UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Are we really speaking English?

A study of language implications within one of the Volvo Group- organizations

Master Thesis in Strategic HRM and Labour Relations

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Abstract

The purpose was to capture and examine if employees within one of the Volvo Group organizations perceived language implications, and if so, how the language implications were interpreted and also how important these were to overcome from the point of view of the employees' ability to perform their work. Further purpose was to explore which risks and consequences they saw, both for themselves and the organization as a whole. The chosen methods were in-depth interviews and observations because the in-depth interviews gave the respondents' points of view and the observations described their behaviour. The purpose with combining these two methods was to find out if the respondents behaved the way they described. The respondents meant it's natural for a global organization to have a common corporate language implemented, and choosing English. Positive consequences were that it provided them with the base for how and what to communicate with their colleagues and stakeholders. Further provided the common corporate language the structure in which they should perform and deliver their work. Negative consequences were for example loss of information, communication, mistrust, and double-work. The conclusion was the more experience the employee had of working in the common corporate language, the more exposed to the common corporate language. The result was the person started to atomize the communication- and understanding in the common corporate language leading him/her to handle the obstacles related to language implications unconsciously.

Keywords: global organization, language implications, common corporate language, consequences, power of language, English, learning process.

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1. Introduction

The world is becoming more global with organizations working in larger geographical areas. This cross-country operation means most employees within multinational organizations need to communicate in more languages than their native language. Increased globalization means the organization needs to put more attention and effort to the language in which they conduct their businesses. The languages within the organization are affecting how the organization is functioning in the global market they operate in. Global, or multinational, organizations are the shared basis for people with different backgrounds; such as traditions, cultures, political environments and languages (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Griffith, 2002; Dhir, 2005; Dhir & Góke-Pariolá, 2002).

Employees are almost on a daily basis interacting with colleagues from areas with different native languages with help from the technology used today, for example e-mail, networks, video-conferences and a global integration of it-networks, in combination with an increased level of mobility. Multilingual situations are an "*everyday phenomenon in international organizations*" (Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004; 414), which means many employees perform their work tasks in a foreign language. When employees are working in a foreign language, they might feel they don't reach the same level of communication and/or information flow as in their native language. The result may be cultural and linguistic differences which can create implications within their communication (Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Feely & Harzing, 2003).

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this master thesis is to capture and examine if employees within a multinational organization perceive language implications, and if so, how the language implications are interpreted and also how important these are to overcome from the point of view of the employees' ability to perform their work. A further purpose is to explore which risks and consequences they see, both for themselves and also the organization as a whole, by having one common corporate language.

1.2 Research questions

a)   Do the employees perceive language implications, and if so, what are their interpretations of how they perceive them?

b)   What risks and consequences, both for the individual employee and the organization, do they see by having one common corporate language?

c)   How important is it to overcome negative effects of the language implications, according to the employees' perception, and if so, why is it important?

d)   Which ways can be used to come around negative effects of language implications and how do the employees use the different methods?

The topic which will be studied in this master thesis is a question all global, or multinational, organizations need to handle within their organization. The organization in which this study was conducted was a specific organization within Volvo Group (VGO).

1.3 Expected contributions to HRM

The different traditions, cultures and languages involved in a global organization needs to be managed successfully. The need to manage all variables related to global organizations and a common corporate language becomes a challenge within organizations covering big geographical areas. HR needs to have knowledge of the advantage and disadvantages of working in a common corporate language to avoid negative consequences such as a loss of information, competence and knowledge. Further, this knowledge and awareness can be used when developing HR-strategies and policies which will pay attention to the needs related to the common corporate language, for the organization to be able to use the full potential of its resources.

1.4 Disposition of the master thesis

The disposition of this master thesis mainly follows the chronology of the work performed. Previous research related to the topic follows the introduction. Then the research methodology is presented, followed by the empirical data collected. The data found is analysed and conclusions from the analysis are later discussed in a wider context. Finally, the conclusions of the master thesis are presented.

2. Literature review

The purpose of this section is to present previous research within the field of language implications; descriptions of the situation, consequences and handling procedures. Most of the mentioned research below, in combination with the gathered data, will be discussed and analyzed to better understand the area of language implications in order for the organization to minimize its negative effects.

2.1 Language

The high number of different languages within global organizations could be a source of power. The power of the language-model below shows the different combinations of the communication within the organization and particularly in the subsidiaries. Employees who had *"the relevant language skills"* (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999; 431) usually had more power and influence in the organization than their formal position indicated. A consequence was that these employees, which could be both managers and ordinary co-workers, could be given informal roles of gate keepers. This meant they were involved in a number of informal networks, described below, which gave them a position to regulate the information flow and they, therefore, had the possibility to control decisions and decision-making processes. Contrary, it was important for the organization to remember that these networks, easily, could sabotage the

organizations best plans by blocking the communication and create/shape opposition to changes. Important to notice, these employees were not assigned those roles by the organization; instead they intervened in the communication chain as additional to their ordinary work tasks. As the model below indicates, a person who obtained position 2 would have advantages within the communication in the parent- and global company level, but disadvantages at the local level. Another employee who obtained position 7 would have global contacts but missed the language skills within the local level which could be a disadvantage for them. The best position for an employee to obtain was position 1 since it would give the possibility to communicate with colleagues in several different languages (Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari & Säntti, 2005; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999; Zander, Mockaitis & Harzing, 2011).
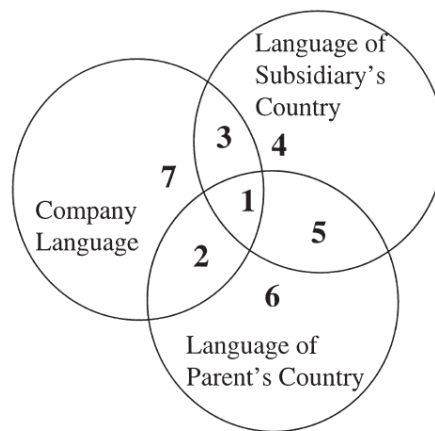
Key:
1. Speaks all three languages
2. Speaks parent and company language
3. Speaks company and subsidiary language
4. Speaks only subsidiary language
5. Speaks parent and subsidiary language
6. Speaks only parent language
7. Speaks only company language

Figure 1: *The power of language* (Marschan- Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999: 432).

2.2 Dimensions of language implications
When the organization developed language management strategies, they also needed to consider the different variables, or dimensions, which affected the communication within the organization. These could also be included in the daily work and are described below (Feely & Harzing, 2003).

Depending on the number of speakers and the number of different languages within the organization did the size and amount of problems of working across linguistic boundaries increase or decrease. This was, in other words, referred to as language diversity. There were both advantages and disadvantages with this. Positively, the diversity, both linguistically and culturally, had the possibility to provide a potential value for the organization. This was, generally, because heterogeneous groups had access to different sources of knowledge, which could add value to improve the performance of the organization. Contrary, the result could also

be that it disturbed the group- interaction processes and performances because the language skills within the group was not enough and the group, therefore, started to form subgroups based on their native language. This result could prevent all information and knowledge within the group to become visible (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Lauring & Selmer, 2010).

Language penetration referred to the number of organizational units/functional areas, within the multinational organization, which had to co-operate across the linguistic boarders. "Back in the days", research meant that cross-lingual communications could be channeled through a small and exclusive band of language specialists. The new integrated systems of global coordination were touching almost every function of the organization and also on different hierarchical levels, leading most employees within the multinational organization to perform work tasks in a foreign language (Feely & Harzing, 2003).

The language sophistication referred to the refinement and type of language skills each employee was required to have in order to be able to perform the ordinary work tasks. For example, the necessary language skills for a receptionist could be to recognize different requests and to be polite towards the guests. Contrary, an engineer, who worked as a part of an international design team, could be required to evolve concepts and resolve design problems both in written and spoken form (Feely & Harzing, 2003).

2.3 Common corporate language

As a way to manage cross-linguistic communications, mentioned in the introduction, some organizations chose to introduce one official common corporate language. Research found several reasons behind this decision. The purpose with introducing one common corporate language was to create a common ground. This common ground would be the base for both the internal as well as the external communication for the employees within the organization. In other words, the organization aimed to create a base for an effective organizational communication; to increase the level of communication, knowledge sharing, and information flow and to overcome cultural and linguistic differences. The common corporate language provided the employees with an access to different official information channels such as company reports and employee magazines. Additional purpose could be to create a structure. The organization could have several different spoken languages which could be interpreted as "a mess" with, for example the same documents translated into multiple languages. The goal by introducing a common corporate language was to make the organization monolingual (Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari & Säntti, 2005; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006; Dhir & Góké-Pariolá, 2002; Dhir, 2005).

Important for the organization to remember, by introducing and/or having a common corporate language; it didn't mean all organizational obstacles within the cross-cultural, cross-functional and cross-linguistic communication among the employees would disappear. The result of having one common corporate language was that a number of employees within the organization would be forced to use their second or third language in their daily work with

consequences described below. A question concerning the common corporate language was if it was shared throughout the entire organization; from the top management to all employees within each subsidiary. Prior research showed subsidiaries tended to use their local languages, instead of the common corporate language, when negotiating and cooperating with local employees, customers and suppliers (Tange & Lauring, 2009; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006).

2.4 English as the common corporate language
When an organization chose one common corporate language, it was preferable for them to select a language generally considered to be without influences, such as political and/or cultural, in the international communication process (Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004).

According to Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012), English was, without doubt, the most chosen common corporate language today among multinational organizations. According to Crystal (2003), there was one main reason which decided if a language could or would become a global and/or international language and that reason was the power of the people. This meant political and military power, which could be seen throughout the history all the way from the ancient Greek to Arabic until today. The main source of power to maintain and expand the language was the economic power, which also could be seen throughout the history; from the industrialization until the 21st century. The foundation was during the beginning of the 19th century, when Britain was the world's leading industrial and trading country. During the end of the century, USA was the fastest and most growing country in the world and I meant the language behind these countries and their money, therefore, was English.

According to the Swedish national encyclopedia[1], English had the third largest number of native speakers around the world, about 360 million, Mandarin and Spanish were the only ones bigger. Tietze (2004) meant the reason to why many multinational organizations chose English as their common corporate language was because they considered English to be an efficient, and "easy" language to conduct business in. The explanation was that it was viewed not to have any cultural, political and/or ideological baggage. Instead, it gave a tool which was viewed to be free from values and therefore worked as a transformation of technology, the flow of information and an expansion of the workforce.

Research identified different characteristics and consequences, both positive and negative, based on the language implications, which will be described below. The researchers meant the consequences of the knowledge of the language needed to be put in a context, to give it value. The employees' different levels of knowledge and skills within the common corporate language could be divided into "winners" and "losers", where those who had enough knowledge, or fluency, were viewed as winners. Those employees who mastered the common corporate language had access to an unlimited range of both formal and informal communication channels.

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[1] http://www.ne.se/spr%C3%A5k/v%C3%A4rldens-100-st%C3%B6rsta-spr%C3%A5k-2010 (2012-01-30)

Some of the impacts will be described below (Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari & Säntti, 2005; Lauring, 2007; Crystal, 2003).

2.5 Advantages with a common corporate language

By using English as a common corporate language, the organization perceived to minimize the risk for miscommunication. Organizations meant English helped non-native speakers to cross the linguistic boundaries and help them communicate both with native English speakers and non-native speakers (Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006).

Positive consequences mentioned were that employees had better performances because they were under a constant exposure of the common corporate language. This could result in the employees improved the quality of both their written and spoken language skills within the common corporate language. The improved language skills could also result in a better communication between the different organizational units. Further, it had been interpreted to increase the levels of communication which was reflected in how employees interpreted, understood and responded to the information communicated by their counterparts (Tange & Lauring, 2009; Dhir & Góké-Pariola, 2002; Lauring & Selmer, 2010).

Another advantage was that it provided the employees and the organization's other stakeholders with an easy access to company documents, for example manuals, company reports and financial documents (Dhir & Góké-Pariola, 2002).

The common corporate language has shown to create a shared identity between the different organizational units and to give the employees a sense of belonging to the organization and the global family (Lauring & Selmer, 2010).

