Communicating in a second language in the corporate world

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Abstract

Title: Communicating in a second language in the corporate world

Purpose

Globalization is occurring around the world in a rapid pace with a rising number of companies operating globally, and therefore employing individuals from different countries that needs to work across borders to reach common goals as one cohesive unit. To facilitate cooperation English is used as a common corporate language for a numerous of global companies, but a majority of the employees have other native languages than English which can lead difference in competence and ability when communicating. This leads to the purpose and main question of this study which is "what is the impact of communication, within a global company, when participants from different countries communicate in a language other than their native language?"

Theory/former studies:

Research and literature revised in the study is concerning globalization and global companies, communication and language, bilingualism and multilingualism, English as a lingua franca, culture and cultural differences, company culture and intercultural communication.

Method

To gain an insight into the experience of communicating in a second language in the professional setting one semi structured group interview with four respondents and six structured individual interviews was conducted within one team from a global company.

Results:

The results from the data collected revealed that less misunderstandings is perceived between second language communicators using English than when second language speakers are communicating with native speakers. The level of fluency has an impact on communication and the importance of correct translations is of essence. The use of a common corporate language facilitates a group feeling and a more equal level is experienced. A specific "Company X-English" that is based on the company culture rather than on a country's culture has emerged and that even though language clearly influences communication in a global company cultural differences are far more challenging.

Keywords:

Communication, second language, corporate language, global, culture.

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Gothenburg, May 24:th, 2013

Sincerely,
Sara Sternermark Petersén

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1. Introduction

Globalization has a large impact on our contemporary society and it influences our private lives as well as it is plays a prominent part in the professional environment (Scholte, 2005; Miller, 2012). Companies are in a higher degree operating globally than ever before and cooperation between borders is not only happening between companies but also within. A rising numbers of companies are multinational and have offices in different countries with employees that need to work across borders to reach common goals and objectives. The whole world can be seen as one large market for global organizations. English has become of greater importance than ever before and functions as an official corporate language in a numerous companies (Briscoe et al, 2009). English can be seen as a lingua franca of our time which enables communication between individuals with different native languages (Mauranen, 2010) and being at least bilingual is almost a necessity for individuals in the society of today (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). This leads to a higher demand on employees within a global company when it comes to proficient English-skills to facilitate communication and collaboration (Marschan-Piekkari et al, 1999). Often a majority of employees in global companies do not have English as a native language, but as a second language and there is a difference in how competent communicators' different individuals are as they speak English and how confident they feel using another language than their native (Meierkord, 2012).

The intention with this study is to examine how communication between professionals is experienced when employees are conducting their work in a second language. How does Swedes for instance experience to work with English as a corporate language which is not their native language, and how do they feel as they are communicating with coworkers from other countries that also communicate in their second language? The objective of this study is also to uncover and analyze the issues and positive aspects when it comes to communication with individuals from other countries in a professional setting, using a common corporate language that is not the first language of the participants.

I believe that these questions are of great importance when it comes to companies and the working life of today because of the impact globalization has on the corporate arena. The world is opening up more and more, the markets are increasing in size and a numerous of professionals communicate with individuals from other countries more or less on a daily basis. It can be of great significance to the corporate world to find out what kinds of challenges and opportunities the use of a common corporate language has on communication among professionals. To find out how communication can improve and what the positive aspects and issues are when communicating in a second language can facilitate a proactive work in which growth and nurturing can occur. Research about the subject of communication between second language communicators in global companies is slim and therefore this thesis might fill a gap when it comes to the matter.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to provide an insight into how communication in a corporate language, as a second language in a global company, can be perceived by employees in a global team. The goal of this study is not to provide generalizable answers for the questions at hand, it is rather to get a comprehension of how second language communication can be experienced in a professional setting. To find answers this study consists of one main purpose and three narrow research questions.

Purpose

"What is the impact on communication, within a global company, when participants from different countries communicate in a language other than their native language?"

Research questions

- To explore issues and positive aspects when communicating in a corporate language that is not the native of the participants in a professional setting.
- To find out how using a second language is perceived to effect communication when communicating with colleagues from other countries.
- To find out if there is other aspects in addition to language that affects communication when communicating with individuals from other countries in a professional setting within one and the same company using a corporate language.

1.2   *Expected research contribution*

A substantial amount of research has been made when it comes to the concept of communication, language, company culture, intercultural communication and globalization. But when it comes to communication between second language communicators within a global company the research has been slim. Therefore this study could contribute to a greater awareness of how individuals in global companies perceive using a corporate language that is not their native language. Ideas might emerge in how communication can improve within a global company, what the opportunities and challenges are and thereby facilitate a proactive work that could ensure shared meaning and facilitate communication in a higher degree.

1.3   *Limitations of the study*

Generalizations cannot be drawn from the results of this study since the respondents' works for the same company and within the same team. To be able to draw generalizations more interviews with a larger amount of respondents from different teams, companies and countries should be conducted.

2. Theoretical background

The literature revised for this study is reported below. The ambition is to give an oversight into the area at focus. Different parts of literature are selected since there is no comprehensive theory or research which answers my questions. I thereby recognize a gap of research when it comes to second language communication between individuals within a global company that I aim to fill with this study. To get a better insight into the area of research this chapter begins with an explanation of globalization and global companies; to provide a contextual understanding of the environment in which the company resides in. After that a section about communication and language is presented, followed by the concept of bilingualism and multilingualism; this to give an insight into the importance of language when communicating. In the next section an explanation of English as a lingua franca is presented which is followed by a section of culture, cultural differences and company culture. The theoretical section is concludes by a section about intercultural communication which is of great importance when it comes to communication between individuals originated from different countries and with different cultural- and linguistic backgrounds.

2.1 *Globalization and global companies*

Economies of the world have over the last fifty to hundred years become increasingly integrated and the society more global than ever before. We live in an ever changing world that always is in the verge of evolving (Briscoe et al, 2009; Giri, 2006; Eriksson-Zetterguist et al, 2006). The reasons for globalization are many; increased travel between countries, rapid development of new technology, extensive global communication, trade agreements and migration to mention some (Briscoe et al, 2009; Scholte, 2005). There have been several definitions and associations when it comes to globalization, all from prosperity and progress to disaster and deprivation. Different definitions can promote different interests and values since no conceptualization is politically neutral. It is not to be forgotten that every definition is related to a context and no definition is definitive since we live in a changing world where knowledge is in a process of invention and reinvention. Disputes often start when it comes to definition of the concept globalization (Scholte, 2005) and therefore different perspectives will be presented below to give an introduction into the area.

One common conception identifies globalization as internationalization. In this view globalization is described as a growth of interdependence and international exchanges, in other words cross-border relations between countries. According to Hirst and Thompson (1996) globalization is *"large and growing flows of trade and capital investment between countries"* (Hirst & Thompson1996:48). An example of this is an enlarged movement of people and ideas between countries. A more critical definition treats globalization as westernization or modernization. In this view the social structures of modernity as industrialism, bureaucratism, individualism and capitalism have been spread all over the world, normally destroying pre-existing local cultures and thereby taking over. This has been referred to as the imperialism of CNN and McDonalds and has been compared with the

colonization of the Third World. A third approach has identified globalization as liberalization. This definition refers to the creation of a borderless world economy, an international economic integration through a process of removing state-imposed restrictions between countries. An example of this can be seen in the reduction of regulatory trade barriers and foreign-exchange restrictions. A fourth conception is treating globalization as universalism. Following this interpretation globalization can be seen as a worldwide synthesis of cultures, a global humanism which is a process of spreading experiences and objects to people all over the world. A fifth usage views globalization as respatialization. Here globalization refers to increased transplanetary connections between people and a reconfiguration of social geography. This has been defined as a tendency to deterritorialization. Depending on what definition one holds as real when it comes to globalization the interpreter develops different understandings when it comes to the matter (Scholte, 2005).

Because of globalization many companies now have an international or multinational presence in the world with employees in different locations worldwide within one and the same organization; these organizations are referred to as global companies. Globalization leads to complex interconnections between political, business and cultural systems that needs to be managed in a productive way (Miller, 2012; Scholte, 2005; Hofstede, 1991). Challenges when it comes to globalization concern for example systems of understanding, messages being interpreted the right way, relationships and economic issues. Communication is of great importance when it comes to understanding in a multicultural workplace and to make sure that common goals and objectives are reached as one cohesive company (Miller, 2012). According to Marschan-Piekkari et al (1999) the adoption of a common corporate language can in a management perspective have many advantages when it comes to global companies. Language standardization can ease access to company documents between units in various foreign locations and facilitate formal reporting which can lead to minimized miscommunication. A common language also influences information flow and informal communication between subsidiaries and assist fostering a sense of belonging to a "global family". But even though a common corporate language can facilitate the handling of coordination problems which can be caused by multiple languages used within a company there can also be issues as difference in competence when it comes to communicating in English. A further issue is when it comes to hiring staff; a prospective employee might have the expertise (technical for example) when it comes to the work to be conducted but not sufficient English skills. For effective knowledge transfer and sharing within a global company competence in the common corporate language is essential (Marschan-Piekkari et al, 1999).

According to Gleditsch (1974) physical distance between individuals can become a restraint when it comes to interactions between individuals working together in different countries, but this can to some extent be solved by technology that can connect without the change of location. But even though technology can facilitate collaborations, there is still an issue at hand when it comes to time differences between countries and non-overlapping working hours (Gleditsch, 1974).

