



14th GEM&L International Workshop on Management and Language

EM Strasbourg Business School

4-6th May 2020

Call for Papers

Global working and language: Towards an understanding of global-local interplay

Global forms of work have become common in MNEs (Reiche, Lee and Allen, 2019) in an ever-growing heterogeneity of local environments (Jaussaud and Mayrhofer, 2014). By global working, we mean situations in which employees from diverse cultural backgrounds, often in geographically distant and different national contexts, are collaborating (Hinds, Liu and Lyon, 2011). This includes all forms of expatriation, corporate and self-initiated expatriation, short-term assignments, flexpatriation and international business travel (Mayerhofer, Hartmann, Michelitsch-Riedl and Kollinger, 2004) as well as work in global virtual teams and domestic work with involvement in international responsibilities and/or interactions with colleagues from different countries.

We have chosen to use the expression “global working” to highlight the fluidity and situatedness of these specific work experiences, close to “international working” introduced by Mayrhofer, Reichel and Sparrow (2011) and by McNulty and Brewster (2019). Angouri and Piekkari (2018) also call for a more fluid approach to organization and global work which conceptualizes the organization as more than its material and legal structure. In this perspective

management and organizational scholars have shown that discourse shapes organizations (Cooren, Vaara, Langley and Tsoukas, 2014; see also Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen and Clark, 2011, in the special issue of *Organization Studies* on Communicating, Organizing and Organization). The importance of situatedness in context raises the question of global and local interplay in each global working situation: i.e. how global and local dynamics co-construct the reality of global working experiences within the language ecosystem (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018) of each local environment.

Language lies at the heart of global working at three different levels identified by Reiche and colleagues (2019): actors, processes and structure. Firstly, actors may be more or less invited to participate in global working arrangements and to voice their opinions in these instances depending on their level of mastery of the corporate language of the MNE. Employees may be empowered (Tietze, 2008) or on the contrary marginalized if they don't master the language of the organization (Neeley, 2017). In this regard, individuals having developed multicultural identities may bring precious contributions to global working (Lee, Masuda, Fu and Reiche, 2018). Research also suggests that expatriates proficient in the language of their host country develop more and deeper relationships with locals and adjust better than others (Zhang and Peltokorpi, 2015). Furthermore, language competence may not suffice to erase the effects of differing native communication styles or to prevent the doubts and frustration these may cause (Louhiala-Salminen, 2005; Tréguer-Felten, 2018), a feeling shared by increasing numbers of diverse types of global workers in MNCs and especially by those labelled migrant workers.

Secondly, in terms of processes, it has been suggested that language skills influence knowledge sharing and that an overemphasis on international networks reduces employees' embeddedness in local networks which is critical to MNCs' development (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2014). Other areas have also been explored, such as: how corporate international policies or international marketing campaigns are deployed locally or how language skills enable boundary spanning

activities (Barner-Ramussen, Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov and Mäkelä, 2014) and influence teaming (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017).

Finally, it is important to unravel the role of language in different structures of global work and to understand, for instance, if an expatriate moving physically to another country will resort more to a local language in a specific host country than someone involved in global working arrangements in his or her country. Global-local dynamics in specific contexts and different situations of global working may trigger different ways of negotiating language use.

Understanding these dynamics requires a fluid approach to language use, seen as a social practice (Karhunen, Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen and Piekkari, 2018) and not as separate entities, merely analyzed through the prism of proficiency in a national language. Janssens and Steyaert's multilingual franca (2014) illustrates this approach by throwing light on the local practices resulting from the imposition of English in MNEs.

To examine the implication of local language use in more depth it would be valuable to investigate how business concepts and work processes are understood and enacted by local employees in their own contexts. For instance, subsidiaries located in cross-border regions provide opportunities to observe how employees draw on all their language resources and combine them to make themselves understood (Langinier and Ehrhart, 2019 forthcoming).

Analyzing language as a social practice raises a number of methodological issues and calls for self-reported data surveys, observations, critical ethnographic studies, as well as interaction analysis (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018).

We thus welcome papers which investigate the interplay between new forms of global work and language use in MNC and non-MNC contexts (i.e., SMEs, NGOs, etc.) (Angouri and Piekkari, 2018). These papers could address but are not limited to:

- The link between language and the boundary spanning role of global workers

- The role of “born globals”: how people with multicultural identities experience global working and what their relation is to language in these instances
- The way migrants transport language in MNCs, how their language skills might be recognized in some instances
- The way language is used by global marketing specialists, how international marketing campaigns are deployed internationally, and what the role of language is in this process
- The impact of differing communication styles on global-local dynamics and processes
- Methodological issues associated with the analysis of language in global working situations, what kind of data collection this requires, what approach could fully account for the complexities of global-local dynamics and their link to language in global working situations
- Multilevel analysis highlighting how the macro environmental context and the corporate context influence global workers’ multilingual practices
- Translating the research findings on global working and language into the management education sphere

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The short paper should indicate the key theoretical, methodological and empirical questions addressed in the paper, the conceptual field(s) informing the paper, if applicable the data set used in the paper and the major theoretical and empirical contributions of the paper. All submissions must be original and should not have been previously accepted for publication.

First page with author's name, affiliation, e-mail and postal address.

Text of the proposal: in .doc(x), anonymous, justified, 2.5 cm margins throughout.

Title: Times New Roman, bold, size 16.

Other titles: Times New Roman, bold, size 12.

Short paper (around 3000 words, excluding references) with 8 – 10 keywords.

Text: Times New Roman, size 12.

Authors are required to precede their short paper with a short abstract (around 10 lines) to be included in the final programme.

Format for references:

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Steyaert, C., Ostendorp, A. & Gaibrois, C. (2011). Multilingual organizations as 'linguascapes': Negotiating the position of English through discursive practices. *Journal of World Business*, **46**(3), 270-278.

Proposals in French or in English in Word format to be uploaded on the GEM&L website, www.geml.eu by 15 January 2020

All submissions will be subjected to a double blind competitive review process on the basis of originality, rigor and relevance. No author information or other identifying information should appear anywhere in the submission.

Please note that the workshop will host a doctoral session, which will offer PhD students the possibility of discussing their doctoral thesis project with research fellows and to be advised by the most prominent senior scholars in this field of research. The review process of PhD students' papers is subjected to the same rules as for regular papers.

All authors will be informed about the outcome of the review process no later than 15 March 2020.

At least one author of each paper must register for the workshop and present the paper. A final paper is not required before the workshop.

For any information concerning the workshop, please contact: scientifique@geml.eu

Schedule:

Short paper: 15 January 2020

Notice of acceptance: 15 March 2020

GEM&L Workshop: 4-6 May 2020

For registration information go to: www.geml.eu