facilitate my reading of the multinational context and situate problem solving discourses more broadly in the HQ-subsidiary relationships. A linguistically informed methodology has been usefully drawn on in conducting multi-layered analysis of participants' positioning in connection with the institutional context. This adds to a processual approach which is an emerging paradigm in organisational communication studies (e.g. Cooren, 2015; Vásquez *et al.*, 2017).

The contribution of this thesis could be developed in future research projects which can address and overcome some of the inevitable limitations of this study. In terms of methodology, further scholarship should also involve video-recordings of problem-solving meetings to investigate the ways participants convey their orientation to specific interactional activities or moves through both talk and bodies. This thesis had to limit itself to audio data. This is the most common source of data in the field, but it filters out a lot of information that

video data can capture. Given that interaction is multimodal, a fuller analysis looking into language and the body can significantly contribute to problem-solving research. Sutinen's work (2014), for example, investigates how participants accomplish their acts of resumption through their bodies. In my observation of the meetings, participants' usages of physical spaces and artefacts appear to convey their role-responsibilities engaging with specific activities in problem-solving. Combined with linguistic processes, multimodal elements or 'multiactivity' in Haddington et al.'s (2014) term, can further our understanding of 'interactional and temporal features of situations and conduct' (p. 5), expanding our understanding of the dynamics of problem solving processes. Further on the limitations I encountered, by looking into a single case, I was able to develop a good understanding of the local context and move towards and emic perspective. It is however important to open this studies to multi company research for more patterns to emerge and to test the stages identified in the problem-solving meeting. Finally, this thesis has excluded quantitative data as appropriate for the current design. It would be useful however to also consider mixed method interdisciplinary studies which can capture perceptions and processes of problem-solving through survey and experimental data.

A particular area of interest emerging in my corpus is the transition of expatriate managers, as my participants frequently draw on the management turnover, e.g. *the beginning of the first sixt month* (see p. 69) and portraying them as a newcomer. The mobilisation of this timeline is observed in employees' talk about the language(s) and the organisaional hierarchy vis-à-vis the local experiences and knowledge. This specific context affords future resaerch avenues to investigate the negotaition of power relations between HQ and subsidiary employees as individuals can claim a position in the organisation (Wodak and Meyer, 2016) and reveal how these manifest in the local interaction.

To draw this thesis to a close, I have shown that a discursive approach is appropriate for unpacking the dynamics of problem-solving interaction. I have addressed the ways in which problems come into existence, which has often been taken-for-granted in non-lingusitic studies of 'the organisation problem'. The analysis of the language use in context allows to explore interactants' positioning and their orientations to the matters that go beyond the here-and-now of the interaction. This is an angle suitable for future interdisciplinary research on the topic and can shed new light on the problem-solving processes particularly in organisations that operate across time/space zones.

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Appendix 1. Information Sheet for Participants in Research Project

Information Sheet for Participants in Research Project

Research Topic: Communication in the Multicultural Workplace

Researcher: Kyoung-mi Kim

University of Warwick: PhD Student, Centre for Applied Linguistics

Note to participants: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary; you may refuse to participate from the very beginning, or withdraw at any time; your refusal to participate or your withdrawal will not have any negative consequences for you or your company.

Nature and aims of the project:

- To explore individuals' experiences of working in a multicultural setting and interacting with people of different backgrounds;

- To develop insights into the ways in which such intercultural encounters can be handled effectively.

- The data will be obtained by interviewing participants about their working experiences, preferably on two or three occasions, and, if it is possible, observing their interactions.

- Length of research project: between three and six months

- Profile of potential participants: Professionals working in the multicultural workplace, where individuals from more than two nations work together, in UK

The researcher will contact the participants in the following way:

- The potential participants in the present study will be initially identified via the researcher's acquaintances and professional contacts;

- The researcher will contact the potential participants in person and/or via email to seek their consent to participate in the study.

