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by

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PITFALLS AND MERITS OF METALANGUAGE IN A (POTENTIALLY) MULTILINGUAL WORKPLACE: SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDIES FROM AN EU INSTITUTION IN LUXEMBOURG

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Summary

This dissertation presents a compilation of four academic articles on qualitative sociolinguistic research exploring the implications of metalanguage in an international workplace. The research was conducted with language professionals from an international terminology and communication department of a European Union institution based in Luxembourg. The participants engaged in iterative semi-structured interviews and reflexive metaphor drawing, which prompted metalinguistic comments on the languages and speakers they encountered in their daily work. The analyses draw on the tradition of critical socio-pragmatic discourse analysis. They link the sources of knowledge about language (structural and social conditions), the resulting intentions (whether understood or misunderstood), and the subsequent effects of language use.

The four articles are accompanied by an overarching commentary that describes the research process and brings the separate studies together into one report. The first article describes a pilot study that investigated the metalinguistic stances of trainees identified by the team as ‘native English speakers’. The findings reveal the negative effects of language ideologies that construct the position of ‘native English speaker’ as particularly valuable in a multilingual unit. The second study explored the different meanings of ‘multilingualism’ and the development of its understanding among trainees during their internship and research participation. The results underscore the need to consider the social and affective aspects of language use, which may be of greater importance than the precision of linguistic expression, even in the work of language professionals. The third study unveiled the differing interpretive frameworks for language choice between English and French in the context of cross-cultural management. In the discourse analysis of “language cringe” and “language push”, the article reveals a number of incongruent intentions and effects in metalinguistic commentaries that reinforce stereotypes of ‘French speakers’ while limiting the willingness of individuals to use French in multilingual settings. Finally, the fourth study focused on linguistic authority in the context of European mobility. The resulting final article highlights the negative impact of language ideologies on younger workers with unstable job situations, and discusses the implications of the “empty promise” of multilingualism in the EU institutions.

In conclusion, this dissertation provides a critical, theoretically triangulated analysis of metalinguistic discourse circulating in the international work environment of the European institutions in Luxembourg. Collectively, the studies reveal the adverse effects of language ideologies at work; challenge prevailing stereotypes; and advocate critical reflection, which can lead to respectful action in multilingual contexts. The results highlight the need to pay attention to metalinguistic commentaries, as different interpretations of language use, whether manipulated or simply different, can contribute to tensions within work teams. The aim is to mitigate or address discursive manipulations by promoting open, critical, and respectful metalanguage, while acknowledging the importance of social and affective functions of language.

Keywords: sociolinguistic, metalinguistic, metalanguage, stance, European Union, workplace, multilingualism, native speaker, language ideology

Statement of Original Work

I declare that this cumulative dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

The following published papers are part of the dissertation:

	Article	Publisher	Licence
1	Lovrits, V. and de Bres, J. (2021). Prestigious language, pigeonholed speakers: Stances towards the 'native English speaker' in a multilingual European institution. *Journal of Sociolinguistics 25*(3), 398-417. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12431	John Wiley & Sons Ltd.	CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs
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2	Lovrits V. (2022). Making meaning of multilingualism at work: from competence to conviviality. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2047987	Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group	CC BY 4.0 Attribution 4.0 International
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3	Lovrits, V., Langinier, H. and Ehrhart, S. *(accepted with minor revisions).* French and language ideologies in a multilingual European Union institution: Re-constructing the meaning of language choice at work. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*.	Sage Publications Ltd.	
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	Text version used in this dissertation		Author's preprint

Dedication

To the late Prof. Jan Blommaert,

whose life advice has helped me navigate the challenges of the academic world.

With deep respect and admiration, I dedicate this dissertation to his memory.

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Academic Publications 2020-2024 (Complete List)

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1	article	first author	Lovrits, V., and J. de Bres. (2021). Prestigious language, pigeonholed speakers: Stances towards the 'native English speaker' in a multilingual European institution. *Journal of Sociolinguistics 25*(3), pp. 398-417.	Published by Wiley	x
2	article	last author	de Bres, J. and Lovrits, V. (2021) Monolingual cringe and ideologies of English: Anglophone migrants to Luxembourg draw their experiences in a multilingual society, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. https://doi.org/ 10.1080/01434632.2021.1920965	Published by Taylor and Francis	-
3	article	author	Lovrits, V. (2022). Making meaning of multilingualism at work: from competence to conviviality. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2047987	Published by Taylor and Francis	x
4	book review	author	Lovrits, V. (2022). Book Review: Language Management: From Bricolage to Strategy in British Companies. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*. https://doi.org/10.1177/14705958221138697	Published by Sage	-
5	chapter in conference proceedings	author	Lovrits, V. (2022). Adverse 'native speaker' effects on Anglophones in the multilingual workplace. In Hůlková, I., Povolná, R., Vogel, R. (Eds.) *Patterns and Variation in English Language Discourse. 9th Brno Conference on Linguistics Studies in English*. Masarykova Univerzita. Brno.	Published by MUNI	-
6	chapter in conference proceedings	author	Lovrits, V. (*accepted*). Implications of the managers' preference for 'native speakers' in a multinational team. In *Champs didactiques plurilingues » sous-collection « Échanges de la recherche*.	In press at Peter Lang	-
7	article	first author	Lovrits, V., Langinier, H. and Ehrhart, S. *(accepted with minor revisions)* French and language ideologies in a multilingual EU institution: Re-constructing the meaning of a language choice. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*.	Accepted with minor revisions in IJCCM	x
8	article	author	Lovrits, V. *(accepted)* Linguistic authority in the context of European mobility: Addressing the empty promise of élite multilingualism.	Accepted in JMMD	x

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CET	thesis supervision committee (comité d’encadrement de thèse)
CAST	Contract Agents Selection Tool
EU	European Union

Foreword

The freshly arrived trainees at a European Union (EU) institution had not yet put their things on their new work tables when a senior rushed into the office: “Hello! Who of you is the native English speaker?” The trainees looked at each other and Florence[1] shrugged her shoulders: “Probably me?” The senior turned to her: “I will send a text for proofreading to the common address. Could you check it and send it back as soon as possible?”. Florence quietly replied: “Sure.” The senior briefly thanked her and left swiftly, forgetting to introduce herself to the newcomers. Florence looked at me. She seemed to feel uncomfortable.

I felt uncomfortable too. As I was working there when the trainees arrived, I was supposed to tell them what they did not know. Only I did not know what to think about the situation either. What I had noticed, however, was that those who were considered ‘native English speakers’ were treated differently. I supposed that Florence, coming from the United Kingdom, would often hear how special she was for the team and how happy they were to have her. I felt sorry for her, without really knowing why. Since I did not say anything, Florence looked away and joined her colleagues’ effort to log into the assigned computers. As she delved into her new work, I realised that this is where critical sociolinguistic research is needed – helping people understand what happens in tense language-related situations.

My research began with my “sociolinguistic wonderment” regarding one person’s situation in one specific context. However, it has since opened up new perspectives in

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[1] Florence is a pseudonym chosen for my research by the trainee in question.

various other directions. Therefore, I hope that my findings can continue to serve as a source of inspiration for meaningful change in different workplaces and social contexts. I would like to invite readers to consider my dissertation as not only a completion of four years of my doctoral research, but also as an inspiration for rethinking stances towards languages and speakerhood. My dissertation demonstrates that, while metalanguage can be harmful, it can also contribute to individual well-being and support social justice.

PART I. Embarking on the research journey (2020)

“Imagination, not intelligence, made us human.”

— Terry Pratchett, 1998

Foreword to "The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy" by David Pringle

Chapter 1. Introduction

My opening quote symbolically introduces the "what if" perspective shaping my doctoral research approach (Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018). Although fiction is not a traditional source of inspiration in science, the use of creativity, liveliness, and imagination is still important for qualitative research (Jonsen, Fendt, and Point 2018). As I have investigated complex, socially embedded problems I employed my "transdisciplinary imagination," in order to deal with the complexity and ambiguity of social life (Brown, Harris, and Russell 2010). It is important to stress, however, that the knowledge constructed through transdisciplinary imagination is not illusionary. It remains embedded in theory, previous research and the context of specific times, spaces, and other constellations (Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Verschueren 2000).

While my investigation is rooted in sociolinguistics, it also meets the characteristics of applied linguistic research, as it focuses on contextualised language use, integrates theory and practice, takes a problem-based approach, and adopts a multidisciplinary perspective (Aronoff and Rees-Miller 2003: 643). I understand the term "multidisciplinary perspective" as a perspective that considers and facilitates discussions across contexts. I use the term cross-disciplinary in my dissertation, though, as it underlines that I do not wish to create a hybrid space. I aim to facilitate discussion across disciplines, namely sociolinguistics and language-sensitive management, while making the findings accessible to the public.

Since I aim for the practical usefulness of my research and acknowledge the importance of a broader societal discussion, my research also reflects the principles of pragmatic philosophy (Dewey 2009[1910]). I follow the socio-pragmatic tradition of discourse analysis (Blommaert 2007), paying attention to the *sources* of knowledge about language (structural/societal conditions) and the intended or perceived *purpose* of the language use in a situated, socially embedded context (Cameron 2004).

My doctoral research explores how a team of language professionals uses metalanguage to deal with inherent linguistic and normative diversity in an EU institution in Luxembourg. While my main topic could also be described as “metadiscourse” or “metapragmatics” (Cameron 2004), I consider the term “metalanguage” most suitable for a cross-disciplinary discussion and most accessible for readers that may be interested in the findings. I inspect “metalanguage” as socially embedded metalinguistic commentaries on languages and “speakerhood” (Spotti and Blommaert 2017).

I aim to identify the pitfalls and merits of metalanguage in an international work environment where communication can – yet does not necessarily have to – happen in multiple languages. The following (overarching) research question has guided my research: ″What can metalinguistic stances reveal about socio-pragmatic intentions and their implications in a (potentially) multilingual workplace?″[2] In this dissertation, ″metalinguistic stance″ shall be understood as a discursive positioning towards languages and speakerhood. The ″socio-pragmatic intention″ refers to what my participants aim to achieve through their use of (meta)language. My investigation then focuses on the underlying reasons and purposes that drive stance-taking in a given social context, and the potential effects thereof in the workplace.

[2] The pilot study presented in Chapter 3 was not guided by this question, but led to its formulation.

My research deals with three metalinguistic issues, identified as problematic in existing research and literature. They provide context for understanding the discursive "pitfalls" of metalanguage. The first issue concerns the "bureaucratized" understanding of language that automatically considers language as **state-controlled** (Bourdieu, 2001[1991]). This connection has been criticised across disciplines for imposing methodological nationalism/colonialism (Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck, 2005; Kraus, 2010; Szkudlarek et al., 2020; Wilmot and Tietze, 2023). Applied linguistics focuses on the practical challenge caused by the fixation on the standard language norms and prescriptivism (Milroy and Milroy, 2012), while sharing a critical concern about the effects of structural injustice with critical theorists in sociolinguistics (Blommaert and Backus, 2013; Kubota, 2019; Duchêne and Heller, 2009). Eventually, international business scholarship (Janssens and Steyaert, 2014; Karhunen et al., 2018) highlights the implicit link to political power and the existing gaps in our understanding of language use in the cosmopolitan/global work environment.

The second problematic area addressed in my research is the **"marketized"** understanding of language. From this perspective, language(s) and their speakers are primarily viewed as impersonal, monetised commodities that can be exchanged for monetary gain in the labour market (Block 2017). This view influences individual self-perception, emphasising individual responsibility for cultivating an economically valuable and up-to-date (élite) multilingual self (Barakos and Selleck, 2019). It drives individuals to strive, at their own expense, for languages that the market may require now and potentially in the future (Barakos, 2019; Garrido and Sabaté-Dalmau, 2019), a tendency that is already mirrored in some educational curricula (Sunyol and Codó, 2019; Zimmermann and Flubacher, 2017).

The third problem addressed in my dissertation refers to the notion of a **"languagised world"** (Jaspers and Madsen 2018). This perspective implies that an individual's lived experience is formed by the idea of separate languages (backed by the power of **state *and* market**), no matter how critical research may define language. In light of this perspective, my dissertation discusses both the negative aspects of linguistic nationalism and marketisation, as well as the legitimate functions of curated language systems in a "languaged" (labour) market (Kraft and Flubacher 2023:372). This is particularly important for language professionals, as they literally earn their living by mastering separate language systems and their distinct structures.

The resulting composition and structure of my dissertation text is as follows. PART I introduces the main aspects of the evolution of the social-constructivist paradigm (Berger and Luckmann 2001[1964]), which sets the theoretical framework for my pilot and links it with my main research. This is followed by a reprint of my pilot study, which was published in a sociolinguistic journal. PART I concludes with a chapter that reflects on the first peer-review process and articulates its implications for my overarching research design.

PART II provides insight into the common features and concepts of my main doctoral research. It describes the "behind-the-scenes" aspects and the decision-making process that informed my main doctoral research. This includes discussions of the theory and methods that I employed, the overarching institutional context, the construction of my data set in a chronological process, my reflection on researcher stance and positionality, and the organisation and curation of my data.

Next, PART III features my research results in the form of three articles/manuscripts. To facilitate an overview of the compiled dissertation text, the articles and manuscripts include bibliographical references in their respective page footers. Moreover, the numbering of figures and excerpts had to be adjusted for the orientation in the compiled text. Additionally, each of the texts is introduced by a cover page that specifies the contributions of the author(s) and the license agreements with the publishers.

Regarding the three articles based on my main research, the study in Chapter 9 clarifies what my participants meant by "multilingualism" and explains how trainees in the team rethought their understanding of language use during their traineeship – to be more precise, how they shifted their focus on competence towards conviviality. The study in Chapter 10 has been accepted with minor revisions in a cross-cultural management journal. It explores metalinguistic reflections on language choice, particularly the reasons why French was (or rather was not) used in the international, predominantly English-speaking team. The study in Chapter 11 has been published in the same applied linguistics journal as Chapter 9. It analyses linguistic authority and illustrates the negative effects of language ideologies, particularly on early-career, transnationally mobile professionals.

In the concluding PART IV, I provide a summary of my research and discuss the overarching themes. This part also includes my final reflection over the limitations of the study and an outline of the potential implications for further research and practice. The dissertation comes to a close with a complete list of references, and appendices that provide evidence to my claims about the research process and relevance of my findings.

Chapter 2. Social construction of reality

The core paradigmatic positioning of my research reflects the developments of classical theory on the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 2001[1964]). According to this theory, everyday human interactions actively construct what individuals experience as their "reality." From a fundamentally functionalist/structuralist perspective on the original theory, the social construction of reality is a means through which overall social cohesion is achieved in daily mainstream interactions. Social interaction constructs social roles that are further linked to scripts or habits, which require minimal decision-making effort and frame what is considered "norm" or "deviation". A mainstream-enacted agreement on these roles and scripts restrains individuals who do not conform to expectations, thus allowing society to function as a coherent system (Berger and Luckmann 2001[1964]).

While the original theory primarily focuses on how the social system is maintained through everyday interaction, it already contains the seeds of individual agency, resistance and transformation. By recognising that the nature of social structures is not a given and can potentially be altered, the theory has provided a foundation for the theoretical exploration of the potential for change within the system. This (still as an implied potential) was further emphasised by Bourdieu (2001[1991]), who specifically examined the social construction of language hegemony under state territorial power.[3]

[3] Bourdieu's perspective is widely present in my research, not only as references to the territorial power over language, but also in the practice of using single quotation marks ('-') to indicate my critical stance towards notions that I find problematic. The traditional quotation marks ("-") are used to indicate something that has previously been said.

In the subsequent developments of the theory, various intellectual streams have put emphasis on agency in the process of the social construction of reality. New scholarly streams have begun to accentuate the ambiguity, fluidity, and unpredictability in real-world communication, which requires the negotiation of meaning (Dervin 2017). These changes have explicitly highlighted the need for flexibility and recognition of many coexisting social realities in so-called "superdiverse" societies (Vertovec 2014). Increasing mobility has driven the complexity of communication and mobile populations that do not share a stable set of socially constructed knowledge in a given space (Spotti and Blommaert 2011). Shared knowledge must constantly be negotiated and re-constructed under changing situational and socially embedded conditions (Blommaert and Rampton 2011).

Indeed, an important societal impetus for the change of focus is increasing geographic mobility on a global scale. The social changes brought about by increased global mobility and changing modes of communication in recent decades (Budach and de Saint-Georges 2017) have given rise to a new perspective on how social cohesion can be achieved. Modern society is so marked by compartmentalisation that individuals can no longer rely on the stability of shared social knowledge (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Of course, we could debate whether Berger and Luckmann's (2001[1964]) original notion of a consistent, widely shared body of knowledge at all reflected the lived reality in less mobile and connected even societies sixty plus years ago. In any case, the now recognised importance of differing frameworks of interpretation within the socially constructed reality of transnationally mobile people has been a salient aspect of my research.

Furthermore, my research is critical, as is the work of Blommaert (2007) and his colleagues, representing an “empowerment” turn in research on language. Blommaert (2007) points out that, “... some of the greatest mistakes (and injustices) can be committed by simply projecting locally valid functions into the ways of speaking of people involved in transnational flows...” (Blommaert 2007:72). Therefore, I consider power relations in society while taking into account the practical implications for different actors in real life, as well as the consequent (lack of) individual and group responsibility. Within the socio-pragmatic approach to discourse analysis, my research reflects and follows the above-outlined developments and discussions, recognising individual agency and the malleability of social norms at the level of personal interaction. It also explores the structural influence of social norms on social interaction.

In light of the above-outlined developments, I can situate the paradigmatic core of my research at the border of “social constructivism”. This is, on the one hand, concerned with social norms and structures and, on the other hand, focused on individual agency (Gergen and Gergen 2009). My research is constructionist in the sense that it primarily focuses on how people understand and use language-related norms (rather than on the norms or language structures themselves). However, I am particularly interested in situations where norms and structures stream or restrict individual agency.

Thus, I am primarily concerned with what metalanguage “does” to people (Blommaert 2007: 70-71). By this, I mean how the sediments of socially constructed knowledge about language affect the lived experience in an international environment. While acknowledging the individually malleable character of socially constructed knowledge, my research is primarily concerned with the structuring effects of knowledge about language, as it is mirrored in talk about language and 'its' speakers.

Paradigmatically, my dissertation also belongs to the interpretivist research in which the social construction of knowledge is a key aspect (Fuchs 1993). This axiom that human knowledge is socially constructed is both epistemologically advantageous and limiting in the context of my research. On the one hand, the interpretivist approach can open up a new way of understanding the world (Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018). On the other hand, it cannot aim for definitive or generalisable conclusions (Smith 1984). Instead, it seeks a chain or matrix of evidence that allows formal logic to draw conclusions about lived experience (Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018).

As such, I have conducted qualitative, interpretative, socio-pragmatic research. I have worked with the classical sociological theorem stating that, if people define something as real, it has real effects for them (Doerr 2009). I investigated the effects that my participants associated with language, its use, and 'its' speakers (speakerhood), while examining whether the effects correspond to those that my participants intended to achieve. The very beginnings of my doctoral research are represented in the following chapter, which introduces my pilot study on the effects of 'native English' speakerhood in the international team. The pilot project helped me to further refine my main research focus, as well as its methodology of data collection and analysis. This will later be presented in PART II.

Chapter 3. Publishing the Pilot Study (Article 1)

The creation of my first journal article marked the beginning of my PhD journey. As I aimed to develop a paper-based dissertation, I had to learn how to write for a global audience and to navigate the revision process following peer reviews. My previous MA thesis supervisor supported me in transforming my pilot study into a publishable PhD article and guided me through the revisions.

This experience not only taught me how to navigate this writing process, but also highlighted the influence that journal editors can have on research. In the end, the requested revisions resulted in a significant shift in paradigm, layering my core social-constructivist research approach with a conflictualist interpretation, which aligned more closely with the editorʹs desire for a critical theory perspective. While we, as authors, could understand and work with the effects of this new paradigmatic framing, it was not our initial intention.

Our finalised article is presented in the next section. It demonstrates my early engagement with the sociolinguistic theory on stance and introduces a significant theme that would consistently emerge in interviews with my participants over the following years: the silent prevalence of native-speakerism in workplace small talk.

As with all the manuscripts and published articles in this dissertation, the article is introduced by a form with licensing and copyright information regarding the original publication. It will be followed by a section linking the pilot study results, as well as my experiences from the publication process, to my consequent doctoral research.

