Master in Learning and Communication in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts

WORKING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE:

Case study of employees' perceptions in a Luxembourg-based multinational company using English as a lingua franca

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Abstracts

With the globalisation of business and diversification of the workforce, an increasing number of companies implement a corporate language policy based on the use of a lingua franca, often English. Thus more and more people face the challenges of simultaneous socialisation into a new corporate and linguistic environment, and of re-inventing themselves as competent articulate professionals through the medium of a foreign language. While a number of studies have concentrated on the management angle of corporate communication, fewer seem to focus on the language-related experiences of the employees in a multinational company. Adopting a sociolinguistic approach, this study seeks to explore the implications of working in a foreign language through the perceptions of a sample of employees at a multinational IT company based in Luxembourg and using English as a lingua franca. The qualitative content analysis of the data obtained in the course of 6 semi-structured interviews provides insights into the ways the employees construct and negotiate their daily linguistic reality. The study examines their attitudes to working in a foreign language (English as a lingua franca or other language) and outlines the perceived benefits, challenges and coping strategies. Special attention is paid to discourses linking language to power and professionalism. The adaptation to professional functioning in a foreign language is presented as a continuum, tracing the journey from overcoming initial challenges to achieving 'linguistic well-being'. While this trajectory is hard to generalise due to the variety of contributing factors, it is argued here that this type of person-centred bottom-up research is essential for understanding the reality of a modern multilingual workplace, and for raising individual and corporate awareness of the implications of working in a foreign language.

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La mondialisation du milieu des affaires et la diversification ethnolinguistique des employés amènent les entreprises à adopter une langue véhiculaire du fonctionnement professionnel, souvent l'anglais. Ainsi, un nombre croissant d'employés doit faire face aux défis que présente l'adaptation simultanée à deux environnements - celui de l'entreprise et celui de la langue de travail. En même temps, ces employés ont besoin de se réinventer en tant que professionnels compétents par l'intermédiaire d'une langue étrangère. Bien qu'un certain nombre d'études se soient focalisées sur la communication au sein d'une entreprise du point de vue de la gestion, moins d'entre elles se sont penchées sur les expériences linguistiques des employés dans une entreprise multinationale. En adoptant une approche sociolinguistique, la présente étude cherche à explorer les implications du fonctionnement professionnel dans une langue étrangère à travers les perceptions des employés d'une société informatique multinationale établie au Luxembourg et utilisant l'anglais comme lingua franca. L'analyse qualitative du contenu des données obtenues au cours de 6 entretiens semi-structurés donne un aperçu de la manière dont les employés construisent leur réalité linguistique au quotidien. L'étude examine leurs attitudes envers la langue étrangère de travail (l'anglais ou autre langue) et en décrit les avantages, les défis et les stratégies d'adaptation. Une attention particulière est accordée aux discours reliant la langue au pouvoir et à la perception du professionnalisme. L'adaptation au fonctionnement professionnel dans une langue étrangère est présentée en tant que continuum, retraçant le trajet entre les difficultés initiales et la «santé linguistique». Bien que cette trajectoire soit difficile à généraliser en raison de la diversité des circonstances individuelles, il est soutenu ici que ce type de recherche focalisant sur les perspectives individuelles aide à comprendre la réalité d'une entreprise multinationale d'aujourd'hui, et à sensibiliser le public (employées ainsi que gestionnaires) aux implications du fonctionnement professionnel dans une langue étrangère.

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В условиях глобализации бизнеса и многоязычия сотрудников многие компании устанавливают язык корпоративной коммуникации, или «лингва франка»; часто в этой роли выступает английский язык. Таким образом, растущее число людей сталкивается с проблемами одновременной социализации в новой корпоративной и языковой среде. В какой-то мере коммуниканты заново создают и себя, и свою профессиональную репутацию через посредство иностранного языка. В то время как ряд научных работ касался вопросов межнациональной корпоративной коммуникации на уровне компании, конкретный опыт языковой адаптации сотрудников в многонациональной корпоративной среде пока остается на периферии. Автор диссертации берет за основу социолингвистический подход и ставит своей целью исследовать, что же в реальности означает для людей профессиональная деятельность на иностранном языке, в данном случае, через восприятие группы сотрудников многонациональной информационно-технологической компании, базирующейся в Люксембурге и использующей английский язык как «лингва франка». Материал для анализа был получен в ходе 6 интервью с сотрудниками компании. В исследовании рассматривается их отношение к работе на иностранном языке (английском или другом иностранном языке) и анализируются связанные с этим преимущества, трудности и механизмы их преодоления. Особое внимание уделяется дискурсам, связывающим язык с концептами влияния и профессионализма. Процесс адаптации к профессиональной деятельности на иностранном языке представлен тематически в виде континуума, прослеживающего путь от преодоления первоначальных трудностей до достижения «языкового комфорта». Несмотря на то, что эта траектория зависит от множества факторов и потому не подлежит обобщению, автором утверждается, что личностно-ориентированные исследования, изучающие опыт коммуникантов, имеют важное значение для понимания реальности современного многоязычного делового социума, что имеет ценность как с индивидуальной, так и с корпоративной точки зрения.

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List of Abbreviations

BELF	Business English as a Lingua Franca
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca

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1. Introduction

With the globalisation of business and diversification of the workforce, an increasing number of companies implement a corporate language policy based on the use of a lingua franca, often English. Thus more and more people face the challenges of simultaneous socialisation into a new corporate and linguistic environment, and of re-inventing themselves as competent articulate professionals through the medium of a foreign language. While a number of studies have concentrated on the management angle of corporate communication, fewer seem to focus on the language-related experiences of the employees in a multinational company. However, as succinctly put by Marschan-Piekkari *et al*. (1999a:382), 'companies do not have languages, people do'. This study foregrounds the bottom-up, human, individual dimension of professional communication, which is regarded as an important aspect of the modern workplace - a rich 'contact zone' (Pratt, 1991) where socioculturally, linguistically and biographically situated individuals meet.

Becoming a competent and articulate professional in a foreign language is a complex process experienced by many employees in today's global world, and a fascinating subject for research. While studies have been carried out into psychological and physical well-being, there seems to be a lack of research into 'linguistic well-being', which constitutes a significant part of an individual's professional experience. How comfortable or confident do employees feel in a multilingual workplace? What factors contribute to those feelings? How are they progressing along the adaptation trajectory? This is a process with many variables, and a better understanding of its dynamics can be beneficial to both individuals and their employers.

Awareness of these issues may also have implications for adult language teaching and learning, and for in-company training. On a more personal level, these aspects are of added interest to me as a researcher, as I have been teaching languages to adults for many years, often preparing them for using foreign languages in the workplace. Besides, most of my adult life has been spent functioning in a foreign language (English) or switching between languages. By undertaking this project I have sought to gain theoretical and practical knowledge of how a multilingual workplace is conceived and experienced by its participants, and to link theory to practice.

The present study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- How do employees construct their experience of the multilingual workplace and how do they negotiate working in a foreign language?
- What does it mean to be an articulate professional in a foreign language? In what ways is language competence linked with the perception of professionalism and power?
- What are the positive and challenging aspects of working in a foreign language?

In order to address these issues, this interview-based sociolinguistic research project explores the experiences of employees at an international IT company which is located in Luxembourg and operates in English as a lingua franca (EFL). The freedom of corporate language choice in the Luxembourgish private sector, together with the ethnolinguistic diversity of the workforce and the client base, make Luxembourg an interesting site for research into workplace multilingualism. The company chosen for the current study presents a particularly suitable environment for the project, since over 95% of its employees are non-anglophone, and therefore have to work in a foreign language. Moreover, some of the employees find themselves in situations where they work in more than one foreign language, and thus are in a position to compare those experiences, providing more insights into the process.

The Thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework for the study by reviewing research in the area of workplace multilingualism and discussing the key concepts underpinning the analysis of the data, such as language and linguistic capital, language policy, English as a lingua franca. It emphasises the importance of the sociolinguistic approach conceptualising language as a co-constructed socio-cultural phenomenon with multiple implications on the professional scene. This chapter also reviews relevant workplace research in the local context of multilingual Luxembourg. Finally, it outlines the gap the current study seeks to address, i.e. the need for holistic bottom-up research focusing on the ways individuals experience working in a foreign language, adapt to the process, negotiate the challenges and construct the benefits.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological choices of this study. It details the steps and methods of collecting the data by means of semi-structured interviews, and explains how the qualitative content analysis of the data was carried out. This chapter also contains some reflections on researching multilingually (i.e. conducting interviews in more than 1 language), which adds to the richness but also to the complexity of the data. The position of the researcher and some ethical considerations linked to carrying out research at the workplace are also addressed.

Chapter 4 starts by setting the scene and describing the company and its language policy. Then it proceeds to the analysis and discussion of the interview data, highlighting the employees' perceptions of English as the official corporate language (or, in fact, of Business English as a Lingua Franca), which is constructed as given reality and is widely used in the company. This, however, does not mean that the company operates monolingually, or that the adaptation process is always trouble-free. The study explores the linguistic practices in the company through the eyes of its employees, paying special attention to the coping strategies and ways of negotiating the multilingual professional environment. It outlines the continuum between the initial difficulties of starting a foreign-language job and the stage where an employee feels 'healthy', i.e. comfortable, working in a foreign language. The chapter concludes with the main discourses of perceived challenges and benefits that emerged in the course of the interviews.

Finally, Chapter 5 contains some reflections on the results and limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for potential research.

Thus, building on previous research in the domain of workplace multilingualism, this study seeks to explore what working in a foreign language actually means for individuals, how the process is constructed and negotiated by the participants, what positive and negative aspects are involved, and which discourses are foregrounded. It is hoped that this person-centred approach will contribute to understanding the reality of a modern multilingual workplace, and to raising individual and corporate awareness of the implications of working in a foreign language.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter seeks to outline research carried out in the sphere of workplace multilingualism to date, and to situate the current study within the context of this domain. It reviews the key concepts used in the literature and in this research, and emphasises the relevance of the sociolinguistic approach which is the chosen framework for this project.

The literature review is selective and focuses primarily on concepts and studies which are related to the research question: exploring the perceptions and implications of working in a foreign language. It does not aim to give a comprehensive overview of workplace multilingualism research, due to the variety of approaches and specific local characteristics. Instead it seeks to outline the main approaches to the domain and provide the framework and conceptual tools for analysing the data of the current study.

Firstly, this chapter describes a modern multilingual workplace as represented by sociolinguistic researchers, emphasising its nature as a social environment where individuals interact. It also gives an overview of research into workplace multilingualism, stating the main lines of enquiry which are relevant to the present study.

Secondly, this chapter examines the key concepts which are essential in discussing workplace multilingualism. After looking at the socio-culturally co-constructed nature of language, and the linguistic capital it represents, the discussion moves on to the ways in which language use can be regulated, i.e. the concepts of language policy and language management. Next, these concepts are put into the specific context relevant to this study: language use in an international company. Approaches to formulating a corporate language policy are reviewed, which is considered important for providing the backdrop against which workplace language practices are constructed by individuals. Subsequently, the concept of the lingua franca (in particular, English) as a corporate working language is discussed. This further narrows the theoretical focus to environments similar to the one researched here: that of a multinational company whose corporate language (lingua franca) is a foreign language for a significant proportion of the employees.

Thirdly, after discussing the key concepts, this chapter sets the scene for the current project: it describes Luxembourg's potential as an environment for researching workplace multilingualism, and reviews recent local studies into corporate language practices and ideologies.

Finally, suggestions are made as to the ways in which the present study can contribute to existing research. It is argued here that while a lot of research has been done into the correlation of corporate language policies and actual practices, into specific language practices and discourses, and into power issues such as language-related exclusion, there seems to be a lack of studies that focus holistically on the way individuals experience working in a foreign language, negotiate the challenges and construct the benefits. Exploring the progression to linguistic well-being is seen as an important building block for developing a better understanding of what working in a foreign language entails on a human level.

2.1. Multilingualism in the workplace

Over the past decades language has become an increasingly important variable in the modern workplace. In a changing globalised economy the demands of the workplace are changing as well, and multilingualism becomes the norm rather than the exception. The process of globalisation creates new conditions for the production of language practices and forms, as well as new challenges to ways of thinking about language. Language is no longer the 'forgotten factor' (Marschan *et al.*, 1997) it used to be in top-down corporate planning; it is also gaining prominence in bottom-up discourses. The increase in the number and scope of multilingual workplaces all over the world affects the way companies and individuals construct their professional reality.

Today's international workplace represents a complex dynamic setting where the workforce has become a 'wordforce' – a term coined by Heller (2010) following Duchêne's adoption of the phrase 'parole d'œuvre' to replace the idea of the 'main d'œuvre' (Duchêne, 2009, cited in Heller, 2010).

Since economic goals remain the primary force driving business activities, strategic business management of international companies is of vital importance. However, it is no less important to examine a multilingual company from a sociolinguistic point of view. Businesses that operate globally bring together people from a variety of sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds, brought up and educated in different languages, through different learning processes. A modern multinational workplace can be viewed as an example of a contact zone – a social space where 'cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt, 1991:34).

In this multilingual and multicultural environment the strategic management of the company's economic activities and human resources becomes an increasingly complex task. Focusing on human resources, i.e. people, it is important to bear in mind the fact that a modern international company is a place where employees experience a double socialisation (Roberts, 2010). Firstly, they are faced with the discourses and practices of a new workplace, which is a challenge experienced by any newcomers, regardless of their sociocultural and linguistic background. Secondly, the employees are socialised into the specific language environment, which often involves lingua franca interaction alongside with multilingual practices. Understanding these processes and taking them into account allows the companies to maximise their human and economic potential, and enables individuals to successfully negotiate the challenges.

The sociolinguistic approach to studying language management and communication in the multilingual workplace has been adopted by a number of researchers (Heller, 2003; Spolsky, 2004, 2009; Shohamy, 2006; Holmes, 2008 among others) and also constitutes the theoretical framework of the present study which focuses on the way individual employees perceive and use their linguistic resources to achieve their communication goals in the professional environment. These goals may be transactional or relational (Holmes, 2005): the former category refers to professional task-accomplishment interaction, while the latter describes the social relationship-building interpersonal aspects of communication. Angouri (2013) terms those 'task-oriented' and 'social' functions respectively; Holmes (2000) refers to 'doing collegiality' as a way of building relationships among colleagues.

Research into multilingualism at work has been steadily gaining prominence in the last 5 years, with the number of dedicated publications rising in 2013-2014, according to the Scopus[1] database. In recognition of the importance of the subject, both Multilingua and Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development published special issues devoted to multilingualism in companies (for an overview of contributions see Sherman & Strubel, 2013; Angouri, 2014). Workplace multilingualism is approached from 2 perspectives: firstly, the organisational perspective, which concerns the presence and management of multiple

[1] https://www.scopus.com/

languages in the company, and secondly, the individual perspective, which examines the ways in which the presence of multiple languages in the workplace is managed by employees. The present study falls within the scope of the individual perspective, though it also deals with corporate language management as a backdrop against which individual experiences develop.

The following main lines of enquiry have been recently explored by researchers (based on the analysis by Zhu Hua, 2014):

- the economics of the multilingual workplace
- intercultural communication studies
- multilingualism and its sociolinguistic implications (for instance, processes of social exclusion)

In the context of the present study, the last of these three directions is seen as the most relevant and is mainly addressed in this literature review (though it is not limited to the issues of inclusion and exclusion foregrounded by Zhu Hua, 2014). However, it has to be noted that academic literature often combines several lenses. For instance, there is a strong link between the notions of language and culture (hence the term ‘languaculture’ coined by Agar (1994)), therefore interculturality is often discussed by scholars in connection with multilingualism. Also, linguistic and socio-linguistic studies of multilingual workplaces are frequently designed to gain understanding in order to enhance economic performance. The latter approach is reflected in some recent large European projects, for instance:

- ELAN[2] - Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise (2006), which highlighted the link between language skills and business success;
- PIMLICO[3] - Promoting, Implementing, Mapping Language and Intercultural Communication Strategies (2010-2011), which focused on the language management strategies of successful small and medium enterprises in EU countries;
- DYLAN[4] - Language dynamics and management of diversity (2006-2011), which sought to provide scientific backing to the concept of multilingual repertoires as

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/documents/elan-summary_en.pdf

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/documents/pimlico-summary_en.pdf

[4] http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/home/home.php

resources that can be put to use in a variety of professional, political and educational contexts.

Outside Europe, New Zealand has been running the Language in the Workplace Project[5] for nearly 20 years with the aim of analysing the features of effective interpersonal communication in a variety of workplaces from a sociolinguistic and cross-cultural perspective, and ultimately helping to create a better working culture. Among other issues, it focuses on workplace interactions involving migrants who speak English as a second language and seeks, firstly, to gain understanding of the challenges faced by individuals joining a foreign-language job market, and secondly, to find ways of facilitating this transition.

More importantly for the purposes of this study, there is also a variety of small to medium-scale research which covers multiple scenarios of workplace multilingualism, for instance: corporate mergers between companies with different language policies (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.,* 2005); superimposing a lingua franca (English) onto a largely monolingual (Danish) environment (Tange & Lauring, 2009); multinational/transnational workplaces (Kingsley, 2009; Lavric, 2009; Angouri, 2013); cross-border workers (Franziskus, 2013). The list can go on, and every setting is valuable, as it helps 'piece together the multilingual workplace jigsaw puzzle' (Zhu Hua, 2014:239) where employees are involved in complex language practices. Studying a variety of settings also contributes to understanding the ways in which individuals construct and negotiate working in a foreign language.

In this respect, the following aspects of research into multilingual workplaces inform the theoretical understanding of the current study and provide the lenses for data analysis:

- the degree of acceptance by the employees of corporate language policies, including their attitudes towards the lingua franca (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.,* 2005; Fredriksson *et al*., 2006; Kingsley, 2009, 2013; Lavric, 2009; Angouri, 2013; Lønsmann, 2014; Negretti & Garcia-Yeste, 2014);
- the role of linguistic competence in the context of power relations, and of the processes of inclusion and exclusion (Marschan-Piekkari *et al*., 1999b; Tange & Lauring, 2009; Lønsmann, 2014);

[5] http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/centres-and-institutes/language-in-the-workplace/about-us/project

- discourses of multilingualism, such as multilingualism and the use of English, multilingualism and cosmopolitanism, the challenges and expectations of multilingualism (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014);
- discourses related to the perception of competence: the 'native speaker ideal' versus an 'instrumental use of language' adequate for handling international business activities (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014; Lønsmann, 2014);
- discourses related to the challenges and advantages of multilingualism (Angouri, 2013; Lønsmann, 2014; Wille *et al.*, 2015);
- the use of linguistic adaptation mechanisms, such as accommodation and code-switching, which allow individuals to negotiate the challenges of multilingual workplace interactions (Poncini, 2003; for a detailed theoretical review see Franziskus, 2013:101-104).

The application of the above findings and observations, as well as their correlation with the data of the present study will be addressed in section 4 (Data Analysis and Discussion).