The in-depth study will involve:

- Interviews (preferably audio-recorded): semi-structured interview, lasting on average an hour.

In addition, it will ideally entail one or more of the following:

- Access to written data such as emails and text messages;

- Observation of staff interactions involving participants of different nationalities.

The benefits to the participant and the company will be as follows:

- Enhance their understanding of social relations in the multicultural workplace by making the research results available to them

The foreseeable risks, inconvenience or discomfort to the participant are as follows:

- Participating in interviews and possibly being recorded;

- Being observed and possibly being recorded;

The level of confidentiality that can realistically be guaranteed is as follows:

- All names of people and places will remain anonymous.

- Records will be stored in a secure location and destroyed on completion of the research project if requested.

Each participant can expect a debriefing/feedback as follows:

- The results of the research will be made available to the participants.

Further information:

- The research will be conducted in English or Korean depending on the participants and the desires of the participants. A translation into Korean will be provided if necessary.

- Permission may be sought for the data to be used for other purposes such as publication in academic and/or professional journals.

- Compensation arrangements for participants who for unforeseen reasons suffer harm or injury from the research will be determined on a case-to-case basis.

Contact details for queries or complaints about the research:

- Kyoung-mi Kim

  Centre for Applied Linguistics

  University of Warwick

  CV4 7AL, Coventry, UK

  Kyoungmi.Kim@warwick.ac.uk

Appendix 2. Consent Form

Research Project Title: Intercultural interaction in the workplace

Names of researchers:

Kyoung-mi Kim - Researcher

Prof. Helen Spencer-Oatey - Supervisor

I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above project and that I agree to take part in the study as described. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions that I may have and that I may keep the Information Sheet for my records.

As part of this project we would like to record your interviews and, if possible, your interaction with your colleagues and use it in various ways for research purposes. Please indicate below what uses of the data you are willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. We will only use the records in ways that you agree to.

<u>In any use of these records, names, places and organisations will be anonymised.</u>

Please indicate your consent in the tables below:

Your interview can be audio recorded. *(Please circle)*	Yes No
Selected interactions with your colleagues can be audio recorded. *(Please circle)*	Yes No

		Transcript of Interview (Yes/No) Please use ✓ or X	Audio Recording of Interview (Yes/No) Please use ✓ or X	Transcript of Interactions with Colleagues (Yes/No) Please use ✓ or X	Audio recording of Interactions with Colleagues (Yes/No) Please use ✓ or X	Written Data (e.g. email) (Yes/No) Please use ✓ or X
1	The data can be studied by the researchers for use in the research project.					
2	The data can be used for academic and professional publications.					
3	Extracts from the data can be					

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	used in training and assessment materials.				
4	Extracts from the data can be showed/played to research students or professionals interested in the research project.				
5	Extracts from the data can be shown in presentations to non-specialist groups.				
6	The record of the data can be made available to other academic researchers.				

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of records as indicated in the table above.

Name _____ (please print) Signature _____ Email:_____ Date_____

Appendix 3. Interview Questions

The first phase of fieldwork

1. How long have you been working in this company?

2. Could you briefly explain about people whom you work with/ whom you spend the most of time/ whom you most frequently interact?

   a. Can you think of anyone whom you felt difficult to communicate with? If there is, what do you think was the reason? How did you/ how would you like to manage this issue?

   b. On the contrary to this, can you think of anyone whom you felt relatively easy to communicate with? If there is, what do you think was the reason for this?

3. What practices have you found different from the ones that you are used to? / What practices have you found easy/ difficult to adjust to?

   a. Could you think of any example or incident that can best illustrate this point? (Please describe it in detail, what happened, when it happened, who are involved, who did/said what and what you did/said, why you think it happened, how you felt, and what you thought at that moment)

   b. How do you adjust yourself to those practices you mentioned?