A further concern for global companies is the variation in level of autonomy subsidiaries have in the different countries that they are located in. There are different strategies that can be used for global companies; one orientation is ethnocentrism where when executives as they manage international activities use a home country standard with high control and centralized decision making centered in the headquarter (Briscoe et al, 2009; Eriksson-Zetterquist et al, 2006). An alternative strategy is geocentrism where the outlook is to create a global network by using a transnational strategy with practices that are relatively centralized and thereby create a common company culture. To support the organizational structure of a multinational or global company different groupings are often integrated to support a cohesive company culture to form a global mindset by the use of formal networks. This can be done by incorporating transactional services for all the locations of a company by for example establish intranets and by delivering HR services in the form of a common shared service center that can be accessed by all countries within the global enterprise. Informal networks that global companies often facilitates through the organization is one of the most important aspects when it comes to cooperation, but they only works if managers that interact knows and trust each other well enough to collaborate. The "tie" that binds a global company together can be said to be the social and intellectual capital in the skills, experience and knowledge of its employees and its ability to use and share this knowledge on a global basis. Therefore creating a culture of learning and nurturing can lead to great advantages (Briscoe et al, 2009). Learning and competence is seen as central when it comes to the "good working environment" since it provides possibilities for individual development and stimulation. Developing competence and learning is also seen as important when it comes to corporate efficiency (Sandberg, 2003). In a contextual perspective the emphasis of learning is on relational and social interaction where learning occurs in social contexts and in participation in daily activities (Ellström & Hultman, 2004).

2.2   *Communication and language*

The essence of communication is the exchange of messages to accomplish goals and objectives and truly effective communication is interactive which means that each individual takes part in listening and responding to each other. The goal of a communicational event is shared meaning and mutual understanding (O'Hair et al, 2011). Communication is about cooperation and the creation of meaning-systems and can be seen as a process that produces and reproduces shared meaning (Miller, 2012). When sender and all intended receivers' interpret a message the same way shared meaning is accomplished. Communication is multidimensional and usually takes place on several levels of awareness simultaneously, all from intentionally to unintentionally communication (Allwood, 2001). In the presence of others we continuously send out signals about our feelings, attitudes and personality (Knapp, 2006). The content of communication, the ideas that individuals wish to share is referred to as messages. Messages can be expressed verbally, in written or oral form, or nonverbally through posture, gestures or facial expressions for example (O´Hair et al, 2011; Lustig & Koester, 2010; Allwood, 2001; Knapp, 2006). The sender of a message determines the best way of sending the message and what is to be shared, when doing so the sender needs to take

into account the need and willingness of the receiver to understand the content. Before transmitting the message the sender encodes the content which is the process of organizing elements in the message to make it comprehensible, this can be done by the choice of words for example. After encoding the sender chooses a channel in which the message will be sent through; it can be by telephone, e-mail, video conference, personal face to face meeting or in a group meeting to mention some. The message is then transmitted to the receiver. If a message is not picked up by the receiver we cannot say that communication has taken place. A receiver is not only the intended target; all individuals who pick up the message are seen as receivers. To make sense of the message the receiver now has to decode the message. When decoding there are many different factors that can influence the receiver's interpretation of the message, such as listening abilities, cultural background, posture towards the channel in which the message have been transmitted through and attitudes towards the sender. Any response to the message from the receiver is called feedback which can be given as a verbal or nonverbal response (O'Hair et al, 2011; Allwood, 2001).

Communication takes place within a setting or situation referred to as a context. The concept of context is multilayered; it is about the nature of relationship between the participants, the place where the individuals meet and the social purpose for being together. Different contexts influence the content of discussion and lead to different expectations about behavior and how interactions normally should occur. Communication is a dynamic process that involves not only what is communicated in the moment but also past experiences which means that contextual influences are mediated through memory as well as through perception (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Allwood, 2001).

The native language is an aspect of individuals lives that is often taken for granted since it is learned without conscious awareness and it is often not until learning a new language or communicating with someone who do not comprehend what is shared that the central role of language are recognized. We often do not attend to how language influence the way we perceive the world and how we think (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Giri, 2006).

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein; *"the limits of my language are the limits of my world"* (Lustig & Koester, 2010:165). How we think about and how we perceive our surrounding is dependent on the words we have at our disposal. If we do not have a word for something it can be a challenge to communicate to others about it and it might not even make sense to us. We need labels to communicate and in different languages different words can contain different meanings. This coincides with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relatively where how individuals think is determined or at least influenced by language. Language is our medium of expression in the society and there is a clear relationship between language and how we experience the world. Variations in vocabulary plays a part in understanding when it comes to language and an example of difference in perceptual understanding is the great number of words for snow in the Eskimo language compared with the numbers of words for the same phenomena in the English language. The different words for snow in this example have altered meanings and therefore it can be challenging when it comes to understanding for individuals communicating because of different references (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

2.3   *Bilingualism and multilingualism*

The field of bilingualism and multilingualism is a complex and broad field, the research is focused on not only the use of two or more languages and the individual pluralingual´s knowledge but also at the cultural and social consequences of the use of more than one language within a society. The terms bilingual and multilingual needs to be understood from a multidimensional aspect. Research in the field has increased in the recent years and there are a growing number of researchers arguing that instead of using bilinguals as a term entailing multilingualism there is a need of a distinction between the two. The definitions of bilingualism are many. Simplified the term bilingualism is referring to the use and knowledge of two languages and the term multilingualism to the use and knowledge of three or more languages. But here we can identify the question of degree in how competent an individual are when it comes to communicating in a second or third language and the degree of fluency, performance and understanding that different definitions entails. According to Valdés and Figueroa (1994) bilingualism is defined as *"an individual (who) possesses more than one language competence".* According to Haugen (1953) the definition is individuals who *"can produce complete meaningful utterances in other language".* According to Bloomfield (1933) bilinguals are individuals who have a *"native like control of two languages"* (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013:111). Newer definitions have provided more room for greater variations of competence when it comes to bilingualism, but there is still not one categorization that is agreed upon within the bilingual field. Today there are more bilingual speakers in the world than monolinguals and the number is increasing as the process of globalization is occurring around the world. People recognize the advantage of knowing more than one language and it will be even more important to be at least bilingual in the future. Bilingualism and multilingualism lead to both opportunities and obstacles when it comes to intercultural and interpersonal exchanges in the global world. At an individual level bilingual or multilingual competence can broaden possibilities, but when there are many languages there are also communicative problems at hand and therefore translations and lingua francas are required (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013).

Bilingual individuals communicating with each other using two or more different languages within one conversation is referred to as code-switching (Meierkord, 2012; Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013; Lustig & Koester, 2010). The choice of language to be used in an interaction for a bilingual communicator in a particular interaction can depend on different factors, such as the conversation partner; which includes social roles and relationships, the context of communication, topic of conversation, attitudes towards the language used or the purpose of the interaction (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013; Lustig & Koester, 2010).

The comprehension, acquisition and production of the native language of an individual enable the bilingual to understand and learn a second language, therefore significant influences on communication originates from the native language (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013; Lustig & Koester, 2010; Giri, 2006). Evidence has suggested that both languages of the bilingual communicator are active when only one is required. It is virtually impossible to ignore the language not in use and parallel activation of two languages can at times lead to cross-

language interactions that influence the comprehension of words and sentences. Several languages consists of words that translated have the same meaning, but there are also words that are similar but have very different meaning which can lead to conflict in comprehension for the bilingual individual (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). When it comes to cross-cultural communication styles and problems related to language difficulties Munter (1993) has identified four possible issues that can occur; semantics, word connotations, tone differences and difference in perception. Issues that can occur as a result of sematic refers to that the meaning of a word is not the same for all individuals, barriers caused by word connotations refers to that word can imply different things in different languages (Giri, 2006). Within an organization it is important that every individual recognize the same meaning when it comes to the concept used since otherwise individuals can communicate about different things without being aware of it (Lindelöw, 2008). Tone difference refers to the formality and informality of tone use depending on culture; to use an informal tone, even if it is common in the culture one originates from can in another culture where a formal tone is expected lead to negative consequences. Difference in perception refers to how individuals from different cultures view the world, and how we view the word is influenced by our language. There is not to be forgotten that communication style also differ depending on in what context an individual are within; businesspeople, scientists and artists do not communicate in the same way (Giri, 2006). It is also important to understand that within a group of individuals different jargons can emerge. A jargon is a specialized form of vocabulary, a set of terms or words that can be shared by those with common experience or profession (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

The conception of belonging and allegiance clearly intertwines with language. In addition to providing an instrumental value language is the medium of group narrative and a representation of culture and traditions. An identity is a socially constructed self-representation that is performed through the use of language; it is through language we express ourselves as individuals. Therefore knowing more than one language can lead to branching in terms of group belonging and identity since bilingualism links an individual to more than one ethno cultural community and can thereby lead to allegiances to different language groups (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013).

2.4   *English as a Lingua Franca*

The concept of English as a lingua franca is in its formative stage and research in the field is relatively new, nevertheless the there is an increasingly body of research in a range of contexts drawing on corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. Lingua franca can be defined as communication between individuals in a language that is not the native language of any of the communicators. It is the use of an international recognized language that facilitates communication between individuals with different native languages (Mauranen, 2010; Meierkord, 2012). Studies in lingua franca often focus on linguistic features and sociolinguistic parameters as attitudes and norms (Mauranen, 2010).

The importance of English as an additional language when it comes to communication is given an increasingly vital role and English as a global lingua franca has become one of the

symbols of our time. Even though English as a lingua franca have been relatively little studied the subject has been largely debated. The use of English has been seen as a way of efficiency when it comes to the business world and a positive aspect when it comes to communication between individuals from different countries. At the same time the use of a global lingua franca in English has also been seen as a hazard for local cultures and languages and a threat to Standard English (Mauranen, 2010).

The need of a common global lingua franca was first articulated in the 1950s as a result of a great amount of international institutions that came to being. The business- and academic world required the adoption of a single global lingua franca since generating and sharing knowledge is of great importance within these communities and translation process across multiple languages can lead to difficulties. English as a lingua franca is strongly associated with trade and business. Business lingua franca has become a concept where the language in this context is not so much associated with a particular national culture, but with specific professional collectives with certain vocabulary and practices (Tietze, 2008).

