

The Myth of Common Corporate Language - A Case Study of a Finnish MNC's Customer Support Team

International Business Communication

Master's thesis

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2014

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Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of communicational patterns within a single team of a Finnish multinational company, being the customer support team in the case company. Moreover, the study investigates internal interpersonal communication practices in absence of a written language policy. The aim of this study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of and challenges in CCL communication in MNCs. The research questions examine (1) the corporate language, (2) the use of corporate language, (3) the situations of language switches and (4) employees' opinions of language switches in the case company's customer support team.

Methodology

The study was based on a case study approach conducted as a qualitative research in the customer support team of a Finnish MNC. The data for the study was collected by interviewing 6 customer support team members (3 Finns and 3 internationals) and the internal communication manager. The data was analyzed with qualitative methods and categorized according to the research questions.

Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the common corporate language was a myth for most of the customer support team members in the case company. The case company practiced an indirect communication approach for corporate language issues meaning that the employees learned about the common corporate language through colleagues or by deducing about it from the context of situations. The indirect communication approach was determined to be ineffective. Moreover, the study showed that the case company lacked conformity in the communication of instructions on the common corporate language and that it did not specify any guidelines, neither in oral nor in written form. Furthermore, an affirmative attitude was expressed towards the use of other languages. In addition, a series of various situations of language switches from English to Finnish was detected that covered private and work-related conversations and included situations in which international employees were passively present as well as involved. The analysis of the customer support team members' opinions of language switches illustrated that both internationals and Finns had concerns that ranged from isolation of international colleagues to the hindrance of spread of tacit knowledge and negative effects on the team spirit.

Keywords: common corporate language, corporate language, language policy, multinational company (MNC), ELF, BELF, local foreign language, parent company language, language switches, international business communication, internal interpersonal communication

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ABBREVIATIONS

BELF – Business English as a Lingua Franca

CCL – Common Corporate Language

CL – Corporate Language

CST – Customer Support Team

ELF – English as a Lingua Franca

HR – Human Resources

ICM – Internal Communications Manager

NS – Native Speaker

NNS – Non-Native Speaker

LFL – Local (Foreign) Language

LP – Language Policy

MNC – Multinational Corporation

PCL – Parent Company Language

RQ – Research Question

1 INTRODUCTION

In the face of globalization the world has become ‘flatter’ and turned into an interconnected network. Cultures intermingle and business relationships become multifaceted as cross-border interactions and worldwide people movement are part of everyday life. Coming along with the global network, it is a relatively new phenomenon that corporations in all kind of regions have to communicate across borders and to deal with a multicultural and multilingual workforce. These changes and events have resulted in the fact that globally operating companies are confronted with a variety of languages, not only externally but also internally. Multinational Corporations (MNCs), for instance, deal with language diversity, not only when communicating with customers across borders, but also internally with their multicultural workforce in the headquarters as well as in their subsidiaries. Particularly these developments have led to the fact that researchers are now more and more interested in investigating the effects of the practice of different languages in workplace discourse (Nickerson, 2009).

The increasing interest in the confronting of internal communication with multilingualism is not surprising since a smooth communication flow is indispensable for a good company performance and the enabling of essential knowledge sharing among the workforce. Because of this language issues in internal communication are essentially important and have to be recognized in significance (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

Generally international business discourses, in external and internal communication, are carried out in English language as it serves a neutral communication ground for the parties involved (Nickerson, 2009; Tienari, 2009; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005). Numerous studies have been conducted on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as an intermediary communication tool (see e.g. Jenkins, 2000; House, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004 & 2005; Nickerson, 2005; Mauranen & Metsä-Ketelä, 2006), and particularly on its use for business purposes (Business English as a Lingua Franca –

BELF). Among the pioneers of BELF research are particularly Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen who have made big contributions to this research field (see e.g. Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

This study focuses on a specific trend currently occurring in international businesses communication, namely the adoption of English as the common corporate language (CCL). Due to the increasing dominance in business interactions in English most multinational companies (MNCs) adopt English as CCL (e.g. Charles, 2007; Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, & Pitzl, 2006).

The topic of CCL has been investigated from different viewpoints. Most notably Piekkari (first Marschan, later Marschan-Piekkari) contributed to the area of shared corporate language with numerous case studies and research. In the light of human resources she analyzed amongst others influences of a CCL on career paths (Piekkari, 2008), the control on foreign subsidiaries (Björkman & Piekkari, 2009), the multinational management practices (Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997) and the internal power relations and communication in MNCs (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999a). Other researchers dealt with the topic of CCL by investigating language policies of MNCs (e.g. Kangasharju, Piekkari & Säntti, 2010; Thomas, 2008).

Benefits as well as challenges of a CCL and its application in MNCs have been demonstrated, discussed and analyzed. However, none of the researchers investigated CCL from the point of view of a single team in a MNC. The existing MNC research has been conducted on the communication between subsidiaries (e.g. Mäkelä, Andersson & Seppälä, 2012), between headquarters and subsidiaries (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a) or between different teams of merged companies (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Moreover, the researchers investigated the CCL use in long established MNCs with written language policies like Kone (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), Siemens (e.g. Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006) or Nokia (Marschan et

al., 1997; Kangasharju et al., 2010) or mergers that clearly expressed which CCL has to be used for communication (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005).

When working in the customer support team (CST) of a relatively recently established Finnish MNC that grew very fast out of a start-up into a successful globally operating corporation, I experienced several challenges of interpersonal communication among colleagues. In this case company I personally experienced unharmonious communication and language choices between my colleagues in the CST. Although the CST comprised a multicultural workforce that was dependent on each other's knowledge sharing, languages were switched on a frequent basis so that not all colleagues were able to follow or join the conversations. Furthermore, my colleagues at the CST were unsure what the CCL was and when it has to be used. I had the impression that there were no guidelines for the use of the company's official language. These challenges that were experienced in a single team amongst colleagues and the fact that no research on CCL with a focus on a single team has been made yet inspired my research. The aim of this thesis is to analyze the CST knowledge on the CCL and find out whether similar communication challenges that have been previously identified in subsidiaries and subsidiary-headquarters relationships in view of a CCL can be found in a single team. With this study I intend to uncover challenges of communication about and in the CCL already evolving in a single multicultural team in the headquarters of a MNC.

Moreover, since no written guidelines on the use of CCL existed, this study aims to close the indicated research gap by Kangasharju et al. (2010) which is the investigation of communication practices in the absence of a written language policy.

1.1 The Case Company and the Customer Support Team

The case company for this study has recently grown out of a start-up to a very successful and worldwide known global company. It operates in the technology and entertainment sector and has published worldwide known products and services.

The case company has its headquarters based in Finland, but has also several branch offices around the globe and, thus, is classified as a MNC. Moreover, English is regarded as the CCL because the internal communication in the headquarters and between the subsidiaries and headquarters is carried out in English (source: website of the case company¹). Furthermore, official meetings in the teams and all internal communication channels are in English, but still Finnish is often used by Finnish employees.

This study specifically focuses on the CST of the case company which comprised 14 Finnish and 4 international employees at the time of research. The number of employees in the team varies frequently due to seasonal changes of work amount and fast growth of the company. Therefore the number of international employees compared to Finnish ones is not stable and varies. The customer support is conducted via email and the communication takes place in English with international customers. In rare cases the support is conducted in Finnish language, if the inquiry has been sent in Finnish.

The team sits in the same office in front of laptops. The seating places are often changed when the employees feel the need for a change of scene. Therefore, the seating varieties change often. Moreover, since the employees are working part-time and also at home, the office room is seldom filled with all the CST members and approximately 8 to 10 CST members are present every day. The employees who are working at home can communicate with the other team members via Skype and ask questions when needed.

The CST has a highly informative environment where the employees have to be up to date with various new customer issues that come up on a daily basis and that may change very fast. Therefore, the CST members are dependent on information exchange among each other and often have to ask questions or to discuss work-related issues. Because of this it is very important that the team members understand the conversations

¹ the real website address and name of the case company cannot be disclosed

being held between the colleagues. The employees might talk about a customer problem which has been encountered by another CST member or will be encountered in the future, thus, it is important that the understanding and the communication runs smoothly within the team and that everybody can understand the conversations being held.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

This thesis aims to investigate the internal interpersonal communication of the case company's CST in general and its knowledge about the CCL and perceptions about the implementation in particular. The objective is to conduct an in-depth study of interpersonal communication patterns within a single team in a MNC and by this to contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of and challenges in CCL communication.

As already mentioned in the introduction, when working in the case company the personal experiences made were that the CST members had feelings of insecurity concerning the language use at work. Through my colleagues' statements it became obvious to me that some of the CST members did not know about the existence of a written language policy (LP) and were unclear about the internal interpersonal language use in general. This experience led to the formulation of the first two research questions (RQs). Moreover, my personal experience as a CST member showed that the employees switched between Finnish and English. This experience led to the formation of RQ(3) and RQ(4). The RQs are presented in the following.

*(1) What is the **Corporate Language** of the case company and how is it communicated?*

The first RQ aims to find out what is the Corporate Language (CL) of the case company. The official answer by the management as well as the CST members' answers is investigated and compared. Furthermore, this RQ examines the CL communication in the case company and analyzes how the employees get to know about it.

(2) *In which **situations** is the (common?) corporate language used?*

The second RQ investigates whether the CST members have been instructed on the use of the CL. The managements' as well as the CST members' views on the situations in which the CCL has to be used are analyzed. The analysis of the case company's instructions concerning the language use may serve as an explanation for the employees' uncertainty concerning the language use. Moreover, a possible existence of written instructions, for instance, in form of a written document (LP), is investigated.

(3) *In which situations does a **language switch** occur?*

The third RQ targets the practices of language switches in the CST and aims to identify and analyze the situations in which a language change occurs and another language is preferred over the CCL.

(4) *How does the CST **perceive the language switches**?*

The fourth RQ targets the CST members' opinions of the languages switches. It targets specifically the employees' feelings, opinions and thoughts about the language change. Both the Finnish and the international employees' opinions are analyzed to uncover possible misperceptions and divergent views.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of research and presents the RQs, objectives and the structure of thesis. The second chapter discusses relevant research literature about corporate language and lingua franca that frame the theoretical framework of this thesis. Thereupon the third chapter presents the research method and analysis and illustrates the trustworthiness of the study. Relevant findings to each of the four RQs are presented in chapter four.

Whereupon chapter five concludes with a discussion of findings. Moreover, practical implications are presented and a critical view is discussed by showing limitations to this study. The thesis concludes with practical implications and indications for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents literature that has been conducted on relevant topics for this study. Section 2.1 presents relevant literature on Corporate Language (CL). The discussed research literature leads to a conclusion in section 2.2 that MNCs can be seen as multilingual communities. Furthermore, section 2.3 discusses lingua franca since it is imperative to understand how lingua franca influence CCLs in MNCs. Finally, based on the presented material, section 2.4 presents the theoretical framework.

2.1 Corporate Language

This section concentrates on the central topic of Corporate Language (CL) and first defines basic terms. After this section 2.1.1 illustrates the trend towards a CCL to point out that many MNCs currently take the step and adopt a shared language. Moreover, section 2.1.2 presents different CL strategies to illustrate how a corporation may end up having a CCL. Benefits and criticism of a CCL are discussed in subsection 2.1.3 to show the reasons for and against a shared language. Moreover, subsection 2.1.4 presents previous research topic on CCL to show the body of acquired knowledge needed to elaborate the theoretical framework. Finally subsection 2.1.5 is devoted to the hidden CCL, a communicational problem inside many MNCs that is central to this study.

When it comes to defining CL Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) note that a clear definition does not exist and that there are big differences in interpretations. Some research scholars define CL as a language strategy that regulates the language use in a corporation. Other interpretations define CL ad hoc as being the most appropriate for cross-border communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta 2012).

Despite the nonconformity of its definition, the introduction of a CCL typically means for an organization that all documentation and reporting at the corporate level, as well as the communication between the subsidiaries of a corporation has to be carried out in

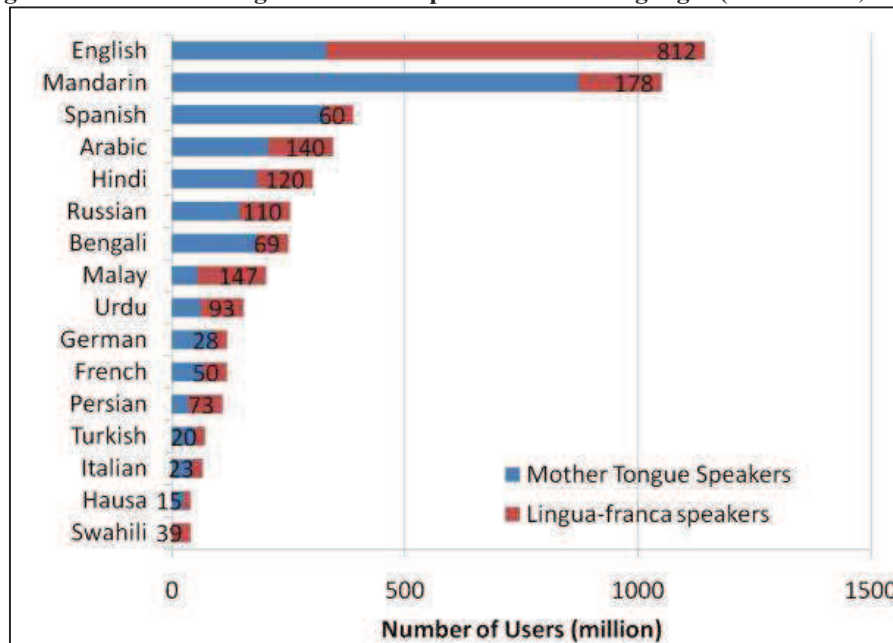
the defined common language (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Thus, the introduction of a CCL means defining the language use in the organization's communication. It can be seen as a corporate rule that tells the employees which language to use.

