The relationship between linguistic diversity policies and de facto language practices on the work floor – A case study within the Deutsche Post DHL Group

by Alessandra Bauer

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Background Information

Details of the Student:
Name: Alessandra Bauer
ANR: 781915
Telephone:
Email:

Name of the Supervisors:
Prof. Dr. Kutlay Yağmur
Dr. Massimiliano Spotti

Title of the Master Thesis Circle:
Investigating language policy of commercial companies

Title of the Thesis:
The relationship between linguistic diversity policies and de facto language practices on the work floor – A case study within the Deutsche Post DHL Group
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I wish you now an inspiring reading.

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Abstract

In line with European policies on business multilingualism, this research aims to explore language policies and practices of a commercial company in Germany. Due to the fact that the majority of previous studies on the management of diversity often disregarded the factor of linguistic diversity and its impacts on business success, the aim of this research is to highlight the relevance of linguistic diversity in multinational organizations. In order to gain a better insight into language policies and practices, these highly relevant issues and concepts are researched within a case study at the Deutsche Post DHL Group by focusing on organizational linguistic diversity policies on the one hand and the practice of languages on the work floor on the other hand. In this way, policies will be evaluated in connection with the actual practices on the work floor. In today’s globalizing world it is especially important for organizations to take linguistic and cultural diversity into account as it may help to establish the most optimal management practices and business outcomes. Whereas most of the previous studies researched linguistic diversity quantitatively, this case study offers a qualitative approach based on incidental observations and semi-structured interviews as the main instrument for data collection and thus offers new insights into linguistic diversity within commercial companies.

Keywords
Linguistic diversity, multilingualism, lingua franca, corporate language, multinational companies, language ideologies, language management, language policies
1. Introduction

This research aims to investigate language policies and practices, organizational strategies and management approaches in a German commercial company in line with the European perspectives on business multilingualism. A reflection on previous works conducted in the field of diversity studies emphasizes that there is a lack in research dealing with linguistic diversity in companies (Jonsen, Maznevski & Schneider, 2011; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Matveev & Nelson, 2004; Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2012). Nevertheless, in recent years more scholars started to pay attention to this field (Angouri, 2013; Angouri & Miglbauer, 2012; Extra & Yağmur, 2012; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006; Hagen, Foreman-Peck, Davila-Philippon & Nordgren, 2006; Jonsen et al., 2011; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Matveev & Nelson, 2011; Vandermeeren, 1999). Whereas most of these studies relied on a quantitative approach, which cannot provide deep insights into language ideologies of the work setting, the approach taken in this study employs qualitative research methods to explore de facto language practices that derive from underlying language ideologies of the Deutsche Post DHL Group and individual employees. In order to provide a sound basis for the understanding of the influence of linguistic diversity in multinational companies (MNCs), new research evidence is necessary. Thus, this research contributes to the existing literature by investigating the different ways a MNC deals with multilingualism, specifically in terms of language policies and de facto language practices, both within and outside its own boundaries.

Some earlier works have emphasized four language management approaches, namely language strategy, appointing native speakers, recruiting staff according to their language skills and making use of translators and interpreters (Hagen et al., 2006). Other studies focused on the communicative competence on individual and organizational levels and their effects on business outcomes (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Most of these results point towards the importance of English as a lingua franca for (non-) native speakers in business communication, but also critically reflect on it (Angouri, 2013; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Jonsen et al., 2011; Kingsley, 2009; Loos, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005; Nickerson, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2011; Vandermeeren, 1999). Thus, besides the use of English other languages will be targeted, as the diverse languages of the employees are often used for personal communication as well as networking (Amelina, 2010). Furthermore, languages other than English do have a significant impact on individual and organizational international success (Amelina, 2010).
Since the application of languages might broaden international work opportunities and strengthen business relationships, it is argued that increasing multilingualism will help European organizations to position itself effectively in the global marketplace (Business Forum for Multilingualism, 2008; Extra & Yağmur, 2012; Hagen et al. 2006). Thus, linguistic diversity within a MNC is an aspect of competitiveness and can be a valuable resource (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014).

As part of my conceptual framework, I reflect on the concepts of Language Policy & Planning and Language Management Theory. In this respect, Spolsky (2007) and, also Sherman and Strubell (2013), differentiated between three levels of language policies: (1) ideology, (2) management and (3) behavior. The three dimensions of language policy as presented by Spolsky (2007) provide a conceptual framework for my thesis. Based on ethnographic data collected from the Deutsche Post DHL Group, a policy analysis along those three dimensions will be presented.

With my thesis, I want to contribute to the existing literature on linguistic diversity management in MNCs by approaching it from an actual workplace perspective in a German-based commercial company. Furthermore, I want to uncover underlying processes that are in play when language policies are implemented and put into practice. Going beyond the connection of language policies and their use, this research aims to find out whether linguistic diversity policies within organizations are inevitable and how multilingualism positively and/or negatively affects the company’s commercial practices. Consequently, the following research question has been developed:

*How are the linguistic diversity policies within the Deutsche Post DHL Group related to de facto language practices on the work floor?*

In order to answer this question, further sub-questions that reflect on the meso and micro level have been formulated:

**Meso**

- What image concerning linguistic diversity does the company give?
- How does the company perceive linguistic diversity?
- What are the management approaches towards linguistic diversity?
- How are diversity management policies, if there are any, implemented?
- Does the company make use of multiple languages used by its employees?
Micro

- How does the work floor reflect what is decided on the micro level?
- Do linguistic policies have an effect on individual language practices?
- How do employees perceive linguistic diversity?
- What factors have an effect on individual language choices?
- What are the reasons behind peoples’ choice of language use?
- Why do people make use of different languages?

These sub-questions and the central research question are studied in the framework of an explorative case study at the Deutsche Post DHL Group, which investigates the relationship between linguistic diversity policies and de facto language practices on the work floor. More specifically, this research attempts to identify linguistic diversity management approaches on the one hand and intends to reveal and explain language practices by employees by examining influencing factors on the other hand. By means of qualitative research, including desk research, observations and semi-structured interviews, multiple insights of the work floor reality are gathered. Taking a grounded approach in data collection allows for deeper insights into language practices on the work floor. Furthermore, it is an attempt to derive actual themes from the collected data by applying three stages of systematic data coding, which allows for ending up with the most representative themes. In this respect, the project adds a new perspective to previous research.

This thesis is structured as follows: Firstly, a detailed theoretical background is presented, which provides an extensive literature review on linguistic diversity in commercial companies. Secondly, the methodological framework of this research is discussed and justified. Thirdly, the results of this research are presented based on desk research, observations and semi-structured interviews. Finally, the conclusions and discussion chapter examines and links the research findings to the theory. Furthermore, limitations of the research are elaborated on and recommendations for management purposes are offered.
2. Theoretical Background

As stated previously, little attention has been paid to language practices and its impacts on MNCs. In order to document language policies and practices that take place at the Deutsche Post DHL Group, a more detailed theoretical framework including the macro, the meso and the micro level, needs to be presented. Whereas the macro level (2.1) embeds this study in a wider European and German context and reflects on previous research on business multilingualism in general, the meso level (2.2) presents literature on language management approaches. Finally, the micro level (2.3) discusses previous research on language practices on the work floor. The meso and the micro level are highlighted in order to examine how linguistic diversity policies relate to de facto language practices (see Appendix I).

2.1 Macro level

The macro level is included in this study as it provides a theoretical framework based on documents of European and German institutions as well as on previous research on business multilingualism, which reveal different views on linguistic diversity. Furthermore, a brief definition of the term multilingualism and how it is used in this thesis is given beforehand.

2.1.1 Multilingualism

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines a multilingual person as someone who is “speaking or using several different languages” (Wehmeier, McIntosh, Turnbull & Ashby, 2005, p. 1003). However, in practice this term is much more complicated than its conceptual definition, because it is seldom clearly stated how proficient a person must be in a certain language in order to be defined as a multilingual (Aronin & Singleton, 2012; Kemp, 2009). Whether a person needs a native-like proficiency level of a certain language or not in order to be considered a multilingual is discussed in the literature (Aronin & Singleton, 2012). In order to define multilingualism for the purpose of this study, a definition by the European Commission is considered, which states that “[m]ultilingualism is understood as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives” (European Commission, 2007, p. 6). Interestingly, a native-like proficiency level of a speaker is not mentioned, however, an ability to participate in more than one single language. This last definition of multilingualism shall be kept in mind during the course of this thesis.
2.1.2 European context

According to the European Convention on Human Rights, people are prohibited to be discriminated “on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status” (European Court of Human Rights, 2010, p. 12). This in turn means that “[t]he Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity” as is declared in Article 22 from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012). In total, 24 languages are official languages of the European Union’s 28 (after Brexit 27) member states. Furthermore, 60 languages, such as regional or minority languages, are recognized by the European Union (EU), but have no official status (European Commission, 2016a). As member states do not share a mutual language, by promoting language diversity and encouraging people, especially students, to learn two additional languages, besides their mother tongue, the EU displays its pluralist ideology concerning languages. This ideology reveals the EU’s sensitivity for different languages and of a unified Europe, where citizens are able to communicate with one another (European Commission, 2014). Nevertheless, this objective seems to be a challenging task, considering that its member states are autonomous in their decisions regarding language policies (European Commission, 2016b; Kuiken & van der Linden, 2013). However, it is to mention that the focus, when discussing language policies, lies on educational language policies. Still, as EU institutions seem to have limited control regarding educational language policies, this seems to be true for language policies in business as well.

In 2011, the European Commission published a Language Guide for European Business based on previous reports on business multilingualism. Its aim was to improve language management strategies in MNCs and to highlight the importance for linguistic diversity in order to be competitive and run a successful business (European Commission, 2011). According to Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2006), however, national institutions are allowed to decide on their own, whether they agree to adopt such policies developed and made by European bodies. As there is no necessity to adopt such policies, a gap between policies and practices can often be encountered.

2.1.3 German context

As already mentioned previously, language policies are often subject to national or regional ministries of education (Shohamy, 2006). Within Germany there is no national language education policy, as each of the 16 different states is responsible for it (Werner, 2006). Thus, with respect to language policies in businesses, no regulations can be found.
Lambert and Shohamy (2000) further indicate that language policies and practices of a country generally rely on its ethnic composition. In comparison to other European countries, however, there is no paragraph in the German constitution that states that German is the country’s official language (Deutscher Bundestag, 2010; Pfaff, 2011). Nevertheless, it is often associated with being the official language, as the majority of its inhabitants speak it. In this respect, Lambert and Shohamy (2000) would classify Germany as a monolingual country. Yet, this does not mean that there are not any other languages present in the German society, but that the status and power of German outclasses immigrant and regional minority languages (Lambert & Shohamy, 2000). Furthermore, Article 3, paragraph 3 of the fundamental rights of the German constitution emphasizes that no one can be discriminated against or preferred because of gender, ethnicity, language, origin, religious and political opinion (Deutscher Bundestag, 2010). Whether Lambert and Shohamy’s (2000) categorization is also valid and the paragraph of the constitution is respected for the organizational context or whether actual practices seem to suggest otherwise will be explored.

2.1.4 Previous research on business multilingualism

In the context of previous studies conducted, the Language Rich Europe Project (LRE) by Extra and Yağmur (2012) is worth mentioning, as it aims to document linguistic diversity across Europe, including organizations, and to create awareness for the relation between policies and practices. Additionally, LRE emphasizes that “linguistic diversity is a key property of Europe” and increasing multilingualism will help Europe to position itself effectively in the global marketplace (Extra & Yağmur, 2012, p. 14). Furthermore, the authors emphasize that linguistic diversity within Europe does not only include traditional languages, but also regional and immigrant minority languages. Thus, the aim of LRE is to create awareness of a multilingual Europe on the one hand and of a gap between language policies and de facto practices on the other hand, which can ideally lead to a cooperation between language policy makers and its users. Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2006) also highlight the relationship between language policies and practices within Europe. These authors as well as Canagarajah (2007) argue that the language-issue in the European context seems to be challenged by effects of globalization, such as rapid exchanges of communities among countries or doing business beyond borders, as borders seem to vanish. Moreover, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2006) argue that it is necessary to reflect on European countries individually in order to address the issue of linguistic diversity effectively and by-pass the gap between policies and practices. Watson (2010) stresses the importance and need of various languages in EU businesses in order to be competitive.
Furthermore, the author points out that due to the changing European context, English became the lingua franca and that its dominance in international discourses is remarkable, which, however, can result in less competitiveness on the global market (Watson, 2010). Kingsley (2009) and Angouri (2013) also highlight that in most cases English serves as a lingua franca among employees. In this respect, English is used as a common corporate language in organizations. It is, thus, a tool for communication and the language which is used the most in businesses all over the world. Generally, however, the existing literature hardly took into account Europe’s rich linguistic landscape and the possible importance of other languages besides English. Therefore, it is important to highlight the ELAN study as one of the monumental works in the EU context on attitudes towards various languages. This study provides evidence that a great language repertoire is valuable in order to establish and maintain business relationships within Europe on the one hand and underlines the companies’ competitiveness and the need for a rich linguistic landscape, as this will affect the access to new markets on the other hand (Hagen et al., 2006). Furthermore, this report highlights the importance for companies to invest in a language strategy (Hagen et al., 2006).