On the whole, academic literature regards language in the workplace as a strategic resource for achieving communication goals, and that applies to any language – first, second etc., or a lingua franca. The current study specifically focuses on using a foreign language at work, but the analysis is informed by theoretical considerations about language in general, therefore these are reviewed below.

2.2. Key concepts

In order to conceptualise and explore a modern multilingual workplace, and to answer the research questions of the present study, the following key concepts will be defined and discussed:

a) Language and linguistic capital
b) Language policy and language management
c) Corporate language policy as a specific kind of language policy
d) Lingua franca/common corporate language
e) English as a lingua franca (ELF) in a modern workplace.

Discussion of those concepts will be illustrated by their application to the target environment – that of a multilingual workplace.

a) Language: conceptualising language in the workplace

The currently predominant view on language in sociolinguistic research is a socio-constructionist one, emphasising its non-bounded socially co-constructed aspect. Thus, Heller (2007:2) sees language as a 'set of resources which circulate in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces, and whose meaning and value are socially constructed within the constraints of social organizational processes, under specific historical conditions'.

Saville-Troike (2003) also foregrounds the socio-cultural aspects of language as a specific linguistic medium that is chosen by language users in accordance with the following criteria:

a) the focus of a conversation (e.g. ingroup/outgroup, formal/informal)
b) setting (e.g. place, time, participants)
c) function (e.g. task/relationship)
d) social identity (e.g. national, professional, gender)

All of these functions are relevant in workplace communication, and viewing them through the lens of working in a foreign language adds to the complexity.

Language as a concept can be viewed on different levels, from macro to meso to micro, for instance, on the national, societal, group or individual level. If national languages are tied to a geopolitical entity and provide a marker of socio-cultural identity, languages used in a business setting (corporate languages) represent the privileged communication medium (or media) of a corporation, which may or may not be territorially defined. Although a corporate language may be promoted as a symbol of organisational unity, its principal purpose is task-accomplishment and overcoming any linguistic and cultural barriers on the way to efficient organisational communication (Marschan-Piekkari *et al.,* 1999a, 1999b; Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2002; Dhir, 2005; Tange & Lauring, 2009; Gunnarsson, 2014).

In organisational contexts, language is understood as 'the principal means by which an organisation acquires and communicates its culture to members within the society in which it operates' (Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2002:243). The socio-cultural nature of language is important not only because language communicates information, but also because in the process of exchange it creates value within the culture.

The way in which value (including economic and political value) is both embedded in and created through language makes language a fundamental aspect of social dynamics. The economic, value-related view of language was advocated by Bourdieu who conceptualised language as an embodiment of linguistic capital and power (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). For Bourdieu, language is 'an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of producing a certain material or symbolic profit' (Bourdieu, 1991:66). Creating value and exercising power are important factors in all spheres of society, in particular in the corporate world. According to Bourdieu (1977), linguistic capital is a powerful factor with regard to establishing authority and hierarchy in society. In this sense language competence does not merely presuppose the ability to select and use the correct form of a given language (for instance, lexical, grammatical, phonetic or syntactic); it is also a pragmatic ability to adapt language to specific social situations and contexts. In the environment of a multilingual workplace the level of employees' language proficiency has an impact on their access to formal and informal communication channels, thus affecting their status within the professional hierarchy as well as the social network. Bourdieu (1991) demonstrates how individuals can be excluded from social participation if they lack specific competencies required for communication in a particular setting, such as sufficient 'legitimate' command of the dominant language. Thus, employees lacking the necessary linguistic resources may be excluded from the decision-making processes or information networks (Marschan-Piekkari *et al*., 1999b; Lønsmann, 2014). This exclusion can lead to the emergence of alternative linguistic markets or language clusters (Tange & Lauring, 2009). In other words, language skills in the workplace are far more than a pragmatic resource. At the symbolic level, language represents a power asset enlisted by individuals or groups to distinguish themselves in a particular social context, and is crucial in the continuous struggle for resources and recognition within an organisation (for further discussion of Bourdieu's theory applied to the workplace see Tange & Lauring, 2009).

The concept of linguistic capital and power is echoed by Miller (1999, 2003) who introduces the term 'audibility' and specifically applies it to functioning in a foreign language. Her research was carried out primarily in the sphere of second language acquisition, but the notion of audibility is relevant in the dynamics of a multilingual workplace. Miller (1999) describes audibility as the degree to which speakers are legitimated by the users of the dominant language. Consequently, high audibility enables access to 'further legitimacy in a range of social settings and to agency within powerful social and institutional networks' (Miller, 1999:164). In a professional context where individuals work in a foreign language, linguistic competence and resulting audibility impacts on the power relations. Miller goes as far as to claim that audibility in a second language is tantamount to a successful renegotiation of identity, since languages are ways of self-representation that implicate social identity.

Building on the conceptualisation of language as capital, Dhir (2005) draws an analogy between language and currency. Language is presented as a corporate asset which performs important functions in terms of exchange, accounting and storage of information, knowledge and know-how. The author goes even further in suggesting that a corporation 'can begin to think in terms of a portfolio of language assets much in the same way as it thinks of portfolio of financial currency assets' (Dhir, 2005:376)

Regarding language as a corporate asset certainly enhances the value of language (or languages) used in a company. However, this view is not unproblematic, because it may lead to the commodification of language. Heller (2003) argues that the globalized new economy has resulted in the commodification of both language and identity, together or separately. Commodification of language is a process whereby language is reduced to a set of skills, and communicative activity becomes a 'commodity negotiated between those who have it, those who sell it and those who need it' (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014:151). Viewed through this lens, language becomes valuable primarily because of its significance for economic gain (Heller, 2003, 2010). This is particularly the case for languages such as English, which are widely used for business and are therefore seen as an educational investment in order to increase employability and profitability. Though this is a reflection of reality, regarding language solely as a commodity essentialises language use, narrows down the scope of corporate language planning and underestimates the interactional work done by multilingual speakers (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). The current study adopts a person-centred bottom-up approach and seeks to draw attention to individual experiences and perceptions and to situate them within the corporate context.

In order to bring the focus back to the individual, it is important to consider the notion of linguistic repertoire (for a detailed discussion see Blommaert & Backus, 2013). Being a long-standing core concept of sociolinguistic vocabulary, repertoire traditionally referred to the 'totality of linguistic resources available to members of particular communities' (Gumpertz, 1972 cited by Blommaert & Backus, 2013:12). However, in the last decades the emphasis has shifted from communities to individuals and therefore to individual repertoires, which are viewed in the context of mobility and superdiversity and do not rely on languages as bounded entities. Blommaert & Backus (2013) argue that in post-modern fluid and mobile reality it is necessary to reconsider what 'knowing a language' actually means. Language learning is non-homogenous, experiential, eclectic and highly individualised. An individual's linguistic repertoire is usually richer than it appears at first sight, and does not necessarily coincide with the 'officially' assessed and valued repertoires. An awareness of this underlying richness allows a holistic picture of an individual's functioning in a multilingual environment to emerge. This is also true of a multilingual workplace, the subject of the present study.

The above considerations demonstrate that exploring language use by individuals (in any social sphere, including the workplace) requires a simultaneous application of several lenses. Due to the complexity of language as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, adopting just one particular angle would oversimplify the issue (though this may sometimes be justified as a heuristic). The trend towards a holistic approach is reflected by the hybridisation of research. Thus, studies of language practices and discourses incorporate a range of fields, including second language acquisition, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, cultural studies and conversation analysis. For instance, Miller (2003) quotes examples of hybridization, which demonstrate that linguistic relations are social relations, but also power relations, and the 'power of language to legitimate and maintain ideologies is a recurring theme in literature'. (Miller, 2003:291)

Going back to the workplace environment, today's globalised markets present new sociolinguistic challenges for researchers, companies and individuals alike. The essential point to keep in mind is that fundamentally, language is an issue concerning individuals and their competences. It is suggested in the literature that the functions of language in the workplace need to be analysed in parallel from a range of perspectives, such as the perspectives of sociolinguists, economists and decision analysts (Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2002). This has implications for language management approaches within multilingual companies, since corporate and community planning perspectives have a different starting point and a different focus. The difference in perspectives and the resulting need to strike a balance will be further discussed in section 2.2(c) on corporate language planning.

b) Language policy and language management

Before moving on to corporate language policy in the modern multilingual workplace, let us consider the underlying concept of language policy in general, and the ways in which it relates to language practices and language management. This provides the framework for understanding the *de facto* language environment of an international workplace.

Traditionally the term 'language policy' refers to 'a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system' (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997:ix). This is a very broad, top-down approach to the concept. In more recent research, however, (notably in Spolsky, 2004 and Shohamy, 2006) the concept of language policy has been related to patterns of language use in a given setting, and issues of ideology have also been foregrounded.

Thus, Spolsky (2004), one of the most frequently cited sociolinguistic researchers, conceptualises the language policy of a speech community as a sum of three components: its practices, its beliefs and any attempts to influence practices by any type of language intervention, planning or management. The language practices of community members refer to the habitual patterns of using their linguistic repertoire, i.e. what languages they tend to use in what situations. Language beliefs, or ideologies, are seen as values and prestige assigned to different languages and language use. The final component, language planning or management, is represented by explicit efforts made to modify or control the language use of others in the community. Spolsky advocates this complex language policy model by pointing out that when studying language policy, the aim is usually to try and understand how non-linguistic variables interact with linguistic variables. Consequently, it is necessary to recognise the surrounding factors which may affect the design and implementation of language policies (for a further discussion of applying Spolsky's model to an international workplace see Kingsley, 2009, 2013; Sanden, 2015).

Spolsky's definition of language policy is very generic and can be somewhat confusing in respect of terminology, for instance: 'language policy may refer to all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community' (Spolsky, 2004:9) Here policy is seen to incorporate language practices, while policies and practices are often presented as a dichotomy, especially in corporate language management contexts (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.,* 2005; Piekkari *et al.,* 2005; Angouri, 2013). Thus, the term 'language policy' may be understood at various levels of generalisation. While Spolsky provided the seminal approach and framework for studying language policies in various settings, researchers have felt the need to adapt and supplement this broad approach in order to make it more concrete.

For instance, Shohamy's (2006) model of language policy adds the intermediary feature of 'mechanisms', or 'policy devices' to Spolsky's framework. These mechanisms include rules and regulations, language education, language tests, language in public space and ideology/propaganda. Shohamy's mechanisms provide the link between ideologies and actual practices by indirectly perpetuating language policies; in other words, they shape the actual, *de facto* language policy of a community. In her view, the mechanisms determine *de facto* policies more than any policy document. Applied to the multilingual workplace context (e.g., in Kingsley 2009, 2013), 3 of the mechanisms proposed by Shohamy appear particularly relevant: rules and regulations, language testing and language education. These mechanisms are very similar to aspects of corporate language management reflected in research ((Marschan *et al.*, 1997, 1999a, 1999b; Feely & Harzing, 2003): management of the working language, recruitment and language courses in the organization.

Within the rules and regulations mechanism proposed by Shohamy (2006), one of the devices used to grant preference to certain languages is officiality. Officiality relates to prescribed language use in public and private spaces. However, the act of declaring certain languages as official does not guarantee that officiality will be practiced. In the same vein, Spolsky (2004:8) notes: 'even where there is a formal, written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed not consistent' (incidentally, in this statement Spolsky himself opposes policy to practices, thus presenting it in a less generic sense, as a plan; this approach seems to be adopted by most researchers and is also the basis for conceptualising language policy in the present study). Similarly, in the workplace environment the fact of designating an official language of communication does not make the company monolingual *de facto* (Marschan-Piekkari *et al.*, 1999b; Fredriksson *et al*., 2006; Angouri, 2014).

Scholars have therefore considered it important to distinguish between explicit and implicit dimensions of language policy (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Spolsky, 2004; Shohamy, 2006), both of which shape linguistic reality, but the latter are often more important and nuanced. There have been variations in terminology: explicit language policies can also referred to as *overt*, *official*, *de jure*, or *planned*; implicit ones are termed *covert*, *informal*, *de facto*, or *unplanned* (for further discussion of these dimensions see Kingsley, 2009). Typically, research into languages in the workplace starts by establishing whether a corporate language policy exists in a particular company or group of companies, and whether this policy is explicit or implicit. This move sets the backdrop against which specific circumstances of language management and language use are explored, and provides the link between the top-down and the bottom-up perspectives. The present study also adopts this approach.

c) Corporate language policy: importance of combining different approaches

As discussed above, one of the aspects of language policy in the generic sense is language management, which refers to the formulation and proclamation of an explicit plan of language use (Spolsky, 2004). In the workplace 'management decisions are intended to modify practices and beliefs…, solving what appear to the participants to be communication problems.' (Spolsky, 2009:53). The reasons behind establishing a corporate language policy are often commonsensical (Millar & Jensen, 2009), the main aim being 'to get the job done'; but in fact the process is a lot more complicated and requires a combination of several approaches.

In the last 15-20 years companies have become more aware of the importance and economics of language skills with regard to profitability and economic performance. As pointed out by Sanden (2015:1097), the study of language in business and management research has gained an increasing amount of attention in recent years, but is still considered a relatively new area or research in the field. The language situation in the corporate world has found its reflection in the work of language management theorists (Marschan-Piekkari *et al.,* 1999a, 1999b; Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2002; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Grin *et al*., 2010).

As Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá (2002) point out, one of the challenges of formulating a corporate language policy lies in the fact that corporate planners and sociolinguists have a different view of the objectives of the policy and the functions of the language. Typically, sociolinguists tend to have a more general societal approach. For instance, for corporate planners the goal is to maximise the company's strategic and competitive advantages, while sociolinguists seek to maximise the quality and quantity of social interactions within the given environment, be it a state or a community. As far the language functions are concerned, the differences in views are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Corporate planners versus sociolinguists: approaches to language planning (based on Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá (2002))

Language functions	Corporate planners	Sociolinguists
Means of communication	choose a working language	study community languages
Capital	language as an asset, intellectual capital	language as a community attribute which helps create social capital
Creating value	create economic value through efficient and effective knowledge management for gaining competitive advantage	create community value
Desired outcome	facilitate efficiency and synergistic interactions among individuals; promote homogeneity	heterogeneity and preservation of languages

This distinction emphasises the extremes, but it is helpful in the sense that it also highlights the spectrum of attitudes and goals. Indeed, corporations have to find a balance between organisational efficiency and economy of effort, on the one hand, and maintaining a healthy communicative environment. Only a language policy which combines these approaches will enable a multinational corporation to gain maximum competitive advantage (Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2002). As observed by Thomas (2008), though a number of language policy researchers have discussed language needs for business, most research seems to have been conducted by management scholars. He pointed out a gap in academic literature regarding the implications of a corporate language policy on a human level, which is surprising, since 'corporate language policy (presumably) affects everyone who works or will work in a corporation' (Thomas, 2008: 307). This gap is being increasingly addressed in research, but much remains to be explored.

It is hoped that the current study, albeit a small-scale project, will contribute to the understanding of the ways in which multilingual employees experience functioning in a foreign language and these insights into the 'human factor' may help to promote both a healthy linguistic environment and economic efficiency.

d) Lingua franca as a corporate language policy: common corporate language

Corporate language policies may take a lot of forms depending on factors such as geographic location, ethnolinguistic diversity of staff, internal and external communication structure, content-related considerations etc. They may involve a combination of local language(s) and the languages of the head office, and/or a lingua franca. In the context of the current study only the latter language policy, that of establishing a corporate lingua franca (English in this case), is relevant. Therefore, only research pertaining to this area of corporate language management will be reviewed.

The key concept of lingua franca as a language used for communication between people whose first languages differ (Holmes, 2008) is not new. It is interesting to observe that the need for a common language is grounded in the divisive representation of linguistic diversity that has been prevalent in European thought (Millar & Jensen, 2009; Angouri, 2013). The image of the tower of Babel is reflected in the expressions such as 'Babylonian confusion', 'bridging the language divide', or a common metaphor 'language barrier' (also used by Feely & Harzing, 2003). The multitude of languages obstructs communication, and therefore the language divide needs to be bridged by means of a lingua franca.

In a workplace context, the term 'lingua franca' refers to the language (or language variety used in the broad sense) which enables the participants of a multilingual company to communicate professionally and socially. This language is usually designated, explicitly or implicitly, to act as the language of corporate communication, i.e. the common corporate language. It does not automatically turn a multilingual workplace into a monolingual one. As studies show (among others Fredriksson *et al.*, 2006; Forsbom, 2014; Gunnarsson, 2014), other languages continue to coexist in the company alongside the lingua franca.

The introduction of a common corporate language has a number of benefits, such as 'facilitation of formal reporting', of 'informal communications between operating units and within cross-national teams', and 'fostering a sense of belonging' (Feely & Harzing, 2003:45). It allows a company to create guidelines and also harmonises communication (Marschan-Piekkari *et al.*, 1999b). It also provides a mechanism for managing language problems (Fredriksson *et al.*, 2006) and promotes organisational learning and value creation (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaaranta, 2012). From a business point of view, the introduction of a common corporate language is linked to generating economic value by efficiently fulfilling business objectives (Dhir & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2002).

Along with the benefits, using a common corporate language also has potential drawbacks: comprehension problems, neglect of benefits of language diversity, creation of isolation, power centralisation, increase of inequality and additional costs (for a discussion of benefits and disadvantages of using a common corporate language see Forsbom, 2014).

Most of the above advantages and drawbacks have been explored from the corporate point of view. Only some of them (such as isolation and exclusion) have been approached from the bottom-up individual perspective. In fact, there seems to be a gap in research into the implications of working in a foreign language (including working in a lingua franca) for individual employees. It is argued here that this kind of person-centred research is essential for understanding the reality of a modern multilingual workplace, and would ultimately benefit the companies by enabling them to take the 'human factor' into account when designing and implementing corporate language strategies. This study seeks to contribute to filling this gap.

e) English as a lingua franca: what kind of English?

Nowadays the use of English as a lingua franca in international business context is commonly accepted as a fact, even though it may be deplored by some. Fredriksson *et al.* (2006:406, drawing on House, 2002), cite the following factors that have historically promoted the spread of English:

- the worldwide extension of the British Empire;
- the political and economic influence of the USA;
- the development of modern information and communication technologies;
- the growth of international mergers and acquisitions.

In recent years, the term 'English as a lingua franca' (ELF) has emerged as the preferred way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2001, 2005).

Klein (2007) posits that English is the most important language for accessing the European labour market. In fact, he goes as far as suggesting that the European Union language policy of ‘mother tongue + 2’ should be adapted to promote the learning of English and should take the form of ‘mother tongue + English +1’. At the same time, he admits that this view prioritises ‘economic rather than cultural considerations’ (Klein, 2007:278) and thus is an example of the commodification of language. The strong position of English in European workplaces is particularly noticeable in Scandinavian countries (Louhiala-Salminen *et al.*, 2005; Fredriksson *et al.,* 2006; Tange & Lauring, 2009; Lønsmann, 2014;) and is also reflected in research carried out in other countries of continental Europe. Overall, Germany provides an example of the expanding role of English in the business domain, while France is reported to be resistant to the spread of ELF (for a detailed discussion of ELF workplaces see Gunnarsson, 2014). With regard to Luxembourg, Klein (2007) claims that command of English facilitates access to the Luxembourgish labour market (though this is not straightforward, as illustrated by Franziskus *et al.* (2013), with reference to cross-border workers).

