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A discursive approach to dialogic organizational communication in Yammer messages - a case study

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ABSTRACT

Objective of the study: The objective of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of how organisational dialogic communication is visible in enterprise social media (ESM). To reach this aim, this study will focus firstly on how dialogic communication is visible in a company's Yammer communication. Secondly, the focus is on the discourses that can be found in Yammer communication. The third emphasis is on the linguistic characteristics in Yammer messages that are apt to produce dialogue. Yammer is one of the prevalent ESM channels with over half a million organisations using it. Despite of the popularity of ESM in general and Yammer in particular, no previous research on dialogic communication in ESM is made. The theoretical framework in this study is formed mainly on dialogic communication, which becomes comprehensible by linking it to the evolution of organisational communication models. The evolution from transmission model to interactive models presents a clear switch from one-way communication to dialogic communication. In this study, communication is viewed and interpreted through a discursive lens. Consequently, communication is seen as (re)creating organisations and their realities.

Research method: This study is done as a commission for a case company and the value the results provide is thus practical in nature. As text can be seen as the material embodiment of discourse, this study will have its focus on written Yammer messages. The data set consists of 750 Yammer messages that are derived from four different groups within the case company's Yammer community. The methodology used is based on critical linguistic analysis, which is an approach to discourse analysis. Furthermore, in order to ensure a complete understanding of the social world in an ESM, this study applies social network analysis to some extent.

Findings and conclusions: Five key discourses were identified out of which two adopt dialogic communication. The first dialogic discourse, Conversation enabler, is expressive in style and personal in tone. The second dialogic discourse, Communal entity, uses also expressive language but the emphasis is more on togetherness. The tone is light and even cheerful. Even though the three remaining discourses do not initiate dialogue per se, when they are in interaction with the dialogic discourses they can be seen as allowing dialogue. Thus, dialogue, but also one-way communication, is visible in the Yammer messages of the case company. The detailed explanations of each discourse respectively provide valuable information about the current state of the case company's communication culture.

Keywords

corporate communication, organizational communication, dialogic communication, two-way communication, communication models, interactive model of communication, discourse, critical linguistic analysis, social network analysis, enterprise social media, Yammer

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1 Introduction

The world of organizational communication has changed vastly during the last decade. Globalization and the development of technology have changed the nature of communication in several companies, and current internal communication has become more dialogic and web-based. (Paulasto, 2012.) An increasing amount of organizations use several means of communication in order to achieve the best outcomes and especially social media usage among organizations occurs at a rapid pace. Indeed, social media platforms are used broadly due to their various characteristics that enable dialogue in a cost-efficient manner. In a way, these digital platforms break the classic patterns of communication where conversation does not have to follow hierarchical lines but can be initiated and maintained by any employee (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 172).

The current globalized business world is composed by a complex combination of diverse and international organizations. Dialogue in business has become an important factor as it allows people across the world to connect in ways one-way communication is not capable of (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011, pp. 172-173). As stated before, social media has facilitated this process vastly and has nowadays become a commonality among organizations worldwide. As these new social platforms evolve and grow, a need to understand how they enable and constrain communication in organizations has arisen.

One of the prevalent social media platforms especially among organizations is Yammer. Approximately 500 000 organizations globally use Yammer today ("Teamwork in the Workplace | Yammer Business Benefit", 2016). Yammer is an integrated enterprise social media (ESM) service that offers a variety of social media functions, such as blogs, status updates and profiles. All posts, likes and shares that are visible on Yammer are associated with a specific employee. All users are authenticated with their real names and usually also

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with their working titles. Even though many of Yammer's features are available on external social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, the user experience does still differ due to its positioning inside a firewall. Furthermore, as the organization's Yammer network is not publicly accessible, it reduces different aspects of privacy concerns. For example, company confidentiality information can be freely shared across the network. (Roberts, 2012.) These aspects combined, it can be stated that Yammer allows rather open communication among the employees of an organization.

Despite the massive popularity of ESM usage in general and Yammer in particular there is hardly any research on the dialogic nature of communication in ESM. User behaviour in social media in general is studied broadly (see e.g. Karakayali & Kilic, 2013; Bazarova, Choi, Sosik, Cosley & Whitlock, 2015), but these studies view social media as a comprehensive phenomenon (ibid). The majority of the studies that focus on organizational context focus mainly on defining and describing the functionalities and technologies of ESM (see eg. Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Zhang, Qu, Cody & Wu, 2010). Only a few studies focus on the usage of ESM, but they either focus on virtual platforms in general (see e.g. Hsu, Ju, Yen & Chang, 2007), or have a very specific focus, such as sense making (DiMicco, Geyer, Millen, Dugan & Brownholtz, 2009) or social resilience (Farrell, Kellogg & Thomas, 2008). Thus, the comprehension of the effect of ESM usage has yet remained superficial and as no previous research has combined dialogic communication and ESM, the key question of how a dialogic communication culture actually is visible in ESM is still unanswered. Therefore, it may be valuable to investigate what kind of a role Yammer has in developing and sustaining dialogic communication within organizations. The purpose of this study will therefore be to achieve an enhanced understanding of the nature of dialogic organizational communication in the social network channel Yammer.

1.1 Research questions and objectives

The aim of this study is to research whether and how dialogue is visible in the messages written in the social network platform Yammer. In other words, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of ESM in dialogic communication.

In order to gain an understanding of how dialogue is visible in Yammer, the first research question has its focus on the prevalent discourses that are visible in a company's Yammer communication. The recognition of specific discourses provide insight to what kind of social contexts and further communication cultures are visible in Yammer overall. The second research questions goes a bit deeper and covers specifically the forms of communication the Yammer messages take in the dialogic discourses. The third research question has its emphasis on language usage and on the linguistic factors that accomplish dialogue in particular. As other factors influence dialogue as well, the impact of language is outstandingly significant (see e.g. Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, Cheng, Kleinberg & Lee, 2012 & Jaech, Zayats, Fang, Ostendorf & Hajishirzi, 2015).

The three main research questions are:
1. What kinds of discourses are found in a company's Yammer communication?
2. How is a dialogic communication culture visible in a company's Yammer communication?
3. What kinds of linguistic characteristics are apt to producing dialogic communication?

This study is made as a commission for a case company and the results provide more practical value than theoretical insights. The findings and discussion of this study seek to bring valuable information for the case company about how their communication culture functions and is visible in practice. Furthermore, the case company will gain an understanding of how the employees use Yammer and what kind of messages usually tend

to generate dialogue. This in turn offers a possibility for more effective communication in Yammer. The findings as such are not applicable to other organizations, although tentative proposals may be outlined.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This paper is divided into six chapters. This introductory Chapter 1 describes the topic of research and presents the research questions. Chapter 2 presents the context of this study, i.e. the features and possibilities of ESM whereupon Chapter 3 presents relevant literature and discusses especially how dialogic and monologic communication cultures, communication models and discourse are intertwined to each other. These concepts presented form the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 4 introduces the research methods and data employed in the study. In order to get a holistic view of the issue at hand, Chapter 4 presents also an introduction of the case company and its communication culture. In Chapter 5, relevant findings to each of the three research questions are presented and examined. The final Chapter 6 reiterates the aims of this study, summarises the main results and discusses the practical implications of these findings.

2 Enterprise social media

As stated in the introduction, social media has had a contributory effect on organizational communication and on the growth of dialogue. Therefore, the important concept of ESM in the light of dialogic communication is introduced and discussed in this chapter. The characteristics of social media platforms offer a unique possibility for employees worldwide to connect and engage in dialogue in a way that has not been possible before. ESM is thus a significant concept in regard to this study as it can be seen as one of the major factors influencing and furthering dialogic communication within organizations. The following sections will explain in detail what the role of ESM in organizational communication is overall and how ESM is intertwined to dialogic communication. Thereafter the linguistic forms of messages will be discussed. Finally, as national culture influences ESM usage vastly, it will be covered to some extent as well.

2.1 The role of ESM for organizational communication

According to Leonardi, Huysman and Steinfield (2013), ESM can be defined as an integrated, web-based platform that allows employees of an organization to:

- Communicate with chosen colleagues or the whole organization.
- Publish and edit texts and files.
- View messages posted and edited by someone else at any time.
- Mark colleagues as communication partners.

All of these four attributes combined, ESM facilitates dialogue in a unique way and differs from other communication technologies, such as emails. Especially the transparency of all communicative acts ESM provides is unique. (Leonardi et al., 2013.) By allowing behaviour that prior to ESM was difficult or even impossible has made ESM an important part of organizational communication. Thus, it can be said that the usage of ESM has changed communication practices. (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). However, it is important to

notice that ESM should not be the only means for communication, as online and offline environments often supplement and influence each other (Karakayali & Kilic, 2013).

ESM facilitates communication flow through several distinct characteristics. Below are listed the major characteristics identified by various researchers (Treem et al., 2012; Leonardi et al., 2013; Klitmøller & Lauring, 2013) in recent years.

- Transparency: Message content, behaviour, knowledge and networks are visible for others. The open nature of social media might encourage engaging in dialogue and knowledge sharing.
- Persistence: Posts and other activities remain available to others after the user logs out. This means that conversations can be browsed, searched and replayed at any time. Having a record on previous communication has long-term consequences; for example claiming responsibility of a task is easier to prove. Persistence also helps sharing knowledge, as all information remains available and the amount of information keeps growing as new content is uploaded.
- Editability: ESM enables (re)crafting the message before it is viewed by others. Also reflecting on one's own writing and correcting mistakes and misspellings and even deleting messages are possible.
- Association: ESM allows connections among individuals, content and projects and make them more explicit.