The figure below is my interpretation of the effects the advantages of the common corporate language had on the organization and its employees.
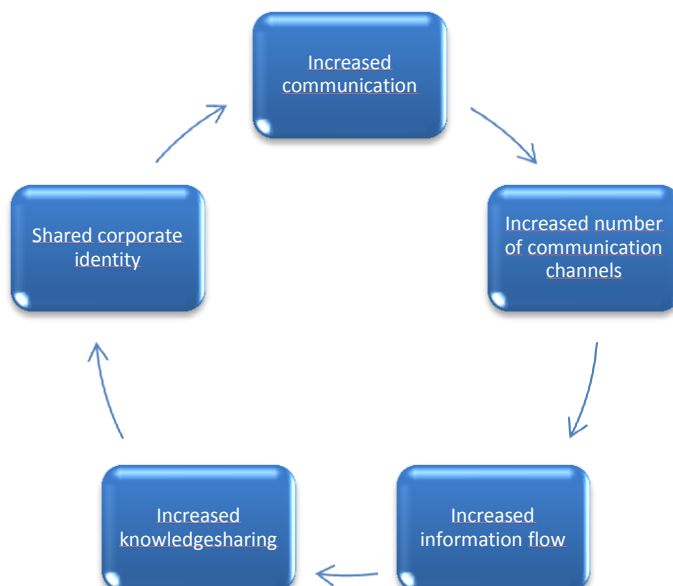
Figure 2; *Positive circle of communication.*

2.6 Disadvantages with a common corporate language

Crick (1999) meant some countries were more willing to use English as the official international business language among their organizations than others. They meant that this sometimes resulted in difficulties for organizations who relied too much on, as they meant, the international business language- English. Crick meant the communication parties spoke English, but used and relied on different registers within the English language which in turn could lead to a failing communication. It is important for the organization to remember that the communication usually took place among employees whose fluency in English was varying. Research showed employees spoke English, but not as native English speakers. Instead, they spoke English based on their native language, which could be Swedish English, Chines English or Spanish English. This could result in implications when formulated and translated the communication (Zander, Mockaitis & Harzing, 2011; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006).

Feely and Harzing (2003) meant language implications weren't anything the organization could put a number on, for example how much money they spent. Instead, it was viewed in terms of how it was affecting/influencing the organization and its internal as well as external relationships. The relationship between the buyer and the seller were characterized by a loss of confidence, assertive and loss of some power and advantages within the deal by the person who didn't spoke his/her native. The buyer usually argued the choice of language should be based on the buyer's language, since they were the ones making the purchase. The relationship among the joint ventures was characterized by the will to share the risks between them because, as a consequence of power through the communication, one of them could start to dominate their relationship.

Language implications could take additional forms, for example loss of information, extra work for those who mastered the common corporate language, time-consuming, lower levels of knowledge sharing, and loss of productivity and performance. It was also a loss of learning opportunities and it could disrupt the collaborative processes. In conclusion, negative consequences for organizations who didn't manage the language implications properly were that it could be costly for them. The reason to why information could be lost was because the non-native English speakers didn't had the same level of nuances as a native English speaker when it came to, for example jokes, humor, symbolism, sensitivity and sarcasm. This gave these employees a weaker position in negotiations and other organizational discussions (Neeley, Hinds & Cramton, 2012; Harzing & Feely, 2008).

2.6.1 Forming groups

As stated above, the different levels of skills and knowledge within the common corporate language could act and define which employees who were a part of different groups. This meant

these skills and knowledge was expressions of power within the organization, were the employees who mastered the common corporate language had more influence compared to those who didn't. Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert (2004) meant language was a way to control the communication process within the multinational organization. This meant the knowledge, or fluency, in the company language, or in multiple other languages (see figure 1) was an informal way for the employee to exert power on (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Lauring 2007).

2.6.2 Informal networks
The groups mentioned previously could be used as informal networks within the organization. The creation of these informal networks was an ongoing process which, most often passed by unnoticed in the daily activities in the organization. Krackhardt and Hanson (1993) and Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch (1999) described the link between the different informal and formal organization/networks. The formal organization was described as the organizations skeleton and the informal network as the central nervous system which *"drove the collective thought process actions and reactions"* (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; 104) of the organizational units.

Harzing and Feely (2008) and Krackhardt and Hanson (1993) found that organizations today spend an enormous amount of money and effort on the formal networks. They meant the organization should put these efforts on the informal networks instead because these could kick start activities which had been delayed and meet extraordinary deadlines. The reason mentioned was because these informal networks could cut through formal reporting procedures. Further could they identify gaps in the information flow, the inefficient use of resources and the failure to generate new ideas.

2.7 Emotions within/among employees towards the language implications
The consequences of the language implication described above, could create feelings to arise within and among the employees of the organization. An employee could be afraid of admitting his/her linguistic weaknesses because of the fear that it could bounce back on how his/her colleagues interpreted this employee's professional competences. In other words, the employee was afraid of losing his/her face. Gudykunst (in Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004) conducted a study were an American manager judged a Japanese manager, a co-worker to the American manager, who was fluent in English, as more intelligent and ambitious than his other Japanese colleagues who weren't as fluent in the language. Employees who, themselves, identified this gap felt their professional capacities and competences became limited because they didn't have enough knowledge within the spoken language to formulate their thoughts. Research showed employees hesitated to share information and/or opinions on a voluntary basis when feeling insecure in the spoken language (Neeley, Hinds & Cramton, 2012; Harzing & Feely, 2008; SanAntiono, 1987).

Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) showed that the entire group, containing of employees who were and weren't fluent in English, could feel the co-operation could become a

"nightmare" because they lost interest since they spend more time trying to understand each other than they were actually working.

Employees who interpreted they had a lower level of knowledge and skills within the common corporate language could, for example, feel excluded from participating in meetings, decision-making and other social interactions among the employees. Further, they could feel their lower level of language knowledge was an obstacle for their career path upwards in the organization. What was important to remember was that employees who experienced that language gap could, themselves, draw back from social interaction and therefore created a larger social distance between themselves and their colleagues (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari & Säntti, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005).

Emotions found among employees who interpreted language implications were frustration, dissatisfaction, suspicion, a lack of charisma, leadership abilities. It seemed harder for those employees to develop trust among each other. The employees who perceived they had a gap in their language knowledge felt anxiety and uncertainty when speaking English. Positive feelings among those who mastered the common corporate language fluently were trustworthiness (Neeley, Hinds & Cramton, 2012; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Harzing & Feely, 2008).

According to Harzing and Feely (2008), shows the figure below the different variables included in the language implications. They meant that the reason to a failed communication was caused by a loss of rhetorical skills, which in turn could lead to uncertainty, anxiety and an evaluation of the group's capabilities. Additional consequences were the attitudes among the employees would be harder and the inter-group relationships suffer since the group-identities could polarize and motives and actions were incorrectly and negatively attributed. These variables combined were interpreted to increase the sense of separation within the communication between different organizational units. This could result in a more strained, guarded and formal communication as time passes. The researchers meant it was important to remember that the communication process didn't exist in a vacuum. Contrary, it was rather a necessity with communication, knowledge flow and some level of understanding for the decision-making process. Further mentioned could be that I saw the figure below as a summary of the negative implications which could be caused by the language implications.
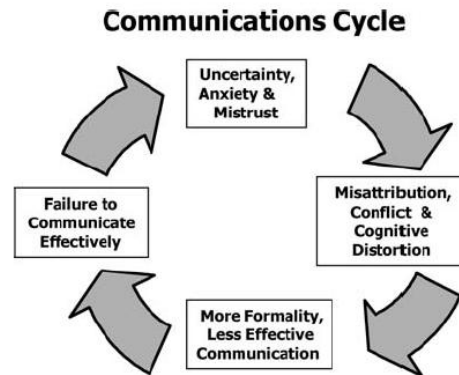
Communications Cycle

Figure 3: *The communications cycle (*Feely & Harzing, 2008:56).

2.8 Examples of ways for managing the language barriers

Earlier research found different ways for both the individual employee and the organization to overcome the language implications. These will be described below and as will be seen, some of them are more temporary solutions while others are more viable in the long run.

2.8.1 Informal network

Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) and Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) found employees searched for colleagues who spoke their native language when they needed help. They meant the employees searched for co-workers within his/her informal network who spoke the same language/languages to ask them for help, even thou the employees knew there was another person who wasn't a same native speaker but was an expert within the field of question. According to the above, employees could feel limited in their communication within other languages than in their native language, which could result in frustration and a fear of degrading their professional competencies. To avoid this feeling, they contacted an employee within their native language who had knowledge of the topic but wasn't the expert.

As stated above, there were both advantages and disadvantages with the informal networks. On the one hand could they quick-start projects and meet special deadlines. On the other hand could an employee be afraid and/or feel limited when communicated in a foreign language, resulting in him/her contacting a colleague speaking their native language instead of the expert and risk losing his/her professional face.

2.8.2 Code-switching

Code-switching meant the employees with the same native language spoke their language instead of the common corporate language. This solution has generally been seen as one of the most negative solutions since it could lead to irritation and suspicion from the rest of the group who didn't understand what was said. On the other hand, research has also shown if this method was used occasionally were the responses, both the negative and the positive, balanced. An advantage was that this method gave the employees an opportunity to make clarifications to a colleague, and for example within a negotiation could each side take a few minutes time out to

make internal agreements before the meeting proceeded. The importance was that both sides remained patient during these situations (Harzing, Köster & Magner, 2011; Neeley, Hinds & Cramton, 2012).

There was a risk, according to the above, that the employees formed subgroups based on their natives and this could prevent all information and knowledge within the group to become visible and disturbed the knowledge sharing and information flow. Those employees who didn't spoke the code-switch language could feel excluded from the conversation. An additional solution found was that leaders of meetings adapted an exclusionary behavior which meant they only invited colleagues who spoke their native language.

2.8.3 Internal informal translators

Another possible solution was the informal internal translators, by researchers called, among others, language nodes, language intermediaries and/or bridge individuals. These informal internal translators were employees within the organization's subsidiary who spoke the corporate language fluently. These employees were then asked to provide his/her co-workers with the necessary translation; they were not assigned this specific task. It was not uncommon that expatiates within the subsidiary were asked to act as translators within the communication chain, both vertical and horizontally. This role could follow the employee back to his/her "home office". On the one hand could this solution cause delays, because, for example, the person was out of office or are overloaded with work. These internal informal translators could be viewed as gatekeepers, mentioned above. This meant they was involved in the communication chain and were therefore given the possibility to regulate the information flow. They could, in turn, control the decision/decision-making process, since they were choosing which information should be visible to whom. On the other hand could this type of communication result in an increased level of communication within the organization, which meant the employees' informal networks could be expanded. Further, this increased communication could result in an increased knowledge sharing since the internal informal translator was then given the opportunity to add information and knowledge within the assignment of translating (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997; SanAntiono, 1987).

2.8.4 Language training

A common solution, for the organization, was to use language training as a way to overcome the language implications. The organization could provide the employees, either within working hours or in their spare time, with English classes which the organization paid for and/or arranged. Sometimes the organization involved some conditions before providing the training, for example a certain grade average. The positive effect for the employee was that he/she, if succeeded in the training, could be viewed as a "winner" according to the above. Researchers meant the employees who spoke the common corporate language had access to an unlimited number of both formal and informal communication channels. Further could these skills provide the employee with an easy access to company documents such as company reports and other financial documents. Additionally, the emotions within the employees, mentioned above, who

experienced language implications could change from a negative to a positive point of view. The training could give them additional nuances and synonyms leading them to feel comfortable when using the common corporate language. Examples of emotions which could change was the feeling of being excluded from meetings, less frustrated and that his/her performances could increase. Further effects of the language training could be as the employee increased his/her language skills, the identification with the organization could also increase, leading the employee to, hopefully, become a loyal employee (Harzing, Köster & Magner, 2011; Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004).

2.8.5 Build in redundancy

According to Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) this solution was the single most used solution when trying to overcome language implications. Build in redundancy within the communication exchange meant the speaker asked his/her counterpart to give a summary of what was just said, ask control questions, give illustrative examples and frequent summaries of the content. The organization had, according to the above, a lot to gain with a good and understandable communication among the employees. An increased, good and understandable communication could help both the organization and the employees to gain advantages when it came to knowledge sharing, and information flow, for example. The just mentioned effects could, in turn, have a positive influence and effect on the performances and effectively of the organization, but also the single employees who could put in that extra effort.

