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Linguistic Diversity in Cooperative Work Processes of Task-Oriented Teams

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Acknowledgements

Contents

Abstract

Due to the internationalisation of companies and the immigration into Switzerland, Swiss companies today employ people from different backgrounds and with different mother tongues on all hierarchy levels. Thus, multilingual teams are becoming more common. The lingua franca, or common working language in these teams is often English or German; for many team members these are foreign or second languages. So far, research has paid too little attention to the linguistic challenges multilingual teams face and to the strategies they employ to efficiently master their communicative tasks.

Even though several studies within organisational psychology and small group research look at the relationship between cultural diversity and group performance, they limit interculturality to values and ethnicity without or only implicitly taking into account language, thus neglecting its impact. On the other hand, communication in teams is being researched linguistically, but not from the angle of communicative efficiency and teamwork optimisation. Consequently, language diversity and strategies of coping with language diversity in team communication are mostly absent in psychological research and communicative efficiency is only a minor subject in organisational psychology.

The main goal is to analyse how communicative efficiency in multilingual company-internal teams is attained. Our research question is whether communicative efficiency depends on the team's ability to manage its diversity of languages, i.e. to master specific linguistic and communicative challenges in the company appropriately.

Since the project is at the intersection of linguistic communication and team performance in organisations, it calls for an approach that combines linguistic methods with methods of organisational psychology and that is based on action theory and functional-pragmatic communication analysis as a common framework, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data from two partner companies serve as case studies which are compared in a contrastive design.

The findings of the study will help our partners in practice to foster multilingual teams and to establish a best-practice model that may be adapted for the use with other teams. This contrastive design with two partners in practice each having their own specific linguistically diverse work groups, enables an exemplary approach to linguistically diverse work groups, which are most common in this form in a large number of Swiss companies. As contrastive case studies they therefore help to gain new insights into the research area.

Sowohl durch die zunehmende Internationalisierung als auch durch Migrationsbewegungen in die Schweiz arbeiten Teams in Unternehmen auf allen hierarchischen Stufen vermehrt in sprachdiversen Konstellationen. Oftmals werden Deutsch oder Englisch als lingua franca zur Verständigung verwendet.

In dem vorliegenden Projekt wird untersucht, welche kommunikativen Probleme sich durch die Sprachdiversität von Teams ergeben und welche Bewältigungsstrategien diese entwickeln, um die kommunikative Effizienz in Teamsitzungen sicherzustellen. Diese Fragestellungen werden sowohl aus linguistischer Perspektive als auch aus organisationspsychologischer Sicht bearbeitet. In zwei betrieblichen Fallstudien werden in einem transdisziplinären Design Teamsitzungen mit funktional-pragmatischen Methoden analysiert und mit organisationalen Rahmenbedingungen sowie individuellen Bewältigungsstrategien in Beziehung gesetzt.

Erste Ergebnisse zeigen, dass in Abhängigkeit von der individuellen Erfahrung in der Zusammenarbeit in sprachdiversen Teams, von der Teamkonstellation und in Abhängigkeit von der Sprachpolitik des Unternehmens Mitarbeitende Kommunikationsstrategien entwickeln, welche zum einen zur kommunikativen Effizienz beitragen. Dazu gehören z.B. das Aushelfen mit Vokabeln, mehrmaliges Erklären oder fehlertolerantes Verhalten. Zum anderen verursachen sie aber auch dysfunktionale Effekte wie unsachgemässe Vereinfachungen, ungenaue Auftragsvergabe durch Moderator/innen und fehlende Partizipation der Mitarbeitenden an Sitzungen und Entscheidungen. Durch den transdisziplinären Ansatz können komplexe Zusammenhänge und positive und negative Effekte der kommunikativen Strategien aufgezeigt werden. Funktionierende Strategien sollen den Praxispartnern und weiteren Betrieben als Best-Practice Modelle dienen.

1.   Introduction

Our paper concerns methodological questions as to how language diversity can be integrated into diversity research and what contribution linguistics can make to improve the understanding and management of diversity in organisations. We link linguistic issues with research on team performance in multicultural and multilingual teams and organisations. To answer these methodological questions we present a transdisciplinary research design that was developed for a current research project that is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation[2]. In addition we illustrate the application of the research design with preliminary results.

In the following, we firstly describe the theoretical and practical background regarding our research project (section 2); secondly, we relate the research questions to specific linguistic and organisational problems (section 3); thirdly, we describe the research design developed in order to take into account operational and microeconomic organisational factors as well as linguistic conditions and outcomes (section 4); fourthly, particular attention is given to the functional-pragmatic framework employed in our linguistic analyses (section 5); finally, we report preliminary findings on case studies with our practice partners (section 6) and draw some conclusions setting directions for our further research work (section 7) and formulate first recommendations for companies (section 8).

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2. Theoretical and Practical Background

2.1 Linguistics and the Work Place

Language Diversity and Multilingualism in Multi-National Enterprises (MNEs)

Work place linguistics and cross-cultural/intercultural research have been an issue for some decades now within the fields of linguistics (cf. Rehbein ed. 1985; Clyne 1994; Bruenner 2000; Bendel 2006, among others). However, while models developed in social anthropology and related fields have found their way into management literature (cf. Adler 2002; Adler & Gundersen 2008; Cramer 2007), linguistic knowledge has been neglected consistently in management literature and management practice until now (cf. the critiques in Chen et al. 2006; Dannerer 2008). Thus, our knowledge regarding the effects linguistic diversity has on team interaction in multinational work groups is still scarce.

Also, most MNEs lack a systematic practice of 'linguistic auditing', e.g. as provided and supported by the EU since the 1990s, albeit with a focus on trade and customer relations (cf. Reeves & Wright 1996). This lack of linguistic measures may be considered severe in terms of a drop of performance registered in many companies due to a lack of multilingual competencies of their staff, as has been recognised in previous studies (cf. CILT 2006). At the same time, linguistic qualifications are highlighted as a necessity by supra-national policies of workforce mobility and multilingualism, as in the Lisbon strategy (EU 2000) and, subsequently, the policy portfolio for multilingualism (EU 2006). European and global businesses require multilingual, highly qualified personnel in order to meet globalisation standards. The practice of recruiting such 'international' staff, as well as worldwide work migration of the displaced and poor, have led to a significant increase in cultural and linguistic diversity at all levels of the workforce and have thus created new challenges.