Again, ESM differs from other computer mediated communication technology in the sense that it affords all these communicative outcomes simultaneously and consistently. (Treem et al., 2012; Leonardi et al., 2013.)

According to Farrell, Kellogg and Thomas (2008), the wide cross-organizational dialogue that ESM enables and empowers organizations to be socially resilient. Social resilience refers to good adaptation and recovery from changes and difficulties through social

relationships. However, the value of ESM to employees has until now been seen usually as more information-centric than social (DiMicco, Geyer, Millen, Dugan & Brownholtz, 2009). Yet, especially the ability to comment is important for supporting dialogue (DiMicco et al., 2009).

In their work Majchrzak, Wagner and Yates research (2006) corporate wiki users. The authors discovered three main benefits of wiki usage: gaining personal respect and reputation, making work more straightforward and improving organizational processes. Especially the latter two are most likely to occur when the task discussed requires innovative solutions. As the study was restricted to wiki users only, it does not provide broad insight on ESM usage, but the results are nonetheless relevant. Also Farrel et al. (2008) recognize the benefit of ESM for building personal reputation. The authors also add a variety of other benefits for individual employees including advertising projects and maintaining relationships across geographies. Especially the latter can be seen as reflecting the benefits of engaging in dialogue in ESM.

An important notion made by Hampton and Wellman (2003) is that whatever the functions ESM has, it might neither weaken nor transform the community, but rather work as an addition to existing forms of communication. Thus, ESM in itself may not be enough to induce dialogue if the communication culture otherwise is monologic by nature.

As stated by Leonardi et al. (2013), organizations have three choices for ESM usage:
- Publicly available sites (e.g. Facebook)
- Private implementations of software (e.g. Yammer)
- In-house proprietary solutions (e.g. Beehive)

Zhang, Qu, Cody and Wu (2010) suggest that the behaviour varies across the different ESM choices. The authors studied Yammer messages and found out that employees publish more posts considering their groups or business units than themselves. Notably, this

behaviour is distinct from external social media usage, in which a great deal of posts concern the post maker. Furthermore, a variety of user types in Yammer were visible through e.g. different posting activities and reading behaviour.

Zhang et al. (2010) continue by stating that the communicator chooses a media that best fulfils their needs. Yammer might thus not always be the first option for communication. Yammer's main benefit is that it allows employees to follow other's work and make new connections. Noticeably, over time the understanding about social networks does inevitably change and thus also the usage behaviour might change. (Ibid.)

2.2 Engaging in dialogue in ESM

Following the lines of media richness theory, social media can be considered as a rather rich media. The richer the media, the more able it is to reiterate the sent information. This is why it is said that rich media is more suitable for dialogue as complex and multifaceted matters can be discussed more easily. Lean media in turn might be particularly efficient for one-way communication, such as sharing canonical knowledge. Social media does lack extra-linguistic cues, such as tone of voice and body language due to absence of social presence, which might result in ambiguity and is therefore important to acknowledge. However, the possibility to use for example pictures, sounds, videos, emoticons and acronyms alongside text provide richer cues, which results in rich communication overall. (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008; Klitmøller & Lauring, 2013.) Especially the use of emoticons should not anymore be seen as a teenage phenomenon only, but rather as an important tool for facilitating organizational communication. As Skovholt, Grønning and Kankaanranta (2014) state, the usage of emoticons can enhance the verbal message and this way work for a better understanding. Emoticons can for example mark positive attitude, soften requests, rejections and corrections and strengthen greetings, wishes and appraisals. With these considerations in mind, it can be stated that when used efficiently, social media does enable rich communication, which in turn enables dialogic communication.

The relation between media richness and dialogue is apparent, but the significance of that relation is questionable. As Klitmøller et al. (2013) state, a variety of factors influence what kind of a media best serves the purposes of organizational communication. Especially in intercultural context, the choice of media affects significantly whether dialogue is initiated or not. The intercultural aspect will be discussed later in this section.

Employees face various people-related challenges in organizational context. For example, it is generally of benefit if employees keep up with projects and activities of distant people and if they get to know other employees both personally and professionally. (DiMicco, Geyer, Millen, Dugan & Brownholtz, 2009.) Interestingly, according to Wu, DiMicco and Millen (2010), employee behaviour on ESM signals information about the participants' professional and personal closeness. ESM users have different kinds of relationships with each other and in a way ESM can be seen as a mechanism for maintaining relationships. The ties that are made in ESM are of significant importance in this study as they enable dialogue. (Wu et al., 2010.)

According to the lines of social network theory, that plays a contributive role in this study, ties reveal what connects the social network members, i.e. how many relations the members share. All employees share at least one tie: they are all members of the same organization. Furthermore, giving and receiving for example financial support or attending the same conferences are additional ties. Weakly tied people are less likely to engage in dialogue compared to more strongly tied people. Yet, if an organizational tie is combined with an electronic tie, in this case ESM, it is enough to allow dialogue between people who have never actually met. This kind of communication gives an opportunity for diverse resources, as people come from different social networks. (Garton, Haythornthwaite & Wellman 1997.)

Thus, professional virtual communities, such as the platform of Yammer, enable communicating and knowledge sharing without the need to meet. Knowledge sharing can be defined as the process of a person conveying knowledge acquired previously to others

(Klitmøller et al., 2013). Knowledge sharing is one of the main functionalities Yammer and other social media platforms allow. However, instead of considering knowledge sharing as solely informational and one-way, it can be viewed as dialogic as well. All employees within the company, regardless of their hierarchical status, are allowed and encouraged to share knowledge, and others are in turn encouraged to participate.

Leonardi et al. (2013) divide the knowledge an employee can learn in ESM into two categories: instrumental knowledge and meta-knowledge. Instrumental knowledge refers to information that helps to perform a specific act. Meta-knowledge in turn is knowledge about what other employees within the organization know. Both categories are important, and in a sense meta-knowledge functions as a connector that supports instrumental knowledge sharing. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is rather complex and a variety of factors influence on employee's willingness to share knowledge. Employees might fear criticism and possibly misleading others; in other words, if employees are not sure that the contribution would be important, relevant or accurate, it might restrain them from participating at all. (Hsu, Ju, Yen & Chang, 2007.) Furthermore, especially new employees might feel intimidated to participate as they might feel they have not yet "earned the right to post on a company-wide system." (Ardichvili, Page & Wentling, 2003, p. 70.) Social influence is connected to reciprocity: if the employees anticipate great reciprocity, they will have more favourable attitude towards knowledge sharing (Hsu et al., 2007).

Importantly, in the current fast-paced world, information overload is an important concept that may affect also the eagerness to engage in dialogue within ESM. Information overload is a situation in which an individual has difficulties to manage all communication inputs. Once the communication in ESM becomes unmanageable, the user behaviour tends to change. If information overload occurs, users will more likely either react only to simpler messages, end participation or respond in a simpler manner. (Jones, Ravid & Rafaeli, 2004.)

In dialogic communication both the sender and receiver are mutually involved in the information sending process. Yet it should be noted that some factors affect the extent to which dialogue is pursued. Especially the linguistic form of a message has a significant impact on maintaining dialogue. For example Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al. (2012) and Jaech et al. (2015) state that among other factors, the choice of words and sentence structure greatly affect readers' reactions in social media, and thus that the language used can have a persuasive impact. According to Althoff, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil and Jurafsky (2014), several factors affect the likelihood of getting a response when asking formally for something online. The results of the study indicate that the linguistic form of a message has significant impact on whether others will engage in dialogue. Even though the study is not made in organizational context, it does bring insight about the impact of linguistics in online social interaction.

As content plays an important role, it is still important to note that it is a complex interplay among several factors that ultimately affects whether others are inclined to engage in dialogue. For example, the culture of the community in which a post is made might have an effect, as each community may favour certain word choices. For example, simplicity can be highly appreciated in some communities, while others favour high descriptivity. (Lakkaraju, McAuley, & Leskovec, 2013.) However, Lampe and Resnick (2004) suggest that the length of the message influences the reaction; too short or too long messages do generally not sustain dialogue.

The significant factors in content linguistic-wise found in previous research are described next. First of all, if the message includes indicators of gratitude, reciprocity and evidentiality (for example, proof in the form of pictures) the likelihood of others engaging in conversation is higher. Also, in most cases, when the message is structured in a clear way, it contributes to gaining reactions. Furthermore, an overall positive atmosphere in the message contributes to popularity. (See e.g. Althoff et al., 2014; Lakkaraju et al., 2013; Jaech et al., 2015.)

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2.3 National culture affecting virtual behaviour

Globalization has increased multinational corporations' usage of virtual teams. National culture might influence greatly on virtual behaviour within multinational organizations as cultural values have impact on message encoding and decoding. According to research (e.g. Peltokorpi, 2010; Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling & Stuedemann, 2006; Clausen, 2007) the effect is so significant that it is considered in this particular study as well. Even though culture is not a visible part of this thesis, its influence is considered to some extent.

In multinational corporations, culture is negotiated; characteristics of each organization member shape the most salient cultural traits of the organization. Thus, when members of different cultures come together, a negotiated culture emerges. As stated previously, it entails aspects of all cultures but also completely new aspects emerge. (Clausen, 2007.) Intercultural communication may either encourage conflicts or increase the acceptance of existing differences. Several cultural aspects function as symbolic markers for the sense of being part of a group, and many of these behavioural patterns are visible in virtual communities as well. (Jonasson & Lauring, 2012.) Culture might become an excuse for not engaging in dialogue. Therefore it is of vital significance that employees do not essentialize culture but rather, embrace the effect of the shared and negotiated culture. (Ibid.)