As only one out of every four users of English in the world is a native English speaker (Seildhofer, 2005, drawing on Crystal, 2003), most ELF interactions take place among non-native speakers of English. This means that in most cases ELF is ‘a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication’ (Firth, 1996:240). Defined in this way, ELF is part of the more general phenomenon of ‘English as an international language’, ‘World English’ – or rather ‘World Englishes’, since there are many varieties.

In order to focus specifically on the use of ELF in the business environment, Louhiala-Salminen *et al.* (2005) introduced the notion of Business English as Lingua Franca (BELF) to emphasize the purpose of communication and the domain of use. BELF is conceptualised as a neutral and shared communication code. It is neutral since it is not the mother tongue of its speakers; it is shared in the sense that it is used as a means of conducting business within the global community of BELF communicators. Following this argument, the speakers of BELF are viewed as users in their own right, rather than non-native speakers or learners of the language. It is therefore the BELF users, not native English speakers, who establish the norms and standards of language usage. This phenomenon is reflected by research, which shows that sometimes the native English speakers’ lack of lingua franca skills is perceived as a difficulty, since using non-adjusted idiomatic language may present an obstacle in corporate communication (Gunnarsson, 2014).

There is a discussion in the literature as to whether BELF is completely neutral and devoid of cultural affiliation (see Louhiala-Salminen *et al*., 2005), as the assumption that BELF is just a code language for business purposes ignores the fact that its speakers have a diversity of cultural backgrounds which they bring into their language practices.

There have been attempts to describe varieties of BELF used in different areas of business activities. Thus, researching language preferences and practices among EU civil servants and lobbyists in Brussels, Krizsán & Erkkilä (2014) coined the term 'Euro-English' - a variety of English 'charged with the technical jargon of EU bureaucratic discourse (originated mostly from French) and distinguished by its laxity of standard English pronunciation patterns as a result of influences from the speaker's first language(s)' (Krizsán & Erkkilä, 2014:206). It may be hypothesised that other varieties of BELF exist in other business environments and are determined by the combination of professional jargon and the ethnolinguistic composition of the workforce – this idea is further developed in the data analysis and discussion.

To sum up, this section has examined the way language is conceptualised and managed in the multilingual workplace. The next section sets the scene for the current project: it describes Luxembourg as a research environment and reviews the studies into language dynamics on the local professional scene.

2.3. Luxembourg: an attractive location for researching workplace multilingualism

Situated between Germany, France and Belgium, Luxembourg is at the crossroads of European multilingualism. Officially trilingual in Luxembourgish, French and German, it has seen an influx of foreigners over the last century, primarily for economic reasons. According to 2016 official statistics, 46.7% of its population of 576,249 people are resident foreigners (STATEC, 2016). This figure does not take into account the vast numbers of cross-border workers who constitute a high percentage of the workforce: as of 2014, 44% of the workforce were cross-border commuters, 29% Luxembourgers and 27% foreign residents (Centre d'Étude et de Formation Interculturelles et Sociales, 2015, citing Inspection Générale de la Sécurité Sociale, 2014).

Luxembourg continues to attract foreign individuals and businesses. In fact, in January 2016 Luxembourg was ranked the most business-friendly country in the world in a survey conducted by the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and strategy firm BAV Consulting[6].

The Luxembourgish labour market is characterised by language segmentation (Wille *et al.*, 2015). Luxembourgers tend to enter the public service, which requires mastery of the three national languages. This means that foreigners and cross-border workers are largely left to the private sector, where language use at the workplace is not as regulated. In fact, the lack of language regulation in Luxembourgish private sector constitutes one of the particularities of the research environment. Companies are free to choose their corporate language (often English) and they are not required to produce corporate documentation in the country's official languages. This is in stark contrast with many countries, for instance, neighbouring France, where article 2 of the constitution proclaims French as the 'language of the Republic' and serves as a basis for the 1992 law declaring French the official working language; sanctions are applied for failure to produce translation of corporate documentation into French (see Lejot, 2014).

This freedom of language use in the private sector together with the ethnolinguistic diversity of the workforce and the client base make Luxembourg an interesting site for research into workplace multilingualism. However, not many studies have been conducted in the field so far. Some of the studies are reviewed below; they explore the use of languages (including English) in international workplaces, primarily by foreigners/non-native speakers. Thus their design and findings are directly related to the focus of the current study – working in a foreign language.

The most prominent local research was carried out in Luxembourg's financial institutions. Adopting Shohamy's (2006) model of mechanisms which contribute to creating *de facto* language policy, Kingsley (2009) explored the discrepancy between explicit language management policies and reported language use practices in international banks located in Luxembourg. In a follow-up project Kingsley (2013) took a more detailed bottom-up

[6] http://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/open-for-business-rankings

perspective and researched employees' complex language practices across various genres of communication (reports, emails, presentations, meetings, phone calls and informal talk). She concluded that the ethnolinguistic composition of employees and transactional/relational functions of language are the two most important bottom-up pressures on language choices. According to her findings, English emerged as an essential lingua franca. These observations were used as a reference point for interpreting the data of the current study, which was carried out in a different sector, that of Information Technology.

Another series of significant studies of language use in Luxembourgish workplaces focused on the language practices and ideologies of cross-border workers (Franziskus, 2013; Franziskus *et al.*, 2013; Wille *et al.*, 2015). This time the research environments included a supermarket, an office product distribution company and an IT company (the latter being particularly relevant as it is the only instance of research into language use in this domain in Luxembourg to date). This ethnographic and interactional investigation identified three factors that influence cross-border workers' multilingual practices: language resources, transactional context of the workplace and social/relational aspects. It also analysed how language ideologies and workplace norms for appropriate language use further impact on the employees' language practices. A complex answer emerged as to 'why, when and how cross-border workers adopt multilingual practices' (Franziskus, 2013).

Importantly, follow-up studies (de Bres, 2014; Wille *et al.*, 2015) explored the opportunities and problems related to societal multilingualism. Together with Angouri & Miglbauer's (2014) research into challenges and expectations of multilingualism, this was an important point of reference for the current study which seeks to elicit the perceived benefits and challenges of working in a foreign language.

2.4. Research gap

Research into communication in multilingual workplaces is relatively young and has mostly been carried out in the last decade. The variety of geographic and professional settings, the ethnolinguistic composition of the workforce, as well as the different possible combinations of languages and language policies make for an extremely vast research field, where every research project contributes to the overall picture. A number of studies have taken the strategic language management approach, but at the same time scholars highlight the need for further research which ‘will focus on the multinational workplace as perceived by the employees’ (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014:165). Kingsley (2013) also calls for adopting a bottom-up approach as a way of understanding the pressures on employees’ language practices.

While an increasing number of researchers do take this approach and focus on individuals’ practices and perceptions, there does not seem to be any research focusing exclusively on the experience of functioning professionally in a foreign language. Though this aspect comes up in the context of language acquisition (e.g., Cummins, 1999, 2008) and challenges for ESL learners at work (e.g., Holmes, 2000), it has not been explored systematically by tracing the trajectory of employees’ experiences, investigating the perceived benefits and challenges and mapping the road to linguistic well-being in a professional context. It is hoped that this study will provide a ‘snapshot’ of perceptions and thus contribute to accumulating knowledge in this important area.

Besides, the research environment of the current project is designed to fill a gap both in the professional and local scene: little research has been done to date into language use in international IT companies, where English is strongly present due to its terminological links to the technical content. This study seeks to explore the way ELF and other foreign languages are used and experienced by the employees of a private IT company in Luxembourg, which, as shown above, presents a unique environment for research into workplace multilingualism.

3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological issues related to the present study. It outlines the underlying methodological approach, presents the methods for collecting data, describes data collection procedures and reflects on the role of the researcher as well as on some ethical considerations and limitations of the chosen approach. The aim is to explain and justify the methodological choices made during the research process and to provide an overview of how the conclusions and answer to the research question were reached.

3.1. The sociolinguistic approach and research design

Focusing on the perceptions and implications of language practices in the workplace, the present study falls within the framework of the sociolinguistic approach.

In broad terms, sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society and the ways of conveying social meaning through language (Holmes, 2008). A variety of research methods exist, in particular in qualitative research, therefore scholars emphasise the need to select and tailor the methods to the research question and the research environment. These methods may be adapted and combined to provide a synthetic type of research that Denzin & Lincoln (2011) compared to a patchwork quilt.

In order to answer the research questions of this study, choices needed to be made regarding the methodology and research design. In the phase of data collection the qualitative approach (interviews) was favoured; at the initial stages it was preceded by some quantitative elements (questionnaires). Qualitative content analysis was chosen as the approach to data interpretation. These choices are further explained below.

The following 7-stage research design was elaborated in order to obtain and analyse the data:

- Phase 1: exploratory
    - Initial contact, exploratory interview with an employee (non-transcribed)
    - Request for information regarding corporate language policy documents
- Phase 2: a questionnaire distributed by email to the Human Resources with a view to:
    - collect quantitative data about the ethnolinquistic composition of the company's workforce
    - elicit information about the corporate language policy
    - elicit initial information about language practices in the company
    - potentially select respondents for the interview phase
- Phase 3: interview with the management and final selection of interviewee sample
- Phase 4: establishing contact with interviewees and administering a short questionnaire by email
- Phase 5: semi-structured recorded interviews with 5 employees
- Phase 6: transcription (and, where necessary, partial translation) of interviews; coding
- Phase 7: content analysis of the data.

3.2. Choice of methods: qualitative and quantitative combined

The most fundamental categorisation of research methods in general, and in the domain of sociolinguistic studies in particular, is the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research.

As succinctly defined by Dörnyei (2007), quantitative research involves 'data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods, while qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods'.

This clear distinction does not imply that quantitative and qualitative methods have to be applied separately. As observed by Denzin & Lincoln (2011), qualitative research has come to the fore in the postmodern era and can be successfully used alongside quantitative methods. In fact, some theoretical and practical academic literature advocates using qualitative methods in conjunction with quantitative (Kvale, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007; Holmes & Hazen, 2014; Angouri, 2013, 2014; Keyton *et al*., 2013, to cite a few examples). The qualitative stage of research, mostly in the form of interviews, is often preceded by a quantitative stage (such as questionnaires) which allows the researcher to collect broad information about the field and thus put themselves in a better position to both formulate research priorities and select participants for the subsequent stages. In particular, using mixed methods has undoubted advantages when working in a limited access context, such as a fast-paced modern workplace, where the external researcher does not have the possibility of a regular lengthy presence in the field.

The qualitative approach was chosen as the principal one in the context of the current project, in line with the people- and perception-oriented emphasis of the research question. It is seen as the main method of collecting and interpreting data, as will be further elaborated in section 3.2(b).

a) Quantitative approach: questionnaires

Since the present research is conceived as a case study of a multilingual company, it appeared logical to use a quantitative tool, namely a questionnaire, at the initial stage, in order to get an overview of the field and of the background of the subjects of the study. The questionnaires were administered and returned by email.

Dörnyei (2007) distinguishes between 3 types of questions that are typically included in a questionnaire:

1) factual questions – to elucidate specific features such as demographic characteristics, residential location, occupation, language learning history, amount of time spent in L2 environment etc.

2) behavioral questions – focusing on actions, life-styles, habits, personal history

3) attitudinal questions –covering attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests and values

For the purposes of this study, it was decided to limit the questionnaires to the factual part. This decision was dictated, firstly, by the specific nature of the professional field, where participants do not have unlimited time to answer detailed or open-ended questionnaires. Secondly and most importantly, it was considered that exploring behavioural and attitudinal questions in a face-to-face interview environment would be more productive, as it would allow the researcher and interviewee more flexibility to identify salient points and explore them in greater detail than by way of a written questionnaire.

The original intention was to administer questionnaires both to the Human Resources department of the company and to a broad cross-section of employees in order to select the target group which would later be interviewed. This part of the design had to be modified due to the specific nature of the field, i.e. the high professional intensity and limited availability of the staff for non-work-related tasks. In the circumstances, the choice was made to administer a more detailed questionnaire by email to the HR department only (see Questionnaire 1, Appendix 1) with the view of obtaining factual data about the multilingual composition of the field and about the corporate language policy. The actual selection of interview candidates was made partly on the basis of the data obtained, and mostly through direct contact with the management. The selection and composition of the interviewee sample will be addressed further on in section 3.4.

A shorter questionnaire (Questionnaire 2, see Appendix 2) was subsequently sent by email to the selected participants. Like the HR questionnaire, it was also factual, and included questions about the employees' position and duration of experience in the company, their mother tongue and other languages spoken, and also required them to list the languages they used in the workplace. This questionnaire provided the initial information about the participants which allowed the researcher to customise the interview questions in order to target the particular experience and background of the interviewees and to elicit richer information in the course of the interview. It was also helpful in maximising the use of the limited interview time for more in-depth discussion rather than for establishing factual background information.

Thus, the quantitative approach was used in the current research to a limited extent, as a useful initial tool which allowed the principal, qualitative part of research to be carried out more efficiently in terms of the use of time and targeting research priorities. The qualitative methodology is discussed in the section below.

b) Qualitative approach

The beauty and challenge of qualitative research lies in its open-ended nature.

Two of the most influential qualitative researchers, Denzin and Lincoln (cited in Dörnyei, 2007:35) concluded that 'qualitative research is difficult to define clearly. It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own… nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own.' The researcher may often have to take on the role of a 'bricoleur', a quilt-maker who uses a 'patchwork' of methods and adapts them to the field, approaches and pragmatics of a particular case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Sociolinguistic research deals with real-life situations yielding rich and complex data. Qualitative methods are useful for making sense of complexity and were therefore chosen in the present study which seeks to provide understanding of employees' perceptions of a multilingual workplace reality, as well as of the subjective benefits and limitations of working in in a foreign language.

In this vein, it is worth emphasising another characteristic of qualitative research which makes it appropriate for the current study - the way in which it focuses on the insider meaning. Qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals, and aims to explore the participants' views of the situation. To quote Dörnyei (2007:37), the 'insider perspective has a special place in the qualitative credo' given that 'human behaviour is based upon meanings which people attribute to and bring to situations and it is only the actual participants themselves who can reveal the meanings and interpretations of their experiences and actions'.

In line with this logic, interview research as a fundamental integral part of qualitative research was seen as an efficient way of collecting data for the present study.

3.3. Semi-structured interviews as the main source of data

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate interview format for the current study. The rationale for this choice lies in the fact that, on the one hand, they allow for sufficient flexibility, in contrast to structured interviews with set questions, and on the other hand, provide enough of a structural framework for the researcher to be able to deliberately focus on the research topic(s). Semi-structured interviews have the potential of incorporating narrative passages, should the participants feel inclined to share their experience in this way. This was considered an important dimension of gaining insights into individual experiences, therefore the interviewees were encouraged to take initiative and recount incidents and examples. These digressions were not numerous, and not all of them were relevant, but they contributed to establishing a more relaxed atmosphere and a better rapport between the researcher and the participants, and some of the digressions led to 'rich points' (Agar, 1994). Ensuring the flexibility of the format and allowing the interviewees to alter the structure is in line with Mishler's view on interviewing as organised social discourse which goes beyond the stimulus-response paradigm, and where 'meaning is jointly produced by interviewers and interviewees' (Mishler, 1986 cited in Cannell, 1988:267).

A total of 6 semi-structured interviews (1 with the management and 5 with the staff) were conducted in January-February 2016 on the premises of the company. In order to minimise disruption and external noise, the interviews took place in the participants' offices or, for those who work in an open space, in an available office or meeting room. Occasional disruptions occurred in the form of colleagues entering or leaving the space, but they were either neutral or provided extra opportunities for observing communication and language use in a multilingual workplace. For instance, on two occasions an employee temporarily present in the room was also asked to give their opinion, thus providing an opportunity for triangulation (Fontana & Frey, 1994, drawing on Denzin's use of the term) and helping to reduce subjectivity.

The interview guide was prepared in 3 languages – English, French and Russian (see Appendix 5). The interviews were primarily conducted in English as it is the company's lingua franca and therefore the expected language of communication. Where possible, the interviewees were given the opportunity to express themselves in their mother tongue (French or Russian) or to switch to another language the researcher was familiar with. As a result, one of the interviews was conducted in Russian with occasional switches into English, and another mainly English-language interview with a French speaker contains excerpts in French. As a reflection of the multilingual setting, one interview contains a spontaneous exchange in German, while other ones incorporate Luxembourgish and Italian words. The use of different languages in the course of the interviews is seen as a way of 'researching multilingually' (Holmes *et al.*, 2013) and will be discussed further on in section 3.5 ('Languages of interviewing').

The questions in the interview guide were formulated with a view to eliciting information related to the anticipated coding categories. Questions were tailored to the main categories such as perceptions of English as a lingua franca, the advantages and strengths linked to using English, the challenges of working in a foreign language, inclusion and exclusion issues, power implications etc. At the same time the interview guide allowed the researcher flexibility as to the order of questions asked and potential follow-up. During the interviews questions were indeed asked in a different order or phrased in a different way, as was deemed best to fit into the logic of the conversation. This is especially relevant in a foreign language context, where there is no guarantee that standardising the wording will ensure that all respondents have the same semantic interpretation of a question.

The interviewing technique aimed to incorporate different types of questions as suggested by Kvale (2009): introductory, follow-up, probing, specifying, (in)direct, structuring and interpreting in order to elicit descriptive, behavioural, experiential, emotive, cognitive and evaluative responses. This was regarded as a means of obtaining richer and more varied data, which would later be used for interpretation and coding.

3.4. Data collection

The data used in this study consists of the information from the company website, written answers to questionnaires, researcher's observations and field notes and, for the most part, audio-recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews (more than 200 minutes) which constitute the main corpus of this research project. Each interview recording lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. A total of 1 hour was allowed for the interaction with each participant, which included non-recorded parts, i.e. explaining the aim of project and the interview format, signing the consent form and answering any relevant questions.

The data was collected in the period from November 2015 to February 2016, with the interview stage taking place in January-February.

The first informal exploratory interview was not included in the corpus but was used to identify research possibilities. In parallel, further information about the company was obtained, and excerpts from the website dealing with attitudes to multilingualism were selected for further use during the interviews as potential prompts.

A certain amount of time in the beginning was devoted to establishing contact, gaining access authorisation and attempting to locate the corporate language policy documents. After a while the search for those was abandoned, with the conclusion that the corporate language policy designating English as the company's only lingua franca is an implicit and not an explicit one (to be further discussed in Chapter 4).