Native speakers are in a minority when it comes to the use of English today and English as a lingua franca is used in multiple companies as a corporate language to enable employees in global companies from different countries to communicate (Meierkord, 2012). When it comes to international communication evidence have suggested that non-native English speakers can better adjust their language for people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds than native speakers can. This is referred to as the native speaker problem and indicates that there will not be an advantage to speak English as a first or only language once a majority of educated people in the world speak English as a second language, this because of competent second language speakers often speak in a more comprehensive way that native speakers. Second language speakers are often competent when it comes to accommodate their language to suit different communication contexts. Because of the wide spread of English in the world we can identify different varieties of English with difference in grammar, use of sounds and vocabulary which can have an impact on international communication (Mauranen, 2010). The numbers of English variations that come into contact have increased and so have the contexts in which they occur, therefore the language is not spoken in a homogenous code but rather across various varieties. Meierkord (2012) have instituted an approach called "Interaction across Englishes" that assumes that English potentially can merge in interactions among communicators speaking in different variations of English and thereby develop new emergent varieties of the language. The new varieties can be shared by a group of individuals and be consciously or subconsciously recombined into new linguistic systems (Meierkord, 2012). We can also identify different levels of competency in English when it comes to second language speakers. Misunderstandings can occur on the basis of assumptions from English as lingua franca speakers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds; since when interpreting meaning the communicators rely on their native culture, norms and mother tongue instead of a common knowledge base (Mauranen, 2010). But according to Meierkord (2000) lingua franca communication in English is *"a form of intercultural communication characterized by cooperation rather than misunderstanding"* (Meierkord, 2000:11). This can have to do with proactive work as speech management conducted by the communicators to prevent

misunderstanding and for the purpose of reaching mutual understanding. To do this there are different strategies that can be used; repair strategies such as repetition, reformulation and paraphrasing (Mauranen, 2010).

2.5 *Culture and cultural differences*

According to Kroeber and Kluckholm (1952) term *"culture refers to all characteristics common to a particular group of people that are learned and not given by nature."* (Allwood, 1985:1). According to Allwood (1985) we can differentiate between four dimensions that can vary between cultures; patterns of thought, patterns of behavior, patterns of artifacts and imprints in nature. Patterns of thought can be explained as values, norms, factual beliefs and emotional attitudes and patterns of behavior as common ways of speaking and behaving within a culture (Allwood 1985).

According to Lustig and Koester (2010) culture is a set of shared interpretations which means that culture exists in the mind of people, not just in their behaviors. Culture affects how we think and feel, what we consider important and not and provide rules for appropriate behavior. If a relatively large group of people share symbolic ideas a culture can be formed. A culture involves common beliefs, social practices, norms and values that are stable over time which together provide a way of life and establish predictability in human interactions. Values are acquired in an early age and when a child is about ten years old most of the basic values are programmed in his or her mind (Hofstede et al, 1990). When a large group of people share interpretations about values, norms and beliefs it provides guidelines about how to behave and what things mean and therefore affect behavior. Cultures can vary in the degree in which individuals are encouraged to make direct statement or ask questions. Social practices or predictable behavior patterns within a culture form expectations and become a basis of making predictions about others. To develop competence in intercultural communication it is extremely important to understand difference in culture, or in another word to understand cultural patterns. Cultural patterns are rather unconsciously experienced by its members in social practices than consciously taught and it should not be forgotten that a culture consists of individuals and as such there are not two individuals who think and act in the same precise way, but within a culture there tend to be a similarities. Cultures with similar patterns are more likely to have similar communication patterns and cultures with dissimilar patterns are more likely to have different communication patterns (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

Preferred conversation distances can largely vary from culture to culture. This is referred to as proxemics which is the perception of social and personal space. How individuals respond to and use spatial relationships in formal and informal group settings as well as touching behavior are of great importance when it comes to nonverbal behavior. Other factors that can effect communication in different ways can be facial expressions where different emotions are displayed, eye behavior as when or how long we look at others during interactions and vocal behavior which refers to how something is said which can be changes in pitch, rhythm, loudness or even silence (Knapp, 2006).

An important contribution to research about the relationship between culture and communication is Edward T. Hall's (1959) high- and low-context cultural taxonomy. This taxonomy organizes cultures according to the amount of information implied by the surrounding context of the communication regardless of the spoken word. According to this taxonomy cultures differ on a continuum from high to low context. In high-context cultures the meaning of a message is often presumed to be a part of the individuals' values, norms, beliefs and social practices or implied by the physical setting rather than by the use of explicit messages. There is a large emphasis on nonverbal codes and meanings are internalized, almost preprogrammed within the individuals belonging to the culture, which means that people already know that the communicative behavior in a specific context have a specific and particular message and are therefore often interpreted correctly, leaving little chance for wrong interpretations. In high-context cultures messages are coded in a way that it is assumed to be shared and therefore there is no need to be explicit and transmit a message verbally. Much of the meaning in messages in high-context cultures are embedded in the rituals, traditions and rules of situations with specific expectations of behaviors, therefore it is very easy to determine who is a member of a group and is following the norms and who is not. High-context cultures are for example the Japanese, Chinese and Mexican. Low-context cultures on the other hand prefer to use low context messages when communicating, where more information is revealed in the explicit code which means in the precise words that individuals use. Low-context cultures are for example Swedish, English and European American cultures. Reactions of culture members in a low-context culture are often very explicit whereas reactions in a high-context culture are likely to be reserved. In high-context cultures sustaining harmony among the participants is one of the major purposes of communicating and unconstrained reactions could threaten harmony and make individuals loose face or social esteem. In low-context cultures explicit messages are seen as preferable since it helps to achieve goals and an important purpose in low-context cultures are regarded to be to convey exact meaning when communicating. (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Burgoon et al, 1996).

According to Giri (2006) culture and communication greatly influence each other and neither concept is to be seen in static terms. Changes that occur in the society are reflected in the behavior of individuals and in the culture in which they live. Culture is in in an ever changing process where individuals frequently negotiate and renegotiate meaning of value systems and the cultural concept (Giri, 2006).

2.6   *Company culture*

According to Killman (1989) organizational culture is *"the social or normative glue that holds an organization together. It consists of values and beliefs that some groups organizational members come to share."* (O'Hair et al, 2011:19). An organizational culture represent norms, motives, actions and philosophies that an organization values. It is about shared understanding and meaning within an organization that provides a framework or a pattern of understanding in which the members can comprehend situations and particular

events in a cohesive manner. Common rituals and norms can help in creating a shared understanding and knowledge of the organizational culture can generate a sense of purpose for its members (O'Hair et al, 2011). Hofstede (1991) considers organizational culture to be "the collective programing of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another" (Hofstede, 1991). Company culture can be defined as characteristics in an organization (Smirchich, 1983) and according to some researchers companies can obtain a higher productivity by regulating employees with a strong company culture (Eikssson-Zetterquist et al, 2006). Company culture has acquired a status similar to strategy, structure and control (Hofstede et al. 1990). Developing a strong company culture can according to Deal and Kennedy (1982) enhance business success by improving organizational and individual performance. The key concepts of a strong culture are; values, heroes, rites and rituals and cultural networks (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). With values the authors refer to shared visions and beliefs among members in an organization. Values are important since they control and guide performance and helps when it comes to motivation. Heroes refer to individuals that through myths and stories exemplify the values of the organization. Heroes are visionaries of the company that provides role-models for others and symbolizes possible success. Rites and rituals are ways that the organization celebrates its values and cultural networks is the communication system within the company with both formal communication channels and informal interactions through which cultural values are instituted and reinforced. A strong company culture can lead to enhancing employees' satisfaction and to ensure that employees work harder (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

According to Korte (2009) socialization and staff introduction into a company is central when it comes to individuals becoming functional members of an organization. Socialization of newcomers is a critical process that influences learning, satisfaction, performance and commitment to the organization (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992). In addition to learning procedures within the organization and job tasks it is also important for a newcomer to learn to interact successfully with colleagues and the need for relational communication can be seen as a individuals need for growth and social relatedness (Korte, 2009). Organizational practices and values are learned through workplace socialization (Hofstede et al. 1990). To be socialized into a working environment is partly about incorporating formal knowledge but also informal knowledge such as values, identification and loyalties (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2000).

There is an economic imperative for intercultural competence in the professional environment because of the fact that global corporations can move employees from one country to another leading to a workforce consisting of different nations. Coworkers, clients and business-partners might have different cultural backgrounds and different views of what is appropriate and important therefore intercultural competence can lead to a greater level of success when communicating (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

2.7   *Intercultural communication*

Communication between people of different cultural background is referred to as intercultural communication and is according to Allwood (1985) an important precondition for human co-existence. Allwood defines the concept as; *"the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between people of different cultural backgrounds"* (Allwood, 1985:1). In an expanding global economy an ability to communicate with individuals from other cultures can be seen as the primary skill that allows us to function productively in the global society (Chen & Starosta, 2005). When communicating with individuals from other cultural backgrounds different aspects have to be taken into consideration which is not necessarily equally relevant when communicating with someone from the same cultural background as one self. Cultural dimensions that need to be addressed are patterns of thoughts, norms, values, beliefs, emotional attitudes, patterns of behavior, common ways of speaking and behaving that can differ depending on cultural background (Allwood, 1985). According to Knapp (1995) communicators from different cultural background are to a large degree not aware of differences of different communicative norms and behaviors depending on cultural background (Meierkord, 2012). Being aware of differences can provide a base for constructive communication and help to lessen misunderstandings. There are for example a great difference in how individuals from different cultures communicate through their body language and how they read others nonverbal communication. Gestures can mean different things in different cultures and convey different meanings which can lead to different interpretations. The intensity in how individuals express emotions through body language or prosody also differs and since we interpret what we experience through our own cultural filter which can lead to misunderstandings (Allwood, 1985). Misunderstanding refers to when a receiver connects incoming information with stored information but make incorrect interpretations of what have been communicated. A misunderstanding might not always be detected by the participants of a communicative event which can be related to strong expectations about the content of a message. If a misunderstanding occurred as the individual received information it can potentially influence the individual in the sender role on a later occasion. Feedback in the forms of nodding or "aha" might be given as an indication for the speaker to continue to speak, but can be misunderstood as a common understandings have been reached. If misunderstanding is perceived there are different strategies that can be used, such as articulate an interpretation by paraphrasing something said to the sender of the message to see if the interpretation is correct, to request for a clarification of the intended meaning from the sender or to indicate failure to apprehend and thereby make the sender aware of the problem (Allwood & Abelar, 1984).