2.2 Meso level

The meso level reflects upon ideologies towards languages as well as linguistic diversity management approaches of organizations and its effects. Whether language policies exist, and whether language is an important factor in everyday business is one of the concerns here. The concepts of Language Policy & Planning and Language Management Theory are also discussed with respect to the broader concept of Diversity Management, which will be elaborated on in the first place.

2.2.1 Diversity management

People differ from each other in terms of identity, lifestyle, culture, norms and values, language, worldview, religion and more. This diversification of cultures also affects the workplace. Thus, cultural diversity is found at every level, from the employees to the board of directors and from the suppliers to the customers. As a result of globalization, cultural diversity in the workforce will increase, meaning that cultural diversity policies should be implemented sooner rather than later (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). Generally, cultural diversity has been recognized as a source of creativity and innovation, therefore, providing a base for competitive advantage (Basset-Jones, 2005; Nataatmadja & Dyson, 2005). The management of diversity is consequently of severe relevance (Nataatmadja & Dyson, 2005). Whereas the topics of gender,
religion, disability, sexual orientation and age already have a place in most diversity management teams, other subjects, such as language need to be emphasized more, as they “are perceived to have a relatively high impact” (Caye, Teichmann, Strack, Haen, Bird & Frick, 2011, p. 4). Caye et al. (2011) also believe that work force diversity will result in greater improvement. Gunnarsson (2013) points out the important role of communication and, thus, multilingualism in a diverse work place. Additionally, this author emphasizes the struggles of migrant workers who have to adopt to the work environment and learn local majority languages.

In this respect, should not only European or national bodies offer educational language trainings, but also organizations in order “to prepare workers for future challenges” (Ruske, Kauschke, Reuter, Montgomery, von der Gracht, Schuckmann & Mauksch, 2012, p. 23). As a result of globalization and internationalization, speaking more than one language, therefore, gains more importance (Ruske et al., 2012, p. 23). The same authors emphasize that especially for organizations within the logistics sector, their performance relies highly on its cultural, thus, including linguistic, diversity (Ruske et al., 2012). Hence, local employees and their knowledge are needed in order to gain access to “local market conditions or culturally sensitive issues” (Ruske et al., 2012, p. 28).

2.2.2 Language management

The first concept, Language Policy & Planning (LPP), was originally defined as “language planning by governments” (Tollefson, 1991, p. 16). By doing so, its aim was to “change language behaviour of individuals within society” (Thomas, 2008, p. 307). These policies could either be implicit or explicit and either encouraging or hindering concerning the use of different languages or their variations (Thomas, 2008). Nekvapil and Sherman (2015), provide another, quite similar definition of LPP, where the focus lies on the changing of language usage in society, institutions or organizations. Additionally, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) refer to language planning as “body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change, rules, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities” (p. 3). Their idea of LPP can be said to derive from Fishman’s (1971) interpretation, in which LPP is characterized as a certain behavior towards certain languages. Hence, the planning and setting up of policies used to focus on the nation-state. However, the recognition of certain macro and micro factors within organizations have led to a new approach of language planning that is known as language management, which is often used synonymous with LPP (Spolsky, 2004; Thomas, 2008).
The second concept, Language Management Theory (LMT), was first established and described by Jernudd and Neustupný (1987). LMT, unlike LPP, takes into account several language factors. These language factors can be described as ideological perspectives at the societal level, which might have an effect on micro level processes, such as on interactions on the work floor (Thomas, 2008). Nekvapil (2009) argues that the interrelation between these macro, meso and micro factors is of importance. Thus, LMT can be linked to language ideologies as the perspective shifts from the macro to the micro level and the focus lies on actual interactions (Nekvapil & Nekula, 2006). According to numerous scholars, the issue of linguistic diversity emerges at the micro level, as international organizations develop language policies, which seem to deviate from de facto language use within organizations (Baldauf 2005; Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan & Baldauf 1997; Schiffman 1996; Shohamy 2006; Spolsky 2004; Spolsky & Shohamy 1999). LMT attempts to highlight the connection between the two levels.

Language strategies that could be put into practice within MNCs are manifold. One approach is to adopt and implement a Common Corporate Language (CCL) (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Thomas, 2008). A CCL “is the language of global operations” of a company (Thomas, 2008, p. 309). Thus, it is the language of communication inside and between the headquarters and its subsidiaries. In most cases, English is the CCL, as it is also the lingua franca among the people involved in contact situations (Kingsley, 2009). Furthermore, English is the main language used in business all over the world and thus, a tool for communication (Angouri, 2013; Kingsley, 2009). A second strategy for MNCs is the adoption of the Parent Company Language (PCL), which is for the most part the language spoken by the majority of the employees at the headquarters. This PCL is usually the national language of the country where the headquarters are located. A third strategy is the permission for functional multilingualism, where the PCL can be maintained and the use of foreign languages, mostly spoken within subsidiaries, is promoted simultaneously. A fourth strategy is the purposive recruiting of staff according to their language skills, which ultimately entails the appointment of fluent speakers to engage in business relations (Hagen et al., 2006). A final strategy is the procurement of external resources, such as interpreters and translators to overcome language barriers (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Hagen et al., 2006). Generally, though, Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) argue that there is an ambiguity of linguistic diversity management policies, as there is always the conflict between using many different national languages and using a common corporate language, which is almost always English.

Concerning corporate communication on websites, Lauridsen (2008) proposes three alternatives on how organizations can deal with the language issue. Firstly, websites can only be
available in the national language. Secondly, websites can include the national language plus 1-2 major foreign languages (usually English is one of them). And finally, organization’s websites can be multilingual. Furthermore, the author claims that the “communication strategy should be clearly linked to a language policy that ensures that all communication is expressed in one or more language(s) that can be read and understood by all relevant target audiences” (Lauridsen, 2008, p. 113).

Angouri (2013) stresses that ideology and language choice are closely linked. In this respect, the meso and the micro level are ultimately related. Besides, the author puts forward that “language use is manipulated and controlled which highlights the issues of power and struggle” (Angouri, 2013, p. 567). Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen and Pullen (2014) took a similar approach and emphasized that generally management strategies and interventions regarding linguistic diversity are “ideologically directed” (p. 278).

Angouri & Miglbauer (2012) additionally highlight that local and global businesses became glocal. Thus, it is necessary for internationally operating businesses to focus on English on the one hand and the language of the target audience on the other hand. Nevertheless, local languages, are often disregarded and organizations rely mostly on English in their corporate communication (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). Moreover, minority languages are often neglected, because they are paid less attention to compared to dominant languages. This selective multilingualism is ideologically directed and can be observed in many organizations (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). As employees often adopt a pragmatic ‘whatever works’ attitude, the management is not in control of language usage by its employees. Consequently, language choice is negotiated between different actors on a daily basis (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014).

2.3 Micro level

The micro level aims to unravel individual ideologies towards languages on the one hand, and focuses on the behavior, thus, de facto language use by individuals, on the other hand. Hence, the reasons behind individual choices of language use are central. As the micro level is a reflection of the work floor reality, individual’s perceptions of languages are fundamental, which can display contrasting perspectives on linguistic diversity, whether language is seen as a problem or a resource.

Language choice is often a matter of negotiation in interactions; hence, its practical notion and social purpose within MNCs cannot be neglected (Angouri, 2013; Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014; Barakos, 2012; Sherman & Nekvapil, 2015; Spolsky, 2007; Thomas, 2008). Practical implies that language choice follows “commonsensical” reasons (Angouri, 2013, p.
which are driven by thoughts and perceptions as well as social reasons (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). Thus, an individual’s mind-set, or as Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) put it, “the employees’ perception of the role of languages in their daily work life” (p. 147), seems to reflect the underlying ideologies (unconsciously), and will ultimately influence the individual’s behavior when deciding which language to use. Furthermore, ideologies set on the meso level might also affect ideologies and practices encountered by individuals on the work floor in a positive and/or negative way (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014; Nekvapil & Nekula, 2006). Thus, the different ideologies can either be contradictory or confirming. Additionally, Angouri (2013) highlights that language policies, which are implemented top-down, are challenged by actual language practices that follow a bottom-up approach on the work floor.

Additionally, Nekvapil and Nekula (2006) stress the factors of competence and performance as these may influence individual language ideologies, whether individuals behave as the policies intend or opposing to that, as this may have significant effects on organizational performance and eventually business outcomes (e.g. Hagen et al., 2006; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Thomas, 2008). Sherman and Strubell (2013) believe that a person’s history, such as ethnicity, nationality and language background determines one’s attitude and beliefs towards language ideologies. According to Blackledge (2005), language ideologies of individuals are formed by “values, practices and beliefs associated with language use” (p. 44).

Taking all these aspects into account, one can say that language choices are affected by language ideologies and either reflect one attitude or another. These choices of individuals tend to be subjective and need to be considered in an economic and social context (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). Thus, by examining de facto language use on the work floor, which tends to be influenced by the meso level where the language strategy is developed (Nekvapil & Nekula, 2006), the relationship between the policy (meso) and the practice (micro) level is identified, as reality might deviate from what policies determine. Consequently, this study wants to discover whether there is a convergence and/or divergence between the meso and the micro level.
3. Methodological Framework

This chapter initially discusses and justifies the qualitative research methods of this study. Afterwards the methodological approach in data collection and the methodology used for data analysis are presented.

3.1 Overview

I carried out my research at the Deutsche Post DHL Group as it is a multinational organization, in which multiple cultures and languages in the headquarters as well as in its subsidiaries can be encountered at all times. The Corporate Diversity Department of this organization was the starting point of my research and one of the main sources of information, as it helped to gain deeper insights into their overall diversity management processes. I became familiar with general policy documents and aware of possible contextual factors. Furthermore, while being around the organization, and making contact with employees, although time was limited, I was able to increase the contact with possible informants. Besides interviewing three people from the Corporate Diversity Department, managers of culturally and linguistically diverse teams as well as employees, who have to deal with the issue of multilingualism in their day-to-day functioning, were consulted. In addition to a policy analysis based on EU, national and organizational documents on diversity and business multilingualism, in-depth interviews with different actors uncovered different ideological stances on linguistic diversity. Limited observations of participants on the work floor and their de facto language practices were related to the findings of the interviews. By taking this approach, data triangulation was ensured.

3.2 Research design

The nature of this research is explorative and relies on qualitative data, which are supported by desk research. Qualitative research allows for gathering different perspectives and involving different stakeholders. These multiple insights provide a more comprehensive overview of what is actually taking place on the work floor. This type of research aims to unravel the ideologies that subsume people’s behavior when dealing with linguistic diversity (Arksey & Knight, 1999). For the purpose of my research, a case study was carried out at the Deutsche Post DHL Group, as a case study allows for explaining phenomena in their real-life context (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Incidental observations were made parallel to an intensive desk research. This phase of research was followed by semi-structured interviews.
3.3 Sample strategy

The sampling strategy applied in this case study is in line with the qualitative research approach (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Purposively, a German multinational commercial company was selected. Furthermore, their emphasis on diversity was a central criterion. Additionally, the international orientation and multinational workforce were selection criteria. My aim was to get familiar with the socio-cultural space, while at the same time getting acquainted with policy documents and their content. Furthermore, interactions between people wanted to be observed. Ideally, the interviewees should have been spread across the meso and the micro level, which was a challenging task.

As the organization is divided into the Corporate Center and further four divisions (see Appendix II), I tried to spread the interviewees among this organizational structure (see Appendix III). This factor was important as only by interviewing employees from different divisions of the organizational group, various viewpoints and experiences could be made explicit. Hierarchically, participants from various high-skilled job levels were interviewed, however, the majority being in a managerial position at the Deutsche Post DHL Group. Highly educated professionals, German or non-German, who either work in their home country or in subsidiaries abroad and routinely use their mother-tongue only or two or more languages in their work environment were the focus group of this study. Gender and age of possible interviewees did not play a central role, but it could be noticed that generally more women were interested in the study. With my contact person of the corporate diversity team I discussed how to contact possible participants during the first meeting in March. First relations were made by sending emails to employees who work in diverse teams or have a multilingual background. This email included a small description of the research and what imaginable topics to expect during an interview. From there I tried to get in touch with more and more people as I was not able to spend complete days at the organization and make a lot of personal contacts myself. Therefore, I had to rely on my first three interviewees to extend my research to further colleagues. Thus, the selection of participants can be compared to the snowball sampling, in which usually participants recruit or recommend other future participants (Arksey & Knight, 1999). All efforts were made to avoid bias in informant selection, however, some participants were selected to be part of the research explicitly, as they dealt with the topic under investigation previously, were familiar with some issues and consequently had a solid opinion and something interesting to communicate. Furthermore, availability of possible informants had to be taken into account, as the research was limited to two months (March 15 until May 15, 2016) only. Additionally, as some interviewees were located outside of Germany, arrangements for telephone interviews...
had to be made, which was a rather difficult process, mainly because of the time difference. In the end, 15 interviews could be conducted.