National culture may influence virtual dialogue considerably. For example, different cultures prefer distinct ways to present information verbally and visually. Additionally, people's preferences for communication channels and willingness to ask questions, discuss problems, disagree publicly, contradict known experts and follow others in a message thread vary greatly across cultures. (Ardichvili et al., 2006.) Based on the work of Hall (1976) it can be stated that for example low-context cultures have more emphasis on written words, which results in that online discussion is more acceptable overall. Low-context and high-context countries is a concept presented by Hall (1976), which allows categorizing countries specifically by the extent to which the people are involved with each

other. In low-context cultures, people are highly individualistic and even fragmented, which Hall (1976) suggests that makes communication more explicit and general.

It is important to acknowledge that the effect of national culture is difficult to research due to its vagueness. At times also a strong organizational culture might overrun habits of national culture. (Ardichvili et al., 2006.) Furthermore, in our current globalized world it is questionable how much national culture actually does affect our virtual behaviour. Indeed, the degree to which national culture affects in reality can differ a lot. Especially due to globalization national cultural characteristics might not be as visible as before. Furthermore, an important acknowledgment made by Jameson (2007) is that culture is not equal to nation and in addition to national culture; an individual's behaviour is influenced by a variety of subcultures. Additionally, organizational culture might have stronger presence than national culture (Ardichvili et al., 2006). Finally, the way users communicate does not depend only on culture, but also on technological circumstances. Technical parameters affect for example whether communication is asynchronous or synchronous. (Marotzki, Holze & Verständig, 2014.)

3 Dialogic communication

The theoretical framework in this study is based on dialogic communication. In order to get a comprehensible view of dialogue, the evolution of organizational communication models are seen as significant. This chapter examines dialogue in the light of organizational communication models. Importantly, as a lot of organizations still also utilize one-way communication, the shift from one-way to two-way communication is evident especially in communication models. Yet Carey's (1992) suggestion that communication models function as templates that guide actual interaction is an important notion, which not only makes the models concrete, but also highlights the relevance of these models. In other words, the communication models are not merely describing but also creating and determining communicative behaviour. Furthermore, as Corman (1990) states, theory and practice are indivisibly linked as theoretical models explain and describe actual phenomena. With the help of theoretical communication models, organizations can facilitate their communicative actions in order to achieve the best possible results. Indeed, within a large number of organizations a switch from one-way asymmetrical communication towards two-way symmetrical, i.e. dialogic communication is apparent and this phenomenon will be discussed in detail. Furthermore, as this study takes discourse as a dominant viewpoint, the concept and its implications to organizational communication are explained in more depth.

In order to understand organizational communication, it is of benefit to elaborate on the term organization. Organizations are created through communication: the complex communication habits of the organization's stakeholders build up the organization. Therefore, an organization should be seen as a collection of its individual stakeholders and their activities. In addition to that, the multiplicity of voices does not only create the organization, but also constantly reshapes it. (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011.) This study will have its focus on the diverse employees and the communication among them.

Importantly, organizational communication differs from corporate communication, as

corporate communication is a part of organizational communication. Thus, as organizational communication can be seen as an umbrella term with corporate communication beneath it, the division goes beyond that. Christensen and Cornelissen (2011, p. 406) state that organizational communication and corporate communication can be seen "as two sides of the same coin". Thus, organizational communication is dynamically related to corporate communication and vice versa. Corporate communication can be viewed as a specific way of thinking, a common and coherent mind-set. The aim of corporate communication is to manage all communication that involves an organization. As opposed to other types of organizational communication, such as advertising or employee communication, corporate communication addresses many audiences at once. Indeed, corporate communication focuses on integrating and coordinating an organization's communication in order to give a consistent image of itself across different audiences and different media.

3.1 The evolution of organizational communication

Organizational communication has been influenced greatly by various organization and communication theories. This section will go through the shift from the transmission model or standard view of communication, which basis lied in conceptualizing communication, to the interactive or ritual model that have been accepted in the last decades. Yet, in the current organizational complex context, a variety of middle grounds are possible. (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2007.) Overall, several diverse theories have evolved and they all tend to reflect a clear shift from one-way communication towards two-way communication and from asymmetry towards symmetry. (Juholin, 1999; Grunig, 2001.)

Several definitions for one-way, two-way, symmetry and asymmetry have been given over time. This paper will rely on the definitions given by Toth (2007), Grunig (1984; 2001) and Christensen and Cornelissen (2014). With two-way communication Grunig (1984) refers to

dialogue: the form of communication in which both the sender and receiver are mutually involved in the information sending process. One-way communication focuses on monologue: the process of sending information. Toth (2007) elaborates these definitions by giving a definition for symmetrical communication, which refers to a balanced communication flow with the aim of seeking mutual understanding. In asymmetrical communication in turn the balance is thrown off and is tipped on either side. (Toth, 2007.) However, also in symmetrical communication the other side tries to accommodate their own interests while simultaneously helping the other side. In this sense, symmetrical communication is not cooperation in its purest form. (Grunig, 2001.) According to the definitions given by Christensen and Cornelissen (2014, p. 52-53), the two-way symmetrical communication will be referred to as dialogic communication, or dialogue, from now on.

3.1.1 One-way communication: early organizational communication models

A variety of organizational communication models have been created in time, and only the most noteworthy theories and models that serve the purpose of this thesis are presented below.

The classical organization theory emerged from the industrial revolution and held during the first half of the 20th century. It can be seen as a starting point for organizational theories. In the classical theory, organizations are viewed as being composed of machines and rules, which make regulations and hierarchical structures key elements. Communication is one-way and asymmetric: the underlying assumption is that a message automatically affects behaviour, attitudes and knowledge in the desired way once it is received. (Juholin, 1999, p. 47.) In the 1940s, system theory started to evolve, and researchers acknowledged that organizations consist of independent components, such as employees, units and technology, which influence each other and thus function together in cooperation with the environment to achieve organizational goals. However, at this point organizational communication was still not perceived as vital. (Juholin, 1999, pp. 50-51.)

In the late 1940s, Shannon and Weaver (as cited in Hallahan et al., 2007) acknowledged the importance of communication and the first major communication model was evolved: the transmission model. The transmission model is concerned solely with the transmission of messages and thus the general view on communication adapts the one-way and asynchronic model. According to Shannon (1948), communication consists of an information source transmitter, a transmitter, a channel, a receiver and a destination. The transmission model brought important insight to communication as a discipline that still functions as a base for understanding the general nature of communication. (Shannon, 1948; Hallahan et al., 2007.) Many researchers expanded and clarified the transmission model, and it was widely accepted until late in the 20th century. Later on the model was criticized for stressing to excess the importance of the information sender and ignoring the impact of the receiver. Scholars started to recognize the importance of dialogue. (Hallahan et al., 2007.)

3.1.2 Towards dialogue: current view on organizational communication

The current states of organizational communication models are clearly leaning towards two-way symmetrical communication. Especially the interactive model of communication has been a great influence and was evolved through a variety of theories[1] (Hallahan et al., 2007). As illustrated in Figure 1, the model is highly dialogic in nature. The important role of the information receiver is acknowledged by for example Bauer (1964). Additionally, the model takes into account personal experience, which influences the understanding of the message; the more the communicators' experiences overlap, the better they understand each other (Wood, 2009).

The interactive communication model does not have any indications of simultaneous communication, rather, it views communication as a process in which all parties take turns to interact. Furthermore, the model does not discuss the dynamic nature of communication in any way. (Wood, 2009.) The transactional model, which could be called an upgraded

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[1] The interactive model has a lot of similarities with the ritual model of communication.

version of the interactive model, approves both the continuous and dynamic nature of communication. Especially context is seen as a significant factor: depending on the context, the communication can vary to great extent. As in the interactive model, also the transactional model views communication as two-way, but all elements are viewed as interdependent. (Barnlund, 1970; Wood, 2009.)
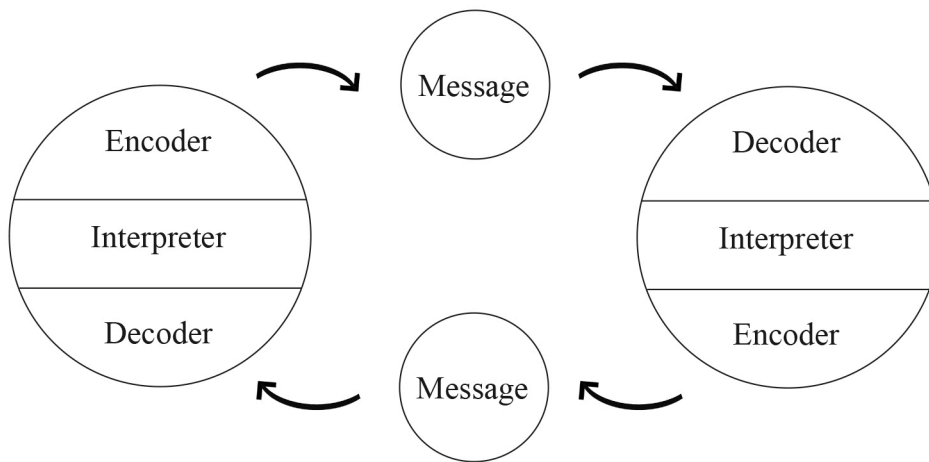
Figure 1. The interactive model of communication by Schramm as cited in Wood (2009, p. 11)

Regardless of the limitations these models might pose, they have importantly brought up and evolved the general ideology of two-way symmetry in communication. Later on, Cornelissen (2014) named two-way symmetrical communication as the dialogue strategy and it stems from the abovementioned theoretical models. In the dialogue strategy, all parties involved engage mutually in an exchange of ideas and opinions.