3.1 Prestigious Language, Pigeonholed Speakers

Lovrits, V. and de Bres, J. (2021). Prestigious language, pigeonholed speakers: Stances towards the ‘native English speaker’ in a multilingual European institution. *Journal of Sociolinguistics 25*(3), 398-417. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12431

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TITLE

Prestigious Language, Pigeonholed Speakers: Stances towards the "Native English Speaker" in a Multilingual European Institution

ABSTRACT (EN)

Critical sociolinguistics has demonstrated that the social construct of the 'native speaker' has a strong impact on people's lives, but research on 'native speaker effects' in the workplace remains rare. This article examines such effects from the perspective of four 'native English speaker' trainees on temporary contracts in a multilingual European Union institution in Luxembourg. Applying the framework of sociolinguistic stance to interview data and drawings, we examine how the participants position themselves towards the 'native English speaker' construct at work, and how they think others position them. According to our participants, 'native English speaker' positioning confers privilege but restricts opportunities, demonstrating that the interest of a multilingual organisation in using the 'native English speaker' as a resource does not automatically provide a powerful position to 'native English speaking' workers. Our results featuring trainees in precarious labour conditions raise broader issues regarding the precarisation of language work in the EU.

RÉSUMÉ (FR)

Des recherches sociolinguistiques critiques ont révélé que la construction sociale de « locuteur natif » influence fortement la vie des personnes. Pourtant, les recherches concernant les « effets du locuteur natif » sur le lieu de travail sont rares. Le présent article examine ces effets depuis la perspective de quatre stagiaires « anglophones natifs » avec un contrat à durée déterminée dans une institution multilingue de l'Union européenne au Luxembourg. Appliquant le cadre de la position sociolinguistique (sociolinguistic stance) aux données des interviews et aux dessins, nous analysons comment les participants se positionnent par rapport à la construction d'« anglophone natif » au travail et comment ils se sentent positionnés par les autres. Selon nos participants, ces positionnements conféreraient des privilèges mais réduiraient également des opportunités ; ainsi, l'intérêt d'une organisation multilingue à recourir à des « anglophones natifs » en tant que ressource ne place pas automatiquement ces travailleurs dans une position de pouvoir. Nos résultats – qui présentent des stagiaires en conditions de travail précaires – soulèvent des questions plus larges de précarisation du travail linguistique dans l'Union européenne.

KEYWORDS: English, linguistic commodification, multilingualism, native speaker, precarity, stance

1 Introduction

Answering the call for critical examination of "native speaker effects," i.e. implications *"of the ideological premises of the notion 'native speaker'"* (Doerr, 2009, p. 39), this article investigates the social construct of the "native English speaker" through the lived experiences of four "native English speaking" trainees in a multilingual European Union (EU) institution in Luxembourg. Given the indeterminacy and ideological load of the "native English speaker" and its uncertain role in the power dynamics of workplace communication, we analyse sociolinguistic stance (Jaffe, 2009) to identify how being constructed as a "native English speaker" shapes the experience of temporary junior staff in a multilingual team. Stance in our discursive approach represents a socially-shaped nexus linking ideological inputs and consequent practices through first-person reflective accounts. Our social actor-centred inquiry was based on semi-structured interviews incorporating visual data (drawings of metaphors) and supported by ethnographic observation – an innovative mix providing rich insights linking personal experience to issues of broader sociolinguistic concern.

Critical investigation of "native English speakers" has mainly focused on the macro picture of language ideologies favouring them (Pennycook, 1997; Phillipson, 1993) or on individuals disadvantaged by being "non-native English speakers" (Doerr, 2009; Kabel, 2009; Swan, Aboshiha, & Holliday, 2015; Wei & Hua, 2013). We add the perspective of "native English speakers" who are generally considered to benefit from their sociolinguistic status. Our key contribution is applying a critical

ARTICLE (1) Lovrits, V. and de Bres, J. (2021). Prestigious language, pigeonholed speakers: Stances towards the 'native English speaker' in a multilingual European institution. *Journal of Sociolinguistics 25*(3), 398-417. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12431 (author's preprint)

sociolinguistic lens to our interviewees' experience, in the context of workplace, where critical approaches to the "native English speaker" construct remain rare (Codó, 2018; Kubota, 2011; Lønsmann, 2017). Specifically, we argue that our participants experience both privilege and precarity via their construction as "native English speakers."

Our participants' ambivalence towards the "native English speaker" construct may surprise if viewed from a macrostructural perspective ascribing "native English speakers" the upper hand. It makes sense, however, when considering employees in low-status, unstable positions where being a "native English speaker" is a central part of their role. As we will show, "native English speakers" can in such circumstances be subject to similar processes of linguistic banalisation (Duchêne, 2011) and commodification (Heller, 2010) as speakers of other languages. Despite aligning with a discourse of English as the indispensable language for work success (Kubota, 2011), our participants construct their status as "native English speakers" to confer both advantage and disadvantage, with significant "native speaker effects."

In the following sections, we present our conceptualisation of the term "native (English) speaker" as a social construct and its relation to conditions of precarity, commodification and banalisation. We describe the institutional setting and data that constitute our research focus and present our analytical framework of discursive stance. We then focus on how our participants position themselves towards the "native English speaker" construct and how their stances interact with their position of both privilege and precarity. We show that being constructed as a "native speaker" is a mixed bag for them, with the positives (in symbolic value, status, prestige and authority) not necessarily outweighing the negatives (in the nature of their work, identity, language experiences, and relationships).

2 The construct of the "native (English) speaker"

We approach the "native speaker" as a social construct (Berger & Luckmann, 2001)– a broadly recognised set of expectations naturalised over time to become considered as fact, obscuring ongoing processes of social construction. The "native speaker" construct is tied to language ideologies, which we conceptualise as *"the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group"* (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 501). Pennycook (1994) identifies the following associations with "native speakers" among the general public: the language is the standard variety of a named language, it is associated with particular nation-states, whose citizens are automatically competent in this variety, and their competence encompasses all domains. "Native speakers" are assumed to master a single set of linguistic skills intrinsic to a homogenous population (Doerr, 2009; Pennycook, 1994). This ideal of homogeneity is manifested not only in a "national culture" mirrored in the national language (which, as Kramsch (1998) points out, encompasses both observable and imagined cultural patterns) but also in ignorance of social stratification of speakers (Rampton, 2003). The "native speaker" construct operates within dominant ideologies of monolingualism. Linguistic nationalist ideologies claim the state ruling over the native language should be monolingual and individuals should have only one native language (Yildiz, 2012). When linguists try to identify who a “native speaker” is, an arbitrary set of features emerge–the language of parents, language of education, duration of exposure, or acquisition in childhood, among others (Davies, 2006). These criteria lead to multiple groups to whom the label[4] “native speaker” may or may not be applied. While critical linguistics has established that it is possible to acquire more than one “native” language (Davies, 2006), the ideological prerequisite of innate monolingualism in a standard language exerts a strong influence on constructions of linguistic legitimacy and competence (Doerr, 2009). According to Davies (2006), the decisive aspect of who counts as a “native speaker” rest not in linguistic criteria but in ascription of this label based on autobiography, i.e. being a “native speaker” is a linguistic identity claim.

Specifying the “native *English* speaker” as our object of analysis entails further sociopolitical dimensions. Critical sociolinguists have envisaged English as ruling a language hierarchy, due to its perceived global predominance (Crystal, 2003; Pennycook, 1997). From this standpoint, any person perceived as a “native English speaker” bears power derived from mastery of the language. Use of English by others increases the individual power of linguistic “natives,” facilitating language expansion (Phillipson, 1993). The dominance of “native English speakers” in multilingual environments is an axiom of post-colonial deconstruction of sociolinguistic structures

[4] While we generally use the term “construct” to refer to our object of analysis (the “native English speaker”), we use “label” when emphasising the ascription of this construct to a specific person or group of people and “status” when we consider power relations linked to the construct.

(Pennycook, 1997). The ideologies of international communication without borders (Kayman, 2004), the global "knowledge society" (Hornidge, 2013), and the indispensability of English for global business (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2009) all assume a hegemonic position for English. Research has revealed that this presumption does not automatically hold true, however. In multilingual European workplaces, English can be a mere "transit language" (Fredriksson, Barnes-Rassmussen, & Piekkari, 2006), a "common communicational minimum" (Gunnarsson, 2014) or one language among others, while "local languages" or "native languages" are often preferred (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014; Gunnarsson, 2014; van den Worp, Cenoz, & Gorter, 2018). Even where English plays a central role, "native English speakers" do not always have the upper hand in interpersonal exchanges at work (Lønsmann, 2017). To understand why, we must consider how "native English speaker" status interacts with broader patterns in contemporary labour conditions, as we do next.

3 Precarity, commodification and banalisation in language work

The global working world is characterised by precarity, in which *"informal, temporary, or contingent work is the predominant mode of livelihood"* (Kasmir, 2018). The market metaphor has become a *"dominant way to frame all manner of day-to-day activity"* (Block, 2017, p. 39). Individuals are encouraged to adopt the ideology of the "entrepreneurial self" (Garrido and Sabaté-Dalmau, 2019) or "neoliberal worker" (Barakos, 2019), a lifelong project in which they are responsible for developing and promoting themselves as "bundles of skills" (Uriciuoli, 2008) that can respond to the dynamics of market change (Barakos, 2019). Meanwhile, the globalised economy has led to an increasing role for language as both a tool and product of labour, resulting in the phenomenon of the "language worker". Speakers and languages acquire differing levels of value in the labour market via processes of linguistic commodification (Heller, 2010), a phenomenon particularly relevant to English as a prestigious language (Block, 2017). Language skills become *"the responsibility of the worker who wants to strengthen her/his employability through investments and skilling by and of the self"* (Kraft, 2019, p. 4) and employers resort to "linguistic banalization" (Duchêne, 2011), considering languages as something "natural." They benefit from the language skills of their employees without these transferring to employees' salary or professional mobility (Duchêne, 2011). Unlike in other cases, the presumed skills of the "native English speakers" in our study are explicitly valued by the employer. As we show, however, expectations of linguistic skill are symbolically attached to the construct of the "native English speaker", making an individual's skill level irrelevant. This represents another form of linguistic banalisation. Moreover, while the linguistic tasks linked to the "native English speakers" in our study were discursively constructed as precious for the workplace, this did not result in a paid position that valued these tasks institutionally.

Precarious language workers, such as call centre operators, back-stage airport employees and construction workers, experience high levels of linguistic exploitation (Duchêne, 2011; Heller, 2010; Kraft, 2019). Recent studies expand this picture to include language workers in more privileged professional situations. Barakos (2019, p. 184) found language trainers in an Austrian language education company *"caught up between privileged and precarious working conditions"*, in which appreciation of their developing a flexible and creative skill set was counterbalanced by anxiety about their job insecurity. Codó's (2018) English language teachers in Barcelona had easy access to jobs conferring prestige *"embedded in global language ideological inequalities that value native English speakers over non-native ones,"* but simultaneously faced *"the precarisation and flexibility inherent to most ELT jobs,"* including very low salaries and long working hours (Codó, 2018, p. 437). Kubota (2011) notes that Japan-based companies tend to hire cheaper agency workers for exclusively English-related tasks. Commodification of languages clearly also negatively affects "native English speakers" and "elite multilinguals" (Barakos & Selleck, 2019). Our participants are speakers of what is constructed as one of the most powerful languages in the world, but they are also "neoliberal workers" valued for their assumed skills in a highly commodified linguistic resource. As we explore, this potentially exposes them to processes of linguistic commodification and banalisation.

4 Data

Our data derives from a study of workplace communication at an EU institution in Luxembourg. Luxembourg provides an interesting site for investigating language in the workplace due to its multilingual situation. Bordered by France, Germany and Belgium, its four official languages (French, German, Luxembourgish and German sign language), are used regularly in everyday life. Its favourable economic situation has resulted in increasing migration, with people of non-Luxembourgish nationality

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now comprising 48% of the resident population of 602,000 (STATEC, 2018). This includes historical migration of Italians and Portuguese, alongside more recent arrivals working in multinational companies and EU institutions. There are cross-border workers from France, Germany and Belgium, who account for 45% of the workforce (STATEC, 2018). Most of these come from France and French-speaking Belgium, so French has become the main lingua franca while English plays an increasing role within multinational companies (Horner and Weber, 2008).

The workplace concerned also operates within the EU language context. Multilingualism is promoted via European language policies, and EU institutions are theoretically expected to function multilingually. In practice, language use varies from monolingualism to multilingualism (Wodak, 2013) and implicit policies often support a strong position for English. The workplace in this research is a unit of an EU institution servicing the EU as a whole. At the time of the research, several languages were common in day-to-day conversation there. All staff were comfortably multilingual, could speak at least three languages and make educated guesses in others. There was no explicit language policy but the implicit policy clearly favoured multilingual practices. Nevertheless, the unit had a special (informal) position for "native *English* speakers." The reasons for this elevation of English–and those who speak it–were never made explicit during the research.[5] Implicit language policies are

[5] An idea emerged in the interviews that the "native English speakers" were placed in the unit to make the English of "non-native" colleagues more "authentic." A text was not considered

no less powerful than explicit ones and, while the reasoning behind this policy remained opaque, it had a clear impact on our participants' perception of their role.

Most of the work undertaken in English was for the unit's website, for which trainees of various national backgrounds were responsible. "Frontstage and backstage" communication (Kankaanranta, Karhunen, & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018) was multilingual, but only texts in English were proofread, for no explicit reason. Texts written by trainees who were not "native English speakers" had to be proofread by a "native English speaker" trainee, and permanent staff could also use this facility. Everyone was theoretically supposed to contribute their "native" skills but, as only the English output was checked, a disproportionate part of the "native English speaker" trainees' work was focused on these linguistic tasks. As the website was regularly updated with new articles in English, the "native English speaker" trainees did proofreading every day, consuming 20-30 percent of their working time. They had not expected this to be part of their role, it necessitated more complicated time management and involved "uncreative" work compared to other trainees. When no "native English speaking" trainee was present, proofreading of English texts fell to the permanent staff (of whom none were "native English speakers" but many were linguists or translators), who preferred to avoid this.

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professional if it contained breaches of standard linguistic norms. We inferred from our participants that the head of the unit was particularly concerned to avert criticism of English language output from above in the institution.

Our data collection focused on four trainees meeting the criterion of both identifying and being identified by others as “native English speakers” (following Davies, 2006). They were university graduates in their late twenties and thirties, with previous work experience in journalism or communications who spoke at least one official EU language alongside English. Ben and Kate spent their traineeships together, before Lucy and then Florence[6]. Ben was Irish and had studied journalism, languages and translation to Masters level in Ireland. He had worked in journalism and publishing, and was attracted to the traineeship to develop his language skills and explore the international labour market. Afterwards, he worked as a content writer in Luxembourg, before returning to an editorial position in the United Kingdom. Kate was Maltese and had studied communications and translation to Masters level in Malta, before working as an English teacher and in communications. She was a keen traveller and Luxembourg was on her list to visit. After the traineeship and further travel, she worked in communications in Malta. Lucy was British and studying journalism during the traineeship, having previously been an au pair in Europe. She saw the traineeship as part of her studies and proceeded to a Masters degree in international studies. Florence was British and had studied translation and languages in England and Europe before working as a journalist and writer in Portugal. She wanted to work in a large and stable institution after years of freelancing. She then

[6] All names are pseudonyms and some details of the participants’ profiles have been changed to ensure anonymity.

worked in communications in Brussels, before returning to freelance in Portugal.

The participants undertook their traineeships for various reasons, including working abroad, developing their language skills, enhancing their education, visiting somewhere new, and experiencing work in an EU institution. They could be seen as élite, successful "global employees" (Barakos, 2019), "*university-educated, work experienced (…) mobile for the purposes of work (…) flexible, responsible entrepreneurial agents whose profile, identity and status are not only indexed by their multiple language skills but also by their willingness to be subjects of change and movement"* (ibid., p. 189). On the flipside, their working conditions reflect the nonlinear and precarious careers common among the mobile middle-class workforce (Barakos, 2019). They were employed full-time for a fixed term of five months on the minimum wage. They had health insurance and access to a subsidised canteen, but had to find housing in an expensive city. Overall, they occupied the least important position in the unit, with the lowest remuneration, job security and future employment prospects.

The data was collected over several phases. The first author spent six weeks at the workplace throughout 2018 as a university intern, meeting all four participants as colleagues. While this period does not form part of the data, it gave the researchers a well-grounded understanding of language practices in the workplace. Subsequently, individual semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the participants. Agreement to participate was obtained from the individuals themselves, the research focusing on their personal experiences rather than institutional policy, and they participated in their free time. Care was taken to ensure their anonymity, although they considered risks to be low, given their short period of employment. The interviews covered their views on language practices and the role of the "native English speaker" in the workplace and were the main source of information for the identification of stances.

The data collection concentrated on one main interviewee, Florence, who was doing her traineeship at the time. A longitudinal approach was taken to progressively explore her perspective across the course of her traineeship. This involved two in-person interviews, in November and December 2018. In January 2019, she participated in a semi-structured interview by email to identify any changes in her views. To explore the wider relevance of the findings, the three former trainees (Lucy, Ben and Kate) were asked to participate remotely. Their participation was concentrated in one week in February 2019, when they took part in a written and a Skype interview with the first author. The data collection finished with a fourth interview with Florence via Skype in February 2019, after her traineeship had ended.

While the interview data was primarily verbal, visual elements in the form of drawings were included. Drawings can elicit the personal, subjective and emotional aspects of participants' language experiences (De Bres 2017) and metaphors can enrich analysis of sociolinguistic stance (McEntee Atalianis, 2013). After the initial interview with Florence, the first author drew metaphors to depict the situations in which "native English speakers" potentially find themselves, based on discourses about the “native speaker” in the research literature[7]. Florence then drew her own metaphor during the second interview. The drawings were discussed with the other participants in the subsequent interviews. This triangulation across participants and methods served to widen the scope of our insights. The final data set encompassed three longitudinal and three one-off interviews totalling six hours of recordings, four written interviews, and ten drawings. While the research represents a small case study, the richness of the data allows in-depth insights into the participants’ experiences as “native English speakers” at this specific workplace, with potential broader relevance.

5 Analytical framework

We analysed our data using the theoretical framework of sociolinguistic stance (Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009). Stance is a *“uniquely productive way of conceptualizing the processes of indexicalization that are the link between individual performance and social meaning”* and constitutes a source of individual action (Jaffe, 2009, p. 4). It encompasses identity claims, beliefs, assessments, appraisals and other forms of evaluation and positioning. “Second order stances” are taken to mis/align with the

[7] These metaphors included: a missionary; a king in armour; a knight leading an army fighting a three-headed dragon/language mistake; an umbrella shielding people from rain; a tourist visiting the EU; a person relaxing in the gym while others exercise; a person deciding which direction to take following their own interests versus those of others; a person reaching a mountaintop, leaving others behind; and a group of mules, only one bearing a load of papers.

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(inferred) stances of others, and generalisations shift epistemic authority from an individual to a societal level (Jaffe, 2009).

Most research on stance investigates stance-taking turns in conversational interactions, either focusing on (socio)linguistic features (Du Bois, 2007; Kärkkäinen 2003; Wu 2003) or broader topics of social and political discourse (Englebretson, 2001; Haddington, 2004; Jaffe, 2009; Liu & Stevenson, 2013; McEntee-Atalianis, 2013). Taking the latter discursive approach, we analyse stances similarly to Coupland, Holmes and Coupland (1998), tracking the effects of broader societal discourses in the dynamics of individual reflections in interviews. Specifically, we critically analyse how the "native English speaker" construct serves as a discursive link between language ideologies and their practical implications in our participants' working life. Juxtaposing expectations, interpretations and (reported) actions and considering them in all their complexity and dynamics, our stance analysis offers explanations that enrich the perspectives provided by traditional analyses of the separate factors at play (language ideologies, attitudes or positioning).

We deconstruct stance into three constitutive features (Du Bois, 2007). The first feature is the *object of stance*. We look at how the "native English speaker" as the object of stance is both socially constructed and treated as fact by our participants. The second feature is *positioning*. We examine how our participants position themselves towards the "native English speaker," both affectively and in terms of power relations. The third feature is *mis/alignment*. Here we compare our participants' stances with stances they infer and expect from others. Although we only learn of others' stances from our participants' perspective, they are key to our participants' own second order stance-taking, and thus have strong analytical value. Being dialogic and performative in nature, stance is not transparent and must be inferred (Jaffe, 2009). We had to be careful in our interpretations, taking into account researcher positionality, the potential stakes for our participants, and limitations in information about the broader context in which they took their stances. We aimed to track prominent, relatively stable (habitual) stances, checking that those selected were not fleeting but represented a "stance style" (Jaffe, 2009).