4. What's your main concern when communicating/interacting with people at work?

   a. Could you think of any example or incident that can best illustrate this point? (Please describe it in detail, what happened, when it happened, who are involved, who did/said what and what you did/said, why you think it happened, how you felt, what you thought at that moment, and how you'd like to handle it in the future)

5. What changes do you think you have experienced while working in this company?

   a. Could you compare yourself now from the beginning you started working? Do you think you can cope with the difficulties you found in the beginning? Can you give me an example? Why do you think in that way?

The second phase of the fieldwork

1. How have you been since we met last time?

   - Any changes happened to the company, your team, and your role (tasks)?

   - Could you give me details and examples? / What do you (others) feel about it? / And why?

2. Could you describe your typical day at work? I'm interested in the areas of your responsibilities and roles, and how your work is structured.

   - What are your main tasks?

   - Who do you work closely with? (including staff of HQ/HO) What's your (their) roles and responsibilities? Can you give me an example of when you need to work closely with them?

   - Can you give me an example of a situation where teamwork is necessary?

   - What are the occasions where you definitely need to communicate with them?

   - What decisions should be made when performing your job?/ Whom do you make the decision with and how?

   - Can you give me an example of a situation where you are required to be an expert on the organisation or role?

   - What's the most exciting/ challenging part at work?

(To the new MD)

1. How have you been since you transferred to this company?

   - What are the changes in your roles and responsibilities?

   - Could you give me details and examples? / What do you feel about it? / And why?

and 2 same as the above

Appendix 4. Samples of observation log

Date	21-08-2015				
Setting	Acc team -> Op team				
Info	To have Lunch with Eddie, HJ, SB and Cathy at a pub JH and MS on holiday				
Space	Time	Events	Actors	Topics	Goals
Acc team	9.00am	Arrived in the office. JH is not here since he's on holiday. I say morning to RT and HJ, and Marketing team members as I come in the office	RES>RT, HJ		Greet
		Kelly arrives. HJ says morning to her. I say morning to her.	HJ, RES> KE		Greet
		As soon Kelly sits, Rita talks to her about payment Kelly paid and credit card	Rita> Kelly	Payment	Discuss
		Kelly goes to JH's seat and browses some papers on his desk.			
		Rita joins her looking for documents.			
		Kelly grabs her cup and Rita's (and leaves for the kitchen).			
		HJ talks on the phone (in English) about insurance. She mentions the Poland subsidiary.			
		HJ asks Rita what she's looking for. Rita shortly answers some documents and keeps looking for the documents at JH's seat.	HJ> Rita		Suggest help?
		Kelly brings two drinks, places them, and asks how it is going. Rita answers she's still looking. Kelly goes to Rita and they discuss.	Kelly> Rita		Find docs Discuss
		Rita comes in and sits. Kelly and Rita have a small chat. Rita receives a phone call. As she hangs up the phone, Kelly comments on the	RT KL		Small talk

	9.00	[8.54] JH asks HJ about certain quantities and asks her to check them. HJ says yes. She shortly checks it and gives the number. [8.58]40'00" JH goes to Rita with a copy. JH goes back to his seat. Rita follows JH's seat to take another copy. Rita says she would pay that. JH says thank you. Rita shortly finds out something is wrong in the info on the copy and says she would cancel it. JH explains about the wrong information. Rita says okay and that she would cancel it.	HJ > KL	deletion	Support Report and share an error
Kelly's seat			RT > KL		Discuss and
Owns seat		In the meantime, HJ walks away and Kelly arrives.	RT>JH	Hungary, Figure	support
Rita's seat		[9.08] HJ goes to Kelly talking about something to be deleted. Kelly says she would delete it. HJ says thank you and walks away.	JH > KL		Small talk Ask Qs Check info
		[9.11] Rita and KL having small talk.			
Acc team		[09.13] Rita asks JH about something about Hungary. JH goes to Rita's seat. They look at Rita's screen together. Yeah? Okay. Checking figures. JH returns to Rita's seat. They look at the screen JH asks Rita to scroll up and down to check info. JH uses a calculation and Rita waits. They look at screen again and confirm the info. Rita says she would do something. JH back to his seat.	HJ > Rita JH> < KL	English Expression payment	Ask English expression
		In the meantime HJ walks in and Kelly walks away.	RT > KL		Ask Qs
			RT > HJ		
Rita's seat		[9.17] HJ asks RT an English expression: what does it mean by out of the blue. RT explains	HJ > RT RT > JH	Bank account	Chat Check out
		[9.21] JH goes to Kelly with a copy to discuss payment. Kelly says why we need to pay him and JH says he doesn't know.			