Even though symmetry is a key element in dialogic communication, Toth (2007, p. 67) acknowledges that effective symmetric communication requires some form of asymmetry. As stated previously, one critical aim of both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication is to accommodate own interests and persuasion. Importantly, dialogue does not mean an exclusion of communication that follows hierarchical lines. This kind of communication is still widely needed and used. (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 172.) The relationship between asymmetry and symmetry is presented in the form of a continuum in

Figure 2. Both ends of the continuum are asymmetrical, and the middle is a "symmetrical win-win zone" for both parties (Grunig, 2001, p. 26).
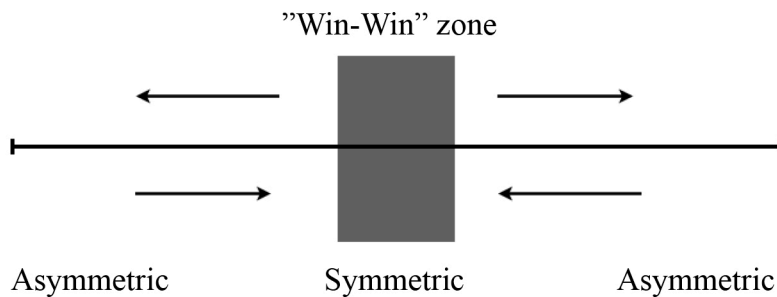

"Win-Win" zone

Asymmetric   Symmetric   Asymmetric

Figure 2. The relationship between asymmetry and symmetry (Grunig, 2001, p. 26)

3.2 Communication through discourse

Communication can be observed through different discourses. This study holds discourse in particular importance as it can further the understanding of the many aspects of communication as a process. As Phillips and Hardy (2002) state, discourse is a multifaceted and ambiguous concept. Discourse, or rather a variety of discourses, construct the social world. Discourse can be defined as a set of texts and the production, dissemination and reception of these texts. In this sense, texts can be seen as a material embodiment of discourse. With texts Phillips and Hardy (2002) refer to a variety of different products, such as written texts, spoken words, pictures and symbols. These texts get their meaning through their interconnection with other texts. Thus, context is closely related to discourse; discourse can be produced only with context.

One of the widely used and accepted discourses, the critical discourse, views communication as producing reality. It also emphasizes the role of power, or control, in creating reality: different people have different levels of access to communication resources. (Mumby, 2013; Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011.) Organizations coordinate their members'

behaviours, and control is needed to motivate people to act in certain ways. Since different organization members tend to have different kind of goals, the usage of various forms of control, such as bureaucratic control or ideological control, gets an increasingly significant role. An important notion made by Mumby (2013) is that power tends to be hidden, thus the people with most visible power do not always use it on the people with less power. Also Jonasson and Lauring (2012) acknowledge the importance of power in intercultural context. Hence, it is not communication style or language alone, which affects organizational communication. The influence of power relations and access to resources should be taken into account as well.

Generally, researchers agree that communication should be seen as a dynamic and on-going process that creates organizations. (See eg. Mumby, 2013; Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). A good example of communication as a reality creator is language. As the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1922, p. 74) stated: "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world". Interestingly, especially mundane communication events, such as status updates in social media, have a significant effect on how organization members view and create their social reality. In other words, these events are not viewed as simply providing information, but creating and shaping behaviour. (Mumby, 2013.)

Following the lines of critical discourse, organizational communication can be seen as creating and negotiating collective meanings through practices in order to achieve organizational goals. The relationship between organization and communication is thus very dynamic. (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011.) Although clarity and consistency is important, organizations are dependent of polyphony: the distinct voices of its individual shareholders (ibid.). As this seems understandable, it most definitely makes communication more complex. The struggle to find balance between polyphony and consistency is most probably a great issue among organizations. In a way, dialogue could be a way to deal with this problem as it engages dynamically in mutual sharing and understanding.

4 Methods and data

This chapter explains the methodological choices used and data collected. The first section presents the context, i.e. the case company and the prevailing communication culture within the case company. Section 4.2 describes the data collected whereupon section 4.3 describes and discusses the research methods. Finally, section 4.4 discusses the trustworthiness of this study.

4.1 The case company

The case company is a Finnish industrial enterprise. It is headquartered in Finland but has several branch offices worldwide and can thus be classified as a multinational corporation. The company has employees in 70 countries. (Source: website of the case company[2].)

According to the Communications Director[3] (personal communication, March 21, 2016), the communication culture at the case company could be described as multifaceted. The form and way of communication depends highly on the office and on the team. One team might be very dialogic, active and open in its communication whereas another team might not follow a similar communicative structure. The organization is listed on stock exchange, which brings some form of rigidity and orderliness. Indeed, the communication culture is still partly hierarchic and conservative. Yet, in the course of years, the communication has become more open and dialogic.

As stated by the Communications Director, the participating communication culture is partly the result of an active and reformist communications department. For example, the company was among the first ones in Finnish context to launch a company-wide intranet. The company has faced resistance to change especially in Finland; whereas in other regions

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[2] The company name and website cannot be disclosed
[3] The name of the Communications Director cannot be disclosed

the offices have been pleased as they might have felt that they finally have become a part of the company.

The company has used Yammer for approximately a year. The platform has roughly 9500 users. In practice, every employee gets a user name automatically, but they have to separately log in and join the network in order to use the platform. It should be noted that employees within manufacturing do not have own accounts, but can use the platform with a general account.

According to the Communications Director, the company management team has been involved in Yammer as well partly due to the persistent encouragement of the communications department. In addition to globalization and technology, especially the influence of the senior management has affected the change in communication towards more dialogue. As the senior managers engage in dialogue by for example being easily approachable and active in Yammer, they signal an example for employees.

Certainly, as the Communications Director stated, Yammer allows employees to engage in dialogue easier. Earlier, employees have been involved for example in the planning of strategic communication. A couple hundred employees were asked to contribute, and further on feedback was asked from all employees. This kind of engagement is now facilitated due to Yammer.

4.2 Data collection

For the purpose of this study, documentary secondary data, i.e. a set of posts written in Yammer, was seen as the most helpful form of data in order to gain relevant and valid information. As stated by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), documentary secondary data refers usually to written material that is already available prior to research.

Prior to research it was yet not known how large the sample size should be, and it made the collection of the hundreds of posts rather straightforward. The majority of the messages were posted within 3 months of the collection date, and all of the messages were posted within 6 months of the collection date. Once automated messages by Yammer were removed, the data set consisted of 259 posts and approximately 750 messages in total including the responses. The length of the posts varied highly. Shortest messages included one or two words only, whereas the longest post was over 1200 words. In general, most messages included around 20-100 words. Furthermore, the data set consisted of approximately 300 unique users and their respective job titles, which corresponds to 3,2 % of the whole (9500 users) user amount. While this number might seem low, it is notable that the majority of the users are inactive or active only in private groups, which were not a part of this study.

The data collected was raw data, which means that there was no initial processing made to the message posts. All posts were derived straight from four different Yammer groups within the organization's Yammer community. Yammer enables the construction of hundreds of groups and they can be either available to all users or only to participants that have access to the group. In other words, any divisions, groups or teams can create their own groups within Yammer for their specific needs. (Roberts, 2012.) The case company made the choice of these specific four groups and it was guided from the fact that they are accessible to all users and they were frequently and actively used within the organization. Furthermore, all of these groups are international and multi-cultural, as they include users from at least five continents. The first group in this data set was a general group for universal discussion that all users are automatically added in as they register to Yammer. The following two groups were divisional groups to discuss issues, ideas, and Best Practices. The fourth and last group included in this data set was called "Ask the Doers", which is meant for discussing and asking about work related matters. Two types of data were collected: usage data, which consists of all posted messages and users' organizational information about the job title they hold.

In addition to the written content of the messages also a variety of other features were part of the analysis in order to best utilize the methods described in the previous section. These features are described next. Yammer allows three different kinds of message types: sharing an update, posting a poll and praising someone. The data set included only one poll and zero praises, the rest of the 259 posts were regular updates. Before publishing the post, the user chooses to which group the post will be published. Furthermore, if the user wants to, they can notify specific users about the post by adding their names to the post. Also topics can be added in order to simplify the search for posts. Pictures and files can also be added to posts. All posts can be commented, shared or liked, similar to the functions of for example Facebook. (Roberts, 2012.) These additional features were part of this research to some extent as well. Especially the usages of notifying specific people by naming them and of including pictures or videos were seen as relevant parts.

To ensure the ethicality of the data collection, everyone who uses Yammer within the case company needed to be aware of this research project and that posts and other actions were possibly read and analysed by a third party. Even though the usage of the messages was a managerial choice, the question whether every employee was content with that choice remains. Furthermore, even though the messages were anonymized, direct quotes can be easily backtracked. As this study will be publicly accessible, all employees of the case company will have access to this study. Yet, the issue is not seen as that significant as the original messages and their senders are visible only internally within the case company. Furthermore, the quotes visible in this study were used as general reflections of generic discourses rather than personal examples of particular users.

4.3 Research methods

The choice of research method is a multifaceted process and requires careful consideration. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 482) state, qualitative data is based on meaning expressed through words. Qualitative research is seen as appropriate when the objective of

the research is to understand the phenomenon in more depth and when the phenomenon and its meanings are seen as being continually shaped by social actors. (Bryman & Bell, 2003.) With these considerations in mind, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice for this study.