The analysis was a continuous process following each element of data gathering. It was limited to utterances related to the "native English speaker" as an object of stance. In every interview, topics from previous interviews were included to check if the interviewees shared similar reflections or sought to contradict, adjust or build on those of the others. They were asked for additional comments when inconsistencies appeared, or when the pattern differed from the others. Florence, the main interviewee, was an active partner throughout the analytical process. She read the transcripts and preliminary analyses and her comments showed she understood the research as a means of discovering information relevant to her work experience. Her dedication was evidenced by her openness to discussing difficult topics and her willingness to reflect deeply on her sociolinguistic status. The data collection design meant the other participants did not have as much time for reflection, and their memories had faded since their traineeships had concluded, but they often related to Florence's observations. This helped to identify patterns common to the experience of “native English speakers” in this workplace.

6 Results

Having described our methodology, we proceed to the results of our analysis. We seek to determine how ascription of the “native English speaker” label shapes the work experience of people in temporary junior positions in a multilingual EU institution. To do so, we examine the three aspects of our participants’ stances towards the construct of the “native English speaker”–the object of stance, stance positioning and misalignment of stances. In examining these points, we especially attend to how our participants’ situation of mixed privilege and precarity influences their stance towards the “native English speaker” in the workplace.

6.1 “Native English speaker” as the object of stance

The “native English speaker” was treated by our participants as a natural, uncontested social fact. They associated it with a *geopolitical affiliation* but did not mention the same countries. The Irish and Maltese interviewees saw the “native English speaker” as a phenomenon encompassing more than one state. In contrast, the two British interviewees perceived the “native English speaker” as linked to Britain (which they often equated to England, in line with their own national origins).

For all interviewees, it was necessary to cross national borders to realise that a “native English speaker” status was salient, it making no sense to think of oneself as a “native English speaker” at home. Aligning with Bourdieu’s (2001) model of competition on the linguistic market, our participants saw their “native-ness” as a *socially valued label* assigned when working abroad. They felt they had a competitive advantage and had been selected for their "native English speaker" status. In reality, this is unlikely, as the selection principle for EU institution traineeships is merit having regard to geographical balance (EPSO, 2005). Nevertheless, they were convinced that the unit particularly appreciated "native English speakers," which may conceivably have influenced their assignment to it after recruitment. Ben expresses his sense of being selected for this reason in the extract below:

Extract 1[8]

[8] Transcription conventions are as follows:

? = rising intonation

. = falling intonation

(*laugh*) = paralinguistic features

<u>this</u> = stress

(.) (..) (...) (5s) = pauses of varying length

[ ] = implicit reference

/ / = overlapping speech

- = truncated speech

R: = researcher

F: = Florence (British), the main interviewee

L: = Lucy (British)

B: = Ben (Irish)

K: = Kate (Maltese)

B: *I thought- I felt that I kind of- it became clear to me that [the fact I was a "native English speaker"] was the main (.) reason [for getting the job] and I probably hadn't even thought of it as much of a skill?*
Like as being a "native English speaker".
Like I think I do have a good level of language.
I try to use (..) like ah language well um and I- I enjoy writing and editing, things like this but (..) just the fact that just that being a "native English speaker" that was kind of like a skill in itself ...

Ben indicates that he separates his actual language skills ("I think I do have a good level of language") from the "native English speaker" label ("being a native English speaker that was like a skill in itself"). This is how all participants approached the "native English speaker" construct – as disconnected from their individual language skills. This discrepancy is salient for the process of linguistic commodification, in which the employee is stripped of their individual characteristics and transformed into a generic language resource buyable in the labour market under the label "native English speaker." Since these "native" linguistic skills are constructed as inherently present in every citizen of the nation-state, the employees' actual quality of language skills is obscured and no longer a personal mark of distinction. These skills need not be provided by a professional specifically paid for this purpose, thereby fuelling linguistic banalisation. Indeed, when the interviewees reflected on what linguistic performance actually distinguished "natives" from "non-natives," the ambiguity and questionable value of the “native English speaker” construct was exposed. While “non-natives” were reportedly able to keep up with the “natives” in language practices at work, the crucial “native” aspect was the perceived instinctive ability of a “native English speaker” to refrain from making “huge/terrible” mistakes. Nevertheless, repeatedly asked, none of our participants could recall encountering any “detrimental” mistakes at the workplace, or give an example of one. They rather referred to the potential social consequences of breaching a linguistic norm, such as being laughable, making the unit look bad, causing someone to lose their job, etc. In effect, a “non-native” English text adjusted by a “native English speaker” had symbolic rather than linguistic value; it had the ideological stamp of approval of a “native English speaker.”

We can identify the interviewees’ first reflections on the process of linguistic commodification and banalisation of their individual linguistic performance in the way they clearly separated their language skills from their definition of the “native English speaker,” accompanied by an underlying negative affective evaluation. Faced with this situation, they had to choose which stance positions to adopt in response.

6.2 Stance positioning

Among a variety of more fleeting discursive positions, our participants repeatedly took two stable positions. The first was constructing the “native English speaker” as a *valuable language resource* “used” for the good of the team, “providing” English. This was sometimes accompanied by a positive affective evaluation of this status as "prestigious," embedded in neoliberal ideologies linked to linguistic commodification and the presumed global superiority of English. They saw the tedious nature of their proofreading tasks as balanced by positive recognition from their superiors, and approached it as a form of "noblesse oblige" (Bourdieu, 2001). They all noted that the head of the unit had a habit of celebrating the presence of "native English speakers" at work. Kate comments on this as follows:

Extract 2

K: *You're being kind of a called on by the superior as- as the (..) kind of saving the day moment because (.) like we need this it's not something that is just there and we make use of it at times but it's something essential for- for the- for the- for the- for the wellbeing so to speak linguistic wellbeing of the unit.*

Kate expresses the prestige she embodies in this role from the perspective of the "non-native English speaking" unit ("we"), addressing the imaginary "native English speaker" first as "you" ("you're being kind of […] called on") and later as "this" and "it" ("we need this", "it's something essential"). This depersonalisation of the "native English speaker," while here expressed as a positive affective evaluation of "its" useful presence in the workplace, was a recurrent theme. Often, the participants associated this with a more negative affective evaluation, involving being "pigeonholed", as Florence put it:

Extract 3

F: *... it became clear that ah what- what- people wanted from me ahm (..) at work and- that was being an English speaker you know doing (..) a "native English-speaking" role as a result.*
Um and um I was maybe feeling slightly pigeonholed by that?
Like as in it felt quite limiting.

Using the same words as Ben in extract 1 ("it became clear"), Florence signals a realisation that simply "being an English speaker" was highly valued at work, but she distances herself from this construct, framing it as a "role" that others wanted her to play. Both Ben and Florence claimed that excessive emphasis on the "native English speaker" as a resource narrowed their presence to a mere representation of English at the workplace, rather than an individual with a range of skills and attributes. Ben expressed this as follows:

Extract 4

B: *So (..) I don't really know how I felt about that at the time? Because I'd like- I'd like to think that it was (..) my experience and my studies (.) my (..) professional experience to that date.*

Ben's positioning implies regret ("I'd like to think") that his individuality was erased by something he had not even considered a skill (see also extract 1). Transformation of an individual person into a mere linguistic resource constitutes linguistic commodification and is one of the salient "native English speaker" effects in our research.

Reflecting on the practical implications of their positioning as a valuable resource, three participants referred to the unexpected limitation of their potentially multilingual experience to active work in English only. Florence, Ben and Lucy had all hoped to practice their strongest foreign language working in the EU institution. For Ben and Florence this was French, and for Lucy it was German (Florence also knew basic Portuguese). In practice, none of them had the opportunity to use these languages. In Extracts 5 and 6 below, Lucy and Ben extend their position of a valuable resource to a *monolingual* English resource, accompanied by an affective evaluation of disappointment:

Extract 5

L: *It's difficult and it's really frustrating and it makes it so <u>hard</u> to learn <u>anything</u>.*
Uhm (.) and then eventually I do think it just- like it just made me lazy because I was like (.) well (.) I won't even bother <u>trying</u> because you know they're just going to switch to English anyway.

Extract 6

B: *That [using French at work] would have been quite a good opportunity to do in a professional path that I didn't really happen to have because everything just goes back to English.*

Like Florence feeling "pigeonholed," Lucy and Ben express disappointment that their "native English speaker" status worked against their aspirations of personal and professional linguistic progress, leaving them feeling demotivated and restricted to an "English bubble." Gearing and Roger (2018) observed a similar pattern, describing the unwanted monolingual life of "native English speakers" in Korea as an "English cocoon." This positioning appears to be embedded in the ideology of "elite multilingualism," representing a desired personal development towards a multilingual status that would serve as an *"access code to a local, national or global perceived elite (way of life)"* (Barakos & Selleck, 2019, p. 362). As a result of their disappointment, Lucy, Ben and Florence went so far as to talk about themselves as "monolingual," although they had to know other languages to get the traineeship.

Kate provides an exemplary contrast in this regard. While she personally constructed herself as a "native English speaker," she inferred the stance of her colleagues as constructing her primarily as "bilingual (and) Maltese." This reveals the ideologies of linguistic nationalism inherent in the "native English speaker" construct. The practical effect was that, while Ben and Kate felt they had comparable linguistic skills, Kate was spared the proofreading tasks most of the time. Meanwhile, her skills in English enabled her to enjoy comfort and social recognition at work:

Extract 7

K: *I had the best of both worlds(.) so (.) it was- it was perfect for me because I had- had- I had (laughing) kind of the status but (.) didn't have the burden as much.*

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Kate did not resist the positioning she inferred from her colleagues, because the effects were favourable. While tasks assigned to the “native English speaker” were presented as a consequence of privilege, the tasks themselves were best avoided. In this extract Kate also implies–from the fleeting position of an outsider, since she otherwise participated in the interview as a confidently self-ascribed “native English speaker”–that the legitimate (Bourdieu, 2001) “native English speakers” inhabit “another world” in the workplace. Given that other Maltese and Italian speakers were present in the unit at that time, and one of the projects was running in Italian, Kate used Italian and Maltese at work, as well as English. Thus, unlike the other trainees, Kate was able to exist in both monolingual and multilingual worlds.

The second salient position adopted by the participants was that of an *ultimate linguistic authority* responsible for the quality of English language outputs. This invokes language ideologies attributing the highest level of language skills to the “native English speaker” from particular nation-states where English is dominant. This perceived “native speaker” authority is embedded not only in observable patterns linked to sociohistorical context but also in a “culture of the imagination” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 8). When it came to vertical employee-superior relationships, the interviewees acceded to these language ideologies affording them power over the linguistic outputs of the “non-natives.” This made sense within the framework they used to define the “native English speaker” and their ultimate linguistic authority was never openly questioned by the permanent staff (although a text proofread by a “native English speaker” was occasionally adjusted by a senior). The participants experienced this superior positioning of “native English speakers” as a key source of prestige. It was more complicated in the context of horizontal relationships between trainees, however, where it could induce competitiveness. The participants’ stance positions on the sociolinguistic authority of “native English speakers” were typically followed by recollections of either friendly sharing and swapping of tasks between trainees (in Ben and Kate’s case) or painful interpersonal conflict (in Florence and Lucy’s case, as discussed further below).

Florence distanced herself from the position of ultimate linguistic authority over English from the outset. In response to the first author’s drawings, she refused the hierarchy represented by metaphors of a king and a climber making a victory gesture on a mountain top, leaving other climbers behind, with this explanation:

Extract 8

F: I wouldn’t see it in terms of (.) being the most powerful- as more than everyone (.) rather like as turning the same direction. It’s like- which is like- (.) I see that as a turn- (..) like everyone turning the same (voice fading out)

R: /Mhm./

F: /direction/.

Florence positions herself here as simply a team member, not personally having power but aligning with the ideology of English as a powerful language. This attempt to distinguish her personal “native English speaker” power from the power she attributes to the English language was a recurring theme in her interview and will be discussed further below. Florence's egalitarian stance may be an attempt to deal with the incongruence of her high status of "native English speaker" and her low status of trainee. She commented that her "native English speaker" status led to collegial relationships being cast aside in an atmosphere of competition, in which the advantage of her position of ultimate linguistic authority became a downright disadvantage:

Extract 9

F: *(..) I didn't see it [the "native English speaker" status] as um (.) something that could be seen as a (..) competitive aspect.*
Um (.) and then (..) or (.) the- that would be something that could be- (..) kind of work with me but also work against me…

In this extract, Florence does not identify with the "native English speaker," using "it" to distance herself from the object of stance, like Kate in extract 2. Florence attributes agency to the "native English speaker," stepping between her and her "non-native English speaker" colleagues, working both "with" her and "against" her.

Lucy also sought to avoid positioning as an ultimate authority over English. In this context, both she and Florence referenced the ideology of linguistic "integration." Lucy observed:

Extract 10

L: *I think that people already have a bad view of English people not*

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integrating (.) and I don't think Brexit has helped. So I think I was just conscious of- I don't want to you know kind of live up to the sort of horrendous stereotype that people have.

Lucy’s stance enacts a counterposition to a stereotypical stance she expected people in continental Europe to take towards the “native English speaker.” [9] Florence took a similar position, referring to her perception of a typical British aversion to learning languages, from which she distanced herself. They both claimed they consciously tried not to assert linguistic dominance or “preach English” in the workplace, to avoid giving credence to the stereotype of English people abroad who made no effort to “integrate.” While this stance did not have an explicit grounding in this workplace, Lucy and Florence drew on it repeatedly in their reasoning and interpretation of language practices, as we show in the next section. As the two English trainees, Lucy and Florence seemed particularly invested in constructing their personal identity as “cosmopolitan” (Garrido, 2019) in contrast to the stereotype of the “monolingual English abroad.” Neither denounced the imagined “native speaker” authority as such but rather positioned themselves as the “cosmopolitan” type of “native English speaker” who does not *claim* a “native speaker” authority built upon notions of linguo-cultural “authenticity” and legitimacy (Kramsch, 1998).

[9] Lucy refers to “people” generally but may also have felt the pressure of the United Kingdom’s impending exit from the EU (though no interviewees raised Brexit as a salient topic at work.

6.3 Misalignments of stances

In this final section, we analyse a pattern of misalignment linked to the power position of the "native English speaker" in the workplace. The context is Lucy and Florence's distress that their Spanish-speaking fellow trainees often spoke Spanish in their presence (in different teams at different times), even though they did not understand Spanish and could not participate in the interaction. Florence considered learning Spanish to be able to participate more fully at work, but concluded that she had limited time and motivation to do so, the internship being only a few months long and her perceiving no need for Spanish in the future. Despite feeling surprised and disappointed by the use of Spanish in their presence, Florence and Lucy were reluctant to ask their colleagues to switch to English. In terms of stance analysis, they first imagined what stance their Spanish-speaking colleagues would take if they asked for English. Concluding that their colleagues would consider them stereotypical "native English speakers" who expect everybody to speak English, they decided not to request English in favour of constructing their "cosmopolitan self." Lucy prioritised this identity unconditionally, renouncing English and communication altogether, and allowing her colleagues to finish the project in Spanish. Florence resisted abandoning her participation so easily and hinted to her colleagues via several days of passive-aggressive behaviour that she found the situation uncomfortable. When this failed, she staged a scene within her superior's earshot in which she theatrically pushed for English. Going by Florence's account, she was marginalised in this situation, but the reaction she recounts also draws on a

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position of privilege, of which she may not have been fully cognisant. She did not want to be seen as a monolingual "native English speaker," but she did want her colleagues to speak to her in English, which she viewed as showing they valued her as a colleague. She considered her co-workers' potential motivations for resisting English, i.e. they might be uncomfortable working in this language, but she nevertheless expected them to limit their Spanish in the interest of a good working relationship. She leant on her privileged position as a "native English speaker" in demanding English from her colleagues in front of her superior.

Both Lucy and Florence experienced exclusion and a loss of harmonious relationships as a result of their actions. Florence summarised her feelings in a metaphor she drew of her "native English speaker" status at work, shown in Figure 1 below.

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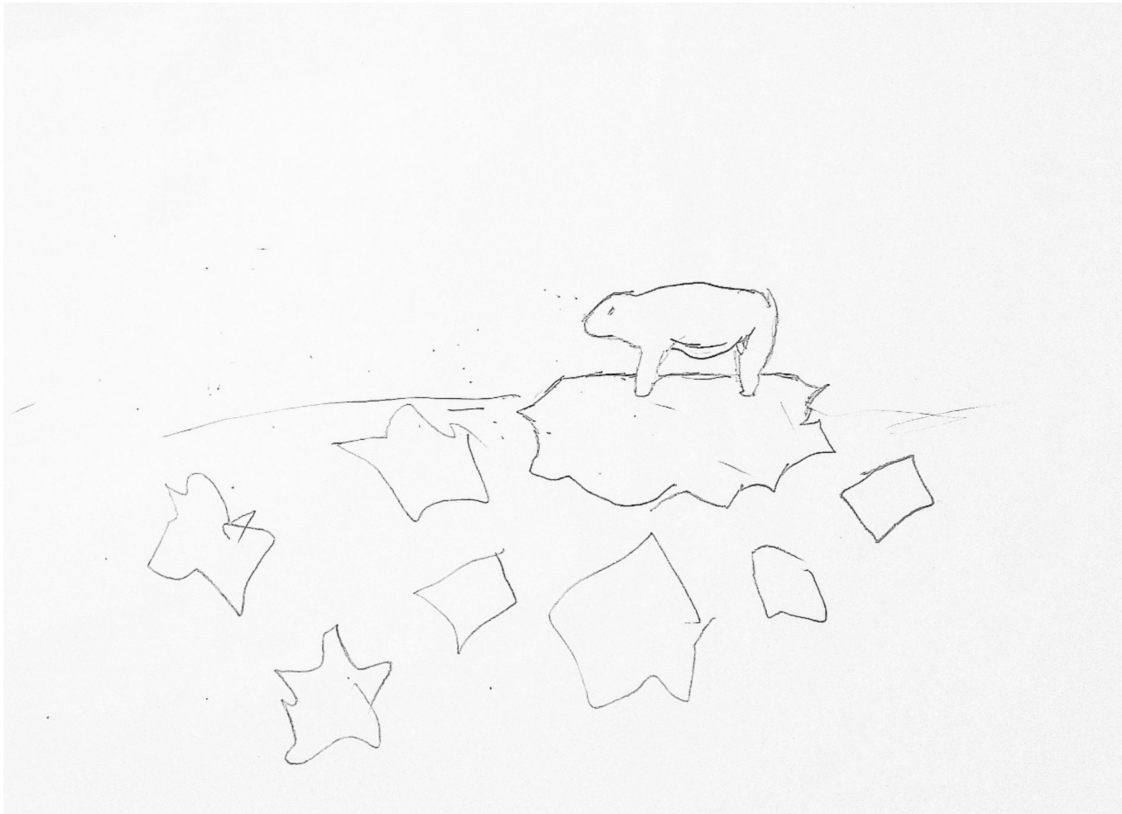

Figure 3.1 “Lonely polar bear” by Florence

Florence commented on this drawing as follows:

Extract 11

F: *That it’s in the Arctic (.) that- that’s obvious. (smiling)*

And then you have like lots of (..) little bits almost like they would fit into it that they break off.

R: *Mhm!*

F: *And they’re like just like <u>around</u> (.) but floating. (...)*

Uhm and it’s like (.) the polar bear has the biggest part of the ice (..)

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...

F: *Maybe that (.) that (.) that as in- (..)*

You hold the key (.) in a way (.) within the wor- within (..) this workplace

R: *Mhm.*

F: *you know in terms of like the "native English-speaking" (.) role.*

Ahm (.) and that gives you like a bigger (..) part of the ice.

But (sigh) (.) it's more what people perceive- that- that people perceive that you have a bigger part of the ice (.) it's not necessarily what (..) a lot of the time what I would perceive is - that I have the biggest part of the ice (..) like I feel that I- it was like- I'm standing on it but in terms of what I view around me (.) like in terms of ice- like I see myself as being (..) almost separate from the others.

R: *Mhm.*

F: *As in that I see all the broken bits of ice around me (...)*

But (..) I don't know (.) maybe (...) that in the end that's not necessarily what other people who are viewing at me see.

We see that Florence separates the power she attributes to the English language (the "biggest piece of ice") from the power of the speaker, who is perceived as "[having] a bigger part of the ice" but is actually merely "standing on it." She positions herself as privileged by her status as a "native English speaker" but simultaneously as lonely and disconnected from her colleagues, as she gazes at the "broken bits of ice around [her]." She misaligns with the stance she infers from her colleagues, indicating a disconnection between her own feelings and "what other people who are viewing at me see" (sic). From her phrasing and sad tone of voice, we infer that she finds herself in an isolated social position that she directly links to language ideologies accompanying the construct of the "native English speaker." She infers a stance among her colleagues of the overriding importance of English, but she partially misaligns with this stance–dissociating this perceived importance from her individual power in the workplace. Her affective evaluation hints that she wishes to be a part of friendlier horizontal relations (a member of the workplace community) or at least have the ambiguity of her status recognised (gain some sympathy, maybe also from the researcher). This highlights the main thread winding through our participants' accounts–the wish to be treated as a whole person with an individual skill set, rather than an objectified representative of the English language. Florence was not alone in her stance towards the "native English speaker" construct. Lucy later chose this drawing as the only one that aligned with her own stance towards her "native English speaker" status, particularly referring to the feeling of loneliness linked to language use at work.