Difficulties that can emerge from intercultural communication are for example when the communicators lack shared pre-understanding and relevant common cultural background, when there is difference in values, norms or beliefs which can lead to difficulty to make sense of the other. Difference in expectations in how to behave can also lead to difficulties. Different cultures have different norms when it comes to situations as greetings and the amount of bodily contact that are permitted and what is seen as polite (Allwood, 1985).

To be aware of different face saving strategies used by individuals from different cultures can also facilitate understanding in intercultural communication. According to Ting-Toomeys (1985) face-negotiation theory; a set of communicative behaviors that individuals use to regulate their social dignity or to challenge or support others social dignity is referred to as facework. "Face" in this context refers to the social self and the self-worth an individual wish others to have of him or her. Facework has been linked to compliance-gaining, complementing, politeness, embarrassment and apology to mention some concepts. How facework is enacted differs between cultures, but Ting-Toomey assumes that individuals in all cultures in every communication situations try to maintain and negotiate face. Individuals from individualistic cultures tend to use more self-oriented face-saving strategies whereas individuals from collectivistic cultures tend to use more other-oriented face-honoring and face-saving strategies (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Good intercultural training can enhance understanding of others point of view, improve sense-making, create enjoyment when interacting with individuals from other cultural backgrounds and can lead to establishing relationships (Chen & Starosta, 2005). According to Allwood (1985) a solution for the problem of understanding in intercultural communication is to use a third language, like English, that none of the communicating parties master sufficiently. Doing so the communicators now have to attempt to master a third cultures way of speaking and thinking that is foreign to them both which can lead to positive effects as equalization of power. There are also negative consequences of using a third language since there is a greater risk of misunderstanding. But at the same time the communicators might have a caution in reacting because of a greater awareness of misunderstandings occurring when communicating in another language than the native. To gather a good insight into different cultures differences and similarities is a first step to reduce risk of misunderstandings in intercultural communication (Allwood, 1985).

3. Methodology

3.1 *Methodological approach*

The method used in this study is a qualitative method. Qualitative research focuses on the subjective understandings of the respondents in intent to get a comprehension of the unique experiences and emotions of the individuals (Silverman, 2010). A study can more or less capture reality, but if the right individuals are interviewed and the questions asked is relevant to the topic at hand the validity can be considered high (Svenning, 2003). The conclusions drawn in this study is based on data from interviews and therefore the validity of the study is considered to be good. A high reliability refers to the level of consistency when it comes to the measurement instrument in which the data have been collected. If two studies are conducted with the same purpose and with the same methods the end result should be the same (Svenning, 2003). In this aspect the reliability of the study can be considered low.

3.2   *Selection of respondents*

Qualitative studies are often used to exemplify rather than to generalize which is the purpose of quantitative studies and therefore the criteria for collection of respondents are often selective (Svenning, 2003). The respondents selected in this study are six professionals working in a global company within one and the same global team. The respondents primarily work with communication in a shared support service center where they provide different services to the rest of the company with locations in different countries. Four of the respondents' native language is Swedish and two of the respondents have other languages as native. None of the respondents have English as a native language which is considered to be of essence for this study. Five of the respondents are located in Sweden and one in France.

3.3   *Method of data collection and analysis*

The data collected originates from interviews which were made in two separate phases. The first interview phase was a semi structured group interview with some predetermined questions and with room for open ended questions, conducted in English with four respondents at their workplace. Qualitative interviews usually tend to be conducted in a rather informal pattern of questioning with a prepared set of questions that is used as a guide for the interview and where the pace of the encounter is set by the respondents (Silverman, 2010). The reason for interviewing four respondents instead of six in the first phase had to do with availability. The interview was interactive where the respondents were free to ask each other questions in addition to the researchers'. The interview was conducted face to face with the respondents to make sure that nonverbal behaviors were not overlooked. The group interview was recorded and later transcribed into data. The respondents were asked if further questions were allowed on a later occasion to clarify answers concerning the research question if it was necessary, which was approved.

When analyzing the data collected, the recording was also listened to for the purpose of facilitating a greater understanding, to provide difference in prosody and to examine if something neglected the researchers attention during the group interview.

The second phase of the data collection was made through additional interviews. To gain further information structured individual interviews was conducted with the same respondents that was present in the group interview and with two additional colleagues that also work within the same global team; via e-mail. Two additional members was included to get a greater understanding when it comes to the research questions wished to get answered and to investigate if there were any inconsistencies compared to the result from the group interview. Six respondents felt sufficient to the research because of the rich amount of data received during the interviews. According to Silverman (2010) qualitative research interviews tend to work with a small number of cases and instead of looking for facts that can be generalized researchers search for peoples understanding (Silverman, 2010).

3.4 *Ethical considerations*

Before the interviews was conducted the respondents was provided a document where confidentiality and anonymity was ensured. This coincides with the meaning of informed consent which means that subjects must be fully informed about the intended possible use of the research. They also have to be informed about the purpose and methods used and what risk their participation entails so that they can make an informed decision about their possible involvement. This information is to be provided in written form (Silverman, 2010) which it was.

The respondent was informed that the recording and all material in forms of transcriptions from the group interview and individual interviews was to be destroyed after the finalization of the study. The quotations wished to be included in the result of the study were sent to the respondents for approval of use.

The company was renamed to Company X, the working group Team X and the respondents were assigned letters from A to F for the purpose of anonymizing. After the quotations the respondents letter is presented in this study and also an I (individual interview) or a G (group interview).

4. Results and analysis

The results from the interview base are presented below. The section begins with an explanation of the use of English within the company; this is done to give a framing of how important the use of a common corporate language is for the respondents as they conduct their work at the global company. This is followed by a section of issues and positive aspects when using a common corporate language in the professional setting; this is done to provide an oversight of the implications experienced by using a corporate language. To conclude the results analyzed from the interviews is a section that provides other aspects of communicating in a corporate language that can have an impact on communication between colleagues from different linguistic backgrounds.

4.1 *Information about the company*

Company X is a part of a large global concern that has it's headquarter in Sweden. The concern use English as a corporate language in all the countries it resides in and has a clear company culture that considers diversity as a way to success. Company X employs about 3'000 employees and conduct its work in about 60 different countries.

4.2   *Use of corporate language*

To use English as a corporate language when communicating with colleagues from other countries is according to the respondents a productive tool for reaching common goals and objectives in a useful manner since it leads to a greater understanding for each other and facilitates cooperation within the company.

4.2.1   *English as a corporate language*

"English is the corporate language. It is spoken in most Company X groups except the ones dealing with the local markets. Team X, where we work, is a shared service center. We work globally and work in English every day." (AI)

"Usually a meeting has a specific purpose and it is possible having a common language to use to be able to communicate and reach the objective of the meeting." (FI)

According to the respondents they come in contact with colleagues from different countries on a daily basis since the groups function provides services, delivers finances and Human Resources to colleagues within the whole company which has facilities around the world. In addition to providing services from the headquarter which is located in Sweden the respondents also travel abroad conducting meetings with colleagues in different countries. Travelling to different locations where the company resides in can be seen as an approach to manage the complex interconnections between business- and cultural systems that emerge within a global company with international presence in the world (Miller, 2012; Scholte, 2005; Hofstede, 1991). The corporate language is used in several different communication channels as; face to face interactions, e-mails, online calls and written documents to mention some. The respondents expressed many times that working in such a global environment requires the employees to have proficient language skills to be able to communicate in a productive manner. In a global company communication is crucial to make sure that goals and objectives are reached as an interconnected unit. Among the challenges facing global companies is to ensure that messages are interpreted cohesively through the organization and therefore there is a need to create systems of understanding with the desired end result of shared meaning and mutual understanding (Miller, 2012; O'Hair et al, 2011). To be able to actively communicate with colleagues from different linguistic backgrounds a common language is required to enable cooperation. When it comes to the business world the use of English have been seen as a way of efficiency and enablement when it comes to collaboration and therefore several global companies use English as a corporate language (Mauranen, 2010). Company X uses English as a corporate language which is not the native language for the majority of the employees and therefore bilingualism is of essence. Bilingualism can broaden possibilities for exchanges in a global world, but when there are several different languages spoken within a company context communication problems can occur, therefore translations and lingua francas are required (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013).

According to the respondents English is used all from half the hours of a working day to 80-100% of the day. Most of the respondents answered that English is used at least 80 % of the day and that the exception is when communicating with a Swedish colleague. The one respondent that answered half the time gave the reason that English is not always used in daily office interaction with colleagues if they do not have foreign visitors, but that English is used in email interactions and online calls during the day. The difference in answers might be related to a slight difference in work descriptions.

"When I speak to my Swedish colleagues I speak Swedish off course. But when I write emails to people who are Swedish and English I write in English." (CG)

E-mail interactions are according to the respondents mostly conducted in the corporate language even if the message is to be sent to as Swedish colleague so that there is no need for translation if forwarding the message to someone else within the company. Using the corporate language in the high extent as the company do in the professional setting, with documents and communication conducted in English is according to the respondents timesaving and leads to a more productive workplace where there is no need to translate written communications and documents since it is already conducted in English and can therefore be understood by the global workforce as a whole. Writing notes in meetings, presentations and e-mails are conducted in the corporate language for the reason of efficiency. Lingua franca communication in English can enable communication and lead to a higher degree of cooperation and adapting to a common corporate language can facilitate coordination problems by simplifying access to company documents between units in different locations which can lead to minimized miscommunication (Marschan-Piekkari et al, 1999; Mauranen, 2010; Meierkord, 2010).