There is a lot of variance within qualitative methods. In this study, discourse analysis formed the basis of the analysis. As Phillips and Hardy (2002) state, there is a great deal of variation among discourse analysis as well, and the approach taken in this study was critical with an emphasis on text. Furthermore, as Mumby (2013) acknowledges, methodological triangulation, i.e. using a combination of research methods and theories tends to be the best way to do research. For the sake of this thesis, social network analysis was seen as relevant and it had a supporting role in the analysis of this research project. The following subsections will discuss discourse analysis and social network analysis respectively, and finally combine them and describe the proceeding of the analysis.

4.3.1 Discourse analysis

Even though discourse analysis is complex and ambiguous, Mumby (2013) and Christensen and Cornelissen (2011) state that it fills a gap the traditional research methods do not deal with: how different topics came to be and what holds them in place. The actual research area, method of data collection and analysis can vary to a great extent. The boundaries between discourse analysis and other methods are not always that clear, since discourse analysis entails parts of other approaches. It is therefore not the method, but the use of the method that makes a research discursive. Different theoretical assumptions form differences among the forms of discourse analysis.

In general, discourse analysis researches the relationship among the three main components: text, discourse and context. It researches how texts are made meaningful and what contributive effect does this meaning have to the social reality. Discourse analysis expresses a constructivist view of the social world: in contrast to traditional qualitative

approaches, which assume a social world and then research its meaning, discourse analysis research how the social reality was produced and how it is maintained. In addition to that, discourse analysis emphasizes language and how language constructs phenomena. (Phillips & Hardy, 2002.)

Phillips and Hardy (2002) present a framework that categorizes these differences according to two dimensions: emphasis on individual text versus context and emphasis on power. By combining these two axes, the authors identified four major perspectives: social linguistic analysis, interpretive structuralism, critical discourse analysis, and critical linguistic analysis.

This thesis will have its focus particularly on critical linguistic analysis. It focuses heavily on texts and has emphasis on modes of social power or control. Thus, power is viewed and analysed in interrelation to text. (Phillips & Hardy, 2002.) In this study, as the relation among text, discourse and context remains significant, special attention is laid to the individual texts in the data set.

Power and control being prevalent factors of discourse analysis, also Jonasson and Lauring (2012) state that power has a significant role in language. The main function for organizational communication is therefore not only about being understood but also about the economic purposes behind the messages. This makes a possible situation where the communication is to some extent asymmetric as the employees are not striving for mutual understanding. As the authors state, a lean towards asymmetry is closely related to power and control. (Jonasson & Lauring, 2012.) This study will therefore take power relations into consideration.

4.3.2 Social network analysis

Marotzki et al. (2014) state that whenever studying social networks, such as Yammer, social network analysis is crucial as it can contribute in manners other methods cannot. Thus, for the sake of this thesis, social network analysis is seen as rather relevant and the characteristics of social network analysis are partly visible in this research project. The

social network analysis provides valuable insight about the communicative nature of ESM that, as described in the previous chapter, differs from other communication media.

Social network analysis studies relational ties (Garton et al., 1997). All actions of two persons are interpreted in the light of these two people's relations to other network members instead of viewing them as totally separate from their community. Social network analysis acknowledges this complexness and instead of focusing on the specific attributes of individuals, social network analysis looks beyond that and focuses on the relations among network members. (Garton et al., 1997.)

Considering relations, according to social network analysis, three factors are the most salient ones and require examination in order to understand the social network structure. These factors are content, direction and strength. Firstly, content refers to what kind of an exchange of information the communication is. Direction in turn refers to the balance of the relationship: does one actor initiate communication more frequently than the other? The direction flow of communication might in many cases not be symmetric. Finally, strength refers to the density of communication. Whether communication is initiated throughout the workday, once a day, weekly or yearly, may support important information about the relation. (Garton et al., 1997; Bandyopadhyay, Rao & Sinha, 2011.) These abovementioned factors are covered in the analysis part of this study.

4.3.3 The construction of the analysis

Consequently, the main method used in this study is the critical linguistic analysis, while the function of social network analysis was mostly supportive. The relation among discourse analysis, critical linguistic analysis and social network analysis in this study is illustrated in Figure 3.

Background from discourse analysis

↓

Critical linguistic analysis

↑

Support from social network analysis

DA: Interrelation among text, discourse and context

CLA: Focus on text

SNA: Direction, content and strenght of relational ties
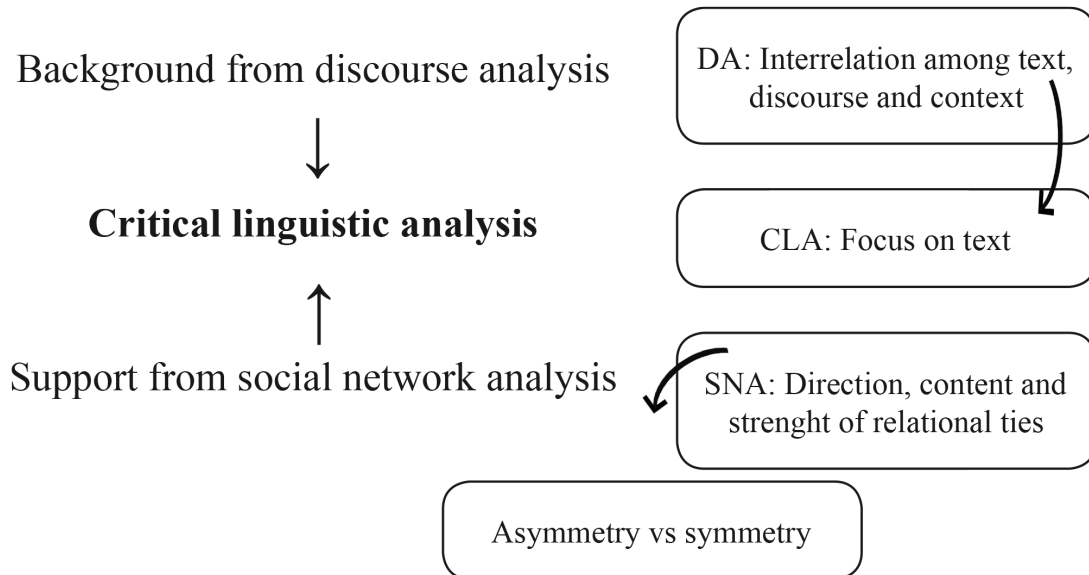
Asymmetry vs symmetry

Figure 3. The relation among discourse analysis, critical linguistic analysis and social network analysis in this study

Thus, this thesis has a fairly holistic point of view on the influence of communication style, direction of communication, language and power of the individual Yammer messages used in this research project.

The raw data was processed in the following manner: removing unnecessary automated information provided by Yammer, editing the files for reader friendliness, anonymizing the messages and storing the data appropriately and securely. Once these steps were taken, all of the messages were read carefully to get a general view of the context. Thereafter the posts were read again more thoroughly and classified into 49 initial categories according to the intention and style of the messages. All of the categories are listed in Appendix 1. The identification of these categories was guided by the research questions presented in section 1.1. In accordance to the critical linguistic analysis, the main focus was on the linguistic content of the messages and the categories reflect the linguistic aspects of the different needs and demands of the employees. These different ways of communicating were further identified and organized into distinct themes. These themes in turn were connected to major themes, i.e. representations, which reflect the communication culture in the case company.

Derived from the data, five major themes were discovered and recognized. These main themes were treated as discourses. The detailed explanation of each theme and discourse can be found in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the relational ties of the messages were analysed. All users were marked and especially the following aspects were inspected:

- whether the initial post maker returns to the conversation,
- how actively users participate in a thread and
- does one user initiate communication more frequently than others.

Additionally, the job titles were a part of the analysis. The job titles and their relations to each other and to the messages were investigated in the most relevant threads. However, as not all job titles were available, the analysis remained cursory.

Importantly, the choice of analysis software was carefully considered as different software solutions transform data in distinct ways, which might encourage thinking about the data in different ways (Gaiser & Schreiner, 2009). According to the recommendations of Gaiser and Schreiner (2009), the following aspects were taken into consideration when choosing the appropriate analysis software: user's capabilities, easy availability of software and the nature of the database and analysis itself. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti was used.

4.4 Trustworthiness of the study

Reliability and validity are usually seen as important factors to consider when conducting and assessing the quality of a research. Yet, when conducting qualitative research, the relevance of reliability and validity is not that significant. As this paper presents a qualitative case study, the purpose is not to produce a repeatable study and a generalizable theory, but to explain the particular setting in the case company. However, some implications of reliability and validity can and should be drawn to qualitative studies as well. Reliability refers to which extent the study can be redone with consistent findings. Validity in turn is concerned with whether the findings in reality concern actual phenomena. For this particular study, the question of observer bias is present as there may be different

ways of interpreting the data. Furthermore, the data collection and analysis processes should be transparent enough for others to see and understand it and duplicate parts of it if needed. (Bryman & Bell, 2003.)

Lincoln and Cuba (as cited by Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 288) suggest alternative criteria when evaluating the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. These criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these is discussed next separately.

Credibility refers to describing the specific social reality in a way that is acceptable by others as well. In this study, credibility is taken into account by conducting the research by good practice and describing this practice in great detail. However, the fact that the description of the current communication culture in the case company found in section 4.1 relies solely on the views of one employee might be problematic. To reduce the subjectivity of the statements, the section was sent to three employees for commentary. Also the findings of this study are submitted to the case company to ensure a correct understanding of the specific context. As the findings of qualitative studies are usually not generalizable, the notion of transferability takes a different meaning. It usually refers to describing the context sufficiently in order to make judgements about the application of the findings to other research settings. In this study, the prevailing communication culture within the case company is described in as much detail as felt necessarily in order to understand the context in which this study is made. (Bryman & Bell, 2003.)