Then a semi-structured interview with the manager was carried out, and potential interview candidates were identified. The goal was to obtain a diverse sample including a mix of male and female employees from different countries, with different mother tongues, varying length of experience with the company and a varying level of linguistic competence in English, the company's lingua franca. These selection criteria had to be reconciled with the practical aspects of availability and accessibility, since not all the company employees work on the premises. Table 2 below presents the final selection of interviewees (the figures include the manager and therefore the total number of respondents is 6):

Table 2. Interviewee sample

Nationalities	Greek (2) French (1) Russian/Greek (1) German (1) Luxembourgish (1)
Gender	4 male 2 female
Length of experience with the company	between 1 and 19 years

This cross-section does not claim to provide a full representative picture of the company whose staff in Luxembourg includes members of 21 nationalities (some employees have dual nationality). Another limitation is that the job descriptions of the respondents vary significantly, entailing a difference in communication patterns and language use. As a result, the study provides insights into the perceptions of a limited number of employees which may not necessarily be generalizable with regard to the whole company. This limitation is to some extent compensated by triangulation, i.e. exploring the perspectives of individual employees and the views of the company management in parallel. However, the individual perceptions are still to be treated as subjective and, as such, they are valuable elements in 'piecing together the jigsaw puzzle of workplace multilingualism' (Zhu Hua, 2014:233).

3.5. Languages of interviewing

It is difficult to ensure the homogeneity of an interview-based study, as every semi-structured interview is different in its way. An added dimension to this diversity is the fact that 1 interview was conducted in the respondent's mother tongue (Russian), which is also the researcher's mother tongue. It could have been conducted in English, a language in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are fluent, and the possibility of choosing either language or switching between them in the course of the interview was explicitly offered before the start. Russian was chosen as the most natural means of communication, as it was already an established shared language between the two interactants, and using a foreign language would have introduced an artificial dimension. Keeping the communication as natural and open and possible was obviously the primary concern, since the aim of the interview was to share perceptions without communication barriers, to the extent it was possible. However, opting for the mother tongue in 1 of the 6 conducted interviews meant that the interviewing procedure was not homogenous, and this metalinguistic aspect needed to be taken into account when analysing the data.

Researching multilingually is seen by Holmes *et al*. (2013) as a demanding, but also a natural and rewarding process. It adds new dimensions to research by giving access to fuller information (due to 'differing thinkaloud protocols', depending on the language used). It also produces richer insights, neutralises power imbalances and develops researcher awareness.

It is interesting to reflect on how the choice of language impacts on the dynamics of the interview itself and ultimately on the data obtained. Being interviewed in a foreign language is part of functioning in a foreign language, and therefore is of interest in this study.

In the course of conducting the interviews 3 language combinations, or scenarios, of interviewer-interviewee communication were present:

<u>1. Shared foreign language (5 interviews)</u>

English as a lingua franca was used in 5 of the 6 interviews. This provided a common neutral ground for communication and was naturally expected by all of the interviewees, since this is the company's working language and also the language previously used by the researcher for communicating with the participants via email. Interview dynamics depended to a large extent on the interviewees' level of language proficiency.

Those with a lower level of linguistic skills were, quite understandably, more concise and hesitant. This required an adjustment of the interviewing techniques: more prompting, rephrasing or summarising on the part of the interviewer, the need to leave longer pauses for reflection while avoiding awkwardness at the same time.

More linguistically proficient respondents were able to give more spontaneous and detailed answers. Transcripts contain longer passages of uninterrupted speech. It is interesting that they expressed a certain sense of satisfaction with the fact they were 'naturally' doing it in a foreign language. Of course, there is a paradox in observing that something is natural, because this observation in itself points to the fact that natural is not as natural as it would seem, otherwise it would not have been singled out.

Nevertheless, as the transcription and subsequent analysis of the interview data revealed, the sheer volume of content is not all that is needed for it to be rich. Significantly, some very rich data came from the less proficient speakers in a more concise and 'purified' form: not having the linguistic means or confidence to 'just talk' and embark on digressions, they concentrated on conveying the information they considered important, and this is as valuable for research purposes as high proficiency with its clear articulation.

2. Shared mother tongue (1 interview)

This model introduces an element of in-group affinity (Tajfel, 1982; Ellemers, 2012) and in that respect facilitates the sharing of information and the flow of the conversation in general. It was the longest out of the 6 interviews and contained more of the 'stream of consciousness'-type re-phrasings and hesitation fillers (not all of which were fully reflected in the transcript as they were not deemed relevant to the content, and would have required more detailed transcription conventions, closer to the conversational analysis approach). While in this scenario the information is certainly forthcoming, there is a greater scope for redundancy as well, as speech in the mother tongue 'just flows' and linguistic self-consciousness is minimal. It can also be due to the personal characteristics of the interviewee, who is very well spoken, but this observation appears to be generalizable to some extent to many mother-tongue conversations. Thus, in contrast to the limited and self-edited 'thin communication' observed by Tange and Lauring (2009), a mother-tongue interview can be described as an instance of 'thick communication'.

It is interesting to note that the mother tongue Russian-language interview contained a number of instances of code-switching towards English and French; one consecutive long sequence (approximately 3 minutes) of the interviewee's responses was completely in English – an illustration of discourse-related code-switching prompted by an English-language quote from the company website. At the same time there was also content-related code-switching into English when the conversation turned to more technical terms or workplace realia. While English was used more to describe the respondent's stance, it was also present, alongside with French (a weaker foreign language in this case), in the dialogical 'Bakhtinian' sense, to represent the voice either of the company itself (which sends qualified multilingual personnel to satisfy the client), or the voices of other colleagues or clients (for a discussion of Bakhtin's theory applied to code-switching and voice see Weber & Horner, 2012). It is significant in this case that in the dialogical and dramaturgical (Goffman, 1971) presentation of self and others the voices of the 'others' are represented through the language they would be using, even though the utterances are not necessarily quotes.

<u>3. Interviewee's mother tongue – researcher's foreign language</u>

This model was present in several exchanges in 1 of the 6 interviews, where the francophone respondent was encouraged to switch into their mother tongue when/if desired. This ensured the ease of spontaneous expression, not mediated by the foreign language on the interviewee's side, especially in cases where it seemed harder to find the exact words in English. Since the point of the interview was to get insights into people's perceptions, facilitating communication by lowering or removing language barriers was considered an appropriate technique. It was observed that the content of comments made in the mother tongue did not differ from that expressed in English (of course, the tone, speed and facility of expression were different). However, the respondent clearly preferred using English. This is probably due to several factors: the expectation of an English-language interview; the extremely positive attitude of the interviewee towards the English language; the association of English with the workplace; the habit of using English as a lingua franca with foreign interlocutors; and finally, the potential need to accommodate the non-francophone interviewer in case of switching to French. This last point is speculative, but it leads to an interesting question which is outside the scope of the present study: are people more - or less - accepting, tolerant and accommodating when speaking a foreign language with another foreigner, compared to when they are speaking in their mother tongue to a non-native speaker? And, more generally, is there a variation in acceptance and tolerance of non-native proficiency levels on the part of native speakers of different languages? In other words, would English speakers, who are presumably more exposed to non-native English due to the global spread of ELF in the workplace, be more accommodating and tolerant, for instance, than the French or German speakers, whose language is less often used as a lingua franca?

3.6. Transcription and translation

All the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. As pointed out by Kvale (2009), there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode. A more constructive question is, 'What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?'. This pragmatic approach to transcription as a heuristic tool has led to the elaboration of a set of transcription conventions used for the purposes of the present study.

The objective of transcribing more than 200 minutes of recorded material was to prepare the data for content analysis. This type of analysis, unlike conversational analysis, does not require the indication of intonation, overlapping, hesitations and repetitions, nor the exact measurement of pauses. However, it was considered useful to include some of these features in a simplified form in order to provide a more authentic presentation of the interview dynamics; therefore the pauses are marked but not strictly measured. Similarly, some repetitions or hesitations are included, in the instances where they are seen to be indicative of the thought process. Occasionally repetitions or re-phrasings were omitted if they were not seen to add meaning to what had already been said. These choices were made on a line-by-line basis at the discretion of the researcher and in order to facilitate the coding and interpretation process.

The transcripts do not include some segments of text which were deemed to constitute irrelevant digressions from the research topic.

The full transcription conventions are listed in Appendix 6.

All the interviews were transcribed in the language(s) they were conducted. As most of the interview material was produced in English, it did not require translation. Neither did the passages in French, or one very brief one in German, since those languages are part of the trilingual Master's course within which the current project is carried out. The Russian-language interview was partly translated into English by the researcher in order to integrate it into the data analysis and quote within the text. A working translation in the form of notes was also carried out during the coding process, so that parallels could be made between the English-language and Russian-language coding categories, especially those based on the exact wording used by the participants ('in vivo' codes). The coding process will be further detailed in the next section which deals with the qualitative analysis of the data.

3.7. Content analysis

Two main approaches to qualitatively analysing interviews are differentiated in the literature: interview analysis focusing on meaning, and interview analysis focusing on language (Kvale, 2009). Of course, language and meaning are interwoven, but in the present study the focus is on the meaning of the interview content and the ways it can be used to answer the research questions. Therefore, content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate way of dealing with the data (interview transcripts) and is understood as a 'systematic quantitative description of manifest content of communication' (Kvale, 2009:105). Dörnyei (2007:146) described content analysis as 'latent level analysis' (as opposed to the quantitative 'manifest level analysis') because it involves a second-level, interpretive analysis of the deeper meaning of the data.

Echoing Denzin & Lincoln's (2011) description of the qualitative researcher as a 'bricoleur', Kvale (2009:115) points out that in reality interview analysis is often a 'bricolage' of several methods or tactics, which enable the analysis to progress from the descriptive to the explanatory, and from the concrete to the conceptual. In that respect, content analysis may have elements of linguistic analysis. For instance, in this study the frequent or particular use of specific language means was sometimes used as a tool for developing coding categories, or helped draw attention to the significance of the reported phenomenon. In another example, data analysis made references to code-switching which is a practice often explored through conversation analysis. Also, content analysis almost inevitably involves elements of discourse (discursive) analysis which seeks to establish how 'truth effects are created within discourses' (Kvale, 2009:112) and provides links with social representations and ideologies. Finally, individual perceptions are ways of 'telling a story', and elements of narrative analysis may be present even in the case of semi-structured interviews. It is argued that a holistic approach to exploring people's perceptions may contribute to a better understanding.

The main tool of content analysis is coding, a cyclical multi-level technique for analysing and organising the data. The initial stage of coding involves 'attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of the statement' (Kvale, 2009:105) – this stage is described as 'meaning coding' (Kvale, 2009), 'first-level coding' (Dörnyei, 2007) or 'first-cycle coding' (Saldaña, 2010). A code is a word or a short phrase that 'symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (Saldaña, 2010:3). In fact, in interview research pre-coding starts at the transcription stage and is continued by reading and re-reading the data, highlighting extracts and labelling them with initial coding categories which are later refined. In the current study, this phase also included establishing parallels between coding categories in different languages (English, Russian and French) when doing partial translations of the relevant passages.

The next stage of coding is termed 'meaning condensation and interpretation' (Kvale, 2009), 'second-level coding' (Dörnyei, 2007) or 'second-cycle coding' (Saldaña, 2010). It involves going beyond descriptive labelling to identify patterns, recurring themes or more abstract commonalities. At this stage it is helpful to visualise the data and group the emerging categories and themes by means of mindmaps; in other words, to follow the 'Think display' advice (Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Saldaña, 2010). For the current study the themes were initially plotted onto 'positive', 'negative', 'dynamic (communication patterns)' and 'miscellaneous' mindmaps, which helped to organise the data and structure the analysis.

Coding categories may be developed inductively or deductively (Mayring, 2000). The inductive approach presupposes the step-by-step development of categories on the basis of the empirical material, then progressing to generalisations and theory. Deductive categories stem from prior assumptions and are applied to the data. In the current research coding started deductively, by correlating the interview data with some anticipated categories which were prompted by the existing literature and its application to the research questions. Thus the interview guide was formulated in order to elicit data fitting in with broad categories and themes such as the positive and challenging aspects of working in a foreign language, English as a lingua franca in the company, the correlation of language policies and practices. In the course of coding it became apparent that, though these categories and themes were relevant, they needed to be supplemented with other coding categories in order to analyse and organise the rich data obtained in the interviews and find the most appropriate way of presenting it. One of the reasons the 'positive-negative' division was insufficient was its static, binary nature. While helpful when analysing certain aspects of functioning in a foreign language, it only makes sense when placed on the continuum of individual sociolinguistic progression in a multilingual workplace. Thus, starting from the 'in-vivo' codes such as 'difficult' or 'natural', the theme of chronological progression emerged as a way of approaching second-level coding and presenting the data. Once this approach was adopted, transcripts were re-

read with a view to code references to the participants' perceptions of their experiences at different stages of the continuum.

The coding categories themselves were labelled heuristically, some of them using the so-called 'in-vivo' codes – 'concepts using the actual words of research participants rather than being named by the analyst' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:65). One example of this is the word 'cement' which was used to refer to the unifying function of English as a lingua franca. Another 'in-vivo' category, which gave rise to the continuum of linguistic well-being, was the metaphor 'health' used by one of the interviewees to refer to the degree of comfort experienced in a multilingual workplace. Other categories were summarising labels used by the researcher (for instance, 'preferred mode of communication', which led to the analysis of the role of written versus spoken communication) or juxtapositions (e.g., benefits versus challenges). Some even had the form of a question: 'What kind of English?'. As the categories emerged, they were illustrated in coding notes with quotations from the transcripts to be potentially used in data analysis.

When coding the data, attention was paid to any topics that were brought up by the interviewees or developed in more detail in answer to the researcher's questions. In this way the researcher tried to make sure that the analysis was led by the data itself, rather than by pre-conceptions or expectations. This allowed the development of inductive categories and themes that better reflect the participants' perceptions. Thus, it became apparent that the link between language competence and perceived professionalism was foregrounded by the participants, while the issue of inclusion-exclusion was less prominent than originally thought. At the same time, some categories were salient and recurrent in some interviews, but less present in the others (for instance, the issue of language and power). Such variation can be explained by the individual characteristics of the participants as well as by the nature of their professional activity and the extent to which they are involved in internal and external corporate communication.

In order to code and analyse the 'thick' data that was obtained in the course of the interviews, decisions had to be made about what categories to include in the final analysis, and, accordingly, which ones to exclude. In the end, the following main categories and themes (a theme is seen by Saldaña (2010) as 'an outcome of coding') were selected for further analysis:

- ELF as perceived by the participants;
- language competence and its links to perception of professional competence;
- language and power;
- the positive aspects of working in a foreign language;
- the challenges of working in a foreign language;
- coping strategies;
- the continuum of adaptation to working in a foreign language

These themes determined the structure of the data analysis.

A number of other topics emerged in the interviews, but due to limitations of time and space not all of them could be addressed. Thus, when asked about their linguistic experiences in the international workplace, many participants made the connection between language and culture, and multilingualism and multiculturalism. Furthermore, issues of national and professional identity came to the fore (including some debatable perceptions of national stereotypes, and whether speaking another language affects the way a person comes across professionally and socially). All this provided rich data on the topic of intercultural communication which goes beyond the scope of the present project and was therefore not included. Another large theme that had to be left out of the analysis is the role of the mother tongue when adapting to working in a foreign language, and in particular the role of the mother tongue in the thought process and in language learning in the workplace. Similarly, the focus had to be narrowed down to work-related linguistic experiences, with workplace socialising practices being left out. Yet another interesting aspect that could not be included in the analysis was the position of the 'outnumbered local', the Luxembourger in a private international Luxembourg-based company which does not use the local languages as its official languages. These and other themes emerged through initial coding but were not included in the final analysis. Some of them represent potential directions of bottom-up research in the domain of workplace multilingualism and will be addressed in the conclusion.

After coding and structuring the data, a major challenge remained: finding the best way to present the resulting qualitative analysis. This study follows the recommendations of Chenail (1995): Openness, Data as Star, Juxtaposition, and Data Presentation Strategies. The purpose is to provide the reader with as much background and first-hand information as possible, in order to enable them to assess the research and its findings. To this end, this section has described the process and limitations of data collection, presented the methodological choices and outlined the data presentation strategies. In the analysis and discussion chapter data will be given the 'star' prominence it deserves, i.e. the study will include a large number of original quotes from the participants alongside with the researcher's periphrasis and commentaries. What remains to be done is to add a few notes on the ethical side of the study and the position of the researcher; these points are addressed in the next section.

3.8. Ethical considerations and the researcher's position

Being granted research access to a corporate environment is a privilege and a responsibility. This kind of sociolinguistic research into the perceptions of language practices is designed to make both an academic and a practical contribution to the understanding of the reality of a multilingual workplace as it is experienced by the employees. Thus, it was logical and positive that the company's management should ask to have access to the research material. At the same time the awareness of potential readership emphasises the need to pay particular attention to ethical issues, and imposes additional responsibility on the researcher. In other words, this study strives to be authentic and open, and at the same time it has to fully respect confidentiality and protect the anonymity of the participants.

In conformity with research ethics, all the interviews were conducted with the respondents' informed written consent (for consent forms see Appendix 3). Before the beginning of the recorded interview each participant was informed of the purpose and format of the interview and provided with oral information about the researcher and the research project. They were also informed that they may withdraw their consent at any point without further explanation. Assurances were given regarding the anonymity of individual participants. In order to ensure this, no identifying references are made in the data discussion, and the quotations are not attributed. While it is recognised that it may have been helpful for the reader to have some demographic information about the person behind each quote (for instance, age, gender, nationality, length of experience in the company), the decision was taken to completely anonymise the participants in view of their limited number and the size of the company. The researcher has tried to partly compensate for this by providing the overall information on the participants in section 3.4 (Data Collection). Besides, in the analysis itself references are made, where relevant, concerning the length of experience, the mother tongue or the language proficiency in relation to the quote analysed. For instance, the data chapter contains indications such as ‘more experienced’ or ‘relatively new’ without citing the exact number of years in the company; with regard to language, ‘francophone’, ‘multilingual’, ‘more proficient’ etc. are used. It is hoped that the resulting picture does not suffer too much from those restrictions.

This ‘overt’ role of the researcher (Walsh, 2004:229) was the only appropriate option for securing access to the company and it ensured complete transparency of the process. On the other hand, the procedure was unavoidably restricting, as the participants were conscious of the fact that they were going to be recorded and quoted, albeit anonymously. It is hard to say to what extent the content of the interviews was influenced by the fact that they were conducted at the workplace, about the workplace and recorded, but there clearly must have been restrictive implications. Nevertheless, the participants were cooperative and the interviews yielded rich and varied information.

Given the restricting factors described above and the relatively short (1 hour maximum) duration of contact with each interviewee, it was particularly important to create a positive confidence-inspiring environment from the very start – quite a challenge for the researcher. This challenge was compounded by the varying degree of English proficiency among the participants, and the resulting difference in their fluency and confidence. In that respect the researcher’s experience in teaching English to adults was very helpful, as conducting an interview in a foreign language is similar to encouraging a student to express themselves in a foreign language. And, similarly to the language teacher, the researcher has to keep their talking time to a minimum by asking open-ended questions and engaging in active listening techniques.