In the context of corporate language it is important to mention the term 'language policy' (LP). Thomas (2008) defines LP as a company policy that attempts to influence and control the spoken languages inside the corporation. Kangasharju, Piekkari and Sääntti (2010) describe LP as a written document that provides the guidelines for the implementation of the corporate language. According to this definition, a LP instructs the employees in written form and specifies which language or languages to use for internal communication. Therefore it is an important document as it ensures conformity in company communication. Because of this a LP has also been defined as language standardization since in most companies only one language is being specified as the main one for the use in the internal communication (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999b).

2.1.1 The Trend towards English as a Common Corporate Language

Most notably the trend towards internationalization and the evolution of globalization have led to a strong position of the English language. Figure 1 (McNamara, 2012) illustrates the vast amount of non-native English speakers compared to other main languages in the world. It can be seen that English has not only the highest number of users in the world, but also the highest percentage of non-native speakers (NNSs).

Figure 1: Number of English-users compared to other languages (McNamara, 2012)



Since the English language is constantly gaining in popularity, it is not surprising that in line with this development increasingly more companies, also in non-English speaking countries, adapt English as a CCL to enable and to harmonize internal communication. Especially the number of multinational mergers with headquarters in non-English speaking countries that adopt English as a CL has grown in the past years (House, 2002). Several multinational companies (MNCs) – like Siemens, Nokia, KONE, only to mention a few – have introduced English as the official CCL. The fact that these big global corporations have chosen English as their official language shows the increasing dominance of English in international business communication (e.g. Charles, 2007; Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, & Pitzl, 2006).

According to Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), this trend has even reached the Nordic countries Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland. They explain that for the Scandinavians, the intermediary language used to be Swedish or “Scanidinvian”, a mix from the related languages Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic. For years this mix has served as a means of communication in business related situations (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Now with the trend towards using English for these purposes,

the communication patterns have changed especially in the Finnish working environment, which is highlighted by Kangasharju et al. (2010). They point out that the increased internationalization has led to an increasing number of Finnish employees residing outside Finland, as well as to an increasing number of foreign employees working in the Finnish headquarters and a higher number of international mergers in Finland. All these changes resulted in a multitude of languages spoken in Finnish companies and have created a necessity to manage internal communication and the spoken languages with the help of a written regulation or LP (Kangasharju et al., 2010).

The trend towards a CCL seems to be self-evident as a company operating in multiple countries and having an international workforce wants to manage the multitude of languages and therefore adapts a commonly understood intermediary language. English being the neutral communication code number one (Tienari, 2009) is then adopted by various MNCs. This subsection explained the reasons and development of this trend, which is relevant for this present study that focuses on a Finnish MNC that adapted English as CCL.

2.1.2 Corporate Language Strategies

How do companies introduce a CCL and how does the introduction take place? While there is a lack in research on how companies address language issues, for instance, on when and how a CCL is being introduced or if a formal introduction takes place at all (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b), it is far easier to say the reasons why a company may end up in having a CCL. Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b) emphasize that companies internationalizing from English-speaking countries may pursue their global operations without facing language issues, but a company from a country like Finland, whose language is rarely spoken outside the country, may adapt English as a CCL by default. As previously mentioned in subsection 2.1.1 there is an increasing dominance of English in business interactions. And this development is the reason for many companies in Europe adapting English as the official corporate language (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) name two kinds of corporate language strategies that corporations can pursue. Their summary and investigation of two research projects reveals two different corporate language strategies that can be adopted in organizations, one being multilingual and the other one emergent.

Multilingual strategy

Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's analysis (2012) of Lehtovaara's (2009) study shows an example of a multilingual strategy. The project, which was conducted in International Business Communication at the Aalto University in Helsinki, analyzed the internal communication of a globally operating NGO. The case company claimed four languages as being official corporate languages – English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. However, the questioning of the workforce and the analysis of the employees' perceptions revealed that this four-language policy was not practiced by the workforce in their daily working life and that also other languages were used. While English as one of the official languages was still being used, the other official languages were left behind and were replaced by other local languages most notably in informal communication. Employees of the NGO pointed out that English was preferred over the other official CLs and that documents were not translated in all the four official languages, resulting in a barrier for knowledge transfer as those documents were not understandable for employees with weaker English skills and stronger language skills in the other official CL.

Although the multilingual strategy intended to create more equality among the employees by avoiding that some employees feel uncomfortable with only one imposed corporate language, it resulted in the opposite. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) conclude that the multilingual strategy for official corporate languages resulted in confusion of employees and the feeling of inequality as one official language (English) was preferred over the others (French, Spanish and Portuguese). Besides the

lack of guidelines on when to use which official language, the employees felt that information was not fairly distributed and not equally accessible to all employees.

One can conclude that a multilingual strategy for the CCL needs clear guidelines so that employees feel treated fairly and know which language to use for specific circumstances or conditions. Besides, the documentation has to be accessible in all company languages to avoid a barrier to knowledge sharing. Equality and transparency has to be priority in companies adopting a multilingual strategy. However, the issue of ignoring the official CL and using other languages in working life which has been previously pointed out by other authors (e.g. Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Kangasharju et al., 2010) is recurring. The reason for ignoring the company policy may be the lack of official guidelines, but requires further investigation for a definite answer.

Emergent strategy

The research project of Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) presents the analysis of five internationally operating companies that used English for international internal communication for working purposes. Although English was not claimed as official CL, it was used in the international websites of the case companies and the employees used English for their every-day interactions with colleagues to share knowledge, to simply communicate and to get the work done. Thus, English “emerged” as corporate language out of daily work necessities. The employee survey showed that the employees of the case companies were satisfied with using only one language as means for working communication. No additional languages were demanded and the workforce felt comfortable with using English as they perceived it as an equal means of communication among NNSs. Although no guidelines for the use of English were present in these companies, the communication was functioning smoothly and the negative perceptions that have been uttered in the NGO using a multilingual approach were not expressed by the employees.

As demonstrated in Louhiala-Salminen's and Kankaanranta's research (2012) in the five case companies, also Kangasharju et al. (2010) point out that many companies end up having English as CCL as it emerged as working language during the daily operations due to work necessities. Most of the companies use English more and more in their daily work as they internationalize.

This subsection provided essential knowledge on different ways to adopt a CCL. The presented studies demonstrated that language strategies have an impact on internal communication and the implementation of a CCL. Hence, the case company's language strategy may reveal reasons for its implementation or neglect of the CCL.

2.1.3 Benefits and Criticism

There are several benefits that may arise from the implementation of a CCL. It is even argued as being a necessity and indispensable for multinational organizations as it is supposed to "minimize the negative effects of language diversity" (Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari & Sdntti, 2005). The advantages and benefits of a CCL that are presented in previous research literature (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Kangasharju et al., 2010) are summarized in the following.

Creation of guidelines: A CCL creates guidelines for the employees and tells them when and how the official CL has to be used. The increased diversity through the internationalization in multinational companies generates a need for an official statement (Kangasharju et al., 2010). It seems only logical that a multitude of languages that is spoken in a company needs to be managed so that the employees can rely on a form of guidelines or written LP when interacting and communicating in a company. The absence of guidelines can result in a multitude of languages spoken in the company that may lead to unsuccessful communication within teams and the whole corporation (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b).

Harmonization of communication: The absence of a LP and clear guidelines may result in the insecurity of employees about the language practices in the company. This may lead to a non-harmonious internal and external communication. A written LP can help to obviate this risk by standardizing the corporation's communication (Kangasharju et al., 2010). Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b) also acknowledge the threat of a non-harmonious communication in the company by pointing out that "if the multilingual character of the MNC context is not properly acknowledged, a great deal of the communication efforts emanating from the corporate center may be inefficient or counterproductive." It is important that the communicated messages of the management reach the employees and that everybody understands the message. Thus, a LP ideally sets the rules and by this helps to create a harmonious communication so that the messages can reach the audience in the pronounced CL and can be understood by the workforce.

Facilitation of information flow: A LP does not only benefit an organization in form of guidelines and harmonization of communication, but these advantages may lead to the additional benefit of an easier communication flow throughout the corporation. It can help to stimulate coordination in the company (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012) and to facilitate the access to internal documents such as technical manuals, procedure documents and policies (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Moreover, Feely and Harzing (2003) point out that a LP may enable uniform formal reporting and may foster informal communication among multinational teams as well as between different units of an organization. Such enhanced communication may benefit the whole organization as the employees work more closely together and enrich each other's information.

Creation of a sense of belonging: Because a LP helps to harmonize the communication and to facilitate the information flow (Feely & Harzing, 2003), it may lead to stimulation and promotion throughout the whole organization. As employees use the CL to communicate with each other and not a minority language that not everybody understands and speaks, interactions between the whole workforce may be supported and reinforced. The enhanced communication and understanding of each other may

create a sense of belonging in the team and in the entire corporation and may result in a stronger corporate culture (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Piekkari et al., 2005).

Management of language problems: A non-harmonious communication in a company can create language problems as not everybody might understand minority languages spoken throughout a diverse workforce. This may lead to problems of miscommunication, misunderstandings and ineffective communication as the messages might not be understood, misinterpreted or not received at all (Fredriksson et al., 2006). A LP can tackle these problems associated with language diversity and may reduce the threat of miscommunication and, as the information flow is facilitated, it also may increase “organizational learning and value creation” (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Luo & Shenkar, 2006).

Economic value: Probably one of the most important benefits for corporations that may arise due to the introduction of a CCL is the increase in economic value. As already mentioned possible benefits, LPs may reduce negative effects resulting from language diversity (Kangasharju et al., 2010; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b), may improve the information flow and knowledge sharing (Feely & Harzing, 2003) and thus, may enhance the communication and organizational learning (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Luo & Shenkar, 2006). The sum of these potential benefits of a CCL can play an important role in implementing the strategic and operational business objectives (e.g. Dhir & Gökè-Pariolá, 2002; Luo & Shenkar, 2006) and therefore, a LP can generate economic value.

Besides the various benefits that have been pointed out, there are also drawbacks and aspects that are being criticized of a CCL. In the following the criticism on CCL is presented and the problematic aspects are pointed out that the introduction of a CCL may implicate for a corporation and its workforce.

Comprehension problems: According to Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002), the most common problems resulting from the adoption of a CCL are potential

comprehension problems of employees who have a lower level of language proficiency in the shared language. They further continue that these comprehension problems may also result because of the various accents of NNSs, and may involve difficulties in comprehension resulting from insufficient translations of company documents (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002).

Neglect of benefits of language diversity: The previously mentioned argument by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b) in favor of a CCL, namely the harmonization of communication, is refuted by Vandermeeren's (1999) research. Vandermeeren (1999) conducted surveys and found out that there are several situations in business life where using the native language of the counterpart may be beneficial for the selling process. She points out that especially the documentation in the customer's mother tongue (e.g. advertisements, product information etc.) can be highly advantageous in customer interactions and may be preferred by the customers over a shared lingua franca.

Creation of isolation: Another counter-argument for a benefit of a CCL is that a CCL may not always create a sense of togetherness, but can also create a feeling of isolation for those employees that are not fluent or do not feel comfortable in the company's CCL (Ferner, Edwards & Sisson, 1995; Piekkari 2006, 2008). Ferner et al. (1995) point out that a CCL can easily make those employees feel as outsiders because they cannot join conversations easily or may not fully understand the content that is being communicated in the CCL. This can drive a wedge between the employees and the shared values within the MNC that are intended to be spread out through a CCL. In this context Piekkari (2006, 2008) speaks of the shared corporate language as a glass ceiling that creates a language barrier for NNS which is difficult to break through.

Increase in work inefficiency: Marschan, Welch and Welch (1997) illustrate in their research how employees that are not fluent or confident in the CCL may use intermediaries for translations and communication. This can result in delays when the intermediary is absent (due to travelling, sick leave or when the intermediary has no time) and can cause frustration for the employees who are in need of an intermediary as

well as for the intermediary as the work load increases (Marschan et al., 1997). Besides the frustration, such procedures may slow down the work pace and may also result in inefficiency.

Power centralization: Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b) talk of power concentration as a threat of a CCL. According to them, a CCL may not only centralize the language use, but also power. They further continue that language standardization can allocate the power to those who are better in the CCL than others. The ones that do not have the adequate language proficiency and who have to use intermediaries may become dependent and less powerful compared to the ones who are fluent in the CCL (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b).

Increase in inequality: A similar finding is presented by Virkkula (2008) who argues that any shared means of communication may increase inequality as the employees that are native speakers or better in the CCL might be preferred over others. Although the language proficiency may not even represent the skills specifically needed to get the job done, still the mere ability to better articulate in the CCL may result in the preference of a language competent employee over another, for instance, in a recruitment process or when it comes to promotion (Virkkula, 2008). This fact also correlates with power centralization as the ones with better language proficiencies may enjoy higher benefits.

Creation of additional costs: Sääntti's dissertation (2001) demonstrates in a case study of a bank merger that the introduction of Swedish as a CCL resulted in major additional costs due to the need for language training of employees with weaker Swedish skills, the need for additional translations and supplementary documents and work inefficiency. Moreover, additional costs resulted from re-organization when employees demanded to be transferred to departments where the CCL was not needed and because the merger lost essential trained staff when employees left the company after Swedish had been adopted as CCL (Sääntti, 2001).

Table 1 shows the presented arguments in favor and against a CCL.

Table 1: Overview - the Pros and Cons of a CCL

Pro CCL	Contra CCL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of guidelines • Harmonization of communication • Facilitation of information flow • Creation of a sense of belonging • Management of language problems • Economic value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension problems • Neglect of benefits of language diversity • Creation of isolation • Increase in work inefficiency • Power centralization • Increase in inequality • Creation of additional costs

At first sight, the overview may suggest that scholars are more in favor of language diversity than standardization since the list of contra points is longer. Nonetheless, the biggest and most successful MNCs increasingly adopt a CCL (e.g. Kangasharju et al., 2010). I argue that the reason for this lies in the nature of these corporations. In line with globalization, internationalization of workforce and global operations of the MNCs' subsidiaries in countries with a variety of languages, it is not surprising that the pros outweigh the cons for MNCs. A MNC needs guidelines and harmonized communication to be able to work efficiently and facilitate or even enable information flow. The need for standardized communication is higher than the threat of the criticized aspects. Moreover, most of the criticized aspects deal with the low language proficiency of employees and can be prevented through a careful selection of language competent employees so that a high language standard can be ensured throughout the corporation. Furthermore, Tienari (2009) argues that English serves as the most neutral tool for communication for people from different cultures and with different backgrounds and languages. He states that the positive aspects of English outweigh the negative ones that may occur when adopting a CCL and even makes the final claim that "there is no alternative for English as a lingua franca" (Tienari, 2009, p. 256).