2.8.6 Adjust the mode of communication

Organizations of today, as mentioned in the introduction, have invested heavily in the modern communication tools used. Examples of tools were global intranets, video-conferencing, e-mail networks and a global integration of it-networks. Adjust the mode of communication meant the communication parties changed the style of the communication. Research showed employees within multinational organizations preferred to send e-mails, instead of having verbal communication either in form of phone calls or face-to-face meetings. The explanation given was the additional dimension added to the verbal communication, the different accents of the counterparts. On the one hand could the disadvantages be that it was time-consuming and therefor cost more money for the organization. The advantages for the employee, using those communication tools, could be they communicated more than if they were forced to use verbal communication. The written communication gave the employees an opportunity to take their time to understand the message. Further could be mentioned, if the employee understood the message, he/she would be able to perform better which in turn would increase the performance of the entire organization (Harzing, Köster & Magner, 2011; Feely & Harzing, 2003).

2.8.7 External translators

One of the most expensive solutions to overcome language implications was to employ external translators. These were mostly used within activities of great importance for the organization, for example to translate contracts and technical documentations and/or at board meetings. The negative consequence, except the cost, was that these people were usually not familiar with the

organization and therefore didn't have knowledge within the key issues for the organization. The advantage with involving external translators was they could provide assistance in translating the company documents, which, as mentioned above, gave the employees and the organizations other stakeholders with an easy access to these. This in turn could help the employees to create a shared identity between the different organizational units and create a bond towards the organization which could lead them to become more loyal and have better performances (Harzing, Köster & Magner, 2011).

2.9 Summary of the literature review

The literature review described how organizations work today, by entering several different geographical areas, which has resulted in a need to manage and work with several different languages. As a way to handle this situation, some organizations chose to implement one common corporate language. Researchers meant that English was the most common choice, because it today, was viewed as the international business language.

The advantage with one common corporate language was that it created a common ground for the internal as well as external communication for the employees within the organization. The purpose was also to increase the level of communication, the knowledge sharing and information flow and most important, to overcome linguistic and cultural differences. The disadvantages, on the other hand, were that some employees would be forced to work in their second or third language with all the obstacles this involved. The level of English was varying among employees and those who didn't have English as their native language spoke English based on their native language. This could result in problems, when it came to formulate and translate communication. Another concern needed to be considered from the organization was if the language was spread throughout the entire organization and not just the upper levels of employees.

Another positive implication was that employees within organizations with one common corporate language performed better because they were under a constant exposure of the chosen language. The result improved written and spoken language which could result in a better communication among the employees. Another advantage was that the common corporate language showed to create a shared identity between the different organizational units and to give the employees a sense of belonging to the organization and the global family. Finally, the common corporate language provided the employees and the organizations other stakeholders with an easy access to company documents, for example manuals, company reports and financial documents.

Examples of negative consequences were loss of information, extra work for those who mastered the corporate language, time-consuming, lower levels of knowledge sharing, loss of productivity and performance, it was also a loss of learning opportunities and it could disrupt the collaborative process. In conclusion, implications for organizations who didn't manage the language implications properly were that it would be costly for them. The reason to why

information could be lost was the non-native speakers didn't had the same level of nuances as native English speakers when it came to, for example jokes, humor, symbolism, synonyms, sensitivity and sarcasm. Another consequence was that the different levels of skills and knowledge within the common corporate language could be used as informal networks within the organization. The creation of these informal networks was an ongoing process which, most often, passed by unnoticed in the daily activities in the organization.

Emotions identified to rise within the employees were that an employee could be afraid of losing his/her face and fear the lack of language knowledge might bounce back on their professional competencies. Employees who interpret they had a lower level of knowledge and skills within the common corporate language could feel, for example, excluded from participating in meetings, decision-making and other social interactions among the employees. They could feel their low level of language knowledge was an obstacle for their career path, upwards in the organization. What was important to remember was the employees who had this language gap could draw themselves back from social interaction and therefore create a larger social distance between themselves and their colleagues. This could cause the employee feeling frustrated and that he/she couldn't formulate the communication in the desired way and that this was because of the limited knowledge within the spoken language.

Researchers identified several different methods to overcome the language implications. The employee used his/her informal network to find the necessary information, help and decision. Another solution was to use the internal informal translators who were employees who weren't assigned the translation task but intervened in the communication chain. This assignment gave these employees, most of the time, an informal position far upwards their ordinary position. Previous research showed the most common solution was, for the organization, to give the employees the opportunity to take English-courses. The mentioned were examples of solutions which had been identified as ways to overcome the language implications according to the research.

In the analysis below, the findings above will be connected to and analyzed from the point of view of the findings in the literature review.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

The process of the master thesis started with seeking information, the purpose was to increase the understanding for the chosen topic and also to be able to find out which method would be most appropriate to use in the study. Problems concerning communication in a common corporate language are something that I, myself, have noticed during my own experiences of work and therefor I wanted to have more in-depth knowledge within the area. Trots (2010) meant the purpose of the study is significantly important when choosing the appropriate method. The

study's purpose was to capture and examine if the employees within VGO perceived language implications, and if so, how it was interpreted but also how important it was to overcome from the point of view of the employees' ability to perform their work. Further purpose was to explore which risks and consequences they saw, both for themselves and the organization as a whole. According to Hakim (2000) case studies is an appropriate method to use when doing research on communities, social groups, organizations, roles, relationships and work teams. The method can be used both on small groups who have direct contact with each other, for example work teams, and also larger groups who share a common identity, activity or interest. An interest can, for example, be to work towards the same organizational goals. Further, Hakim meant case studies involves a variety of data collection techniques, which can give a more round and holistic picture than other research designs because it can give a "*detailed "portrait" of a social phenomenon*" (Hakim, 2000; 59). Case studies are usually based on two or more methods for data collection. Examples of methods which can be combined in a case study are administrative records, interviews, large-scale structured surveys, observations and questionnaires. The chosen methods in this study are in-depth interviews and observations and will be described below.

The second purpose with the gathering of information was to be able to find good criterions for the selection of the respondents. I chose long experiences of multinational organizations, experience of different positions within a multinational organization, different departments within the organization, employees who had prior thoughts about the topic and a possibility to participate. With help from the supervisor within the organisation, 15 respondents for interviews and five meetings to observe were chosen. During the interviews was the purpose of the study presented, a description of how they would contribute to the study made clear and the respondents were asked how they felt towards the interviews being recorded. No respondent declined. The interviews, which were recorded, were held within the rooms of the organization to make it smoother for the respondents to participate. The respondents were interviewed on one occasion during March 2013 and the interview lasted between 45-70 minutes. According to Trost (2010) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2011), the result of recorded interviews gives the researcher the possibility to listen to the respondent's different choice of words, tone of voice, and it also make it possible to check the different responses. The interviews were recorded, but no notes were taken. This due to a wish to be present in the conversation and really listen to the responses the respondents gave. According to Trost is it when the interviewer turns the voice recorder off and begins to close the interview that it, sometimes, actually begins for real. It's then the respondents begin to relax and remember relevant new things. Therefore there was a conscious choice not to turn off the recording equipment until leaving the respondent.

The recorded interviews were transcribed; I listened to the recordings and went through the transcriptions again. This was to, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2011), ensure that everything from the recorded interviews was included. Kvale and Brinkeman believe if the transcriptions are done in a structured way it facilitates the analysis of data later on. When the material was transcribed, patterns were chanted. The material was analysed by the following

themes; implementing a common corporate language, English as the choice for the common corporate language, advantages, disadvantages, feelings and methods. A matrix was developed by cutting and pasting quotes from the transcribings' to facilitate the findings of the themes; it was easier to see the similarities and differences within and between each theme. After this, the material was compiled to the results section of this master thesis.

3.2 Case study methods

Stated above, the chosen methods were in-depth interviews and observations because, as will be described below, the in-depth interviews gave the respondents' own descriptions of their points of view and with observations I could see the respondents' behavior. The purpose with combining these two methods was to find out if the respondents behaved the way they described in real conversations.

3.2.1 Interviews

Since the purpose of the study was to capture and examine if the employees perceived language implications, and if so, how it was interpreted but also how important it was to overcome from the point of view of the employees' ability to perform their work, semi-structured interviews was chosen as best suited for the study. Trost (2010) meant semi-structured interviews are guided by an interview-guide constructed after the purpose of the study and the research questions, see appendix one. The questions were open, relatively short with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Trost meant the interviewer should know the different question-areas well and that the interview-guide shouldn't be too detailed. The interview-guide was, instead, used as a support and not followed literally. Before the interviews with the respondents were seven pilot-interviews made. Two of them had connections to the organization; their employments were connected to other departments. After these pilot interviews was the interview-guide revised to the shape in the appendix.

3.2.2 Observations

Researchers argued observations are a highly valued and effective method to gather data. The arguments given are that it enables the researcher to improve their understandings of the different aspects of social interaction. In other words, the researcher's tried to gain an understanding from what people actually did in their current situation and not what they said they did. Observations give the researcher the opportunity to collect data based on the respondents' psychical and verbal behaviour; actions and reactions, and it also gave the researcher the opportunity and possibility to see and describe the social phenomenon in its natural setting (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005; Bloomer et al. 2012; Eager & Oppenheim, 1996).

I spent two and a half weeks within the organization doing interviews and observations. The observations covered the talk in the corridors, coffee breaks and planned meetings such as monthly HR-meetings and different training sessions involving all departments within the organization such as marketing, quality, finance, research and development. The planned

meeting-observations covered 16 hours. I tried to be as open-minded as possible, recording the meetings and notice all behaviours I saw.

3.3 Respondents

The participants were employees within VGO. 15 interviews were conducted with employees, occupying positions within the departments' warranty, finance, human resources and strategy and planning. They were all belonging to the middle and upper levels of the organisation with titles as director, vice president and senior president, and had been employed within the organization for 4-27 years. All respondents had long experiences, 14-27 years, of working within multinational organizations, and those with fewer years within VGO had prior experiences. 13 interviews were made face-to-face and because of practical issues concerning time and travel, two interviews were made through telephone.

      To be able to have a global perspective on the study, respondent coming from Europe, Asia, Africa and South America were chosen, and no one of them had English as their native language. Because of the demand of confidentiality, see below, it is a conscious decision not to publish further information concerning the respondents' characteristics such as age range, home countries and current positions. By publishing this information, it could contribute to them being identified. The supervisor had knowledge who the respondents were; they all mentioned it was okay if the supervisor within the organization knew. The explanation given was their participation could add value for the organization but they wanted to avoid public identification.

3.4 Method for analysis

Themes were found in the literature review, which, according to Ryan and Bernard (2003) is the base within social science research. According to the researchers are themes "*abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds and objects*" (Field Methods, 87). When the researcher is able to answer the question "What is this expression an example of", a theme was found. These themes were then followed throughout the construction of the interview guide and the analysis of the gathered data.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The master thesis was guided by the four ethical principles provided by Vetenskapsrådet (2002): *The demand of information (Informationskravet)* meant the respondents need to be informed of their input within the study, their conditions, the voluntary participation and that they had the opportunity to interrupt whenever they felt. The purpose with this demand was to give the respondent's all necessary information which could have had an impact in their choice of participating in the survey or not. The respondents asked to participate in the study was informed, both verbally and in writing (see appendix two), concerning the purpose of the study, their input in the survey and that they had the opportunity to interrupt the process whenever. They gave their mutual acceptance to the recording and transcribing of the interviews.

      In accordance to *the demand for approval (samtyckeskravet)*, the respondents gave their mutual acceptance to participate in the survey. The respondents also had the right to decide for

him/herself if, how long and on which conditions he/she was participating. The respondents were allowed to decide day and time for the appointment of the interview. One important part within this principle was the respondents should not be forced into participating in the survey and should therefore not be in any position of dependence towards the researcher/stakeholder of the survey.

The demand of confidentiality (konfidentialitetskravet) meant all information which could be used in identifying the respondents needed to be handled in a way so it is impossible for external persons to get access of the data. The interviews were transcribed and given a number. I was the only one knowing which number was connected to whom. Quotations included in the report had to go through a process to minimise the risk for identification.

The respondents were also informed, in connection to the above, that the collected data only would be used in the purpose of the study connected to the master thesis. This was in line with *the demand of utilization (nyttjandekravet).*

3.6 Limitations and risks

The data gathering was conducted both in Swedish and English. Interviews which were carried out in English could have some implications of the respondents and the interviewer's ability to express their thoughts in English. Both Harzing et al. (2005) and Ralston, Cunniff and Gustafson (1995) studied how respondents from different languages replies in a common language would have an effect of their responses. Their finding was the common language influenced, the responses became more homogeneous. This was something I needed to be aware of when asking the interview-questions.