Studies on multinational teams reveal that they are either much less or much more efficient than culturally homogenous teams (Adler & Gundersen 2008), and that their success is related to the tasks set as much as to the team's capabilities of cooperation and coordination (Lehmann & van den Bergh 2004; van den Bergh & Lehmann 2004). These capabilities within the team, in turn, are unequivocally determined by linguistic abilities (cf. Marschan, Welch & Welch 1997; Trompenaars & Hampden Turner 1998, among others). Also, it has been observed that in mixed teams foreign language speakers often come across as "less cooperative" and "more reserved" (cf. Asmuß 2002: 186, translated by the authors). However, in spite of a growing number of conversation analytical studies in the linguistic field, these have failed to recognise multilingual interaction and linguistic diversity as crucial factors in work place interaction (cf. Roberts 2007: 407ff for a critique).

Thus, the combined impact of both accumulated challenges and neglected language policy in multilingual team work processes, calls for a methodologically and theoretically minded analysis from a linguistic angle based on empirical research.

Lingua franca communication in MNEs

English is currently being used as a corporate language in many MNEs. The management often is convinced that using English will create a common ground, facilitating access to information and verbal exchange between international staff. However, most employees make use of English as a lingua franca, that is, as a means of communication restricted to certain functional areas and specific purposes related to their work processes (cf. Seidlhofer 2004; Jenkins 2006). Often, employees in lingua franca situations interact as if they fully understood each other, even if they do not, until a doubt is cast or communication breaks down (cf. Poncini 2004: 22). Non-native speakers are more likely to experience negative effects in lingua franca team communication than native speakers, but lingua franca effects principally affect all team members as well as the quality of work (cf. Lüdi 2002; Raasch 1999; Kirkpatrick 2007). In particular, linguistic realisations of action patterns, such as announcing, explaining, reporting or giving orders are subject to specific expectations as to how they will be carried out and how one should answer to them (cf. Hohenstein 2005). These patterns and the concomitant expectations are distinctly language-related, i.e. even in languages as close to each other as German and English, they will vary considerably. However, only when discrepancies occur as breaches or irritations in interaction, can these interactional expectations be made explicit, as there often is a reluctance in intercultural constellations to acknowledge, address, and resolve basic sociocultural asymmetries (cf. Günthner & Luckmann 2001: 79). In lingua franca mediated multinational team work processes, this may lead to a) the development of strategies of linguistic (over-) simplification as well as to b) resorting to more formalised types of communication. Both strategies have implications for the development of trust and cohesion in the team and the cooperative processes necessary in order to achieve tasks.

2.2 Communication in diverse teams for dealing with cooperative tasks and effects on group performance

Cooperative tasks and team work

To link linguistics with work and organisational psychology we selected activities as a central category for our theoretical and methodological positioning. As well as the functional-pragmatic approach focuses on linguistics in the context of activities (compare section 2.1) work psychology focusses on "the *core of work*, and that is *acting*" (Hacker 2003: 106). Actions are regulated by goals, "which are interlocked in a hierarchical manner" (Hacker 2003: 106). The goal-orientation enables and supports motivation, emotions and the coordination of individual and collective work tasks (Hacker 2003: compare 109). Furthermore, from an action theoretical perspective "the crucial variable in any kind of work is the task" (Hacker 2003: 126). Therefore according to Hacker, the central category of a psychological analysis of activity is the work task (Hacker 1986: 61, as cited in Ulich 2005: 197), which is the interface between an individual and the organisation. As it often is impossible to work individually on complex tasks, the tasks have to be approached in the form of subtasks and with the help of cooperative processes of coordination. Actually, Hackman and Vidmar (1970) showed that 90 % of the variance of cooperative performance is explained by the

kind of task people worked on (as cited in Hacker 2003: 126) From a socio-technical point of view, the work task connects the social system with the technical system and the human being with the organisational structures (Ulich 2005: 198). Teams as social systems carry out work tasks as a collective:

"A team is a group whose members have come together or have been assembled for the completion of a particular task. Team work is the process of mastering tasks." (Scholl 2003: 3, translated by the authors). Such task-oriented groups are characterised by common goals, social interaction and cooperation (Brodbeck 2007: 416–417). The common goals are for the most part determined by organisational guidelines, so that team performance can often be measured in organisational criteria such as productivity, efficiency and innovation.

According to Brodbeck (2007: 417, translated by the authors), cooperation is defined as "[interdependent] activities that relate to each other in a meaningful way" and that are aimed at achieving goals of a work-oriented group. "Cooperation is on the one hand the goal-oriented interplay of individual actions and on the other hand the coordinated exchange of information, evaluations and opinions, e.g. in collective planning, problem-solving, decision-making, and assessment" (Gallagher, Kraut & Egido 1990, as cited in Brodbeck 2007). According to Grote (1997: 36), reciprocal, interdependent working contexts require team work.

Based on action regulation theory (cf. Oesterreich & Resch 1985), Pleiss (2007: 79) distinguishes action goals from cooperative goals. Cooperative goals motivate and regulate co-operation; they are supra-individual and set to the adjustment of individual action regulation. Cooperative goals are pursued in communicative processes in team meetings. In analysing such meetings we can combine the linguistic and psychological perspective, by focussing on cooperative goals, their requirements for action-oriented communication in the group and the real, observable communication.

Factors and criteria of group performance

In a next step, we want to approach the question of which factors determine whether a team achieves good group performance or even works efficiently. There are different conceptualisations of group performance. Brodbeck (2007: 417) distinguishes between group performance, group success and productivity. Group performance is an aggregate of different behaviours relevant for reaching the goals set; group success is the degree to which these goals are achieved (e.g. has a problem been solved completely). Productivity is the efficiency, i.e., how many resources are used (e.g. time, number of steps in a task, information) to reach a goal (cf. Scholl 2003: 4–5).