This subsection discussed reasons in favor and against a CCL. The understanding of positive and negative aspects of a shared language may serve as basis for the analysis of the CCL's effects on the communication in the CST of the case company. The findings will demonstrate which of the praised or criticized aspects the CCL implied for the international CST.

2.1.4 Research topics on Common Corporate Language

This section concentrates on topics that have been researched on CCL or the language standardization in MNCs. Relevant research will be presented in more detail and relevant findings will be connected to the RQs of this study. Moreover, significances in regard to this study will be pointed out.

One of the pioneers in the research area of shared corporate language and communication of MNCs and of particular importance is Rebecca Piekkari (first Marschan, later Marschan-Piekkari). Piekkari concentrated in her many studies on language standardization and conducted several case studies, especially on the Finnish MNC Kone Elevators. In the following, most of Piekkari's research, as well as other research pioneers are summarized and subdivided according to research subject. The topics cover the multinational management processes (Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997), internal power and control relationships of MNCs (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999a), knowledge sharing (Mäkelä, Andersson & Seppälä, 2012; Argote & Ingram, 2000), human resource management (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Piekkari et al., 2005; Piekkari, 2006) and language policy (Fredrikkson et al., 2006; Kangasharju et al., 2010).

Studies conducted on the influences of a CCL on career paths (Piekkari, 2008) and on the control on foreign subsidiaries (Björkman & Piekkari, 2009) are not discussed or presented in detail as these topics are not connected to this study and RQs.

Multinational management processes

The case study of the Finnish MNC Kone focusing on the CCL by Marschan, Welch and Welch (1997) pointed out that language was often a forgotten factor in multinational management. The research identified problems arising from the adoption of a CCL, for instance, the passive behavior of employees or the use of intermediaries for translations by employees who were not fluent in the CCL. The research pointed out the high importance of linkage of LP to human resources (HR) because recruitment processes and training of staff had to be coordinated according to the corporation's policy standards to fulfill the company's communicational needs and to ensure a smooth communication flow (Marschan et al., 1997).

The fact pointed out by Marschan et al. (1997) that language is often a forgotten factor is in so far interesting for this study as it aims to find out how the LP in the case company is communicated. The communication and instructions of CST members about the language matters will indicate how much importance the management attaches to this topic or whether it is also a forgotten factor in the case company like illustrated in Marschan et al.'s research (1997).

Internal power relations and communication of MNCs

The case study on Kone Elevators by Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch (1999a) investigated the effects of a CCL on the communication flow of a MNC and on the personal relationships in the corporation. The study focused on the communication flow between subsidiaries and revealed that a CCL may be a barrier to communication and information flow. Moreover, the study showed that especially NNSs of the CCL and who were not able to understand the native language of the headquarters, Finnish, complained about the limited access to information. Those managers felt as being second-class managers as a lot of information was distributed through informal networks that were difficult to access as a non-Finnish speaker or with difficulties in the CCL.

These research findings are of particular interest to this study as one of the RQs aims to find out how the CST members perceive the language switches. It may be that the NNSs of English and the employees who do not understand Finnish have similar feelings concerning unequal information distribution like the managers at Kone who felt as managers of second class.

Knowledge sharing

The findings of unequal information distribution and effects of CCL on personal relationships (Marschan et al., 1999a) can be connected to the central theme of the following research, namely knowledge sharing. The communication flow at Kone has been characterized as distorted in terms of information distribution between the subsidiaries. Mäkelä, Andersson and Seppälä's research (2012) gives an explanation for this issue. Mäkelä et al. (2012) found out that knowledge sharing can be negatively affected by structural boundaries such as functions and geographical borders. Their findings suggest that interpersonal-similarity, meaning a similar function in the company and the nationality, may lead to employees being more willing to share knowledge among each other. A lack of interpersonal-similarity on the other hand, may act as a barrier to knowledge-sharing. The interpersonal similarity even outplays demographic similarities like age and gender.

As knowledge sharing between different units is an indispensable factor for the successful functioning and competitive advantage of a MNC (Mäkelä et al., 2012; Argote & Ingram, 2000), it is important that a corporation is able to share knowledge and does everything to ensure a smooth information flow. These facts are related to this study as followed: The first RQ targets the issue of company language and its communication, which deals with information distribution on CL in the case company and by this knowledge sharing. RQ(3) and RQ(4) address the language switches within the CST and the CST members' opinions of internal communication. Language switches can represent information withholding or a distorted information flow within

the team if the topic is work-related. If this is the issue, then the language switches can be compared to a structural barrier in inter-unit communication in MNCs previously pointed out in Mäkelä et al.'s research (2012). This would mean that structural barriers may even have a negative effect on knowledge sharing in single departments, and not only when it comes to inter-unit communication. Though language switches may not represent a reduced willingness to share information, still the barrier of language and nationality may result in suboptimal information distribution and knowledge sharing.

Human resource management

The CCL and its effects on human resource management is the main research topic in numerous studies: Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b); Piekkari et al. (2005) and Piekkari (2006) focused on the implications of a CCL on human resource management in multinationals. The study of Kone Elevators by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b) demonstrated how a MNC might struggle with language problems sometimes even to the extent of having problems with the CL itself, although the CCL has been adopted a long time ago. Another study of Piekkari et al. (2005) showed that a CCL might have disintegrating effects and unequal opportunities for employees.

Particularly the disintegration aspect and the struggling with the CCL are interesting for this thesis as the RQs aim to find out the CST members' opinions about the language switches as well as their attitudes on the CL itself. The findings of this study will reveal whether the interviewed CST members see any disintegrating aspects in the CCL or whether the employees perceive that the company is still struggling with the implementation of the CCL.

Language policy

Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006) addressed the multilingual character of the German-based MNC Siemens and showed that the introduction of English as official CL didn't make the language shared in the company. The Siemens-

employees didn't know whether a LP existed and they thought that German or English, or both languages were the official CLs of the corporation. The Siemens workforce continued to use several different languages at the workplace and constantly switched between different languages although English had been introduced as the official CCL already years ago. Frenriksson et al.'s (2006) study is insofar of interest for this thesis since RQ(1) and RQ(2) investigate whether the CST members struggle with the same kind of confusion like the Siemens workforce and whether they know what the company policy concerning language use at the case company is.

Another important study on LP was conducted by Kangasharju, Piekkari and Sääntti (2010). It examined the written LPs in six Finnish MNCs (Itella, Nokia, Nokia Siemens, Nordea, Outokumpu and Oxfam) and concluded in one of the findings that all investigated LPs had a preference towards the parallel use of different languages and, thus, directed towards multilingualism. The second finding showed that even though these companies had written down a LP, the awareness of the existence of such a document was very low among the workforce. They either didn't know if it existed or where to find the information.

Besides the recurring finding of low awareness of the existence of a LP, there is a new finding of significance for this thesis. This study will show whether the case company encourages the use of parallel languages as well, either in a written document or through verbal instructions. The second RQ aims to find out how the employees are instructed about the language use and will reveal whether the LP of the case company directs towards multilingualism like in Kangasharju et al.'s findings (2010).

In summary, in this subsection previous research topics on CCL and LPs have been presented and discussed in its relevance to this study, which helps to elaborate the theoretical framework of this thesis. Moreover, the presented studies help to formulate implications for other MNCs in combination with the findings of this study.

2.1.5 The hidden Common Corporate Language

Because of its operations across multiple countries and its international unit structure, a MNC faces several languages and has to deal with a multitude of cultures. Because of this Luo and Shenkar (2006) characterize MNCs as multilingual communities and Thomas (2008, p. 323) speaks of “linguistically diverse networks of communities.” Such a diverse network needs a common language to be able to communicate efficiently. A CCL seems to be indispensable for a smooth communication flow because the MNC’s characteristic as a geographically diverse network includes that a MNC has to face language barriers when interacting internationally or when communicating with its subsidiaries located abroad (Adler, 1983; Herbert, 1984; Ronen & Shenkar, 1985; Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, inside the corporation there are employees with different CCL levels (mostly English) and who speak, besides the CCL, other languages as mother tongue and at a potentially much higher level than the CCL (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Nickerson, 2000; Barner-Rasmussen, 2003; Frederiksson et al., 2006). Not specifying the language use in such a diverse workforce would result in prevailing minority languages over a common language and may lead to miscommunication and non-comprehension.

The previously pointed out benefits of a CCL in subsection 2.1.3 and when considering the multilingual character of the MNC, it seems logical that a multitude of languages needs to be managed and that employees need guidelines in form of a written LP. This is also the reason why several scholars point out the need for the management of language diversity in MNCs (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1996b; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004; Luo & Shenkar, 2006; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

However, when looking at the Finnish MNCs, surprisingly, Kangasharju et al. (2010) point out that most of the Finnish companies do not have a LP and do not have a written policy that refers to the language practices of the employees. And yet, even if a LP stating the use of a CCL is being introduced, it does not necessarily mean that it is

automatically becoming the shared language for communication in the company as many employees continue to speak other languages at work (Fredriksson et al., 2006).

The findings of Kangasharju et al. (2010) are especially of interest because they pointed out that most Finnish companies don't consider a LP as a necessity and only a few have written down a document stating the guidelines. Even when interviewing employees about the LP in their research, Kangasharju et al. (2010, p.146) could not retrieve any clear answer and statements like *“Our corporate language is English, but I do not know if there is anything in black and white on that”* were standard.

Previous studies on CCL conclude that either the LP is non-existent or not communicated throughout the organization. These facts are surprising as even the biggest and most successful multinationals seem not able to communicate language related matters successfully throughout the corporation. If not most of the employees know what the CCL is, the communication efforts of the MNC are unsuccessful and the LP cannot be performed.

This subsection presented the communicational problem concerning the CCL and LP that many MNCs face. The CCL seems to be a myth for the employees that they have heard of, but they don't know whether it is true or not. None of the previous studies could retrieve a definite answer from interviewed employees about the CCL. Particularly the first two RQs of this thesis target the same issues and aim to find out the status-quo on language matters in the case company and to identify daily practices in the event of non-existence or non-awareness of a LP.

2.2 The MNC as a Multilingual Community

The literature review on CL gives the impression that the notion of a CCL is a myth among the MNC's workforce and that it remains wishful thinking in the management's minds who intend to standardize and harmonize internal communication. Regardless of all the good intentions and benefits a CCL is associated with, the multilingual character

of a MNC that has been pointed out throughout this thesis, has the consequence that besides a CCL, there are still many other languages used in the MNC network. Thomas (2008) speaks of three language dimensions that are used by the MNC's employees depending on the region and the subunit they work for. These three language dimensions are presented in the following (Thomas, 2008, p. 309):

Parent Company Language (PCL): it is mostly the national language of the country where the headquarters are situated and it is spoken by the majority of employees at the headquarters. For instance, Finnish is the PCL of KONE originating from and with headquarters in Finland. Most of KONE's employees in Finland are able to communicate in the PCL Finnish.

Common Corporate Language (CCL): adopted by the management and official language of internal communication. As a result of the English dominance, usually English is used for the documentation, corporate website and as working language.

Local (Foreign) Languages (LFL): The employees working in the MNC's subsidiaries in different countries speak local languages that will be mostly the national languages of the country where the subsidiary has its operations. But also employees from other countries working in the headquarters might speak a LFL in the headquarters with colleagues sharing the same mother tongue. For instance, KONE's employees in their subsidiary in Germany might speak German as LFL, as well as German employees working in the headquarters in Finland might speak German with their fellow German colleagues.

Table 2 by Thomas (2008, p. 310) shows the language framework of a MNC with its geographical domains as well as its users.

Table 2: Language geographical domains and users in MNCs (Thomas, 2008, p. 310)

	Geographical domains	Used primarily by
Parent Company Language (PCL)	parent company	parent company employees
	domestic branches	domestic branch employees
	foreign subsidiaries	expatriates
Common Corporate Language (CCL)	parent company; domestic branches	parent company management
	foreign subsidiaries	expatriates
Local (Foreign) Languages (LFLs)	foreign subsidiaries	local subsidiary management; local employees; expatriates
	parent company	repatriates (i.e. expatriates who have returned to the parent company)

The language framework shows the language diversity of a MNC’s workforce as well as the variety of use patterns that depend on the MNC unit and the employee background. This complex structure makes it difficult to believe that a single CCL is able to account for the entire communication of the whole corporation. This explains and justifies the before noted Kangasharju et al.’s (2010) finding that MNCs’ language policies direct towards multilingualism. Likewise, recent research presents the MNC as a multilingual organization (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Thomas, 2008; Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman, 2007; Janssens et al., 2004) or as a multilingual community (Luo & Shenkar, 2006).

This section demonstrated that the CCL prevails to be a myth in MNCs and that scholars recently started to move away from the thinking of language standardization in MNCs and view them as multilingual communities. Particularly the presented finding by Kangasharju et al.’s (2010) on the companies’ direction towards multilingualism supports this view of multilingual communities and shall serve as grounding for this study. It is essential to find out whether the CCL in the case company is considered to be a myth as well and whether the management directs the employees towards multilingualism.

2.3 Lingua Franca

MNCs' operations range across multiple geographical borders and language barriers. Therefore, lingua franca or intermediary languages are an inevitable matter of course for MNCs. English as today's lingua franca number one for non-native speakers (see subsection 2.1.1) is discussed in subsection 2.3.1. After that subsection 2.3.2 presents Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) to emphasize the business aspect in lingua franca communication.