"If there are only Swedish people in a meeting or coffee break we speak Swedish, but if there is a non-Swedish speaking person in the room we speak English." (CI)

The respondents revealed that the native language of the country is mostly used in informal settings such as chatting online on the company intranet with colleagues that also speak Swedish or in coffee breaks. They also mentioned that if an individual that does not understand Swedish is present when communicating the corporate language is used to include all employees. This can be referred to as code-switching where the choice of language used by bilingual speakers depends on the conversation partners included in the context of communication or the purpose of the interaction (Meierkord, 2012; Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013, Lustig & Koester, 2010).

The respondents mentioned many times that the work conducted is very global and an unanimous perception within Team X is that it would be impossible to use Swedish as a corporate language because of the work conducted communicating internationally within a global position with colleagues in different locations around the world. At the same time they mentioned that there can be exceptions of this in Team X and that Swedish can be used in meetings if it is understood by all the participants. It can also be necessary for the company to use the native language of the country occasionally; an example is when it comes to union

documents and some financial documents as tax. This is not specific for Sweden as a country, it also occurs in other countries within the company because of legal restrictions. According to the respondents the language used depends on the message that needs to be delivered, but in most cases the corporate language is used.

"I do not even think about the language, it is just very common in my workplace to use English at work. I feel confident speaking English." (AI)

"It has come to that point that I think in English." (DG)

The use of English as a corporate language has led to a habit in the extent that most respondents do not even contemplate that they use another language than their native. According to the respondents a majority of them think in English at times when it comes to the professional setting. When a competent bilingual individual is communicating evidence has suggested that both languages are activated even though only one is required (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). Since the respondents use English as a corporate language and therefore use their second language in a higher extent than their native in the professional setting the language activated can just as well be their second language as it can be their native. The native language often has an influence on communication and how we think, but proficient bilinguals can be influenced by their second language as well as their first.

4.2.2   *Translations*

"Whenever we ask a question to a service-organization we automatically get an email back saying: remember to write in English." (AG)

Belonging to a shared service center Team X is in constant contact with other locations, as Poland, Brazil, Japan, France and India for example. According to a respondent there are contact centers and helpdesks in other countries that ensure that communication is conducted in English, this could be seen as an indication of the importance of communicating in the corporate language. Being able to communicate with individuals from other linguistic backgrounds is seen as a primary skill that allows us to function in a global society (Chen & Starosta, 2005). But even though the corporate language is to be used within the company in most contexts some documents can still be translated into the native language of a country to make sure that it is fully understood by all intended receivers.

"We need to be very careful if we are writing a document, for example a strategy-document and we then have it translated into English and then we will have it translated into French or to Polish. Then we need to secure that these written words are the same meaning in the translation. So we always have to check with some person in the market in Poland for example that really knows the content. If we are writing about a strategy the words can be a bit different to understand so it must be correctly translated. It is not just to do this Google-translation because a strategic word have a strategic wording and can be something else in if you are not sure that this is the right meaning of the words." (BG)

According to the respondents the importance of correct translations between languages cannot be stressed enough; not securing words can lead to great misunderstandings, especially when it comes to crucial document like a strategy document that must be complied with all employees within the company. Several words in different languages consist of similar words that indicate different things or have different implications which potentially can lead to conflict in meaning when translating from one language to another and thereby lead to difficulties (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013; Giri, 2006; Tietze, 2008). How we understands the world and the conclusions we draw upon it is dependent on the words we have at our disposal and variations in vocabulary in different languages and difference in individuals references can lead to dissimilar interpretations of what has been communicated (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Giri, 2006). If a word is misinterpreted it can lead to difference in comprehension as communication occurs and there might be a great risk for the misunderstanding to go undetected. A misinterpretation of a word or a sentence can thereby have an impact on the meaning of a message and lead to difference in expectations when it comes to, as in this example, how a strategy is to be understood and can lead to individuals communicating about different things without realizing it (Allwood & Abelar, 1984; Lindelöw, 2008). A misunderstanding can potentially influence an individual in the sender role on a later occasion (Allwood & Abelar, 1984) and as a result of that a misunderstanding can affect more than just the original receiver of the message which can lead to great misunderstandings within the company.

"We think we have a clear message, but the receiver has another reference when reading your message." (DG)

"We will have translators; otherwise we are not sure that the messages go through. It's that way in France and we have the same in Japan." (BG)

The respondents mentioned that there can be a slight difference in competence at times when it comes to communication in the corporate language within the company. In a global company all employees do not have the same skills when it comes to the use and comprehension of the corporate language (Marschan-Piekkari et al, 1999; Mauranen, 2010) and therefore to ensure that the receiver of a message comprehend what is intended to be shared a translator can help when it comes to facilitate understanding. An aspect that can effect communication experienced by the respondents within Company X when communicating with colleagues that also speak in a second language is the willingness and ability to communicate in the corporate language. According to the respondents at times there is a need for translators to be present to make sure that the message intended to be forwarded will be received in the correct manner. At some occasions when conducting meetings with a larger audience in other countries the respondents communicate in English and use translators translating in the background to the listeners to make sure that understanding is reached among all participants. Since we cannot say that communication has taken place if a message is not picked up (O'Hair et al, 2011) the use of translators can be seen as a tool to reach shared understanding.

4.2.3 *Company X-English*

"Company X- English. A Company X vocabulary- so when you're a new employee you will probably react." (BG)

"Geography is not a word in English, but people have started to use it and now I hear my colleagues in the US use it. So actually it is not a word from the beginning but it is a Company X-English word. So people use it all the time now. And everybody knows what it means, it means location." (AG)

A finding from the data collected is the use of a distinctive corporate language, which is referred to as "Company X-English", with special words containing company-specific meanings. In other words the employees at Company X are not just using a language that is used in the society and based on the national culture, but a language used in the company based on the company culture. This can be referred to as a company specific business lingua franca or a jargon which is a specialized form of vocabulary associated with a specific professional collective or individuals with common experience rather than with a particular national culture (Tietze, 2008; Lustig & Koester, 2010). According to the respondents there are some buzzwords they often use that are understood within the company context between colleagues which has emerged from employee interaction. When individuals from different linguistic backgrounds communicate in different "Englishes" the different variations of the language have the potentiality to merge into new emergent varieties of the language (Meierkord, 2012) and Company X-English can be seen as a good example of new words developed with meanings that are specific for a certain group of individuals.

As mentioned by a respondent, a new employee might react when it comes to the specific vocabulary and sentences used within the company, therefore learning the Company X-English can be seen as a part of the socialization process into the company culture where communication can be seen in a relational aspect and be central for social relatedness (Korte, 2009) and for transmitting informal knowledge such as identification, values and loyalties (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2000; Hofstede et al, 1990). A company culture can be seen as characteristics of an organization and it provides a framework of understanding for the members within the organization so that the members can comprehend situations in a cohesive manner (O'Hair et al, 2011; Smirchich, 1983). A strong company culture can enhance business success by improving individual and organizational performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Eriksson-Zetterquist et al, 2006). One of the key concepts of a strong company culture is cultural networks or the communications system within the company and communicating in a common corporate language is an instrument in which cultural values and a group feeling can be instituted and reinforced (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

"If we have contacts with translators and we perhaps ask for spellcheck. We have written our English and then we send it to them to correct this in a way. Then we say that you made this to advance. Use words that are familiar for us in Company X. Sometimes I change the odd or more advanced word til another word that is more familiar for us." (BG)

In this case three types of English can be identified within the company; ordinary English, advanced English and Company X-English. A respondent mentioned that the team at times send texts to translators and ask for a spellcheck, but if the language seems to be to advance in the document they might change the language to Company X- English. This is done to simplify for the reader and to make the language more recognizable for the Company X-employees.

4.3   *Effects on communication; issues and positive aspects*

Results from the analysis of data collected reveals that issues that might occur can be related to the level of fluency and competence when it comes to the second language communicators. That communicating in a common corporate language in the professional setting leads to a greater mobility, facilitates cooperation, makes the company feel more cohesive and leads to fewer misunderstandings. The use of a common corporate language opens up the world in a distinctive way and leads to learning outcomes for the employees.

4.3.1   *Difference when it comes to fluency*

"In Japan for example, people do not tend to speak English fluently." (AI)

"Only with colleagues in France and Korea. They don't have the same education level in English as we have. (DI)

In global companies consisting of employees with different linguistic backgrounds communication skills and ability to communicate in English can be clearly dissimilar, which can lead to difficulties when it comes to communication (Marschan-Piekkari et al, 1999; Mauranen, 2010). According to the respondents the different levels of fluency that can be identified when it comes to communication in English within the global company can at times be seen as an issue when it comes to the use of the common corporate language for second language speakers and this can have an impact on the intercultural communication. The wide spread of English in the world leads to difference in vocabulary, grammar and use of sounds that can lead to misunderstandings as a English as a lingua franca speaker interpret communication based on their own native language instead of a common knowledge base (Mauranen, 2010). We need to consider that there are alternative versions of all languages in form of difference in dialects, meaning of words and pronunciation that can have an influence when it comes to comprehension (Giri, 2006, Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). Aspects as pronunciation, accents and varieties in vocabulary can be challenging to understand and thereby communication flow and effectiveness when it comes to meetings can be affected. There are also different definitions of the term bilingualism that leaves gives room for variations of competence when it comes to the degree of fluency and understanding when it comes to the concept; all from possessing a native like control of two languages to producing meaningful utterances in other languages (Bhatia and Ritchie, 2013). When it comes to the level of fluency within Company X when it comes to other countries as for example Japan, a

respondent claimed that the reason for less fluency being identified when it comes to Japanese colleagues can have to do with that Japan is a new market and the colleagues there have not used English in a high extent before and therefore communication and English ability might improve in the future if given time.