Another risk was that respondents could drop out and/or wouldn't participate in the survey.

It is important to remember the study took place during a reorganization of the organization and the employees only had been working within the new settings for a shorter period of time. The reorganization meant new groups were formed which hadn't worked together before and this might have had an effect on the result.

4. Results

The data was gathered through observations in planned meetings, and spontaneously in coffee breaks and in corridor small talks. Data was also gathered through in-depth interviews. My interpretation, when analyzing the material, was that the behaviors during the meetings observed were consistent with their descriptions of their behavior. Therefore, all data is commonly presented below, and differences only occur if mentioned. The data were grouped by the themes; implementing a common corporate language, English as the choice for the common corporate language, effects, feelings, interpretations of their skills in English, communication abbreviations and shortenings and ways. Some answers have been raised several times and some responses fit into multiple categories. Within this section, they will only be mentioned once but in the analysis

of the results, the information can occur in several places. The reason is it should not be too much duplication of the text.

4.1 Implementing a common corporate language

When the respondents described their interpretation of the fact that the organization had implemented a common corporate language, they meant it is natural because it is a global organization, operating in all continents of the world. If the organization should be able to operate on the global stage, they believed it is necessary to have a common corporate language implemented, to be able to create a base for understanding within the organization. Several respondents stated, in different ways that "*a company is the best of its resources, we have resources around the globe and we need to do business with all the resources to be an international player*". If this wasn't accomplished, it would create a distance between the different markets, customers and employees within the organization which were spread all around the world. The way the respondent saw the common corporate language was that it was about integration, to be inclusive and bringing the employees together. One respondent stated the common corporate language "*was the read thread on which you hanged the organization*". The meaning was everyone within the organization could understand each other, to be able to make decisions, develop and implement policies and procedures and for everyone to be able to take part of the information. Another result of not implementing and/or having a common corporate language was that it could, according to the respondents; create subgroups and subcultures meaning some employees would be excluded. They meant the culture within the organization, described in "the Volvo Way" was that every employee was a "*part of the Volvo-family*" and that subcultures would make it more difficult for the organization to make good deliveries.

4.2 English as the choice for the common corporate language

There was an obvious choice when it came to implement and chose a common corporate language and that was English. The respondents meant it is a global language, spoken by most of the people all around the world and it, therefore, is the natural choice to have within businesses. The respondents felt, by speaking English and being employed within Volvo, included in the organization and as one respondent stated, "*there was an acceptance that even though I had another mother tongue, it is to belong to Volvo to speak English. You have another mother tongue but there is an acceptance that the official language is English*". As the respondents stated above, the organization is global and if the employees couldn't communicate in a common way, and instead worked in the local languages, "*it would be hard to do business with them*". The respondents meant this behavior was a way to create two teams, A and B, which could lead to some employees to become excluded. They meant this was not the culture within the organization, and therefor they choose to implement a common corporate language.

4.3 The effects/implications of the common corporate language

There were advantages and disadvantages both for the organization and for the employees when the organization had a common corporate language implemented. Below are the advantages and the disadvantages which the respondents saw.

4.3.1 Advantages

The respondents meant when they got used to this way of working, they became *"more effective"*. An example mentioned was they were always writing in English; documents, emails, presentations, even thou there were only participants who spoke the same language involved. The explanation given was it was *"not uncommon the information was forwarded to someone else who didn't spoke the same language"* and by writing everything in English from the beginning they saved time because they *"didn't had to redo the work"* and translate.

Many of the respondents mentioned, as an effect of not having the full vocabulary, they became more direct in their communication when speaking English. They meant they *"preferred to go straight to the point"* as a way to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations because they didn't have *"the small tiny words and nuances in the language"*. Also observed in the meetings, my interpretation was that the participants in the meeting didn't feel offended as easily when communicating in the common corporate language. An explanation could be they were all aware of how hard it could be to formulate sentences to really pinpoint the message.

Some wordings became established and were used more. The respondents meant since they didn't have the full vocabulary, they used a smaller amount of words instead, which was used throughout the organization. They meant the result was it was easier for the new employed persons, who weren't used in working in English, to start to feel comfortable and to deliver performances.

4.3.2 Disadvantages

Those employees with lesser experience of working within a multinational organization felt they *"needed more time to prepare"*, for example prior to meetings. The preparations usually involved thoughts on how to make the best explanation, which wordings to use, find the necessary data and to have time to read through and have an understanding for the topic. The result of this was some of them mentioned they, at some occasions, became *"more passive in the meetings because the turns in the discussion were so quick"* so they felt they didn't had time to think about what was said, what to say and add value to the meeting. Interestingly, those respondents who felt they had lower skills in English feel it were not very much loss of value to the meeting; they meant there were *"usually several meetings connected to one topic"*. This, they meant, gave them another opportunity, later on, to add their points of view to the discussion of the topic. Further, they meant their thoughts usually *"didn't change the conclusion of the meeting"*. This meant, interpreted by me, they were aware of the issue but they were not putting effort into it, instead they meant is better to come to the same conclusions.

Loss of information. The respondents meant there was an increased risk for loosing information because they could *"send ten e-mails back and forth"* leading to numerous risks for confusions. Increased was the risk if the person involved others and/or used Google translates to understand. The respondents meant if the employee used Google translates to understand what's written, without checking if they understood it as it was thought, that could lead to the employee having to redo the work because it was not the right interpretation.

A more slow communication. As stated above, the respondents were aware of them not having the full vocabulary leading them to make grammatical mistakes. Usually, the respondents meant, they used some similar wordings but the result was that it wasn't exactly what they meant. Another consequence of this was the communication ran more slowly, and they made interruptions when searching for the right wordings.

Hard when starting to work within a multinational environment. The respondents meant, *"it was hard in the beginning"*, to work in a foreign language because they had to do *"twice the thinking"*; starting with hearing the information, translating it to the native language in their heads, thinking about a reply, translating the reply into English and then speaking. This, they meant, took a lot of energy and one way to reload the batteries, mentioned by e few employees, were to speak with colleagues within the same native language during shorter periods for example a coffee break or at the hotel before ending the day. As have be noticed by me, employees with less experiences of working within English felt it was harder than those with a lot of experiences. Meaning it's those with little experience who felt it is necessary to speak in their native languages sometimes in between the meetings.

Loss of small talk. A consequence of the previous paragraph was there was a risk of losing the social communication, or the small talks. The respondents said they *"became more social in their native languages"*; they made more jokes and played around with their colleagues when they were in their native languages. The explanation was they felt it was a *"bigger risk it could go wrong when communicating in English"*. The result could lead to the small talks between the employees, which gave them an identity within the organization, was lost. When the respondents were asked what they liked about their employments within Volvo, many of them mentioned their co-workers and it was the *"co-workers who made them stay within the organization"*.

Use common corporate language pragmatically. Even though they saw it as obvious to have English as the common corporate language, the underlying meaning was that it should be used pragmatically. If there were only participants speaking the same language was their interpretation there was no gaining in speaking English. The result of this mix of spoken languages was that they, occasionally, forgot in which language they communicated. So sometimes they communicated to their local colleagues in English and in their native language to colleagues stationed abroad. Another consequence of this mix of languages was they sometimes forgot the words. If the respondent spoke English, he/she sometimes only remembered the word

in his/her native language and vice versa. A few respondents meant this issue led them to losing their native language because they used the English wording preferably to the native language wording.

4.4 Feelings towards the common corporate language

Many of the respondents said they had been working within multinational organizations for a longer period of time, meaning they had got used to work within English. Those who didn't have the same amount of experiences of working in another language felt it was hard. By this they meant they needed to riddle among the information given because they felt it took more time to read. Those employees with more experiences of working in English compared it with presentations they had in school; *"in the beginning were I supernervous, but as I got more experience the less nervous I felt"*.

Another concern was the distinction. The respondents felt they were *"lacking the knowledge of the nuances in the language"* which, in particular if there were people from other organizational functions present in the meeting, they became worried about their focus. They were concerned the participants *"focused more on trying to understand them rather than focusing on the actual meaning of the presentation"*. Further mentioned among all employees, regardless of years of experiences of working within a multinational organization or their own knowledge within the language, was they felt it was frustrating when they didn't found the small tiny words to really pinpoint the meaning of their communication.

Contrary to the above, a few employees saw it as a challenge because they had to *"define what they meant"*, and maybe give the explanation in different ways to be able to make their points clear. They had to think about how to formulate to be able to convey what they meant. The respondents meant the response to delivering multiple explanations depended on their shape of the day. Was it a more negative day could the reaction be anger or frustration because it took additional time. On a positive day could this lead them to come up with new ideas and/or they became really aware of what they meant.

Those employees who perceived it was hard to work in English were asked why they had stayed within the organization. The response given were there were more advantages than disadvantages, they felt *"it was worth the struggle with the language and communication"*.

4.5 The interpretations of their skills in English

During the interviews the respondents was asked to give their own thoughts and definitions about their knowledge in written and spoken English.

During the interviews the expression "European English" was raised, meaning an own type of language within the English language, spoken among those who came from Europe and didn't had English as their native language. All respondents interpreted they felt they had *"a good level of knowledge within this type of English"*. They felt it was enough for them to be able

to perform their work tasks in a good way. Most of them mentioned they were aware of the fact they weren't 100% fluent because they "*missed the small tiny words*". Interestingly, they didn't saw this as a problem which would have a particularly big effect on their performances. Instead they meant there were *"always other words to use",* and these usually pop out unconsciously. Additionally, they mentioned they always understood the context, but they sometimes missed the understanding of a few words. To summarize, the respondents felt they could perform and deliver their work tasks; they were aware of the mistakes they made and they were okay with them but they wanted to "*increase their vocabulary to be able to pinpoint their original though*".

In connection to "European English" the respondents mentioned they felt more comfortable when attending meetings and/or working with colleagues' who spoke this type of English. They meant it was harder for them to understand the native English speakers and they felt more limited if there were native English speakers present in the meeting. The explanation given was the native English speakers had a richer vocabulary leading the European English speakers to become "underdogs" because they had another type and level on their English.

The respondents' interpretation was the employees who came from countries where they had been exposed for the English language from an early age adapted to working in English faster. Some of the respondents came from *"countries where they translated, for example movies, to the local languages",* and it was those respondents who expressed more concerns when it came to work in the common corporate language. As additional information from me, the respondents who felt more concerns were originally from another organization, but had changed department in the reorganization and had therefore been forced to work more actively in the English language.

The knowledge of the English language wasn't the most important thing, according to the respondents. They meant there was an acceptance, within the organization, "*the common corporate language was "bad English""*. The result of this, they meant, was that it's okay to not have the perfect English as long as the employee could convey his/her messages, and deliver and perform what's expected.

4.6 Ways of communication

4.6.1 On business trips

Another topic discussed was greetings. Every respondent meant the advantage with working within a multinational organization was the opportunity to *"meet people from different places and the exposure to different cultures and religions".* Many respondents also mentioned this as a reason, in combination with the colleagues, as an explanation to stay within the company. As a result, when travelling they felt it was *"obvious to learn the greetings in the local languages".* They meant it signalled an awareness they were abroad and it was also a way to show, both the country and the host, respect. They were themselves mentioning their visitors which tried were more accepted because they showed an interest for the country.

Some of the managers who spoke a few words as an addition to the greetings said they spoke the local language, to the extent they knew, which was varying among the respondents from beginner's level to almost fluent, with their team. The result of this, they meant, was *"it strengthened the team spirit"*. Other advantages mentioned were that it was an ice breaker; an easy way to start a conversation, to connect with the hosts. Another was they lowered their guard because it is funny and the visitor was "*showing his/her throat*".

4.6.2 Among departments

The employees within VGO were mostly engineers, but the respondents meant there were many employees with a finance and humanistic background. The result was the written communication was mostly on the "technical" language which led to the non-technical employees having problems understanding. The respondents meant there needs to be a balance, *"the communication needed to be formulated so it's understood about the same among all involved"*. Further they meant it's easier to communicate with a colleague who has *"similar background and experiences"*. All respondents mentioned situations where they had been involved within a communication with a colleague from another department where they hadn't, because of different reasons, not asked for clarifications and/or explanations from the sender. This led to, they meant, extra work and frustrations.