7 Conclusion

This article has explored how the experience of being constructed as a "native English speaker" shapes the work experience of people in temporary junior positions in a multilingual EU institution. In examining this question in a workplace context, we depart from the predominant focus on education as a context for investigating "native speakers". Our methodology of longitudinal interviews and drawings enabled us to obtain rich data on our participants' experiences, which we analysed using the framework of sociolinguistic stance (Jaffe, 2009) from a discursive perspective. We have gained insights into the motivations and rationalisations behind everyday sociolinguistic practices at this workplace, and demonstrated a link between the micro-level of individual experience and macro-level processes of employment precarity and linguistic commodification. The lens of stance was especially helpful in accessing the complexities of the trainees' ambivalent status, showing how they at times associated and at times distanced themselves from the "native English speaker" construct, and how their positionings drew on more broadly circulating language ideologies. Our innovative incorporation of the visual research method of drawings alongside interview data within a stance analysis framework proved particularly fruitful for identifying similarities across participants, accessing deeper and more personal reflections, and exploring the broader ideological implications of our social actor-centered perspective.

The key novelty of our findings lies in the critical angle we have brought to bear on the paradox of precarity versus privilege experienced by our participants. They experienced significant "native speaker" effects (Doerr, 2009) from being constructed as "native English speakers" at work. Their discursive distancing from the "native English speaker" construct is explained by the complexities inherent in their attempts to manage the relationship between their "native English speaker" status and their precarious position in the workplace. On the one hand, as self-avowed neoliberal citizens they were drawn to construct their "native English speaker" as a valuable resource, assigning them symbolic value in the labour market and enhancing their prestige within the institution. On the other hand, the ideologies associated with the “native English speaker” construct exposed them to tedious linguistic tasks, objectified them as linguistic skills rather than people, and limited their work experience to an “English bubble”. This clashed with their aspirations towards “elite multilingualism” (Barakos & Selleck, 2019) as another neoliberal resource, leaving them frustrated in their attempts to construct a “cosmopolitan self” (Garrido, 2019) in contrast to the stereotypical monolingual “native English speaker.” Their discursive positioning led them to place the “native English speaker” in a hierarchy above the rest of the team, aligning with the ideology of the superior importance of English over other languages, and thereby raising their personal status in the institution. They constructed their position of an ultimate linguistic authority as functioning in their favour when it came to the appreciation of their superiors, but as negatively affecting relationships with fellow trainees. The interviewees from Ireland and Malta were able to downplay their prestigious position to foster cooperative and egalitarian relations with their non-“native English speaking” colleagues. In contrast, the British participants, who more keenly felt the impact of monolingual ideologies, experienced conflict and exclusion, which they directly linked to their “native English speaker” status. Being ascribed that status thus affords privilege, but also has costs. Our participants found themselves in a complex position having to balance conflicting demands with limited capacity or incentive to resist their objectification as “native English speakers” and the consequent banalisation of their linguistic skills. The "native English speaker" label backfired, as the language skills they offered seemed to become the banal result of being born and raised somewhere, and the actual linguistic quality of a text in English was trumped by the mere fact that a "native English speaker" had checked it.

What, then, can we conclude from our study in relation to the interaction between precarity and "native English speakers"? The scenario at this workplace can be framed as a case of banalisation of the language skills of precarious employees, in which the institution benefits from the provision of English at the expense of the interests of "native English speaking" employees. From this perspective, it is clear that "native speakers" of a globally dominant language like English are susceptible to the negative effects of linguistic commodification, alongside speakers of less dominant languages, at least under certain work conditions. This characterisation, however, misrepresents the privileged position of our trainees, who, despite the challenges they faced at work, claimed to be satisfied with their traineeships, enjoyed their stay in Luxembourg, and went on to pursue further international positions in which their work experience may have contributed to their recruitment. Their ability to do so was likely partly due to the high value of the linguistic commodity they had at hand–their perceived "native English skills"–which, (crucially), along with their other professional skills, education and experience, put them in a position of privilege a far cry from that of other precarious language workers[10].

[10] In other situations, "native English speaker" workers are clearly exploited (Codó, 2018).

The greatest negative effects in this case may not be the impact on the individuals involved but rather the part this scenario plays in the continued facilitation of the banalisation of language work, its relationship to labour precarity, and the commodification of the “native speaker” more broadly. Although it remains unclear how the apparent habit of securing a “native English speaker” for this unit originated and how this is linked to official EU policies and unofficial practices, we believe it points to a broader pattern of the precaritistation of language work in the EU. Within a neoliberal context, EU institutions have been pushed towards internal economisation by national states, just as entrepreneurs face financial pressure from their shareholders. The resultant cost-cutting includes transferring language work from structural positions to cheaper freelance workers (Kubota, 2011) or low-paid “native speakers” (Duchêne, 2011; Heller, 2010; Kraft, 2019), which finds its end point in the position of the “amateur” language work of the “natives.” Beyond the EU context in particular, our results point to patterns that are likely to be relevant in many other workplaces where English (or another language) is ideologically elevated but simultaneously banalised to the point where securing a professional linguistic service is considered unnecessary.

The symbolic elevation of the “native English speaker” is not only harmful (to both “native English speakers” and others) in this workplace, it is just one more brick in the edifice of global English, which, in the larger scheme of things, will always benefit the few at the expense of the many[11]. In this respect, beyond the findings in relation to this particular case, our study more broadly suggests the perseverance of dominant language ideologies that elevate English over other languages, and the "native" varieties above all. Such ideologies provide a weighty backdrop to the dynamics of particular institutions, even when not explicit in institutional policy. As individually precarious "native English speakers" struggle to offset the negative consequences of their sociolinguistic status by the prestige it affords them, they reinforce the golden cage for those who follow them. Broadening out from the existing critical examination of the "native speaker" construct in education, further research into the perspective of other "native speakers" in comparable workplaces (both within and outside the EU) and other unpaid "native" language work would be useful, in order to further examine how linguistic advantage and disadvantage interact under particular conditions of work.

Footnotes = Endnotes in the final publication

[11] Kraft (2019, p. 13) observes of a Polish language broker on a Norwegian construction site: *"the broker's struggle to reach a position of privilege from a position of precarity enables the continued precarity of the majority of migrant workers"*.

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3.2 Follow-up and reflections

Through my experience with the publication process, I have learned that there are important topics still to be explored in the workplace. I had to make decisions on how to structure my main research investigation, so that I could follow a consistent line of inquiry while continuing to publish papers about sub-studies. Although the concept of language ideology helped me to understand the significance of the specific position that the 'native English' trainees were put in at work, and the publication of the pilot project was well-received in academia (Appendix A), I hesitated to adopt language ideologies as a core concept for my main research investigation, for three reasons that I will explain below.

My first concern was the need for novelty in my approach and potential findings. I did not want to simply rehash my pilot project without offering fresh insight. I also wanted to explore different conceptual tools. Second, I aimed to find a research topic that would be readily accessible to my participants, even without prior knowledge of sociolinguistics. The concept of language ideologies, as an abstract mental construct, did not seem to be practical for this purpose. The third and most prominent issue was that language ideologies typically imply a negative affective/normative stance in sociolinguistics (although this is not necessarily the case in management scholarship, as seen in Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2023). In critical sociolinguistics, language ideologies are something to identify and ultimately challenge.

Indeed, a practical consequence of the (conflictualist) critical implications of the concept of language ideologies emerged during the peer review of my paper for the publication of conference proceedings (Lovrits 2022b). One of the peer reviewers dedicated a substantial portion of their feedback to strongly disassociating themselves from the critical, value-driven literature review of my pilot project. Fortunately, for me, they concluded that: "*the author's own stance has evidently not had a negative impact on the scholarly rigour of the actual research itself or the manner of its presentation...*" While I was content that my clear researcher positioning helped secure the publication, I could understand the reviewer′s apprehensions about what they referred to as a ″political″ stance in research. I could personally align with the critical calls for structural change; however, as a researcher, I desired more leeway to establish my research positioning as my findings would unfold. For this reason, I made the decision to take a step back and broaden my perspective beyond language ideologies for my main research project. I will describe my search for the right research questions and concepts in PART II.

Eventually, discussions over the publication of my pilot project generated a number of hunches and questions related to content. I pondered: are the senior members of the unit conscious of the implications of their distinctive treatment of the 'native English' trainees? Is this done intentionally? What motivates them? Does this fixation on 'native speakers' apply exclusively to English or is it present with other languages as well? Would these align with or counter established research and literature? If the 'native English trainees' are not particularly content with their positioning, do other team members also harbour concerns? Would these team members express similar or contrasting rationales for their language-related expectations? Was this pattern solely situational, possibly absent two years later, or did it persist in the workplace? …

I had too many interrelated questions at the beginning. What I knew for sure was that my research could not be a neutral, non-participant endeavour. I know I have an “activist” (empowerment-oriented) approach to work, so I needed a clear and defendable research position that would not be read as “political”. Moreover, I wished to encourage the sharing of knowledge and to develop practical strategies that would shield those who cannot protect themselves (yet). From this practical and affective starting point, I looked for theory support from previous research and literature, refined my scope of interest, formulated the main research question, and chose the appropriate methodology. I will describe this process in detail in the following section, Part II.

PART II. Common Features of the Main Research

"Learning, in the proper sense, is not learning things, but the meanings of things..."

— *John Dewey (2009) [1910] How we think*

Subchapter: The abuse of linguistic methods in education, p. 176.

Chapter 4. Main approach and concepts

Guided by the principles of pragmatic philosophy, I understand and enact science (and life experience in general) as a continuous discussion (Dewey (2009)[1910]; Smith 1984). In this regard, neither my participants' interpretations nor mine are "about certitude or the discovery of how things really are – they are an attempt to enlarge the conversation and to keep it going." (Smith 1984:390). This aligns with the axiom of the social construction of reality, my wish for employing transdisciplinary imagination, and the interpretivist nature of my method.

An interpretivist study, according to Bonache (2021:42), is not supposed to *"reflect a single, converging explanation (as is typically done in qualitative positivism), but […] show how the same phenomenon is experienced and viewed from a plurality of viewpoints and perspectives."* Therefore, my research offers tentative explanations of language-related behaviour without aiming to reconstruct what "truly happened" or what was "truly meant". Instead, it offers interpretations that could help to understand and enhance future communication.

Thus, I also refrain from making claims about correlation or causality. Instead, similar to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), I aim for context-dependent and theory-based interpretations that would be relatable and could inspire changes in further research as well as practice. I link the observed patterns to previous research and literature and in doing so, my findings become justifiable, transparent, communicable, and coherent (Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018). My interpretations are also critically reflected, which increases relatability and transferability to other societal and situational contexts (Smith 1984; Auerbach and Silverstein 2003).

4.1 Metalanguage

Inspired by Rymes's (2021) citizen sociolinguistic approach, my data gathering phase prompted meta-linguistic "wonderment" among my research participants. I encouraged them to reflect on the meanings and effects associated with language and speakerhood at work and to explicitly discuss those. I was curious as to what insights this research could uncover, not only due to the team members openly expressing their underlying assumptions, but also in relation to previous sociolinguistic literature.

Alongside "metalanguage", I considered describing my main focus as "metadiscourse" or "metapragmatics", following considerations of the alternative terms in Cameron's work (2004:312). However, I settled on "metalanguage" – a term encompassing both socio-pragmatics and the discourse on languages and speakerhood – because I consider this term most suitable for cross-disciplinary discussions and public outreach.

Regarding my definition of *language*, the sub-studies referred to in the articles in this dissertation adopt the perspective of language as *performance*, contrasting with the view of language as *competence* (Blommaert, 2007). Drawing from the traditions of linguistic anthropology and ethnomethodology, I emphasise the practical function of language use in real-life day-to-day situations, instead of concentrating on linguistic structure or individual linguistic skills (Blommaert, 2007: 70-71). Moreover, approaching the study of language from a critical perspective, my research distances itself from an automatic link of language to a state territory (Bourdieu 2001), while acknowledging that this link can indeed be relevant in many contexts (Jaspers and Madsen 2018). As Doerr (2009) points out, even imagined phenomena can have real effects on individual lives.

Next, I understand *speakerhood* as the discursive positioning of a language user, invoked and contextually embedded in discourse (Spotti and Blommaert 2017). In comparison to (linguistic) identity, which may be understood as an internal image of self in the context of biographical narration, speakerhood is a more specific role that people take (or which is assigned to them) in the context of interaction. Speakerhood as a situational link between a language and ′its′ user may or may not align with the perceived identity or membership in a ″deductively defined speech community″ (Blommaert, 2007:2016). Blommaert and Backus (2013) talk about ″speaking as″ somebody who has a socially recognised, distinct way of speaking – for example, teenagers (Blommaert and Backus 2013:15). In my research, an example of speakerhood would be the ′native English′ positioning, which is at times assigned and accepted, and at other times questioned or refused in my participants′ reflections.

Furthermore, I examine *metalanguage* within sociolinguistic theory (Jaworski, Coupland, and Galasiński, 2004) as a means of socially constructing knowledge about language and speakerhood. Blommaert points out (2011) that any language use not only says something *in* itself but also *about* itself. Every utterance includes metalinguistic aspects, i.e., references to the motivation for and purpose of the language use. Even little para- and extralinguistic utterances matter as discourse cues/markers, leading to a broader build-up of typified societal relations and contextualisation of what is communicated, picked upon, or misunderstood (Blommaert 2007). My interviews revealed, for instance, that not all joking about language use came across as intended.

The typical function of metalanguage in day-to-day communication is to indicate the “preferred reading” of what has been communicated (Blommaert 2007: 47; Blommaert 2011: 127), which helps to achieve socio-pragmatic goals. Explicit metalanguage can have more functions, though. It is helpful when communication fails, or serves as entertainment (Cameron 2004: 312). However, the actual effects of metalanguage can also fail to reflect the intended socio-pragmatic aim. For instance, when one of my participants repeated an expression, showing amusement about her colleague’s unusual pronunciation, it came across as a micro-aggression from the perspective of the colleague that was concerned. In this case, an expression of metalinguistic “wonderment” (Rymes 2021) regarding linguistic variation, spoken with no intention of harm, created discomfort. However, some metalanguage can be downright mean. Indeed, Blommaert (2011: 126) points out that cooperation should be considered “as a variable [rather] than a stable condition of communication”.

That said, no metalinguistic interpretation in research can ever be ultimate, because the meaning remains subject to a potential re-contextualisation within both what has (and has not) been communicated before and after and by whom (Blommaert 2007). Blommaert (2007: 175) remarks:

> *“… discourse may be simultaneously understandable for many people, yet receive very different interpretations by these people, depending on whether the work of interpretation is done in the same event as that of production, later, much later, by someone else than the original interlocutor, in a different contextual space, from a different historical position, from a different place in the world, and so forth.”*

This inherent ambiguity of interpretation is an important limitation of interpretive research that my dissertation exemplifies. Due to epistemological constraints, no research can uncover what participants “really meant (to achieve)”. That said, it is still important to investigate how people communicate about their meaning-making, because exposing the aspects that people may draw on, and how these may differ, can help to reach a shared meaning in the future. Thus, the findings of interpretive research inform us less about how things are and more about what they could be (“what if …”), which inspires and opens new ways of dealing with socially constructed phenomena – in this case, the metalanguage.

Eventually, I specifically focus on *folk metalanguage*, analysing common sense judgements (Cameron 2000) of language use and speakerhood. Folk metalanguage can manifest in three ways (Preston 2012), ranging from simple intra-linguistic reports about another utterance; to reasoning by a generalised knowledge in social norms of language use; to metalinguistic reactions that draw on those norms, expressing expectations and situationally perceived effects of language use. This dissertation is most concerned with the two latter – the social aspects of metalanguage. This is because my research centres less on the form/character and more on the function of metalanguage in everyday life (Blommaert, 2007). The “meta” aspect refers to a sort of “zooming out” from language as a means of social life, in order to perceive language as an object of discourse instead – or, in common language, a talk about talk that has social implications (both as reasons and effects).

I aim to identify potential pitfalls of the use of metalanguage, as well as the merits of employing critical metalanguage to pre-empt or overcome those pitfalls.

Together with Verschueren (2000), I believe that metalanguage can become a vital tool to avert communication misunderstandings in varied social contexts. Aiming to make critical metalinguistic knowledge more accessible outside of academia, I focus on how to make things work through metalanguage in practical, day-to-day life. This adds to the scholarly trend towards "constructive intercultural management" (Barmeyer et al. 2021), similar to the "conviviality in diversity" trend in humanities and social science (Boesen et al. 2023).

4.2 Socio-pragmatic Discourse Analysis

Having chosen my general research topic, I proceeded to consider the appropriate method of inspecting metalanguage in everyday life. I aimed for a qualitative inquiry, similar to what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe as the exploration of *"routine and problematic moments"* in participants' lives, *"attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them"* (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3). Nonetheless, the notion of "meaning-making" is very broad, referring to a semantic process that takes on various forms in different research fields. Therefore, I considered the relevance of theoretical meaning-making frameworks for my research – that of the semantic, pragmatic and discourse analyses (Crystal 2019).[12]

The *semantic analysis* focuses on language as a tool that people use to convey meaning – in other words, knowledge embedded in given, pre-defined language systems (Crystal 2019). Since I wanted my research be people-centred rather than (language)

[12] The three can also be understood as processual counterparts of Preston's conceptualisation of metalanguage, as described in the previous section.

structure-centred, I did not see my project situated in the field of semantic analysis. While semantics is, indeed, at the core of any language use, I was more interested in the social implications of language use than the language systems themselves.

Next, I considered a *pragmatic analysis* that would look beyond the semantic content of a language system, in order to understand the purpose of language use in a situated context (Crystal 2019). I wanted to pay attention to the unsaid or unwritten, yet communicated (Yule 1996), as well as the background knowledge, beliefs and expectations embedded in a conventional knowledge structure (Yule 2010). In order to understand if pragmatic analysis would be the right method for my main research, I conducted extensive reading and became a member of the International Association for Teaching Pragmatics (ITAP) in 2020. I have visited a few of their online conferences and followed the sources they shared. Although I improved my understanding of intercultural communication and the way pragmatics can be taught in language education, I decided that this was not the right approach for me for the following reasons.

While the implied pragmatic knowledge brings convenience and efficiency to routine, everyday communication, it can cause a problem in societies marked by mobility. Indeed, people on the move bring their normative understanding and expectations to spaces where other norms might rule (van Dijk 2008). The problem is not diversity itself; it is rather that the differing interpretative patterns are not considered, only what is more voiced or negotiated (Verschueren 1999). However, it felt to me that pragmatic analyses, more often than not, assume that there is a clear and homogeneous target system which one must learn in order to blend in and "integrate". I suspect that this might be the effect of the underlying "methodological nationalism" (Kraus 2018) or monolingual "way of seeing" (Piller 2015) in applied linguistics and, particularly, in education. I discuss this aspect in detail in my articles in PART III.

That said, diversity researchers across fields (Baker 2015; Verschueren 1999; Vertovec 2014) agree that successful mobility across normative spaces requires meta-understanding and negotiation of the differing rules and expectations. This is where I saw the opportunity to continue my research discussion on the pitfalls and merits of metalanguage in an international workplace setting. Therefore, I have situated my research in the field of *discourse analysis* (van Dijk 2008), paying attention to the socially constructed, thus malleable normative aspects of the meaning-making process.

In particular, I am interested in what metalanguage "does to people" (Blommaert 2007: 70-71). I investigate socio-pragmatic reflections and the way they help individuals deal with the language-related norms that may not reflect their individual and group interests. Thus, I have taken the approach to meaning-making that pays attention to the stakes of individuals while also considering the normative societal aspects. This approach is sometimes called "pragmatic stream in discourse analysis" (Blommaert 2007:3; Blommaert 2011)[13]. Thus, it reflects my interest in pragmatics while accentuating the challenges posed by diverse normative structures in society.

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[13] Cameron (2004:319) talks about "socially-oriented pragmatics" in a way that I see as a discourse analysis approach, rather than a socio-pragmatic approach (Marmaridou 2011). Since discourse studies and socio-pragmatics seem to be two fields closely related and intertwined, my research findings can be relevant in both; similar to how the analysis of stance can be used in both discourse analysis and conversational analysis.