By definition, an interview is an instance of interpersonal interaction. Though it is primarily a way of obtaining information, an interview is also a mini-relationship, and it needs to be set up and perceived as such: ‘to learn about people we must remember to treat them as people’ (Fontana & Frey, 1994). In this case it was also important for the researcher to be aware of the problematics of asking questions about the professional field, and to be sensitive to the fact that certain information will not be forthcoming. Due to the limited duration of personal contact in the project, analysis had to be based on the data obtained during that time. A more in-depth research process, particularly one incorporating observed as well as reported practices, may well have provided a more detailed perspective.

Finally, a few remarks regarding the socially co-constructed and subjective nature of interviews and their interpretation. The interviews are not seen as an objective reality, but rather as a 'performance of self for and with the researcher' (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014:154). Acknowledging this aspect of social interaction makes interviews a useful tool for collecting primary data on a complex topic, such as the case here.

The researcher is bound to influence the process and product of research by virtue of being present in the situation and interpreting it from their perspective. Subjectivity is inevitable in this kind of research, and its implications need to be balanced when interpreting the results. The biographically and socially situated researcher can only provide their own interpretation of complex reality. Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, and in the end it is the researcher who chooses from several alternative interpretations (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore it is appropriate once again to recall Denzin & Lincoln's (2011:5) apt description of the qualitative researcher as a quilt-maker who 'stitches, edits and puts slices of reality together'.

To sum up, this chapter has described the methodological approach to the present study which falls within the framework of sociolinguistic research. It has explained the choice of qualitative methods over quantitative (which are only present to a small extent and in a purely informative role), as well as the rationale for conducting semi-structured interviews as the best way of obtaining information required for answering the research questions. It has detailed the data collection process and discussed the interviewee sample, its limitations and validity, and provided some reflections on multilingual interviewing (the interviews were carried out predominantly in English, but also involved Russian and French). This chapter has also defined content analysis as the main approach to studying the transcribed interviews, and explained the coding and structuring of the data. Finally, some ethical considerations linked to research in a modern international workplace were discussed, as well as the socially situated interpretative role of the researcher who is striving to provide a picture of reality while being aware of reporting 'perceived perceptions', i.e. their interpretation of the interviewees' perceptions.

This discussion of the research methods and their validity is followed by the analysis the empirical data in the next chapter.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents and analyses the data obtained in the current research project, with semi-structured interviews being the main source of information. In the first place, the scene is set by describing the structure, workforce and language policy of Company N[7]. After briefly presenting the top-down management perspective on language use in the company, the focus will shift to the main part of the study, i.e. the perceptions of the employees which, following the coding of the interview data, have been arranged thematically. The first theme concerns the ways in which the employees construct English as a lingua franca in the company, thus examining their attitudes to functioning in the most commonly used foreign language. Then the paper explores perceptions relating to workplace functioning in a foreign language in general, English or other, and looks at the process of achieving 'linguistic well-being' with its challenges and coping strategies, benefits and constraints. Special attention is paid to the way language is perceived to be linked to power and professionalism. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main positive aspects and challenges of working in a foreign language, as perceived by the company employees.

4.1. Setting the scene: about the company

This section provides a brief description of Company N which was chosen as the location for the current study. Providing some background information and statistics about the company helps to explain its value as a research environment and to better visualise and understand the dynamics of language use in this multilingual workplace.

The information comes from 3 main sources:

- the company website
- the answers to the questionnaire administered to the HR department
- the interviews

Company N positions itself as a leading European IT solutions and services group with strong international presence and expertise. Affiliated to one of the largest multinational technology

[7] The company has been anonymised in accordance with the preferences expressed by its management.

groups in South-East Europe, it has its headquarters in Luxembourg and operates offices, branches and subsidiaries in 18 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. Overall the company currently employs over 1500 people, of which around 200 are based in Luxembourg. It prides itself on being 'a melting pot of cultures from all European countries and beyond' and believes that this multicultural and multilingual environment is beneficial both for those who work for the company and those who use its services. The company's focus on the diversity of the human resources was used as a springboard in the course of the interviews, where the respondents were asked to describe the reality of such a multilingual workplace.

As seen from the above profile, Company N presents a very attractive and rich environment for researching multilingualism in the workplace in general, and for this study in particular. Since this project explores the implications of working in a foreign language, it was essential to focus on an ethnolinguistically diverse international organisation where the working language is not the first language of the majority of the employees. In fact, in the case of Company N, whose corporate language is English, the situation is especially interesting and challenging, since it does not operate in any of the languages of its host country, i.e. French, German or Luxembourgish. It is part of a Greek group of companies, thus bringing yet another language onto the local scene.

Table 3 (overleaf) presents an extract from the HR questionnaire summarising the representation of various nationalities in the Luxembourg branch.

As company statistics show, a total of 21 nationalities are represented among the staff. Virtually half the employees are francophone, followed by a sizeable Greek-speaking group (27 employees); other noticeable language groups are the Romanians (11), Italians (9), followed by Germans, Luxembourgish and Portuguese and British (7 each).

With English being the corporate language, the table shows that over 95% of the staff work in a foreign language, thus making Company N a very appropriate research focus for the current study.

Table 3. Distribution of nationalities in Company N, Luxembourg.

Nationality (List of Countries)	Number of employees
Belgium	26
Czech Republic	2
France	76
Germany	7
Greece	27
Hungary	1
Iceland	1
India	1
Ireland	1
Israel	1
Italy	9
Ivory Coast	1
Luxembourg	7
Poland	2
Portugal	7
Romania	11
Russia	2
Serbia	1
Slovakia	2
Spain	3
UK	7

4.2. Corporate language policy in Company N

This section presents and analyses the information obtained via the questionnaire to the Human Resources (see Appendix 1), the interview with the Country Manager and relevant data from the interviews with more senior employees. The resulting top-down picture will provide a backdrop for the following section where the bottom-up perceptions of the language dynamics in the company will be investigated.

The first step taken in order to explore the linguistic reality of Company N was to establish whether the company has a corporate language policy. The HR department stated in response to the questionnaire that English is the official language of the company, language 'of contract and all internal communication', and it is used 'to harmonise the understanding and communication' within the company. This corporate decision ensures the operation and communication of the company's branches and subsidiaries in 18 countries spread over 4 continents, and in particular it governs the activities of the Luxembourg head office with its employees representing 21 nationalities. The language strategy of adopting English as the language of corporate communication is in line with the view taken by many modern multinational businesses and reported by researchers (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Louhiala-Salminen, 2005; Kingsley, 2009, 2013; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Angouri, 2014 among others).

At the same time, opting for English as the official language of communication does not make the company monolingual *de facto*, as has been pointed out by researchers (Marschan-Piekkari *et al.*, 1999b; Fredriksson *et al*., 2006, Angouri 2014). In both the HR questionnaire and the interview with the management, French was mentioned as a language of communication with the local administration: 'There's communication with the authorities which has to be done in French'. Luxembourg, unlike some other countries (for instance, neighbouring France or Belgium) does not legally require a private company operating on its territory to designate one of the local administrative languages as an obligatory corporate language. Thus, Company N is not obliged to have parallel documentation in English and French (or German or Luxembourgish, for that matter), nor does it have to carry out any of its professional activities in languages other than English. However, in its dealings with Luxembourgish authorities French has to be used, as it is one of the administrative languages of Luxembourg.

In this respect the linguistic functioning of Company N in Luxembourg is different from the way it operates in its other branches in countries with different language laws and regulations. For instance, the HR pointed out that in Belgium the corporate languages are French and Flemish by law, but all documents exist in English as well. In other countries too, the general pattern seems to be that of double, parallel functioning in English and the local language. Luxembourg does not impose any supplementary linguistic regulations, and therefore presents an interesting environment for exploring the dynamics of a single corporate lingua franca in a setting which is truly multinational in a variety of dimensions: in terms of the company's workforce, in terms of the diversity of the customers and in terms of a multilingual host country.

The above language policy was explicitly stated by the management. However, locating corporate language policy documents was not straightforward. While at the initial stages of the study the researcher was given the impression that English was laid down as a lingua franca in an official statement, such documents were not found by the company management after an extensive search. This situation is not uncommon: the absence of an explicitly recorded written policy has been observed and discussed in the literature (Shohamy, 2006; Kingsley, 2009, 2013). It may be said that in Company N the language policy is implicit in the sense that it is not formally laid down by the documentation. This conclusion is based on Angouri's (2013) definition of a formal language policy as a 'document that is disseminated by the headquarters to all the subsidiaries' (Angouri, 2013:568). However, the ideology of English as the language of corporate communication is explicitly present in the management discourse, and as will be illustrated by the data further on, in the employees' discourses as well. In that sense it can be argued that constructing English as a corporate language is a self-perpetuating practice in the company, and as such it can be seen as part of its social representations, as theorised by Moscovici (cited in Millar & Jensen, 2009:88): 'by social representations we mean a set of concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of inter-individual communications'.

The linguistic reality of a multinational company is a lot more complex:

> *English was selected to be its official working language and we try to enforce that. Although, I have to say that not all the time it works. We receive sometimes messages from people… from, let's say Greeks, that they send them in Greek. I protest every time I see this especially if this is for official internal documents. I can understand if it is for official external documents. (1)*

This shows that it is the mechanisms that determine what actually happens in practice, more than any policy document (Shohamy, 2006). Shohamy's model of a 'de facto' language policy emphasises the role of intermediary mechanisms through which language ideologies are translated into actual policies. Among the mechanisms proposed by Shohamy (2006), the following ones find their expression in a multilingual workplace (Kingsley, 2009):

- Rules and regulations: those pertain to the actual management of the working language;
- Language testing: recruitment requirements
- Language education: language courses in the organization

As far as rules and regulations are concerned, one example of such enforcement was given above, showing how the management intervenes to enforce the corporate language use. This enforcement does not always happen in a vertical top-down mode, but is also a mechanism of horizontal communicative practices:

> *We have official meetings with the management, everyone speaks in English. If someone tries to divert, the rest of the people put him back. (2)*

The above illustrates how the language policy is implemented by the participants in a 'de facto' setting. In the absence of a formal 'de jure' policy document, 'de facto' language use is determined by a combination of factors, including the shared understanding of the corporate language policy by the interactants, and ad-hoc, on site language management practices.

Concerning the recruitment requirements, the HR department makes it clear that for Company N, English is a must, and other languages may be desirable depending on the specific task:

> *English for all employees, then it depends on the need of the different consumers (mostly French, then German, Luxembourgish and for some very specific needs Italian, Spanish and Flemish) (3)*

The importance of having a certain proficiency in English is echoed by the staff:

> *If you don't know this, that's it. I mean, you can't enter the company. (4)*

The absence or a low level of linguistic competence is regarded as limiting. However, there is no single proficiency standard. 'Language sophistication' (Feely & Harzing, 2003) varies within the company, and at the recruitment stage requirements are largely linked to proficiency levels in specific job functions. A higher level of proficiency is required for jobs involving project management, producing editorial content, editing, communication with a broader range of interlocutors etc. At the same time, a more specific job requiring certain IT skills may mean that basic English is considered adequate for recruitment. This can be regarded as a content-based variable specific to the IT sector, where foreign language skills are an addition to technical 'coding' language skills.

> *Many of our colleagues have IT skills, if they speak their home languages and IT, that's fine. (5)*

The level of English is not tested formally at the recruitment stage; the job interview itself tends to be conducted in English, but this is not always the case, especially if the employee is taken on for a specific job and on a temporary contract basis. The company has an annual appraisal procedure which is now undergoing some changes. In the past as part of the appraisal employees were required to self-assess their languages on a scale of 0 to 5, and that data could be consulted when assigning employees to various projects. Understandably, modesty and consequent under-estimation of one's level could affect their prospects.

> *Generally I put 4. It's a bit pretentious, but I think it's enough, it's good. (6)*

In the course of the appraisal employees also have an opportunity to request additional language training. The most commonly requested language is French, which can be explained by the high number of francophone customers in Luxembourg, and by the linguistic reality of the country itself.

Language training can be arranged and paid for by the company, mainly outside office hours, in a group at a language school. Schedules may or may not be suitable for employees with high-paced jobs and additional family demands. Employees' strategies of learning and improving their languages will be described further on in the paper (section 4.4.1). The interview data showed that there is a certain expectation to learn on the job.

In the absence of an explicit written corporate language policy document, it was important to find out how the 'English as a lingua franca' policy is communicated to staff. In practical terms this policy is made clear at the recruitment stage and through job requirements. Company N clearly positions itself on the market as an English-speaking company, has its website in English only and explicitly expects its employees to work in English. The bottom-up perspectives of English as the company's language, as well as what kind of English is used as a lingua franca, will be discussed below.

4.3. Employees' perceptions of English as a lingua franca

While the previous section focused on the official view of the corporate language policy, this chapter presents the discourses of the company's employees.

Interviews with the staff revealed a high level of implementation and acceptance of the corporate language policy. ELF is viewed by the employees as essential in practical terms and contractually binding in corporate communication, internal and external.

> *English is totally dominant and official, despite the fact that there is no explicit policy statement… We can't get away from it because we write in it… maybe there is some control, someone in CC copy, and anyway it's a rule.* (7)

4.3.1. 'Like cement'

English is perceived as a given, a statement of fact rather than a point of discussion, similar to the findings in Angouri's (2013) research. There is general consent that it enables the company to fulfil its goals and function efficiently in the global market. Alongside the 'getting the job done' ideology, a sociocultural dimension was also present in the responses, which will be illustrated below.

The essence of a lingua franca as the language of communication between speakers whose first languages differ (Holmes, 2008) was expressed by all the respondents in terms of being a 'natural' and accepted phenomenon:

> *English is the language, the common denominator with other people. (8)*

> *It naturally boils down it is the same language. (9)*

> *English falls into place like Latin at the time. (10)*

The discourse of English as a common ground for communication was accompanied by another discourse, that of organisational unity.

> *English, it's like a… cement? Ciment, yes, you know? And it's the same for everyone, so… it's no more difference, I mean… the same language is good, I think… (11)*

Comparing lingua franca to cement is very meaningful. A common corporate language fosters a sense of belonging (Feely & Harzing, 2003), it plays an important role in building company culture, bringing together members from diverse cultural backgrounds. By providing the common linguistic ground it contributes to the unification and harmonisation of the multilingual, multicultural community, where English is viewed as a bridge across the linguistic divide (see discussion in Millar & Jensen, 2009:91).

> *They are all speaking English, so for me… er… we are all the same community, there's no difference between someone Greek or Romanian or something. I can't see the difference. (12)*

This last comment about 'no difference' is, of course, not about the disappearance of cultural differences; it refers to the homogeneity of linguistic expression which bridges the differences. The unifying cultural aspect is significant, however, in the phrase 'I can't see the difference'. A common language, English in this case, creates a marker that brings together the whole group, as opposed to being an attribute of 'the other'. Since social identity and cohesion is about being part of a group, (Tajfel, 1982; Ellemers, 2012), the role of English in creating a social space that the company's employees identify with is no less important than providing a means of 'getting the job done' as efficiently as possible.

In fact, it is one of the many comments throughout the interviews that touch upon the complex relationship between language and culture. Often, when asked about language practices, the interviewees immediately diverted to culture-related observations. Suffice it to say that this recurrent topic illustrates the close link between language and culture, to the point of considering them as inseparable, as Agar did by inventing the term 'languaculture' (Agar, 1994).

4.3.2. Not a problem?

It is interesting to note that the idea of 'English not being a problem' was recurrent in the interviews both with the management and the employees, without them being asked whether or not there was a problem with English (the quotes below illustrate this):

'have no problem working in their environment' (13)

'without a problem' (14)

'this is somehow not a problem' (15)

'I haven't a problem' (16)

'there is no problem with this' (17)

'I think it's not a big deal, because they are all speaking English' (18)

There may be several explanations for this recurrent statement. Firstly, the question arises as to whether the respondents perceive an expectation of problems on the part of the researcher who is potentially there to find and investigate problems. In that case 'the observer paradox' (Labov, 1972) and anticipation of expectations may be the reason for such statements. Secondly (and linked to the first point), there may be a desire on the part of the respondents to present the situation in the best possible light to an outsider. But then, spontaneously denying the existence of problems might actually have the opposite effect on the interviewer, who might assume that problems do exist, but are not explicitly talked about. Another possibility is that the respondents themselves expect that working in a foreign language should create problems, which is an interesting illustration of attitudes. There is also a fourth way of interpreting the 'no problem' statements: taking them at face value, as indicating 'normality', truly 'not a big deal'. Re-listening to the intonation in interviews has lead the researcher to believe that in most cases (apart from those when specific problems are raised) the respondents genuinely feel that the ELF policy works to the point of not warranting further comments.

4.3.3. A surrogate mother tongue

In the course of the semi-structured interviews employees were asked a number of questions about functioning in a foreign language; in some cases the language itself was deliberately not specified by the researcher (this applies to employees who had more working languages than the original two: English and their own, and could therefore present insights into their own hierarchy of languages). It is interesting to observe that when asked about their experience of working in a foreign language, the respondents chose examples of using different languages to illustrate different points. Though none of the interviewees were native English speakers, they did not always focus on English as a foreign language, but sometimes chose to give examples of using other foreign languages, often those in which they were less proficient. This goes to show how some languages are, so to speak, 'more foreign than others' and may be seen as an illustration of the way individuals construct their linguistic repertoires (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). When a respondent had a high level of English and extensive experience of using it professionally, they would often cite another language, like French, to illustrate the difficulties or challenges, while English was used as an example of 'normal', i.e. ordinary communication without much emphasis on the personal experiential nuances of using it, such as the achievement aspect or constraints. Speaking about English, they would emphasise the 'natural' nature of communication, cite the high occurrence of English and give examples of communicative events it is used in, similar to how they would describe functioning in their mother tongue.

This leads us to the possibility of describing a well-established ELF as a 'surrogate mother tongue': having achieved a certain ease and experience of expressing themselves in English, as well as having accumulated a rich terminological repertoire, the user comes to the point of preferring English to their mother tongue in professional communication.

> *By now I prefer working in English because I'm doing it so often that expressing myself, I'm speaking about business things, in another language is even more, it would become more complicated. (19)*

> *It's ages since I worked in any other language* [=other than English]*... I have already forgotten what it means to work in one's mother tongue. (20)*

> *I feel comfortable [in English]... At the same time I'm aware of the fact that it is not my mother tongue, but I feel more comfortable talking about work and using professional jargon in English. Even with another Russian speaker I would sooner switch to English when I'm explaining what we do in our project... I could say this in Russian, but it would be an effort and would feel unnatural. (21)*

Similar to switching back to one's mother tongue, respondents report relief when switching into the 'surrogate' mother tongue:

> *Having to speak French tires me out, it's a relief for me to switch from French back to English. (22)*

4.3.4. What kind of English?

While ELF is unanimously accepted in Company N, it is worth looking briefly at what kind of English serves as a lingua franca. English here can be described as a ‘contact language’ (Seidlhofer, 2005:339 drawing on Firth 1996:240) used by the individuals to achieve transactional and relational goals (Holmes, 2005). This contact language is not just English, or standard English (however it might be defined), but a form of business English, BELF (Louhiala-Salminen *et al*., (2005), a neutral and shared communication code.