4.6.3 The use of native languages

The respondents were asked which language they used most on an average daily basis. One third answered they used their native languages more than the common corporate language and the explanation given was their job. They meant they worked more towards their home countries leading them to speak their native languages more than the common corporate language. These respondents meant, on the other hand, they used English on a daily basis and the split of the languages are approximately 60% native language and 40% English.

4.6.4 Communication tools

As stated above, there are different kinds of communication tools. The respondents were asked which tools they used the most, why and also the advantages and the disadvantages with them.

Mail was the communication tool mostly used according to the respondents. They meant it was a good way to formalize, leave traces after discussions and/or decisions and it gives the flexibility to answer when appropriate. Further mentioned was that outlook was the center; the calendar, chat, mail, documents, everything was gathered round this. Meaning, *"most of the necessary information could be found in relation to the* [employee's] *outlook"*.

The respondents meant the advantages with phone calls were it gave them the opportunity to hear the tone of voice of the communication counterpart. It gave the employees the possibility to be informed even if the organization saved time and travel expenses. The negative aspect was many of the respondents admit they weren't as committed to the conversation; instead they divided their attention "*between the conversation and replying to all incoming mails*".

Face-to-face meetings gave the communication counterparts the possibility to feel the energy in the room, to be able to read the body languages, and to ask questions to really make sure to get the full picture. Other mentioned advantages were since they were present in the same room it gave them the opportunity to draw parallels to the real world and make drawings. And additional advantage with this communication tool was the employees felt they got more done because when they met they were also "*talking about a second, third and fourth topic*". The most appreciated advantage with the face-to-face meetings was the employee was given a role, an identity, within the organization. Meaning they weren't just sending mails to a name, they knew the face of the person they communicated with. This communication tool was most preferred among all employees.

Live meetings, also called video- or link meetings, gave the communication counterparts the possibility to have the advantages mentioned in face-to-face meetings, but they were geographically apart. A small number of respondents' whished the organization would have more rooms equipped for live meetings. From the negative point of view some of the respondents said this type of meetings was only appropriate if there were about the equal amount of participants on both sides, otherwise was "*the side with fewer participants easily forgotten about*". There were several interruptions in the communication because there were disruptions in the connection and/or someone needs to press a button.

The communicator, the chat, was mostly used for quick and/or short questions. The respondents saw this as an advantage to decrease the number of incoming mails in a day.

4.7 Abbreviations and shortenings

The internal Volvo-language was, according to the respondents, based on terms and shortenings. According to my understanding, the different products had complete names but when spoken about were the employees only using the shortenings because the original name was too long. One respondent estimated it took years for new employees to "*learn all existing terms and shortenings*", for example BI (Business Intelligence) or BRM (Business Review Meeting). There was an expectation that terms belonging to your area of expertise, should be familiar for the respondents. According to half of the respondents, some employees within the organization mentioned the shortenings to "*show they know and that they have been in the organization for a long time*". The respondents meant this was sometimes a problem within the organization, when communicated among different organizational units because some of their colleagues meant that "*difficult and strange words*" were used. The respondents meant because they communicated on an international basis, they spoke more English than their native languages. This led to them having some difficulties when asked to talk about their jobs and/or positions in their native languages. They meant they've "*learned the expressions related to their work in English*" because they didn't have the explanation ready in their natives, instead they had to think about what to say and try to find other ways to describe it.

4.8 Ways to handle language implications

The respondents have been asked and observed on how they handled and/or overcame the language implications. Their answers were then compared to the behaviors on the observed meetings. To my surprise did their actions and spoken statements match. Below are the different methods mentioned without any particular order and how much they were used.

Control. One consequence mentioned was the employees needed to have more control, both so they understood it correct themselves but also so the receiver understood the message the way the sender wanted it to be understood. This meant the employees' spend a lot of time on controlling, asking questions, having follow-up meetings and making summaries.

Reflection. The employees said they needed to reflect more, *"read between the lines"*, and be more creative to try to understand what the meaning was. Further, they meant they needed to think more on how they expressed themselves.

Review. Some respondents mentioned they revised the material themselves, then they asked someone else to revise or proof read the material as well. When choosing who should review, they meant it depended on the purpose; was it to make sure the information was correct, they would ask an expert within the area. If the purpose was to make sure the reviewer and the writer had the same interpretation of the written information, then they could ask any colleague. Another purpose with the review was, sometimes, to look at the "*choice of wording*". According to the respondents were there *"some similar words in the local languages which could be mixed up with the English word"*, leading to a whole new meaning of the sentence. The person who reviewed spoke the local language and was then trying to find alternative words to limit the risk for misinterpretations.

Verifying questions. When there was, within any type of communication, any confusions or possibilities for misunderstandings the respondents asked verifying questions or summarizing the core in the message to really make sure they understood the message correct.

Send out material to meetings and/or trainings in advance. The respondents meant this gave the participants "*the opportunity to become familiar with the topic and/or material in their own speed*" and it is also gave them "*time to formulate questions and/or receive some clarifications*".

Summaries. Another way to handle and/or overcome language implications was by making summaries either in the end of the meeting and/or by sending one afterwards. Both alternatives had two options according to the respondents. Either did the chairman of the meeting made/send out a summary or the chairman would either ask the participants for help with making the summary during the meeting or ask them to send in the information in an email afterwards. When asking the participants to send in information by email afterwards, the respondents meant it was a way for the chairman to see how the participant understood the material and the message he/she tried to send.

Translations. As the respondents mentioned above, they were so used working in English so they didn't reflect upon that any more. Contrary they meant the organization should be aware that not every single employee understood and/or spoke the common corporate language and as an example mentioned was the service people in some subsidiaries. One way to integrate these was to translate some of the information; examples giving from the respondents were employment contracts, business contracts and information from the CEO. According to one of the respondents was the organization translating things which could become a legal issue so there were absolutely no confusions.

Code-switching. If there were several employees with the same native language participating in the meeting, these were sometimes clarifying with a few words in their native languages. The respondents meant this was okay if it's just a few words and not on the level of management teams. The resistance to use code-switching on management level was because the respondents felt the *"employees should have the necessary knowledge in English if they had reached a position on that level in the organization"*. The reason to why it was okay within the lower levels of the organization was because they felt if those few words could help that employees understanding, he/she could contribute to the meeting.

Speak slowly. If the communication was verbal were the respondents speaking more slowly and underline the most important wording in the communication.

Repetition. The respondents were, sometimes, saying the same thing twice, but with different wordings in the same sentence. They meant the problem when it came to understanding was the understanding of the particular words. By saying it twice in different ways, they made sure they gave the receiver different ways to understand the context of the message. During the observations, I also notice that many of the participants repeated the question before answering to make sure they understood it properly.

Mediate. Because of the reorganization were there now employees within the organization who hadn't so much experiences of working in the common corporate language. Those employees who spoke multiple languages could then help them by mediating, occasionally, in the communication. This, according to the respondents, was usually done when the exact understanding was of high importance.

Language training. The organization had the possibility to provide the employees with language training. Among the respondents were there only a few of them that had participated in the training. Most of those who attended English training did that because they wanted to increase their vocabulary and become more comfortable in the language to be able to be more effective when performing their daily activities. The highest percentage of those who participated, among the respondents, in the language training was expatriates studying the host country language. According to them, the reason was *"to be more social and integrated in the new society"*.

The wish to understand. The red thread to handle and/or overcome language implication was, according to the respondents, the wish the receiver had of understanding the message. They meant if the wish was there, the knowledge in different languages didn't matter. Instead they "*drew paintings, gesticulated* [with their bodies] *or showed them"* what they meant. There was, according to the respondents, a culture based on the employees wanting to deliver great performances which was driving them to help each other out in different situations occurring within the daily activities.

As have been interpreted by me, the respondents with less experiences of working within multinational organizations took for granted that people asked when/if they were unsure or if something was confusing. The employees with longer experiences didn't assume this; they meant they've learned from experiences that was not the case. One respondent mentioned, if there wouldn't be any other consequences than to redo the work, he/she *"could let them learn by doing it wrong".* Afterwards they had a feedback session to find out what went wrong, and he/she meant the person usually learn to ask the verifying questions after this kind of situation.

4.9 Summary of the results

It's natural for global organizations to have a common corporate language implemented and choosing English. Mentioned advantages were that it created a base for a common understanding within the organization and gave all employees the opportunity to be able to understand each other, make decisions, develop and implement policies and procedures and for everyone to be able to take part of company information. Mentioned disadvantages were they felt they needed to prepare more. Further mentioned, the communication was slower because they didn't find the exact words and made grammatical mistakes. The respondents said they were more social in their native languages; made more jokes and played around more with their same-native because it was a bigger risk it could go wrong when communicated in English.

Feelings among the employees were that it was hard to work in a foreign language. They needed to riddle among the information given because they felt it took more time to read. Another concern was the distinction because they lacked the knowledge of the nuances in the language which made them worried about the receiver didn't understand their message. A few employees saw it as a challenge, they had to give different explanation to be able to make their points clear.

There was an acceptance within the organization that the common corporate language was "bad English". The result was that it was okay to not have the perfect English as long as the employee could convey his/her messages, and deliver and perform what was expected.   All respondents interpreted they had a good level of knowledge within "European English". Most of them mentioned they were aware of the fact they weren't 100% fluent because they missed the small tiny words and they instead used other words that pops out unconsciously.

The employees spend a lot of time on controlling, asking questions, having follow-up meetings and making summaries to handle and overcome language implications. They revised the material themselves, then they asked someone else to revise or proof read the material as well. Some send out material to meetings and/or trainings in advance to give the participants the opportunity to become familiar with the topic and/or material in their own speed and it is also giving them time to formulate questions and/or receive some clarifications. Code-switching meant clarifications with a few words in their native languages. The respondents were, sometimes, saying the same thing twice, but with different wordings in the same sentence.

Communication happens through different ways. Mail was the most used and a good way to formalize, leave traces after discussions and/or decisions and it gives the flexibility to answer when appropriate. Phone calls gave the opportunity to hear the tone of voice of the communication counterpart. Most preferred were face-to-face meetings which gave the possibility to feel the energy in the room, to read the body languages, and to ask questions to really make sure to get the full picture. Further became more done because when they met they also talked about other topics. Live meetings gave the communication counterparts the possibility to have the face-to-face- advantages but they were geographically apart. Some of the respondents said this type of meetings was only appropriate if there are about the equal amount of participants on both sides, otherwise was the side with fewer participants easily forgotten.

5. Analysis

Topics found both in the literature review and in the data gathering will be analyzed and discussed below.

5.1 Implementing a common corporate language

All respondents meant there needed to be a common corporate language implemented if the organization was global, which their organization is. They meant by having a common corporate language, the organization was providing their employees with a common ground for understanding. This was in line with Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari and Säntti (2005), Fredriksson, Barner- Rasmussen and Piekarri (2002), Dhir (2005) and Dhir and Góké-Pariolas (2002). Their interpretation was that implementing a common corporate language could provide the employees with a common ground which could be the base for the internal and external communication, information flow and knowledge sharing within the organization. Further, the respondents mentioned if the organization hadn't a common corporate language, and in turn the common base, they wouldn't be able to communicate effectively among all organizational units over the globe because there weren't any requirements for skills in any demanded language. The result could be that it could create a "*distance between the different markets, customers and employees"* and, therefore, a risk was the organization couldn't use the full potential of its resources. This could, in turn, result in decreased performances and/or deliveries. Additionally, the mentioned researchers meant it provided the employees, and its other stakeholders, with an

access to organizational information such as manuals, company reports and technical specifications. The respondents mentioned they wrote everything in English; presentations, manuals, reports and so on. The respondents spoke about "the Volvo way", during the interviews, which was a policy who "*expresses the cultures, behaviors and values*" (The Volvo way, 2009; 7).

Lauring and Selmer (2010) found that an organization with a common corporate language implemented created a shared identity, both among the organizational units as well as the employees. It could give the individual employee a sense of belonging and a place in the organization. The respondents meant a common corporate language "*was about integration, to be inclusive and bringing the employees together*". The culture within the organization, which came with having a common corporate language, wasn't to be exclusive and instead let every employee have his/her "*part in the Volvo-family*". A way which it could be viewed as the employee felt he/she belonged to the organization, were *"there's an acceptance that even though I had another mother tongue, it was to belong to Volvo to speak English. You have another mother tongue but there is an acceptance that the official language is English*".