"There tend to be a Company X- English that most people understand, that is an advantage. But as an editor I sometimes feel that I can't express myself at the same level in English as in Swedish" (CI)

"If I write something in Swedish that is my mother tongue of course I can write better and find the words in a better way than I can in English since that is not my native language." (CG)

A further aspect that can effect using a second language when communicating with colleagues from other countries is how to find words to communicate the message wished to be shared. According to the respondents to find words and express what needs to be communicated can at times be a challenge when using a second language, since the native language is the language the individual master to a full. This have to do with that the native language is learned without consciousness awareness and often taken for granted, it is first when we communicate in a new language that we realize languages central role in communication (Lustig & Koester, 2010). The comprehension and production of the native language enable a bilingual communicator to learn a second language and have significant influences on communication. There is a parallel activation of both languages at the same time as communicating in a second language which can influence the comprehension of words and sentences (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013; Giri, 2006; Lustig & Koester, 2010).

4.3.2 *Misunderstandings*

"Misunderstandings due to languages." (CI)

Misunderstandings do occur when using English as a corporate language, but according to the respondents using English as a second language can lead to advantages and the use of the corporate language often do not lead to more misunderstandings than the use of a native language do.

"I think it is an advantage and in the group that I work with, in, one of the countries is Australia and actually that is the accent that people have most problems understanding. The person who speaks English as a mother language has quite a strong accent that we are not always used to, that is the hardest for people to understand, so this is where the problems arise." (AG)

"We have a Scottish person in our management team at Real Estate and he has a really odd accent, but he is still an Englishman and he speaks very properly, but we have a very problem to understand him, so he often has to repeat and speak slower so that we other non- English people understand." (DG)

A result of the data collected was that the use of English as a second language in communication between colleagues leads to fewer misunderstandings than it does when a native speaker is communicating to a second language communicator. This coincides with Meierkords (2000) statement that lingua franca communication in English is characterized by cooperation rather than misunderstanding (Meierkord, 2000). The respondents mentioned that to be a native speaker of a corporate language can lead to advantages because of enhanced ability to communicate and express meaning easier than a nonnative speaker can, but as a result of this a native speakers do not always think about the language; what words are used and in which speed they are communicated in (Mauranen, 2010). According to the respondents different dialects and words can occasionally be hard to comprehend when individuals who use their second language is present in the conversation, but even so the hardest dialects to understand within the Company X collaborative groups is not non-native English speakers but colleagues with English as a native language. According to Allwood (1985) communicators might have a greater awareness of the risk of misunderstandings arising as using another language than their native and therefore have a greater caution anticipating it to occur (Allwood, 1985). Evidence have suggested that when it comes to international communication competent nonnative English-speakers are often more proficient when it comes to adjusting their language for individuals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to suit different communication contexts than native speakers. This is referred to as the native speaker problem where competent second language speakers often speak in a more comprehensive way than native speakers. The native speaker take the language for granted in a higher extent than a nonnative speaker do and therefore do not always perceive misunderstandings due to language (Mauranen, 2010).

4.3.3 *Equalized level*

"We are on same level when communicating." (DI)

According to the respondents using a second language when communicating with colleagues that also speak their second language can lead to a more relaxed atmosphere, since they are in the same situation when speaking a non-native language. Using a second language that is foreign for the communicative parties can lead to positive effects as equalization of power and the comprehension of differences and similarities between the communicative parties can be clearer (Allwood, 1985).

"I feel closer to them: it is really good to have a common language." (EI)

According to the respondents a common corporate language leads to a greater group feeling and a connection which enables cooperation in a higher degree. Language can be seen as the medium of group narrative and therefore strongly intertwines with the concept of allegiance and belonging (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). To have a common corporate language facilitates communication within the global company and is a part of the company context in which the employees create working relationships with individuals from other linguistic backgrounds.

In Company X documents, strategies and a common newsletter are written to all employees in the corporate language which is understood by all members, which can lead to a better overview, a sense of coherence and sensation of belonging to the company. As an instrument to pay attention to achievements Company X at times use diplomas to take notice of successful results obtained by the employees. This coincides with the development of a strong common company culture where the use of a common language in the communication systems within a company is one of the key concepts. According to Deal and Kennedy (1982) organizations uses methods as rites and rituals in which organizations celebrates and reinforces its values. Striving for the same vision can be challenging if there is no cohesive vision shared by the members of the organization but by developing a strong company culture it can improve organizational and individual performance and can therefore enhance business success and institute the company's values and vision (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

4.3.4   *Opens up the world*

"The English language is tying us together." (DG)

"It is an advantage to work for a global company and be able to meet people from all over the world. People with other experiences from other backgrounds." (CI)

According to the respondents the use of a corporate language opens up the world and ties the employees together. They revealed that being a part of a global company gives insight into other cultures and leads to a development of greater understanding for others. This coincides with Chen and Starostas (2005) statement that intercultural training can create enjoyment and lead to establishing relationships and enhance understanding from others point of view (Chen & Starosta, 2005). Parallels can also be drawn to the interpretation of globalization as universalism; where experiences and cultures are spreading over the world (Scholte, 2005). The respondents mentioned that in meetings they often take other employees culture into consideration and can at times adapt to their way of doing things. Team X also show colleagues from other cultures the Swedish customs of doing things at occasions, an example is to take a "fika" and communicate informally after a meeting. This is considered to be a tool for maintaining relationships and learn from each other as well as it is a part of the company culture of Company X. The use of a common corporate language makes it possible for cooperation between locations in different countries and facilitates a group feeling even if the company is large and there are a lot of employees working together in different countries. It can also help in creating a global mindset within the company (Briscoe et al, 2009). Being a part of a global company is according to one respondent addictive in the sense that the world is perceived as bigger, the world is shrinking and the work done is more interesting than it would be if the company only conducted its work within one country. According to the same respondent the work at Company X is challenging at times, but it is very stimulating. A common corporate language influences informal communication, relatedness and communication flow and can promote the development of a sense of belonging to a "global family" (Marschan-Piekkari et al, 1999; Korte, 2009). Using a common corporate language can facilitate one of the challenges facing a global company, which is reaching a common

understanding. When it comes to understanding in a multicultural workplace communication is of great importance to be able to make sure that messages are being interpreted the right way and that common goals are reached (Miller, 2012). A strong company culture can function as a generator of purpose for its members since it consists of values that organizational members share (O'Hair et al, 2011).

"There is opportunities that you can work abroad and to do other things. So that is a Company X opportunity that is an effect of a global company and how we are working with our policy to develop people." (BG)

"You meet a lot of people, even here in the office there are not just Swedish people. It feels like travelling without having to get on a plane." (AG)

Working in a global company leads to a larger working group and more relationships to take into consideration. Within company X there are employees working in different locations around the world striving for the company's goals. The use of a common corporate language can lead to a greater mobility for the employees and makes it possible to be able to work in another country than the native country of the employee which is considered to be an advantage according to Team X. This coincides with viewing globalization as internalization with growing movements of ideas and people between countries (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). The respondents have colleagues that used to work at the Swedish office but now conduct their employment abroad with similar job description within Company X. Two of the respondents interviewed in Team X have other origins than Swedish but by using English as a corporate language makes it not only possible to work together as a team but also leads to an advantage were the best individuals for the job can work together regardless of native linguistic background. Company X has a global strategy where the goal is to develop employees and considers diversity as a way to success. According to Briscoe et al (2009) a common company culture can derive from creating a transnational strategy for the company where the outlook is to create a global network for the employees, this globalization strategy referred to as geocentrism and can create a notion of context. In doing so different groupings are often integrated in the form of formal networks by for example incorporating transactional services, as establishing intranets and by delivering HR services in the form of shared service centers for all locations within the organization to support a cohesive company culture. Creating a culture of learning and nurturing, also called a good working environment, can lead to advantages since the glue that holds a global company together can be said to be the intellectual and social capital of the employees and their ability to share knowledge on a global basis (Briscoe et al, 2009; Sandberg, 2003). In a contextual perspective learning occurs in social and relational contexts when individuals participate in daily activities (Ellström & Hultman, 2004). To travel and meet colleagues in other contexts than the own office can contribute to learning for employees. There is an economic imperative for intercultural competence in a global company when a corporation consists of a workforce of different nations where employees can be moved from one country to another (Lustig & Koester, 2010). By recognizing the importance of developing the employees, offer opportunities in form of the possibility to work at other locations and by creating a company culture with

values that a majority of the employees share, a company can thereby create a stimulating environment that can lead to loyalty and commitment.

4.3.5   *Learning outcomes*

"You have to be careful and you can ask control questions back; do you understand or are you wondering and use examples for avoiding misunderstandings, so we have a dialogue to make sure." (DG)

"I think it can be a positive thing because you have to simplify your language when you write and be very clear in your message, because most other people don't have English as a mother tongue. Then you write very straight forward and don't complicate things, it could be another advantage too." (CG)

"I learnt that we need to secure that we understand each other." (EI)

Learning outcomes that the respondents' have gained using a corporate language is to be very clear as communicating, to make sure that messages come through in the intended way and to secure that understanding is reached, to speak slowly and not to overcomplicate communication or words if it is not necessary. To use control questions to avoid misunderstandings and to at some times apply follow-up strategies in the form of written communication to avoid misunderstanding. According to the respondents it is also important to take cultural differences in consideration and not to use irony and jokes until knowing a person. As mentioned earlier understanding individuals with English as a mother language can be an obstacle for a global workforce consisting of bilingual speakers with difference second language competence, according to the respondents, because of their use of difficult words and rapid speech pattern. According to Mauranen (2010) competent second language speakers of English is often skilled when it comes to adjusting their communication and make it more comprehensive to people with other linguistic backgrounds than themselves. Communicating in a second language often leads to an improved understanding of the risk of misunderstandings and therefore contributes to a greater awareness and caution when communicating. Second language speakers often use strategies as reformulation, request clarification, repetition, and paraphrasing to ensure that understanding is reached (Mauranen, 2010, Allwood & Abelar, 1984).