Dependability entails ensuring that all records are accessible throughout the study process and further on that peers inspect these records to ensure the degree to which theoretical inferences can be justified. (Bryman & Bell, 2003.) As a part of the master's thesis process, this kind of auditing exists in this study as peers function as opponents and the thesis supervisor audits the whole process. Finally, confirmability concerns the extent to which the study is objective and value free. However, as Brymand and Bell (2003) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994) state, it is not possible to ignore values entirely as values affect

everything starting from the choice of the research area to the conclusions. Furthermore, prior knowledge influences on how one sees things but more importantly, also on what one sees. However, it is important to note that already the topic selection reflects some values and societal relevance. As personal values and beliefs might impact also on the data collection, analysis, interpretation of data and conclusions, it is important to be aware of those personal values.

5 Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings of this research project. As stated in subsection 4.3.3, five discourses were recognized from the data. These discourses can be seen as creating the context and reality of the case company's Yammer behaviour and communication culture. The following section gives an overview of the findings. Thereafter following sections will concentrate on each of the discourses respectively and the ways in which they possibly make dialogue visible in the case company's Yammer communication. Moreover, consistent with the research questions presented in section 1.1, the findings focus also on the linguistic characteristics of dialogic communication.

5.1 An overview of the findings

Five major themes or discourses that represent the communication culture in the case company were recognized. These discourses are named as follows:
- Professional organization
- Conversation enabler
- Commercial company
- Communal entity
- Information provider

Table 1 presents the main themes, i.e. the presumptions, which surround each discourse. It is noteworthy that the discourses identified in this research may overlap to some extent and include several themes. As Fairclough (1995) states, a separation of discourses is usually neither possible nor purposeful as discourses should be interrelated and connected to each other. Yet, on an upper level, the discourses present in this study are distinct, which allows an in-depth analysis of each of the discourses individually.

Table 1. Summary of the key discourses and main themes

Discourse	Main themes
Professional organization	• Skilful employees • Enabling environment
Conversational enabler	• Conversation-seeking • Dynamic community
Commercial company	• Echo chamber • Successful company
Communal entity	• Enjoyable place to work • Harmonious community
Information provider	• Large company with many operations • Echo chamber

The most frequent job titles within the data set are manager (66), engineer (19), director (16), coordinator (11), assistant (8), (vice) president (7) and expert (7). Only approximately half of the job titles were available to extract from the data as not all users have their titles included in their profile. However, already these seem to be enough to generate information and further make some tentative assumptions.

The job titles seem to have little influence on dialogue. All users seem to engage in conversation equally and dialogue is initiated among all users regardless of the job title. However, the use of different discourses seems to differ a bit among employees. Especially (vice) presidents and directors make mostly use of the *Communal entity* discourse. Importantly, this does not exclude other employees from using the same discourse.

Overall, threads that have over 3 participants can be divided into two categories: threads with comments that are mostly from distinct senders and threads that have a facilitator that manages the conversation. In the occasions where a facilitator is visible, the conversation tends to be longer, as is illustrated in Appendix 2a. Additionally, as Appendix 2a illustrate, the more users participate in a thread, the more uneven the direction of communication is as the role of the facilitator tends to be highlighted. When threads do not have a visible

facilitator, as in Appendix 2b, the conversation seems to end rather quickly, even though participants would initiate dialogue. Consequently, in most cases where the dialogue is long (i.e., 10 or more messages), one or two facilitators seem to manage and guide the conversation and also communicate most. In instances where only two or three persons initiate communication, all of the persons can be seen as communication facilitators and also the direction of the communication tends to be even, as illustrated in Appendix 2c.

The following sections will take a deeper look on each of the discourses respectively and discuss the forms of communication the discourses present.

The prevalent discourses

5.2 Professional organization

As the ability of straightforward knowledge sharing is one of Yammer's main benefits, it came as no surprise that this feature is clearly visible in the data set. The first discourse is named as *Professional organization,* as it emphasises the expertise and knowledge the company carries. This discourses includes two main themes: skilful employees and enabling environment, which will be discussed next.

First and foremost, the messages within this discourse are substance oriented and informational by nature, as example 1 demonstrate. These features reflect the theme of skilful employees, i.e. having talented and knowledgeable employees and utilizing this advantage. The point of the messages is to share substance-related knowledge. Consequently, the messages do not tend to include any additional phrases or adjectives, while they might hinder the information dissemination and receiving.

1. Hello Name[4] X, Product X is not an o-ring in any engine. Perhaps some typo caused the miscommunication. You can use Product X and you will get the correct honing equipment ("HONING TOOL BOX FOR CYLINDER LINER") for Siguiri.

The second main theme this discourse contains is enabling environment. This theme refers to the sense that a variety of knowledge is available and by serving and requesting service from employees and fellow colleagues this knowledge can be untied. Examples 2 and 3 demonstrate this willingness to be of service.

2. Could you specify what kind of knowledge is needed
3. Maybe someone from the global project is aware of such a specification.

Overall, as examples 4 and 5 demonstrate, the tone of the messages is neutral and polite. Gratitude is usually shown, and it seems to refer to politeness instead of relationship building, as the messages remain straightforward and unemotional.

4. Any information is appreciated.
5. For manuals pls check this layout specification

Thus, it comes as no surprise that a rather simple and direct tone is applied. The messages within *Professional organization* include several questions, which tend to be rather direct, i.e. not including justification or reasoning. As examples 6-8 show, this discourse is not dialogic in nature. Instead it shows asymmetric traits with the other party seeking to accommodate own interests without showing interest to the other side. However, it is important to note that as all communication is visible to all users, the knowledge shared will have potential to benefit others as well than the initial information requester. In this sense, the function of *Professional organization* is to build an effective environment in

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[4] All names, projects and company-related products are anonymized

which information is easily found.

6. How can one change language in a Power Point presentation?
7. Could you specify what kind of knowledge is needed?
8. Is there a way of adding attachments, for example quotations, onto Purchase Requisitions (PR) created using the Purchasing Tool Indirect Purchasing Tool (PTIP) located in the portal?

To conclude, dialogue is not present in *Professional organization*. Even though conversation is initiated, it functions as asymmetric communication and cannot thus be identified as true dialogue. Rather, this still very important discourse is used for sharing knowledge effectively across the company. Characteristic quotes, main themes and features of this discourse are presented and summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Professional organization

Characteristic quotes	• "Is there a way…" • "Further information can be found…" • "Does someone know…"
Main themes	• Skilful employees • Enabling environment
Features	• Substance oriented • Direct questions • Informational style • Polite tone • Neutral tone • Asymmetric communication

5.3 Conversation enabler

The discourse *Conversation Enabler* refers to a discourse in which conversation is initiated and continued by employees as part of a lively and dynamic community. This discourse emphasises the diversity within the company's employees, which enables discussion at any

time throughout the company across divisions and regions. The style of communication is dialogic as users engage in trying to understand each other. This dialogue seeking discourse is reflected by several discussion initiating features, which will be discussed next.

In more than any other discourse, in *Conversation enabler* the messages are usually directly targeted at a specific person. As the examples 9-12 demonstrate, users acknowledge each other by naming their discussants and agreeing with other's opinions.

9. What would be your view Name X?
10. Thank you for your comments, Good point Name X that these Designs and solutions is already existing for some vessel types, Is there any special vessel types you think will adopt these new technologies first?
11. @ Name X: May the below sound reasonable option?
12. I do realize like Name X says…

Another way of naming users is also visible. The *Conversation enabler* truly facilitates dialogue, and includes several strategies to keep the discussion alive. One strategy is directly inviting people in the conversation, as examples 13 and 14 show.

13. Maybe Name X knows more about that.
14. Looping Name X

As examples 15-17 indicate, the strategies for continuing discussion include also summarising the previous comments and acknowledging the importance of the topic.

15. So pulling all these comments together one could maybe say…
16. It is also very important to note...
17. I return to this topic just to keep it 'on the map'.

Furthermore, to activate the other users, the messages include indirect questions that may function as thought-provokers and even direct requests for action:

18. How does an engine work? This was the screensaver we used to be able to use which was BRILLIANT Marketing.
19. Name X, care to share the templates here?

The capitalization of the word "brilliant" in example 18 demonstrates also the expressive nature of the messages. Indeed, the linguistic form of the messages tends to adopt an expressive style. Example 20 gives a further illustration of the expressive style found in this discourse: exclamation marks and other signs, strong adjectives ("very frustrating") and strong word choices in general ("a hell of a lot") are used to emphasise the content.

20. Trying to get important forecasting info from multiple systems that don't all share the same is very frustrating! And it wastes a hell of a lot of man-hours globally trying to find ways 'around' the limitations we put on ourselves.

As part of the expressive nature of the communication, also provocation is visible in some of the messages:

21. I feel like making a small provocation here: How many smaller initiatives there are through out the company and were do they lead? Have we ever had a company-wide initiative creating synergies among all our departments with one big goal? Is that what you are trying here?
22. I am still a bit amazed by the fact that in a big international company like ours…
23. Does it really make sense…

Additionally, the messages adopt a very personal tone. Instead of talking about phenomena on an higher level, the discussion is brought to grass roots level by talking about personal

experiences, assumptions and beliefs. Examples 24 and 25 demonstrate the personal tone used in most of the messages.

24. I believe there will be an increased focus on safety in the future.
25. …and I also think that there will be a technology push changing what's possible in our industry.