Additionally, Lauring and Selmer (2010) meant the purpose with implementing a common corporate language could be the organization had different spoken languages which could be interpreted as a "mess". As could be understood above, the respondents saw it as natural, for a global organization, to have a common corporate language. They mean they "*produced so much information every day*" and that "*any other solution would take too much time*". It could be interpreted the respondents meant without a common corporate language, the organization would be chaotic and an organization of that size needed a decision on how they should communicate with each other. Additionally, they meant, if the organization didn't have a common corporate language the employees could, for example, receive mails in languages they didn't speak, leading them to spend time on "*irrelevant translating instead of doing their job*".

Tange and Lauring (2009) and Fredriksson, Barner- Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006) questioned whether or not the common corporate language was shared throughout the entire organization; from the top management to all employees within each subsidiary. They meant subsidiaries tended to use their local languages when negotiating and cooperating with local employees, customers and suppliers. A few respondents mentioned it was really important the organization, and especially the top management, remembered there were employees employed who didn't spoke the common corporate language at all. Thus, it's important to translate "*the important information*" and explanations such as employment and business contracts and information from CEO. However, not everything was perceived as possible to translate and the result was that those employees couldn't utilize all information posted on the intranet. An effect could be the organization created two teams which they meant wasn't the culture within the organization and they therefore needed to be careful with what they were and weren't translating. According to the respondents was it usually the blue collar workers who didn't spoke the common corporate language. Those who translated could be viewed as gate keepers, mentioned

in the literature review above. In specific situations the respondents meant, contrary to the previous, it was better the employees wrote the information/report in their local languages because the respondents meant the information "*became better, more informative than if they would have written in the common corporate language*", meaning they could take that extra time to translate if that situation occurred. The most important thing, in that situation they meant, was to have as much information as possible and that it was correct, which was easier done in their native language.

5.2 English as the choice for the common corporate language

Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) meant the most used common corporate language today among multinational organizations, without doubt, was English. The respondents meant when it came to choose one common corporate language, "*there was only one obvious choice and that was English*". They meant English was a global language spoken among many people around the world and therefore was it "*the natural choice to conduct business in if you are a global organization*". Tietze (2004) meant English was a language which was considered to be an efficient and "easy" language to conduct business in, something the respondents agreed upon. A respondent mentioned "*English is perhaps not the most complex language to learn*", meaning many people around the world have English integrated in their daily lives from an early age. This is something Crystal (2003) mentions below.

Vara, Tienari, Piekkari and Säntti (2005), and Crystal (2003) meant the employees different levels of knowledge and skills within the common corporate language could divide them into "winners" and "losers". The "winners" would have an unlimited range of formal as well as informal communication channels on which they could exert influence (Lauring, 2007; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004). An example mentioned was an employee with difficulties in expressing in the common corporate language. This person participated in a training session and had serious difficulties in expressing himself and because of these difficulties when trying to express himself, he was viewed as less smart by the others. It could be interpreted that the colleagues, who viewed this person as less smart, didn't want to try to understand this person or help him convey his message and they therefore could miss important information which could have added value to both the meeting and the business.

5.3 Advantages with a common corporate language

The respondents meant when they had got used to work in a foreign language, they became more effective. In the beginnings of their careers it was the opposite, they felt it was hard because they felt nervous working in another language. The lack of experiences led them into feeling the work took more time because they "*needed to do twice the thinking*", riddle among the information and try to understand the message. With twice the thinking meant starting to hear the information, translate to the native language in their heads, thinking about a reply, translating the reply into English and then speaking. When this process was automatic they felt they became more effective when working in English. An explanation could be they felt they saved time on

translating and/or formulating. Research found the employees had better performances because they were under a constant exposure of the common corporate language. This could be connected to the process when the respondents were atomizing the understanding and communicating in English which could result in the employees improving the quality of both their written and spoken language skills. Improved language competencies led them to decreases the number of misunderstandings and increasing the company performances and deliveries because more time was spent on their actual work tasks than on trying to communicate and formulate the message properly (Tange & Lauring, 2009; Dhir & Góké- Pariola, 2002; Lauring & Selmer, 2010). The more the process had been automatized, the more the respondents mentioned they lost their native languages in relation to work. The majority of the respondents mentioned they wrote everything in English, such as documents, mails, presentations. As an additional variable, they mentioned information was always forwarded "*at some point in time*" and if they already had the information in English they didn't needed to redo the work and translate. Further they meant they were used to "*express all work terms in English*", leading them to have difficulties when they needed to describe, explain and/or speak in their native language.

Another positive consequence found, the improved language skills could result in a better communication between the different organizational units because they could explain themselves in a better way (Tange & Lauring, 2009; Dhir & Góké- Pariola, 2002; Lauring & Selmer, 2010). The respondents mentioned the communication among the organizational units, sometimes, included difficulties. They meant it was easier to speak with someone who had *"the same background and the same context".* The employees within VGO were mostly engineers, delivering technical products, but the respondents also meant there were many employees with a finance and humanistic background. The result was the written communication was mostly on the "technical" language. This led to the non-technical employees having problems understanding because they didn't have the same context (Vaara, Tienari, Piekkaru & Säntti, 2005; Lauring 2007; Crystal, 2003). The better the employees were in their knowledge and skills in English, the better/easier could this communication run because they could explain the different organizational terms and shortenings better and more varied. All respondents were mentioning the internal Volvo-language was based on terms and shortenings which was hard for an outsider to understand, they meant it took "*years to learn*".

Another advantage, mentioned in "implementing a common corporate language" was the shared identity.

5.4 Disadvantages with a common corporate language

Crick (1999) meant some countries were more willing to use English as the official international business language among their organizations than others which could result in difficulties if the organization has relied too much on the English language. The organization just went through a re-organization prior to this study were some employees were transferred from another organization where they spoke their native language more than the common corporate language.

Those employees, who felt they had more difficulties to work in the common corporate language, meant they didn't had as much experiences of working in English as their colleagues. The result was they felt limited in their language meaning they had "*difficulties finding the small tiny words and specifying what they want to say*". The respondents mentioned there was a difference depending on which country they grew up in. Those, among the respondents, who perceived they had more difficulties with working in English, came from countries who *"were less willing to implement the English language in the everyday life*", such as the subtitles in movies.

Zander, Mockaitis and Harzing (2011) and Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006) meant the communication within this type of organizations usually took place among employees whose fluency in English was varying. The non-native English speakers spoke English based on their native languages, meaning for example Swedish English and Spanish English. During the interviews was the expression "European English" raised, meaning an own type of language within English spoken among those who came from Europe and didn't had English as their native language. All respondents interpreted they felt they had a good level of knowledge within this type of English, even those who didn't came from Europe, but they felt they had worked so long in a European organization so they had adapted to the "European" language. They meant they were all aware of the fact they weren't 100% fluent in English, they mentioned they missed the small tiny words and the nuances. Instead they meant, which also was observed, they became more affective when they had got the experiences of working in English; they became more direct in their communication, pinpointing the core of the message and speaking in a simplified way. Instead of focusing on the "*details and if I used the right word*", they meant that it was good enough as long as they "*could convey their messages*".

The non-native English, which Zander, Mockaitis and Harzing (2011) and Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006) described, who spoke English based in their native language, had resulted in the respondents mentioning they felt comfortable speaking when surrounded by non-native English speakers. When there were participants who were native English speakers, the respondents felt more limited *"like a bull in a china shop*" because the native English speakers had a more rich and nuanced vocabulary.

Another consequence mentioned among the respondents was that they felt they were more social in their native languages. They meant, for example, there was a bigger risk the joke went wrong because the person being exposed to the joke could misunderstand what was said. This was in line with what Neely, Hinds and Cramton (2012) and Harzing and Feely (2008) meant; the non-native speakers didn't have the same level of nuances when it came to, for example, jokes, humor, symbolism, sensitivity and sarcasm. The explanation given by the respondents were they felt they could "*communicate themselves in a better way*". This, according to the respondents, has led them to think twice before making a joke/play around with a colleague because they meant they *"didn't know how the receiver would react*". Another risk which could occur in these situations was the loss of small talk. Since the respondents mentioned

they were more direct, they meant the result was they were "*killing the soft parts, the warmer parts, of the relationships"*. Another explanation given to the loss of small talk was that the speakers "*had to do the effort because you're in a foreign language*". They meant everyone had better and worse days which could affect if they chose to put in the extra effort or not. A consequence of this behavior was the shared identity, mentioned in the beginning, could decrease.

The respondents said the risks they saw, as a result of difficulties in communicating, were that information could be lost. Because they send multiple more mails to make sure they understood each other, the risk for misunderstandings was increasing. The explanation given were the employees made grammatical mistakes, which could lead to, when trying to understand what was written, the purpose with the conversation was forgotten about. They said they lost time when they send all those mails trying to understand each other. This was in line with what Neeley, Hinds and Cramton (2012) and Harzing and Feely (2008) found, language implications could take additional forms, for example loss of information, time-consuming, lower levels of knowledge sharing, and loss of productivity and performance. All those extra mails could, thus, result in forgetting the original question and therefore forgetting information related to this topic.

5.5 Feelings within/among employees towards the language implications

An employee could be afraid of admitting his/her linguistic weaknesses because of the fear if it could bounce back on how his/her colleagues' interpreted the employee's professional competence (Neely, Hinds & Cramton, 2012; Feely & Harzing, 2008; SanAntiono, 1987). Gudykunst (in Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004) studied how colleagues' interpret each other's competencies from the point of view of their language skills. He found, employees who spoke fluently were seen as more professional. An example, as mentioned before, where a colleague with a vigorous accent who was viewed, from the other meeting participants, as unprofessional and un-smart because this person had difficulties making his/ her points and opinions clear. The respondents mentioned this situation was rare but that it happened occasionally.

Employees who, themselves, identified the above mentioned gap felt their professional capacities and competencies became limited because they didn't feel they *"had enough knowledge within the spoken language to formulate their thoughts"* (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari & Säntti, 2005; Louhiala- Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005). In connection, the respondents' mentioned they felt comfortable speaking the European English, but limited if there were native English speakers present. The explanation given was they didn't felt they had all the nuances they wanted when speaking. When native English speakers spoke English they could "*hear how beautiful the language is and that never happens for a non-native speaker"*. It could be interpreted as the respondents had identified a gap in their knowledge in English, they didn't had the same level of nuances and distinction as the native English speakers. This insight could limit their abilities to perform their work tasks and to communicate because

they, as they mentioned themselves, *"focused more on making sure the information-receivers really understood them instead of focusing on the message"*. Another consequence mentioned was that this type of situation could make them nervous which, they meant, could have an effect on their confidences and that could in turn limit their performances.

For example Lauring and Selmer (2010), Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari and Säntti (2005) and Louhiala- Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta (2005) meant it was important to remember employees who percieved they had a language gap could, themselves, draw back from social interaction and therefore create a larger social distance between themselves and their colleagues. As stated above, the respondents mentioned they felt it was harder to joke and play around with their colleagues in English because they meant the risk for misunderstandings and misinterpretations was so much higher than in their native languages. Further, few respondents mentioned they, because they didn't felt they had the full vocabulary, needed a few extra seconds when thinking about the discussion and the reply. For example, in meetings could the turns be quick, which meant the respondents didn't receive enough time to think. The result, they meant, was they stayed "*a little bit more in the background*". If than the respondents felt they took a position more in the background, either in meetings or in any other social situation, the result could be that that they lost the identification with their colleagues, the group feeling, and therefor with the organization.

Research shows, employees hesitated to share information and/or opinions on a voluntary basis when feeling insecure in the spoken language. Further feelings identified among those who perceived a language gap, mentioned above, was they felt anxiety and uncertainty when having to speak English (Neely, Hinds & Cramton, 2012; Feely & Harzing, 2008; SanAntiono, 1987). Mentioned in the interviews, those employees who hadn't automatized the English work-language meant the discussions in the meetings, sometimes, was to quick which minimized the opportunity for them to have time for translate their opinions and/or thoughts into English. The result, they meant, could and usually were, they weren't given the opportunity to raise their opinions and thoughts and therefore to add value to the meeting. Contrary to what usually could be interpreted, they meant there would always be another meeting related to the same topic/issues which, therefore, gave them other opportunities to bring their *"thoughts to the table"*.