2.3.1 English as a Lingua Franca

According to Seidlhofer (2005), the term "English as a lingua franca" (ELF) emerged in recent years to describe communication between non-native (NN) English speakers. Hence, when it comes to different kinds of interactions between international speakers in English, research scholars mostly refer to English as a lingua franca.

One might think that the concept of lingua franca has been recently established with the changes of globalization, but the concept of a lingua franca is not new. Meierkord (2006) points out that lingua franca have been used ever since people travelled and moved to foreign areas. For instance, the term lingua franca itself originates from the Arabic word *lisan al farang* and refers to "an intermediary or contact language" that has been used by Arabs with travelers of commerce (House, 2002, p. 243).

Since then the original concept of a lingua franca has changed and extended its meaning to describe ELF as "a means of international communication in areas such as politics, business negotiations, cultural and scientific events" (House, 2002, p. 245). ELF in business interactions is of particular interest for this study, as the case company's mainly used language in internal communication is English. But as the definition specifies, ELF is a term for all kinds of international and also non-business related communication.

The English language has gained a strong position particularly in Europe as a lingua franca (e.g. Nickerson, 2005; Graddol, 1997). Many circumstances have led to this development, for instance the British Empire, the importance of the USA, the technological developments in communication and information technologies and the trend towards internationalization as well as the evolution of globalization (House, 2002).

Although ELF has a long history and research scholars acknowledge its importance, it is repeatedly pointed out that there is a lack of research on the use of ELF and ELF interactions and the ones that exist are not uniform in theory and methodology (House, 2002; Mauranen & Metsä-Ketelä, 2006). This is especially interesting as a lot of authors referring to ELF interactions consistently point out its importance and prevalence in everyday lives of NNSs around the world. And still the research seems to be lacking profound investigation on ELF and its interactions.

When it comes to ELF in practice, Bae (1999) refers to it as a *Kommunikationssprache* (language of communication) and points out that English as a lingua franca is used instrumentally to reach the goal of understanding each other, whereas the mother tongue serves as a means of identification (*Identifikationssprache*). The notion of *Identifikationssprache* opposed to *Kommunikationssprache* reflects the described language change in the CST of the case company. The findings of this study will indicate the reasons that the CST members name for the language switches and whether they refer to their mother tongue as a means of identification (*Identifikationssprache*).

To conclude, the concept of ELF refers merely to the use of English as a resource among people of different mother tongues for intermediary purposes. An ELF conversation may take place between non-native English speaking tourists or in a business situation. The previously mentioned globalization and its results in the increase in international business have led to the formation of a new term that concentrates on one part of ELF conversations, namely on business conversations. This term is central to this study and is explained in the following subsection 2.3.2.

2.3.2 Business English as a Lingua Franca

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2007, p. 56) define BELF as “ELF for business communication purposes.” The addition of the letter ‘B’ emphasizes that only one specific domain of ELF communication is being targeted, namely business interactions and all communication that is carried out between business partners and colleagues.

Ehrenreich (2010) acknowledges that both ELF and BELF research come to the consent that the nonnative English that is used for international communication differs from native English. However, the closer definition of BELF shows the different approach of research. The concept of BELF was originally created by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta (2005). Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) define BELF as a neutral and shared communication code that is used in business interactions. According to their understanding, the neutrality refers to that the speakers are neither characterized as native speakers (NS), nor are they characterized as non-native speakers (NNS). In a BELF communication all participants are seen as equal and none of these neutral parties consider English to be a mother tongue. The share of English as a communication code describes that BELF is used for the common communicative business purpose whose interlocutors are neither native speakers nor learners, but simply BELF users (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Like this all BELF discourses take place on a neutral ground for the mere purpose of business interactions.

Moreover, because English is used more among NNSs than NSs (McNamara, 2012) the English language doesn’t need to be flawless and without mistakes to be understood. Among NNSs simple English vocabulary and simple grammatical constellation of phrases may lead to better mutual understanding and, thus, to more successful business results (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007).

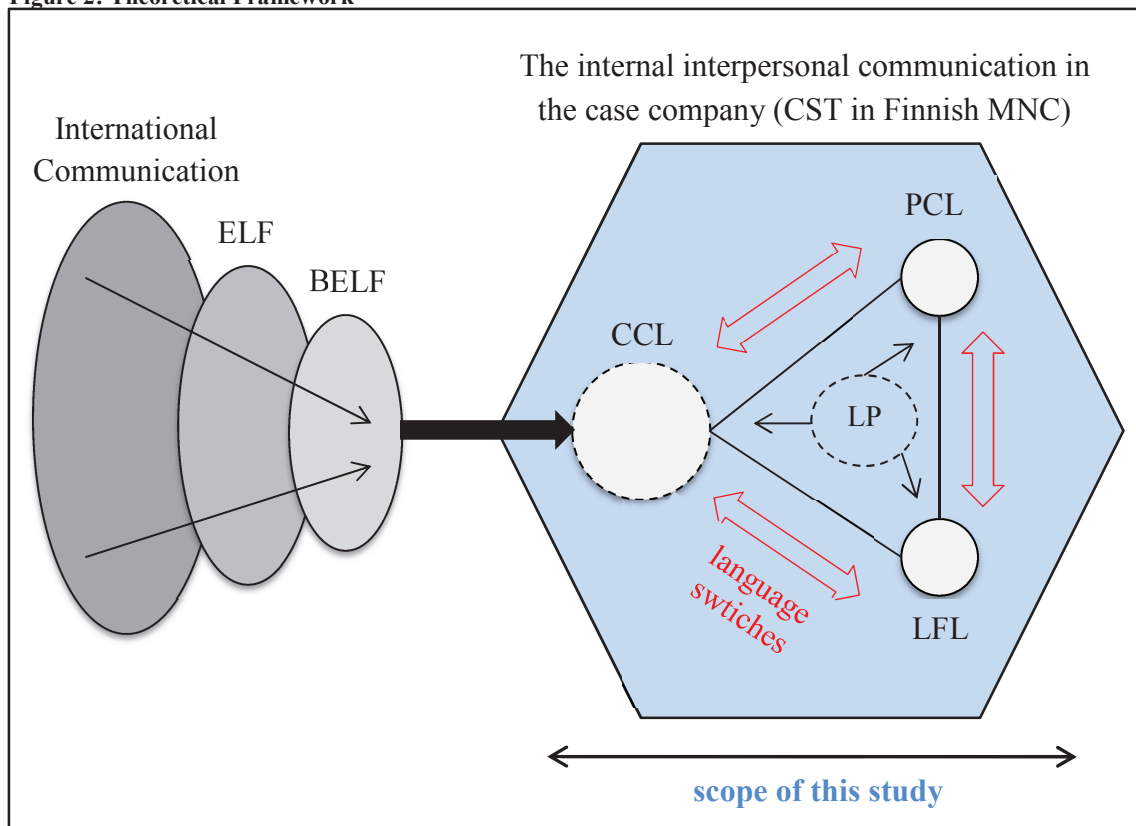
In summary this section provided an overview of lingua franca in general and of ELF and BELF communication in particular. Since MNCs operate across geographical and linguistic borders, there is a need for a lingua franca to communicate externally and

internally. The popularity of ELF resulted in the formation of BELF that plays an important role particularly in the context of international internal communication in (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Therefore, this section provided an overview of the language framework shaping and surrounding the communication of a MNC.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework that will be applied in the empirical part of this study. It combines the presented research literature on lingua franca, corporate language and the conclusion to that the MNC is a multilingual community, and combines them to a framework in figure 2 that encloses and fills the internal interpersonal communication of the case company (Finnish MNC).

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework



Without cross-border interactions or international employees a MNC wouldn't have the necessity for a CCL, or in a broader sense, for a lingua franca. Because of this, the framework begins with a symbol representing the international communication as the starting point. The next symbol ELF represents the biggest proportion of international communication. It is the lingua franca that is dominating the international communication (McNamara, 2012). The third symbol depicts BELF that was developed as a separate term to emphasize the business communications in ELF (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007).

Because the English language has gained such a strong position (e.g. Charles, 2007; Nickerson, 2005; Graddol, 1997; Seidlhofer et al., 2006), English is today the dominating business language (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009). Moreover, the trend of numerous MNCs towards adopting English as their CCL to harmonize, standardize and facilitate corporate communication (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Thomas, 2008) results in that the internal communication in MNCs is conducted in English. Furthermore, the fact that English is spoken by a majority of non-native speakers (NNSs) (McNamara, 2012) suggests that the internal communication is conducted in BELF since the MNC's employees have a diverse linguistic background and use non-native English as a means for communication in the business context. The findings of Louhiala-Salminen's and Kankaanranta's (2012) research on MNCs also indicate that English in international internal communication can be characterized as BELF since it was spoken by 70% of NNSs and in 70% of all cases the communication took place inside the corporation. BELF as a neutral communication code (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) is used by the MNC's employees 'to get the job done.' Therefore, I argue that BELF influences the internal interpersonal communication in the MNC and that BELF becomes the spoken language among the international workforce in a MNC. The influence of BELF on the internal interpersonal communication is symbolized by the bold black arrow in figure 2 leading to the CCL-symbol of the case company.

The other entity in the theoretical framework depicts the internal interpersonal communication of the case company. The case company (Finnish MNC) is presented as

a multilingual entity with three different language dimensions that were pointed out by Thomas (2008). The CCL is the biggest symbol as it is the main language for communication for official matters and the main working language (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Kangasharju et al., 2010). The other two language dimensions, PCL and LFL, are smaller as they are more rarely used compared to the CCL, but they are still present in the MNC. The three language dimensions of CCL, PCL and LFL build a language triangle and the MNC's employees may communicate in these three different language dimensions with each other. The red arrows pointing at both directions represent language switches as the employees can use any of those languages and switch between them.

Inside the language triangle stands the LP which specifies the language use and may include all three language dimensions as most of LPs direct towards the use of multiple languages (Kangasharju et al., 2010). The LP is represented by a dotted circle which symbolizes the fact that most CCLs are adapted ad hoc or may even not exist in the company. And if a LP exists, most of the employees are unaware of its existence (Marschan et al., 1997; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Kangasharju et al., 2010). Because of this the LP and the CCL have a broken circle to represent the low awareness and nescience of the employees.

The scope of this study targets the blue entity of the theoretical framework and investigates the internal interpersonal communication of the case company's CST. The main goal is to find out whether the CCL is a myth among the employees and if a LP is existent or not. Furthermore, the communication of the CCL to the employees is examined (RQ1). Moreover, the research aims to identify the situations in which the CCL is used (RQ2) and the situations in which a language change is made and another language than the CL is used are investigated (RQ3). As a last instance the CST members' opinions and feelings about the use of other languages (PCL and LFL) besides the CCL are examined (RQ4). The framework is used for the analysis of the four RQs and to find out whether the CCL is a myth in the case company.

3 DATA AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research method that was used to answer the research questions (RQs). Moreover, the process of data collection and data analysis is illustrated and the trustworthiness of this study is discussed.

3.1 Data Collection

A case study approach was chosen for this study because it aims to “acquire knowledge [...] from intensive exploration of a single case” (Becker, 1970, p. 75). Moreover, this approach was suitable for this study since it aims both, a thorough analysis of the investigated case and at the same time the development of more general rules and implications (Fidel, 1984).

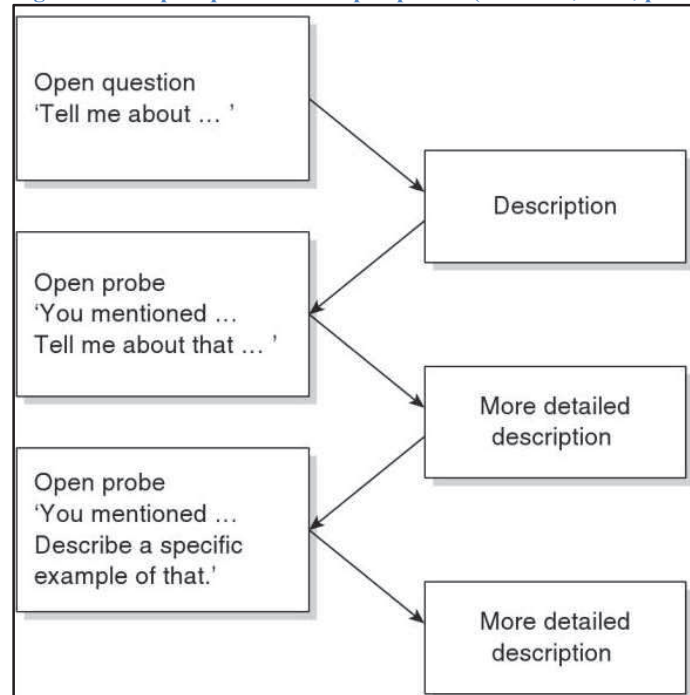
According to Bryman and Bell (2003), qualitative research is characterized by focusing on words instead on the quantification of data. Due to the nature of research that is concerned with words and analysis of verbal expressions, a qualitative research method was chosen. Since the goal of the research method was to see the facts through the eyes of the CST members, the most suitable qualitative research method for this analysis and for answering the RQs was the questioning of CST members in form of qualitative interviewing (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

The interview structure was chosen to be semi-structured. According to Roulston (2011), semi-structured interviews are characterized by a high degree in flexibility because the order of questions in an interview is not always the same. She further explains that the interviewer uses a guide in form of a set of questions and chooses the most appropriate one in line with the interview process. The interview questions were designed with broad and open-ended questions that asked “how”, “what” and “why” or asked “tell me more.” Moreover, so-called ‘probes’ were asked as follow-up questions to the interviewees’ responses (Roulston, 2011) to retrieve more detailed information.

Only few structured questions with yes or no answering possibilities were asked when a definite yes or no answer was required.

Figure 3 illustrates the interview style with open questions and probes that was applied during the interviews.

Figure 3: An open question and open probes (Roulston, 2011, p. 14)



The interview guide for the interrogation was pre-defined and grouped according to each specific RQ. It can be found in the appendix.