Appendix 5. A sample of mapping individuals' roles and activities

Appendix 6. A sample of manual coding

Handwritten annotation (top right): Actors & Activities

What about Ben?

Ben, his sales team all report into Ben. And Ben all requests us, special prices or volumes of tyres or containers of tyres. Usually their requests go into Ben and then to us. And we will report to Ben and KH and then implement the changes.

Do you sometimes have meetings with KH, Ben and Ted together?

Sometimes yes. And most of time, it's usually Ted and Ben. And KH just has a final summary or, you know, say at the end. But um... if it's a big change, or you know, for changing a whole price list or something, and KH might be in whole meeting for that.

Um... How often?

It's hard to say. It depends on the market. At the moment, this year, more often than ever before... Hopefully next year not as often. (Laughter) Because um... haven't changed our prices in the market at the moment and...
competitive. And that's really been this year...

Okay

implement strategies" >>Being (un)able to directly talk to global HQ, not reflecting local level market, not being flexible

But because of the importance, it will always have to go through Minsu for approval anyway or the Koreans' approval because it's business critical. So... we could have, um... a pricing department saying we need to be selling the products at these prices because of, from manufacturing point of view, it's below their production cost. So we always have to have sort of links between, I will call, Minsu's department and the pricing department in both Europe locally and manufacturing. So...we can... request or show the reasons why we want to have this pricing but it will still have to be approved by Minsu and his um... The Europeans will never be able to... (+++) We, we will never, in my opinion, be able to implement a pricing strategy without um... having the pre-authorisation approval of Koreans like Minsu or... From a manufacture's point of view, we can... um... gather the data or put the proposal forward. But we would, we would never be able to react to the market [...] the way that market has gone this year and last sort of 18 months, unfortunately it's all been down pressure so we always be putting the price down. And then you do need to um involve Minsu and the commercial department and the finance department to make sure that it's still viable for the companies, manufacturers, facilities. So there'd always be this...[INT_Ted_26-08-2015]

Handwritten annotations (right side): Global | Local. Global→Local. Global-Local. Hungary. The role of OP & ACC team & How things are structured & underlie the approval process

Handwritten annotations (left side): (pre-) • Approval / (MS) •MS's department / • European • status / Link (web) between actors

(bottom) their strategy's slightly changing because of the new ...ropean marketing director who is non- ...requests go directly into ...on making

Handwritten (bottom circle): (Orientation of) Changes in being...

Appendix 7. MAXQDA Code system

Code System [1502]
    Context [39]
        Time [11]
        Different Institutional Context [17]
    Organisatioal Structure [12]
        Organisational Process [28]
            Decision Making [5]
        Organisational Form [17]
    Roles and Responsibilities [95]
        the Local [7]
        the Global [9]
        Who works with whom [23]
        Cross-roles [6]
        Personal trajectories [7]
    Practice [38]
        Getting on with the HO [6]
            Approval [13]
        around the Global [12]
        around the Local [7]
        Language Use [1]
        Medium [0]
            e-Eco [2]
            Email [1]
            Eco-i [4]
            SAP [0]
        Activities [18]
        Rules/ Guideline [10]
        Patterns/ Regularities [14]
        Variation [0]
        Routines [9]
        Routhinsation(ongoing) [4]
        Different Ways of Doing Things [8]
    Interactios at work [0]
        A lack of/ Little Interaction [13]
            No need [4]
            Communication Needs [11]
        Staff Meeting [10]
        Interaction within a team [45]
        Interaction between/across teams and positions [67]
        Interaction between/across institutions [2]
            SUB-Factories [5]
            EHO-GHO [2]
            SUB-EHO [43]
            SUB-GHO [31]
            SUB-SUB [4]
        Customer [4]
    Interaction Purposes/ Types of Interaction [1]
        Approval [30]
        Give Direction [1]
        Support/ Help [19]
        Ask for help [2]
        Give explanation [23]
        Small talk [16]
        Check [4]
        Queries [11]
        Consultation [4]
        Discussion [3]
        Decision Making [1]
        Share Info/ Updates [14]
        Inform [2]