3.4 Data collection

After the approval to conduct research within the Deutsche Post DHL Group with support by the corporate diversity team, an introductory meeting was arranged. During this first visit at Deutsche Post DHL Group I met my contact person and became familiar with the research site. Afterwards the previously developed interview guideline was adjusted (see Appendix IV). For preparation, but also during field visits, I collected data via desk research by checking their websites and gaining further information such as reports, brochures and general policy documents. Systematic and unsystematic observations before, during and after each meeting as well as writing down field notes were the first methods applied. These observations were made in order to get familiar with the research side and get first impressions about language use in the specific environment. This type of data collection was useful as it gave a general overview, unraveled potential issues that could help by formulating and adjusting interview questions, and helped to explore language practices. Further data was collected by means of 15 individual semi-structured interviews, from which five were telephone interviews, two interviewees answered the questions by email and only eight were held in a face-to-face manner. These interviews added valuable information to the observations. The face-to-face and telephone interviews followed a semi-structured interview guideline, which left room for further issues that developed during the conversation (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Furthermore, it gave me the chance to ask the essential questions on the one hand, and expand the prepared topic list and, thus, gather in-depth knowledge on the other hand. In this respect, it was possible for me to gain deeper insights into the topic of linguistic diversity from an organizational and individual point of view. Unfortunately, due to individual privacy concerns, not all interviews could be audio-recorded. When possible, transcriptions were provided; otherwise short summaries were made immediately after the interview session.

By using interviews to uncover the reasons behind the organization’s and peoples’ choice of language use, a qualitative approach was taken, which was new to the field, but highly appropriate. This way of data collection, which is in line with the grounded research approach, suited the research goal very well, because it allowed deeper insights into language practices.

In the beginning of each interview session, I shortly explained what the study was about and introduced myself. Further, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Afterwards
basic biographical and relevant background information, such as the position within the organization, the degree of international communication and so on, was obtained before the emphasis shifted towards the management of linguistic diversity, ideologies on multilingualism and information about language practices at the workspace. All interviews were held in English as most of the participants were not proficient in German. The German speakers among them agreed to conduct the interview in English. Each interview session lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, whether it was via telephone or face-to-face. The personal interviews took place in either private offices, or at the Café in the Post Tower building. One interview session was held in a Café in the city center of Bonn. When possible, interviews were audio-recorded, while additional field notes were taken during the conversation. Generally, participants understood the questions, although explanations were needed sometimes. Whereas some informants felt very secure, others were a little shy. However, almost every participant could think of situations they had faced when linguistic diversity was at stake. The examples given were positively as well as negatively connotated. Especially interviewees working internationally highly appreciated the topic of the research.

3.5 Data analysis

Besides written information in the form of booklets and documents provided by the organization, the data collected consisted out of field notes from observations, audio material, interview transcripts and interview summaries. The narratives that followed from the interviews were organized and analyzed for relevant topics such as ideologies, management, behavior and other dominant patterns. In line with the grounded approach, open and selective coding was used as a data analysis technique. By applying three stages of systematic data coding, moving from (1) initial coding to (2) re-coding to (3) selective coding, speculations could be avoided and bias and subjectivity minimized. By starting broad and ending up with rather specific concepts, only the most representative themes remained after the coding process (Boeije, 2002; Charmaz, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Thus, additionally to pre-determined issues, actual themes from the database could be identified and core themes and linkages could be established (see Appendix V). Transcripts and codes were compared constantly, which allowed for deeper understanding and analysis of the data. The mentioned line of coding led to an ideal analysis of the interviews, because it started broad and ended with the most relevant topics and their inter-relationships.
3.6 Research quality indicators

To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, four research quality indicators were used: (1) external validity, (2) internal validity, (3) transferability and (4) reliability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Firstly, the correct and systematic application of data collection methods and analysis that was in line with concepts according to the literature ensured external validity. Moreover, systematic coding decreased subjectivity and bias. Secondly, by using multiple perspectives on attitudes of linguistic diversity and various data collection procedures, such as observations and interviews as two methods of data collection, as well as a thorough literature review, data triangulation was guaranteed. This combination of methods ensured internal validity. The semi-structured design of the interviews was also useful in this respect. This way I could stay focused on what needed to be asked, but at the same time be open about new topics. Thirdly, the research design aimed to be transferable to various participants as well as similar organizations in future research, as the findings of this study provide an insight into one organization’s diversity management practices. Thus, using an interview guideline ensured consistency and transferability. Furthermore, an interview guideline assured that I would ask essential questions to all participants and to stay focused. Finally, potential biases and threats that might have influenced the quality of the case study may have led to a lack of reliability, such as the possibility of receiving socially desirable answers. By ensuring confidentiality, anonymity and explaining the academic nature of my research, I tried to counteract on this. The constant checking of the analysis with original data aimed for keeping the study as reliable and objective as possible. Besides that, objectivity was guaranteed by creating operationalized research questions as well as systematic data coding procedures. The semi-structured design of the interviews, furthermore, guaranteed a neutral perspective. As this research was carried out as a case study, generalizations should be avoided. Nevertheless, it seems possible to transfer and compare the results with other MNCs with similar characteristics to some degree. Thus, the results of this case study could be a starting point for future research on business multilingualism in Europe, as it may help to formulate similar research designs.
4. Contextualization of the Research

This chapter provides a brief introduction of the context in which the case study was carried out. An introduction of the Deutsche Post DHL Group is given in section 4.1. The organizational structure is discussed in 4.2, whereas 4.3 deals with the topic of diversity. The chapter closes with a section on organizational policies in 4.4.

4.1 The Deutsche Post DHL Group

The Deutsche Post DHL Group is the “world’s leading logistics and mail communications company” (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016a). With the progressively merging of Deutsche Post and DHL from 1998 to 2002 (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016c), the “Deutsche Post DHL Group operates under two brands” now (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016a). Whereas Deutsche Post is still the “leading postal service provider” in Europe, “DHL is uniquely positioned in the world’s growth markets” (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016a). The latter includes services in supply chain, freight, e-commerce as well as international express (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016a). The group operates in 220 countries worldwide, employs roughly 500,000 people and can, thus, call itself “one of the biggest private employers worldwide” (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016a). The workforce composition of the Deutsche Post DHL Group includes 65.5% male and 35.5% female employees at the end of 2015 (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016b). The headquarters of the organization is located in Bonn, Germany where according to interviewee E more than 50 different nationalities work side by side.

4.2 The structure of the Deutsche Post DHL Group

The Deutsche Post DHL Group covers two brands, Deutsche Post on the one hand and DHL on the other hand. The Group can further be divided into the Corporate Center and four divisions, which are: (1) PeP (Post, e-Commerce and Parcel), (2) Express, (3) Global Forwarding, Freight and (4) Supply Chain (see Appendix II).

Concerning the divisions, the first brand of the business, Deutsche Post, which is of German origin, is responsible for the division named PeP (Post, e-Commerce and Parcel) (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016c). The Deutsche Post is a “global player in the international delivery of mail and goods” and employs 150,000 employees (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016c). The second brand of the business, DHL, is in charge of three divisions, namely Express, Global Forwarding, Freight and Supply Chain. It is the “leading global brand in the logistics industry” and provides “logistics services ranging from national and international parcel delivery, international express, road, air and ocean transport to industrial supply chain management”
(Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016c). DHL employs 340,000 employees (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016c). The Corporate Center is independent of the two brands and any of the four divisions. Roughly 11,200 employees work in the Corporate Center (Deutsche Post DHL Group, 2016b). The Corporate Center and the four divisions (PeP, Express, Global Forwarding, Freight and Supply Chain), including the two brands Deutsche Post on the one hand and DHL on the other hand, operate under the umbrella organization called Deutsche Post DHL Group. Nevertheless, these different divisions have different CEOs and belong to different business units. As these different business units have different functions within the entire Deutsche Post DHL Group, this also has consequences on the management practices as well as on communication processes, since decision makers need to choose different (linguistic) diversity management strategies at different levels. Thus, the corporate structure of the organization is very complex. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, an oversimplification of the meso as well as of the micro level of the organization had to be made.

4.3 Diversity at the Deutsche Post DHL Group

The organization under research strongly emphasizes diversity. In their Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Statement the Slogan “[a]ll different, together successful” is used (Deutsche Post DHL, n.d.). Furthermore, the organization puts forward that they do not only “value the diversity” of their workforce, but that they see it “as a genuine strength” (Deutsche Post, n.d.). In this respect, not a homogeneous workforce is believed to bring success to the organization, but a heterogeneous one. Furthermore, they emphasize that they “promote an inclusive work environment in order to attain the highest possible productivity, creativity and efficiency” (Deutsche Post DHL, 2013).

In order to make diversity work, the global diversity management, as one “component of a sustainable HR strategy”, tries to invite talents and incorporate them into the organization (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014, p. 20). Furthermore, the responsibilities of this management team, which consists of the Diversity Council, the Division-level Diversity Core Team and the Corporate Culture/Diversity Department, are “promoting cultural change, encouraging communication at every level, as well as providing advice on team building and management, planning activities, removing barriers and overseeing the implementation of relevant activities” (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014, p. 20). The main topics concerning diversity within the organization so far are: (1) women in management positions, (2) generations of workforce (young, middle-aged, elderly), (3) internationality & culture, (4) sexual orientation, (5) flexible work arrangements and (6) employees with disabilities (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014). Especially in the
past 11 years, milestones in managing diversity could be reached, such as the establishment of the Diversity Department in 2005 as a starting point, the implementation of the Code of Conduct in 2006, the signing of the German Diversity Charter in 2007 or the adoption of the Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Statement in 2013 to underline the significance of diversity at Deutsche Post DHL Group (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014). This diversity statement was furthermore translated into 21 languages in 2014. Generally, the organization believes that the differences of their employees is something to be proud of and that they are also advantageous when it comes to competitiveness, as a diverse workforce “think[s] in new ways and explore[s] new paths”, gives the “opportunity and impetus for further growth” and is the “hallmark of the corporate culture” (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014, p. 3-4). Thus, the organization itself calls diversity “a key to success” and recruits talents worldwide (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014, p. 3).

The corporate culture of the organization “emphasizes the importance of each individual person – regardless of gender, age, ethnic background, nationality, disability or sexual orientation” (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014, p. 4). Furthermore, “Deutsche Post DHL is characterized by linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity, united under a single corporate umbrella” (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014, p. 12). Thus, in spite of the background differences among the workforce, employees work along the same corporate goals and ambitions. In this respect, the heterogeneous composition of its employees can be used advantageously in order to provide the company with future success as different talent will support the organization to do business in various economic markets the organization operates in already or will be operating in the future (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014).

Scholars also emphasize that only through its diverse workforce and cultures does an organization gain meaning, as an organization’s corporate culture is a result of “cultural preferences of leaders and employees” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 157). In order to define a corporate culture, three main aspects have to be taken into account, which can be summarized as: (1) relation organization and its employees, (2) the structure of the organization, whether it is hierarchical and authority oriented or not, (3) how employees view the organization and their role within it. A distinction can be made between four models of corporate cultures, which can be ultimately linked to national cultures: (1) Family (person-oriented, hierarchical), (2) Eiffel Tower (task-oriented and hierarchical), (3) Guided missile (project-oriented, focus on task and also egalitarian), (4) Incubator (fulfillment-oriented, focus on person and egalitarian). Often a mix of these generalized models about different corporate cultures is possible in which usually one type of corporate culture gives the direction. At this point it is to mention that this categorization is an oversimplification, however, it can help to classify certain
organizations. German organizations are typically classified as Eiffel Tower cultures, because usually they are role-oriented, task-focused and hierarchical. In the Eiffel Tower culture, usually a status of a person is attributed to the role and function that person has within the organization. Hence, in the recruitment process, a person’s qualifications and its relation to job requirements are most important, which means that people have to fit into a certain role and fulfill this function. If different organizational cultures are at stake within one organization, conflicts can emerge. Considering now the case of Deutsche Post DHL Group, it is to say that a German organization in core merged with DHL, an originally American organization. Thus, conflicts may arise. Nevertheless, not all American companies have a guided missile structure, but regarding authority, American corporate culture seem to be much less hierarchical and formal than most German companies. Thus, the structure of the Deutsche Post DHL Group is a proof in case for complexity and mixed corporate structure, as the merging of the two companies undermines the fixed and rigid descriptions of the corporate culture models. In this respect, national cultures do not always have a direct link to corporate cultures.