Brodbeck (2007: 420) assumes a multidimensional criterion for group success. Brodbeck (1996, as cited in Brodbeck 2007: 418) argues that the function of task-oriented groups is not only to maximise productivity, but also to optimise the realisation of individual, social and societal criteria. He integrates four elements of group performance into his model that influence one another reciprocally (compare Brodbeck, 2007, p. 419, translated by the authors):

1. *Dimensions of performance:* motivation shown, knowledge, feats and skills applied, and collective strategies used
2. *Dimensions of success:* quantity, quality, efficiency, individual needs, team viability, innovation
3. *Factors of context/group processes:* process gains, process losses
4. *Development processes:* changes in individual resources, task requirements, technologies, collective strategies, product characteristics and group dynamics

For our research, "team viability" (Sundström et al. 1990, as cited in Brodbeck 2007: 419) is of high relevance. It is characterised e.g. by solidarity, cohesion, collective expectations of self-efficacy, ability to cooperate, and participation. Processes of social interactions emerge when the group attempts to reach a common goal. Individual actions, reactions and communications refer to one another in group meetings about problem-solving and decision-finding. These interdependent actions are called group processes and correspond to the functional approach of communication research (Cragan & Wright 1990, as cited in Brodbeck 2007: 424). In linguistic studies about communication within a company, questions of linguistic economy and linguistic-communicative efficiency stand out (Roelcke 2002; Kleinberger Günther 2003; Dannerer 2008; cf. Grin 1996a, 1996b, 2003; Grin & Sfreddo 1998). These studies make it clear that even in monolingual constellations (in homogeneous work groups), the empirical practice in a company diverges from ideas of effective, goal-oriented and efficient communication. For example, analyses show that informal "soft communication" in the workplace may be particularly efficient for the information flow in a work process (Kleinberger Günther 2008, translated by the authors).

A decisive factor that influences group processes and in further steps, group performance, group satisfaction and the achievement of objectives is the group composition, that is the arrangement of homogeneity vs. heterogeneity in a team (Wegge 2003). Current management research places this issue under the concept of diversity. Characteristics of diversity are nationality, ethnicity, regional origin, religion, age, gender; further criteria include education, specialised knowledge, and duration of service for the company. Teams are also called diverse when their members differ with regard to values and attitudes (Wegge 2003: 127; Podsiadlowski 2002: 262) or ability, disability and sexual orientation (Riordan & Shore 1997; Dietz & Petersen 2005; Stuber 2004).

The understanding that the influence of a team's heterogeneity on group efficiency and effectiveness is connected to the conscious perception of it (Wegge 2003: 120), and that the reflection of team processes and mental models has positive effects (Gurtner, Tschan, Semmer & Nägele 2007), is important for our research.

2.3   Language as a factor in diverse teams

Conceptualisations of diversity do include factors such as nationality (which probably implicitly includes language) and descriptions of difficulties that arise in team work also mention linguistic difficulties; linguistic diversity as a characteristic, however, is neither conceptualised nor systematically seen as a factor. This "blind spot" is typical for psychological research on the connection between diverse teams and communication, as well as on diverse teams and group performance.

Diversity in teams and its effects on team performance is being widely analysed in organisational psychology, mainly in laboratory studies, but also in field studies. In the field of ethnicity and nationality, which is relevant for our research project, studies with an intercultural approach are scarce in the German-speaking countries, as many focus on bicultural teams (Cramer 2007). In English-speaking countries, there exist mainly laboratory studies and only a small number of studies on real teams (Smith & Noakes 1996: 478). Due to the contradictory results and the small number, Cramer (2007) makes out a research gap in the field of intercultural collaboration with respect to the question of how diverse teams work together, "to what extent they are successful or not, what impact cultural diversity has on their work and in what way which factors impede or support their work" (Cramer 2007, translated by the authors; Kühlmann 1998: 76). This lack of research is even more gapping when being looked at from the perspective of German as a company language and lingua franca in work processes.

Communication problems are often researched as an effect of cultural heterogeneity and by applying a cross-cultural approach, i.e. by comparing "typical" communicative styles of people of different nationalities, but without considering the linguistic situation (Kirkman & Shapiro 2005; Podsiadlowski 2002; Bochner & Hesketh 1994; Karoc-Kakabadse & Kouzmin 2001, as cited in Seymen 2006). Only a small number of studies differ from this practice, as for example a study by Dinsbach et al. (2007), which directly links language to cultural diversity.

Moreover, the number of theoretical models including language as a factor is still limited. The linguistic dimension is particularly looked at in Adler (2002), who determines advantages and disadvantages of diverse teams, whereby language variety is considered a disadvantage: due to increased communication in one's own cultural group, miscommunication, translation problems and because non-native speakers reportedly speak more slowly, linguistic diversity is perceived as a drawback in team work. However, Adler's study also understands linguistic phenomena as mere effects of cultural diversity and does not look at them as an independent factor of team performance. It is thus a prerequisite for more extensive and detailed analyses into team work and team efficiency to recognise the opportunities created by and cooperative interaction patterns already apparent in the team members' multilingualism.

3.   Research goals and questions

The *main goal* of the running research project is to analyse how communicative efficiency in linguistically diverse teams is attained. The assumption is that communicative efficiency depends on the ability of the team to manage its diversity of languages, i.e. to master specific linguistic and communicative challenges in the team according to the specific situation and constellation. Based on these results the best practices in dealing with linguistic diversity in teams shall be worked up and disseminated for further organisations.

Our research questions in detail are the following. Which problems occur in the communication and cooperation of linguistically diverse teams? Which communicative strategies do the teams develop to cope with communication problems caused by linguistic diversity? Which linguistic strategies are communicatively efficient? Do the strategies also influence other outcomes like satisfaction with communication in the team and team climate? How are comparable, cooperative work tasks mastered by the teams?

4.   Research design

The research project examines multilingualism in teams within organisations by combining linguistic and socio-scientific concepts. Both approaches are based on action research. The study is carried out with two companies in the field (partner in practice PP1 and PP2), which allows for a theory-based approach to the practical interest that the two partners in practice have in the subject. Combining two disciplines and integrating the needs of the two companies and their knowledge in the research process our research strategy can be indicated as transdisciplinary.

