

Special issue on language in global management and business

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Over the last three decades, a ‘language-sensitive’ agenda has emerged in research on international business as attested by special issues in the *International Studies of Management and Organization* (2005), *Journal of World Business* (2011) and *Journal of International Business Studies* (2014) and recent publications dedicated to language in international business (Piekkari et al., 2014). Conferences such as AOM 2015 on the Power of Words, symposia such as AIB 2013 and 2014, and streams at EGOS 2013 and 2015 have seen the number of the papers focusing on language issues rise, and with them debates about the role and status of language in fields such as cross-cultural management, intercultural communication, international business and organization studies. Seminal studies have been conducted by leading scholars on the language factor regarding issues such as power (Hinds et al., 2014; Tietze, 2004; Vaara et al., 2005), cross-cultural team dynamics (Brannen and Thomas, 2010; Janssens and Steyaert, 2014; Mughan, 2015; Peltokorpi, 2010), Human Resource Management policies (Harzing and Pudelko, 2013; Piekkari et al., 2005; Sliwa and Johansson, 2014) or the strategic role of translation (Janssens et al., 2004; Piekkari et al., 2013), to cite only a few.

The articles in this special issue were selected among the 41 papers presented at the 9th International Conference of GEM&L (an international research group on management and language) at Aalto University School of Business in Helsinki in 2015. Each contributes to language-sensitive research in global management and business by expanding the theoretical foundations of language use in cross-cultural management. Building on the seminal studies mentioned above, these articles suggest ways that language and cross-cultural management scholars can work together on themes such as team dynamics, power relations, corporate language strategies and the role of translators in the transfer of knowledge.

The first of these themes, cross-cultural team dynamics and intergroup processes, is the focus of several of the articles. In 'Revisiting Culture and Language in Global Management Teams: Toward a Multilingual Turn', Jane Kassis-Henderson and Linda Cohen question widely held assumptions about language, culture and identity and propose an original analysis of language use in a multilingual team. Building on recent research in sociolinguistics and International Business, the authors further develop the concept of hybrid team culture demonstrating the positive role of the interplay between the different languages. Their empirical data illustrate how individual team members mobilize multiple linguistic resources and develop communication practices which facilitate relationship building and sense-making processes. Findings show the value of the metacognitive skills gained through exposure to multiple languages and cultures and the need for these to be recognized in organizations, particularly concerning recruitment criteria, foreign assignments and training.

The micro-processes of interactional teamwork are also explored by Mary Vigier and Helen Spencer-Oatey in their article 'Code-Switching in Newly-Formed Multinational Project Teams: Challenges, Strategies and Effects'. The authors demonstrate how three project teams develop strategies for managing the challenges of code-switching, the practice of changing from the common working language to the use of another language. This article contributes to the studies of this phenomenon by investigating how the dynamics and processes occur at the micro level with both negative and positive consequences and by showing how task achievement and team dynamics can be optimized by managing code-switching.

From a more general perspective, DaJung Woo and Howard Giles analyse different factors affecting communication processes. In their article on 'Language Attitudes and Intergroup Dynamics in Multilingual Organizations', they discuss three topics: team building and trust; discrimination, perceived unfairness and social exclusion; and, finally, leader-member exchanges and favouritism. The importance of adopting accommodative speech style strategies while taking account of the cultural perspective of others and their communicative needs is emphasized in their study together with the organizational benefits of sensitizing managers to intergroup dynamics in multilingual organizations.

The second theme, power relations in a cross-cultural context, is addressed by Betty Beeler and Philippe Lecomte in their paper 'Shedding Light on the Darker Side of Language: A Dialogical Approach to Cross-Cultural Collaboration', in which they analyse linguistic hegemony and language-based in-group behaviour in cross-cultural encounters from a dialogical perspective. Drawing on Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia, addressivity and responsiveness, they show the importance of cross-cultural managerial practices which reward dialogical relations between team members and repress the use of dominant language skills to exert power over others.

In their paper 'Beyond Possession and Competition: Investigating Cooperative Aspects of Power in Multilingual Organizations', Claudine Gaibrois and Chris Steyaert investigate power from a discursive perspective. Inspired by the writings of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, they conceptualize power as an effect of speaking acts. Their findings highlight six subject positions ranging from 'battle winners' to 'helpers' which are associated with the discursive construction of competitive or cooperative power relations. Power is thus considered as a double-edged sword which generates competition as well as cooperation.

Corporate language policies, the third theme covered by the authors in this issue, are intertwined with the issue of power. In her article 'Language and the Faces of Power: A Theoretical Approach', Nathalie Wilmot applies Fleming and Spicer's (2007) framework of power and resistance to provide a more nuanced vision of language management policies as manifestations of power. From this

perspective, the choice of a language policy can be viewed as a particular application of power, potentially triggering the resistance of employees, itself a form of power. Her article reinforces the view that language constitutes a research field in its own right (Brannen et al., 2014) rather than constituting a subdivision of culture.

Wilmot's theoretical approach to the issue of corporate language policies complements Dorte Lønsmann's empirical study of the way employees react to a new language policy in 'Embrace It or Resist It? Employees' Reception of Corporate Language Policies'. Using sociolinguistic stance-taking theory to investigate employees' reactions, she finds that acceptance of a new policy depends on the local linguistic context, the language competence of the individual and his or her ability to see the long-term results. This leads her to conclude that management needs to consider the local linguistic conditions and the employees' need to understand how the change benefits them before putting a new language policy into place.

Along with a corporate language, companies need to share their corporate values with their culturally diverse workforces. Cheryl Cordeiro applies a form of discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), to analyse the way Swedish managers transmit their corporate values to employees in Singapore. Her article, 'Using Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Metafunction as a Tool in Identifying Agency in Organizational Change in Cross-Cultural Management Contexts', demonstrates how SFL is designed to detect attitudes and visions that might otherwise be missed. She calls for more studies in cross-cultural research which approach language as a function rather than an object, using discourse analysis.

In 'The Role of Translation in the Cross-Cultural Transferability of Corporate Codes of Conduct', Geneviève Tréguer-Felten uses cross-cultural discourse analysis to examine how companies use translation to deal with multiple languages and the cultural differences embedded in those languages. Her comparison between the English and French versions of a French multinational's code of conduct reveals discrepancies based on differing deep-seated cultural attitudes regarding employees' sense of responsibility, contractual relations and expectations of employers. While the two texts refer to the same notions and obligations, each reflects a particular way of putting them into practice. This target-oriented translation is a cultural process that can help multinationals to succeed in the transfer of their corporate codes of conduct and values.

The translation perspective is also addressed in an article on the important question of the agency of translators in knowledge transfer across national boundaries. In 'The Translator as Agent in Talent Management Knowledge Transfer', Susanne Tietze, Carole Tansley and Emil Hélienek show that the translator is a key agent in shaping the transfer process as he/she addresses what the authors call a 'discursive void'. In this sense, their article as well as Tréguer-Felten's contributes to a more strategic vision of the translation process and the role of the translator as an 'agentic actor'. By placing the language and culture paradigm at the heart of managerial issues, they show that the translator is not only a cultural or language broker but also a key player in the company's international strategy. Through the articles in this special issue, we hope to have contributed to a deeper understanding of the central role of language in cross-cultural management contexts.

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