4.3 Search for conceptualisation and initial research question(s)

As the next step in building my main doctoral research, I started to explore concepts that could help me understand the implications of metalanguage in a multilingual workplace. I started working with the concepts of *discursive resources*. Discursive resources are the mental "structures, rules, or categorizations that individuals possess" (van Dijk 2008:132). People may not always be consciously aware of these resources when using them (Kuhn et al. 2008). They may also be unaware that they are expected to use them (Blommaert 2007). Discursive devices can be both linguistic and sociolinguistic.

Linguistic discursive resources, in particular, refer to the rules and constraints of the language system(s), which determine the ways in which language can be used. Examples of these are grammar, vocabulary, syntax, or phonology (Blommaert 2007). These conditions are collectively acknowledged and apply universally to all speakers within a specific community, forming the foundation of a recognised language system. This aspect has notably been gaining prominence as a key component in enhancing metalinguistic awareness in education (Jessner et al. 2016). Additionally, *sociolinguistic* discursive resources reflect the fact that the communicative resources may be subject to variation in different contexts. These resources may also refer to the social and cultural background of the participants, specific setting in which discourse takes place, type of interaction, relationships between participants, topics discussed, and/or the social context (Blommaert 2007).

With the idea of discursive resources in mind, I formulated a preliminary central question and four sub-questions in order to investigate four specific issues. Before presenting the final research questions at the end of this chapter, I will present the initial questions in the figure below, both to allow for a comparison and to show evidence of the evolution of my research:

Figure 4.1 Initial research questions

<u>Initial main question</u>: What discursive resources shape communication in a multilingual European workplace, and how could a metapragmatic talk about them enhance the initial training of newcomers?

<u>Initial sub-questions</u>:

1. What does ʹmultilingualismʹ at work mean to the participants?
2. What type of personal interests can be traced in trainees' positioning towards language practices in the workplace?
3. With reference to what social conditions do the participants legitimize their stances towards languages and language practices at work?
4. What patterns emerging in research do the participants identify as potentially enhancing their communication at work, namely regarding the initial training of newcomers?

With the above preliminary research questions as guidance, I looked for theoretical insights that would allow me to construct my data set. Experience from the data gathering phase further formed my need to study theory. Equipped with this knowledge, I was able to iteratively revisit my data. In every round of investigation, I gained additional insights, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of how language use was experienced and interpreted in the workplace.

Over the course of this process, I have repeatedly revised my research questions and their conceptualisation. I tried different formulations of the questions, but for a long time I lacked an overarching guideline, even though I was sure that I was following a common golden thread. I understood that I still had to search for an appropriate conceptualisation and correct formulation of the overarching idea that would link the focus expressed in my sub-questions.

Subsequently, thanks to my growing theoretical knowledge from literature and trial-and-error formulations, I realised that "discursive resources" were not the right concept to use when navigating my research. They kept leading me to the semantic and linguo-pragmatic approach, which begins with a theoretical view of language. I wanted to move in the opposite direction, starting with real-life experiences (emic/insider perspective) and seeing how they fit or do not fit into theoretical categories (etic/structural perspective) – I expected this to facilitate the understanding of language as a social practice (Szkudlarek et al. 2020).

Therefore, I put the concept of discursive resources aside. Instead, I started to explore the potential of discursive *patterns* and sociolinguistic *conditions* (also used by van Dijk 2008; Blommaert 2007). However, as my understanding deepened further, I concluded that this was not the right approach either. The concepts of discursive patterns and sociolinguistic conditions were again too closely linked to structures. I wanted to explore the space linking the interpersonal and the societal – namely the link between what shapes metalanguage and the effects thereof.

In my last futile attempt at conceptualisation, I tried to work with the conceptualisation by Vertovec (2014), which originally seemed to provide a link between practices and norms. According to Vertovec (2014:15), effective communication at the level of "encounters" relies on shared meanings within an interpretive framework, i.e., pragmatic “representations” that mirror the structural matrix of “configurations”. While the three concepts could be applied to my research, they only helped me categorise my data, without leading me to any explicatory value or novel finding. Eventually, I decided to leave those concepts aside too. By clarifying what was not working for me, I was eventually able to determine what particular aspects I did want to investigate. The above-described explorations and dead-ends ultimately helped me to identify the concept that connected all my sub-questions. I decided to work with the concept of socio-pragmatic intentions.

4.4 Socio-pragmatic intentions and the final research question(s)

According to Haugh (2008), the concept of “socio-pragmatic intentions” has evolved into two distinct conceptual streams. First, the “cognitive-philosophical” approach ties socio-pragmatic intentions to the work of Grice (Haugh 2008). This approach centres on the cognitive facets of the speaker’s deliberate intentions. The second perspective, termed by Haugh (2008) as “European-continental” and “sociocultural-interactional”, assumes that speakers might not always have explicit and conscious intentions. Instead, additional or new interpretations may arise from the communication context and the collaborative process of negotiating meaning among speakers. Haugh (2008) notably associates this approach with the contributions of Verschueren, which align not only with the essence of my research and research topic, but also with my other literature choices.

I have decided to follow the latter approach, conceptualising socio-pragmatic intentions as *expectations* (whether *conscious or implicit*) that connect social actors′ communicative objectives to their actual communication, as well as to the normative framework of broader societal discourses (Haugh 2008). In the process of meaning-making, a socio-pragmatic intention represents the initial point. The socio-pragmatic intention is then put into action through a certain utterance/language use. Subsequently, the communicated socio-pragmatic intention is interpreted (understood or misunderstood) by the communication partner(s) who respond(s), again, based on their own socio-pragmatic intentions.

However, the process of understanding socio-pragmatic intentions in a situated social context is not straightforward. Firstly, while communicating individuals may understand the literal meaning of a statement, they may also each interpret its intended meaning differently (Blommaert 2007; Preston 2012). Secondly, the same discourse can be understood differently, not only by individual actors in varying contexts but also over time, and depending on when, where, and by whom it is being interpreted (Blommaert 2007). Thirdly, these intentions may lack consciousness while being explicitly denied or retrospectively re-negotiated (Haugh 2008). Haugh (2008) underlines that socio-pragmatic intentions are inherently ambiguous, thus escaping the possibility of an ultimate certainty about them.

While the ambiguity of socio-pragmatic intentions is an epistemological limitation, it remains in line with the interpretive character of inquiry (Smith 1984: 390) that I outlined in the beginning of Part II. Thus, the epistemological ambiguity of the central concept aligns with the purpose of my main research question in this context. On the contrary, it allows for the linking of studies in different fields while also offering flexibility throughout the unpredictable process of journal-specific requests and revisions regarding the published articles. Eventually, despite considerable changes being made in the peer-review process, my final research sub-questions (Figure 3 below) remained close to the initial ones (compare to Figure 2, page 72). The most substantial change was to leave out the aspect of training enhancement (included in my initial research questions) after I realised that it was more an expression of my dedication to undertake relevant research, rather than a helpful addition to the research questions.[14]

Figure 4.2 Final research questions

Final Research Question: What can metalinguistic stances reveal about socio-pragmatic intentions and their implications in the (potentially) multilingual workplace?

Sub-questions for three studies:

1. What does "multilingualism" mean for a team of language professionals and how does this understanding shape their perception of language practices at work?
2. How is the language choice between English and French performed and interpreted in the multilingual EU institution context?
3. How does linguistic authority feature in participants' stances towards languages and speakers at work, and with what implications?

Ultimately, the final main research question leads my dissertation towards investigating the socio-pragmatic intentions expressed or implied in stances towards languages and speakerhood in the (potentially) multilingual workplace. The analytic framework of pragmatic discourse analysis (Blommaert 2007) implies a concern with the impression and "expectation management" in day-to-day interaction (Blommaert and Varis 2015).

[14] Instead, I discussed the relevance of my findings in one of my contributions to a book of conference proceedings (Lovrits *in press*/2024).

The research focus is on the roles that my participants assume or assign to others, and how they position themselves towards each other with reference to language use and speakerhood. In order to identify the pitfalls and merits of metalanguage, I focused primarily on moments in which mismatched socio-pragmatic intentions led to unintended and undesirable interpretations and effects, all while seeking possible solutions that metalanguage may offer in these situations.

Chapter 5. Sampling and the place of research

My understanding of a suitable place and participants has been influenced by the premises of linguistic ethnography (Saville-Troike 2003). I investigated discourse in a ″community of practice″, focusing on its emic characteristics, i.e., the context-dependent, empirical patterns of social interaction (Buchstaller and Khattab 2014). After taking both purposeful and practical features into consideration, I selected the research location and participants (Buchstaller and Khattab 2014). The existing trust that I had built with the senior members of the team facilitated my access to the workplace, making it a smoother process compared to starting from scratch.

Additionally, the chosen site and participants fulfilled practical criteria, including the proximity of the location and the participants' willingness to engage in the research. Thus, my decision regarding the location and participants leaned towards convenience. However, this convenience was not without purpose; I was mindful of both the utility of my research and the potential benefits to participants, all while seeking access to valuable insights. The individuals involved in my study (whom I hesitate to refer to as a ″sample,″ as they remain first and foremost human beings, rather than research resources) were selected for the purpose of investigating contextualised issues, not for representativeness (Bonache 2021).

I would like to point out that the decision on place and sample was taken at the end of my pilot research preparation. I had already decided to investigate socially embedded metalinguistic stances in a multilingual environment when I saw the opportunity to collect data at the place where I was doing my internship. As such, my findings rest upon a more general theoretical construction that aligns with my own personal experiences, as well as those I have observed or shared with others in multilingual contexts outside of the EU institutions and Luxembourg. I believe that this supports transdisciplinary imagination and allows for the transferability of my findings across fields investigating language in multilingual settings.

Given the specificity of my research context, my place and participants may represent a ″critical case″ (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). This is a case that highlights the critically understood functions of metalanguage in collaboration with language workers, for whom languages and multilingualism are at the core of work tasks. As the place is highly visible and difficult to access, it can also be considered a sensitive (political) case place/sampling (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). In any case, my participants were not chosen for their characteristics; thus, my data cannot lead to generalisable results. However, this is less of a limitation and more an inherent characteristic of (pragmatic) interpretative research (Smith 1984), as described in the previous sections.

5.1 Participants

I have described the characteristics of my research place and participants in every article included in my dissertation. However, some of the characteristics are only relevant for the overarching doctoral research, so they could not be part of the individual publications. I will describe these characteristics now and in the following section, in order to keep my research report transparent.

My participants were language workers in one of the EU institutions in Luxembourg. Although many of them were staying with the unit only temporarily, they understood themselves as part of a collective "we," joining in the shared history of the unit. The participants sometimes distinguished between two types of “we”, referring to two particularly salient social roles in the workplace – the trainees (“juniors”) and the staff (“seniors”). The difference between these two roles was not age, but rather position in the institutional hierarchy.

Furthermore, professional language skills were one of the characteristics that my participants shared. They all spoke more than one language at a professional level, of which one was always English. They were language workers, with degrees in linguistics, translation, education, journalism, social media, or marketing. Because of this, I did not expect them to find it too difficult when asked to reflect on metalinguistics for the research study. However, some of them considered this reflection difficult or unusual. I will illustrate this later, in the chapter on positionality in research.

Apart from the interest in languages, another shared aspect of participants’ workplace experience was the high turnover that they had to deal with. The only two stable staff members were the head of unit and the vice-head, to whom I also refer to as “management”. Two other seniors were subject to the internal policy of mobility and worked as trainees’ tutors. One of them was about to leave the unit after seven years at her position. The other was on maternity leave for most of my research, but she came back for the final phase in 2021.

The unit would get a new cohort of paid trainees twice a year, always in March and October. Some of the trainees could stay a few months longer, if there was more work and space in the budget to pay them. Most of them left after five months, though. Under rare circumstances, a trainee could get an offer for a short temporary contract.

This happened during my research; one of the trainees replaced one of the seniors for just under a year, while she was on maternity leave.

The age of my participants varied greatly – some were fresh graduates at their first job (most of the trainees), others were a few years from retirement (most of the staff). While all participants but the head of unit were women, gender did not seem to be a salient topic for my participants. Other group characteristics were salient in some of the published studies – they will be described in more detail in the respective articles.

I have included only the information that the participants wanted to disclose about themselves. For instance, it was clear from the interview context that at least one participant held citizenship in more than one country, but she did not wish to disclose which (in order to keep more anonymity). Some others were bilingual from home, or had moved between countries over the course of their studies and professional life.

I respected what my participants wanted and did not want to disclose in the data gathering process. I only asked directly about the languages they knew, and their educational and professional experience. There was no need to get more socio-demographic information from the participants, since my research did not aim to describe an "objective" reality, but its interpretation. As a matter of intersubjective construction of relevance, some aspects became salient and some not. I will come back to this aspect in Chapter 7, which is on stance and positionality.

Moreover, participation in the research did not depend on participants' personal characteristics, but instead on their work relation to the unit under observation at the given time. Thus, the participants were selected irrespective of traditional socio-demographic features – their age, gender, citizenship, first language or socio-economic status. However, that does not mean that those features were not relevant for the research. They were only not relevant a priori, when the study was designed. Some of the characteristics have become a pivotal part of my interpretation (like the different positions of the seniors and the juniors, discussed in Chapter 9, or the French origin of one of the trainees in Chapter 10). At times, those characteristics also enabled me to link the observed features to the extant literature and research (like the 'native English' in Chapter 3 and Chapter 11). However, I only disclose the characteristics that were essential for comprehending the phenomenon discussed in every submitted manuscript. Including any further details would increase the risk of identifying the participants or the location.

5.2 Characteristics of the workplace unit

My participants worked together in a so-called horizontal unit. This means that the workplace was neither defined as a national unit (representing an EU member state), nor as a language unit representing one of the official languages across the EU member states (such as German for Germany, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Italy). While there was no official language policy for the internal vehicular language(s), English was considered the default.

In management terms, the unit could be described as a ″learning organization″ (Reese 2020). Additionally, the unit′s management made a conscious effort to ″fidelise″ its team members and collaborators (Le Boterf 2017), i.e., make them feel satisfied at work, hence loyal to the unit. This fidelisation was not a performance for the interviews; I experienced it myself when I was working in the unit. The unit′s management tended to let the team members deal with their work tasks in an autonomous way. The head of unit believed that there are several ways of dealing with the challenges of their service. This is why he backed individual decisions according to a system of mutual checks and reflective opportunities, which ensured what management theory calls ″collective competence″ (Le Boterf 2017). He summed up his people-oriented approach in this way:

Excerpt (5.1)[15]

[15] The transcription conventions vary slightly in my submitted/published articles. The following format has been used in the parts of my dissertation that are not submitted/published articles:

?	= rising intonation
.	= falling intonation
(laugh)	= paralinguistic features
this	= stress
(..) (...)	= pauses of varying length
[ ]	= implicit reference
/…/	= omitted text part
-	= truncated speech
[ ]	= implied information
R:	= researcher
S1:	= senior - first round
S2:	= senior - second round
T1:	= trainee from the 1. term
T2_1:	= trainee from the 2. term - first interview
T2_2:	= trainee from the 2. term - second interview
T2_3:	= trainee from the 2. term - third interview

S1: if people feel well in a team, they also work (..) well. So, then the result is good.

The effectiveness of his friendly and non-hierarchical management was put to the test during the initial and most challenging phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, when strict regulations were implemented just two weeks into the traineeship. Despite the pressure from the higher institutional hierarchy intensifying during the time of the full home-office regime, the team members saw themselves as sheltered by their positive interpersonal relationships in the unit. The head of unit was particularly highly regarded for his people-oriented and respectful managerial approach during that period. For instance, in September 2020, one of the trainees reflected on the pandemic's effects on their work-life balance:

Excerpt (5.2)

T1: And for every problem you have, you could communicate somebody either personally, individually or within the [WhatsApp] group. This has also helped us a lot and I'm really grateful for that. Because the pressure- Also (..) taking into consideration that in this specific unit, uh, 40% of the employees are working mothers- during the confinement, their life changed. There were kids at home. The meetings had to be organised at hours when they did not conflict with the school hours of their kids (...)

The pressure for high-speed/high quality production was experienced separately from the Covid-19 stress. One of the seniors described this as “working at a conveyor belt” (in Slovak “ako na páse”; author’s translation). However, all team members positioned themselves as loyal workers, grateful for the working conditions in the unit, which they felt were especially friendly. No matter the difficulties and pandemic-related restrictions, all trainees expressed satisfaction with their stay. Some of them were sorry for the conditions, but all were happy with the support of the senior staff. One of the trainees from the second cohort even talked about the unit as a “perfect utopia”, wishing to continue working in the EU institutions for the ideal working conditions.

Seniors were also aware of the way in which their approach was praised by the trainees. However, one of the seniors expressed her doubts as to whether this approach actually prepares the trainees for the “reality” of the EU institutions:

Excerpt (5.3)

```
S2: Sometimes I think that they might get the wrong
experience that- that after they're leaving [the
unit], they might end up in an- in an environment
which is the opposite, I mean- and this might be a
really cold- cold shower for them. /.../
I mean, not that they are badly treated, but they just
don't have the same relations as we have with the
trainees.
```

Staff members were proud of their ability to create positive relationships at work. Indeed, the perceived friendly nature of communication and collaboration within the unit was emphasised during the meetings. Numerous comparisons were drawn, not only to other units within the institution (particularly translation units), but also to translation agencies and other international organisations. One noteworthy aspect, highlighted by participants who had previously worked for translation agencies, was the opportunity to be seen as an individual with a personal history and a unique skill set, rather than being reduced to a mere entry in an Excel table of ″human resources.″ In stark contrast, these participants had experienced strong detachment between their work and personal needs in their previous employment.

My last analysis exposed one more relevant aspect that characterised the different perspectives of my participants – the character of work contracts. Seniors had life-long contracts with the institution and did not have to worry about the value of their linguistic repertoire on the labour market, because they did not expect to be job hunting in the future. They were keen on learning languages and looked out for opportunities to practise them. However, that was their personal whim, they were not forced to do so by any structural condition. In contrast, the trainees were at the beginning of their careers (one re-starting her career as a trailing spouse accompanying her husband to Luxembourg), and they had only received a stipend for the duration of their placement at the EU institution – no work contract. They were (often painfully) aware that they would have to compete for a job soon and they believed that their speakerhood (′native speaker-ness′) and overall linguistic repertoire (languages they could or could not use) were either assets or constraints in the hunt for jobs.

Chapter 6. Constructing the data set

In this chapter, I describe the way in which I generated my research data. I will not talk about ″data collection″, given the social-constructivist characteristics of my research and the phenomena under investigation. My data were not ″out there″, so I could not simply pick/collect/gather them (Iversen 2014). Instead, I co-constructed my data together with my participants, and our knowledge changed (deepened) over time.

In the following section, I introduce the principles of participatory action research, followed by a chronological overview of my data construction phases. I conclude with two sections explaining the main techniques of iterative interviewing and metaphor drawing.

6.1 Participatory action research

My approach to data construction was inspired by the (participatory) action research principles (McTaggart 1997; McIntyre 2008; McNiff 2013). Varying approaches to action research share a common premise: when individuals engage in reflective practices, they gain the capacity to enhance their social conditions (McTaggart 1997). Since this assumption aligns with my previous professional training in social inclusion advocacy, community empowerment, and social work counselling, I was able to use this research approach while building upon skills that facilitated my engagement with my participants.

Action (or practice-based) research is a set of practices that implies "a process of people interacting together and learning with and from one another, in order to understand their practices and situations, and to take purposeful action to improve them." (McNiff 2013:25). Action research raises awareness and incites change, while disclosing individual and collective skills, resources, and agency in the given environment (McIntyre 2008). Thus, this method is particularly fitting for investigating complicated issues in diverse communities that host conflicting perspectives and agendas.

Action research brings about new insights in participants and new changes in their environment. Among other things, this means that it is not possible to establish a direct link between the co-constructed knowledge and action. Action research investigates socially situated triggers and effects, as opposed to definitive causes and consequences, thus exploring possibility rather than aiming for predictability (McIntyre 2008). Moreover, the process of a (potential) change can never be considered complete. The act of seeking explanations can initiate a process of reflection that, in turn, may prompt a re-evaluation of participants' beliefs and values, and so forth (MacKay 2020). This is all in line with the principles of (pragmatic) interpretative inquiry (Dewey 2009[1910]; Smith 1984; Blommaert 2007), which does not look for generalisations, but rather inspiration and transferability of knowledge that is always context-dependent.