While civil servants of the EU have had their version of English described as Euro-English (Krizsán & Erkkilä, 2014), a suggestion was made by one of the respondents with regard to defining the common corporate language in Company N:

> *I would add another qualifier, would say, a ‘Euro’ and then ‘technical’ English. (23)*

Thus the ELF of Company N can be described as a variety of English more charged with technical jargon (content-related to the IT domain) and less charged with the bureaucratic euro-jargon reported in Krizsán & Erkkilä (2014), which is nevertheless present to some extent, due to the Luxembourg business environment and the customer base. This ‘Technical-Euro-English’ is neutral in the sense that it is not the mother tongue of the vast majority of speakers and as such, it is a means of communication in its own right with its own rules and conventions made up by non-native speakers. It has considerable laxity in pronunciation standards which are influenced by the speakers’ mother tongues, and emphasis is placed on intelligibility and precision rather than phonetic perfection or rich vocabulary. Making it too correct and rich might be perceived as ‘showing off’ or, more significantly, lead to miscommunication:

> *Other people have different levels of... of skills in English, and they write just as they go, yeah. So it would not help if I would write Oxford English. (24)*

This statement illustrates the discourse of an instrumental use of language, adequate for handling international business activities. However, interview data shows that this discourse coexists with the ‘native speaker ideal’ (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014), whereby native proficiency in the company language is perceived to be linked with higher communicative, intellectual or professional proficiency. Those links will be further explored in section 4.4.2 (‘Getting the job done’).

However, the high status of English and the ‘native speaker ideal’ does not mean that people are always willing to develop their language beyond what is perceived as the sufficient level.

> *Sometimes it happens that people are kind of rebelling a little bit to expand their English, too much English. (25)*

> *What surprises me is that people ... don’t use the endless possibilities of google translate in order to look up and understand… So there are misunderstandings which surprise me somehow, because they come from a lack of curiosity or from people’s desire to be confined to some narrow range of vocabulary in English. (26)*

To sum up, the employees of Company N perceive ELF as a given reality, and through continued use many of them accumulate substantial professional vocabulary which makes ELF their ‘surrogate mother tongue’ in professional communication. English is also represented as a means of creating social bonds and cohesion within the corporate context. The English used by the employees can be described as a kind of business English – ‘Techno-Euro-English’, and though ‘standard English’ has a high status in their eyes, the instrumental approach was reflected in the data.

The following section will examine the way the employees construct their experiences of working in a foreign language (English or other) and the way their professional language journey unfolds.

4.4. The road to health

When asked about the positive aspects of working in a foreign language, one of the interviewees seemed to be taken aback. There was no immediate, or obvious, answer:

> *We are so much used to the benefits that it takes a while to think about what are the benefits… It is like being healthy. If you ask a healthy person what are the benefits of being healthy you think about them and then you can say, ‘I can walk and breathe without machines’. (27)*

This idea was also expressed metaphorically by another participant:

> *For me it's completely natural* [to speak English]*... Neither positive nor negative. Yes, it's as natural as breathing. (28)*

Remarks like this paint a rosy picture of working in a foreign language. It is natural, it is effortless, it is hardly noticeable. And it may indeed be so - after many years 'on the road'. But how does this journey start, and in what ways does it progress?

Getting used to working in a foreign language is a continuum, and the feeling of 'linguistic well-being' does not come immediately. Nor does it come automatically. This journey depends on a variety of factors, such as individual characteristics, previous experience, sociocultural background, path of professional development, and many others. It is not generalizable, and even less so on the basis of small-scale research in a particular multinational company in a particular country. However, the interview data obtained in the present study provides some insights into the progression and dynamics of professional functioning in a foreign language, with is challenges and rewards, benefits and constraints, tensions and coping strategies at various stages.

The sections below seek to outline some of those steps. The more experienced and confident respondents who have reached the stage of 'multilingual health' also had a starting point in their journey at some time in the past, and were encouraged to share their earlier experiences, even if it was in another corporate setting. All of the participants, regardless of their experience, still have to negotiate various scenarios of communication, be it transactional or relational or both, through a foreign language. This thematic presentation is arranged along an approximate chronological continuum that represents an individual's progression in a multilingual setting: from starting a foreign-language job to feeling 'healthy' in it.

4.4.1. The initial challenges and coping strategies

A job in a multilingual company presents a challenge of double socialisation: into the discourses of a new professional and social environment, and also into the specific language and cultural practices (Roberts, 2010). The new language requirements of the workplace may also entail what Roberts calls a "linguistic penalty" whereby the communicative demands of the selection process may be comparable those of the job itself. In the case of Company N there is no formal testing at recruitment stage, but the job interview is often, though not exclusively, conducted in English. An applicant is expected to have some (unspecified) proficiency in English which is deemed sufficient for the job, or adequate in the circumstances. The rest will have to be acquired 'on the job', and that expectation in itself is an additional challenge. All the interviewees were made aware of the corporate language policy and the job-related linguistic demands at the recruitment stage.

A newcomer with little or no previous experience of working in a foreign language in an international environment will go through a demanding period of sociolinguistic adaptation.

> *Yes, it's the first time. Er… very difficult for me because… I learned English 20 years ago and never, never had to speak English. And it's very difficult to… start again.(29)*

> *I: How was it in the beginning?*
> *AB: (long pause) I don't want to remember (laughs). (30)*

Those who have had previous experience of working in English may still encounter similar challenges when starting another language, like French, which is not a requirement in itself in Company N, but the absence of which is limiting when working with francophone customers:

> *At first the nice moments came when from the difficulties, the torture* [of using a new foreign language]*, you progress, you are able to survive and swim. (31)*

Initial stages of language competence may involve receptive bilingualism, where the individual is able to follow what is being said, but has a limited active repertoire. Thus, one participant recalls a previous experience in a foreign language (francophone) environment:

> *It was awkward but ... hopefully everyone was accommodating so… in the meetings that I was participating, especially the first year, they were switching to English so that was easier for me. (32)*

In this scenario mutual accommodation and good will play an important role in avoiding exclusion. Taking a 'what works' approach (Angouri, 2013) may prove to be a rewarding experience:

> *Sometimes I was struggling with their French, sometimes they were struggling with my English, but… it was ok, it was a nice environment. (33)*

Most of the respondents reported instances where the negotiation of language choices required an effort at both the production and reception ends; at the same time this negotiation was constructed as a necessary and valuable mechanism of communication, often with positive connotations (described as ‘nice’ or even ‘fun’).

Lack of language proficiency, or of confidence in one’s language proficiency, is not a purely language-related anxiety, especially at the initial stages. In a multilingual workplace it may be perceived as a lack of professional skill.

> *At the beginning I asked an English native speaker to check what I was sending out… definitely it was an anxiety that could reflect on professionalism. (34)*

The link between language proficiency and the perception of professionalism will be further explored below in section 4.4.2.

Confidence comes gradually, with experience, ‘after 8-9 months’ or ‘when you’ve written 10 reports’ – timing is subjective and may vary enormously depending on the initial language proficiency, rate of progression and the nature of the job itself. Linguistic background and previous professional experience also play an important role, once again making it hard to generalise. Overall, looking back on the initial adaptation period, the interviewees reported a number of coping strategies that helped them to improve and gain confidence in their language skills, or to learn a new foreign language while working in another one:

a) Learning on the job
b) Taking language courses
c) Learning from colleagues (both with regard to transactional and relational competences)
d) Relying on written communication
e) Code-switching (to the mother tongue or to another shared language when possible)

Some of those points (and in particular learning from colleagues and relying on written communication) will be commented below, as they are most relevant to improving language proficiency and confidence at the initial stages of working in a foreign language, and therefore to the focus of this section. Code-switching strategies will be discussed further on in section 4.4.2.

‘Learning on the job’ is an expression that seems to sum up the experience of all the respondents. Learning by doing is not so much a coping strategy as a necessity, a stage one has to go through when adapting to any new professional environment, and in particular to that of an international workplace. A significant part of this socialisation is more job-related rather than language-related, and therefore is outside the scope of the present study. In terms of adapting to working in a foreign language, most participants reported a rapid increase in professional vocabulary which was confidence-boosting. This vocabulary increase was a consequence of dealing with professional content in a foreign language and therefore was described as 'learning on the job', mostly as a result of individual effort.

In terms of organised effort, **taking language courses** is also an option provided by the company's management. None of the participants used this option for improving their English, either because it was already adequate, or because 'learning on the job' was sufficient. However, several interviewees mentioned the importance of learning French in the context of Luxembourg, and one spoke of a colleague taking a Luxembourgish course. Time presents an additional constraint in this respect, as language courses may not be compatible with a busy job or family demands. Two respondents, who had previously participated in group courses sponsored by the company, had opted to change to the private format or stopped after reaching a certain level. One interviewee mentioned teaching themselves basic German by means of an interactive app. Another one keeps a translation tool handy on the mobile phone or computer.

Overall, the discourse of 'learning on the job' prevailed. Having gone through this phase at an earlier stage of their career, more experienced employees can empathise with the challenges the new ones have to face. They also feel a responsibility, at least initially, to monitor the output.

> *After a year this person will become very good in English by the fact he or she is working in English all the time. And probably the first incidents of compiling reports, probably the colleagues, or the boss or the editor would look over the materials before they are sent out. (35)*

Learning from colleagues as part of interpersonal communication in the workplace can prove to be very helpful and motivating in terms of language learning. This can apply to both task-oriented and social functions (Angouri, 2013). Thus, two of the respondents mentioned starting a new foreign language because it was the language of their immediate colleague in a small team. Besides sharing the lingua franca, taking steps to speak a colleague's language is seen as a source of motivation and good will. Respondents have shown appreciation for such efforts on the part of their colleagues and have been willing to provide informal assistance in language practice, aware that this improves the dynamics of workplace communication:

> *When there's two it is a mixture of what you feel happy in… It's also true she likes to practise German, true, it is one of her strengths, she likes it, and I think, 'Why not?' do her this favour, from time to time, you know.(36)*

However, peer input has its pitfalls when it comes to correcting mistakes. A self-declared teacher may not always be aware of potential implications:

> *When I tried to speak with him he always corrected me, you know. So I cannot make a full sentence before… each time he said, 'no, you said that, you have to say that'… I try my best to speak English, but if you have someone very… er… what can I say? Very… locked into your mistakes, it's difficult. (37)*

A more acceptable approach may be to avoid oral correction, but give written support and feedback in situations where correcting the language is necessary from the professional point of view:

> *Not in talking, that would not be very… er ... polite ... if it comes to reviewing a document, a report that goes to the customer of course I would say, look, we are going to change that, I'll overwrite it using track changes or something. (38)*

With regard to **written language**, several respondents expressed a strong preference for written back-up in all cases, and especially when there are doubts about language proficiency on either side. Asynchronous written communication gives the writer extra time to formulate their message and to find the linguistic means of expression, possibly using previous documentation, translation devices or other sources. At the reception end, the reader similarly has the opportunity to check their understanding of the message in terms of linguistic form and content.

> *It's easier to write because I can… er… search a word, something and translation, so I have more time to… to think. (39)*

> *I learned some words by writing. (40)*

Written communication is also seen as a way to avoid miscommunication:

> *I ask them to write me everything into an email, then first I have the proof of what they ask, and then if I need I can read it again to be sure that I really have a good understanding of what they say. Because sometimes you have a meeting ... so I always ask something written to be sure. It's a kind of guarantee. (41)*

Another benefit of written communication in a foreign language that was pointed out by the interviewees is the fact that a clear visual structure facilitates understanding. Of course, this is only a benefit if the message does have a clear structure:

> *So communication for me is also visual feedback, to be sure that… rather than writing a prose text which is 10 pages long, you give it a bullet point, 1-2-3-4-5, and you're sure that your message is understood, and… and taken care of. (42)*

Relying on writing is, however, not a panacea. As explained by the Country Director who is responsible for dealing with miscommunication within the company, written messages can be a source of miscommunication, because the ELF users may not be sufficiently aware of the use of registers, especially in pressurised or emotionally charged situations:

> *With written communication you can easier, let's say, say something stronger that when you talk face to face with someone… but at least this is my experience, when people, you know, are in front of the PC, and they just type an email, the language they use may be a bit stronger when they are frustrated then the language they would use if they talked directly to the person… I really want to understand if they really meant to use that strong a language, or it was really some kind of miscommunication and they didn't realise that the English they were using was quite hard. (43)*

Thus written mediated communication may turn out to be either more or less carefully expressed. However, the interview data shows that instances of miscommunication through written English are rare.

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As time goes on, the awareness of varying levels of linguistic competence among employees increases. Since everyone is using BELF, the instrumental nature of language skills (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014) adequate for getting the job done certainly plays a role. Relativising and knowing that the standards vary is a way of reducing language-related anxiety for less proficient speakers:

> *Now it's OK because I see that all, they didn't… they don't speak very well. (44)*

Ultimately, the degree of comfort when functioning in a foreign language can be defined through what one of the respondents referred to as 'the educational base':

> *The difficulty for me, initially in English, now it's obvious with French, is the absence of an educational base in that language. It's not just a question of terminology, it's in the broad sense, reading literature… My problems in French, compared with English, are not just in terms of vocabulary, but the absence… I read 90% of professional literature in English, or 95%. And when there's literature in French, I always try to find out if an analogue exists in English. This means that the whole sociocultural, professional and any other context is in another language. (45)*

This reflection highlights the discrepancy of the cognitive base in different languages. While an individual may be fluent in a foreign language, they may nevertheless feel uncomfortable using it in cognitively demanding contexts. The lack or inadequacy of a linguistic cognitive base results in a limited ability to function in a foreign language as an articulate professional or social interlocutor; ultimately it can affect perceptions of one's own or others' professionalism. Being able to compare one's educational base in different languages means that one is more aware of their limitations in some languages, and that in itself can act as a deterrent in communication. To illustrate this unevenness, one of the interviewees came up with an effective metaphor for describing the overlapping or concentric circles of comparative linguistic competence linked to the cognitive proficiency in the 3 foreign languages he uses in the workplace:

> *My languages are like a 'matryoshka'* [a Russian nested doll] *to some extent. My professional base in French or Greek is inferior to my English professional base, though my fluency in Greek is comparable to English, but it covers another, more social, sphere like TV, news, newspapers, … so I'm more limited when I communicate in languages other than English, professionally, I mean. (46)*

As pointed out by Cummins, 'not all aspects of language use or performance could be incorporated into one dimension of global language proficiency' (Cummins, 1999:2). In temporal terms, social and academic language acquisition does not take place at the same rate. Cummins' distinction of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and more demanding Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) was theorised in the context of childhood language acquisition, but it is argued here that this approach can be extrapolated to adult language proficiency in a professional setting.

In order to function and present oneself via a foreign language as an articulate professional and community member, both BICS and CALP are essential, but it is hypothesised here that for adults CALP has an even greater importance than for child education addressed in Cummins' studies.

Obviously, in the sphere of professional expression CALP is paramount. The language(s) of prior academic training and professional education play a decisive role in whether the person possesses the required 'professional' CALP. However, in the sphere of socialising at work, at a 'comfortable' level of functioning (that is, when one is comfortable with one's representation of oneself) superficial, purely pragmatic BICS are not perceived as adequate. Topics addressed in social conversation between educated adults cover cognitively demanding areas, and in this respect the 'educational base' also refers to CALP in non-professionally-related fields. Absence of prior experience and knowledge acquired via the foreign language in question impacts negatively on the level of 'comfort', or ease of expression. Thus for professional adults CALP is instrumental in achieving a comfortable, 'healthy' degree of proficiency both professionally and socially.

In summary, an employee starting work in a foreign language faces the challenges of double socialisation into the professional and linguistic environment of the workplace. The initial period of adaptation may be quite demanding in the absence of prior experience, but 'learning on the job' is seen as the main coping strategy. Learning from colleagues plays an important role, and writing is often seen as a safer means of communication which helps avoid misunderstanding. Negotiating language choices and working in a lingua franca requires mutual accommodation which is perceived as a rewarding process, though not a trouble-free one. Language-related anxiety diminishes over time as professional 'languaculture' is acquired, but it is only with the development of adequate cognitive language proficiency that an individual starts to feel truly comfortable when working in a foreign language.

4.4.2. Getting the job done

This chapter gives some examples of language practices and associated ideologies in order to illustrate the way languages play out in the day-to-day reality of a multilingual employee. Once again, these practices are not generalizable and largely depend on the job description of the employee and their linguistic repertoire. Neither is it possible to cover all the practices described in the interviews within the scope of this paper. Priority will be given to issues connected with language and power, as well as inclusion and exclusion. This section will also examine the links between language proficiency and perception of professionalism.

As mentioned above, having a defined lingua franca does not make a multilingual environment monolingual (Millar & Jensen, 2009; Angouri 2013, 2014, Gunnarson, 2014). All the individual linguistic repertoires are still available, and get used when called upon, both for transactional and relational purposes. While graphic designers may be working primarily at their computer screens and not get involved in much linguistic activity, multilingual senior project managers of the same company may find themselves switching between 4 languages in the course of a working day:

> *Main language definitely English. From all my engagements in the past English was the most common language… followed by French, I would say, because Luxembourg is highly visited by French, frontaliers come and commute to Luxembourg on a daily basis, and followed by German and followed by Luxembourgish. That would be the rating of the frequency of usage on a daily basis. (47)*

Not every employee possesses the language skills which would enable them to adapt to their interlocutor with such flexibility. This linguistic accommodation can be viewed as convergence accommodation in the context of Communication Accomodation Theory (see Franziskus (2013) for a discussion), and it appears to be the *forte* of multilingual Luxembourgers. As a final point on the imaginary progression continuum, this ease of switching to the interlocutor's language is not likely to be achieved by most international employees.

A specific linguistic repertoire, or knowledge of specific languages, means that an employee may act as a 'language node' (Feely & Harzing, 2003), i.e. a communication channel between the company and the external world. This bestows responsibilities, as well as power of representation and also of communication management and gate-keeping.