Our research strategy is a *contrastive case study* design that allows according to Robson (2002, p. 178) "doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within real life context using multiple sources of evidence" and that includes practitioners as experts in the project (Yin, 2003). "Fieldwork is permeated with the conflict between what is theoretically desirable on the one hand and what is practically possible on the other" (Buchanan et al., 1988, p. 53–54 in Saunders et al. 2009, p.171). It was extremely difficult to gain access to the field because firstly the companies did not want to allow us to observe and record real meetings and secondly they were not sensitised to the topic of language diversity. Therefore a systematic or representative selection of companies and groups was not possible. The selection of the work groups to be examined is determined by the needs of the companies participating. From each of the two companies, three work groups are participating, which differ in educational levels, linguistic backgrounds and their working languages (German vs. English). They represent two important types of work teams in Swiss companies: the teams of company 1 (PP1) are linguistically diverse due to the recruitment of highly qualified international personnel, whereas in company 2 (PP2), linguistic diversity is a result of employing immigrants from former war and conflict zones, who have very varied educational levels and linguistic backgrounds. Comparability of these groups is nevertheless given due to the following factors:

(i)   The work groups have a working language which is a foreign or second language for most of the members.

(ii)   The work groups are characterised by linguistic diversity in the team, i.e. their members have different first/native languages and different foreign and second languages. In the situations we examine, they mainly communicate in the foreign working language.

(iii) The work groups have a routine of several years, i.e. their members have a lot of experience in working in their teams.

(iv) Team meetings are institutionalised in the company. They occur regularly and are familiar to all team members.

(v)   Team members are used to carrying out cooperative tasks.

(vi) The work groups organise their meetings and the resulting tasks autonomously or semi-autonomously.

(vii) The work groups represent two examples of linguistically diverse teams typical for larger Swiss companies, as such teams are increasingly characterised by migration and international work mobility respectively.

This contrastive design with two partners in practice each having their own specific linguistically diverse work groups, enables an exemplary approach to linguistically diverse work groups, which are most common in this form in a large number of Swiss companies. As contrastive case studies they therefore help to gain new insights into the research area.

In our investigation, we apply an inductive case study approach, in which we relate different perspectives to each other by methodological triangulation. We work out relations of cause and effect using exploration and interpretation. This step has been made to form a hypothesis. These relations can be examined more closely in follow-up research (compare Saunders et al. 2009).

We use a multi-level analysis in the sense of the "Human-Technology-Organisation" approach that includes several levels of the company: organisational unit, group, and individual employees in order to explain and optimise the completion of work tasks (Strohm & Ulich 1997: 23, translated by the authors). The data is processed case-by-case for both companies; in the operational description of the companies, the characteristics of each team are taken into consideration. Data sources for the analysis are subjective assessments by participants, assessments by the research team and assessments by experts.

At this state of research and knowledge only research questions can be formulated and therefore it is appropriate to choose an *inductive approach* that uses mainly qualitative techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). They are summarised in Table 1.
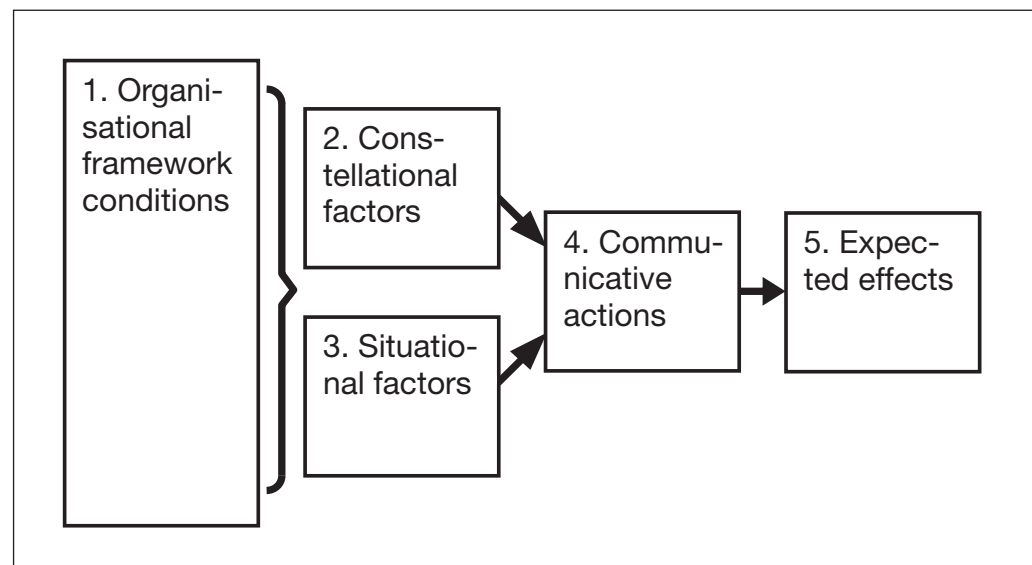

Figure 1: Research design

Figure 1 shows the research design and how the different data relate to one another; Table1 below shows the different layers of analysis, the data sources and the instruments.

1. Organisational framework conditions
- Organisational structure
  Structure of the organisation and process organisation with focus on the operational unit that we focus on
  (expert interview and document analysis)
- Organisational culture
  Diversity policy, language policy; management of linguistic diversity in the company; instruments of diversity and language management
  (expert interview and document analysis)

2. Constellational factors
- Composition of the groups that are analysed:
  Roles and functions, meta data (socio-biographical)
  (short questionnaire about the team, observation)

3. Situational conditions
- Classification of tasks that have to be completed cooperatively
  (Video analysis with focus on 'cooperative tasks', analysis of the tasks, INKA)
- Interfaces
  Information and technical systems that are needed in order to complete the task, e.g. information retrieval on a computer
  (expert interview, video data)

4. Communicative acts
- Management of linguistic diversity by the group; identification of communicative strategies
  (Partial transcription of video data of team meetings, functional-pragmatic analysis, assessment by research team and experts)
- Communicative problems and strategies in the team communication
  (Photo-elicitation interviews)

5. Expected effects
- Quality of communication
  (Short questionnaire team, PP2)
- Team climate
  (Short questionnaire team, PP2)
- Economic effects of diversity management with focus on linguistic diversity from a management perspective
  (Expert interview)
- Communicative efficiency
  Are the goals of the team meetings reached?
  (Operationalisation of efficiency criteria; assessment of selected video/transcript segments by research team and experts; self-assessment by meeting moderators; subjective assessment in photo-elicitation interviews)

Table 1: Levels of analysis, method and data triangulation

In order to understand the cases of partner in practice 1 (PP1) and partner in practice 2 (PP2), we describe the organisational structure and culture of each. These indicators are important as they pre-structure the case-based work processes and communicative situations that are observed and analysed for (defined by Dannerer 2008 as global efficiency) (Table 1, level 1, above).