Data in participatory action research are constructed together with the participants, who jointly investigate their practical experiences, engage in deep reflection, and re-organise their lives based on that reflection (McIntyre 2008). The researcher is not completely neutral and may deliberately try to disrupt conventional beliefs by ″troubling ideas″ or questions such as ″I wonder what would happen if ... ?″ (McNiff 2013:29). While the researcher's heuristic work is based both on theory and insights gained from the participants, the participants are also given the opportunity to engage with theory in a way that is personally meaningful to them (McNiff 2013). This is particularly important to highlight as a legitimate part of the research, namely because I shared my pre-analyses with participants and asked them for a meta-commentary (their commentary on my commentary), as I will describe in a later section (6.3 Chronological process and documents).

That said, participatory action research knowledge is interpretive and inter-subjective (McNiff 2013), and reflection on researcher positionality is a compulsory part of (participatory) action research. While collective and critical self-reflection are considered a legitimate source of understanding (McTaggart 1997), they require exposing values and judging them: ″an action research report demonstrates critical reflection and, where possible, meta-critique″ (McNiff 2013:153).

6.2 Research values and vision

Inspired by McNiff′s explanation of the process of reflection in action research (2013), I inspected my values in research and formulated criteria to ensure that my standards were met. Building upon the obligatory imperatives of transparency, respect, and no harm, I chose the following four main values: individual agency, self-determination, intellectual innovation, and mutually incited changes between research and practice. I describe implications of each of them in more detail below.

My orientation towards the value of *individual agency* relates to the acknowledgement of the dialogic nature of people and systems. While individuals can decide how to live, a change in normative systems (embedded orders) may be out of the individual's reach (McNiff 2013: 204). Nevertheless, people still have freedom of thought. Research has proven that individual agency at the level of values and beliefs exists, even in repressive environments (MacKay 2020). My participants were not mechanical puppets in pre-set systems of social interaction. While their individual actions were shaped by the environment, they remained individuals who could, at least to some extent, resist structural influence and act according to their own values and beliefs.

Next, the value of *participants' self-determination* was reflected in my research as the care for communicative aptness, i.e., comprehensibility, honesty, clear language, respect, non-judgement, and a safe environment for my participants. I understand action research as a way of empowerment, and I see interviewing as similar to a social counselling dialogue, drawing on my previous professional experience. Throughout my research, I was constantly aware that I could neither determine the practical needs of my participants, nor judge their perspectives and/or decisions. I will give some examples in the chapter on researcher positionality.

My research stance sometimes created dilemmas. I reflected on these and consulted my supervisor. The most challenging situations were moments in interviews when I heard participants diminishing the negative effects of their behaviour on other participants (from my point of view). Fortunately, there were not many such moments, and none of them were so serious that I would consider consulting an official ethics body. However, those moments triggered my need to restore justice and ensure that no harm was done. I did my best to address those instances in general terms when I shared my recommendations for the workplace[16].

In terms of the value of *intellectual innovation*, I focused on critical thinking (critical approach to literature, data, and critical research reflection). I did my best to pay

[16] I will talk about the information I shared with my participants in the next section of this chapter.

attention to structural traps in the system of social exchanges, namely stereotypes and prejudice, but also everything that seemed to be ʹobviousʹ or ʹnaturalʹ. An important part of the intellectual innovation here was my engagement with research and scholars from management science. This helped me to identify aspects that were ʹobviousʹ in linguistics, but not automatically accessible outside of the domain – for example, the concept of ʺlanguage practicesʺ or ʺlinguistic repertoiresʺ. I understand that I cannot possibly see all the limitations that may be inherent to my socio-economic position, including but not limited to my upbringing, education, personal and professional experience and geographical location. Nonetheless, I have acknowledged my subjectivity in a transparent way (Devereux 2014 [1967]) and I have done my best to keep this in check by engaging in dialogue about my research with colleagues, students, friends, or people from other social domains who are interested in my work. At all times, of course, I kept my research anonymous (often to the dismay of my curious interlocutors).

Cooperation became the main criterion for assessing the value of a *dialogic link between research and practice*. I believe that it is important to question normative practices, evaluate them from varying perspectives, and change them if needed. Whenever we engage in a discussion, we open the lived world up to change, which can then create new normative structures. This process is never complete. Therefore, my participants were my partners in the iterative dialogue: we generated suggestions and recommendations both from and for practice. My participants were not objectified as sources of information but remained my partners in dialogue, meaning that we both learned throughout this process. I used theory and previous research to identify and analyse unhelpful or counter-productive practices, but I left the participants to pick out their own. Their responses were not uniform: some research topics were refused by some participants, while new suggestions were generated in the interviews.

Ultimately, the values described above led me to the formulation of my research vision. I have chosen the above values because I wish to *foster personal and collective growth in a diverse and constantly changing society, where mutual respect and collaboration are of fundamental importance.* Since I can observe instances where people unintentionally exhibit unkindness towards one another and bring about negative social implications, my aim is to shed light on these hidden dynamics of communication and how they are produced – and to what effect.

I focus on metalanguage, because I believe that an open dialogue is the first crucial step towards preventing the institutions from using people rather than helping them. Moreover, it ultimately facilitates constructive discussions surrounding languages, language users, and language competence in the workplace. I aspire to contribute to a people-centred approach that goes beyond mere procedural and technical improvements, by *"influencing people's thinking so that they realise their potentials for changing their own systems."* (McNiff 2013). This is why participatory action research principles fit my personal research approach.

6.3 Chronological process and documents

For the sake of transparency, I will present the process of my data set construction, step by step, in this section. I will list events in chronological order, indicating the month/year in which they happened. The figure below is a visual depiction of the process, for a general overview of my data construction:

Figure 6.1 Overview of the interviewing steps

TRAINEES (T0) pilot study **2018/19**	- 3x1 interview looking back at the experience - 1 participant longitudinal interviewing (3x) + drawing + written self-reflection - *additional consents to a further use of data*
TRAINEES (T1) Mar2020 - Oct2020 **September 2020**	- 4x1-off interview + drawings; looking back at the experience *(1st Covid)*
STAFF (S1) **October 2020**	- head of unit (1 initial interview on the work with trainees) - tutor in Communication (1 initial interview + drawing) - tutor in Terminology (1 interview + drawing)
TRAINEES (T2) **Oct2020 - Mar2021**	- initial written self-reflection - 4 participants in longitudinal interviewing (3 rounds) + drawings in 2nd interview)
TRAINEE (T1) -> **STAFF** (S2)	- 1-off interview (+ sharing and consulting preliminary insights)
STAFF (S2) **May/June 2021**	- tutor in Communication (1 final interview) - tutor in Terminology (1 final interview) - head of unit (1 final interview on potential effects of research)

Below is a brief description of the events, together with information about the type of data, participants, and [in square brackets] a reference to the respective documents in the final set of appendices at the end of my dissertation. I do not comment on the events or reflect on them in this section, but some of the events will receive further commentary later in the text (the relevant events are indicated).

March 2020

01/03/2020 Start of my doctoral contract

06/03/2020 Start of the first Covid-19 confinement in Luxembourg

April – May 2020

Initial literature review and the Ethics application proposal

June 2020

My doctoral project under the working title “Discursive Conditions of Multilingual Practices at Work” was approved by the Ethics Review Panel on 26.06.2020. The approval featured three data collection lines – ethnographic observations, interviews, and audio recordings of workplace communication.

[Appendix B. ERP 20-025_WorkLingEU_Approval_26.06.20]

July – August 2020

It became clear during the summer that we could expect strict restrictions on social gathering, including access of third parties to the EU institution premises. I decided to give up on the on-site lines of inquiry and fully focus on the online interviews.

September 2020

The head of unit approved my iterative interviewing of the staff and trainees in the suggested frequency and declared his availability for interviews. We agreed that I could start the interviews by talking to the trainees who were finishing their stay (T1). The T1 trainees were looking back at their experience at the workplace from March to September 2020.

Data: 1-off interview (4x) + metaphor drawing (3x)

Participants: 4 trainees (T1)

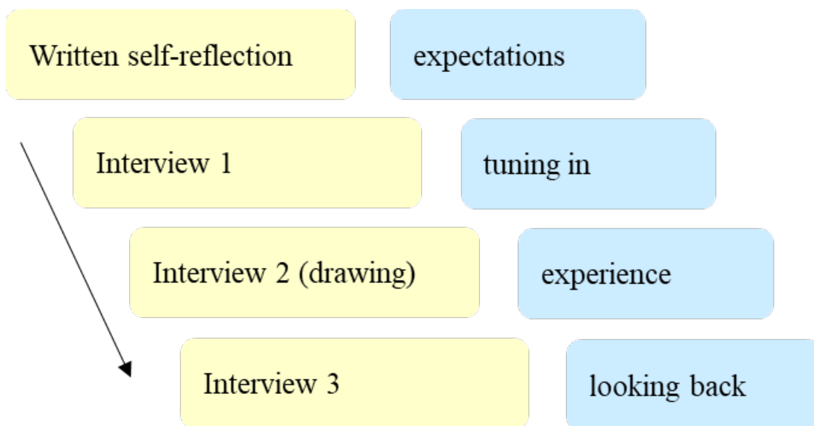
[Appendix C. T1 Interview outline]

October 2020

The T1 trainees' contracts were prolonged by one month and a new traineeship term (T2) started in October.

I asked T2 trainees to write down their expectations about language use at work and send the document over to me in the second week of their stay. This was a pre-interview, sensitising step. Shortly afterward, we had our first round of interviews. For a better overview, I visualise the process in a figure below:

Figure 6.2 Process of iterative interviewing of T2 trainees



Data: initial written self-reflection and Interview 1

Participants: trainees (T2)

[Appendix D. T2_1 Prompt for reflective writing]

[Appendix E. T2_1 Interview outline]

In the next step, I conducted the initial interviews with seniors (S1) at the Interview 2 level per the figure above, as we already knew each other. I asked them to reflect on their work with trainees and the way languages were being used in the unit. I also asked them to draw a visual metaphor for me.

Data: initial interview (3) + 2 visual metaphors

Participants: seniors - the head of unit and two tutors (S1)

[Appendix F. S1 Interview outline]

November 2020

Luxembourg prolonged the nighttime curfew, and social gathering was still discouraged. It became clear that my research, originally designed as an ethnographic study, would ultimately have to be conducted fully online.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to present my initial literature review and research topic at an online PhD conference in Social Science, in a short paper, "On socially constructed aspects of language (in)competence". This led me to a closer investigation of the notion of language competence in multilingual settings, which I later published (this is the article presented in Chapter 9).

December 2020

I scheduled the next round of interviews with T2 trainees. This interviewing also encompassed a metaphor drawing.

Data: second interview (4) + visual metaphors (4)

Participants: trainees (T2)

[Appendix G. T2_2 Interview outline]

January 2021

I prepared and shared my pre-analyses with the team, mentioning three main topics – the changing notion of “multilingualism”, the underestimated social function of language, and the need for metapragmatic reflection. The report covered the main content topics of the interviews in a general and anonymous way.

[Appendix H. Research report January 2021]

February 2021

One of the seniors asked me to present my pre-analyses and suggestions to the whole team of permanent staff. I prepared a 40-minute Canva presentation based on the January report. My presentation mentioned issues to reflect on, including the ambiguous level of informality and misaligning expectations about the way languages were used in the workplace in general. Then, we discussed for a total of 25 minutes – until they had to attend their next meeting.

The reception was positive overall, but some of the staff pointed out that languages have been used in a different pattern in other units and that the ‘native English’ trainee does not actually have any special role in the team.

Addressing the comments, I agreed that the unit would not be presented as representative of the whole EU institution. I did not directly confront the head of unit about the special discursive ‘native English’ positioning that had clearly been happening in the unit for years. This was because I understood his comment as a cautious managerial disclaimer that removed responsibility for any potential discrimination practices in the unit. I could see that my information was considered relevant and a reflection on the practices actually happened, because the head of unit suggested that I prepare a similar presentation for other units in the institution at the end of the meeting. I come back to this aspect in my final discussion at the end of my dissertation text.

Data: participant observation in an on-line meeting

Participants: trainees (T2) and staff (S)

[Appendix I. Research presentation February 2021]

[Appendix J. Suggestions for potential development February 2021]

The last round of interviews with the trainees was also conducted in February 2021. I used this occasion to ask about the trainees' stances towards my suggestions. The interview with the T1>S2 trainee, who was covering for a senior on maternity leave, had an adjusted outline (addressing potential changes and differences that the participant perceived as a person experiencing both the junior and senior position). The trainee wished to be referred to as a T2, in order to enhance the anonymity of her responses.

Data: third interview

Participants: trainees (T2)

[Appendix K. T2_3 Interview outline]

[Appendix L. T1-S2 Interview outline]

March 2021

I was invited to present at the first on-boarding meeting with the new cohort of trainees (T3 – they did not become my participants, though). Some T2 trainees were also present. One of the seniors mentioned the unit's participation in my research and the topics that we had discussed as important: the informality of communication in the unit, including informal address forms in languages other than English, and trainees' right to ask to speak any alternative language that they wished to practise with their peers as well as seniors. The senior listed a few languages that the seniors knew and could practise with the trainees, including ancient Greek.

Data: notes (2 pages)

Participants: trainees (T2, T3) and seniors (S2)

April 2021

I transcribed all the interviews and gained preliminary insight into the covered topics and their development. I wanted to draw a clear conclusion to my collaboration with the participants, so I asked them what their takeaway message was.

May 2021

In the last round of interviews, all three seniors expressed positive reception of my research and praised the various effects that participating had had on the team. One shared topic was their appreciation of the time they had been given for reflection. Seeing how positive the seniors' feedback was, I decided to do more outreach on my research topic.

Therefore, I went to two applied linguistic conferences and wrote two outreach articles for conference proceedings books that linked the pilot to the data from my main research (Lovrits 2022, Lovrits *in press*/2024). The two texts advocate for more metalinguistic awareness in multilingual workplaces and demonstrate the relevance of the topic for applied linguistic research and management.

Data: final interviews (head of unit + tutor/acting head)

	and one-off interview (tutor returning from a maternity leave) **Participants**: seniors (S2) [Appendix M. S2 Interview outline]

Final data set 2021

Ultimately, the main research data set comprises 485 pages of transcripts, 30 hours of audio recordings, and 10 visual metaphors, obtained from 12 participants in 22 interview recordings, from October 2020 until May 2021.

6.4 Characteristics of interviewing

As I expected, the initial T1 writing reflections remained at the surface level of reflection, merely describing perceptions without thinking about the motivation and socio-pragmatics of language use. In order to reach a deeper level of reflection, I had to pose additional questions in the interviews that would help tease out the logical link between socio-pragmatic intentions and the perceived meaning of language-related behaviour, mentioned within and across interviews.

When I asked for a longer string of reasons, interviewees went deeper and uncovered aspects of their argumentation that were previously invisible to them. The excerpt below illustrates that these additional questions did not always get straightforward answers and that participants needed time to process their reflection – for example, by repeating my question or posing questions back to me:

Excerpt (6.1)

R: It's still the "Why" (...)

T2_1: Why.

R: Why. *(both laugh)*

T2_1: What should I say? Because? *(smiling)*

R: Yes, because? *(smirking)*

T2_1: Okay. *(smiling)* So, the question again? *(both laugh)*

R: Why- why would you try to avoid French? Your colleague does not understand well, so-

T2_1: Okay.

R: what is behind that- because you have something in mind.

T2_1: Okay. Yes, yes, no, it's clear. Okay. I try to avoid speaking in French, because this could mean that other colleagues are excluded uh, from communication and (..) um, I don't want anyone to feel excluded.

We can infer from the excerpt above that the T2 trainee considered the colleague's perceived (in)competence as an obvious reason for not using French. However, more interviewing revealed that not all participants refrained from using a language if their colleagues did not know it well (or even at all). Consequently, this topic of language choice became a matter of open discussion in the workplace and was, for the first time, explicitly mentioned in the on-boarding process in May 2021. In other words, my research unveiled misaligning socio-pragmatic intentions and incited individual as well as systemic changes in the unit. However, those changes were always a result of the participants' free will and their willingness to reflect and share.

Furthermore, my general approach to interviewing was inspired by the principles of *longitudinal research*. This was because I was curious as to whether I would see a disconnect in the trainees' reflections when comparing their expectations and their actual experience. Longitudinal research studies' dynamic social process, i.e., involving the factors of time and change (Menard 2002), checks for limitations and potential traps like age-, period-, or cohort effects on behaviour (Menard 2002: 4). While I could not check for those exact aspects, as my data gathering phase only lasted a few months, I could still make use of similar type of data from the pilot to consider the plausibility of what my participants reported (especially when one participant claimed A and another non-A). I was also able to use this data as an interpretation guide (for instance, if I should consider the loneliness of the 'native English' trainee as an effect of working from home during the pandemic).

Furthermore, I opted for a combination of short-term retrospective recall (T1 interviews) and prospective design (T2 and S1+S2 interviews), the former of which is "slightly more appropriate for tracing changes in attitudes" than a long-term retrospective recall (Menard 2002: 48). In general, interviewees tend to adjust and re-interpret their memories so that it creates a coherent life story, biased according to their current perspectives (Menard 2002: 44). In a long-term retrospective, participants tend to recall events and perceptions rather inaccurately; however, the recall is better for important and affectively loaded parts of their lives (Menard 2002).

In contrast to typical longitudinal research (Menard 2002:34), I did not aim to trace patterns of change in order to predict behaviour for the future or beyond the given context (I did not intend to predict or generalise). Our interviews followed the participants from their expectations to their experiences – the one-off interviews covered these topics in the short space of one interview, while the iterative ones could track participants' perceptions over a longer time span of five months. I also checked intra-individual development of perceptions and inter-individual similarities and differences.

Consequently, I could identify inconsistencies in the interviews. For instance, in their second interview, one participant told me that trainees often laughed at how one of their colleagues pronounced brand names following the logic of a language other than English. However, in her last interview, the same participant asserted that they (the trainee team) would never laugh at anyone's pronunciation and had never done so. Considering the ethics of my interviewing, I did not confront the participants with the inconsistencies in their accounts that risked their personal "loss of face". I only inquired about those that could be framed as necessary for fact-checking and clarification.

Furthermore, the interviewing process was part of a broader discussion in the workplace that was influenced by me but not fully under my control. This aspect is not a limitation, but rather an inherent feature of this type of research, in which participants are active agents, not passive sources of information. I also aimed to generate my data in as informal a way as possible, so that it would enable the participants to continue their discussions smoothly among themselves without my presence.

The following excerpt is from the last interview with a trainee who participated in four interview rounds (thanks to her contract extension). When I asked the participant if my research met her expectations, she summed up the dialogic character of data construction:

Excerpt (6.2)

T2_3: Well, I had some general expectations when you hear someone is doing research. Of course, you have an image in mind of like, a lot of interviews talking the whole research process, and how each one or our system is involved within it. Um, so this is definitely what happened, we had interviews, we talked with you, we talked also with um each other, um, both like with trainees and with um other team members, later during meetings, but also like, unofficially, without meetings, we were um, kind of, um, um, discussing our experiences.

As a result, my findings offer potential explanations for patterns of change, only without claiming correlation or causality between the observed aspects. I also took into account the potential period effects (Menard 2002) that represent a limitation in this study: data were gathered during the Covid-19-related confinements and restrictions, which are (fortunately) not typical. To mitigate those effects, I triangulated theory and data, comparing data from different social conditions and examining similar or differing patterns in the pilot research. As for other potential limitations, some parts of the interviews may arguably be of less value because of my reaction, formulation, or how I led the interview. Therefore, in moments when I could not rule out the possibility of my unjustifiable influence on what the participants said (for instance, as a result of an unintentionally leading question), I only included the information in my discussion part, not as "data" in my analysis of the respective study.

6.5 Metaphor drawing

Metaphor drawing is a technique that has been gaining momentum in communication research over the last few decades (Molinié 2009; Castellotti and Moore 2009; Busch 2018; Refaie et al. 2020; de Bres and Morrison-Young 2023). Acknowledging the power of multimodality, I asked participants to create a drawing and then discuss what it meant with the researcher. Nonetheless, unlike in other studies using multimodal data (Rymes 2021), our metaphor drawings were not supposed to "talk for themselves". The main reason is illustrated in the excerpt below, in which a trainee literally refuses to link any meaning to the mentioned visual aspects. She insists on their pure aesthetic value:

Excerpt (6.3)

```
R: They're of a different colour.
T2_2: Uh, I don't think it matters actually.
R: Okay. Because some are white and some are black.
T2_2: No, it was just for the sake of the picture.
```

However, when the metaphor drawings were shared amongst the participants, they incited affective reactions embedded in the participants′ common experience. They reacted to the overall feeling of the pictures, for instance: *"Oh, this is really sad!"* or *"[their pictures] are not so colourful, not so playful, yeah? they are really official,* *yeah?"* They also reacted to smaller details, like the trainee commenting on the metaphor of knights at the round table below:

Excerpt (6.4)

`T2_3: Oh, my God, the round table! And the knigh-, oh my God. This is so cool! But (...) yeah, I have noticed weapons?` *`(smiling)`* `Which is alarming!` *`(both giggling)`*

Such commentaries opened the discussion to new topics that would have been difficult to aim for via interview questions, since they confronted differing perspectives and bore a strong affective load. The drawings challenged perceptions (or meta-perceptions) without creating interpersonal tensions between the researcher and participants, or among the participants themselves.