5.6 Ways to handle language implications
The purpose with the master thesis was to capture and examine if the employees within VGO perceived language implications, and if so, how the language implications were interpreted. Below are the methods the respondents mentioned in focus.

5.6.1 Informal network
Neely, Hinds and Cramton (2012) and Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) found employees searched for colleagues who spoke their native language when they needed help. They meant the employee searched, in their informal network, for someone, even if that person wasn't the expert

within the field of the question, to ask for help. This was contrary to the respondents thoughts. They agreed upon the fact that it was easier to ask for help in their native languages but at the same time, they meant, they *"worked in an international group so it was a part of their job to communicate in a foreign language"*. The respondents meant they, overall, *"communicated more in English than in their local languages"*. The explanation given was that all expressions related to Volvo and their work was in English, which, they meant, have led them to not knowing the translations in their native languages. The result which could be seen was that, when speaking with a same native speaker colleague, they mixed the English expressions with native language words, leading them to feel that it didn't matter who they asked for help.

5.6.2 Code-switching
According to Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) and Neely, Hinds and Cramton (2012) has code-switching, overall, been seen as a negative solution. The reason given was that it could lead to irritation and suspicion because all participants didn't understand what was said since a few employees spoke in their native language. The respondents mentioned this solution was used within the organization and they felt it was okay to use, occasionally and if the purpose was to clarify what was just said, if *"an employee benefits and therefore could add value to the meeting"*. They meant it was usually noticed if the aim was clarifications or discussions. Contrary, some of the managers meant it wasn't okay during management meetings, they meant if employee reached a management position then he/she should have the necessary English knowledge to have the entire meeting in English. The researchers mentioned the method has, when used occasionally, been seen as an okay solution to the language implications which is in accordance to the respondents' interpretations.

A risk with code-switching was the employees started forming subgroups based on their native language. This could prevent all information and knowledge within the group to become visible and to disturb the knowledge sharing and information flow (Marschan- Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999). The respondents who mentioned the only language which should be spoken within meetings was the common corporate language share the same type of experiences. They have all been exposed for colleagues' who had a discussion in their native language and then translated a short summary in English when the discussion was over. Since the respondents didn't spoke that language they felt excluded and that they weren't given the opportunity to add value and /or benefit from the meeting.

5.6.3 Internal informal translators
Internal informal translators were translating the necessary information, asked by colleagues to assist. This informal work task was usually assigned expatriates. Disadvantage mentioned was these employees were given the possibility to regulate the information flow. Advantages, on the other hand, it could increase the level of communication which in turn could lead to increased knowledge sharing since the internal informal translator was given the opportunity to add information and knowledge when translating (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997; SanAntiono, 1987). The respondents mention not all employees within the

organization spoke English, leading to them being excluded from taking part of the information given. They meant some parts of the information therefore should be translated into the local language such as employment contracts and information given from the CEO. A few respondents', the expatriates in Sweden, mentioned they had been asked, only a few times, to help, because of their native language, with the translation. They didn't mean it happens on a yearly basis, more "*once every seventh, eighth year*". They were asked to check if the translation was correct and/or to translate a few sentences in a brochure or a video. Disadvantages mentioned by respondents, the translator could not translate the "right" information according to the management team and/or that he/she misinterpreted the information and translate the information wrongly. The respondents meant it was someone else who riddled among the information, choosing, conscionably or unconscionably, what to translate. This could give them the role of gate keepers, mentioned above (Andersen and Rasmussen, 2004).

5.6.4 Language training

According to Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) and Andersen and Rasmussen (2004) could language training lead to the employees having additional nuances and synonyms which could result in them feeling comfortable when using the common corporate language. Further could the employees' feelings change towards the common corporate language from a negative to a positive point of view. Those of the participants, only a few, who studied the common corporate language mentioned the reason were they wanted to increase their vocabulary, meaning they wanted to have more nuances within their English language. By gaining the possibility to have more nuances in the language, they would become more comfortable in the language because they meant that they could pinpoint what they meant leading them to become more effective in their daily work.

Contrary was the highest percentage of those who participated in the language training, provided by the organization, expatriate employees who studied the host country language. The explanation they gave was that they wanted to *"become more social and integrated in the new society"*. By learning the local languages such as small phrases and greetings, they mean, it signaled an awareness that they were abroad and showed respect and interest towards the host country. All respondents' mentioned they felt more accepted and welcomed when trying to speak the local language. (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999)

5.6.5 Build in redundancy

Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) meant the speaker asked his/her counterpart to give a summary of what just been said, ask control questions, give illustrative examples and give frequent summaries of the content. Interpreted by me, based on the observations, weren't the respondents with longer experiences of working within multinational organizations taking for granted that colleagues asked when/if they were unsure or if something was confusing. These employees meant they needed to control so they had, themselves, understood the message correct and the message was understood correct by the receiver. The results were, according to them, that they spend a lot of time; one respondent estimated it to 20-25% of his/her work day, on

controlling the understanding of messages. There were different ways to control, according to the respondents, which was in line with research within the area. The different alternatives were to ask verifying questions to pinpoint the core of the message, make summaries, have follow-up meetings, to speak slowly and underlined the most important sentences, and by repetition. When the respondents repeated themselves, they said the same thing twice but with different wordings because the problem, they meant, was the understanding of particular words. By saying the same thing twice, in different ways, they made sure to give the receiver different ways to understand the context of the message. Summaries, they mentioned, could either be made by the chairman or the respondents mutually in connection to the meeting or as a mail afterwards.

5.6.6 Adjust the mode of communication/communication tools
Adjust the mode of communication meant the communication parties changed the style of communication. Research showed, employees within multinational organizations preferred to send mails, instead of having verbal communication (face to face or phone) because the verbal communication added the dimension of the accent of the speaker. The mostly used communication tools among the respondents were mail, phone, face-to-face meetings, live meetings and a chat-room. The advantage with mail, they meant, were that it was a good way to "*leave traces after discussions*", meaning the employees could return to the written message and have a second chance both to understand and remember what had been said. The communication-tool the respondents preferred, sometimes contrary to Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) and Feely and Harzings (2003) research, was face-to-face meetings. They meant the face-to-face meetings added variables; it gave them the opportunity to feel the energy in the room, read the body language and draw pictures and illustration to clarify their message. In line with research, some respondents mentioned having difficulties understanding the native English speakers because they didn't "*pronounce the wordings as in the European English*". In those situations, the respondents mentioned, they either, if they felt the time was enough, asked for clarifications and easy explanations or if they were in a hurry, preferred to have this communication in written shape. Contrary to previous, the respondents meant, when preferring verbal communication, the written communication could be more difficult to understand. The explanation given was that the sender made grammatical mistakes and used Google translate to have an understanding of what had been written. This could cause the employees having the "wrong" interpretation leading to him/her focusing on unnecessary work tasks.

5.7 Conclusions of the analysis
The common corporate language provided the employees with the base for how to communicate with their colleagues and stakeholders. Further, the common corporate language provided a structure in which they should perform and deliver their work, and in turn, when being used to the way of working, give them the opportunity to focus on their job instead of for example, redoing work when having to translate information. The chaos, according to the respondents, there would be if there weren't a common corporate language implemented- global organizations meant multiple different spoken languages.

The common corporate language was about integration and inclusiveness which meant it could create a feeling of a shared identity among the organizational units as well as the employees, even if they were geographically apart.

The level of the individual employee's knowledge and skills in the common corporate language decided how much influence that individual could exert through his/her, both formal and informal, communication channels. The more knowledge, fluency, the more influence. Employees who felt they had a language-gap, positioned themselves in the background and drew back from social interaction. The result was that they wouldn't learn the common corporate language, lose the group feeling, and hesitate to speak among colleagues because they felt they needed extra time thinking and translating their thoughts and the responses they got.

The respondents were automatizing the understanding and the communication in the common corporate language. The more exposed to the common corporate language and the more experiences of working in a multinational organization the respondents had they meant they became more effective in their work. The more experience, the less time was spend on being nervous, doing twice the thinking, riddle among the information and try to understand the message. The result could be the respondents improved the quality, with more words and nuances, of both their written and spoken language skills (meaning they could vary their explanations) and in turn decreases the levels of misunderstandings. The more automatized the process of understanding and communicating in English, the more unconscious were their ways to handle the language implications. Further could their position towards it have an effect, they were all aware that they worked in a global organization and that implications and consequences in different shapes would meet them along the way.

The language most used in the organization was "European English", even among the non-Europeans, leading them to feel comfortable speaking that "language". When native-English speakers participated, they disturbed the balance that both communication parts needed to put in extra efforts in order for the conversation to run smoothly, which exist between non-native English speakers.

If the organization wasn't valuing the importance of the effects which could be caused by the language implications, for example loss of information, competencies, lower level of knowledge and loss of productivity and performance, could it be costly for them.

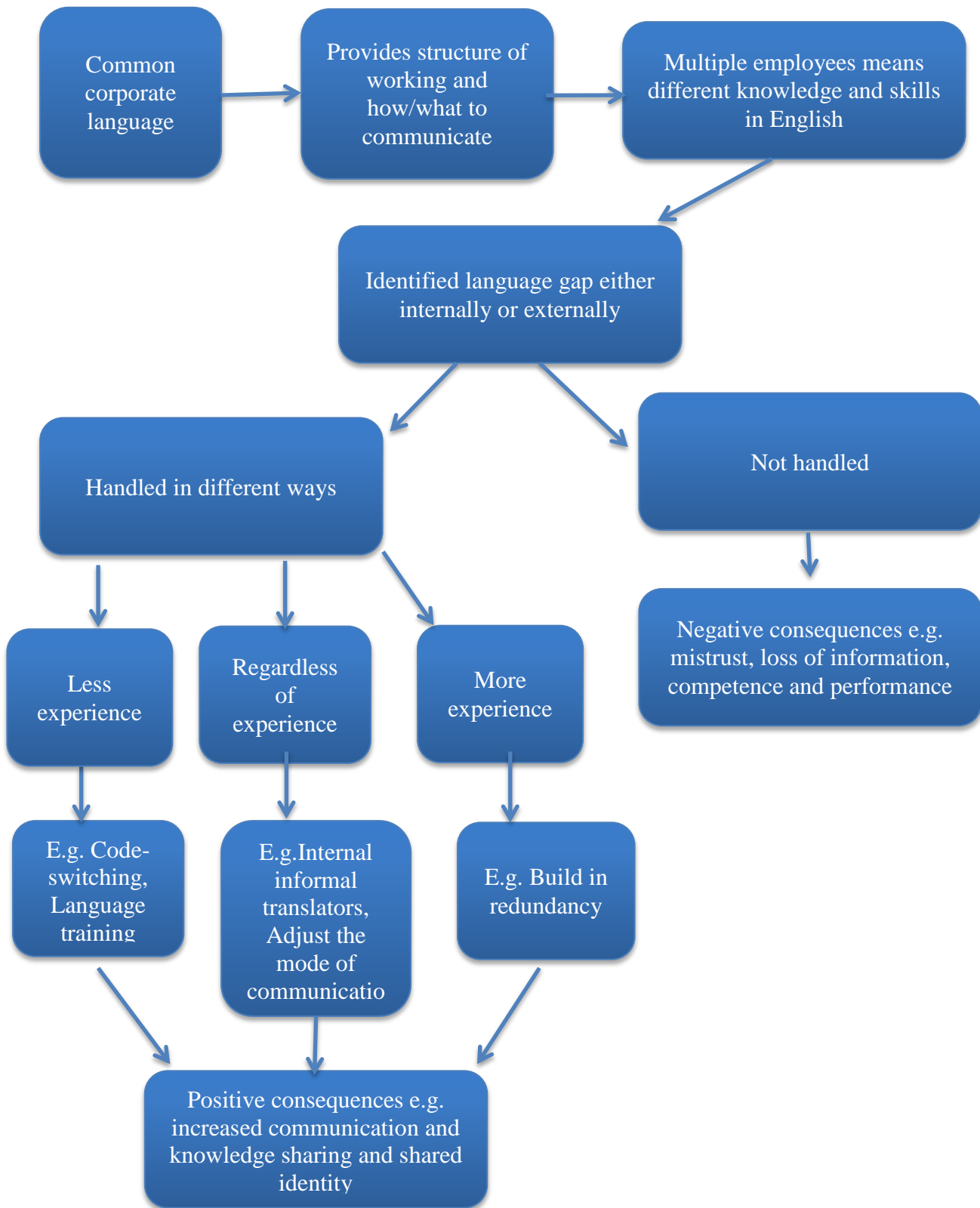Below, a summary of my interpretation of the process of language implications is illustrated.