Systematically, we describe the composition of each team, mainly with regard to language skills (meta data: linguistic diversity, ethnicity, age, sex, education). Describing the social system with focus on language skills can provide explanations as to why certain problems occur and why a meeting is inefficient. This description corresponds with the constellational factors in the analysis of communicative efficiency (Dannerer

2008) (Table 1, level 2, above).

Moreover, we determine as situational condition which cooperative tasks have to be carried out in each meeting (Pleiss 2007). This enables us to gather indicators of difficult situations and to make comparisons beyond the individual teams and meetings. Analysing observation data with a certain system of categories (INKA), we can determine according to Pleiss (2007) the requirements for communication that are caused by a cooperative task. The categorisation of the cooperative tasks is important for the data analysis in order to have a point of reference for the comparison of linguistic acts (Table 1, level 3, above).

In a further step, we look at the actual communicative actions. The team meetings are recorded on video, protocolled, examined, partially transcribed and analysed from a functional-pragmatic perspective with regard to communicative patterns and strategies. For the triangulation, we gather constellational and situational aspects that influence (communicative) actions in photo-elicitation interviews with selected team members (Table 1, level 4, above).

Finally, we look at the expected effects. Are the communicative actions of the group communicatively efficient? (Table 1, level 5, above). We determine this in the following steps:

a) In follow-up interviews after the meetings, the moderators are asked in a short structured interview whether the goals of the meeting have been accomplished (for PP2);

b) Team members assess certain situations in photo elicitation interviews;

c) In expert interviews, the management assesses the economic effects of their diversity/language policy and instruments;

d) We also determine from a perspective of organisational psychology and business how the group assesses the quality of communication and work atmosphere of the team (as criteria of team performance in the dimension of success, following Brodbeck 2007: 418; for PP2);

e) We carry out a functional-pragmatic linguistic action analysis of selected transcribed passages of the meetings;

f) Selected ("dense") passages are evaluated and interpreted first within the research team, in a second step with our academic advisory council and, thirdly, discussed at academic conferences.

Our *research choice is multi-methodological* combining two disciplines using different qualitative methods and data sources (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 152). By *methodological triangulation* we can relate these perspectives and data to each other and increase the validity of our results (Lamnek, 2003, p. 160).

5. Selected survey methods: Instruments of Functional Pragmatics in linguistic diversity research

In our qualitative interdisciplinary approach data were collected not only on the corporate structures, policies, and communication management goals of our partners in practice, but also on perceptions and self-observations regarding the team communication of those involved in the process of the team meetings, as well as audio- and videotapes of a set of team meetings for each partner in practice. The recordings and analysis of empirical data of team meetings are crucial for interpretive analysis of speech actions and interaction patterns actually carried out during the meetings, especially since self-perceptions described by interviewees often are not in accordance with their observable interactions.

The audio- and videotapes of three sets of meetings for each partner in practice over a timespan of roughly a year each are processed from raw data to selective transcriptions using the methodology of Functional Pragmatics and the HIAT transcription system (cf. Rehbein 2001; Redder 2008). In that process, first, audio- and videotaped empirical data from team interactions are described in a table allocating time slots, subjects of talk and involved speakers to form sections; within sections smaller units of interaction are paraphrased according to subjects linked to linguistic patterns, e.g. reporting, explaining, task solving etc. Second, the paraphrased data description enables us to conduct a joint process of interpretation in the research team in order to identify specific parts of interaction where recurring patterns, surfacing communicative problems, or specific solutions to tasks show up. Thirdly, these smaller sections from the data are then transcribed according to the detailed HIAT standard from the audio- and videotapes. In a fourth step, these transcribed data are grouped according to similar sections occurring in various teams, in order to form a basis for comparison and more detailed pattern analyses. In a fifth step, analyses of interaction patterns are carried out by a functional analysis of speech act types, illocutionary forces and propositions, as well as smaller, procedural units of linguistic expressions (cf. Rehbein 2001; Redder 2008). These detailed analyses are controlled via cross-analyses within the research team, discussions in the expert committee and at conferences. Ultimately, this sequence of research steps can reveal sequential inconsistencies in team interactions, between speakers and hearers, diverging roles within the team and ways of dealing with them linguistically. In particular, it becomes clear where the Lingua franca situation poses specific challenges during team interaction, and which strategies and solutions have been developed in the observed teams.

Moreover, two related studies on team meetings by Dannerer (2005, 2008) provide a basis for our investigation, as they combine linguistic analyses of empirical data from a functional-pragmatic perspective with operational management concerns. Specifically, the concept of "communicative efficiency" ('kommunikative Effizienz', Dannerer 2008) is commensurable in management terms as well as in linguistic terms and is highly adaptable for functional-pragmatic analyses of the effect of communication on team efficiency.

6. Emerging Results

6.1 Preliminary results: Case study 1 – Understanding and resolving miscommunication in team work

Case study 1 involves our partner in practice 1, an international financial services company originating in Germany. The company uses English as their lingua franca (ELF) and corporate language in international communications within the company. In meetings twice a year staff from the German mother holding and international subsidiaries meets to discuss developments around internal and external communication issues and uniting communication strategies. Team interaction in workshops around communication tasks form an important part of the meetings. In the following, a transcribed excerpt from video- and audiotaped team interaction data is looked at (6.1.1), and excerpts from interviews with participants of the meetings are discussed vis-à-vis their conceived interactional strategies in ELF (6.1.2).