One example of this is described by a senior in the excerpt below. She begins with a disclaimer that she did not understand the metaphors, but she then admits that some of them may actually have spoken to her:

Excerpt (6.5)

`S2: I don't understand all of the- many of them. I don't understand what they want to say. I mean, okay, there are some. But there- by one, I was really (..) not shocked, but I was impressed by one, in fact, the native English speaker, the ice bear on one of the ice floating around, I wonder, does this express the loneliness that they feel?`

R: Yes, that's it.

T: This is what I thought of and I was a little bit: "Oh!" I was a little bit shocked. *(laughing)* And (...) yeah, that's scary. And it's sad. Very sad.

The effect of the metaphor drawings was apparently intense and even had some transformative effect on the senior. She decided to change her (and the unit's) approach to activities previously linked to the 'native English speaker' position, mentioning the "Lonely Polar Bear" metaphor (featured on page 45 of this dissertation; drawn in December 2018) in her final interview in May 2020. Commenting on her main takeaway from the research, the senior said:

Excerpt (6.6)

S2: Yeah, I- me personally, I will try to bear this in mind and uh (..) be more sen-si-tive? *(laugh)* about- to the- the social part of- of the whole experience and uh (..) yeah. And uh, bear in mind always this little polar bear. *(laughing)* Yeah.

Although the juniors did not share such strong reactions to the drawings, some of the juniors still considered the drawings to be a crucial part of their research experience, as expressed in the excerpt below:

Excerpt (6.7)

T2_3: I mean, for me, it's interesting, because I'm always curious to see how other people resonate and how our points of view are different. So, for me, this was maybe the most interesting part to see all these different metaphors drawn by my colleagues.

Moreover, Rymes (2021) notes that visual perspectives can expose the basic choice people have – either to follow a standardised path offered by the mainstream discourse, or to construct their lived world differently according to their own needs. Indeed, some of my participants aligned with the idea of peaceful, friendly and effective communication in the team, whereas others explained that they had felt uncomfortable because of the way languages were used in the workplace. I have chosen the below extract to show how discussions about the metaphor drawings sometimes went from mirroring institutional discourse on equality through diversity, to internal doubts about the actual practices:

Excerpt (6.8)

T2_3: And then also the other languages! I think (..) they're basically on the same level, so they have (..) "diversity is equality" because even though (..) they are different, and also, uh, in terms of um, speakers' ability- because that's why I drew someone with a missing leg or missing arm someone on a wheelchair- because even though we're not on the same level- so, maybe, our language is a bit rocky, a bit shaky, not

```
st- I mean, we're not really the best speakers, but
anyway, we really treat our languages as equal. I
think. Mm. Hmm. Yeah. So this is it.
```

In the excerpt above, the trainee said that they "really treat [their] languages as equal"; however, she then somewhat diminished the claim by saying "I think. Mm. Hmm.". Deciding that this would be her stance, she closed her statement with the utterance "Yeah. So this is it.". Nonetheless, it emerged later on in the interview that she actually did not think that languages were treated equally in the unit, as a follow-up to her doubts expressed in the excerpt above. The trainee later elaborated that the 'native English' trainees might feel inferior for not speaking multiple languages, similar to the 'non-native English' feeling inferior when using English. This issue of "leveraging" discursive positioning will be discussed in more detail in the article on linguistic authority in Chapter 11.

That said, the drawings as well as the interviews must be interpreted in the given context. The first metaphor drawing, made by a T0 in the pilot project, clearly expressed sadness, loneliness and un-belonging (despite the T0 trainee having added a smile to the bear as a finishing touch). I might not have gotten such a strongly negative message from the trainee if the drawing had been intended as material for a shared discussion in the team during her traineeship stay.[17] In contrast, participants from the main data collection knew that their metaphors would be shared and discussed in the team (anonymously,

[17] She explicitly agreed to the use of her data in further research after she had finished her traineeship.

though), which could arguably lead to more subdued expressions of negative experiences due to potential self-censoring, as I will discuss in the next chapter on positionality.

Despite this limitation, there were still metaphor drawings that openly conveyed a critical message. One example is T1 metaphor N° 3 (Picking Cherries), which criticised the overwhelming use of English and impossibility of practising other languages. Another would be the (non-visual) S2 metaphor N° 14 (Assembly Line), which likened the use of languages to the intellectually dumbing effect of automatised work at a constantly running conveyor belt. Finally, there was the T2 drawing metaphor N°10 (Alone with IT Office Tools), which was passed to me with such sadness that I struggled to contain my emotional reaction, as I try to comment on in the transcript below:

Excerpt (6.9)

`T2_2: I drew you a super picture of my home office.`

(Silence, as the camera was focusing on the picture, then T2 giggled. I joined her to cover my emotional reaction and to let her express her own affective reading of the situation)

`R: So this is- like- Is it the way you use languages?`

`T2_2: Yes! It's my telephone.`

`R: Oh!`

(I was surprised and did not know how to react in words.)

`T2_2: And my email.`

`R: Yeah. (..) Could you possibly make a picture and send me that picture?`

(I was trying to gain time to pull myself back together and find the appropriate way to proceed.)

T2_2: Of course.

R: Yeah, so maybe- maybe let's start by our metaphor? Uh (..)

(In my stressed state, not knowing how to continue the interview, I even forgot to thank her. I hoped she would continue without my questions, adding more information without my comments – since the drawing felt very lonely to me, especially after having received cheerful drawings from her colleagues.)

T2_2: Yeah, so we get (..) emails (..) on WhatsApp (..) in English. Um, yeah. (...)

(I gave up on trying not to show my interpretation, because it must have been clear to her. She did not seem willing to add anything more either. I tried to choose my words carefully.)

R: Well, that sounds a bit (..) um, how could I- maybe- (..) disappointed?

T2_2: Yeah. It's my one- it's my one-room apartment. Yeah.

The trainee did not explicitly confirm my description of her affective stance as disappointment, and did not add any more information at that point. However, she did not deny my interpretation either, which I understand (in the context of the development of all her interviews and wordings) as a silent stance, taken so that she would not be seen as complaining; however, it still communicates some sort of negative affect.[18] The feeling of loneliness in a world ruled by technology was exacerbated by the Covid restrictions, hence this information has limited implications. Still, other trainees drew much happier and more vivid metaphors. Thus, in the context of my complete research knowledge, I understand metaphor N° 10 (see page 261) and our cautious talk as a way of sharing the lonely feeling of being the 'native English speaker' in the team, only in a very careful and indirect way that would not sound like complaining. Indeed, the trainee's overall experience from the traineeship was positive, as other aspects were more important to her, in the end. At the same time, I could not use this as evidence for any claim, because my influence on the construction of this information was potentially too strong.

To sum up, no information could be taken at face value and without consideration for its context, be it within the interview or within the workplace dynamics. I have done my best to consider the plausibility of as many interpretations as I could think of. Although I aimed to proceed rationally and consciously, I was aware that the interviewing part of my data construction was very much influenced by affective aspects of communication. At times, this shook and shuffled our mutual positioning in the dialogue. In order to deal with this aspect of my research, I will further reflect on our stances in interviews and researcher positionality in the next chapter.

[18] Jaffe (2009) points out that even no stance is a stance in the context of communication.

Chapter 7. Researcher positionality

My goal in interviewing was to foster mutual trust and to convey a deep sense of respect towards my participants, who graciously invested their time in my research. Drawing from my counselling experience during the interviews, I recognised the significance of addressing specific technical aspects, as outlined by Deppermann (2013: chapter 6.2), including narration-induction, active listening, and empathy. These techniques were crucial in empowering my non-professional communication partners and granting them control over the dialogue. In this sense, I adhered to the principle of neutrality in my interviewing (Deppermann 2013). Although I shared my pre-analyses with the team over the course of the iterative interviewing process, my participants were also critically examining and discussing the same topics amongst themselves.

In general, conducting a successful qualitative study demands that the researcher cultivate the practice of regular reflection on the research process and progress, while being reflexive by acknowledging their own shaping influence on the study and its reciprocal influence on themselves (Alvesson and Schaefer 2017; Holmes et al. 2016). As described in Chapter 6, participatory action research is not value-free. Thus, values and perspectives are important in situational positioning, as they help in understanding the communicative and pragmatic validity (Bonache 2021) of interpretations. Indeed, the relevant values and perspectives in this study are acknowledged and checked with scientific rigour against the plausibility of interpretations (Alvesson and Schaefer 2017). As the researcher always shares some, but not all, contextual features with the participants (Berger 2015), I made sure to iteratively check if I had understood the participant's point and if I had put it in the right context.

Furthermore, Goodwin (2007) points out that professional education forms the professional's stance into a disciplinary stance, i.e., teaches the individual how to position themselves so that professionals in the field can see the same aspects of reality and so that disciplinary discussion is possible. Thus, professionals from different disciplines see differing aspects of reality, unless they are able to position themselves in ways other than how their discipline has taught them. This is one of the reasons that transdisciplinary imagination is valuable and allows for creative perspectives. At the same time, laypersons may have a broader scope of potential stance positioning, as they are not "disciplined" into seeing in a particular way.

The consideration of "professional" versus "layperson" positioning was salient for my research, since I consider my work with participants as falling under the category of citizen or folk linguistics (Rymes 2021). This aspect needs more explanation, because my participants were language professionals. Talking to them about language might have been a professional discussion within sociolinguistic research. However, it turned out that a *critical* socio-pragmatic discussion was relatively far from the type of disciplinary training that most of my participants received (with the exception of one trainee, whose experience will be discussed in Chapter 11). As a consequence, I realised that talking across sub-disciplines of language science already made our discussion less professional (disciplined) and more personal (opened to alternative interpretations), as we had to remain open to each other's understanding of concepts and their interconnected nature.

The principles of participatory action research emphasise the importance of reflexivity and the researcher′s positionality throughout the research process (Holmes 2020). Both these aspects are also crucial in qualitative research (Berger 2015). Holmes

(2020) suggests clarifying the following four aspects of researcher positionality: *participants*, *context*, *time*, and study *subject*. Thus, I will elaborate on these aspects in the following sections.

7.1 Participants

Researchers have examined mutual positioning as a methodological aspect of interviews across disciplines (Deppermann, 2013; Lampropoulou and Myers, 2013; Iversen, 2014). While reflection on conventional areas of research, such as social stratification, gender, power dynamics in the workplace, and even characteristics like 'native speaker-ness', are (becoming) relatively common in social research (Lønsmann, 2016), other forms of positioning may have an impact on the data collected (Iversen 2014). For instance, the participants' implicit intentions (strategic positioning) or potential preconceived narratives related to the topic can significantly influence the research outcomes (Iversen 2014). This aspect was particularly salient in my interviews with the head of unit. His accounts were friendly, but unlike other participants, he positioned himself strategically by taking stances that were representative of the institution's views.

Regarding the demographic characteristics, these were not shared at length with many of my participants. I did not have the same (primary) national affiliation as any of my participants. I am also no 'native English speaker'. If we accept the concept of passive bilingualism, I am a Czech and Slovak 'bilingual'. Age-wise, I belong to the generation in the middle, between the fresh university graduates who made up most of my trainee participants, and the senior participants who were only a few years from retirement. As for my professional experience, I had a certain level of familiarity with the workplace as I had completed two short internships there. I was also familiar with the context of EU institutions, as several of my family members and friends work there. My insider perspective was evident in the interviews, as the participants referred to individuals and practices that I was knowledgeable about. In turn, I was able to pose relevant additional questions and check contradicting information.

Furthermore, I considered the social roles that we might have played. Blommaert (2007:209-210) notes that: “Speakers would speak from different positions in the space of one single narrative event, and they would speak as different subjects, enacting different ‘roles’.” These roles (identities evoked as salient in the communicative situation) not only yield characteristically different perspectives, but also mirror the representations of power relations that communication partners pick up on, often without consciously realising it. My participants considered the following positioning as particularly salient: juniors versus seniors; ‘native’ versus ‘non-native/language learners’ (also within this category was ‘native English speaker’ or ‘francophone’ versus other speaker of those two languages); and linguists versus communication professionals. The implied discursive dichotomy of those pairs of roles were discussed in the published articles that will be presented later in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10.

Apart from the explicitly mentioned roles/positioning, I also considered two other factors that could potentially have impacted my findings: all but one of my participants were women, and my participants had varied types of work contracts (which I briefly discussed in Chapter 11). Furthermore, I considered other roles, like participants coming from particular countries, or from “old” EU member states or “new” EU member states, participants with a specific language background or profession, age, or at a particular phase in their professional career. However, I have not found any pattern in those aspects of stance positioning. Additionally, some stance positioning was only evoked by one participant or at one specific moment. Examples of these include the perspective of a trailing spouse, a graduate in sociolinguistics, or a recreational player in a multilingual football (soccer) team. Those “fleeting” stances were sometimes important in interviews, as I will explain in the next section.

Moreover, my personal positioning towards the participants differed in the pilot and the main project. In the pilot project, my researcher positioning was passive; I was merely a listener, albeit sometimes a clearly friendly and supportive one. I did not confront my participants with information contradicting their beliefs and interpretations and gave them the freedom to share their own image of how languages and ‘their’ speakers were treated in the workplace. However, this does not mean that I did not shape their thoughts. The fact that I asked about their ‘native English speaker’ position already highlighted the aspect of their experience, and it was clear that I was interested in exploring something linked to their positioning. Nonetheless, their view was not confronted by any other person’s view on the same situation.

At the same time, I was more of a peer-colleague than an expert to them, since they all knew me from my study visits in the unit. We used to work on the same tasks, they proofread my texts for the unit’s website and we spent our lunch breaks together. As they had graduated very recently, they understood my research work as something they had just gone through themselves and they tried to be cooperative in their interviews, probably also out of collegial support.

In contrast, my positioning changed during the main data collection process. After being introduced by the seniors, the juniors treated me like an expert, a more distant figure. It took me some time and reflection to understand that my participants did not see themselves as my peers, unlike the participants in my pilot. Moreover, I did challenge them this time, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Excerpt (7.1)

`T2_2: Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Should I- Because you always-` *(giggling)* `always try to challenge me so! It's-` *(both laugh)* `you make me think about things that I would never think about! It's quite difficult` *(laughing)*`. Okay.`

Furthermore, my role in the data gathering was much more active in 2020-21 than in the pilot; in the pilot, I used the interviewing methods I had been taught. During the main research, I drew more on my counselling experience, encouraging empowerment through active listening. This is why I prefer to use the term data construction rather than data collection with regard to my main research. As Iversen (2014) explains, qualitative research does not collect data that are simply “out there”. The data set is co-created by participants together with me.

On occasion, the participants clearly communicated the information they wanted to share; they wanted me to know, but they did not want me to use that information for the output (directly or linked to a certain person). They hedged their utterances with phrases such as: “I will tell you a secret now” or “Please, do not mention me here”. Such information marked both the trust we shared and the quality of the rapport between us and, of course, it would not be used in my research output.

7.2 Context and changes over the time

The most evident context factor shaping my research positioning was the societal situation defined by the Covid-19 pandemic. People that were not employed in the EU institution were not allowed to enter its premises. Moreover, for a long time, it looked like we would put each other in danger if we met in person privately. The interviews and observations conducted online led to a different exchange to what would have been possible if we could meet in person, maybe over a lunch of coffee, getting to know each other better as individuals. I believe that I could have gone into more depth with at least some of my participants, if we had been able to share more than our screens.

The next context factor influencing my positioning was the organisational setting of the EU institution. In general, I had unique and privileged access to the institution thanks to the trust of the head of unit and the seniors, who knew me from when I was an intern there. I also believe that one of the supporting factors was the fact that the head of unit was about to retire and had no particular personal or political agenda. Therefore, he was not afraid of potentially unexpected research findings in the context of the institutional hierarchy or his career.

Furthermore, my academic context shaped my research decisions. I wanted to pursue a paper-based thesis in order to increase future opportunities for myself on the labour market, with the help of a publication record. This decision implied that I would have my data set ready in the early years of my doctoral journey and could start the publishing process soon, so that I could see at least some of my work published before my defence. This influenced my decision to gather my data online instead of waiting for the pandemic restrictions to ease. It proved to be a good decision, as I was only able to officially enter the institution as a visitor in late 2022.

The need to publish articles also led me to analyses in slices. I considered whether this could represent the “salami method”, against which we were warned in university, as it was bad research practice. I concluded that it was not, because every study was based on the previous analysis (analyses), and so they gradually led to a theoretically deeper insight with each new article. Since peer-review journals have strict word count limits, it was a challenge to develop a convincing, theory-supported narrative in one short report.

Further, I considered the aspect of time as a context factor. I kept writing notes about my decision-making throughout the research process, which is a professional habit that I have maintained since I worked as a social counsellor. Thus, my self-positioning has undergone salient developments with regard to research neutrality. While my core methodologic positioning did not change as such, I had to gather information to rationally defend my approach. It took me years to find the right keywords to use in my search for the relevant literature that would authoritatively support the aptness of my intuitive research choices (namely Bonache 2021; Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018; Fuchs 1993).

Looking back, I see that I was aware of the trends towards more reflective, collaborative and interpretive work with participants, but I had to search for publications relevant to my type of inquiry. I wish I had read those sources before I started my data gathering, but the societal conditions (Covid-19), the academic context (the need for early publications for a cumulative thesis), and my limited options on the

Luxembourg labour market (immigrant and mother) made me hyper-conscious about the time pressure and compelled me to make risky methodological decisions. I have learned that this is also a recognised characteristic feature of the pragmatic stream in research, in which pragmatic "tinkering before rule-following" only gets validated by the practical usefulness of the yielded research results (Fuchs 1993:30). Fortunately, my research reports have passed several peer-reviews and editorial scrutiny in international journals and books. Moreover, my findings clearly joined the latest research trends in that they focus on the positive aspects of day-to-day, mundane, but creative experiences of diversity and multilingualism (Barmeyer et al. 2021; Boesen et al. 2023), explored from an emic, insider perspective (Szkudlarek et al. 2020), using qualitative and interpretative methodology (Bonache 2021). Thus, my initial decisions have been validated as relevant and appropriate over time.

7.3 Multilingualism – a study topic and methodological challenge

My positioning towards the core content of my research, i.e., the social construction of reality through metalanguage in a multilingual environment, has been shaped by a combination of factors. First, I learned about the theory of the social construction of reality during my undergraduate sociology studies and it deeply impacted my general worldview. The idea that (a significant part of) reality is co-constructed implies that everybody has some responsibility for the world as we know it. Due to uneven power relations within society, not everyone has the same capacity to incite structural changes – but we all have some. This idea has given a light hint of activism to everything that I have been doing in my professional life (and beyond).

Over time, I have had to reconstruct my understanding of the world around me – every time I moved for studies, work, or to be with my family. Since 2011, I have been settled in Luxembourg, raising three sons in a country that is over a thousand kilometres away from where I grew up and worked before. As a result, I have found myself in the social role of "stranger". Embracing the perspective of a stranger enables people to view social practices from the "outside" of mainstream society, enhancing our ability to question paradoxes and offer alternative viewpoints (Marotta 2012).

That said, I grew up and worked in a bilingual Czech/Slovak community. However, my previous experience with multilingualism was different, both from what has been discussed as a methodological challenge in research on multilingualism and from what I have experienced in Luxembourg or in the EU institutions as a private person. Indeed, the post-colonial aspect of multilingualism, i.e., the thinking about a language as a hegemonic societal imposition (Phillipson 1993), was a completely new topic new to me.

I have learned that the pivotal question is one of ethics – who can represent whose voice (Temple and Young 2004), or, who decides and who has to adjust themselves. Consequently, methodological aspects emerge, for example: what language to use when building samples or gaining consent (Baumgartner 2012; Andrews et al. 2013). The main problem is the uneven power dynamic between the researcher and interviewees and, moreover, the socio-political power hidden in language choices (Phillipson 1993).

Nonetheless, my participants and I did not experience uneven power relations due to our use of English. We were all able to work in more than one language and all relatively comfortable in English. We sometimes looked for concise expressions or could not find precise words, but English was the main working language for all of us. Moreover, we all regularly used at least one more language. Thus, we did not use the term ″language″ as an automatic synonym for English, which sometimes happens, even in critical sociolinguistic research (Pennycook 2007).