The data shows that all the employees, whatever their linguistic repertoire, have to negotiate language choices. In the business context, the choice of language and the level of proficiency have implications on the ability of an individual to be persuasive and therefore successful in negotiations:

> *The more comfortable you feel at language, the more you can get your ideas better explained, better presented, and if a person might have a better idea, but is not capable of explaining it, well the idea doesn't reach everybody, which is a pity in that context. (48)*

> *If our task is to convince the client that we do it well, to sell and to get money for it, then language is one of the main means of persuasion. (49)*

This emphasis on the social interactional dimension of language echoes Bourdieu's (1991) conceptualisation of language as capital. A speaker who is recognised as legitimate and articulate embodies authority and benefits from better 'audibility' (Miller, 1999). Language as a measure of power and authority has implications for our understanding of linguistic performances within the multilingual workplace. A person with a higher level of language proficiency has increased chances of succeeding compared to someone who is as good professionally but less articulate, or less competent, linguistically. This consideration holds true in a monolingual environment as well, but has increased levels of complexity when more than one language is involved. Command of a language paves the way to taking initiative and, ultimately, exercising power:

> *If your language level is inferior, and you are speaking with a partner, or with clients, well, to some extent… it's somehow obvious that initiative and power is on their side. I don't know, but despite all their good will or politeness, and their efforts to listen to you, to try, but in any case it's crucial which language to choose. (50)*

It is interesting to observe that the authority connected with language proficiency is 'somehow obvious'; this statement is not questioned but stated as a common perception, a social representation. Thus, lower language skills and lower 'language sophistication' (Feely & Harzing, 2003) may automatically put the speaker in an inferior position even in their own eyes from the very start, and make the attainment of the business goal even harder. This linguistic self-consciousness as an obstacle in professional communication is also foregrounded in the following quote:

> *When I have to work in French, it's an effort even with professional jargon, ... so I add words 'how do I say that?' and that creates an unfavourable impression because conversation, speech is an important medium. (51)*

When it comes to the perception of competence, native speakers of English (of whom there are 8 in Company N) benefit professionally from their ability to come across as more articulate:

> *Native English are welcomed, obviously again not because we idolise English, but because we believe, sometimes wrongly, about some individual, native English, you know, equals, you know, best possible editor. It's a guarantee of your output. (52)*

The discourse of 'native speaker ideal' is reflected in research by Angouri (2013) and is constructed as a social representation by Millar & Jensen (2009). Thus language proficiency in English can be perceived as a subconscious measure of intellectual and professional proficiency, both by self and others:

> *Native speakers have admitted - whether we like it or not, we consider ourselves a little bit superior intellectually, because, because ... the way people express themselves it's not really intelligent, it's not very refined. So you know, it's despite the fact that they know they are mistaken, and this is projected onto all the others. Those foreigners whose English is better, say Luxembourgers, are perceived by others to be potentially more able, or capable of expressing their ideas and explaining, so I'd rather go and ask them about the project, or I'll recommend him, he is a really smart chap. (53)*

This perception of professionalism is self-perpetuating, because it keeps being projected among the staff, albeit subconsciously. Intriguingly, the same thing does not happen with regard to the French language, which is not considered as a corporate language in Company N and therefore is not directly linked to professional competence:

> *It's not the same for French. Respect comes to foreigners who can speak French, but it's not linked to evaluating them professionally. (54)*

As mentioned in the section on the language policy of Company N, English is used for all internal communication and is contractually binding. At the same time other languages, notably French, can be used externally in communication with the customer. A number of the company's clients are francophone and, with French being the one of the languages of the European Institutions and of Luxembourg, they often expect the representatives of Company N to be able to work in French. This is obviously not a problem for its numerous francophone employees, but is far less straightforward for those who had to learn French 'on the job'.

When finding themselves in this position with the client, a non-francophone multilingual employee faces the pressures of a double representative role: on the one hand, they are representing their international company, and on the other hand, they have to project a representation of themselves as knowledgeable and articulate professionals. Adopting Goffman's (1959, 1967) dramaturgical view of social interactions, we may say that the employee is called upon to play several roles, and to maintain several 'faces':

> *If I have an assignment with French speakers, and I'm not so good in French, it's hard for me to be very articulate in French, but out of respect for them and also to show that they have been sent a high-level consultant, I speak French but at the first opportunity escape into written English which they have to 'tolérer'. (55)*

Thus the employee uses French as a 'face-saving' technique (Goffman, 2008; Scollon *et al.,* 2011) at the initial stage of the interaction, establishing themselves in the desired professional and social role. After that a strategic code-switching technique (dictated by 'rational choice', Myers-Scotton & Bolonyai, 2001) is used to achieve transactional job-related goals. The switch into English brings the employee back into the comfort zone of the 'surrogate mother tongue'- the lingua franca where his language proficiency is higher than in French, and at the same time this switch is perfectly legitimate since it is the official corporate language of Company N as a service provider. Apart from being a way of 'saving face', the initial use of French is also an accommodation technique that shows good will ('out of respect for them') and thus facilitates further interaction, and the subsequent strategic switching into English puts the employee in a stronger position with regard to language and power as discussed above.

It is interesting to note that once again written English is seen as the best option for avoiding miscommunication among EFL users with varying proficiency levels, as well as for ensuring the factual consistency of the work project.

Strategic switching into a stronger 'legitimate' language can also be used as a power move, as language choice can be critical when it comes to bidding or negotiations, for instance.

> *When talking to French speakers, if you switch to 'machine-gun English' you put pressure on them, you turn the tables around... They say yes, yes, no problem at all. And then later you understand that they do have some problems, but you have already won, you've got it.* (56)

In this scenario high-speed oral English is used as a tool for projecting a dominant 'face'. According to Scollon *et al.* (2011), non-hierarchical communication does not exist at all. Under-accommodation, i.e. 'failure to adapt one's communication style to that of the other person'(Frame, 2014:95) in the form of fast technical ('machine-gun') speech is used to assert one's power and take initiative in the negotiations, and once again language proficiency in this interaction is linked to power.

The above examples illustrate the linguistic capital and power implications attached to English in communication with external partners or clients. It may be reasonable to suggest that internally similar dynamics can be found, but to a lesser extent, since communication mostly takes place in English. As the data in this study is represented by reported, not observed practices, and the interviewee sample was limited, it was not possible to establish the patterns of language switches or analyse them in depth due to the lack of context. However, these switches do occur internally, but they seem to have less to do with power issues. For instance, the interviewees reported instances when a person temporarily switches into their mother tongue during a meeting because of other participants sharing the same first language (participant-related code switching), or just because they are tired or frustrated. In this case the 'diversion' gets translated back into English, and it is not perceived as a change in the power balance. These instances are treated as part of the day-to-day reality, of using the language repertoires rather than trying to make a point:

> *If they start feeling uncomfortable, I've observed a couple of people who switch back to their native language. Because they could better explain what they really want. They… I don't rate it as a weakness, say, or as a non-willingness to speak a language rather than a willingness to get understood, and not to be misunderstood in that way. (57)*

The question of language and power is closely linked to that of exclusion and inclusion. As put by Zhu Hua (2014:219), 'language is a double-edged sword' which can be inclusive and exclusive at the same time. All the interviewees indicated the inclusive nature of company 'languaculture' in N:

> *How could we switch to a language one of us doesn't master? We can't. We can't. (58)*

That refers mostly to the professional, transactional communication. It appears from the interview data that in Company N clustering (Tange & Lauring, 2009) is not very pronounced:

> *Here… it's… it's not a natural tendency of clinging together. No, not really. I think we're organised too much in teams for this kind of… of clusterisation. (59)*

None of the interviewees suggested that they are excluded or marginalised due to their language skills. Hence the 'clustering', if and when it occurs, does not appear to be related to levels of competence in this environment. This supports recent research by Angouri (2013) where clustering was not presented by any of the interviewees as a marginalisation process; to the contrary it is came across as almost 'natural'. In contrast, other research (Tange & Lauring, 2009; Lønsmann, 2014) illustrates the processes of exclusion through clustering. Given the limited scope of the current study, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the exact nature of this process in Company N, but the interview data suggests that the limited and non-exclusive nature of clustering in professional communication is mainly due to the fact that the teams are formed on a matrix basis and the composition gets changed as people are assigned to various projects.

Socially the employees are free to 'do as they please'. The kitchen is a mingling place, and lunch breaks are an opportunity to socialise on or outside the company premises. Overall, the data suggests that there is a certain amount of social language-based clustering among nationalities with larger representation within the company, but there was no concrete evidence of exclusion with regard to any participants.

> *I think it's like in real life, not only at work the people who are of the same nationality stay together. I think… I think it's a principle you can apply everywhere. French will go more easily into French language with French people and Greek together with*

Greek because there are more common… common point of view… common culture, maybe. (60)

One final point to be made here is that linguistic exclusion is not always negative; sometimes it may be meant as a sign of politeness. For instance, a 'private' language may be chosen for an interaction so that it does not distract the people who are physically present but not involved in the exchange. Let us consider the following example: a German employee spoke German to a multilingual Greek assistant about the availability of a meeting room where a meeting was in progress and the door was ajar. When asked to explain her language choice, the employee said she did not want to disturb the people in the meeting room (those people apparently did not speak German).

To sum up, in the day-to-day functioning of a multinational company employees have to negotiate language choices in a variety of situations. Some of those may be neutral instrumental interactions, others are charged with power implications. Examples from interviews included some scenarios where language choice is strategic, and the level of competence crucial, especially in external communication. They also illustrated the link between language proficiency and perception of professionalism, as well as the presence of the 'native speaker ideal' (Angouri, 2013) alongside the instrumental discourse regarding ELF. However, the interviews did not provide evidence of language competence-related exclusion in internal communication or significant clustering within the company, which is largely due to the company culture and its changeable matrix-type composition of teams.

4.4.3. Integration into diversity: the benefits of working in a foreign language

Let us go back to the question at the start of this section: what are the positive aspects, the benefits of working in a foreign language? How do multilingual employees experience the rewarding nature of their multilingualism? In other words, how does 'linguistic health' find its expression?

As Zhu Hua points out, knowing the right language 'can establish rapport with other employees, facilitate career progression, open doors to the job market, and increase mobility' (Zhu Hua, 2014:239). Most of these points were mentioned by the participants.

The data showed 2 main discourses: advantages related to professional satisfaction and to personal satisfaction, which are linked in the workplace context by a 3rd discourse – that of satisfaction of belonging, as a result of building a common professional identity through language. Some examples of these discourses will be illustrated and analysed below.

Firstly, interviewees are aware of the benefits multilingual employees bring to their company by enabling it to develop current business and expand into future markets.

> *It is obviously very, very beneficial… first of all, it helps us win more business in our current markets; secondly, it also helps to expand the company, to expand in other countries. (61)*

This is more of a corporate strategy consideration, but at the same time it brings professional satisfaction to the individuals involved in implementing it, i.e. the multilingual employees themselves. On the individual level, multilingualism offers people a wider scope of professional activity, including mobility and potential involvement in projects in other countries.

> *For instance, I now run a business in Tunisia and I can only work there because I speak French. So it's a distinct advantage here, yes. (62)*

Even though in Company N there doesn't appear to be a direct link between language competence and promotion chances, there are perceived potential benefits of multilingualism in terms of career options and flexibility. Being able to participate in a wider variety of projects also contributes to job satisfaction, as it makes professional activity more varied and interesting (even though at the same time it adds to the pressures of a busy schedule). In other words, the more languages the person speaks, the bigger their linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991), the more valuable they are as an employee, and the more they benefit from the wider professional scope of activities.

Alongside discourses linking language use with economic potential, the employees in this study emphasised the importance of the rapport side and the building of a common professional identity, which is in line with Angouri's (2013) findings. Examples of this discourse were given earlier in the paper (section 4.3.1 'Like cement'), illustrating how English becomes a marker of the corporate group self and contributes to the sense of affiliation experienced positively by the participants. It is interesting to observe that multilingualism in itself (not just ELF) becomes a marker of corporate identity and is signalled as a positive aspect in the interview data:

> *Also I would believe that people come and work for Company N because they like to work for – how we call it? – a melting pot. (63)*

Positive attitudes to multilingualism that emerged from the research data echo the 'discourse of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism' observed by Angouri & Miglbauer (2014). As stated above, the analysis of multiculturalism goes beyond the scope of this paper, but it is worth mentioning that this theme was widely present in the participants' perceptions:

> *Well, it expands the mind. Because by languages you also learn about the world. (64)*

Individuals take pride and satisfaction in being able to successfully negotiate an international professional environment and to integrate into multilingualism and diversity, so to speak. For instance, multilingual communication is constructed as a ground for establishing a positive representation of self. As such, it acts as a source of personal satisfaction.

> *I find you're much better recognised if you're able to speak the other person's language… in the sense that … that… what can I say? Respect is the wrong word.(65)*

The interviewee here is talking about the way a multilingual professional is perceived by others, and tries to describe the benefits of multilingualism through recognition and respect. The latter word is called into question by the speaker, but actually it seems quite apt. 'Respect' linked to language proficiency is likely to be a factor in overall respect for the individual as a professional, as shown by previously discussed data on language competence as a perceived measure of professionalism. Therefore, an individual aware of their language competence is also aware of the benefits it brings in workplace communication. Of course, this statement has a reverse side, i.e. the inability to speak another language is perceived negatively. A multilingual workplace imposes covert expectations of multilingualism on its employees, and these expectations may be projected by the more experienced and linguistically versatile individuals, who take pride in their multilingualism. For instance, one of the interviewees gave an example of switching into another language during a conversation in the presence of someone who has a limited knowledge of that language that could have been improved:

It's not a direct statement, but on the other side it's an invitation for people to respect all languages and to live in multicultural environment. And you consider it a shame and limitation if someone is only tied to one particular language. (66)

This suggests that the benefits and limitations are two sides of the same coin, and the lack of a positive representation automatically results in a negative one. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that reality is rarely binary, it is more complex than 'black-and-white', and benefits and limitations are interrelatedly present on the continuum which this paper seeks to illustrate. The same individual may be feeling powerful and proud in one instance of professional communication in a particular foreign language, and may find themselves experiencing the opposite feelings in another context soon afterwards. It is this dynamic and fluid nature of language (foreign language in the context of this study) as an instrument of social interaction that makes it such a fascinating and versatile subject of research.

Going back to the benefits, one of the most positive discourses on the personal level was being proud of one's linguistic achievements. At a higher level of language competence and longer experience in a multilingual setting, the sense of achievement translates itself into regarding working in a foreign language as natural, but that ease in itself is a source of justified pride, as it is perceived as achievement or 'health'. On the initial to middle end of the progression, the concept of 'being proud' was expressed with regard to making progress and being able to function as an articulate professional. This awareness is immensely confidence-boosting on the professional and personal level.

I feel very proud of me to have been able to learn this language, to be really at ease when I have a conversation with someone. (67)

I feel very at ease with the language now. (68)

A positive association with the language provides motivation to keep improving one's skills and helps one to enjoy practising it. Thus, someone who has been interested in music and songs in English for a number of years, or has enjoyed travelling to the UK, projects the positive association linked with leisure activities or travel onto their workplace experience, resulting in a more enjoyable use of language at work.

J'aime beaucoup parler anglais en plus. Donc… pour moi… j'aurais voulu que ça soit ma langue maternelle, l'anglais… Oui, oui, j'aime vraiment ça. Comme je vous ai *dit, j'aime beaucoup aller en Angleterre. Quand je vais là-bas, j'ai l'impression d'être chez moi, alors j'aime beaucoup l'anglais. (69)*

This is perhaps the strongest evidence of affiliation with the foreign language among the participants; though not generalizable, it is a powerful statement in its own right.

Last but not least, one way of explaining the positive aspects of working in a foreign language was describing it as 'fun', which echoes the discourse of 'enjoyment of an international work environment' which also emerged in recent Luxembourg-based research (Wille *et al.*, 2015):

It's fun. I think if we all had to… if all of a sudden we had to work in our local markets and with just our own language, with our native languages, probably we would be bored. (70)

It's a fun place to work. (71)

It's fun to exchange languages, it's fun to improve the language skills. (72)

Fun means enjoyment, often light-hearted. Breaking the 'work versus fun' dichotomy, the mention of the word 'fun' by several participants evokes a very positive attitude to multilingualism. Describing multilingualism at work as 'fun' is an expression of linguistic well-being and satisfaction, regardless of the language proficiency or the job description.

4.5. The benefits and challenges or working in a foreign language: a summary

The perceived advantages and challenges of working in a foreign language have been described throughout this paper. They have been addressed in the context of adapting to a job in a multilingual environment, of progressing along its professional and linguistic continuum, of negotiating language choices and exercising power through language, of projecting a certain image of professionalism, and of coming to enjoy the 'linguistic health' of a multinational workplace.

These benefits and challenges which emerged from coding the interview data are briefly summarised in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Summary of challenges and benefits of working in a foreign language

Challenges	Positive aspects
• Initial difficulties of double socialisation • Expectation to learn on the job • Need for extra concentration • Need for extra effort to avoid miscommunication • Allowing for differences in the level of linguistic competence; accommodation • Language-related anxiety (regarding accuracy in both form and content) • Performance-related anxiety: link between language competence and perception of professionalism • Need to develop the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in the foreign language(s)	• Awareness of professional benefits (wider scope of professional activity, mobility and variety of projects) • Perceived potential benefits (career options, flexibility) • Positive image of the foreign language(s) • Awareness of improvement • Acquired ease of professional expression: surrogate mother tongue • Empowerment in professional communication • Feeling proud: sense of achievement • Feeling of comfort, being at ease • Feeling 'healthy': ability to work multilingually is taken for granted • Fun

This at-a-glance summary allows the reader to visualise the main discourses regarding the advantages and difficulties of working in a foreign language. The 'lists' in the table may seem commonsensical to a large extent; their value lies in the fact that the categories emerge from the data and are not pre-conceived. Several additional points need to be made here in order to avoid oversimplification:

- As pointed out above, reality is neither binary nor static. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that there are no fixed or pure advantages or disadvantages.
- The 'lists' of benefits and challenges are by no means exhaustive. They comprise the discourses that were most prominent in the data. Reality is much more complex, so both the 'positive' and 'negative' columns could be expanded in order to take into account more factors or individual circumstances. Needless to say, with a larger

sample of participants (within the company and potentially in other workplaces) many new insights would emerge.

- On the basis of the table it is tempting to draw the conclusion that in purely mathematical terms (10 'positive' items versus 8 'negative' ones), the benefits of working in a foreign language outweigh the difficulties. This may indeed be true for this particular research setting, where most seem to thrive in the linguistic diversity. However, no ex-employees were interviewed, so it could be claimed that the data only presents part of the picture. In any event, the purpose of this study was not to produce a 'for and against' chart, but to provide insights into the complexities of constructing a professional life in a foreign language.

The next (final) chapter summarises the results of the study and discusses its findings with regard to the research questions. It also presents some of the limitations of the study and outlines the potential for further research in the field.

5. Concluding Remarks

5.1. Main findings

Working in a foreign language is a daily reality for a vast number of employees worldwide. This essential aspect of workplace interaction falls within the scope of a number of disciplines, such as business studies, communication management, language teaching for professional purposes, psychology, and, of course, sociolinguistics. The latter approach forms the basis of the present study. However, it is argued here that professional communication in a foreign language is a particular type of interpersonal interaction which needs to be approached holistically, on many levels, since the participants should be simultaneously regarded as:

- employees performing their professional tasks within and on behalf of a multilingual company;
- colleagues building a network of professional and social relationships;
- language learners who are putting theory into practice and learning on the job;
- and, last but not least, human beings who experience a range of feelings linked to the linguistic aspect of their workplace communication.