The interview consisted of six CST members. The sample of six interviewees corresponded to one third of the CST team (6 out of 18). The reason for choosing this number was the decision to have an equal number of international and Finnish interviewees. Like this it was avoided to give a louder voice to Finnish CST members and an equality aspect in the findings has been achieved. Hence, all three international CST members were chosen to be interviewed and the corresponding equal number of three Finnish CST members was chosen. The Finnish interviewees were chosen so that

their work experience in the case company varied and that employees with longer work-duration (work duration > 1 year) as well as newly employed ones (work duration < 1 years) were interviewed. All the interviews were individually conducted face-to-face in the headquarters of the case company and in the English language. The interviews took place in July 2013 and ranged from 15 – 35 minutes in length. During the interviews only few notes were taken since the interviews were recorded. Moreover, the interviews were transcribed for analysis.

In addition to the interviews with the CST members another interview was conducted with the Internal Communications Manager (ICM) of the case company. Due to time constraints from the communications department the interview was conducted via email. It asked for an official answer concerning the CL and LP, its communication and the instructions thereof.

Table 3 shows an overview of the data sample and presents the interviewees' alias and background information.

Table 3: Data Sample

Alias	nationality	English level	work duration	responsibilities
International 1	English	NS	2 years	CST Manager
International 2	Turkish	NNS	8 months	CS Specialist
International 3	American	NS	5 months	CS Specialist
Finnish 1	Finnish	NNS	5 months	CS Specialist
Finnish 2	Finnish	NNS	2.5 years	CS Specialist
Finnish 3	Finnish	NNS	1 year	CS Specialist
ICM	Finnish	NNS	1 year	Internal Communications Manager

3.2 Data Analysis

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005), the process of data analysis is concerned with the examination of collected data with the goal of extracting meaningful answers to the RQs. As preparatory work for the analysis of data two steps have to be performed: the editing and coding of collected data. The process of editing is concerned with verifying that the posed questions were answered by the interviewees. The process of coding tries to find classifications for the collected data to group the obtained information to meaningful categories (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

The process of editing was made by analyzing the transcribed interviews systematically and verifying that all the received answers corresponded to the asked questions. Thereupon, the data was coded according to the RQs. The classifications were made corresponding to the information that was asked from the interviewees. This resulted in the formation of the following four categories: CL of the case company, use of CL, situations of language switches and employees' opinions of language switches. Moreover, the data reduction method was applied to filter and simplify the data (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). Thereby only the most useful data was obtained for the findings. After all the answers and statements relevant for each category were identified and collected, they were compared and analyzed concerning similarities, differences and particularities. The analysis yielded further subcategories that resulted because of several subthemes that emerged during the interview. The process of data analysis ended with the formulation of findings and self-critical consideration of results.

3.3 Trustworthiness of the study

This section assesses the trustworthiness of the research approach. The factors that may have an effect on trustworthiness are presented and assessed concerning its potential influence on this thesis.

There are numerous scholars that discuss a series of different criteria for assessing validity of qualitative research (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall, 1990; Maxwell, 1992). The trustworthiness of this thesis is assessed by the criteria defined as primary validity criteria by Whitemore, Chase and Mandle (2001): credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity. The criteria is presented and evaluated in the following.

In the first instance a qualitative research has to ensure credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize that the research outcomes should be the voice of research participants and reflect the interviewees' views in the best possible way. Another important criterion that ensures trustworthiness of a qualitative research is authenticity. Whitemore et al. (2001) stress the fact that qualitative research interprets data and, therefore, includes multiple perspectives that may take away authenticity. Both criteria credibility and authenticity are closely linked together (Whitemore et al., 2001).

The first step to reach credibility and authenticity in this study was taken by recording the interviews. Moreover, hardly any notes were taken during the interview to ensure that the interviewees don't get distracted and can illustrate their opinions without disruptions. The recorded interviews were carefully transcribed word by word and have been reviewed and compared to the transcriptions to ensure accuracy of quotes. The careful transcription of interviews contributed to the fact that the quotes present the authentic voice of interviewees. Moreover, in order to deliver the most authentic perspective of interviewees when interpreting the data, it has been paid attention to a thorough selection of quotes so that no quote was taken out of context and could impede the real opinion of interviewees. Like this it was ensured that the interviewees' perspectives were authentically represented.

The need for the third criterion of trustworthiness, criticality, results from the fact that qualitative research deals with different interpretations, assumptions and that each researcher has a different knowledge background of the investigated topic which may affect the research outcomes (Whitemore et al., 2001). A critical view when searching alternative hypotheses and the consideration of possible bias is therefore crucial

(Marshall, 1990). Moreover, the final criterion integrity is important for the validity of qualitative research since every researcher interprets data subjectively and uniquely. Therefore, integrity has to be sought in the interpretations of data to ensure a thorough analysis and interpretation (Johnson, 1999). Both criteria criticality and integrity are closely linked to each other (Whittemore et al., 2001).

Since the research was conducted by a member of the CST there was the risk of bias and prejudice due to personal knowledge of interviewees and of the procedures in the case company. The first step to achieve criticality during the research was taken by acknowledging the risk of bias and by being self-critical when planning, conducting and analyzing the interviews. For instance, the interview questions were intentionally designed in that way that all answers regarding the RQs were received from the interviewees and that no personal bias could be included in the data. Moreover, when interpreting the quotes an unknowing attitude of a third party was embraced to enable a way of thinking free of bias. To ensure integrity in the interpretations of data each interpretation was reviewed critically and different meanings have been taken into consideration. These measurements ensured criticality and integrity of this study.

The trustworthiness of this study might also be at risk due to the relatively small number of interviewed CST members (33,33%). However, the number of interviewees was chosen because an equal number of international and Finnish CST members has been aimed for analysis. Like this it was avoided to give a louder voice to Finnish CST members and an equality aspect in the findings has been achieved. Generalization of findings was not at risk since the proportion of internationals to Finnish CST members fluctuates frequently as mentioned in section 1.1.

Another aspect that might affect the trustworthiness of this study is the fact that it focused on a single Finnish MNC and because of this its results may be company specific. The findings from the case company led to implications for other MNCs through a combination with previously conducted research. Like this the research is trustworthy in terms of usefulness and applicability for other organizations.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter shows the findings related to the four RQs that have been presented in section 1.2. Each section in this chapter shows the findings relevant to each question separately. The four RQs of this thesis are the following:

- (1) What is the *Corporate Language* of the case company and how is it *communicated*?
- (2) In which *situations* is the (common?) *corporate language* used?
- (3) In which situations does a *language switch* occur?
- (4) How does the CST *perceive the language switches*?

4.1 Corporate Language of the Case Company

This section summarized the findings on RQ(1): “What is the *Corporate Language* of the case company and how is it *communicated*?”

The answer concerning the CCL by the Internal Communications Manager (ICM) was clear and definite: “It’s English.” However, when questioning the CST members, only one (Finnish 3) out of six interviewees answered with the same certainty as the communications manager. Although all the other five interviewees pointed out that the CCL is English, nevertheless each of them was doubtful about their answers and revealed uncertainty as illustrated by the following quotes:

“The language policy is that everything should be in English. That is what I have understood [...]. I got the impression that it was kind of a rule that everybody should speak English.” (International 1)

“[after hesitating] ... I think that the official language of the company is English.” (International 2)

*"I think the official, the working language, is English. Correct? [hesitating]
Okay MY understanding was that it is English."* (International 3)

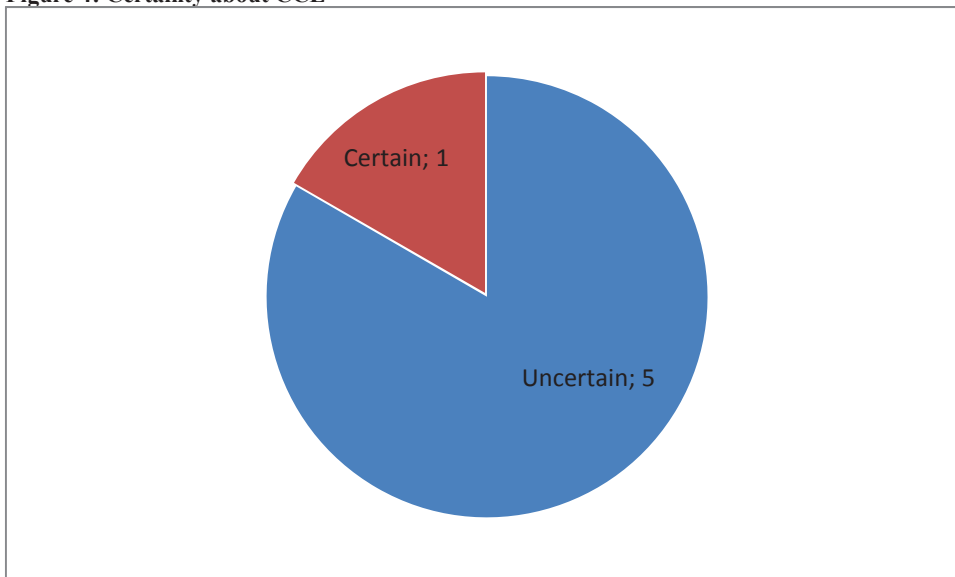
*"So far as I understood the official language is English. I'm not sure are
we supposed to speak all the time everything in English."* (Finnish 1)

*"The working language is English, but other than that I don't know if
there's any special policy."* (Finnish 2)

Each response that the CCL is English was followed by some sort of an excusing phrase or justification and signs of uncertainty. Although all of the interviewees answered that the CCL was English, five out of six used formulations like "I think" or "as far as I understood" to hedge a possibly 'wrong' reply and hesitated in their responses.

Figure 3 graphically illustrates the finding of uncertainty concerning the CCL in the CST. It shows the amount of certain and uncertain interviewees concerning the CCL.

Figure 4: Certainty about CCL



The findings of the study also show that the CCL hasn't been communicated consistently to all the CST members. In their opinions, they had received either directly or indirectly information about the CCL. Four out of six interviewed CST members had not received direct information on the CCL by the management and deduced from the context of situations about the CCL. The following quotes demonstrate that the CST members had not been informed directly about the CCL:

"I guess there are at least more than 20 nationalities working [here], so I would guess that it makes sense that the language is English."(International 1)

"...because they didn't necessarily require any other language skills, when I applied at least."(International 3)

"That's a tricky question.... [pause] I think they mentioned it in the interview. Or at least they said that we do most or all of our work in English because we have a lot of international people here."(Finnish 1)

These quotes illustrate that no supervisor or manager had said directly to these CST that the CCL was English. Although the interviewee Finnish 1 made assumptions or tried to remember where he might have received this information from, the sentence constructions "I think" and "at least they said" made it clear that the interviewee tried to remember and was unsure where the information came from. This demonstrates that the CST derived the English language as the CCL out of the context, as they either guessed it from the fact that they didn't need other language skills at work or they thought that it was a logical conclusion to use English due to the international character at work.

The CCL had not been communicated by the management and the CST members might have received this information from a colleague. The following quote demonstrates that the CCL had not been communicated internally in a direct or official manner:

“I’ve heard it just along the way that English is the corporate language.”(International 1)

This quote shows that the CCL hadn’t been communicated as a central issue and in no formal manner and it gives the impression that the CCL was not considered to be an important issue. That the CCL had been mentioned “along the way” which implies that the CCL issue hadn’t been necessarily communicated by the management. The following quote supports this as the CST member did not believe that there was a company-wide language rule and thought that the language choice depended on the nationalities of the team:

“Well, yeah I guess actually it depends on the team. I don’t really know about the company-wide policy to be honest.”(Finnish 2)

However, two out of six interviewed CST members said they had been informed by a supervisor in a direct manner that the CCL was English which is illustrated by the following quotes:

“I just heard from my coordinator X that the [company]’s official language is English.”(International 2)

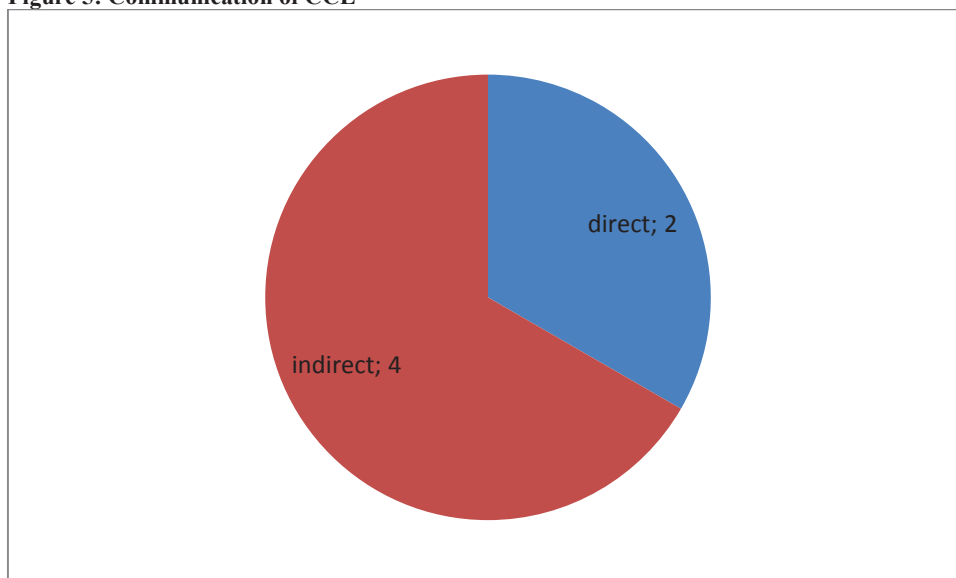
“When I originally started in December 2011, I didn’t have any introduction or anything like that. But after I was away for 6 months and then came back here, I went to an introductory meeting and there it was also mentioned that the official language is English.”(Finnish 3)

Both of the interviewees who were informed about the CCL directly had just recently started to work for the case company. Thus, it seems that the management had started to acknowledge the CCL’s importance or the fact that it has to be explicated since supervisors more than before communicated the CCL in a direct manner to the new employees when they began to work.