4.4 Organizational policies regarding linguistic diversity

The Code of Conduct, which was established in 2006, is an expression of the ethical principles and behavior of the Deutsche Post DHL Group. This Code of Conduct is the “foundation of all other Group policies” and is translated into 21 languages (Deutsche Post DHL, 2016d). It is part of the corporate culture of the organization and unites the different divisions and regional subsidiaries worldwide (Deutsche Post DHL, 2013). Regional subsidiaries are able to expand the group’s Code of Conduct (Deutsche Post DHL, 2013).

A general policy on linguistic diversity is not mentioned explicitly in any policy document. Due to the various nationalities that are part of the Deutsche Post DHL Group, however, different mother-tongues are acknowledged as was put forward during one of the first meetings at the beginning of the research. Thus, no written-down policy on linguistic diversity is available. An overview of all Deutsche Post DHL Group policies is included in Appendix VI.
5. Results

This chapter presents the results of the case study performed within the Deutsche Post DHL Group. The interviewees were spread among the Corporate Center of the organization as well as three out of the four different divisions. Interviewees have multiple cultural backgrounds, working in Germany and abroad. All interviews were held in English, but for all participants, including the researcher, English is not the mother-tongue. The results are presented in three sections. First of all, the organization’s attitude towards and motivation for linguistic diversity are displayed. The main objective of this section is to gain a better understanding of the organization’s ideology and management practices. In the second section, the employees’ personal attitude towards and motivation for linguistic diversity are discussed. The focus lies on their ideology and language behavior as well as on their individual experiences regarding the topic. Finally, the language practices of the organization and its employees in their everyday working environment are presented.

5.1 The organization’s attitude towards and motivation for linguistic diversity

Generally, all informants emphasized that the Deutsche Post DHL Group is a very diverse organization, as it operates in 220 countries worldwide and employs people from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, almost every participant emphasized that the organization pays attention to cultural as well as linguistic diversity. According to the majority of the interviewees, the organization is aware of the fact that diversity can help the business to grow and that diversity can make the organization even “more hybrid” as was mentioned by one informant. The same employee put forward that “diversity is the key for innovation” and that the organization’s reality is “that it is global”. Nevertheless, it seems as if the organization does “not understand the whole cultural thing”, however, “it is the new future” as was illustrated further by Interviewee H. Besides, this conversation revealed that the Deutsche Post DHL Group seems to be very diverse by accident, as the organization attracts many talents worldwide without the explicit planning of recruiting international employees.

Another informant highlighted that the parent company is still in core German, but that the organization became more global in recent years, especially with the merging of DHL and several internationalization strategies. Thus, the organization shifted towards becoming more global and saw a need in communicating to a great degree in English. That the organization’s origin is German was also emphasized by one interviewee, who works in the Netherlands, nevertheless, for the predominantly German division, PeP. This informant felt that Dutch employees strongly have to adapt to the German head offices, especially language-wise. Furthermore,
this division changed their product names, from German labels into English labels. This highlights that the organization is aware of their global reach and international customer base.

5.1.1 Business strategy

Concerning the strategy of the organization, generally, every important information within the Deutsche Post DHL Group is communicated in English and German. These two languages were also defined as being the two common corporate languages as annual reports are also published in English and German respectively. Additionally, almost half of the respondents argued that occasionally employees, who master specific languages, are placed in certain projects, as they usually have the linguistic and cultural background, which makes understanding the customer and their culture better. In this respect, potential linguistic and cultural barriers can be overcome. Consequently, it seems as if the organization makes use of the functional notion of employees’ language skills. Interviewee C emphasized further that colleagues make use of her language expertise, even in the absence of explicit policies. Three Spanish speaking interviewees claimed that the organization appreciates their additional language know-how, besides German and English, as well as the people they are working with. Interviewee G argued that they are using this strategy “to make sure that [they] create a trust and rapport that [they] can actually build on”. Interviewee H, furthermore, declared that “it is a powerful tool for the company to use all its benefits”. Despite these positive aspects concerning multilingualism, one informant noticed that even for international roles, native German speakers are preferred due to better communication among them. This way, international managers are able to discuss issues in their mother tongue, which is more convenient than speaking English as a lingua franca.

5.1.1.1 Recruitment process

Almost half of the interviewees stated that new employees are not recruited and hired according to their language skills, but because of their professional knowledge. Despite that, however, three respondents claimed that new employees are recruited explicitly according to their language skills, especially when certain projects are about to start as it is “a huge advantage if people speak the local language”, because that makes it possible to “navigate more easily and successfully” as Interviewee M illustrates this point. A Dutch employee working in the Neth-

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1 ‘Benefits’ does not seem to be the appropriate word here. What could be derived from the interview is that the informant meant that the organization should make use of all its resources.
erlands emphasized that managers usually look for people, who are proficient in Dutch, to communicate nationally, German to communicate with the headquarters, English to communicate internationally and also sometimes French, as “these are the four most important languages” within their business unit. Thus, language skills do play a crucial role when recruiting and hiring new staff\(^2\). Interviewed employees from other countries, such as Singapore, the United Arabic Emirates and China, revealed a different picture as usually speaking English and the local language of the country is enough. The requirement of speaking German does not apply in this context.

Generally, the majority of the informants mentioned that language skills requirements are usually clearly mentioned within job vacancies. This is also the case for the proficiency level of a certain language. Moreover, as speaking English seems to be inevitable for higher skilled positions, it is not always explicitly mentioned as a job criterion. Concerning German, informants were of different opinions, as some mentioned that German skills are not required, because “English is enough and mandatory” and others said that employees speaking German, additionally to English, are preferred. Only one interviewee made a distinction between high-skilled workers and operational staff. This person believes that it is of great importance that the operational staff has certain language skills, as these are the employees who usually have close contact with customers. Therefore, speaking the local language of the country or region would be essential.

5.1.2 Management approaches

The Code of Conduct is the basis for all organizational policies. Five interviewees highlighted that this essential document is available in multiple language versions. One informant justified and explained this decision by saying that it is necessary for the organization to communicate its rules and regulations as well as penalties in case of their violation efficiently to its employees. This is the main reason why it is inevitable to translate this document in various languages; that it can be understood by every employee. With regard to this management choice, the organization takes precautions and translates its Code of Conduct into 21 different languages. One informant additionally mentioned that there is also a simplified version of the Code of Conduct, including pictures and a simplified language, available, which is mostly convenient for the operational staff.

\(^2\) It should be brought to attention though that this interviewee works for the German brand Deutsche Post and not DHL in the Netherlands. This could have possible impacts on recruitment criteria.
In the Deutsche Post DHL Group’s Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Statement the organization puts forward that the diversity of their workforce is valued and seen as being supportive and advantageously for the success of the organization. Yet, linguistic diversity and its possible advantages for business outcomes are neither clearly mentioned, nor seriously considered.

During the initial interview of this case study it was asked whether the organization has an official written-down language policy. The informant’s answer was negative. However, this respondent highlighted that the organization informs its employees that everything, which is communicated internationally and across borders, must be done in English. The same informal rule is also applied by international teams, which practically means that as soon as a person is not aware of the local language, employees should switch to English. Additionally, from the desk research as well as from the answers of the majority of the interviewees it could be derived that there is no official language policy or written-down statement of the organization concerning the management of various languages. Nevertheless, some informants referred to an informal policy, which encourages employees to either use German or English in their day-to-day work environment in the headquarters. Furthermore, two respondents mentioned an informal policy, which implies that English and German are the main languages used for internal communication. Moreover, two different participants said that the official language of the organization is English, but yet that it is an unwritten rule. Interviewee G emphasized that she “never heard of it [a language policy]” and at the same time put forward that it is interesting if there were any guidelines and policies, but the employees do not know about them. Further, she was questioning how effective these guidelines were in the end.

Other interviews revealed that some employees have certain language skills, but that the management is not aware of these skills, because employees’ language skills are not recorded in a database. In this respect, the organization seems not to pay much attention to other languages spoken by its staff than English and German as was put forward by some participants.

5.1.2.1 Translation and interpreting services

In order to manage linguistic diversity, the organization makes use of translators and interpreters as was mentioned by six interviewees. They explained that there is an internal translation service on the one hand and that the organization makes use of external translation and interpreting agencies on the other hand. Especially when implementing internal programs (e.g. training programs) translations (often up to 40 different languages) are used in order for the implementation to be understood by the target group and to become more effective as was
mentioned by two interviewees. One of the greatest concerns of the organization is it to make sure that every employee understands these training programs and is able to work with them. Interestingly, as one of the interviewees is in charge of e-trainings, she would like to find out whether there are any other barriers in the successful application of training programs besides the language barrier. In order to do that she is working on a project, where she would go to different countries and find out where employees are struggling so that she can eventually change the programs to make operations run more smoothly.

Also internal documents, which have a group-wide reach (e.g. documents that are written and published by the global compliance office), need to be translated to make sure that all employees are able to read and understand. This is especially important for the operational staff, who might not be proficient in English or any other additional languages besides their mother-tongue. As already discussed, the Code of Conduct as well as additional policies are also available in different languages, which is also usually most beneficial for the operational staff, but also for employees who do not have international roles and may not be as fluent in English as others. Two interviewees mentioned the Letter of Frank, which is a report written for all employees and published by the group’s CEO at the end of the financial year. To reach as many workers as possible, this report is translated into various languages. As translations are always costly, the people responsible always carefully decide whether such a translating or interpreting service will be used or not. This often depends on the target audience and the importance of efficient communication of a certain document or report. Furthermore, three interviewees highlighted that after the initial translation, there is always a second language and cultural check by employees, who are native speakers of a certain language. In this manner, the organization makes use of the functional notion of their employees’ language skills again.

Concerning the use of interpreters, two interviewees said that all board members speak perfect English, resulting in the fact that international meetings will always be held in English, as there is no need for interpreters to overcome language barriers. Only one interviewee, however, remembered that the organization made use of interpreters at an international conference before.

5.1.2.2 Opportunities for language and cultural trainings

The Deutsche Post DHL group is offering different types of trainings to its employees. Five interviewees mentioned the opportunity for non-native German speakers to go to German language classes when they start a job in the country. Some respondents even said, that these language classes are compulsory; whereas others mentioned that it is up to the employee to be
pro-active and ask for language training, since this is “not a group-wide policy”, as Interviewee G explained. Usually, the manager has to decide whether money from the team budget can be spent on language trainings or not. For employees, who are going abroad for work, a different picture is shown, because there was no language training in the local language of the country available to the workers who participated in the study.

With the merging of the two brands Deutsche Post and DHL, English business courses were offered to German employees as English gained more importance in the work environment. Thus, if English language skills were required for a job, German employees were able to get English language trainings as was pointed out by informants. Furthermore, as the organization wants to make sure that every employee can speak the language that is necessary to speak for the job and feel secure about it language training opportunities are offered. A Chinese informant, however, criticized that there was no English language training available to employees in China.

Concerning cultural awareness trainings, only one foreign worker located in Germany could affirm that cultural awareness trainings were accessible for her. Other informants, who worked in Germany or abroad and who are either German or internationals could not affirm that there was an opportunity to partake in cultural awareness trainings.

5.2 The employees’ attitude towards and motivation for linguistic diversity

Concerning the employees’ attitude towards the German language and culture, most of the foreign workers in Germany revealed a positive attitude towards it, as the majority was eager to learn about it. One interviewee was interested as he would “no longer feel like a foreigner” when he had basic language skills. Another respondent was also eager to learn German due to her circumstances in her private life, but also in order to integrate better. She would recommend every foreigner to at least try to learn some German as it helps in the integration and orientation process in the new environment. The topic of exclusion and inclusion was also brought up by another respondent. Besides that, another participant argued that “colleagues take it as a nice sign that I make an effort to get to know that language”. Furthermore, learning German shows that she respects the fact that the parent company is of German origin. Additionally, it helped her to integrate more into the working environment. Another informant also believed that it is an advantage to speak German, as she cannot imagine working and living in Germany without speaking the language. Especially for her personal life outside of the work environment, speaking German is inevitable. Moreover, this person appreciates a diverse workforce, as colleagues can profit from each other’s experiences. Because of the fact that she left
her home country to study abroad and her interest in new cultures and languages, she was always eager to learn many languages herself. Another interview revealed a similar attitude, as this person always loved different cultures and countries. She also left her home country as she felt the need to get to know the world’s diverse inhabitants. A comparable mind-set was encountered by a third respondent, who always had an intrinsic motivation to learn other languages on the one hand, and inform herself about different cultures on the other hand. From a personal perspective, she thinks that it is important to embrace diversity within organizations.