Awareness of the complex nature of professional functioning in a foreign language is important for both companies and individuals, and large-scale research would be required in order to reach broader and more general conclusions. However, since every environment is different, each 'piece of the puzzle' is valuable for highlighting different aspects and perceptions of the process. This study has sought to provide insights into the way working in a foreign language is experienced and negotiated by the employees of one multinational company in Luxembourg.

The data obtained in the course of semi-structured interviews with 1 manager and 5 employees was qualitatively analysed in order to answer the following research questions:

- How do employees construct their experience of the multilingual workplace and how do they negotiate working in a foreign language?
- What does it mean to be an articulate professional in a foreign language? In what ways is language competence linked with the perception of professionalism and power?
- What are the positive and challenging aspects of working in a foreign language?

The interviews showed that English as a lingua franca is perceived as a given reality and accepted by the employees. Despite the absence of an explicitly documented corporate language policy, constructing English as a corporate language is a self-perpetuating practice in the company, and as such it can be seen as part of its social representations: it reflects the shared perception of 'common sense' in multilingual communication, and is represented as a means of bridging the linguistic divide. The data showed that English, which is a foreign language for more than 95% of the company's employees, and for all of the interviewees in this study, is also viewed as a common marker and thus a building block of a common professional and corporate identity. It acts as a means of creating cohesion within the company.

The study also suggested that the actual lingua franca of the company is a form of Business English which can be termed 'techno-Euro-English' – a language variety based on 'standard English' modified by content-related technical and bureaucratic jargon combined with a certain laxity of pronunciation. It is important to point out that this lingua franca is a shared code implemented by non-native speakers, and its primary purpose is instrumental. At the same time, the data also revealed the presence of the 'native speaker ideal', whereby native or near-native English proficiency is perceived as an indication of higher professional competence, and therefore of power and audibility.

Interviewing employees with a varying degree of language proficiency, as well as a varying length of professional experience in a multilingual company, allowed the researcher to gain insights into the process of getting used to working in a foreign language. This progression is imagined as a continuum where an employee occupies a particular place with regard to their professional and linguistic development. However, the progression is far from linear or general, and should be viewed as a heuristic tool for presenting a person-centred thematic analysis.

Content analysis of interview data identified the following main coping strategies that help employees to overcome the initial challenges of working in a foreign language and to progress along the continuum towards the state of 'linguistic well-being' in the lingua franca, or to improve their competence in another foreign language while working in ELF:

- learning on the job;
- taking language courses;
- learning from colleagues;
- relying on written communication;
- code-switching.

By examining reported language practices the study was able to identify and illustrate some scenarios in which language choices are linked with discourses of power and professional competence. This link is an important factor in the day-to-day reality of an international workplace, and adds to the pressures of the job. Language proficiency levels and language-related anxiety could potentially impact on confidence, audibility and perception of professionalism by self and others. This consideration is even more significant in situations where an employee functions simultaneously as a professional in their own right and a representative of the company vis-à-vis external partners or clients.

Interview data suggested that to be truly comfortable when working in a foreign language, one needs to have an adequate 'educational base', i.e. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), as it was termed by Cummins (1999). It is argued here that in a cognitively demanding professional adult environment the level of CALP is even more important than in childhood language learning, because it serves as the basis for both the instrumental and relational language use in the workplace. This may have implications for language teaching and learning, highlighting the need to learn more than just the target language, but also content through the target language.

With time and experience employees working in a lingua franca accumulate the necessary professional vocabulary and achieve a certain ease of communication in a foreign language. Some of the more experienced interviewees expressed preference for working in English, compared to working in their mother tongue. Thus for them ELF effectively becomes a 'surrogate mother tongue' in work-related communication. Significantly, some of the discourses on foreign language use at work focused on using other (weaker) foreign languages, thus implying that ELF was perceived as 'non-foreign' or 'less foreign'.

In order to better understand the experience of working in a foreign language, the study sought to identify the challenges involved in the process. The main perceived challenges were linked to the pressure of learning on the job, to the need for extra concentration and effort to avoid miscommunication, and to language-related and performance-related anxiety. It is also important to bear in mind that an employee starting work in a foreign language faces the challenges of double socialisation – into the new professional as well as linguistic environment. Awareness of these challenges can be helpful both for individuals and for the companies employing them. It is suggested here that developing this awareness might be a useful component of HR and staff training, and could be integrated into workshops promoting the company culture or intercultural communicative competence.

Finally, the study explored the perceived benefits related to working in a foreign language. Three main discourses were identified:

- professional satisfaction;
- personal satisfaction;
- satisfaction of belonging.

In the workplace context these discourses are interconnected, since professional success achieved through using a foreign language is linked to the sense of personal satisfaction arising from successful command of the language. Similarly, the positive feelings of common identity arising from sharing the corporate language are linked to the perceived professional advantages and ultimately contribute to satisfaction on the personal level.

The personal satisfaction discourse of ‘linguistic well-being’, or ‘linguistic health’, also included references to the feelings of comfort and fun. It is argued here that this emotional component is an extremely important indication of successful functioning in a foreign language, and is part of the general psychological health of a modern multilingual workplace.

5.2. Limitations of the study

This study has a number of limitations, mainly due to its small scale and restricted access to the field.

For instance, some discourses, as well as salient themes, differed considerably among the participants. It was not possible to assess the relative significance and relevance of these perceptions. This research gives insights into individual perceptions of a small cross-section of employees of one company, with different backgrounds and job descriptions. This is both an asset and a limitation – the diversity of the selected sample provides a variety of perceptions, but the limited numbers make it difficult to compare and draw conclusions, since too many factors play a role. A larger scale study with more respondents sharing similar profiles would be a useful way to get a bigger picture of the benefits and challenges of working in a foreign language.

Another limitation of the study is due to the fact that it focuses exclusively on perceptions and does not include observation; thus it explores reported rather than lived reality.

This study of employees’ perceptions involved a short period of contact with the participants due to limited access; therefore it was not possible to see how their perceptions evolve, or to compare perceptions at different points in time. Given that perceptions can change over time, and are influenced by a particular day’s experiences as well as shaped by the whole continuum, the results of this research are to be treated as a ‘snapshot’ rather than a comprehensive account.

An attempt was made to produce a holistic picture of functioning in a multinational workplace, which involves both professional and social communication. In fact, very limited information was gathered on the social aspect, which makes it difficult to compare the two spheres of workplace communication in terms of language use.

5.3. Potential for further research

Working in a foreign language is a rich research field which can be developed in many ways.

For instance, there seems to be a lack of research into the process of adaptation to working in a foreign language. Longitudinal research into the change of perceptions would contribute to understanding this process. Ethnographic observation of the adaptation process, combined with interviews, would provide a very useful methodological approach.

In the course of the interviews many informants referred to the relationship between language and culture in the workplace. This aspect goes beyond the scope of the present study, and was not included in the analysis. However, working in a foreign language could also be explored in the context of intercultural communication, i.e. the interrelation of 'languacultures' in an international workplace.

While adapting to working in a foreign language, individuals may find themselves constructing a new professional and social identity. To what extent is this identity linked to the language(s) they are using at work? Do people work in different languages in the same way as in their own language, or differently? If differently, then in what way? What are the differences in the way people express themselves and come across when using different foreign languages at work, and is this phenomenon language-specific or person-specific? Some of these questions have been addressed in the literature on ethnography of communication and multilingualism in general (for instance, see Troike-Saville, 2003), but they can be potentially used for specific research into working in a foreign language.

Another significant area that warrants further research is the 'native speaker ideal' in the multinational workplace (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). The other side of the coin could also be explored: how does the native speaker minority experience working in their mother tongue among the majority of BELF users? To what extent do they accommodate the non-native speakers, and what are the ideologies involved? What are the advantages and constraints of being a native speaker in a lingua franca workplace?

As has been pointed out earlier in this study, there is a need for further research into linguistic well-being of employees working in a foreign language. It is argued here that linguistic well-being is an important component of overall social and psychological well-being in a modern international workplace.

Finally, one more concluding remark needs to be made. As pointed out by Pan *et al.* (2002:137 cited in Gump, 2004), 'successful communication in the international workplace requires a self-reflective understanding of the processes of communication'. In the course of this research several interviewees commented on the fact that they had taken a lot of their language-related professional experience for granted, and sharing their reflections during the interviews had been a thought-provoking experience. Thus, by focusing on individual perceptions and encouraging the participants to reflect on language-related communication issues, this study has hopefully made a small contribution to sensitising the public to the complexities of functioning in a multilingual workplace.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire 1 (Human Resources)

1. How many employees does your company have in Luxembourg?

(please specify whether all of them work full-time)

2. Which nationalities are represented? How many employees of each nationality are there?

3. Does your company have a written corporate language policy (i.e. a document regulating language use within the company)?

    If YES: 3a. How is this policy documented and communicated to staff?

    IF NO: 3b. If there is no documented corporate language policy, what is the 'de facto' policy and how is it communicated to staff?

4. If English has become the corporate lingua franca, can you list ways in which the use of English is seen as a company resource?

5. Are any other languages used for corporate communication? In what situations?

6. Are there any recruitment requirements related to language proficiency? Which languages are considered essential and at what level?

7. Do these language requirements differ depending on which division of the company the employees work in?

8. Does your company have an employee appraisal procedure?

    If YES,

    8a. Is it conducted in English only, or in other languages as well? Which languages?

    8b. Does it contain questions related to language use?

9. In your opinion, what are the main language-related differences between your branch in Luxembourg and in other countries?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share with regard to the multilingual and multicultural nature of the company that has not been covered by the questions above? (You can list any topics you consider relevant. They can be followed up at the interview stage).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Appendix 2: Questionnaire 2 (Staff)

1. Your mother tongue

2. What other languages do you speak?

3. Which of these languages do you use at work?

4. How long have you been working for Company N in Luxembourg?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Appendix 3: Interview Consent Form

'WORKING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE'

Research project conducted by Yelena Radley

Master in Learning and Communication in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts,
FLSHASE, University of Luxembourg

I, the undersigned participant, hereby accept to take part in a sociolinguistic study of the implications of working in a foreign language. I authorise *Yelena Radley* to use the recorded and transcribed interview data for the purposes of analysis within the framework of the study. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any point, should I wish to do so.

- Any additional clauses or restrictions introduced by the participant:

By signing below, I acknowledge that:
1) I have read this agreement carefully
2) any questions I have about the study and the use of my interview data have been answered satisfactorily
3) I have been given a copy of this form, including any additional changes or restrictions, initialed by me and by *Yelena Radley*.

I understand and agree to the conditions outlined on this consent form and I hereby authorise *Yelena Radley* to use this interview material for research purposes.

Date: ___________________

Participant's signature: ____

Participant contact information (optional): ___________________

Researcher's signature: ____

Researcher's Contact Information: *lena.radley@gmail.com*

Appendix 4: Interview Guide 1 (Management)

1. Could you please say a few words about yourself and your role in the company? Have you worked in such a multilingual company before?

2. Your company's website emphasises its multilingualism and multiculturalism. [*Printout of the relevant webpage provided*.] Could you please comment on this extract (and in particular, how 'This multicultural and multi-language environment enriches all of us and directly benefits the work that is delivered to our customers').

3. Do people in your company actually use English in their daily working life most of the time? Why, when and how are other languages used? Could you give some examples? (include spoken and written communication)

4. How important is it for the company which language its employees use and what their level of linguistic competence is? Does it have an effect on the employees'-

- professional activity
- productivity
- working styles
- career prospects/promotion chances
- relationships at work (professional and social)

5. Are there any (real or potential) communication problems related to linguistic issues? Can you give any examples?

6. What are the company's mechanisms for dealing with such problems?

7. Does the company offer any language training for its employees?

- If YES, What kind of training is provided, and is it obligatory or on a voluntary basis?

- If NO, Would the company financially support efforts by their employees to learn other languages outside work?

8. You are Greek, working for a Greek multinational company in Luxembourg. How much of your professional communication is conducted in English/other languages? How long have you been working in English?

9. How do you feel, on a personal level, about using a foreign language for professional purposes? In what way is working in English different, say, to working in Greek?

10. Is there anything you would like to add?

(+ any topics arising from the questionnaire)

Appendix 5: Interview Guide 2 (Staff)

a) English version

1. Personal background (countries, languages)
2. Work background – have you worked in a multilingual environment / in a foreign language before?
3. Which languages do you use in your job here? In what situations? (Consider written/oral, formal/informal)
4. Were your language skills tested when you were offered this job? Have they improved? In what way?
5. How comfortable do you feel when you work in a foreign language (English/other)?
6. Do you think you work differently in different languages? In what way?
7. What are FOR YOU the advantages of working in English? (or in another foreign language). What do you feel most positive about?
8. Do you encounter difficulties when working in a foreign language? (Can you think of any examples?) What's the hardest aspect?
9. Do you use the same language when talking to your colleagues professionally and socially? What does this change for you?
10. Do you ever feel excluded because of language choices?
11. Is there a link between languages and career opportunities?
12. Is there anything you would like to add?

b) French version

1. D’où venez-vous? Quelles langues parlez-vous?
2. Avez-vous déjà travaillé dans une entreprise multilingue et multinationale?
3. Quelles sont les langues que vous utilisez au travail? Dans quelles situations? (pensez à l’oral/écrit, formel/informel)
4. Votre niveau d’anglais a-t-il été testé avant l’embauche? A-t-il amélioré depuis? De quelle façon?
5. Est-ce que vous vous sentez à l’aise quand vous travailler dans une langue étrangère (anglais ou autre)? A quel point?
6. Est-ce que vous travaillez différemment dans les langues différentes? Pouvez-vous donner des exemples?
7. Quels sont POUR VOUS des avantages de travailler en anglais? (ou une autre langue étrangère). Quels sont les aspects les plus positifs?
8. En quoi consistent les difficultés de travailler dans une langue étrangère? (Donnez des exemples.) Quel est l’aspect le plus difficile pour vous?
9. Utilisez-vous la même langue dans votre activité professionnelle et sociale au travail? Qu’est-ce ça change pour vous?
10. Est-ce que ça vous arrive de vous sentir exclu(e) à cause du choix de langue?
11. A votre avis, y a-t-il un lien entre le niveau de langue et la carrière, la promotion?
12. Est-ce que vous voudrez ajouter quelque chose?

c) Russian version

1. Расскажите немного о себе: откуда вы, на каких языках говорите.
2. Ваша работа. Работали ли вы раньше в многонациональной многоязычной компании? На иностранном языке?
3. Какие языки вы используете в вашей работе? В каких ситуациях? (устно/письменно, официально/неформально)
4. Тестировался ли ваш языковой уровень при приеме на работу? Лучше ли вы владеете языком сейчас? В чем это выражается?
5. Насколько комфортно вы себя чувствуете, работая на иностранном языке (английский + другие языки)?
6. Как вы думаете, меняется ли ваш стиль работы в зависимости от языка? В чем это выражается?
7. В чем вы видите преимущества (ДЛЯ ВАС ЛИЧНО) работы на английском (или другом иностранном) языке? Приведите примеры. Какие аспекты для вас наиболее позитивны?
8. В чем трудности работы на иностранном языке? Приведите примеры. Что для вас самое трудное?
9. Ваше общение с коллегами: используете ли вы разные языки в разговорах по работе и в неформальном общении? Что от этого меняется?
10. Случается ли, что вы чувствуете себя изолированным/исключенным из общения из-за языка?
11. На ваш взгляд, есть ли связь между уровнем владения языком (англ. или другим) и перспективами продвижения по службе?
12. Что еще вы хотели бы добавить?

Appendix 6: Transcription Conventions

(All participants' names and initials are pseudonyms)

I	interviewer (Yelena Radley, the researcher)
AB	initials of the interviewee
(*laughs*)	paralinguistic features in italics
…	pause of 1-2 seconds
(pause), (long pause)	a pause longer than 2 seconds
(… action?)	unclear utterance, tentative transcription
<…>	omission of one or several words or utterances which represent repetitions or are deemed to be irrelevant in the context of the study
<information from website>	reference to other materials available during the interview; summarizing of digressions or non-transcribed passages
langu-	incomplete, interrupted or cut-off utterance
YES	capitals indicate emphatic stress
[meaning English]	researcher's contextual reconstruction/interpretation of implied content

Appendix 7: Example of Interview Transcript

(For reasons of space, full transcripts of the interviews are not included in the Appendices; they are provided in electronic form)

TRANSCRIPT - INTERVIEW 2 (STAFF)

<…>

I: For me Company N is a very interesting place for research, because it has so many nationalities and the company language is English, BUT you are not in an English-speaking country-

SP: no-

I: and there are all sorts of languages used. You speak French-

SP: Yes, it's my mother tongue, so I speak French, yes.

I: And have you worked in such a multilingual environment before?

SP: Er… I already worked in Luxembourg before Company N, but it was a French company, so they used to speak French, so, enfin, it's the first time but now it's 10 years I work here in English, so…

I: And how was it when you started? Do you remember this change from a French company to the English-speaking international…?

SP: I don't remember it was a big problem because I listen a lot of English music and things like that so I was already accoutumated with accent or language because I like to sing… So it was not real problem, it's… a big improvement in my vocabulary, and writing or speaking, even if… I have not a good accent, because I'm French I still have my French accent I suppose, but… yes, I learn every day.

I: You learned on the job? When you started, how good was your English then?

SP: Well, it was not so bad, but er…

I: It was, kind of, from school …? And music…

SP: Yes, school and music. So it was, I think, quite good but not perfect but… some words were missing sometimes… But now I think it's … it's quite ok.

I: To me it sounds really good. But if you want we can change between English and French – ou on peut parler français… on peut changer. Pour moi, ce qui est important, c'est que vous pouvez vous exprimer exactement. Alors, if you want to change-

SP: OK, je peux switcher entre-

I: Switching, exactement! Ok. Et vous switchez au travail aussi?

SP: Er… non, parce que, enfin, no, because Toula is Greek, I have to speak with her in English, and generally other people speak English, so… it's… maybe I have two colleagues where I can speak French with them, but it's not often. Generally, it's always in English. Yeah.

I: So all the written communication is in English, everything you write, all the emails?

SP: Yes, generally yes.

I: In English. And professional… oral communication is mainly English?

SP: Yes, when we do some conference, or conference call, or small meeting just to explain the project, sometimes just … can speak French, from time to time we speak French together, but we really quickly switch into English because some word comes naturally into English when we read the client's email, so in the head you switch the language directly, because the email is written in English so … you adapt yourself to the language. But it's really… it's not often. We generally speak English.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled ‘Working in a foreign language: case study of employees’ perceptions in a Luxembourg-based multinational company using English as a lingua franca’ has been carried out in the Master in Learning and Communication in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts, at the University of Luxembourg, under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Ingrid de Saint-Georges. The work is original and has not been submitted in part or full by me for any degree or diploma at any other University.

I further declare that the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

Luxembourg, _________________