1

Report [21]
Request [25]
Complain [1]
Problems [20]
Constraints [29]
Challenges [35]
Communication Barrier [8]
Language [28]
Lack of Common Interest [2]
Structure [4]
Hierarchy [6]
communication styles/ attitudes [4]
Time/ Workloads [3]
Uncertainty [9]
Language use [0]
Hungarian [1]
English [12]
Korean [5]
Language Ideology [2]
Relationship between staff [41]
Cultural statements [10]
Norms/ Expectation [7]
Cultural Difference [21]
Make nationailty(culture) relevant to their practice [1]
Power [1]
Institution Power [2]
Expertise [17]
Language [1]
Korean language ability [3]
English language ability [14]
Hungarian language ability [2]
Knowledge and Skills [11]
Overseas Experiences [1]
Education [0]
Work Experience [5]
MNC [3]
Work abroad [2]
Network Links [3]
Contact-based [2]
Role-based network [6]
Structure-based network [4]
Language-based Network [4]
Cenetrality [2]
Seniority [3]
Work Tenure at Eco [10]
Accees to organisational routines and procedures [11]
Inclusion-Exclusion [4]
Access to Information [6]
Control [11]
Influence [9]
Membership categorisation [0]
Team [1]
European [4]
British [2]
Local [2]
Korean Local [1]
Korean [5]
Changing [1]
The Past [45]
The present [21]

2

Anticipation (Evolving/ Going forward) [23]
                    Subsidiary level [2]
                    MNC level [7]
                    Roles/ Responsibilities [10]
                    Processes and Activities [10]
                    Organisational Structure (Form) [1]
                    Environment [2]
                    Staff members [1]
                          New European Marketing Director [7]
                          Team member change [10]
                          MD change [19]
                          Korean expatriate manager change [10]
                          Generation [1]
                    Openness to Change [2]
              Goal/ Business Orientation [7]
                    Strategy [2]
                    Efficiency [9]
                    Sustainability/ Growth [7]
                    Globalness [4]
                    Sales [2]
                    Market/Environment [10]
                    Customer [10]
                    Competitors [3]
        Attitude [24]
        Autonomy [4]
        Emotion [6]
Sets [0]