Despite these positive attitudes towards learning the German language and culture, one interviewee does not have any personal motivation to make an effort to do so, as she does not need it for her job and her personal life, as people can communicate with her in English. Moreover, due to modern technology, she is even able to watch TV from her home country and does not feel the need to adjust language-wise. According to her, it would not really matter where she would be located, as information in various languages is available around the world nowadays. Nevertheless, for her it is of great importance to try to understand others and make others understand her in cultural terms. She strongly believes that this “is a mindset”. Accordingly, the language spoken does not really have an influence on understanding each other’s behavior and thoughts, but the attitude towards making each other understand. In contrast to this statement, one interviewee argued that “language does matter in terms of finding that cultural understanding” and that she always loved languages as it helps her to understand people better. All information gathered concerning this topic were derived from interviews that were conducted with foreign employees in Germany. Every employee who works for the Deutsche Post DHL Group outside of Germany did not have a motivation to learn the German language, as their local languages as well as English were sufficient enough to do their job.

Now turning to the voices of native German speakers, one interviewee argued that it should be obligatory for foreign employees to speak English and German when working in Germany. However, many of them do not speak German. According to her, she would appreciate if the company would expand its range of languages in which they communicate to their employees on the one hand, but then these employees should also make an effort and try to master German on the other hand. Another respondent put forward that she appreciates if foreign colleagues make an effort to learn German, although it is often not used for work-related issues.
5.2.1 Linguistic diversity at the workplace

Concerning personal experiences of (linguistic) diversity at the workplace, some informants explained that cultural rather than linguistic differences can cause conflicts occasionally. Especially the style of working is strongly determined by one’s culture. One respondent explained that she has to use different approaches in different countries on how to convince people for new processes or the implementation of new strategies. Also giving negative feedback can be done in various different ways depending on the country working with. In this respect, the culture and the style of working influence one another, which may result in misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Additionally, another interviewee claimed that a person’s culture defines who they are and how they work. Even though the parent company is of German origin, it would not be advantageous to try to implement the German culture in local subsidiaries. From her own experience, she could report that this will not work out. She illustrated this point by saying: “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”.

5.2.1.1 Integration and adaptation process

Regarding the integration and adaption process from a personal dimension, almost all respondents, who are foreign employees working in Germany, emphasized that they felt awkward in the beginning. One interview revealed that colleagues were not informed about the fact that a new foreign colleague will soon join the team and that this person does not master the German language well yet. Moreover, she felt isolated in the beginning as she did not get any cultural or linguistic support from colleagues, which had psychological effects on her. Out of her own interest she started to learn German in order to enjoy life in the work environment as well as in the country even more. Concluding, she would still say, that foreigners have to adapt to German colleagues and adjust to the work place. Another participant explained that especially when meetings were held in German she did not understand anything in the beginning. This resulted in frustration on the one hand, but also in motivation to learn German as soon as possible on the other hand. Her personal strategy was to acknowledge people to speak in English if they want her to contribute in the discussion. One interview revealed that there was barely any social interaction between colleagues and the new foreign employee, which might have been influenced by the employee’s attitude. She explained: “I don’t feel comfortable making friends, because I have to make friends. This is for me like forcing a situation”. Nevertheless, she “never felt excluded” when others spoke German, as long as they would explain afterwards what the conversation was about. Another participant, however, put forward that he had felt excluded before when foreign colleagues were speaking in their mother tongue. His strategy in
this situation was to ask the colleagues to switch to English so that he could join the conversation. Two informants who have been and who are working outside of Germany also highlighted that they felt lonely and left to themselves in the beginning. One of them argued that it always greatly depends on who you are (gender, age, nationality, etc.) and where you work. Especially with multicultural teams, the integration and adaptation process seems to be easier than otherwise; one informant explained: “I never felt as being treated differently”. Another respondent argued that employees have to be pro-active themselves in order to get familiar with the new environment, adjust and eventually adapt.

According to a third of the respondents, a formation of communities of people who share the same cultural and/or linguistic background can be observed. Four interviewees claimed that these communities serve a social purpose. Further, two of them pointed out that similarities of people, like sharing a same language and culture, are attractive and that this gives a feeling of belongingness. In this respect, it is a natural behavior to look for other people that may be similar to oneself, as the possibility is always higher to get rejected by people who are different to oneself as was explained by one informant. One international employee working in Germany even pointed out that she uses these kind of communities to get to know people, who would want to learn her mother tongue. That way she can speak her native language and help others to improve their language skills. Generally, however, there are “no formal mechanisms to get people with the same language together” as Interviewee G argued. Thus, informal group formation take place on a personal level, but usually not on a professional.

5.2.1.2 Barriers

Numerous interviews revealed that linguistic as well as cultural differences can create barriers in the work environment. As some German employees have difficulties with the English language, misunderstanding and miscommunication can cause problems among them. Even outside of Germany, employees have different English proficiency levels, as a lot of personnel have national instead of international roles in their country. Thus, speaking “English is an extra” for them as was explained by Interviewee H. In this respect, sometimes the language barrier can complicate business talks, and this is why local languages are often helpful when doing business abroad. A Chinese employee argued that also in meetings clarifications are necessary, because peoples’ English skills vary greatly. Then it is inevitable to slow down the pace of the speech and clarify arguments so that everyone will understand in the end. Not only does the proficiency level of English matter, but one informant highlighted that often people have different English accents, which makes it harder to understand one another and which may be one
of the reasons for misunderstandings. Especially native speakers are claimed to have a strong accent, which makes it difficult for non-native speakers to understand the content. If non-native English speakers repeat the content, it is usually better understood by people who also use English as a common language and who do not have native like proficiency. Furthermore, interviews revealed that there are generational differences regarding English language proficiency, as usually older employees struggle with English more than younger ones. Nevertheless, older employees tend to be open towards English language courses in order to communicate with foreign colleagues. Another participant argued that on the one hand speaking German and getting familiar with the German work environment was challenging in the beginning. On the other hand, she highlighted that “organizations have their own language”, which was striking for her. In this respect, she had difficulties to adapt to the organizational corporate language as such. Additionally, two informants put forward that even if people know a certain language that they also get familiar with the cultural background of that language. Nevertheless, speaking a certain language will increase the chance to understand the culture as well. Another interview revealed that linguistic and cultural differences have implications for the corporate efficiency and productivity of the organization. If these barriers cannot be overcome, it is possible that productivity and success may be lower. One German employee working in Asia mentioned that besides the language barrier there is also often a cultural barrier as people say they understood what was discussed, but it turns out that they have not. They would agree to do things, but then they would not do the task. When wanting to check whether employees understood, they would confirm that they understood, but this confirmation seems to have a different meaning, as “it means more, yes, I heard what you said” according to Interviewee M and not yes, I understood what you said and I will do it. Another barrier was encountered during online trainings since the instructors either have to speak English or German, depending on the target audience. If the instructor has a strong accent in a certain language, that makes it difficult for participants to follow, especially because it is not a face-to-face interaction but a visual one.

Concerning the operational staff, one interviewee mentioned that these employees are often left out, as online communication with them is usually not possible, because they are service providers and do not sit in front of a computer all day. Her concern was how these “unheard voices” could be reached. So she set up a project about linguistic diversity among blue-collar workers in order to find out how communication with these employees can be improved. Her practical approach was it to go to a place where the operational staff is located and see what languages they are using there. The result was that the blue-collar workers in Germany speak many different languages, but not German. As a consequence of this finding, a magazine
with various language versions was developed, in which organizational news and processes were published. This magazine was supposed to reach blue-collar workers worldwide, as they would find their language in the magazine. The combination of having different language versions combined in one magazine was not acknowledged by everyone, so the decision was made to develop separate sheets and distribute them in different languages. The main idea behind the magazine was also to be able to compare languages. For example, a Turkish migrant in Germany could read the Turkish version of the magazine and also try to read the German version of the same text. That way, the language proficiency could have been improved. As some employees from the operational staff are in direct contact with customers, they need to speak the language of the country. The informant explained that it is absolutely advantageous if the staff speaks the language of the customers in order to build and strengthen customer relationships. Finally, one informant mentioned that local subsidiaries are often very local. In this respect, global strategies that are implemented by the headquarters do not reach these local offices. From her perspective, a combination between local and global aspects are needed.

5.3 Language practices

Firstly, the majority of the interviews revealed that the languages spoken by employees within the organization depends to a great degree on the fact for which brand and division the employee is working for as well as on the CEO responsible for the certain division. Other employees located outside of Germany argued that German usually does not play a role when participating in a work-related conversation, but again emphasized that the language used for work-related topics depends greatly on the division an employee works for. As different divisions cover distinctive economic markets, different language priorities could be observed. In this respect, it is each divisions’ responsibility to translate certain documents for either their employees or their customers if a German or English version is not sufficient. The same holds true for local subsidiaries. Secondly, interviewees argued that it makes a great difference whether people work at the headquarters or at regional offices. Whereas English and German are used at the headquarters, most local subsidiaries make use of the local language, like for example Spanish in Spain or Dutch in the Netherlands. Contrasting to these statements, however, another respondent experienced dissimilar language requirements. She emphasized that regional subsidiaries seldom ask for local languages (she applied in Belgium, the Netherlands and Singapore), but that English would always be sufficient. Thirdly, another interviewee argued that language use is highly depending on the language that is used by the leaders of each
division and the team composition. Additionally, the employee’s position, whether it is an international or national role, or whether a person is responsible for certain economic markets, influences which languages are used on a daily basis. On the one hand, the organization seems to believe that if people have a national role, it is not always necessary to use any English in their daily business. On the other hand, if employees work in an international position, English is almost used exclusively to communicate with one another.

5.3.1 Working documents

Concerning the working documents used on a daily basis by staff within the organization, six participants of this case study said that the material they work with is available in English and German. One interviewee emphasized further that there are also documents which are only available in German. This is a disadvantage for her as being an expat in Germany, since she has to ask colleagues either for translations or to show and explain her how things are done. Despite this, almost half of the interviewees put forward that their workplace documents are always in English nowadays. However, they could encounter a shift towards a higher availability of English documents. Three of the interviewees who mentioned that are located outside of Germany and further three are having an international role, but are stationed in Germany. Nevertheless, sometimes it is even necessary to translate international English documents, as it is easier for the target audience to understand, especially when it is about sensitive issues as was explained by one interviewee. Three respondents, who have been or are still working in their home country, which is not Germany, emphasized that local documents are always available in the specific local language. Again, as none of my interviewees worked for the German branch of the business only, no difference between the Corporate Center and the four divisions could be found.

5.3.2 Intranet and websites

According to one interviewee, every country has its own intranet in their own local language. Furthermore, employees have the option to choose within the intranet of a certain country in which language they want the page to appear. One interviewee sees a problem in the way the intranet is set up now, because articles or reports that are published in one language (usually English) are translated (often only) locally into the native language. This translation is then published on the intranet of a certain country. Thus, the initial publisher does not have control over the translated report any longer, as information is translated in order to make local em-
ployees understand. The process happens locally without any assent. In this respect, the interviewee proposed a technical advancement in the way the intranet is set up, namely having one intranet with different language versions for everyone and not only on local levels.

The website of the Deutsche Post DHL Group is available in German and English, revealing the two brands, on the one hand the German parent company Deutsche Post and on the other hand DHL. The websites for Deutsche Post and DHL are also available in German and English in Germany. Concerning other countries, usually information is available in the local language as well as in English; this was explained by international interviewees. However, particular countries (e.g. India and Philippines) offer English-only websites. Two interviewees believe that the limited language versions of a website are due to cost issues. Furthermore, three interviewees mentioned that the way the websites are set up now provides no link to international customers. In this respect, the organization should speak the language of its customers and should not exclude minority languages. Especially by offering information in minority languages like Turkish or Polish, such as in Germany, the organization would become more customer-friendly as other service-oriented organizations are already by providing different language versions at ticket machines for trains for example.

5.3.3 Language practices of employees

The personal strategies, experiences and perceptions of linguistic diversity at the workplace differ greatly. A distinction can be made between a work-related context and a social context when talking about language use.

5.3.3.1 Work-related context

One Spanish speaking employee emphasized that she feels “more comfortable using [Spanish] rather than English” if another Spanish person is around. Furthermore, it is nice for her to communicate with someone in her native language, especially on work-related issues. Three informants, who are not Spanish, confirmed this statement by putting forward that this happens a lot with Spanish speaking colleagues. Whether native language skills help to make the business become more successful was not mentioned. Interviewee K stressed, however, that “it is quite natural” to switch to the mother tongue in a meeting if everyone speaks and understands the language well enough. Non-German employees also pointed towards the fact that often German colleagues speak German with one another, although people are around that are not proficient in this language. If this happens in a meeting one interviewee concludes for herself that the information is not important for her, if it would be, they would switch to English.
Furthermore, the same respondent argued that it is acceptable for her if colleagues speak German with one another to explain procedures better and then tell her the gist afterwards. Another respondent made different experiences, as she argued that people speak in their native languages with other colleagues, but will always switch to English as soon as another person joins, who is not aware of the language “to make sure that everybody can understand each other”. This was confirmed by another interviewee, who argued that if a non-German speaker is around, colleagues will switch to English; “this is common sense here”. Furthermore, interviewee K mentioned that she feels very comfortable to speak different languages and to switch between them, so that her conversations contain a mix of different languages, which is unconsciously done, as “sometimes [she does not] even notice which language [she is] using”. A German interviewee highlighted that she “never fall[s] back to German” as it is easier for her “to express things in English” and as she feels “more comfortable in English”, because that is the language of her daily business. A second and third informant also pointed out that it is easier to talk about work-related issues in English instead of their mother-tongue. A different picture is shown by a Dutch employee working in the Netherlands. English does not seem to be the most important language used in her daily business, but German. This shows that Dutch offices see a need to adapt to the German parent company, at least language-wise. In this context, she also highlighted that the parent company of the organization is German, so this fact should be acknowledged by all employees working for the group.