4.4   *Other aspects that effects communication*

After analyzing the results originated from the data collected findings of aspects in addition to language that effects communication when using a corporate language is culture, time difference, gestures and body language. There is an unanimous perception in the respondent group that cultural difference has the biggest impact on communication within the global company, more so than the use of a common corporate language that is not the native language of the respondents.

4.4.1 *Culture*

"I think that even though English is a foreign language for most of us, it is usually not a problem. The cultural differences we face are more of a challenge." (AI)

A result of the data analysis is that all of the respondents consider culture differences to be of greater significance than language when it comes to communicating with colleagues from different countries and this is something that was mentioned several times. Even though language influences a communicative activity difference in culture can function as a challenge if it is not being addressed. Culture affect what individuals consider as important and not, how they think and feel and form what is consider to be appropriate behavior and it also provides predictability and form expectations. Culture is the base of making predictions about others and not being aware of the cultural differences can lead to miscommunication and wrongly predictions (Lustig & Koester, 2010). But it needs to be taken into consideration that culture is in an ever changing process and changes within the society are mirrored in culture and play an important role in shaping communication (Giri, 2006). The respondents therefore need to be aware of changes in different cultures and in the society in which their colleagues live in.

"There is a cultural layer that we always need to keep in mind and be flexible." (EI)

"We have to think about it every time when we are going to a communication. How do we do this in the best way, who is the target-group and we have to think about the cultural-differences." (BG)

According to the data collected the respondents are very aware of cultural differences and are prepared for it to occur as they communicate with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. A helpful tool used in Company X according to one respondent is the GLOBE-database where the employees can learn how to communicate with an individual from another country in the most productive way and make a self-assessment of their own communicative skills connected to the country at hand. Using this tool the employees can learn how well they understand differences in cultures and it is a resource of finding ways to behave in another country. An example of cultural differences given by the group was the American way of communicating; using a lot of words and talking extensively in what a respondent called a "fluffy" manner. Also how they dominate a group, are excellent when it comes to rhetoric and are very straight forward, which can be different from other communicators from other cultures. Not being used to this kind of communicational pattern can lead to lack of understanding when it comes to communication within a global company that consist of different countries using different communicational patterns that they feel comfortable with. Difficulties can emerge when the communicators in intercultural communication lack relevant cultural background and shared pre-understanding of each other which leads to difference in expectations in how to behave. Being aware of cultural patterns and shared beliefs within a culture is a way of developing competence in intercultural communication (Allwood, 1985).

"You don't tell a joke in China in a formal meeting because it is not proper to do that. Then they are very confused. In our meetings we make jokes and try to be funny to have a relaxed meeting." (DG)

Another example of cultural differences given in the respondent group is China and the difference in culture compared to the culture of Sweden. In Sweden a meeting can be performed more informal than in China and there is a need to be aware of this difference as conducting a meeting with Chinese colleagues to get the best possible outcome in a communicational situation. Knowing how to behave in a cultural appropriate way can according to a respondent give an advantage when conducting meetings in the country at hand. The content of the discussion and different expectations about behavior is influenced by the context in which communication occur (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Allwood, 2001) and in a business meeting different individuals can have dissimilar references. The formality or informality of the tone used in a communicational event is different depending on which culture you come from. The use of an informal tone in a context where a formal tone is expected by members of another cultural background can influence communication negatively (Giri, 2006). Greeting the participants of a meeting in a cultural appropriate way is an example of cultural differences; in China the oldest person should always be greeted first which is a token of respect. An example of a specific cultural difference reported by a respondent were how to deliver a business-card in China; when delivering the card the individual are to use both hands and the receiver of the card are to take the card using both hands as well, this is a token of respect and very important within the culture. The business card is not just information about how to reach the individual but also symbolizes the identity of the individual. In Sweden this is not a part of the culture and it is of little importance, but in China it needs to be taken into consideration. These findings coincides with Edward T Halls (1959) high- and low-context taxonomy where cultures are organized according to the information implied by the surrounding context and not just my the words used. Sweden belongs to a low-context culture where messages are preferable transmitted in the explicit code whereas China belongs to a high-context culture where the meaning in a high extent is internalized by the members of the culture. In a high-context culture there is a large emphasis on nonverbal cues, social practices and the surrounding context rather than revealed in the explicit message, and the meaning of a message are in a high degree embedded in traditions, rituals and rules of a situation (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Burgoon et al, 1996).

According to a respondent a problem that can occur due to cultural differences is when it comes to questionnaires conducted within the company in different countries. A questionnaire must be adapted to the audience at hand and since there is a global work force within Company X this can be a challenge. Writing a questionnaire to an Asian audience must be relatable for them and they must feel comfortable when giving answers. In this situation the respondents needs to take culture into consideration to a larger extent than just adjusting the language for the target audience.

"Also, when we get answer back, are they answering in a way –are they honest in their answer or are they answering in a proper way that is expected for them to answer. Sometimes it doesn't give you that much." (BG)

Difficulties that can appear in intercultural communication can originate from difference in expectations of how to behave in different cultures and what is considered to be polite (Allwood, 1985). A respondent mentioned that in some cultures the polite way of answering is more important than it is to give an honest answer. There can also be a difference when it comes to reactions expressed by culture members of high- and low-context cultures and cultures varies in the degree in which members of the culture are encouraged to ask questions or to make direct statements. In high-context cultures, as China in this case, sustaining harmony is a major purpose of communicating and reactions and answers given are often more reserved than it is in a low-context culture (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Face saving strategies is also something to take into consideration when it comes to intercultural communication. Individuals from collectivistic cultures tend to use other-oriented face-honoring strategies to support others dignity and can do so by compliance (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). As mentioned by a respondent what can be understood as agreement or a hones answer can be a culture appropriate answer more concerned about not insulting the communicative partner than to be straight forward and answer what really is experienced within a situation.

4.4.2   *Time differences*

"Since we are a global company, we have global working hours. Regardless of the time, there is always someone in the world who is working." (AG)

"When we plan virtual meetings for example with our managers, we have two sessions; one in the morning for one time-zone and one in the afternoon." (BG)

According to the respondents an aspect that can affect communication when communicating with colleagues in the professional setting within a global company is time differences. Time differences between countries working together within a global company leads to non-overlapping working hours which can lead to a restraint when it comes to interactions between colleagues (Gleditsch, 1974). Working in a company that has employees in different countries with time differences leads to a necessity to be more flexible with time to make sure that the work is effectively conducted and the goals are reached. According to a respondent there are times that every individual that needs to be a part of a virtual meeting cannot attend because of the time differences and therefore strategies requires to be incorporated to avoid time loss; if the respondents needs to work with the Asian market they have to come in early and if they need to communicate with the US they have to stay late. This adaption is not one sided but goes both ways and other countries also have to adapt for the Swedish market.

"One example is IT. We have helpdesks in several countries. If there is something wrong with your IT equipment, someone is available to help 24 hours a day and 7 days a week (the contact details are the same for all locations). When the working day is over in India, Sweden takes over, and after that e.g. Brazil. All the time zones are covered and issues are solved much more quickly." (AI)

According to the respondents time differences is not primarily perceived as an issue, it can also lead to positive outcomes since if the group send a complicated question by e-mail to Japan for example, where the time difference is 8 hours, they can get an elaborated answer the next day which can lead to efficiency and a more productive work environment. Another positive aspect is that there is always someone available to help if it is needed since all time zones are all covered within the company.

4.4.3 *Gestures and body language*

"Gestures and body language can be misinterpreted." (FI)

When it comes to communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds there can be a difference in the nonverbal communication of the communicators that at times can be misunderstood. According to a respondent this is not considered to be an issue within Company X, but it needs to be taken into consideration when communicating. An individual who seek a lot of eye contact and is used to be near when communicating can find it difficult to communicate with another individual who prefer to have a greater distance between their communicative partner and themselves. In some cultures the perception of social and personal space can be smaller than in other cultures and individuals can respond by feeling uncomfortable when experiencing to be too close to another person (Knapp, 2006). Since communication takes place on several levels of awareness and we constantly send out signals about our feelings and attitudes (Allwood, 2001; Knapp, 2006) and we might not be aware of how what we communicate is perceived. According to Allwood (1985) there are different cultural dimensions as norms, common ways of speaking and patterns of behaving that needs to be addressed in intercultural communication that can affect comprehension and interpretation of messages being conveyed correctly. Common ways of behaving and speaking can differ depending on cultural backgrounds and being aware of difference can provide a foundation for constructive communication. The intensity in how individuals communicate through their body communication, express emotions, use gestures and prosody often differs depending on their cultural background. Individuals interpret patterns of behavior through their own cultural filter and therefore misunderstandings can occur if there is no awareness present (Allwood, 1985). Misunderstandings due to nonverbal communication can also be related to feedback being given in the communication in the forms of nodding or smiling where the sender of a message believe that the message been received correctly but the receiver might just have been nodding to be polite or to show that he or her were listening (Allwood & Abelar, 1984).

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this investigation my goal was to come to an understanding when it comes to the impact on communication between colleagues from different countries collaborating within a global company in a corporate language that is not their native. I also wanted to examine the issues and positive aspect concerning communication in a corporate language in the professional setting. To gain a result I first conducted a face to face group interview with four respondents working at a global company within the same team, and later sent out individual interviews via e-mail to the same individuals and also added two additional respondents that work within the same team to examine if there were any inconsistencies when it came to the answers. The result was that there were not any significant differences in answers from the respondents; the result was rather a difference in the amount of data collected since the group interview lead to a greater volume of information. To conduct the group interview before I sent out the individual interviews might have had an impact on the answers given, but at the same time the respondents that were not present during the first phase gave similar answers as their colleagues. Using one working group of professionals in focus to gain data can be seen as a limitation of my investigation because therefore any generalizations from the result cannot be drawn, but my intention was to gain a perspective of my research questions, not to draw generalizations. The group interview conducted provided an extensive basis of material and the contact with the respondents was experienced as positive with an open climate of dialogue.