6.1.1 A look at some data: Communication during a workshop

In a workshop for management in the internal and external communications and public relations sector, a group of two German L1 males, one Italian L1 male, three German L1 females, one American English L1 female and a Portuguese L1 male are working on the team task of collecting examples from their experience, where the company information system had worked in a particularly effective manner. The examples are to be used afterwards for public relations purposes. What happens is that the team members, asked to collect examples in order to present them afterwards to the complete group of roughly 50 participants of the meeting (all split up in smaller work teams to work on the same task at that point in the meeting), recollect personal experiences and share them by narrative patterns, types of storytelling. One L1 German junior management member (SwM2) has difficulties understanding the story his experienced Italian L1 senior colleague (ItM) is relating about an instant aid campaign initiated through the company network in the case of a large earthquake in Italy. The storytelling of ItM itself is impeded by the Italian accent and many vocabulary problems on the part of the speaker ItM, cf. Excerpt 1[2]:

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2 Transcription following the HIAT conventions as described in Ehlich, K. (1992). HIAT – a Transcription System for Discourse Data.
Transcription conventions:
- •   short interruption of the flow of speech
- ••   an estimated pause up to half a second
- ••• an estimated pause up to one second
- ... interruption or break, uncompleted turn
- /   repair, self-initiated correction
- ´   stress
- =   slurring
- x   place names/names in general
- ( ) beginning and ending of unintelligible words and passages not completely verifiable auditory
- [ ] decreasing loudness (due to difficulties with language)

(1)

ItM, senior manager [v]	(= And) for us, it was (based on) the media. Only uh they (we-re/ would) know about the • [fund rousing• fund rousing]…
	[searching for correct word]
GeF3, senior staff [v]	Fund raising, [ja].
	[German affirmative particle]

Here, one of the German L1 speaking female team members joins in and helps out with the correct vocabulary item, "fund raising". Interestingly, her final particle "ja" is a German insert. In this context, it serves to signal not only her confirmation towards the content of what was being said, but also as a means to align herself as a non-native speaker of English. Small tokens such as "ja" can achieve such an effect, because they are processed almost subconsciously. They function as an immediate feedback and create understanding between hearer and speaker. The Italian L1 speaker ItM goes on telling his story:

(2)

ItM, senior manager [v]	We [lanched], and uh (in activity) we la(u)nched uh fund raising. And said (all) all our interná, employeés. We reached (two) hundred thousand Euro and (=====). (====) some, some.
SwM2, junior [v]	Collected by the…
ItM, senior manager [v]	Collected by the employees.
SwM2, junior [v]	By thé • • • Employees.
ItM, senior manager [v]	• And agents.

Here the speaker SwM2 asks for a word he did not understand by applying a similar strategy as the German L1 speaker in (1). He repeats part of the former speaker's utterance. However, since it is phrased as a question with an interrogative intonation, it does not serve as cooperation towards the speaker, but demands a cooperative effort from him.

From this point on, the other team members start categorising the example given as "inspiring pride" and work on how to present it later on. Only after ItM takes up his story again and elaborates it, it becomes clear that the Swiss male still has not understood that the subject of the talk is an earthquake catastrophe. When he finally admits this and asks, the senior manager, the second Swiss male in the group, at last steps in and tells him what the story was about:

(3)

SwM2, junior [v]	And he was present?
ItM, senior manager [v]	• • • Aaaah. (They tried to ===).
SwM2, junior [v]	And what was the topic? Or the issue?
SwM1, senior manager [v]	It was the earth quake, • • • in (xxxx).
SwM2, junior [v]	The earth quake?!
	Aha! I didn't understand that. Now it's clear. Okay.

In this example, without going into the details of linguistics and functional pragmatic analysis, it becomes clear that this kind of team process is highly impeded by the

varieties of English used as lingua franca. However, in the end, the group task is achieved, because the team members react with cooperative patience towards each other and the senior staff takes on the responsibility to make comprehensible what otherwise may not be understood by the junior participant. Patterns of partial repetition, as well as of joining in in an uncompleted turn, and patterns of answering an unresolved question emerge as solutions to potential breakdowns of communication. Possibly, these resolving patterns have been developed by the senior staff members (GeF3, SwM1) during years of experience, since these kinds of meetings between the international communications staff have been held on a regular basis for 10 years. More specifically, the participants have developed patterns and strategies in order to secure understanding, which have been discussed elsewhere in research on lingua franca, e.g. helping each other with words or trying to explain something to each other, as it happens in the above example regarding the earth-quake.

6.1.2 Interactional strategies as conceived by the workshop participants

To collect data on the individual level, six interviews with workshop participants were conducted. The description of the results is focused on perceived problems and individually developed strategies concerning comprehension. First statements in all interviews are that language difficulties do not exist or that they generally are not recognised as inhibiting communication since professional knowledge and general communicative competence can compensate for language deficiency. Talking with the interviewees more in depth, some language induced problems in communication and strategies for ensuring comprehension can be found. Team members perceive different levels of English in the group and reflect that due to their fluency in English they have more active or passive roles in the meetings.

Perspective of the non-native speakers, esp. on listening

The main strategy to ensure understanding is to listen carefully, which means to let uncertainties pass for a while and accept a lack of understanding for a lapse of time. If uncertainties remain people do not hesitate to ask for an explanation.

> "I'm concentrating listening and maybe with the sentences repeat, and then for me is too, easy to catch the general meaning. Maybe... no maybe, without maybe, I loose some specific argument, (issues), or item. But in the current day I replace this empty with listening. But I don't care about this, because I speak when I not understand." (PP1, Code: 05a)

Perspective of the native speakers

Native English speakers and others in good command of English have developed strategies to be understood: They try to keep it short and concise, to simplify their vocabulary and to reduce statements on focal ideas. They are aware that they risk distorting the content of their statement.

> "Uhm, I do sometimes choose my words more carefully. So, for example […] I would sometimes use simpler words rather than fancy words to make a point."

Interviewer: "You try to do that on purpose? So, you're aware of..."