Regarding employees who are currently stationed in Germany, the interviews revealed different opinions. On the one hand respondents claimed that English is always needed and that German can also be of great importance for some positions, depending on the division and role, whether it is a national or international role. On the other hand, further interviewees argued that German is used for work-related issues very often, as still a lot of documents are available in German only and are not translated yet. In this respect, it is more important for employees to be able to read and listen to conversations in the language rather than speaking it themselves. Additionally, one interviewee emphasized that speaking German was a criterion to get the job, as a lot of work-related communication in her position is done in German. Another respondent, however, disagreed, as he put forward that it is not necessary to speak German to get a job in Germany, as almost all communication is done in English. An incident could be observed, where a French business man met a German business woman at the reception area of the Post Tower in Bonn. When they met, they were probably aware of the fact, that they have to use English as a common language, as the man was not fluent in German and the woman was not
in French. On another day before some interview sessions, observations were made at the reception area of the Post Tower again. It was noticeable that all communication with visitors was either done in German or English.

Considering employees who have been or who are currently working outside of Germany, a diverse picture of language use in work-related contexts is shown. Roughly half of these respondents argued that it is necessary to be able to speak the local language of the certain country, despite the fact that a lot of communication is done in English. The other half claimed that local language skills are not relevant and that everything within the organization is communicated in English. Whether these employees’ divisions belonged to the brand of Deutsche Post or DHL was not an issue here. Especially the Dutch interviewee highlighted, however, that French is of great importance to communicate with customers in France; it is even a necessity besides Dutch, German and English. Furthermore, she argued that local languages are always needed. Additionally, this respondent argued that working documents became predominantly German again in her division. In this respect, German plays a major role to communicate with the own company in Germany, as the German language is bridging the local Dutch offices and the headquarters in Germany. She explained that “it makes it easier if you speak German to get the information you need”. She argued further that this is also the reason why German “is essential for the job here”. According to her, there seem to be Dutch colleagues, who do not see this issue and who are difficult to convince that they have to be fluent in German, as English is more popular in the Netherlands. Especially in national positions, like Human Resource Management, one respondent claimed that it is always necessary to speak the local language in order to understand laws and regulations set by the government. Interestingly, one interviewee, although being non-German and working in Asia, argued that German is often used “informally or sometimes even formally in some meetings”. Despite the fact that this employee is part of the brand DHL and works for the division called Supply Chain, which according to most of the informants is predominantly English, he underlined that German still has major role within the organization.

To summarize the language use in work-related contexts, it seems as if in formal settings the English language dominates, while in the informal sphere, it is rather common to speak one’s mother tongue or the local language. German seems to have a special position as the organization’s origin is German and as the headquarters is located there. Additionally, it is to mention that if the English proficiency is rather low in a certain target country, local language skills are of great advantage. Furthermore, work-related language use depends to a great degree on the employee’s division as well as the role within this division.
5.3.3.2 Social context

Language usage in a social context appeared to be different from the language use in a work-related context, although the “native language of the parent company influences both the culture and also the language preferences” by employees as Interviewee G argued. In this respect, she emphasized that it is inevitable to speak at least a little German when working in Germany, as it is nice to participate in social talks. Another foreign employee working in Germany highlighted that “German is a must”, which was confirmed by a native German employee. Additionally, one respondent explained her effort to speak German, as she wanted to participate in social communication in the work environment. Furthermore, by learning German employees show respect to the fact that the organization is of German origin and signalize that they want to be part of the work environment and social life at the work place. Some interviews, however, revealed that not all expats make an effort to learn German, if their language of communication for work-related issues is English. Besides speaking German for social communication, English appeared to be the second most used language in Germany. This could also be observed before an interview, when observations were made around and in the Post Tower. In this particular incident, a presumably East European girl talked to her colleague in English; it seemed like a private conversation. When after a couple of minutes another colleague joined, the conversation still continued in English. English seemed to be used as lingua franca for this private chat. For employees working abroad, German or non-German, a different picture is shown, as usually German does not serve a social purpose. Usually, the language that is spoken the most in a social context is English or the local language. Another interviewee argued that often jokes are told in local languages and then some people do not understand; “that’s just the way it is”. Generally, almost all interviewees exposed that if two colleagues of the same linguistic and cultural background meet that they would use their mother tongue to communicate with one another.

5.3.4 The role of English and national languages

According to the majority of the informants, when the two brands Deutsche Post and DHL merged, a shift towards speaking more English took place. The role of German seemed to gain less importance since then. Although immediately after the merging, there were still a lot of German working documents, it “has improved a lot”, “that is not the case anymore” as was put forward by Interviewee G. Since then English has been the lingua franca of the organization since “English is minimum common standard” as was highlighted by Interviewee B. In this respect, a switch to English will be made, if people do not speak the local language. According to one interviewee working outside of Germany, English is spoken all the time. Another
respondent, working in Germany, explained the role of English by telling the story of Babel. She argued that English is the most convenient language for everyone to speak. Only by speaking English, goals can be reached together. Additionally, one interview revealed that non-native English speakers find it easier to understand and communicate with non-native English speakers compared to native English speakers. As English is the most important language of the organization globally, Interviewee M claimed that the Deutsche Post DHL Group “could not hire anyone who does not speak English”. This was confirmed by another respondent who highlighted that there is the urgency to speak English when working for the company. As some work environments are purely English, all information is at least communicated in English; in this respect, English is essential. However, it is important to distinguish between the Corporate Center and the four different divisions again. Furthermore, three interviews revealed that every employee in an international or higher managerial position is expected to speak English. Nevertheless, as only high-skilled workers are capable of using English properly, the question is which languages are spoken by lower-skilled workers. One interviewee argued that besides local languages, especially minority languages are spoken by these employees and not English. As English is the most important language within the organization, often terms are not even translated anymore. This results in employees who are capable of explaining processes in English, but who are not able to express these issues properly in their own mother tongue any longer. In this respect, one interviewee argued that “native English speakers in global organizations have an advantage, as words come out easier” and they can make use of their mother tongue (Interviewee I). Generally, it is to say that English is mentioned as a language that is used most frequently by all interviewees, whether they are German or not and whether they are situated in Germany or in local subsidiaries. Thus, most of the communication, internally as well as externally, runs in English. Furthermore, the interviews discovered that English is used in order to do business with other countries where it serves as a common language. Due to the fact the English proficiency varies greatly between countries, some respondents claimed that local languages are often needed to avoid misunderstandings. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewees identified that making use of English as a lingua franca increases the efficiency of working processes. At the same time, however, some felt that an English-only policy, even though this is an informal policy, would not be satisfactory. By making use of local languages, the organization can create trust and rapport and this way it could become easier to do business. Thus, speaking other languages than English is seen as an advantage. One respondent claimed that English will always have a strong role, but that it will never overrule local languages.
Further interviews revealed that speaking German would be of advantage when working in Germany or working for the predominantly German brand of the business, Deutsche Post. Local languages, thus, claimed to be of importance for either work-related or social purposes. In this respect, local language skills are generally highlighted as being beneficial when doing business, although often, English is used for these purposes nowadays. One interviewee argued further, that Chinese gains more and more importance in the world’s economic markets, especially in Asia, but that German organizations still tend to ignore this. Additionally, two respondents claimed that speaking different languages or not can open or close doors for every individual, as being able to speak a lot of languages will help people to grow. Furthermore, if individuals do not speak various languages, they will limit themselves in their capability to grow.
6. Conclusions and Discussion

This final chapter presents the conclusions of my case study and provides an answer to the research question. Furthermore, a discussion of the results is provided. The discussion section serves to link the findings back to the theoretical background of this study on the one hand, but also to relate topics that emerged in the field to relevant additional literature on the other hand. Afterwards, the limitations of this case-study are outlined and directions for future research are proposed. Finally, this thesis concludes with implications and recommendations for management purposes for the Deutsche Post DHL Group.

6.1 Case study conclusions

The purpose of the study conducted at the Deutsche Post DHL Group was to explore the relationship between linguistic diversity policies and de facto language practices on the work floor. The findings suggest that the organization as well as individual employees have an interest in linguistic diversity and value multilingualism even in the absence of explicit policies. Furthermore, the organization strongly believes that diversity helps the business to grow and that it contributes to the success of the company. Thus, their interests in diversity are usually business-related.

The language issue as one part of diversity is, however, not explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, it was argued that German and English are the two corporate languages. Therefore, the dominance of these two languages within this organization is very clear. Only when it comes to translating the company rules and regulations, like the Code of Conduct, the organization seems to pay close attention to additional languages. They claim to do this in order to ensure that every employee is able to read and understand these guidelines. Additionally, training programs are translated for the same purpose. Thus, additional language versions of documents have a functional purpose. Generally, however, there are no formal mechanisms on how to manage multilingualism within the organization. Considering immigrant minority languages, it seems as if the organization does not pay (enough) attention to these languages. For example, the group’s website as well as national websites are only available in the local language and in English. In this respect, it seems as if the organization does not always speak the language of its customers.

Concerning the management approaches regarding linguistic diversity, it needs to be highlighted that the organization has no formal written-down language policies. Nevertheless, it is communicated that employees should either use German or English in their daily business. Language trainings are offered to the staff occasionally. Despite that, the Deutsche Post DHL
Group makes us of internal and external translation and interpreting services to overcome language barriers. The Code of Conduct and its several translations should be mentioned at this point, as these guidelines are available in different language versions. Also training programs are often translated to avoid miscommunication. Which documents are also translated depends generally on the target audience. There are no clear regulations for this. Although there is no formal policy on language usage, during the recruitment process, managers pay attention to language skills of the candidates.

The employees’ perception towards linguistic diversity was generally very positive, as they were aware of the benefits, but also of the difficulties that can emerge. The majority of the informants had a general interest in different cultures and languages and were eager to learn German, if they were internationals working in Germany, or other languages that would either be beneficial for their position within the organization or for their personal lives. Especially foreign employees seem to keep in mind that the parent company is German and that some information may only be available in this language.

As there is no written-down language policy provided by the organization, no policies can be implemented. Nevertheless, informants rely on several informal policies. One of them reveals that German and English are the two corporate languages. Furthermore, everything to be communicated internationally must be done so in English. Which language is used when depends, however, largely on the partner of the conversation on the one hand and their own proficiency in a certain language on the other hand. Also the intention of the conversation is of relevance; whether the conversation serves a work-related or social purpose. In this respect, employees generally adapt a ‘whatever works’ policy. Thus, practicality and functionalism determine their language choices. It is a negotiation process between the interlocutors of a conversation. Usually the language which is most convenient for all participants of the conversation is chosen. Some languages, usually local languages, are selected to be spoken in order to build trust and rapport and avoid misunderstandings. Hence, certain languages are preferred over others in order to make conversations run smoothly. Consequently, it seems as if the organization hands over the language issue to their employees, who develop pragmatic strategies themselves even in the absence of explicit policies. Thus, the organization makes use of the functional notion of employees’ language skills. There are no formal mechanisms, however, to place workers with certain language skills in a certain project. This happens occasionally, to ensure that business conversations are understood by everybody. Additionally, native speakers of a certain language are usually asked to double check documents that were translated by the internal or external translation agency.
English is the main medium of (international) communication within the organization and serves as a lingua franca. Thus, it has a very functional role. Additionally, English seems to be the prestigious language in businesses these days, which is also reflected in this case study. The merging of the German company Deutsche Post with DHL also had implications for language practices, as a shift from a German-only work environment towards a more English work environment took place. Consequently, as conditions changed, language practices had to be reconstructed.

In the end, this case-study revealed that written-down language policies within the Deutsche Post DHL Group are absent. Nevertheless, employees rely on informal policies and practices and adopt pragmatic approaches. Yet, this research has shown that the organization pays most of the attention to the German and English language, as these two languages are, although informally, the corporate languages of the organization. As it is a German organization in core, German has a major function in most of the internal as well as external communication. English seems to function as a lingua franca, because of its universality. Nevertheless, from desk research and interviews it appears as if the organization could make more use of their employees’ linguistic diversity. As the Deutsche Post DHL Group is a worldwide brand, there seems to be improvement concerning language use, especially when keeping in mind that the world has become so diverse and organizations cannot know or control which nationalities are working in which country. Additionally, it is to mention that the complex structure of the organization itself may have an impact on language practices.