In many occasions, these personal experiences are presented in a narrative form as examples 26 and 27 illustrate. Narration can to some extent be linked to the expressive style the messages adopt (e.g. "very beautiful" and "very great improvement").

26. This is an interesting part of the Pandora's box you just opened…
27. One of my past employers has annual innovation contest where winners get (very beautiful & high quality) pen with contest name & winning category printed on it. Pen is handed to employee(s) by CEO in an event with champagne, group photos (to be published in intranet), etc. I am not against this tool, for sure it is very great improvement, but IMHO we should focus even more on setting up kind of similar competition / event.

Consequently, the main intention of *Conversation enabler* seems to be engaging in conversation and dialogue and maintaining it by using the different features presented above. Table 3 presents a summarization of this discourse's main characteristics.

Table 3. Characteristics of Conversation enabler

Characteristic quotes	• "I feel/believe/agree/think…" • "I would say…" • "Fully agree with…" • "What do you think?"
Main themes	• Conversation-seeking • Dynamic community

Features	- Summarizing - Narrative style - Naming people - Emphasising the importance of the topic - Personal - Expressive style - Indirect questions - Direct requests for action - Provocative

5.4 Commercial company

Yammer is a convenient tool for marketing the company in general and one's own projects in particular as it allows sending messages visible to all users at once. In a way, Yammer can function as an echo chamber with people shouting and sharing information about their own interest. The discourse *Commercial company* acknowledges and embraces a very promotional style by usually underlining the "coolness factor" of the information. Besides functioning as an echo chamber, this discourse also draws attention to the successfulness of the company.

Examples 28-29 illustrate the promotional style of this discourse. Especially the usage of strong adjectives (e.g. "extremely proud) and expressive style ("THE most important") demonstrate this discourse uses promotional style in sharing basic information.

28. The Company X team in Batam is extremely proud to have reached load out of both Offshore Power Modules for the project X. Therefore we are sharing this cool picture.
29. According to many, the power plants product catalogue is THE most important piece of content we do in the X Team. The 2016 version is now available. Download PDF here.

By being promotional by nature, *Commercial company* includes several requests for action, such as "have a look", "check my latest post" and "stay tuned". Compared to the discourse *Professional organization*, in which requests were direct and unjustified, the requests in *Commercial company* are promoted and justified. As examples 30 and 31 shows, requests often include rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions illustrate once again also the expressive style of the discourse.

30. The US origination initiative Project X has now been going on for about six months. What has the team been up to in US, which customers have they met and how many hot leads do they have? Watch the half-year review video…

31. Are you interested to hear how our competitors did in Q3? Do you want to hear how the Competitor product intelligence-project is proceeding and how you can contribute? Interested to know what we are planning for next year?

The second main theme this discourse entails, the successful company, is visible in the messages from various features. As examples 32 and 33 demonstrate, the messages tend to emphasise achievements. Also these examples include strong, positive adjectives ("huge success", "ton of fun", "great" and "most efficient"). Furthermore, the overall tone of the messages in *Commercial company* is very positive and optimistic.

32. Safety Day was a huge success. We had 99 participants and a ton of fun during the activities.

33. Great to follow the construction of Company X's most efficient power plant ever sold…

In conclusion, the intentions of *Commercial company* are twofold. Firstly, this discourse focuses on promoting the company and secondly on promoting own projects or activities. These two themes combined, this discourse is not seen as dialogic. These main themes and other characteristic traits are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of Commercial company

Characteristic quotes	• "Stay tuned for more!" • "Check out our great video/link/blog post…" • "The project was a huge success."
Main themes	• Echo chamber • Successful company
Features	• Emotional/strong adjectives • Emphasizing achievements • Rhetorical questions • Requests for action • Promotional style • Expressive style • Positive tone

5.5 Communal entity

The fourth discourse recognized from the data set is *Communal entity*. It emphasises the communal feeling in the company, i.e. the enjoyable feeling employees get from working at the company and the harmonious atmosphere working together can achieve. These both main themes, enjoyable place to work and harmonious community, together form a strong sense of togetherness, which is the dominant feeling captured in this discourse. Dialogue tends to be initiated in this discourse depending on the content of the message.

The comments in *Communal entity* tend to focus on relationship building. Example 34 illustrates this by showing traits of an expressive style (several exclamation marks and an emoticon) and appreciating others.

34. It was nice to see you girls!!!! :-)

As examples 35 and 36 illustrate, the tone overall is light and even humorous and lot of congratulations, wishes and greetings adopt the *Communal entity* discourse. Also self-made

poems and jokes are common in this discourse, which contribute to creating a cheerful atmosphere.

35. Happy New Year to everybody
36. Beautiful! I need some rhymes for my Xmas presents and now know who to contact!!

As example 37 shows, sharing stories and pictures about informal events in which employees have together participated also backs up the pleasant and joyous feeling and emphasises the effect of working together.

37. Great beach volleyball event with the Dutch colleagues!

Working together to achieve results is a recurrent theme in the discourse of *Communal entity*. Therefore, the second main theme harmonious community has its focus on team spirit. This sense of togetherness is strongly adopted by the messages in this discourse, as example 38 demonstrates. Even though the initial message acknowledges both the team and an individual within the team, the word "team" is highlighted through capitalization. Also the second comment in the thread emphasises the word "team".

38.
a. CONGRATS TEAM X! And especially to Name X!!!…
b. Congrats to the TEAM, well done!!

Furthermore, as is apparent from examples 39-42, team spirit is emphasised also by using the personal pronouns "we" instead of "I" or "you".

39. Our beautiful Product X was recently pictured on the cover of Power Engineering International. … We got great visibility in one of the most important trade magazines – and the article is not even about us!

40. This is a key priority for all of us

41. Together we can do great things.

42. - - "When we work together to accomplish goals, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!" - -

Consequently, *Communal entity* adopts a very positive and optimistic tone. It might be dialogic but also signs of asymmetry are visible. Most importantly, the importance of togetherness and team spirit is highlighted throughout the discourse, which as a theme might function as promoting dialogue by making it acceptable. The key characteristics of *Communal entity* are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Characteristics of Communal entity

Characteristic quotes	• "This is a key priority to all of us." • "We at Company X…" • "Congratulations to team/all"
Main themes	• Enjoyable place to work • Harmonious community
Features	• Emotional/strong adjectives • Expressive style • Appreciating others • Light and humorous tone • Dialogic • Emphasising team spirit • Wishes/greetings/congratulations • Narrative style • Acknowledging people

5.6 Information provider

The fifth and final recognized discourse, *Information provider,* focuses on sending and receiving information. As the discourse *Commercial company*, also *Information provider* functions as an echo chamber. Furthermore, a prevalent theme within this discourse is the largeness of the company: the company has many operations and sharing information

across the company is vital in order for everyone to stay aware of the company's functions and activities.

The tone in *Information provider* informational as the main objective is to share information. These features are demonstrated by examples 43 and 44.

43. Hi all, The IDM Oracle upgrade has been successfully completed and IDM is now available for normal usage. Thank you for your support during this service break. Br, Name X
44. New power point template now available:

Additionally, as example 45 illustrates, requests for action are made in a neutral and polite manner. These requests do not include an expressive or promotional style, rather, the style obtained remains very informational and subject oriented.

45. Kindly take a moment to watch the Online Services demovideo in Intranet home page.

The messages in *Information provider* seem monologic and asynchronous by nature, thus dialogue is not initiated. The main characteristics of *Information provider* are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Characteristics of Information provider

Characteristic quotes	• "The upgrade has been completed" • "Concerning the info session…" • "New template now available"
Main themes	• Large company with many operations • Echo chamber
Features	• Neutral tone • Requests for action • Informational style • Substance-oriented

6 Discussion and conclusions

This chapter presents first the major findings of this study and discusses them in the light of previous research and in relation to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Thereafter, the following section describes ways for practical implication and the third and final section has its focus on the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Key findings

Only two of the five discourses, *Conversation enabler* and *Communal entity,* adopt a two-way symmetrical, i.e. dialogic communication style. The following two discourses, *Information provider* and *Commercial company,* utilize one-way communication only whereas the last discourse, *Professional organization*, adopts two-way asymmetric communication. In order to provide a condensed answer to the research questions, the main communicative characteristics and findings of each discourse will now be presented and reflected.

The content of the whole data set is highly work-centred and all of the discourses adopt either a positive or a neutral tone. Only the *Conversation enabler* includes also a provocative and even negative tone in its messages. Overall, *Conversation enabler* uses an expressive style and adopts a personal tone. The communication is mostly dialogic. Also *Communal entity* adopts a very expressive and positive tone. It is dialogic in nature but induces forms of asymmetry as well. The tone overall emphasises togetherness in a light and even humorous tone. The discourse *Professional organization* has two-way communication but is asymmetric in nature. The point is to share substance-oriented knowledge and the tone in the messages is neutral and polite. The style in *Information provider* is also substance-oriented and neutral, but compared to *Professional organization* the discussion is solely monologic. Finally, as the *Information provider,* also the *Commercial company* functions partly as an echo chamber, thus the communication is

monologic. Yet, *Commercial company* differs from *Information provider* by adopting an expressive and promotional style.