3

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Appendix 8. MAXQDA visualisation of codes
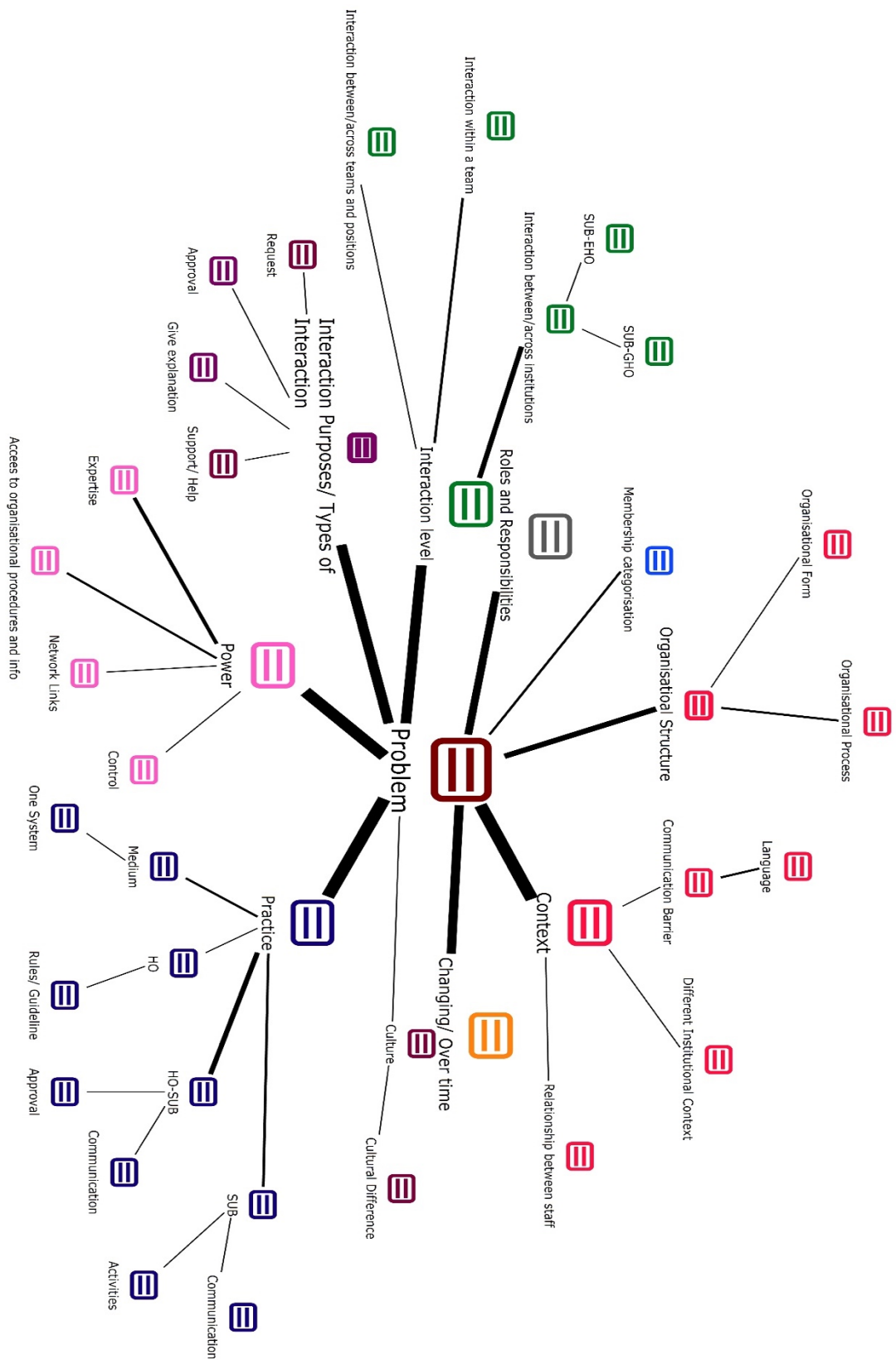
Appendix 9. Transcription conventions

The following conventions have been used for the transcription of problem-solving interaction:

[	Left square brackets indicate a point of overlap onset.
]	Right square brackets indicate a point at which two overlapping utterances both end, where one ends while the other continues, or simultaneous moments in overlaps which continue.
=	Equal signs indicate continuous utterance with no break or pause and/or latch.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a short pause.
,	Continuing contour
[…]	Section of transcript omitted
(xxx)	Unable to transcribe
(word)	Unsure transcription
?	Questioning intonation where not obvious on paper
!	Exclamatory utterance
emphasis	Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis.
th-	Cut off word
(2.0)	Pause about 2 seconds
:	Sound stretching
(( ))	Other details
↑↓	The up and down arrows mark rises or falls in pitch.
hhh	aspirations
.hhh	inhalations