However, the fact that only new CST members pointed out that they had been informed by supervisors about the CCL shows that if the CCL hadn't been communicated centrally, for instance, via the intranet, then it also means that the employees didn't have the same state of knowledge. The previous quotes showed the different levels of knowledge of the CST members as some of them had heard about the CCL along the way or didn't even know if a company-wide policy existed. It also reveals that there was an information gap about the CCL between new and old employees.

Figure 4 graphically shows the overview of findings concerning the CST members' answers. It divides the CST members according to whether they had been informed directly by the supervisors about the CCL or whether their answers show that they learned about the CCL in an indirect manner through colleagues or by deducing about it from the context of situations.

Figure 5: Communication of CCL



The Internal Communications Manager (ICM) confirmed the finding that the majority of the interviewed CST members received the information about the CCL in an indirect way. There seemed to be the assumption in the case company that the requirement of

fluent English skills was sufficient for the employees to know that English was the official language. The following quote demonstrates this general assumption:

“It [English] is an unwritten rule here [...] and has formulated due to our international working environment and the fact that we have a delightful variety of employees from different nationalities.[...] We also require fluent English when recruiting new employees and from that day onwards it should be very clear that English is used as the official language.”(ICM)

This quote also demonstrates that the case company pursued an emergent corporate language strategy as presented in subsection 2.2.3. Because the CCL emerged due to the international working environment, the case company’s ICM believed the CCL was a matter of course and self-evident for the employees. This implicitness about the CCL and the belief in its self-evidence explains the before mentioned uncertainty of the interviewees about the LP. The uncertainty can be explained by the possible thinking of employees that the requirement of fluent English skills might be needed for a specific job like in the support of English speaking customers and thus, not necessarily result in the full understanding that the CCL is English. One interviewee mentioned exactly this understanding as illustrated by the following quote:

“[...] because [...] we are in Customer Support, the customers are speaking English.”(Finnish 1)

Concerning the LP of the case company, the study found that up to date the case company had not published any LP or written statement on the CCL. All in all five out of six interviewees hadn’t seen any written statement about the CCL or LP. Some of the interviewees assumed they could find some information on the intranet, others said there was no information at all and expressed a desire for more information. Only one interviewee had seen a written document stating that the company’s official language was English.

Concerning the existence of a written LP, the CST members didn't know whether written information on the CCL existed or said that there was no information about the LP available in the case company as demonstrated by the following quotes:

"No."(International 1)

"None that I've seen."(International 3)

"[...] the official language that we have it somewhere written down like in rules in the company – I don't actually know." (Finnish 1)

Furthermore, the CST members pointed out, while admitting their nescience about a written documentation, that there was a lack of a LP in the company documents and their answers showed that they wished to have more information about it.

"I guess I might find some information from workspace [the intranet]. [...] I have a feeling that there isn't much information about it." (Finnish 2)

"There is not an official statement on the paper or intranet that the company policy says that the company's official language is English which is I think a big lack of the company policy."(International 2)

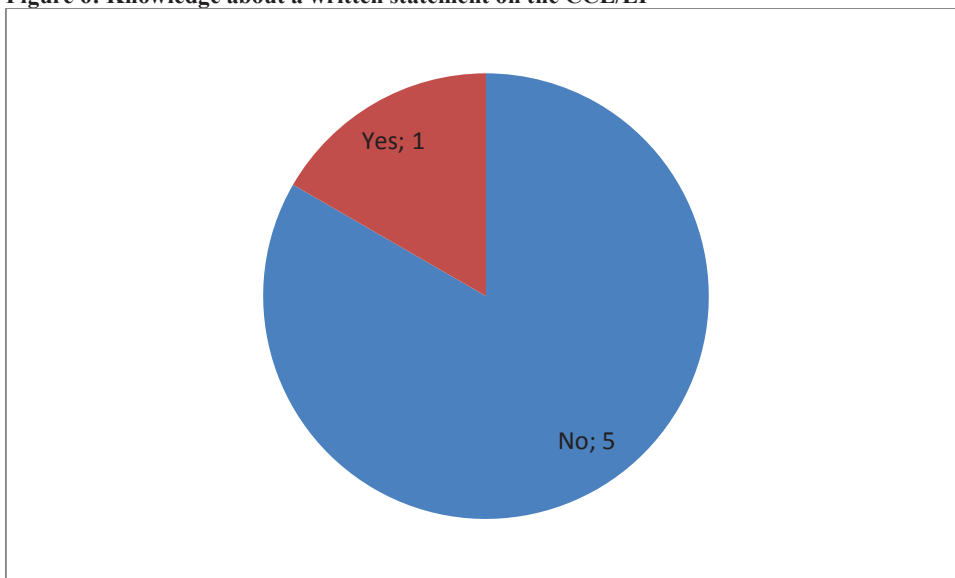
Only one CST member had seen a written statement that the CCL was English. As illustrated by the following quote, he saw this information not in form of a LP, but in the introductory presentation from the HR when he started working:

"[...] that the company's official language is English [...] I saw this information on one of those "Welcome to the company" slides on a PowerPoint presentation."(Finnish 3)

This quote shows again that the management started to acknowledge the importance of communicating the CCL as new employees (work duration < 1 year) were being informed in the introductory presentations about the language issues.

Figure 5 visually shows the proportions of the finding concerning the knowledge of CST members about a written statement on the CCL. It shows that the biggest proportion of the interviewed CST members (five out of six) hadn't seen any and that only one CST member had seen a written statement on the CCL.

Figure 6: Knowledge about a written statement on the CCL/LP



The Communications Department clearly stated that no written statement had been made so far and that up to date no document stated the CCL. However, communication guidelines were planned to be drawn up as illustrated by the following quote by the ICM:

“At the moment we don't have a written language policy for internal communication or corporate language. [...] We will also be drafting internal communication guidelines to supplement this in the future.”(ICM)

This quote shows that a lack in internal communications guidelines had been acknowledged by the management as future plans for its development had been made. This is mirrored by the fact that new employees were now being informed directly about the official language at the case company.

To sum up the findings related to the first RQ, the CCL at the case company was English and the Communication Department practiced an indirect communication approach to communicate about it to its employees and had up to date not published a LP or written statement on the CCL. Moreover, most of the CST members (five out of six) showed uncertainty in their answers about the LP. While the answers of interviewees with longer work duration (> 1 year) showed that they learned about the CCL in an indirect way, newer employees (work duration < 1 year) were informed about the CCL directly by the HR or their supervisor. Furthermore, most of the interviewees (five out of six) had not seen any written statement on the CCL, except the newest employee who had seen a written statement that the CCL was English in an introductory slide by the HR.

To conclude, the CCL was a myth for most of the interviewed employees at the CST because the majority of them answered with uncertainty and lack of clarity about the CCL. Therefore, the indirect communication approach seems to be ineffective. However, it had been acknowledge by the case company as internal communication guidelines were planned to be implemented.

4.2 Use of Corporate Language

This section summarizes the findings on RQ(2): “In which *situations* is the (common?) corporate language used?”. This RQ was motivated by personal experience when working in the CST as I experienced insecurity myself as well as heard about the insecurity of my colleagues concerning the use of the CL in some specific situations. Two of the CST members mentioned in their responses that the working language was English (see section 4.1) and by this separated the working issues from the non-work

related issues in the language use. However, the insecurity about the language use in situations that were other than work-related prevailed as demonstrated by the following quote:

“I am not sure are we supposed to speak all the time, like everything in English. [...] I’m not sure in which situations I’m supposed to use it. [...] for example, if I’m asking something from somebody who is Finnish then I’m not sure does it have to be English.”(Finnish 1)

This concern mirrors the insecurity of mostly Finnish interviewees who were not sure if it was wrong to use the Finnish language. All the interviewees knew the language for working purposes was English as the customer support was carried out in English language, but other than that when talking to colleagues, there was the uncertainty whether every conversation, be it work-related and non-work-related issues, had to be in English.

The study showed that there was no conformity among the communication on the use of the CCL which resulted in confusion and insecurity of the employees. It became obvious that half of the interviewed CST members (three out of six) hadn’t received any instructions on the use of the CCL, while the other half (three out of six) had been directed towards the use of English.

The CST members that hadn’t received any instructions said that the only information was the mere notion about the CCL being English as illustrated by the following quotes:

“No. But for me it is obviously natural to use English.”(International 1)

“[English]. I guess that’s the only instructions I’ve ever heard about the language here.”(Finnish 2)

“There were no specific instructions. Basically what I remember hearing is that the company’s official language is English and that’s about it.”(Finnish 3)

The other half of the CST members (three out of six) had been directed towards the use of English. The encouraging of employees is a sign that supervisors enforced to speak English and by this instructed the CST members. However, one interviewee had been instructed to use English always while the other interviewees mentioned that the CST members had only been encouraged to speak more English. Nevertheless, the following quotes show that the supervisors wanted English to be spoken at the company:

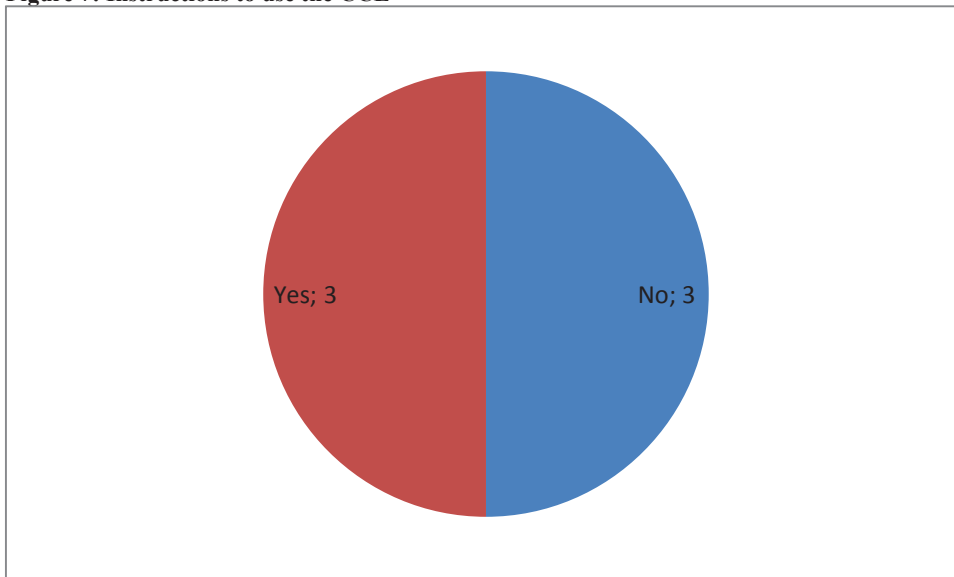
“I remember for example, in weekly meetings a couple of weeks back, [our supervisor] brought it up “Can we please remember to speak English.”(Finnish 1)

“Everything should be in English.”(International 2)

“A few times when working supervisors [...] have encouraged people to speak English when they were speaking Finnish.”(International 3)

Figure 6 illustrates the finding how many of the interviewed CST members received instructions to use the CCL. All in all half of the interviewees mentioned that they hadn’t received any instructions on the use of the CL. The other half of interviewees pointed out that they had received information or the enforcement of using English.

Figure 7: Instructions to use the CCL



It is unclear why half of the interviewed CST members hadn't mentioned any encouragement by the supervisors to speak English, since two of the interviewees referred to this kind of language enforcement. One reason might be that they didn't see the encouragement of supervisors for using English as an instruction. Another reason could be that the reminders to speak English were only done casually and were not being expressed as a significant issue so that it was easily forgotten by the employees.

The study found that the case company did not specify rules or guidelines on the use of English and that it allowed the use of other languages. The case company trusted the employees that they decided themselves when it is necessary to use English and acted accordingly to the situations' requirements. This understanding was shown in the following quote by the ICM:

“It is an unwritten rule here [...]. Many other languages are used as well and we do not forbid it but we trust that the employees always take into account the situation they are in and use English whenever the response/meeting etc. requires English (which is usually the case).”(ICM)

This quote demonstrates the case company's affirmative attitude towards the parallel use of several languages and by this that it directed towards multilingualism like pointed out in the findings of Kangasharju et al. (2010). The case company's assumption of responsible acting of the employees had a good intention; however, it seems that it was causing problems as the interviewees had difficulties in deciding whether it was wrong to speak other languages during work or whether all the conversations needed to be in English. They uttered insecurity, confusion and uncertainty about the CCL and its use in specific situations. It seems that the interviewees wished to have more guidelines or a clear statement so that they could be more certain in their everyday conversations.

To sum up the findings related to second RQ, the study showed that there was no conformity among the communication on the use of the CCL. Moreover, the case company did not specify the situations when to use English, which resulted in confusion and insecurity of the CST members. The management trusted on the responsible acting of its employees concerning language choice and had an affirmative attitude towards the use of other languages.

4.3 Situations of language switches

This section presents the findings on the third RQ and the situations in which the CL is changed to another language by the CST members. The personal experiences made in the CST were that most of the time (with very few exceptions) the language switches were made by Finnish employees who changed from English to Finnish or simply spoke Finnish. Because the international employees in the CST were either from English native speaking countries, which made it natural for them to speak English, or from countries with different mother tongues, only the Finnish employees changed from English to Finnish.

The study found that language switches in the CST from English to Finnish occurred in both private and casual conversations as well as in work-related discussions. English was seen by the Finnish CST members as the language for working issues and for the

distribution of important work-related information or the discussion thereof. Therefore in most of the situations the Finnish CST members acknowledged that they would speak Finnish when no international employee was involved in the conversation as well as when the topic of the discussion was irrelevant to know for everybody and more of private nature. Nevertheless, work-related issues were frequently being discussed in Finnish by the CST members. Most of the language switches happened unconsciously as the Finnish CST members said it was simply easier to initiate the conversation in Finnish. However, internationals argued that conversations in Finnish had taken place in their presence and that the language had been changed although an international CST member had initiated the conversation.