Based on the results, it seems fair to say that the case company does initiate dialogue. Whether it actually is the transparent nature of the messages that encourages users to participate in discussions with people they do not personally know, like Treem et al. (2012) suggest, is difficult to verify in this case study. The question how dialogue can and should be maintained in ESM remains yet partly unanswered, as ESM focuses on communicating with a variety of people across the globe. In a way, Wood's (2009) notion that the more similar experiences communicators have, the better they understand each other, which might explain the complex nature of dialogue. When a variety of participants with different backgrounds attempt to engage in dialogue, meanings become difficult to share. Indeed, also the communication in the case company does not follow the interactive model entirely as a lot of one-way communication and two-way asymmetric communication is initiated as well. The case company has fallen in a middle ground between dialogue and monologue and importantly, it seems like all forms of communication are needed. Yet, dialogue can and should be embraced to a great extent.

Furthermore, as all of the discourses recognised in this study interact with each other and are in a way interdependent of each other, it can be stated that all of the discourses allow dialogue. In many message threads, as also visible in Appendix 2a, discourses are mixed and monologic discourses can function together with dialogic discourses. Thus, when dialogic discourses are combined with the other discourses, it can result in enriched dialogue. Non-dialogic discourses may provide relevant information and content to the discussion even though they do not initiate dialogue per se.

As discovered and presented in the findings in Chapter 5, the linguistic characteristics of dialogic and asymmetric communication do differ. Table 7 summarises the main features of both communication styles. Consequently, dialogic communication seems to be person-

oriented and acknowledging people by directly naming them. The tone overall is very light and humorous, but the discussion can take more negative forms as well. The style tends to be personal and narrative. Additionally, a rather expressive style is adopted and a lot of strong adjectives are used. Yet, an expressive style in itself is not apt to induce dialogue. Direct questions seem to generate dialogue instead of indirect or rhetorical questions. Finally, the contextual emphasis of the dialogic messages is on team spirit and the importance of the topic instead of focusing on achievements.

Table 7. Linguistic characteristics of dialogic and monologic communication

Linguistic features of dialogic communication	Linguistic features of monologic communication
Person-oriented	Substance-oriented
Wishes/greetings/congratulations	Announcements/questions/notices
Naming people	Not naming anyone directly
Light, humorous or even provocative tone	Neutral and polite tone
Personal and narrative style	Promotional or informational style
Expressive style	Expressive style
Emotional/strong adjectives	Emotional/strong adjectives
Direct questions	Indirect and rhetorical questions
Emphasis on team spirit and importance of topic	Emphasis on achievements

As Chapter 5 presented, hierarchy seems not to be a prevalent matter in the case company's Yammer communication, as all participants seem to communicate freely regardless of their position. Even though discourse analysis presents power relations as being a great influence to communication traits, the statement cannot be verified in this study. Importantly, Yammer user's job titles are not directly visible in message threads, but one has to click on each name respectively to discover the job title. This layer of implicitness might affect the

behaviour of participants. This notion is in a way supported and further elaborated by Ardichvili et al. (2006) who state that when the organizational status of others is unknown in social media networks, the probability of posting content and engaging in conversation is more likely. Hence, as stated previously, ESM seems to allow dialogue across hierarchies in this particular case company as well.

However, as stated in the previous chapter, the use of different discourses seems to differ a bit among employees. The finding of directors and (vice) presidents using mostly the *Communal entity* discourse is interesting. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) give a partial explanation to this phenomenon. The authors researched how leaders communicate in an empirical study and found out that the focus was heavily on dialogue and involvement. Furthermore, the well-recognized and accepted managerial grid model presented by Blake and Mouton (1964) conceptualize some leaders as being highly people-oriented and promoting togetherness.

6.2 Practical implications

The practical implications of this study rely heavily on the main conclusions. The five major discourses recognized in this study together shape the case company's social reality in Yammer. In this sense the explanations of each discourse provides valuable information about the current state of the case company's communication culture. Furthermore, in order to induce dialogue within the case company, the linguistic characteristics of dialogue presented in the previous section may be used more strategically. Additionally, below are some practical notions and suggestions for the case company that might further a dialogic environment and communication culture.

Interestingly, employees within manufacturing do not have own accounts, but can use the platform with a general account. Indeed, as a large amount of the users were employees with managerial, equivalent or higher positions, it may limit the possibilities for true dialogue throughout the company. Thus, the question whether this choice complicates or

even prevents dialogue remains, as it would seem natural that all employees have equal chances to engage in dialogue. However, the reasons and implications of excluding some of the employees are impossible to state without further investigation via e.g. some in-depth interviews. Yet, recognizing this gap and understanding its possible impacts is significant when striving for a more dialogic communication culture.

Another interesting notion is the need of a facilitator in successful dialogue. The more frequently this facilitator participates in the discussion, the more flowing the discussion is. Dialogue can however be initiated even though there would not be a visible facilitator, as Appendix 2b illustrates, but the discussion might remain very short. However, a lengthy discussion is not an intrinsic value that should be aspired for. Instead, dialogue and interaction in themselves can be seen as valuable regardless of how long the discussion develops into. Additionally, as noted by Jones et al., (2004), as information overload is constantly present in both organizational and more global context, very lengthy conversations might not be ideal. Especially in these instances the importance of a facilitator who summarises, simplifies and keeps the discussion going is highlighted.

Furthermore, even though several researchers (e.g. Fielding et al., 2008; Klitmøller & Lauring, 2013) regard ESM as a rich media that can offer various extra-linguistic cues, the richness depends a lot on to what extent the users utilise these possibilities. In the case company, employees use a lot of pictures and occasionally also videos and emoticons. These cues could be utilised more efficiently and especially emoticons and acronyms could be used more to enhance the quality of dialogue.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The suggestions for further research are closely interlinked to the limitations of this study. The objective of this study was to reach an understanding of how an organization's communication culture is visible in Yammer. Importantly, the communication and dialogue present in the Yammer messages do not reflect the communication process as a whole in

the case company. As noted earlier in the literature review, online and offline environments tend to supplement each other (Karakayali & Kilic, 2013). Indeed, as the following examples derived from the data illustrate, even though discussion would be initiated publicly in Yammer, it might continue either via private messages or via other channels:

- I was quickly informed from colleagues after posting this question...
- From the dialogue here and with those in WNA, I believe that I learned what the answers are.
- ...based on our earlier e-mail correspondence…
- I will contact you via email too to clarify the details of the concern.

This behaviour might explain the many occasions in which dialogue has been invited but ends in a rather surprising manner. However, without researching this phenomenon in more depth it is impossible to say whether it holds true or not. It might be valuable to include other mediums as well in order to gain a more holistic view of the communication culture.

Additionally, the amount of information that could be gathered through automated means from Yammer was overwhelming, which brought some challenges. Especially the choice of what information was relevant had to be considered carefully. Including more information in the data set might have made this study more trustworthy. Yet it is important to note what information is relevant to achieve the objective of the study. For this particular study, the value of linguistic content was the most significant, but for further studies the focus may be on the other functionalities and activities Yammer allows.

Another limitation this study presents is the fact that the real-life relationships among the users are unknown. Some phrases or word choices in the messages might carry specific meaning known only to the sender and receiver. As it might be nearly impossible to understand these hidden meanings, conducting in-depth interviews with the users might give further insight to the topic and perhaps give explanations to the organization of messages and dialogue that now remained partly superficial.

ESM is still a topic not explored to its full potential, and as technology keeps evolving, inevitably also the functionalities of ESM change which might affect users' behavioural patterns. If the trend of dialogic communication keeps growing, also ESM might change and allow dialogue in new and unique ways. This in turn provides researchers many new interesting topics to discover.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The initial categories of the Yammer messages

Style	Intention	Additional elements
Direct	Achievement	Including emoticon
Emotional/strong adjectives	Agreement	Including image
Expressive	Announcement	Including link
Formal	Appreciation	Including video
Humour	Congratulation	Link only
Indirect question	Discussion opener	Not own text
Informal	Discussion-seeking	Notifying specific user
Informational	Gratitude	
Light	Greetings	
Narrative	Justification	
Negative	Not work related	
Neutral	Question	
Person-orientation	Questionnaire	
Personal	Reasoning	
Polite	Recognition	
Positive	Reminder	
Promotional	Request for action	
Provocative	Summarizing	
Repetition	Unclear	
Rhetorical question	Wishes	
Substance-orientation		
Suggestive		

Appendix 2 a: Example of thread with many participants and one facilitator

Participator (facilitator marked with blue)	Discourse
User A	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User C	Professional organization
User D	Conversation enabler
User A	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User E	Professional organization
User B	Conversation enabler
User F	Professional organization
User G	Conversation enabler
User H	Professional organization
User A	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User A	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User A	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User I	Professional organization
User B	Conversation enabler
User J	Conversation enabler
User J	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User K	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User A	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User L	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User B	Conversation enabler
User M	Conversation enabler
User M	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User D	Conversation enabler
User B	Professional organization
User D	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization

User D	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User F	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User F	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User N	Professional organization
User O	Professional organization
User C	Professional organization
User O	Professional organization
User P	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User Q	Professional organization
User Q	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User P	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User Q	Conversation enabler
User P	Conversation enabler
User R	Conversation enabler
User Q	Professional organization
User P	Conversation enabler
User B	Professional organization
User Q	Professional organization
User C	Conversation enabler
User A	Professional organization
User B	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User Q	Conversation enabler
User C	Conversation enabler
User D	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler

Appendix 2 b: Example of thread with many participators and no facilitator

Participator (no facilitors)	Discourse
User A	Conversation enabler
User B	Conversation enabler
User C	Conversation enabler
User D	Communal entity
User E	Conversation enabler
User F	Conversation enabler

Appendix 2 c: Example of thread with two participants, both function as facilitators

Participator (facilitator marked with blue)	Discourse
User A	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User A	Professional organization
User A	Professional organization
User B	Professional organization
User A	Conversation enabler