"Yeah, I would say I'm aware some times that, I can see a word coming in my mind that might not be very comprehensible, I would rather say it easy to understand. I'm also probably making judgment calls in my head that might be completely wrong, that might be patronising as I explained it to you, but you do that. I must say that sometimes I would tend to take the pen when we're writing up exercises as part of the group, because I think that my English is better. It might not be true in many cases, because we have some excellent English speakers." (PP1, Code: 05a)

In general, most of the time speakers who are either more confident ELF users or native speakers of English take on the team roles of moderation, writing down results on flip charts, and presenting results. Some of these speakers are conscious of this kind of dominating team processes and express that it is desirable that less confident and proficient speakers of ELF would participate in a more active manner.

When non-native speakers of English with different L1 are forming teams, English is used as their common lingua franca. However, switching into native tongues/L1 will be tolerated for purposes of explaining.

6.2 Preliminary results: Case study 2 – Organisational framework conditions and strategies for managing linguistic diversity

As an illustration of the psychological part of the organisational analysis first results of the case study 2 are presented. With partner in practice 2, a document analysis and four expert interviews were carried out with the Head of Department, the Head of Division, the Head of Human Resources, and a member of the support team to gain data about the organisational structure, culture and communicative strategies.

Company and teams

PP2 is a medium-sized firm that operates in the production and repair of household appliances. We examined one management team, two work groups, and one work group as a control group. The work teams carry out services and repairs. Their lingua franca is German. Most team members are semiskilled workers (without professional education) who immigrated to Switzerland and have poor knowledge of German; there are, however, a few Swiss-German native speakers in the teams.

The three work teams consist of 27 employees. On average, the group members are 42.3 years old (range = 19-61) and have been working for the company for 12.3 years (range = 2-29). First languages of the participants are: German (Swiss: 7), Albanian (6), Vietnamese (3), Portuguese (2), Turkish (1), Italian (1), Bosnian (1), Mandarin (1) and others (5). In the two groups chosen for the in-depth research only two members are German native speakers. The organisational unit of 27 employees is divided into the two working groups we examined in depth (11 participants were female and 8 male) and the reference group (5 female, 3 male).

The management team has periodic team meetings where the supervisor and his deputy meet (2 men; first language: Swiss-German) with alternating representatives of each working group (1 man, 4 women; first language 3 Albanian, 2 Swiss-German) to convey information and issue instructions or discuss concerns. Those meetings and the employees involved were also included in the research. Two meetings per group were audio- and video-recorded for later analysis (including two meetings of the reference group).

Organisational structure

The teams work semi-autonomously in work groups. Semi-autonomous team work requires intensive cooperation and communication by the team members because they have coordinating, planning and controlling tasks to fulfil in the fields of their work, but also in the supportive and human resource management processes. The team meetings are moderated by a group spokesperson that is also the interface to other groups and to the management. The company trains some team members as group spokespersons, who assume this role in turns. Among the spokespersons, there are also non-native speakers and people with limited knowledge of German. Furthermore, the teams are given time to hold meetings about their self-organisation. The Head of Division has the most direct contact with the teams. He coordinates the work between the teams and coaches the group spokesperson.

Language policy

The company has decided to use German as the "compulsory" language. One motivation to do so and to apply it as a rule is to avoid the formation of separate subgroups with people from single nations and to enhance the integration of all team members.

The company supports its employees in their development by offering them free language courses, which have to be attended in the spare time. In addition to the basis wage, one part of the salary is based on individual performance and another part on group performance. Language skills are also a criterion for the assessment of the individual's performance and his/her contribution to team work. That means that there is an external, financial motivator to improve one's language skills.

Employees that have the alternating role as the spokesperson are specially trained for this function in courses lasting three days and have mastered a set of group-moderation methods and strategies to verify that everything is understood.

> "By training, we had various trainings of course, especially the representatives of the groups. They get trained to motivate people and also to motivate them to listening." (PP2, Code: 02b)[3]

They also learn special communicative strategies for their moderation task in these courses:

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3   "Durch die Schulungen, wir hatten natürlich verschiedene Schulungen vor allem die Gruppensprecher, die werden natürlich auf etwas geschult, dass sie die Leute auch motivieren und auch zum Zuhören motivieren können." (PP2, Code: 02b)

> "It is actually the responsibility of the representative of the group to ask people: Did you understand that? Explain it to me once again! And then one notices automatically whether she has really understood or not." (PP2, Code 02a)[4]

Communicative strategies of the management team

The Head of Division describes his strategies to 'ensure understanding' in the following way: In team meetings with the group spokespersons, for example, he requires them to repeat and paraphrase important subjects to ensure that they have understood the meaning of information or instructions. The team speakers then do the same with their team members in their work groups.

The interviewed manager assesses this linguistic strategy as best practice because he has the proof that everything was understood correctly. Combined with the observation data some critical points come up. The standardised communication seems to cause a hierarchical atmosphere comparable to the cooperation in a school class between teacher and pupils. We formulated as first working hypothesis that possibly instead of fostering participation it is hindered by this communication style.

A second instrument to secure understanding is the written protocol. Protocols of the work group meetings are presented to the Head of Division, who checks whether all items have been discussed and understood. If this is not the case, he can take up the questionable subjects in a meeting with the group spokespersons.

Perspective of the group members on language policy

The perspective of the group members was gained with 9 photo-based interviews. The two examples illustrate how the team members experience the language policy and which strategies they develop to cope with the linguistic diversity. Although all of the interviewed team members are aware of the language policy, they report that they frequently clarify unclear points in their mother tongue and deviate from the official policy. Example 1 stems from Italian speakers, example 2 from Albanian ones.