6.2 Discussion

The goal of this case study was to explore whether there is a gap or mismatch between policies set on the meso level and actual language use by employees on the micro level. Generally, it was expected that an organization as international as the Deutsche Post DHL Group pays attention to diversity management. This assumption was confirmed when entering the field of research. Moreover, the lack of paying attention to linguistic diversity on the one hand and the focus on English as a lingua franca on the other hand were first expectations that derived from previous studies. Research findings reveal that these general prospects could be affirmed. Nevertheless, this case study wanted to examine the ideologies and management of the organization despite the actual behavior by individuals additionally.

Generally, it is to say that the Deutsche Post DHL Group shows an overall interest in diversity. The signing of the Diversity Charter and the establishment are indicators for that. Yet, the literature argues that “diversity managers cannot solve the diversity challenge on their
own”, but that support from all sides is needed (McKinsey & Company, Inc., 2011, p. 7). Whereas attention is paid to the topics of gender diversity, religious diversity, sexual orientation, etc., the diversity management of the organization does not seem to be focusing on language diversity. Nevertheless, effective communication is highly needed in every business. As the organization can rely on a very diverse workforce worldwide, it seems as if the mix of employees helps to increase business success. Caye et al. (2011) argue that “[t]he composition of a company’s workforce can help address the challenges posed by an increasingly heterogeneous customer base, globalization, an impending talent crunch, and the imperative for adaptive and distributed leadership” (p. 2). Additionally, the same authors claim that a diverse workforce offers “the full spectrum of capabilities” (p. 3). Similar attitudes could be found during this research.

As the Deutsche Post DHL Group sells mostly services to their customer, this organization differs from other commercial companies that sell products. This might have an effect on language practices. It seems, as if, less innovation and creativity is needed in this branch, compared to the automobile industry for example. This might limit the diversity managers’ visions for making use of linguistic diversity efficiently. Furthermore, it is a very complex organization that became more and more international with the merging on the one hand and due to globalization on the other hand. Thus, a shift from a German working environment towards an international working environment took place, which had effects on communication practices. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) argue that organizations can have very structured frameworks, which also has implications on the corporate culture of the business. The same could be observed in this case study, as different brands are involved, the Corporate Center of the organization as well as different divisions. As it is a commercial company, and thus profit oriented, linguistic diversity needs also to be seen as an additional cost issue.

Özbilgin and Tatli (2011) argued that organizations pay attention to diversity management in order to improve the performance of the organization. Moreover, a diverse workforce would result in benefits such as the recruitment of best talent, higher efficiency and improvement of performances, the building of trustworthy relationships. Customer relationships can also be improved by a rich language repertoire. Thus, the increase of success for the company as well as competitiveness seem to be the major motivation for diversity management. Comparable results were found in this case study. Marschan, Welch and Welch (1997) claim that linguistic diversity has effects on the efficiency and productivity of the company, which ultimately has implications on the success rates. This statement can be confirmed with the results of this research. Furthermore, the results show that it is a great advantage for organizations to speak
the language of their customers on the one hand and the language used in certain economic markets on the other hand. Thus, employees are needed, “who understand the new markets and competitors” (Caye et al., 2011).

As clear-cut policies on how to manage linguistic diversity are absent, the organization seems to rely on an informal ‘what works’ policy. Thus, the organization is not influenced by European or German institutions, who plead for multilingualism in the business context. Informally, German and English are the two corporate languages of the organization. Making the language of the parent company to be one of the business’ corporate languages besides English has been revealed as one of the main strategies undertaken in previous research (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Kingsley, 2009; Thomas, 2008). As German is not even mentioned in the German constitutions as the official language of the country, German cannot be made the official language of the organization. Nonetheless, since most of the employees speak this language and the headquarters is located in Germany, it seems understandable why German plays such a major role within the Deutsche Post DHL Group. This can also be seen when considering that the majority of the employees working in the Netherlands for the German brand of the organization have to speak German. In this respect, the Netherlands adopt the language of the parent company. This strategy of adopting the parent company’s language was also put forward in the ELAN study (Hagen et al., 2006). Overall though, the organization seems to take a functional approach towards multilingualism, which implies that language usage is not planned, but that organizations seem to find incidental solutions to overcome language barriers. This finding is also in line with one of the strategies proposed by Hagen et al. (2006). Next to that, the Deutsche Post DHL Group makes use of translators and interpreters just like other organizations that were studied in previous research (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Hagen et al., 2006). External communication on websites is done in the national language of the country and in English. In this respect, these sources that should inform their customers do not seem to be highly customer-oriented. Including languages, especially minor languages, of the customer base is however important in order to establish a strong customer relationship (Kelly-Holmes, 2006).

Individual language practices are determined by the practical notion of a language. Thus, employees use common sense before making a decision. These findings on individual mind-sets in language use reflect the results of previous research (Angouri, 2013; Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014). This ‘whatever works’ attitude in the absence of formal policies seems to be a strategy applied not only in this case study, but also in other research concerning business multilingualism (Angouri, 2013; Angouri & Miglbauer, 2012). Competence of individuals in certain languages ultimately affects these language practices in the business context (Nekvapil
& Nekula, 2006). In this respect, researchers should focus more on the real workplace perspective and less on the theoretical concepts. This was highlighted in previous studies and taken into account during this research. Like Watson (2010), informants reflected on the English language in relation to local languages. Although almost all interviews revealed that usually English is used as a lingua franca. Yet, despite the positive connotations of English as the lingua franca, they also saw the struggles of it, as it is an aspect of competitiveness to not only speak English, but being able to make use of various languages in an organization. Misunderstandings and miscommunication can thus be minimized, although often not only language barriers can lead to conflicts, but also cultural barriers. Caye et al. (2011) argue that “[e]mpathy with employees and partners at all levels can be quite valuable when companies enter new regions or market segments” (p. 12). The results of this case study are in line with these earlier research findings, as informants mentioned how cultural and linguistic understanding of each other has positive effects on business outcomes, especially in countries that were not included in business before.

English is used as the main lingua franca within the Deutsche Post DHL Group. It is a prestigious language in businesses these days. By making use of English the global ideological stance of it by international businesses can be encountered. Nevertheless, informants also encountered problems with that strategy, which are in line with the critical reflection of English as a lingua franca in previous studies (Angouri, 2013; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Jonsen et al., 2011; Kingsley, 2009; Loos, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Nickerson, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2011; Vandermeeren, 1999). The negative effects of an English-only policy, such as different proficiency levels which may result in misunderstandings on the one hand and the positive implications of making use of local languages on the other hand were also highlighted during this research. These findings are linked to the results presented by Watson (2010). Especially the different proficiency levels by various employees in English were claimed to have a strong impact on communication practices. These communication practices were also discussed by Fredriksson et al. (2006) and Loos (2007).

As local and global businesses have become ‘glocal’ language practices had to be re-determined. Thus, the multinational workplace has ultimately become multilingual (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2012), which is also reflected in this case study. Moreover, this research revealed that when doing business beyond borders, linguistic diversity is very important, which was already highlighted by Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2006) and Canagarajah (2007). Consequently, targeting further languages besides English for work-related as well as for social pur-
poses may possibly result in increasing success of the company as was explained by the participants. Amelina’s paper (2010) reveals similar findings. That competences in certain languages may have positive effects on business outcomes was also discussed by Feely and Harzing (2003), Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), Ortlieb and Sieben (2013) and Thomas (2008). Informants emphasized that speaking different languages could firstly create trust and rapport by removing language barriers, which may avoid mistrust and miscommunication, and secondly that knowledge in a certain language may also imply knowledge of a certain culture, which could also avoid conflict. In this respect, it seems inevitable for organizations to focus on linguistic diversity as a rich language repertoire is often needed to build business relationships and gain access to new markets in order to gain a better understanding of the cultural context (Ruske et al., 2012). The findings of this case study are, thus, in line with the results of the ELAN study (Hagen et al., 2006).

The findings of this case study are in line with the findings of the LRE project, which suggest that roughly 70% of the time the national language is used in businesses and 30% English (Extra & Yağmur, 2012). As German still plays a major role within the organization, foreign employees are generally not reluctant towards learning the language. Nevertheless, as the organization seems to pay most of the attention to English and German, other European as well as minority languages are disregarded. This selective multilingualism, as Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) call it in their research, may also have an effect on customer relationships as these customers speak these languages.

Overall, this case study provides evidence that a great language repertoire is valuable in today’s business world. Additionally, it also reveals that the investment in language strategies are not always needed, but that employees develop useful strategies themselves. The reason why organizations may rely on pragmatic approaches of their workers and do not invest in language strategies as such, could be the profit-oriented nature of such commercial companies. It seems as if these companies, however, make short-term calculations regarding investments. Feasibility reports for productivity and increasing profit are present, whereas long-term future investment, such as the investment in linguistic diversity, for the company are often absent. But scholars like Hagen et al. (2006) argue that “[i]nvestment in the development of language skills across the EU would produce economic benefits” (p. 57). Furthermore, the same authors claim that “[t]hese investments are an essential factor in enabling the EU to compete on the basis of skills and knowledge rather than on the basis of low costs” (Hagen et al., 2006, p. 57). Nevertheless, it seems as if commercial companies avoid long-term perspectives.
Further findings suggest that the Code of Conduct is the major policy document of the organization. It was one major theme in the result section, since it is the Deutsche Post DHL Group’s priority to translate this document in various language versions. By doing so, they ensure that every employee will understand the rules and regulations on the one hand and to minimize risks and secure safety on the other hand. Furthermore, a distinction between high-skilled and low-skilled workers are needed, since the operational staff seems to be challenged by linguistic diversity even more than employees sitting in an office.

6.3 Research limitations and directions for future research

Several limitations of this study need to be brought to attention. First of all, due to several contextual restrictions, structured observations could not be carried out. However, it was possible to observe how people interacted with each other on the work floor incidentally. These incidental observations did not give a deep insight, but could be used to match the interview data with some reflections from the work floor. Due to this, desk research and interviews served as primary source of evidence. Secondly, some interviews were conducted via telephone, as these employees are stationed outside of Germany. Despite the fact that all of these telephone interviews were audio-recorded, the audio-files of these conversations were of lower quality, so that not every single word could be understood and transcribed. Some participants may use different languages unconsciously, which means that if they were asked about personal experiences concerning linguistic diversity, they may have been not aware of it. Thirdly, as I was not allowed to audio-record some of the face-to-face interviews, I took notes and wrote a summary of each interview immediately after the talk. However, during the interview it was difficult to grasp all important information on the one hand and stay focused and ask the most crucial questions prepared in the interview guideline on the other hand. Additionally, English was used as a lingua franca, which might have led to misunderstandings that remained unnoticed. For all the participants, including myself, English was not the native language, so there is the possibility that people could not express themselves as clearly as they could have in their mother tongue. I tried to build rapport, but still participants might have felt reluctant in answering sensitive questions. Also my interpretation and analysis of the collected data, although constantly checking during the coding process, might have had an influence on the results. Future research should consider these contextual factors. Additionally, it would be recommendable to leading the research towards more observational findings, as interviews can only reveal what informants remember, but might not show the reality.
6.4 Practical implications and recommendations for management purposes

Based upon the outcome of this study, a few recommendations can be formulated. Firstly, it is suggested that every employee will get informed about language and cultural awareness trainings. As some informants revealed that they were not aware of these trainings, it seems as if communication could be improved. That way, managers could make the offering of language and cultural awareness trainings a group-wide policy. This will result in equal chances for every employee. Cultural awareness trainings could also be offered for local employees, who work in their home country and thus, familiar environment. By doing so, they may become more sensitive towards the situation of their international colleagues. Thus, creating an understanding of each other may be helpful. Language and culture are closely connected in many respects. However, some misunderstandings might be due to language barrier and some due to cultural differences. In this respect, employees need to be familiar with many cultures in order to avoid misunderstandings. When making sure that trainings are offered to every employee, diversity is indirectly promoted as being beneficial for the company. In the same vein, the organization could differentiate themselves from other competitors, if the entire workforce is informed about cultural as well as linguistic diversity and its implications. The trainings could also be expanded to families of international employees, who would also benefit by adjusting to the new country.

Secondly, the organization could document employees’ background information, which may be helpful to do the job, such as language skills. This way the company can make use of the competences of employees more efficiently, which can have effects on the company’s business practices and success. Trainings could be provided in order to encourage employees to improve their language skills in certain languages, which may reduce the costs of interpreters and translators on the one hand and reduce conflict due to language and cultural barriers on the other hand. Interviews revealed that many employees have basic knowledge in some languages, but when increasing their proficiency, the organization may be able to benefit from it in the end.