Figure 4: *Summary of the analysis.*

6. Discussion

During the end of the analysis, I realized that handling the language implications is a learning process. Therefore I have chosen to discuss those findings in a wider context with the purpose to gain a better understanding of the topic.

The main findings above, the more exposed to the common corporate language, meaning the more experiences of working in a multinational organization the employees had, the more effective they became in their work. This meant the person had atomized the understanding- and communication in the common corporate language. These actions could further be connected to Björklund's (2008) five steps of learning; from novice to expert. Being novice meant the person didn't have a coherent conception of the problem he faced; instead he used learned rules to grade whether or not it was a success. Therefore requires novice person's solid structure, clear rules and practices. Advanced beginners were not as tied up by contexts and sophisticated rules. The advanced beginner could see similarities between present and old situations. The competent person based his knowledge on a number of facts and he has learned that if a certain pattern occurred a certain conclusion could be drawn, or a specific decision be taken. The competent person was emotionally connected and felt a bigger responsibility for the results. The proficient person was very interested and involved in its performance and experiences were based on past experiences. Björklund argued intuition was the result of a strong commitment and a sense of having experienced something like this before, using past experience and intuition, the skilled worker organizing and understanding their work. Decisions were made on a conscious level under rules the skilful perceive as meaningful. But the skilful still lack the ability to analyse and evaluate their past experiences and moments of intuition. The last step, the expert, meant an automatic behaviour and different behaviour, within that specific area of expertise, which often repeated itself in the business. Molander said that "*expert see a whole situation, immediately recognize it without analysing or reason it, and react instantly, instinctively*" (2004; 46) This meant that the expert was giving the best and fastest solutions when faced with a problem. As stated above, the more experience the more unconscious. This could be interpreted that these employees had reached further up in among the learning-steps Björklund described. As stated in the result-section, in the beginning of their careers, they felt this was hard to deal with. The explanation could be because they didn't have any experience, they wanted to rely on rules and structures, which was non-existent within this topic. The further along in their international careers, the more situations they faced, which probably needed to be overcome, the more intuition and past experiences they had to rely on, and therefore they had the possibility to ferry the situations they met along the way unconsciously. In other words, they have become experts of handling language implications, meaning their area of expertise was to handle language implications. The more experience they gained, the harder it was for them to describe how to handle the implications/small obstacles related to the communication. Polanyis (1966) expression "tacit knowledge" referred to a person's ability to recognize situations/things and his/her ability to act without being able to describe how. Based on the previous could it be interpreted that the handling process had become tacit, or implicit, since it referred to an

employee's unconscious actions. They fended all situations related to the language and communication off, without noticing they handled them.

Reed meant "*our actions change the environment, but they also change us. Experiences goes hand in hand with action and both can be improved and enlarged*" (1996;49). A connection which could be drawn was that the further up the respondents reached in Björklunds (2008) learning steps, the more experiences of handling language implications they had. It could be seen as the environment has changed the employees' behaviour, meaning because of the existing language implications, the employees needed to control the information to get the correct job done. Further could it be seen as them had made this controlling a natural part in the everyday life, meaning that they had changed the environment. Reed meant humans learn from those who they frequently interacted with. Employees who had lesser experience of working within multinational organizations might, when entering the organization, tried to learn the work/their tasks by looking and listen to their colleagues and/or a mentor. The result could be that the less experienced persons studied conscious or unconscious, the more experienced employees and learn from their behaviours. Further result of that could be they wasn't "*inventing the wheel*" twice.

Morand and Merriamn (2012; 135) meant that equality was "*a superior basis for achieving justice when the overarching goal is one of fostering or maintaining good interpersonal relations, attaining a sense of community or achieving social integration*". When non-native English speakers communicated with a native English speaker were the balance and equality affected since the native English speakers had a richer vocabulary. This could be interpreted as an explanation to why the respondents felt more comfortable speaking with other non-native English speakers; they had to put in the same amount of effort in the communication. In other words, the non-native English speakers became the "underdog", which could not be helpful when building a social relationship. The feeling of being an underdog could create negative feelings within the employee, which in turn could hinder the social relationship even more.

The unbalance/unequality could be connected to equal opportunities both for career advancement and choices (Morand & Merriamn, 2012). It could be interpreted that employees who could be viewed as "stronger" was interpreted to have more knowledge within the common corporate language and have atomized the communication- and understanding process, could have more and/or easier opportunities to be promoted. An explanation could be they could make the relationship more equal because of their richer vocabulary, meaning they had the opportunity to communicate themselves in a better way and could therefore be viewed as more professional and/or stronger.

To summarise the disuccsion, Hecimovich and Volet (2011) meant the more exposed a person was of real situations and/or problems related to their profession, the more would that person learn and that could result was the employee felt more confident in his/her professional

role. Further mentioned, by the researchers, an increased level of confident could lead to improved motivation for learning and a better view on the situation. The employees who had atomized the communication- and understanding process could be interpreted to have reached further up in the learning process, mentioned by Björklund (2012). This could mean they had been exposed to different situations, in connection to their work, for a longer period of time leading them to have gained experiences of multiple situations. These experiences could be the base for their professional confidence since almost all of them mentioned that it was okay to make a fool out of themselves since they tried to speak in the local languages even though they didn't had the knowledge for it.

7. Overall conclusions of the master thesis

To conclude this master thesis, the employees within VGO perceived language implications within the common corporate language. It was a part of working within a global organization, if it was not accepted; the person couldn't work within this type of organization. The respondents said there were both positive and negative consequences of having a common corporate language. Positively, it provided the employees with the base for how to communicate with their colleagues and stakeholders and the structure in which they should perform and deliver their work. Contrary could it mean loss of information, time consuming, and misunderstandings.

The common corporate language is connected to a learning-process. The more experience the employees gained, the more they controlled the understanding of the message they are both sending and receiving. There are different methods to handle language implications, examples are asking verifying questions, summaries, code-switching and reading the body language. The more experience the employee has, the more unaware are the handling of the language implication. That means they have learned, and changed their behavior, to be able to provide themselves and their colleagues with the best conditions to perform their work.

This increased level of experience has also resulted in an increased level of professional confidence, meaning they know what to come, and that it's okay not to have all the answers.

7.1 Contribution to HRM

This study was an explorative study whose purpose was to examine whether or not employees experienced language implications. The studied topic is of interest for all global organizations since it's something they all need to handle in order to "*make the best out of their resources*", as one respondent in this study stated. This study can help organizations help and support their employees when feeling for example frustrated when feeling limited in their communication. Further can the organization help to shorten the learning process for the employees so they will proceed to the higher learning steps Björklund (2012) talks about. If the organization is aware of the negative effects of having a common corporate language, they can provide assistance and support so the employees can handle the negative implications in a better way. This could also

lead to the negative feelings, mentioned above, decreases. This study can help organizations within "hard" business, technical business, to understand one of the soft parts of the work.

7.2 Critics towards the thesis

One criticism which could be directed towards the master thesis is the way in which respondents were selected. The supervisor in the organization named suggested respondents that met the requirements and were able to contribute to the study. This could have influenced the respondents in a certain direction.

It is important to emphasize that the results were based on semi-structured interviews and observations and that the author will be part of the tool. There was a risk that I, in my role as interviewer and observer, may have contributed with my prior knowledge of the subject, for example by leading questions, explanations about a particular method or noticed behaviors which could have influenced the report in a certain direction.

Additional criticisms which could be directed towards the master thesis were that some of the interviews were held in Swedish and some in English. Both Harzing et al. (2005) and Ralston, Cunniff and Gustafson (1995) have investigated if respondents from different languages reply in a common corporate language would have an effect of their responses. Their finding was that the common language influences, the responses became more homogeneous. To be able to have as broad pictured as possible, was some respondents given the opportunity to explain and answer in their native language and at the same time, to still have a global perspective of the study.

Finally, I want to point out that generalizations should be avoided because this is a qualitative study. Furthermore, the paper concerns a topic which is updated regularly, this means that the results might change with time and increased knowledge within the area.

7.3 Suggestions for future research

The respondents belonged to the upper levels of the organization. A suggestion for future research is to replicate the study with employees further down in the organization to see if they have a different interpretation of the topic. Another suggestion is to replicate the study with respondents with fewer years of experiences of working within a foreign language, for example employees who just started to work within an organization with a common corporate language. A third suggestion is to study the native English speakers' interpretations towards the topic.

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Appendix 1; Interview guide

(**Present myself**)

My name is Wictoria Gustavsson and I'm currently writing my master thesis at Gothenburg University, covering the topic of language implications. The purpose is to capture and examine how, and if, you, as employees within this Volvo Group organization, perceive language implications from using English as the corporate language. Further purpose is to explore the risks and consequences of those implications, you can see, both for the organization and for you as an individual. It is important for you to remember that everything said in this room will be held confidential; instead will a shared view of the topic be presented. I want you to remember that there is no right or wrong here; I want your honest opinions and thoughts and I also want you to focus your examples on different language implications. We will start by talking about you and your position within the organization, and then move on to discuss the language and communication within different contexts. How would you feel if the interview was recorded and that I took notes during the interview?

(**The background of the respondent**)
- To start with, I'm interested to know when you started your employment within Volvo?
- You have been employed here for XX years. What is it that makes you feel satisfied with your work here?
- What type of education do you have?
- Which language is your native language?

(**Experiences of global organizations**)
- What are your experiences of working in a multinational organization?
- Have you worked abroad as an expatriate?
- Can you please give both positive and negative examples of working in a multinational organization?

(**Daily work**)
- What position is you currently occupying and please give examples of regular work tasks?
- What language do you usually use when communicating with the colleagues you are work with on a daily basis?
- How does it affect you to work in the common corporate language since that isn't your native language?
- If the person worked abroad, did you know the local language during your time abroad? How did that affect you in your daily work?

(**Language**)
- How confident and comfortable in your English do you feel when attending or chairing a meeting?

- Which difficulties/uncertainties are you worried about when attending or chairing a meeting?

(**Communication**)
- What do you think is affecting the flow of internal communication?
- Can you tell me about a situation with difficulties within the communication when performing regular work tasks with a colleague from another native language?
- How do you handle a situation with problems within the communication?
- You are communicating among different organizational units and functions, what is your interpretation of how this communication is flowing?
- How do you feel towards the common corporate language?

(**Methods**)
- Can you mention the 3 most common communication channels/tools within your daily work?
- Have you used the possibility to have language training yourself and/or recommended others to use it?
- Do you have any ideas of you own how to manage the language implications?
- What are you own thought about the topic?
- Anything you want to add?

(**Finish**)
Thank you for participating! As I said in the beginning will the result be presented in a master thesis will be sent to the organization. If there is anything you want to add, please contact me either by mail or phone.

Appendix 2; Missive-letter

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Hi! My name is Wictoria Gustavsson and I'm a master student in Human Resource Management and Labor Relations at Gothenburg University. The spring semester 2013 is my last semester, ending with a master thesis covering 30 HEC. **The purpose of my master thesis is to capture and examine how, and if, you, as employees within this specific Volvo Group organization, perceive language implications from using English as the corporate language.** A further purpose is to explore the risks and consequences of those implications, which you can see, both for the organization as a whole and for you as an individual. The last purpose with the master thesis is also to suggest how the organization can provide assistance within the area.

It is through XX, I've come in contact with you. **I'm asking you to participate in one open-hearted interview where we will talk about your experiences and feelings of working in a global organization with the common corporate language, English. The interview will last for about 60 minutes** and will cover the above mentioned topic. An example of questions are "Can you please give positive and negative examples of working in the common corporate language, and how did these situations made you feel?", and " Can you tell me about a situation with difficulties within the communication when performing regular work tasks with a colleague from another native language?".

It is important for you to notice and remember that all material will be held **confidential** and I will not be publishing any transcriptions of the interviews. Instead, I will summarize all interviews and analyze them to understand what main themes are dominating, and where improvements of language use can be made. I will present the findings in my master thesis which will be given to the organization.

Please contact me if you have any additional questions and/or concerns:
Wictoria Gustavsson
Phone
Mail

Thank You in advance for Your participation!