> Example 1: 'Then I said it in Italian. Normally we are not allowed to just ask in Italian, aren't we? And then he explained it to me. Because I said: You know, I don't want to convey wrong information, because, when I give wrong information, that is not really ideal, isn't it?' (PP2, Code: 05a)[5]

> Example 2: "We also have for example fellow countrymen, who surely don't command the language as perfect as I or Mister [B] do. Then mostly afterwards they come and

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4 "Es ist auch eigentlich eine Aufgabe von dem Gruppensprecher, die Leute nachzufragen, hast du das verstanden, erklär mir doch nochmals und dann merkt man automatisch, hat sie es wirklich verstanden oder nicht." (PP2, Code 02a)

5 "Nachher habe ich das auf Italienisch gesagt. Normal dürfen wir auch nicht so gerade auf Italienisch fragen, oder. [...]Und nachher hat er es erklärt [...] Weil ich habe gesagt: Weisst Du, ich will nicht falsche Informationen geben, weil wenn ich falsche Informationen gebe, ist dies nachher nicht gerade ideal, oder?" (PP2, Code: 05a)

ask in our language: "Tell me, was it like this or that?". Then I say: "Yes, it was like this or that". "O.K., I wasn't sure"." (PP2, Code: 05a)[6]

The two examples show that the team members follow the language policy during the team meetings. But besides the meetings, they often explain instructions and information after the official group meetings in their mother tongue and circumvent the official policy. Not only extra time is needed for these clarifications, but also explanations and interpretations are given beside the group situation and the collective construction of reality. Therefore, communication can partly be interpreted as ineffective and as threatening to common understanding.

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6 "Wir haben zum Beispiel auch Landsleute, wo die Sprache sicher nicht so perfekt können wie ich oder wie Herr [B] zum Beispiel, wo auch albanisch sprechen. Dann kommen sie meistens auch im Nachhinein und fragen dann auf unserer Sprache: "Du, war das so und so?". Dann sage ich: "Ja, es war so und so". "Ok, ich war nicht sicher"." (PP2, Code: 05a)

7. Discussion

Case study 1 shows that even in a field with highly qualified staff, problems in understanding and cooperating based on language diversity may occur. It also becomes clear that members of the team because of differing proficiencies in English may take on different roles within the team work: this can lead to a dominance of more proficient speakers within a team. In the interviews those speakers expressed that they are aware of that problem and try to counter-act against becoming dominant. However, the empirical data observations showed that more proficient speakers may select some of the topics discussed in the team for presentation and leave others out of the presentation, possibly because the gist of an example or story told by a less proficient speaker is harder to pinpoint. Thus, even though all members interviewed expressed that using English as their common language is relatively unproblematic for their team communication, at the same time linguistic limits of communicating do become clear both through statements in the interviews and through observation of the empirical data of the meetings. One outcome of this constellation may be that team members may not participate in full or may not be able to fulfill all of the team tasks by turns. Also, since all of the participants of PP1 are highly educated and well trained as communicators, issues of self-perception and of face may play a role in dealing with those communicative disparities, and ultimately understating them.

Concerning case study 2, the first hypothesis that needs to be examined is that there might be a relationship between the organisational structure – the requirements of co-operation in semi-autonomous work groups – and language acquisition of non-native speakers. In other words, that team work requires communication and therefore the members have to learn to speak German and to work out strategies to communicate in the group, which leads to participation of speakers of different languages. Whether these strategies are used to ensure understanding of the German language as a lingua franca in the team are successful, and how they are really practised, can be examined based on the observation data in our analysis. A second working hypothesis is that the communicative strategies of the management and the language policy may have dysfunctional effects on the communicative atmosphere and efficiency.

The data triangulation seems to be very fruitful to work out the shown relationships. Comparing the two cases, it becomes clear that even though repetition is used as a means in order to enhance lingua franca understanding, the patterns are different. Partly, this is due to the different education standards between the staff from PP1 and PP2. More interestingly, the ways pragmatic patterns are functionalised in both constellations and linguistic situations may differ as well. Therefore the language diversity, skills and communication strategies have to be examined.

8. Conclusion

Based on this first data analysis, tentative conclusions and recommendations for companies with linguistically diverse teams can be derived. They can be given on the three analytical levels of individual, team and organisation.

Individual level: Selection of personnel and staff training	• Knowledge of the lingua franca/corporate language on B2 level (referring to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR) • Willingness of the selected personnel to participate in advanced training in the lingua franca/corporate language • Facilitate receptive multilingualism among team members beyond the lingua franca/corporate language • Development of professional communicative competence in the lingua franca/corporate language in order to be able to: moderate group discussions, make proposals, plan interactions, make decisions, deal with competing proposals, summarise results, recognise different or unfamiliar patterns of narratives and proposals • Sensitising for varying expectations in team meetings, cooperation and results as well as differing forms of thematising issues due to cultural differences
Team level: Development of the team	• Budget additional time needed for bilateral understanding in multilingual teams • Facilitate participation in the team, e.g. include less fluent speakers actively in discussions, offer redundancies and repetitions in phrasings • Long-term perspective for building trust and team reflexivity needed to attain complete functionality (i.e. more than 2 years)
Organisational level: Language policy	• Awareness for the need of a language policy in companies with linguistically diverse teams • Allow for code switching from the lingua franca/corporate language to mother tongue to facilitate clarification without building of subgroups • Create incentives for improving language skills (e.g. personnel assessment, wages)

Table 2: Recommendations for facilitating multilingual teams specifically

As a last step of the transdisciplinary design of this project the recommendations will be reported back in workshops to the two partner companies and be reformulated with them.

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Dr. Christiane Hohenstein is Professor of Intercultural Studies and Linguistic Diversity at the School of Applied Linguistics of ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences. She specialised in German and Japanese linguistics at University of Hamburg, where she received both her Master and Doctoral degrees for research on pragmatic contrasts in Japanese and German. Her dissertation ('Erklärendes Handeln im Wissenschaftlichen Vortrag. Ein Vergleich des Deutschen mit dem Japanischen', Iudicium 2006) deals with differences in academic presentations, especially the involvement of action patterns and procedures of explaining in German and Japanese, using the methodology of Functional Pragmatics. She published on research projects both in Germany and Japan, and was a full time researcher at the collaborative research centre on Multilingualism (SFB 538) at University of Hamburg, 1999–2005. She also co-edited 'Connectivity in Grammar and Discourse' (John Benjamins 2007) with J. Rehbein and L. Pietsch, and taught at Hamburg University until 2007. In 2007 she took up her position with ZHAW and now mainly lives in Switzerland, teaching and researching on intercultural communication and linguistic diversity, covering aspects of lingua franca discourse, receptive multilingualism, translation and interpretation, and the influence of grammatical differences in diverse languages on patterns of interaction.