Thirdly, the explicit recruiting of people who understand different languages and cultures is recommended to introduce the company into new markets. Then a combination of local and global aspects is possible. By deciding things on local levels and not only from a global or corporate perspective, management interventions may be more effective. Often strategies need to be customized as different people from various cultures adopt the same strategies differently. This way misunderstandings due to linguistic and cultural barriers may be minimized.

Fourthly, it is suggested to invest in multilingual websites. This way the organization can expand their view on languages and not only pay attention to German or local languages and...
English, but also on minority languages or Chinese, as this language gains more and more importance in the business world.
7. References


8. Appendix

1. Conceptual model
II. The organizational structure of Deutsche Post DHL Group

IIa.

[Diagram of organizational structure]

IIb.

[Diagram of brand architecture]

### III. Overview interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
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<td>Romanian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Supply Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Supply Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Supply Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>United Arabic Emirates</td>
<td>Global Forwarding, Freight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Post – e-Commerce – Parcel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Global Forwarding, Freight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Supply Chain</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Global Forwarding, Freight</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Corporate Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Interview guideline

Focus: Interviewees

1. What is your background? (age, how long part of DPDHL?)
2. What language is your mother tongue?
3. If your mother tongue is not German, did you have to learn it (for the job)?
4. What languages can you speak/understand?
5. Which language(s) do you speak with your colleagues on work-related topics/in work-related settings?
6. Which language(s) do you speak with your colleagues on non-work-related topics/informal settings?
7. Have you encountered problems in communication due to lack of knowledge of the language that was spoken (e.g. in a meeting)?

Focus: General

1. Is the company aware of EU programs or funding on (language) diversity?
2. Does language play a role as a cultural marker (symbol, identity) within the company? What does this imply for the policy makers of the company? What does this imply for individuals?
3. Do you feel comfortable listening and speaking to others in German (English or other language)? What are the consequences?
4. Do you switch between different languages? When? Why? What are the struggles and consequences of it?

Focus: External Language Policies

1. In which language(s) (foreign, regional, immigrant) do you (personally) interact with external stakeholders?
2. Which languages does the organization use to communicate externally (annual reports, marketing, corporate branding/identity, website)?
3. Does the company make use of immigrant/regional/foreign in its corporate identity and in branding?
4. Do language skills play a role in the recruitment process? If so, why? Is language proficiency and competence in German (English or other language) a selection criterion for new employees?
5. Does the company explicitly recruit employees that have skills in (foreign/regional/im- 
migrant) languages or even native speakers to support the organization? If so, in which 
languages?
6. Why is/can this expertise of relevance for the business?
7. Do you think the organization’s attitude towards linguistic diversity has changed during 
the years? Why? What are possible reasons?

**Focus: Internal Language Policies**

1. What is the company’s approach towards language diversity (policies, documents, web-
   site)?
2. Do diversity policies exist within the organization? If so, are there policies on language 
diversity? Is there a written statement on which languages to use?
3. How does the company promote language diversity?
4. Does the company provide explicit documents on language ideologies/behavior/man-
   agement?
5. Is there a general/explicit language strategy of the company? If so, what is the strategy?
6. Which languages are used for workplace documents, reports and the website?
7. Does the company provide language or intercultural awareness training for the employ-
   ees? (In order to increase the language proficiency – German or English?)
8. Does the company make use of external interpreters or translators? If so, why?
9. Does the company register the language skills of their employees?
10. How many non-native German speakers do you have within the organization?
11. Which language(s) are used to communicate internally?
12. How important is the national language within the organization?
13. How important is English within the organization?
14. Does the organization pay attention to languages other than German or English?
15. Are German language skills required for a job? Why?
16. Are fluent foreign language skills required for a job? Why?
17. What is the common corporate language? Why? Do you see difficulties here?
18. Do you feel that you or colleagues may struggle to understand others from time to time 
   (difference in language proficiency?)
19. Have you ever felt excluded in the work environment because of not understanding a 
   particular language?
## V. Overview of the coding process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample statements (quotes) of the informants</th>
<th>How the statements are submerged under a general code</th>
<th>Under which main theme the code falls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No formal mechanisms to get people with the same language together.</td>
<td>Interviewees are talking about the organizational attitude towards (linguistic) diversity</td>
<td>The organization’s attitude towards and motivation for linguistic diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization is aware of the fact that cultural differences can help the business to grow.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity can make the organization more hybrid and it is the key for innovation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>After the merging in 2003, a shift towards more English took place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Important organizational statements are published in German and English.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is in core a German company, but the company has become very international, which also influenced the language practices.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization’s origin is German. We have to accept that.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every important document is published in English and German.</td>
<td>Interviewees are talking about how the organization deals with linguistic diversity in their daily business</td>
<td>Business Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and German are the common corporate languages of the organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes colleagues with certain language skills are place in certain projects to work better together, create trust and rapport that we can build on. This is not a policy, but happens occasionally.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of managers, even in international roles, are German as it is easier to communicate with one another.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff is recruited according to professional knowledge and not according to language skills.</td>
<td>Interviewees are talking about their</td>
<td>Recruitment process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63
People are recruited according to their language skills, because it is a huge advantage if people speak the local language.

Here we look for people that speak Dutch, German, English and French. These are the four most important languages.

Speaking English is enough. I do not need to speak German here.

The vacancies will tell you which languages at which level are required for the job.

English is mandatory. German is preferred.

The Code of Conduct is translated into various languages.

The organization needs to make sure that every employee will understand the rules and regulations stated in the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is available in 21 languages.

There is a simplified version of the Code of Conduct available for operational staff.

As a global company we value the diversity of our employees as a genuine strength.

Diversity is a key to success.

I’ve never heard of a language policy.

No we don’t have a written-down language policy.

The informal policy is that either English or German must be used for internal communication.

| Interviewees are talking about the Code of Conduct and that there is no official language policy, but informal practices | Management approaches | experiences with linguistic diversity during the recruitment process |
The official language of the organization is English.

Employees are proficient in some languages, but the HR management does not know about it, because we don’t have to tell them which languages we speak. Language skills are not recorded.

Yes, we use translators and interpreters. There is an in-house translation service. And there are also external agencies.

E-learning programs often need to be translated into many languages. Sometimes 40, so that the employees can work with them.

What it translated and what not always depends on the target audience.

Internal documents, like policies, that are directed to all the employees need to be translated.

The Letter of Frank is translated into different languages.

After translations, the documents are double-checked by native speakers.

No interpreters are needed as the board members speak perfect English.

Colleagues will get trainings to master English.

English business classes were offered when Deutsche Post merged with DHL.

Foreign colleagues can get German training, which is partially supported by the company. It is not a group-wide policy.

Language and cultural trainings are offered to foreign workers in Germany.

German language trainings are compulsory.

Interviewees are talking about group-wide documents that need to be translated in order to make every employee understand.

Translation and interpreting services

Opportunities for language and cultural trainings
I never heard of a cultural awareness training.

I always had an intrinsic motivation to learn other languages and about other cultures. It is very important to embrace diversity.

I love languages. Languages matter in finding that cultural understanding.

I always try to understand others and make others understand me in cultural terms. This is a mind-set.

I always loved different languages and cultures. That’s one of the reasons why I left my home-country.

Colleagues take it as a nice sign that I make an effort to get to know that language.

I have an international role. German is not necessary for my position and if you work in the tower.

How to persuade or convince people is different in different cultures. Germany is a principal first culture and the USA for example an application first culture.

Your culture defines who you are and how you work. German culture cannot be implemented in other offices. It’s like the saying: When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

For integration and orientation, everyone should try to learn German.

When I learned German, I no longer felt like a foreigner.

I learned German to integrate well. It has no professional benefits.

It’s an advantage to speak German in the work environment and also to adapt in society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviewees</strong> are talking about their personal interests in and motivation for linguistic diversity</th>
<th><strong>Linguistic diversity at the work place</strong></th>
<th><strong>The employees’ attitude towards and motivation for linguistic diversity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewees are talking about their personal interests in and motivation for linguistic diversity</td>
<td>Integration and adaptation process</td>
<td>Integration and adaptation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration and adaptation process</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I learned the language because I wanted to be included.

In the beginning, meetings were held in German, then I felt awkward. Also it was frustrating for me, but that actually gave me the drive to learn German.

I felt isolated in the beginning. That affected me psychologically. I didn’t get any cultural or linguistic support from colleagues.

I don’t feel comfortable making friends, because I have to make friends. This is for me like forcing a situation.

When I came, I was the first year completely alone. Alone is alone. But I never felt excluded.

I have felt excluded before, but then I would ask them to switch to English.

I never felt as being treated differently.

I did research myself and ask people around how things are going. You need to be pro-active.

There was a Spanish-community for social purposes.

I know of a Chinese community. You share the same language and culture. That is nice. You have similarities and you can participate in social activities.

It’s natural that people look for others who have similarities, because there is always the possibility to get rejected from people that want you to be similar to them.

I am ensuring that everyone around me speaks Spanish. I am creating a community.

There are no formal mechanism to get people with the same language together. It is more an informal process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking English is an extra.</th>
<th>Interviewees are talking about barriers due to inadequate proficiency in a certain language and cultural misunderstandings</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes it is a barrier, if the other person is not as fluent in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not everyone has the same proficiency in English or German.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online trainings are difficult due to different language proficiencies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often there is also the cultural barrier, as people say they understand and will do something, but don’t do it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s skills in English vary greatly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often clarification in meetings is necessary.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easier to understand English speakers, who are not native speakers.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to different accents, communication can be challenging sometimes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some German colleagues have issues with English here in Bonn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lack of English can cause problems abroad, but not in Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic and cultural differences have implications for corporate efficiency and productivity.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The world has become so diverse. We don’t know which nationalities are working in which countries.</td>
<td>Interviewees are talking about how different factors have an influence on their language practices</td>
<td>Language practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a difference between the headquarters and regional subsidiaries.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It depends for which division you work for.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usually, if you work in local subsidiaries, local language skills are needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>From my experience, regional subsidiaries seldom ask for local languages.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language that is spoken depends on your boss.</td>
<td>Language use depends on your role in the company, whether it is an international or national role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly they are in English and German. Important documents need to be translated. Most of the documents are in English. They are translated if the target-audience needs it. Internationally, everything is communicated in English. Locally in the local languages. Everything is in English, locally and internationally. Generally, there is more available in English these days. There was a shift from German to more English. A lot of documents are still in German, that makes it hard for expats to understand.</td>
<td>Interviewees are talking about their daily working documents and in how far linguistic diversity is considered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every country has its own intranet. The intranet is available in several languages. Employees can set the language they want as their home language. The website is only in German and English due to cost issues. Websites are in the local language and in English. All countries have their internet in their own local language. Multilingual websites would be ideal, as that would be the link to international customers.</td>
<td>Working documents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviewees are talking about multi-lingualism on the intranet and on the group’s websites.</td>
<td>Intranet and websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be nice to offer the website in Turkish or Russian for minority speakers in Germany. We need to speak the language of our customers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly English is spoken. The simple rule in meetings is that if one person doesn’t understand German, we would switch to English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I only speak English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use German and English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I speak English and Spanish at work. Usually I speak English, but sometimes Spanish with Spanish colleagues. But for me, words come out easier in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locally, I speak Dutch. With the headquarters we speak German and English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For international communication I use English, nationally I use German.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I speak English due to the international work environment; German, only very barely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I speak Chinese. If a foreigner is around, we will switch to English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use English and also Filipino with Filipino colleagues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly English and sometimes German.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For social purposes, I speak Dutch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a very diverse group, we speak English. With Spanish speaking colleagues, I speak Spanish, but we switch to English if people enter the conversation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use German and English.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you speak German, it is easier to socialize.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and German should be a must when working here, but many colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewees are talking about the languages they speak for social purposes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language practices of employees in a social context</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Interviewees are talking about the languages they speak for work-related purposes |

| Language practices of employees in a work-related context |

| The role of English and national languages |
do not speak German. If the company would communicate in more languages, then employees should also try to master German.

Colleagues take it as a nice sign that I make an effort to get to know that language.

It is nice if colleagues try to speak German.

The common corporate languages are German and English. If someone doesn’t speak German, a switch is made to English. This is common sense here.

English is an extra.

English is the lingua franca here. It is the minimum common standard.

Speaking English is a must as the work environment is purely English.

Globally, English is the most important language. Somehow it is the lingua franca.

Everyone who works internationally needs to speak English, it’s inevitable.

English is a must in Supply Chain.

Often non-native English speakers understand each other better.

English is the most important language.

English is spoken all the time.

The role of English depends on the country you work in.

Most of the business communication runs in English, thus the German translations for certain terms are not there.

| English and the German language and culture |   |
VI. Deutsche Post DHL Group policies