The following findings describe situations where Finnish speakers didn't intend to target international colleagues with the conversation and where international CST members were not directly involved in the discussion.

Although all the interviewed CST members knew that English was the official CL, the Finnish CST members admitted that they kept on speaking Finnish as illustrated by the following quote:

“Sometimes you just keep on speaking Finnish even if it's something work-related.” (Finnish 2)

According to the CST members, the topic discussed in Finnish usually seemed to be something irrelevant and thus, not necessary to be said in English so that everybody would be able to understand the conversation. The following quote demonstrated these thoughts:

“Most of the times it's something ... more personal sounds weird, but something irrelevant [...] just something silly.” (Finnish 1)

However, the language switches didn't happen always on purpose. All the interviewed Finnish CST members simply felt that it was more natural and easier to start speaking Finnish to a Finnish speaker or a language change simply happened unconsciously as it can be seen in the undermentioned quotes:

“I don't think I make the decision that now I don't want to speak English.”(Finnish 1)

“I guess it's natural if you're just speaking to another Finnish speaker to start speaking Finnish and it might get to something important at one point.”(Finnish 2)

“And I don't see it being done purposefully, it is just naturally. [...] it's easier to initiate the conversation in your own language.”(Finnish 3)

The dilemma became obvious in the second quote: Although the Finnish speaking person could start the conversation in Finnish without the intention of talking about something work-related, the conversation might turn into a work-related issue and important to know for everybody at one point where the international CST members might be left out of the knowledge transfer.

The initiating of a conversation in Finnish depended on the composition of the group. Although the Finnish speaking interviewees pointed out that they mostly spoke English when there were non-Finnish speaking colleagues around, an international CST member reported that he experienced situations in which Finnish colleagues continued conversations in Finnish although international colleagues were present. The following quote describes his experience:

“Depends on the make-up of the group [...] and on whom they are directing or commenting the question to, particularly. And if they are in a group with mostly Finnish speaking people and if there are one or two

English speaking people, then they might not say something in English. [...] if there's some question that they wanna direct to someone specifically and they know that they speak Finnish then they ask in Finnish. Even though some non-Finnish speaker might be able to help they'll still say it in Finnish.” (International 3)

According to the American CST member, his Finnish colleagues would instantly initiate a work-related conversation in Finnish if they asked a Finnish-speaking person. This is insofar problematic as colleagues that might come across the same problem or situation, but haven't asked for help yet, remain with their problem alone and might search for an answer alone. CST members not able to follow the conversation in Finnish are left out of the conversation and remain without important knowledge that might be useful right now or in the near future. This dilemma deepens with the fact that Finnish speaking employees admitted that they initiated conversations in Finnish when they thought that the topic might not be of interest for everybody. The following quote demonstrates this way of thinking:

“It's pretty situational. Depends if it's something that everyone should know and understand then it's better to say it in English. But sometimes it doesn't really matter that much then I say it in Finnish.”(Finnish 2)

The problematic aspect becomes obvious in the quote above, given that it is practically impossible to guess whether a work-related conversation in Finnish would also concern non-Finnish speaking colleagues. One of the international CST members might have the same question or would find the discussed information valuable for the future. However, even casual conversations play an important role for international colleagues. This issue will be specifically discussed in subsection 4.4.1.

Moreover, a language switch to Finnish occurred when one of the Finnish CST members suddenly changed to Finnish in an ongoing English conversation. In such a

situation the other Finnish-speaking CST members continued automatically in Finnish as well like pointed out in the following quote:

“[...] and then I continue it in Finnish because somebody at some point swaps the language to Finnish. [...] And then it feels just naturally to continue in Finnish than turning back to English again.” (Finnish 1)

This kind of situation was also pointed out by one international CST member (International 2) who had told that some of his Finnish colleagues changed the language directly to Finnish when they were being asked a question by a Finnish speaker in English. In this situation none of the international colleagues could follow the conversation.

Furthermore, Finnish CST members admitted that they would speak Finnish even when an international colleague would be sitting right next to them who was not included in the conversation. The following quote describes this:

“[...] if he [the international] is just sitting there and doing his own thing and we are having the conversation just two of us, even though there might be somebody who can hear us then I think we'll speak Finnish.” (Finnish 1)

The previously described situations had all in common that international CST members were not involved in the conversations. However, the study found that also discussions had been changed to Finnish in which international CST members were involved. This was pointed out by the international interviewee in the following quote:

“[...] when you ask one of the Finnish employees a question in English and if the person doesn't know the answer, he asks the other Finnish employee to get more information and the other guy is just next to him and he is asking him in Finnish.” (International 2)

In this quote the interviewee described a situation in which a work-related question was asked from a Finnish colleague who didn't know the answer. Hereupon this colleague asked another Finnish colleague for more information in Finnish although the international colleague had initiated the conversation and should have been included and been able to follow the discussion.

To sum up the findings related to the third RQ, the study found that language switches occurred from Finnish to English in conversations that covered casual topics as well as work-related content. Most of the language switches were done unintentionally because for the Finnish CST members it was easier and more natural to initiate a conversation in Finnish. Furthermore, language switches were made by Finnish CST members when international colleagues were absent, passively present or involved in the conversation.

4.4 Employees' opinions of language switches

This section presents the findings on the employees' opinions about the situations when the CST members didn't speak English. It illustrates in subsection 4.4.1 what the international employees thought about the language switches and how they felt when language switches occurred. Moreover, subsection 4.4.2 shows the findings on the Finnish CST members' opinions on how the internationals perceive the situations when they spoke Finnish.

4.4.1 International CST members

The study showed that international CST members were unanimously indifferent towards private conversations being held in Finnish. But all the internationals expressed feelings of being an outcast, left-out or isolated when their colleagues switched the language. Work-related conversations in Finnish were seen as counterproductive, inefficient and as a disturbance of information distribution in the team.

The international interviewees were unanimously understanding about private conversations in Finnish. However, one of the international interviewees uttered ambiguous feelings about it. For him it was a double-edged sword as on the one hand he understood that his colleagues wanted to speak their mother tongue, but on the other hand he would like to understand what his colleagues were talking about. In his opinion the mutual understanding in the whole team was important as illustrated by the following quote:

“I think it is very difficult especially in casual situations for people not to speak their mother tongue. So I understand why people would want to talk in Finnish, but at the same time I understand that it is important for everyone in the team to understand what the people are talking about.”
(International 3)

Being unanimously understanding about private conversations in Finnish, all the international interviewees expressed their resentment about work-related conversations held in Finnish. Moreover, language switches to Finnish impeded international CST members helping to solve a work-related problem as illustrated by the following quote:

“But then when you can see it’s a question and they [Finnish] are sitting in front of their computers, I think that has something to do with work. Well, I just like information and it’s just important that information is shared [...] cause it might help in our job. And then maybe 10% of the time the person they are asking doesn’t know [...] and then it appeared that actually I had the answer.”(International 1)

Furthermore, language switches negatively influenced the work performance of international CST members as they didn’t understand problems discussed in Finnish. The following quote demonstrates that work-related conversations in Finnish prevented international CST members from informing customers with the right information because they were not up to date with the issues discussed:

“[...] Finnish employees discuss the issues in Finnish language which causes sometimes lots of problems because English speaking people, we don’t understand what the issue is and after, even a month, we still don’t know the issue and we just inform the customer with the wrong information.” (International 2)

International CST members insisted upon equal information distribution among Finnish and international colleagues. Even if international CST members didn’t participate in an ongoing conversation in Finnish, they still listened to it and would like to hear the discussed problem and its outcome because this information might be useful in the future. The following quote underlines this importance of understanding the conversations being held in Finnish:

“[...] even if I don’t know the solution to the problem they are asking about, it would be nice to hear what the other person has to say and what the possible solution might be. So I don’t understand what outcome comes from the question or the conversation that they are having.” (International 3)

Although the acceptance of private conversations in Finnish was expressed clearly, a dilemma became obvious during the interview. The interviewees pointed out that language switches to Finnish in the team created in general a feeling of isolation or made the international CST members feel left out. The following quotes by the international interviewees mirror these feelings:

“If you’re sitting on a table and all the casual talk is in Finnish and all the work talk is in English, I’m sure the person who only speaks English would feel a little bit left out.” (International 1)

“It’s just when everyone is speaking Finnish and I don’t understand what they’re talking about then it somehow creates a kind of isolation.”(International 3)

One international employee even expressed that he felt like an outcast and it became obvious that in his opinion the CST was divided into two entities – the Finnish and the internationals. When talking about international employees he used the collective word “we” and made a separation from his Finnish colleagues by using “they”. Although these expressions were chosen by the interviewee unconsciously, it represented his feeling of separation in the team. The following quote describes his feelings of exclusion:

“We don’t understand what they are talking about, we can’t join the conversation, and apart of it take the conversation further. It is just stuck somehow. We can’t kind of integrate. And you’re being an outcast somehow in the team. So I notice in my team all English speaking people, we sit next to each other.”(International 2)

This quote demonstrates that the seating habits of the CST members reflect the separation of international and Finnish employees who sit apart from each other. This spatial separation reflects the feeling that was expressed by all the international employees as being left out, isolated or even as an outcast when their Finnish colleagues switched the language.

The language switches unsettled the CST members. One international employee got emotional about the language switches and considered these as an insulting behavior. For instance, the experience made by him that his Finnish colleague switched the language from English to Finnish, although he initiated the conversation, was considered to be simply rude as shown in the quote below:

“When you ask one of the Finnish employee a question in English and [...] he is asking [a colleague] in Finnish. I think it should be asked in English for me to be involved about the case. But still it is Finnish and I think it is rude... I think it’s rude.... It is just rude.” (International 2)

The opinions about the language switches that were expressed as something acceptable at first, turned into a soft spot when emotional terms were expressed by the international CST members. The language switches were considered to be “rude” (International 2) or that “it can be kind of annoying” (International 3).

4.4.2 Finnish CST members

Finnish CST members differed in their views on how their international colleagues perceived the language switches. They didn’t see language switches as a major issue because they believed their international colleagues would speak up if the issue became severe. However, all the Finns acknowledged that language switches might let the internationals feel left out or excluded. Moreover, two additional problems were recognized by a Finnish CST member: the hindrance of spread of tacit knowledge and possible negative effects on the team spirit.

The attitudes of Finnish CST members on the international colleagues’ opinions differed and ranged from a simple “I don’t know” (Finnish 1) to “they probably do mind about it” (Finnish 3). One Finnish interviewee pointed out that only work-related conversation in Finnish would bother his international colleagues (Finnish 2).

Although two Finnish interviewees expressed their belief about their colleagues’ concerns of language switches, two of them didn’t think it was a serious issue. According to them, the language switches were not to be taken serious and nothing to be worried about as illustrated below:

“I don’t think it’s that serious if we sometimes speak another language.”(Finnish 1)

“I don’t think that the non-Finnish speaking people are really upset about it, it’s more a sort of a nuisance. So it’s not like a major issue – mostly!”(Finnish 3)

The Finnish CST members hoped that their international colleagues would speak up when the language switches would be considered to be problematic. There was a general assumption in the CST that international colleagues would always tell if the conversations in Finnish became disturbing. This understanding can be seen in the following quote:

“But I think they [the internationals] are pretty good at asking always in English if they don’t understand and remind us [Finns] that we should switch to English.”(Finnish 2)

In contrast to this opinion the international interviewees pointed out that they reminded their Finnish colleagues to speak English. Because of this the repetitive behavior of language switches was considered as an ignorance and rude behavior as shown in the quote below:

“But this is getting rude because although they [the Finns] have been informed and notified about this and they still keep going discussing in Finnish. [...] So, I really don’t like these language switches.”(International 2)

Moreover, both the Finnish and the international interviewee made an unconscious separation in their use of words that has been previously described in subsection 4.4.1. The Finnish interviewee referred to the Finns by using the collective word “we” and to

the internationals by using “they” which has also been done by his international colleagues.

After all the Finns didn’t regard their language switches as unproblematic. For instance, the same feelings of rude behavior and feelings of left-out and excluded were expressed as illustrated by the following quotes:

“I think it might feel a bit excluding. Even if you are not talking about anything important, the fact that you can’t understand what they are saying, or the international person that is sitting next to us can’t understand what we are saying it’s sort of rude somehow.” (Finnish 1)

“It always creates a kind of sentiment that the others get kind of left out of the conversation.” (Finnish 3)

Besides the same problem acknowledgements by the Finns, two additional major problems in language switches were emphasized: the hindrance of spread of tacit knowledge and the negative effects on the team spirit. One Finnish interviewee explained that “people subconsciously pick up things when they hear them” (Finnish 3). He continued that because of this reason it was important that everybody in the CST could understand the conversations being held even if the colleagues were not involved in the conversations. As once they heard an important or work-related issue, they started listening to it and benefitted from hearing their colleagues’ discussion. The interviewee also feared that the team spirit might suffer when his international colleagues felt left-out and isolated when they couldn’t understand their Finnish colleagues. As closing words he added that “just because of common courtesy it would be nice to speak one single language that everybody understands in the team.” (Finnish 3)

To sum up the findings related to the fourth RQ, the study found that international CST members perceived language switches as counterproductive, inefficient and as a disturbance of information distribution in the team. Although they expressed feelings of

indifference towards private conversations being held in Finnish, nonetheless, they felt excluded, left-out or as outcasts when their colleagues were having conversations in Finnish. Finnish CST members had different opinions of their international colleagues' attitudes concerning language switches that ranged from indifference to annoyance. Like their international colleagues, they also acknowledged problematic aspects of language switches and emphasized that language switches hindered the spread of tacit knowledge and had a negative effect on the team spirit.