As a result of the investigation, being a part of a global company with facilities around the world, functioning in such a global environment as the respondents do the use of a common corporate language enables communication and cooperation in a higher degree than the use of a native language would do. According to the respondents it would be impossible to use the native language of the country because of the global work conducted communicating internationally within a global position. Being in contact with colleagues from other countries on a daily basis leads to a necessity to use a common corporate language and without it collaboration would not be as productive as it is perceived at the present time. To use a common language in a meeting enable the employees of the company to reach objectives and company goals. Documents and e-mails are mostly conducted in the common corporate language which according to the respondents leads to a more productive workplace where the content can be understood by the global workforce. The use of the corporate language has according to the respondents led to a habit and the use of English has got to the point that some respondents even think in English when it comes to the professional setting

As a result of using English as a corporate language a distinctive corporate language have emerged in Company X with specific words that are only fully understood within the company context; the "Company X-English". The difference is not the language itself but words that are used in the company by the employees. Company X-English is a jargon that has emerged in the professional setting among the employees and is recognized by a large part of the employees. The company specific jargon could be related to socialization processes, common norms and it could also be seen as an indication of a strong company culture.

A further impact on communication which can be considered to be an issue when it comes to working in a corporate language can be seen as the level of fluency and competency when it comes to communicating in a second language. There is a wide spread of English that have led to difference in grammar, vocabulary and use of sound that can make communication hard to comprehend, not only by the individual who are not proficient when using English but also the proficient communicator who are to understand their communicative partner. Not only communication flow might be influenced when it comes to level of fluency but it can also have an impact on reaching shared understanding. There is impossible for all employees to be on the same level of competence when it comes to a common corporate language when it is the second language for most employees and there is difference in education levels in English within different countries. But on the other hand as an example given earlier when it comes to Japan which is a new market for Company X where English have not been used as a corporate language before, given time the level of fluency might improve.

Something that can become an issue if not being addressed when using a corporate language is translations from English to another language or the other way around where the message is translated in an incorrect manner. Even though English is a recognized corporate language within Company X there is still some occasions where documents needs to be translated into the native language of the employees to ensure that understanding is fully reached , an important example is when it comes to a strategic document. A strategic document must be complied with everyone working within the company and therefore securing words is of great importance. Similar words within a language can have different meanings and if translated to a word with another meaning than intended to it can lead to misunderstandings and dissimilar interpretations of a document. This can have a big impact on comprehension and effect cooperation between employees since they believe that they understand something in the same manner but have different references. A misunderstanding that is not detected can influence the perceived shared meaning which can lead to miscommunication within the company. The respondents are aware of the importance of correct translations, but if they had not it could clearly lead to negative consequences.

Despite of the fact that I tried to conduct the interviews as unprejudiced as possible I had a preconception that using a corporate language that is not the native of most of the employees within the global companies would lead to further misunderstandings than the use of a native language would. But as a result of the investigation the result was the opposite; according to the respondents using the corporate language do not lead to more misunderstandings than using the native language in the professional setting. One interesting finding from the data collected was that the use of English as a second language in communication between colleagues that communicate in their second or third language leads to fewer misunderstandings than it does when a native speaker of English is communicating. The hardest dialect to understand within two different collaborate groups in the company was not non-native English speakers but native speakers. Data revealed that being a non-native communicator led to a greater caution and an awareness of how words, phrases and nonverbal signs can be misunderstood and therefore ensuring that messages is being interpreted the right way is considered to be of essence. The respondents simplify their language as they

communicate and use control questions to secure communication, which can lead to an advantage in a communicative event. In the respondent group using English as a second language was seen as a positive aspect because of less misunderstandings occurring between the communicators. This can have to do with the respondents willingness to learn and develop communication, if no such willingness were present the outcome could be different and misunderstanding could occur in a higher degree. Of course misunderstandings are not always detected, but it seemed as misunderstandings were in a minimum according to the data collected.

According to the investigation another positive aspect of using a corporate language, or a second language, in the professional setting is that it leads to a feeling of a more equal level between the communicators. Being in the same situation when communicating in a non-native language leads to a sense of understanding of each other and leads to a higher degree of cooperation. Using a common corporate language facilitates a group feeling and a sense of belonging which ultimately leads to a stronger company culture. A positive aspect when using a corporate language according to the respondents is the opportunity to meet and work with people from all around the world, to learn new things and to develop a greater understanding of individuals from other backgrounds. The use of a common corporate language is tying the employees together in a high degree and makes the world shrink according to one respondent. Not having a common corporate language could lead to difficulties for a global company when it comes to cooperation and the respondents revealed that working in a global company is challenging at times, but it is also very interesting. Using a corporate language leads to opportunities in a global company that cannot be achieved if communicating in a native language within the same context; as the possibility to work in another country.

Another preconception I had was that I believed that language had the greatest impact on communication when communicating with colleagues from other countries when using a second language. According to the respondents language clearly influences communication in a global company, but cultural differences are far more challenging and something that is important to always keep in mind. Understanding differences in cultures and how to behave in a cultural appropriate way can according to the respondents lead to an advantage when communicating. The respondents communicate with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds at a daily basis and because of an awareness of cultural differences they are prepared for it to occur and adapt their communication. If the employees were not prepared for cultural differences or aware of them to exist communication could clearly suffer. Since I only interviewed one team within the company this doesn't mean that all employees are aware of cultural differences in the same degree as the respondents I came in contact with.

A further impact on communication within the global company is according to the respondents' time differences. Working in a global company with colleagues that do not work at the same time could be seen as an issue when it comes to communication, but according to the respondents it can also lead to positive aspects as efficiency. There are for example always colleagues available to assist in other countries and since all time zones are covered within the

company collaboration can lead to issues being solved faster than if only employees in one time zone were working.

A possible impact on communication according to a respondent is the misinterpretation of gestures and body language. There can be a difference in nonverbal behavior between individuals from different cultural background but according to the respondent this was not considered to be problem within the company, it was merely something to be aware of.

To conclude, using a common corporate language in a global company according to the respondents leads to a facilitation of communication and cooperation among the employees and enables them to reach company goals and objectives in a cohesive manner. There are issues with using a second language when communicating, but as long as there is an awareness of these issues and that they are dealt with in a constructive manner the positive aspects when using a corporate language is considered to be impendent beneficial.

6. Recommendations of future research

In my study I interviewed one working group within a global company. I recommend a larger inquiry to be conducted with a greater number of respondents and also to include respondents from other countries than Sweden to make a cross-comparison in how communicating in a second language is perceived by individuals from different linguistic backgrounds within the same company. In my study two respondents originated from other countries than Sweden, but since the team mostly conducted their work from a Swedish location there could still be beneficiary to gain an insight into how individuals who work in different locations experience the matter. It can also be of significance to conduct field observations to get an insight in how communication occurs and to be able to observe collaboration as it is happening.

To go even further I recommend interviews to be conducted with individuals from different companies that use English as a corporate language to make a comparison if second language communication is perceived different or similar between different companies. Does the company culture create a somewhat shared impression of the use of a second language or is it mostly dependent on linguistic and cultural background?

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8. Attachments

8.1 *Attachment1: Interview guide - Individual interview*

Individual interview

- What is your position within the company?
- What is your corporate language?
- How long have you worked at Company X and how long have you worked at your current position?
- What is your native language?
- Is English spoken at all levels at the company?
- Have you undergone language training?
- In how much of your work every day do you use the corporate language?
- How do you use English? By face to face interactions, phone calls, emails, documents, writing notes etc.?
- Are you always communicating within English in the professional setting?
- How do you experience working with English as the company language when it is not your native language?
- Is there a difference in how you experienced using a corporate language in the beginning and now?
- How do you feel when you communicate with coworkers from other countries that also speak their second (or third) language?
- Do you feel that using a corporate language is better than it would be to use your native language when it comes to the professional setting?
- Do you experience misunderstandings when it comes to using a corporate language (more so than using your native language)?
- When do you come in contact with colleagues from other countries? - How often does it happen?
- Do you have any examples of opportunities or positive outcomes when using a corporate language communicating with a colleague from another country?
- Do you have any examples of negative outcomes, problems or difficulties using a corporate language communicating with a colleague from another country?
- What have you learned in communicative situations with employees who speak a second language?
- Are there other things (than language) that affect communication when speaking to a person from another country in a professional setting within one and the same company?
- In your mind, is it time saving or time consuming to use a corporate language in a professional setting?
- Do you think in English or in your native language when it comes to work related issues?
- Can you talk as fluent when it comes to work in your native language as in English or do you think faster in English when it comes to your work?
- How do you think you would have experienced only communicating in your native language at the professional setting after having English as a corporate language?

8.2   *Attachment 2: Information about the interview*

Information about the interview

I am a student at "Master in Communication" at Gothenburg's University. I am at the moment writing my thesis with the working title: *Communicating in a second language in the corporate world.* As a part of the thesis I am conducting interviews to gain a better understanding when it comes to how individuals perceive communication when it comes to using a corporate language.

Something that can be good for you to know:

- The reason why I am recording the interview is for later transcribing the content and the result will be used as a part of my thesis.

- Everything you say is confidential and no one other than me will get access to the recording. Furthermore, I will destroy the recording when the essay is completed.

- Nothing you say will be traceable back to you personally; your name will be anonymous.

- Is there anything you would later like to add regarding the interview, you are welcome to contact me. I also hope that it's okay that I contact you if there is something I would need to clarify or ask.

- I will send an individual interview by e-mail, I hope that you want to participate, I would really appreciate it.

If you want a copy of the thesis I will send it to you when it is finished, which should be in early June.

Thank you for the participation!

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me:

/Sara Sternermark Petersén

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