5 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the conducted study, discusses its findings in the light of presented research literature and draws conclusions. Moreover, practical implications for other MNCs are presented. The thesis ends with a critical review and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Research Summary

This thesis aimed to investigate the interpersonal communication practices within the CST of the case company and analyze its knowledge on CCL and opinions on language switches. The motivation of this study was personal work experience in the CST and the fact that no previous studies concerning CCL issues have been conducted on a single team and neither a study on language practices in the absence of a written LP. The research was conducted by answering the following four RQs:

- (1) What is the *Corporate Language* of the case company and how is it *communicated*?
- (2) In which *situations* is the (common?) *corporate language* used?
- (3) In which situations does a *language switch* occur?
- (4) How does the CST *perceive the language switches*?

The literature review gave an overview of lingua franca research, on basics of corporate language and on the multilingual aspect in MNCs and led to the formation of a comprehensive theoretical framework for this thesis.

The RQs were answered through a case study approach and a qualitative research method by interviewing international and Finnish CST members. The interviews were transcribed, edited, coded and analyzed systematically concerning answers to each RQ.

The main findings of this thesis were that the CCL was a myth for most of the CST members and that the practiced indirect communication approach for CCL issues was ineffective. Moreover, the study showed that the case company lacked conformity in the communication of instructions on the CCL and that it did not specify any CCL guidelines, neither in oral nor in written form. Furthermore, an affirmative attitude was expressed towards the use of other languages. A series of different situations of language switches from English to Finnish was detected that covered private and work-related conversations and included situations in which international employees were passively present as well as involved. The analysis of the CST members' opinions about language switches illustrated that both internationals and Finns had concerns that ranged from excluding aspects to the hindrance of spread of tacit knowledge and negative effects on the team spirit.

5.2 The Outcomes of the Study

This section discusses the previously presented findings from chapter 4 in the light of the researched literature in chapter 2. Moreover, the findings' significance is analyzed and conclusions are drawn.

The findings to the first RQ concerning the CL and its communication confirmed the results of Kangasharju et al.'s research (2010) that most of the companies don't publish a LP and don't consider language issues as their main priority. The case company demonstrated this by emphasizing the self-evidence of the CCL and by trusting on the reasonable thinking and acting of its employees when deciding upon the language choice. This understanding resulted in that the communication of the CCL has not received the importance needed to ensure an equal state of knowledge of the employees. Without an official document stating the CCL and the belief in its self-evidence, the employees received the information on the CCL in an indirect way as demonstrated in section 4.1. The CST members found out about the language issues through colleagues or deduced it from the context of situations instead of being instructed by supervisors or the management.

For the majority of interviewed CST members in the case company, as well as for many employees in well-established MNCs (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Fredriksson et al., 2006) the notion of CCL was linked to feelings of insecurity and lack of clarity, concerning the CCL itself as well as the situations in which it has to be used. Even if a LP existed in a MNC, Kangasharju et al. (2010) pointed out that the employees hadn't been aware of it. This leads to the assumption that most of the MNCs communicate the CCL indirectly, even if a LP exists. In the case company as well as in other previously researched MNCs (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Kangasharju et al., 2010), the CCL resembled a myth that the employees have heard of, but of which they are unsure if it really exists in their company, and if it exists in what form. Because of this the first conclusion is drawn that an indirect communication approach to communicate CCL issues is ineffective and results in a myth-like belief of the CCL by the MNC's employees.

Conclusion 1: The indirect communication approach for language issues turns the CCL into a myth.

As demonstrated in section 4.2 the study found that the CCL in the case company emerged out of work necessities of daily operations. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) described this as an emergent language strategy in their research. Similar to Louhiala-Salminen's and Kankaanranta's descriptions of emergent language strategy (2012) the case company never claimed English as official CCL in form of a written LP and had not published guidelines for its use. Moreover, like pointed out in Kangasharju et al.'s findings (2010) the case company directed towards multilingualism. The employees in the case company were allowed to use other languages and didn't receive instructions on the language use at work as the case company trusted that they would take into account the situation and use the CCL when necessary. It seems likely that the emergent language strategy enabled the positive attitude towards multilingualism that had been proclaimed by the case company.

Furthermore, the case company's trust in its employees' reasonable language choices resulted in the fact that some CST members made a separation between the working language and the language used for casual conversations or non-work related issues. The separation between the CCL as the working language and other languages used can be connected to Bae's (1999) notion of language of communication (Kommunikationssprache) as opposed to language of identification (Identifikationssprache). It appears that the CST members who consider English as the language of communication only saw it as a means to an end to reach work-related goals.

Moreover, having the freedom of language choice, the CST members often used the easiest and most convenient language to talk about private issues and sometimes even for work-related conversations. Finnish (PCL) was considered as the language of identification and the CCL remains as a mere "tool to get the job done." The fact that the case company favored multilingualism enabled this thinking as it left the opportunity to use languages that are more familiar to the employees and led them to use a language of identification, being the mother tongue. Therefore, the second conclusion is made that NNSs view the CCL as mere language of communication, while PCL and LFLs remain language of identification if the MNC favors multilingualism.

Conclusion 2: The direction towards multilingualism limits the CCL to be the mere language of communication for NNSs.

Section 4.3 demonstrated that the reasons for using PCL instead of CCL were in most cases due to convenience aspects. Although work-related conversations have to be carried out in the CCL, Finnish CST members admitted that they often used Finnish (PCL) for work-related conversations. This finding can be compared to Fredriksson et al.'s research (2006) that the introduction of a CCL doesn't make it a shared language in the company and that other languages are still being used. In the case company it seems that the convenience aspect overran the rules and since there were no written instructions, it was easier to slip away and use another language.

Moreover, the language switches created a feeling of isolation and the international CST members who couldn't understand Finnish felt left out, isolated or as outcasts as demonstrated in subsection 4.4.1. This finding reflects Ferner et al.'s (1995) and Piekkari's (2006, 2008) studies that a CCL can create a sense of isolation. Although previous studies pointed out that NNSs of the CCL feel easier left out since they are not always able to follow conversations in English, in this case it was the NNSs of the PCL – the LFL and native English speakers – who suffered a form of isolation.

Furthermore, other negative effects of a CCL that have been pointed out in the literature review in subsection 2.1.3 could be detected in the case company. However, these negative effects were not for the NNSs of the CCL, but for the international employees who were not able to understand the PCL. The negative effects were due to the language switches away from the CCL to PCL and resulted in comprehension problems (Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, 2002) and increase in work inefficiency (Marschan et al., 1997) because language switches negatively influenced the work performance of international CST members as demonstrated in subsection 4.4.1.

One goal of this thesis was to analyze communication practices in the absence of a written LP and by this to close this indicated research gap by Kangasharju et al. (2010). The findings showed that the absence of written guidelines for the language use enabled uncontrolled language switches in the company since the CST members were unsure about the language use like demonstrated in section 4.1. Although coming along with good intentions, the case company's trust in the employees' reasonable acting concerning language choice resulted in easier slipping away to the most convenient language, even in work-related conversations and involvement of colleagues with different language backgrounds. As demonstrated by the comparison with previous research literature, many benefits of a CCL that have been presented in subsection 2.1.3 disappeared, which leads to the following conclusion:

Conclusion 3: The absence of guidelines or a LP eliminates benefits of a CCL.

One of the goals of this thesis was to investigate the CCL communication from the viewpoint of a single team in a MNC. As already mentioned, section 4.4 demonstrated that the frequent language switches negatively influenced the work performance of international CST members. This mirrors the finding of Marschan et al.'s research (1999a) where the communication flow between Kone's subsidiaries has been characterized as distorted in terms of information distribution. This thesis demonstrated that the communication in a multinational single team in the headquarters of an MNC can have problems with information distribution although a CCL is existent.

Subsection 2.1.4 discussed specifically the issue of knowledge sharing. Because language switches represent information withholding or a distorted information flow within the team, if the topic of conversation is work related, language switches were compared to a structural barrier in inter-unit communication in MNCs like in Mäkelä et al.'s research (2012). The findings of this thesis demonstrated negative effects on the work performance of international CST members due to language switches. Because of this, the conclusion is drawn that negative effects on knowledge sharing can result even in single departments of a MNC due to structural barriers in form of language switches.

Conclusion 4: Language switches may act as structural barriers to knowledge sharing even in single departments in the headquarters of a MNC.

5.3 Practical Implications

This section discusses implications of this study's findings and points out what they may imply for other MNCs.

The first practical implication of this study is that the indirect communication approach for language issues turns the CCL into a myth. To avoid this, the communication about the CCL needs to take a more central role in the company and has to be addressed centrally to avoid negative effects, for instance, the unharmonious internal

communication, hindrance of knowledge sharing or insecurity and confusion of employees concerning the language choice. Therefore, the MNC has to ensure that employees learn about the CCL in a direct way through supervisors, management or an official document that is easily accessible and can be easily found by all employees. Like this the MNC can avoid that its CCL remains a myth for its employees and can ensure an equal state of knowledge concerning language use among its workforce. Hence, negative effects of insecurity and lack of clarity can be avoided and a harmonious internal communication is fostered.

The second practical implication is that the direction towards multilingualism limits the CCL to be the mere language of communication for NNSs. As discussed in the previous section, the fact that NNSs of CCL view the PCL as language of identification results in that employees use the PCL for private conversations. International employees who are not able to follow conversations being held in the PCL feel left out and isolated. These feelings of isolation are counterproductive for a good team atmosphere and the sense of belonging together. Therefore, a MNC should bear in mind that a favor of multilingualism may have negative effects on team atmosphere and implement clear guidelines to avoid uncontrolled language switches. Like this international employees can passively or actively participate in all the conversations being held.

Yet another practical implication is that the absence of guidelines or a LP eliminates benefits of a CCL. The discussed findings demonstrate that all the good intentions and envisaged benefits that a MNC intends to achieve by introducing a CCL are at risk if guidelines are missing. To avoid this it is absolutely necessary that a MNC first, has guidelines and second, implements them. Instructions, in written or oral form, should be clearly expressed and cover the different situations in which the CCL has to be spoken that no employee can develop feelings of unfairness or isolation and that knowledge sharing can take place without restrictions.

The last practical implication is that language switches may act as structural barriers to knowledge sharing even in single departments in the headquarters of a MNC. This

implies that MNCs should not only fear communication problems that might arise between subsidiaries or between headquarters and organizational units. MNCs should keep in mind that communicational challenges may already arise in a single multinational department in the headquarters. Such problems should be detected and tackled by the department of communication by communicating clear guidelines through the management and supervisors. Like this benefits of a CCL don't disappear and can be fully utilized.

5.4 Limitations and indications for further research

This section examines this thesis from a critical point of view by showing limitations of the research. Moreover, further research possibilities are suggested.

The study revealed internal communication problems concerning the CCL already evolving in a single department in the headquarters. However, the case study analysis of a single team limits the generalization of the findings since other departments or units of the case company haven't been taken into account during the research. A study of other units in the case company would reveal if the findings apply to the whole organization or if they remain team-specific.

Moreover, when analyzing the situations of language switches and the employees' opinions of them this thesis focused merely on interpersonal communication. Written communication of the CST members, for instance, email or Skype communication, has been left out of the focus to limit the scope of the study. It comes into question whether language switches also take place in written communication and whether the same results can be achieved in its analysis. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct the same study with a broader scope of analysis including the analysis of written communication.

Another limitation is that the research analyzed a team where the minority aspect of international employees clearly outweighed. Furthermore, the study was conducted with

a relatively small sample size due to the low number of international employees at time of research and the ambition to have an equal number of Finnish CST members for equality reasons. Thus, the generalization aspect of the findings may be challenged. To analyze in how far the minority aspect influences the findings of language switches and to increase the likability of generalization, a study with a higher sample size and a team where international employees are in majority is recommended. Like this it can be found out whether the behavior of language switches can be linked to minority aspects.

A further limitation is that the study was conducted with one single Finnish MNC. Therefore, the results may be country and culture specific. To prove the applicability of the study's conclusions for other organizations and other countries and cultures, a similar study in other MNCs originating from different countries than Finland should be conducted to reveal similarities or differences.

Moreover, since no recommendations concerning successful CCL communication and guidelines to avoid negative effects from uncontrolled language switches were given, further research is recommended to close this research gap.

Despite the highlighted limitations in this study, it can still be stated that the study's research approach and results can be considered as reliable and valid as verified in section 3.3. The research focus was intentionally narrowed to conduct a team specific analysis and by this to deepen the research to a departmental unit in the headquarters of an MNC instead of conducting an analysis with a broader focus on whole units like in previous studies (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Mäkelä et al., 2012). Like this the study was able to give an in-depth analysis of team-specific interpersonal communication and opinions and reveal significant findings as well as lead to important conclusions. The team-specific communicational challenges would have been untraceable when conducting research on whole organizational units. This thesis contributed to a deeper understanding of CCL issues and showed that the CCL still does not receive the necessary attention needed, even in recently established MNCs. Obviously the CCL remains a "forgotten factor in

multinational management” (Marschan et al., 1997) and stays hidden (Kangasharju et al., 2010). The findings of this thesis and its indicated research gaps pave the way for further investigations in this area so that MNCs can bring out the best of their CCL.

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APPENDIX

Interview guide

- Background of interviewees: nationality, work-duration, responsibility at the CST, knowledge of languages, level of CCL, PCL and other LFLs
- RQ(1): What is the Corporate Language of the case company and how is it communicated?
 - Tell me about the language policy here at XY (the case company)?
 - How do you know?
 - Do you know if written information on the LP exists?
 - You mentioned ... Tell me about ...
- RQ(2): In which situations is the (common?) corporate language used?
 - Did you get any instructions on how to use the corporate language?
 - You mentioned ... Tell me about ...
 - You mentioned ... Describe a specific example of that...
- RQ(3): In which situations does a language switch occur?
 - You have mentioned that English is official language. Are there any other languages besides English in use?
 - Tell me more about the language switches...
 - Describe the situations in which a language switch occurs.
 - Why do you think this happens?
 - You mentioned ... Tell me about ...
- RQ(4): How do the CST perceive the language switches?
 - For internationals: How do you feel about these language switches?
 - For Finns: What do you think how your international colleagues perceive the language switches?
 - Why..?
 - You mentioned ... Tell me about ...
 - You mentioned ... Describe a specific example of that...