At the beginning of the interviewing process, I explained my language background to my participants. I also gave them the choice of using Czech, Slovak, English, German, French or Luxembourgish as our interview language. In the end, most participants chose English. We only had one interview in Luxembourgish and one in Czech and Slovak (both participants were interviewed only once). I would like to reflect on the effects that the language choice had on the interviews.

First, I agreed on the following format with the participant who was originally from Slovakia: I would pose my questions in Czech and she would reply in Slovak, since we were used to this passive form of bilingualism from growing up in former Czechoslovakia. Surprisingly, this decision did not bring more language comfort to me. As our **Czech/Slovak interview** included a lot of code-switching and translanguaging, it actually became an unexpected challenge. I even wondered if it might have been more useful to do the interview in English, a language in which we were both comfortable working.

Further, I wondered if I could have gotten more explicit explanations of this participant's ideas if we had a used a more "international" language, like English or German. Indeed, scholars in research on multilingualism have already noted that researchers may sometimes experience a "foreigner advantage" when exploring the methodological implications of cross-language (and cross-cultural) dynamics between themselves and their participants (Welch and Piekkari 2006: 430-431). Interviewees may be more inclined to provide more detailed explanations to an "outsider", as certain aspects might be considered obvious to an "insider". Moreover, the Czech/Slovak interview turned out to be heavily trans-cultural and trans-lingual. I realised that the verbatims from the interview may convey meaning much less clearly to readers who do not have the same combination of a Czech, Slovak, and Luxembourgish background. I had not noticed this aspect until I tried to find concise illustrative excerpts for my publications.

Indeed, I believe I was able to understand what my interviewee wanted to convey, but I had to reflect and explain the cultural differences that emerged in the literal translation into English – the language of my publications – or risk reproaches that my loose translation was not accurate. This would not have been a problem if the publications did not have word count limits, but they did. Additionally, I have since wondered if I might actually have capitalised on the slight distance that English could have created between myself and the Slovak participant, as this may have led her to share more explicit information in her interview.

I will illustrate my considerations on some of the specific translation-related aspects in an excerpt below. Here, the senior tries to explain her perception of the different approaches to writing when comparing the terminology and communication trainees:

Excerpt (7.2)

`S2 (SK original):`

> A teraz to bolo- to bolo krásne vidieť na tejto- na týchto metaforách. Oni sú skutočne taký- ti terminológovia- ja neviem či sa vyjadrím ah (..) ja- tak nejak (..) po sedliacky by som sa vyjadrila- že sú, že sú skutočne, ako hovoríte, že majú to veľmi tak- tak v tej hlave, povedala by som, uče-sa-né, hej?

> S2 (EN, my translation): And now it was- it was wonderful to see it on this- on these metaphors. They're really so- those terminologists- I don't know if I'm going to put it ah- (..) I- sort of (..) I would put it in a farmer's way- that they're, that they're really, as you say, they're very much so- so in their head, I'd say, they have it neat-ly combed, you know?

The phrase "as you say" does not indicate that I actually said anything in that regard. The participant frequently used the expression throughout the whole interview and I had to verify multiple times that I had not inadvertently made any statements or suggestions. Apparently, that expression primarily served to discursively align my participant's stance with mine. Therefore, it is most accurately transposed (rather than "translated") as the vernacular English expression "you know".

Next, the expression "neatly combed" was pronounced with a stress put separately on all four syllables of the long word "u-če-sa-ný". The combination of the word choice together with the phonetic expression of regularity in equal little stressed syllables indicates that the interviewee playfully distanced herself from her perception of her colleagues' writing approach. This para-linguistic feature was slightly poking fun at the allegedly "neatly structured" language performance of the colleagues that the interviewee was referring to.

There is an expression in the excerpt above that is not particularly pejorative in the Czech/Slovak context, but gets a negative affective load in the English translation. The expression "po sedliacky" was translated by the automatic software as "in a peasant way". However, that would shift the utterance to another cultural (class-related) context and carry different connotations. The interviewee's reference to expressing herself in a "farmer's way" implies a conceptually simple expression of thoughts. It does not convey contempt, certainly not in the context of this interview. It was rather a reference to a "common sense" perception of the world, which can be understood as "healthy", i.e., not intellectually overcomplicated.

For a comparison, a "native English" trainee who grew up bilingually in Germany also mentioned the positioning of somebody as a "farmer". Nonetheless, the German trainee's use of the term contrasts starkly with the Slovak reference as it had a completely opposite meaning, this time explicitly negative (the trainee also distanced herself from it):

Excerpt (7.3)

```
T2_2: Yeah, it's a bit like that, like- for instance,
in Germany, like, people who only speak German,
they're um looked down upon. It's like- they're like-
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that sounds bad, but like the farmers? You can't-
you're not educated- you don't speak other languages?
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That said, the above challenges are obviously not inherent to all interviews led in languages other than English. Instead, they depend on the situational context and mutual positioning of the researcher and interviewee. I would like to demonstrate this aspect in the interview that I led in Luxembourgish. My interviewee was a bilingual trainee who spoke English with her mother, and was therefore considered a 'native English' speaker in the workplace. However, similar to the Slovak senior, she decided that my investigation was an opportunity to let the less spoken languages enter the world of sociolinguistic research.

While using her home language, the Luxembourgish trainee still expressed herself explicitly, often saying the same idea in more than one way, making sure that I understood her. She knew that Luxembourgish was a language that I had learned late in my life, so she may have wanted to accommodate me. That said, the clarity of her communication may not only be due to the language that we used. It might also have been fluent and clear because she was not restricted to only constructing her opinion during the interview itself.[19] The trainee was sure about her stance towards the topic of multilingualism, she had an agenda (Iversen 2014). Not only did she have a fresh degree in sociolinguistics, but my research topic also touched upon the aspects of the multilingual life that was important to her, personally. Therefore, some of the differences and interesting aspects that emerged during the interviews have to be understood as a

[19] Iversen (2014) describes this aspect of interviewing in an elucidating way.

coincidence due to the circumstances, rather than as having a direct correlation to the languages in the research.

Finally, the last language-related topic that I would like to mention is the literature that I used in my research. Liddicoat (2015) highlights that English is the primary language used to communicate research to the public, and it also dominates the literature in my research field. Therefore, I took care to incorporate linguistically diverse literature sources to expand my horizons in terms of perspectives and approaches, as suggested by Holmes et al. (2016). I seek out literature that supported my study from various linguistic contexts, including English, Czech, German, and French.

Chapter 8. Organising and structuring information

My analytical process was by no means linear. As I have already explained in relation to the process of looking for proper research questions, I iteratively revisited previous stages of my analysis, adjusting the outputs accordingly. From a philosophy of science perspective, my coding and analyses proceeded in a hermeneutic cycle (Fuchs 1993), or better yet, an inductive-deductive spiral. The metaphor of a spiral seems more fitting, as I never went back to exactly where I was before, but instead delved further or deeper into the covered issues with new insights and information.

Although I cross-checked my analysis by constantly reading and referring to theory and previous research, my intuition still influenced the process. In the initial stages of data gathering, there were moments when I did not have full support from existing literature. However, the later published works of Rymes (2021) and Byrne (2022) helped me to back the relevance of my chosen methodology as one that would advance the progress of research on language in social contexts, feeding into the newest research trends. Before I move onto the three studies in articles/manuscripts, this chapter illustrates the core underlying features and processes that I followed in order to be able to answer my main research question. Further analytical steps will be described in the respective articles/chapters.

8.1 Coding and structuring data

My initial coding proceeded in phases of thematic analysis, as described by Byrne (2022). After the phase of data familiarisation phase, I generated initial codes, from which I extracted themes. The themes aggregated meaning across my data set and I created mind maps to gain a better understanding of the patterns that could be abstracted from my data. In the next phase, I cross-checked my themes with my data, making sure that the codes and themes were coherent, distinctive, and substantial enough, and that they could explain what I was looking for in the main research question and the sub-questions. These phases were recursive and iterative. I also moved multi-modally, from text to visual representations and back. For text processing, I used F4analyse until 2022 and then MAXQDA from 2022.

I established the data set for analysis by identifying language-related stances in the transcripts. I searched for an explication/reasoning in which the participants explicitly or implicitly referred to languages and speakerhood. Subsequently, I chose codes and themes in an iterative manner, inductively and deductively engaging with the data. I started with inductive coding. Below is an example of my first inductive coding system (retrieved from the analysis software F4analyse). For the purpose of this dissertation text, I have retrospectively changed the text colour of the topics that would later emerge as important for the published articles:

Figure 8.1 First coding system

1. **Interpersonal relations**
1.1 **management** (team Family)
1.2 **juniors**
    *1.1.a juniors - **competition***
    *1.1.b juniors - **belonging***
    1.1.c *juniors - **balancing relations** (incl.tutoyer)*

1.3 **native** positioning (general)
    1.3.a *native - vertical/**inferiority***
    *1.3.b native - horizontal/**loneliness***

2. **visual metaphors**

3. **competence**
3.1 **competence** (general)
    3.1.a competence - L=system
    3.1.b competence - L=communication
3.2. **neoliberal/linguized perspective** on competence
    3.2.a linguized - objectification
    3.2.b linguized - instrumentalisation
    3.2.c linguized - exoticization
    3.2.d linguized - authenticity
3.3 **com vs. term approach**
3.4 **language choice**

4.1 **L. policies** and their discursive framing
    4.1.a *L. policies - **political** (EU/n.states)*
    *4.1.b L. policies - **MNG** (business-like MNC)*
4.2 **L. practices** and their discursive framing
    4.2.a *L. practices - **national languages** (<-system)*
    4.2.b *L. practices - **English and ELF** (<-communication)*
4.3 aspect of **mobility/temporality** (policies, practice, discourse) and their structuring effect on *language* use

5.1 **Learning Quid pro quo** in the workplace
    5.1.a What the trainees gain
    5.1.b What the institution gains (trainees - value for the unit/company)
5.2 **Missing knowledge**
    5.2.a nationality-stereotypes
5.3. **Misinterpretations and side-effects**
    5.3.a native exclusion (from previous)
5.4 **(In)sufficient processes**
    5.4.a Reasons/motivation
    5.4.b OK check and reflection
5.5 **Relevance of research for MNG**
    5.3.a Relevance of research
5.3.b MNG main message

My insight was shaped by my previous reading and experience in the workplace and in the pilot project, which, again, entered the heuristic spiral that I have previously explained (Fuchs 1993). With the first coding system, I realised that I might have fallen into the trap of “naive inductivism” (Bonache 2021:40). Reflecting over the “communicative and pragmatic validity” of my coding (Bonache 2021), I wondered how representative the first coding system was of what the participants wanted to say and how consistent it would be in a triangulation of my data and background insights.

I concluded that I felt overwhelmed by the overview. No coherent stories emerged for me from the disparate patterns that I could inductively identify in my codes, as more theoretical and conceptual guidance was needed. Further, I needed strong messages and captivating stories for a convincing report (Bonache 2021; Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018) that would help me to fulfil my publication goal and consequently complete a cumulative thesis – and I could not find them at that phase.

After some time, I came back to my data and concluded that I could not code them for all studies at once, because the themes are too interdependent and overlapping. Thus, I decided to structure the first-level codes one study at time. Reflecting over where I could “enlarge the conversation” (Smith 1884), i.e., join the discussion within previous research and theory, helped me to find the potentially interesting starting points and unwind clear story lines from the entangled information in my data set. This approach also helped me to overcome the feeling of being overwhelmed by the amount of interdependent information. Consequently, I made the decision to recreate the coding system.

I still conducted an inductive thematic analysis through the coding, but this time, I had more profound knowledge of my whole data set. I structured the coding so that it would lead to four articles covering four main topics. The coding system that emerged from this is depicted in the figure below. With colours and arrows, I demonstrate how the main themes moved in my coding system over time. The themes became the backbone of each article.

Figure 8.2 Second coding system

1 Learning what is a competent language use in the multilingual workspace

1.1.A Linguistic competence as a reason for situational choices of language (incl. varieties and registers)
1.1.B Other reasons for situational choices of language

1.2.A (Standard) language competence
1.2.B Native competence
1.2.C Transversal and task-specific language skills

1.3. Competence as a cover for undisclosed interests

2 Juniors balancing out sociolinguistic positioning in a transnational team

2.1 Learning organisation and its members (MNG + juniors)

2.2a Individual language biography
2.2b Representations (profession, native speaker, national …)

2.3a Informality/flat organisation (in language use)
2.3b Hierarchy (in language use)

2.4a Belonging (belonging, teamwork and not-belonging: loneliness, exclusion..)
2.4b Competition

2.5 Balancing an unwanted positioning

3 MNG and native speakerism in the international workplace

3.1. NES - Misinterpretations and side-effects
- 3.1.A Instrumentalization of speakers
- 3.1.B Objectivation of speakers
- 3.1.C Exoticization
- 3.1.D Paradox of authenticity

3.2 **Relevance** of research for MNG → outreach articles

4 Labour mobility limiting language choice in an EU institution

4.1 **L. policies** = EU public relations, *structural language choice that is not about individual or situational competence.*

4.2 **L. practices** (internal functioning)
4.2.a *L. practices* - ***national languages***
4.2.b *L. practices* - ***English and ELF***
4.2.c *L. practices* - ***Technologies***

4.3 **mobility/temporality** (aspect shaping policies, discourse and language practice)

The topic of “language competence” (blue) has been my main concern since my first conference contribution in 2020, so I covered it in my first article, which was based on the data from my main research that will be presented next in Chapter 9. The second core issue, covered in my article in Chapter 10, is the sub-topic of the language choice between French and English (extending the discussion on the notion of language competence in varying cultural frameworks). The last issue pertains to the social conditions set by the aspect of mobility (“routed professional paths), presented in Chapter 11. The aspects linked to native-speakerism were dissolved into these three articles; indeed, they wove through the studies like the proverbial golden thread. Furthermore, I could not cover the other themes without mentioning the tensions around the ‘native English’ positioning. I will come back to this in my final discussion at the end of my dissertation.

8.2 Overview of the sub-topics in the main research studies

The evolution of my core research issues (bearing a concise message in an article), described in the previous section, shows how writing becomes an analytical tool in practice. My experience proves that “writing *is* researching”, not just a report of it (Jonsen, Fendt and Point 2018: 32, emphasis in the original). My writing was a recursive process, synthesising and contextualising data at the same time, while reflecting on the analysis, interpretation and researcher positionality in each step (Byrne 2022).

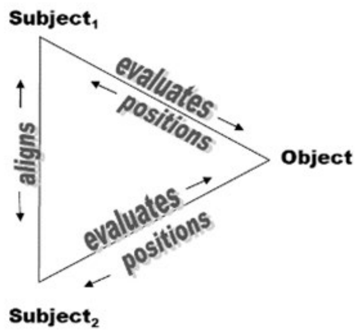
While my understanding of results changed during the writing process, I regularly referred back to the theory on sociolinguistic stance. This kept me on one common track when carrying out the separate studies. From the pilot study onwards, the theory on stance guided my research design and the exploration level of my data analysis.

Thus, it is also the cornerstone of my main research question, which asks: "What can metalinguistic stances reveal about socio-pragmatic intentions and their implications in the (potentially) multilingual workplace?"

The socio-pragmatic character of the analysis refers to the investigation of what effects participants associate with languages, the way languages are used and the status of the speaker (speakerhood), and whether the intended effects correspond to those that my participants intend to elicit. Sociolinguistic theory (Cameron 2004) suggests that if the intended effects are not achieved as expected, talk about talk (metalanguage) can help. At the same time, metalanguage is not always an instrument of cooperation and should therefore also be examined as a potential method of struggling for control over the communicative situation (Blommaert 2011).

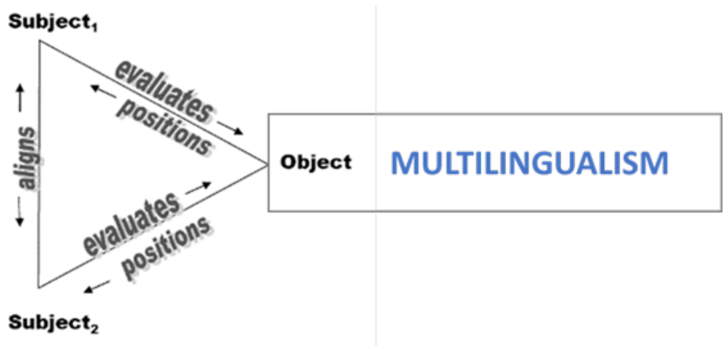
The concept of sociolinguistic stance represents a core unit that I looked for in my data. Stance is a (typically evaluative) positioning towards an object in discourse (Jaffe 2009). Metalinguistic stance, in particular, is a sociolinguistic stance towards a language-related stance object. As an analytical tool, stance represents a combination of the speaker's evaluative (often affective) positioning towards a matter of discussion (object of stance) with regard to the (imagined) stances of others (mis/alignment). When two people take a stance, i.e., discursively position themselves towards the same object, their stance can align or misalign. Alignment does not necessarily mean the same stance, but can mean a stance that is similar, complementary, or non-competing. Misalignment, in contrast, means that the stances are in contradiction, either completely, or in one of their features, typically the evaluative aspect. The following stance triangle by Du Bois (2007) depicts the features visually:

Figure 8.3 Figure Stance triangle by Du Bois, J. W. (2007:163)



Furthermore, the stance triangle helps to link the studies that will be featured in the coming chapters. Each study was built upon insights gained from the previous one(s), covering the evolving folk-linguistic understanding of multilingualism and reasons behind the choices between English and French, finally offering a novel perspective on linguistic authority as a powerful concept elucidating the negative effects of language ideologies. In order to put the three studies into a common visual framework, I have created an overview that incorporates the model of the stance triangle by Du Bois (2007:163) with a changing object of stance for each study. Each visual is followed by a sub-question, the title of each article, and the respective chapter, as shown in the three figures below:

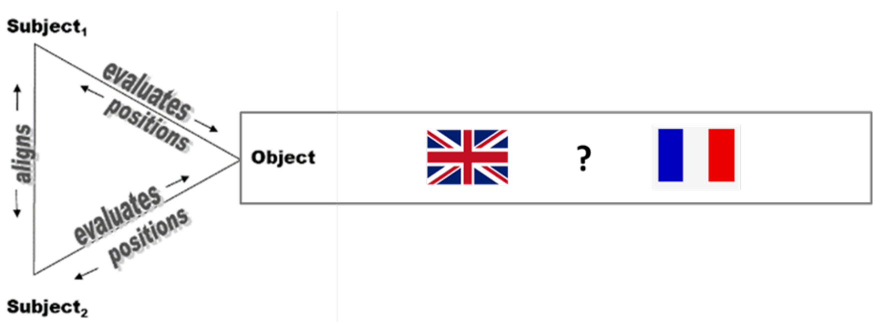
Figure 8.4 Article 2: MULTILINGUALISM



Sub-research question: What does "multilingualism" mean for a team of language professionals and how does this understanding shape their perception of language practices at work?

The article (Chapter 9): Making meaning of multilingualism at work: from competence to conviviality

Figure 8.5 Article 3: ENGLISH vs. FRENCH



Sub-RQ: How is the language choice between English and French performed and interpreted in the multilingual EU institution context?

The manuscript (Chapter 10): French and language ideologies in a multilingual European Union institution: Re-constructing the meaning of language choice at work.

Figure 8.6 Article 4: ENGLISH vs MULTILINGUALISM

Sub-RQ: 3. How does linguistic authority feature in participants' stances towards languages and speakers at work, and with what implications?

The resulting manuscript (Chapter 11): Linguistic authority in the context of European mobility: Addressing the empty promise of élite multilingualism

PART III. Collection of Studies (2021-2023)

Crowley:	*Exactly.*
Aziraphale:	*Yes, exactly.*
Crowley:	*What does your exactly mean, exactly?*
	I feel like your exactly and my exactly are different exactlies.

— 'Good Omens 2', ep. 1,

written by Neil Gaiman and John Finnemore

https://www.imdb.com/video/vi1384433433/?ref_=tt_vi_t_2 (02:02')

Chapter 9. Making meaning of multilingualism at work (Article 2)

Lovrits V. (2022). Making meaning of multilingualism at work: from competence to conviviality. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2047987

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TITLE

Making meaning of multilingualism at work: from competence to conviviality

ABSTRACT

The present study contributes to recent renewed interest in the social construction of folk linguistic knowledge and directs its focus to a multilingual workplace. The article reports on an in-depth sociolinguistic investigation in a European institution in Luxembourg. Data were collected in 2020-2021 with trainees and permanent staff in a terminology and communication unit. The data collection triangulated qualitative techniques of longitudinal interviewing, reflective drawing, writing reflection, and observation. Analysis of participants' stances uncovered a varying understanding of what multilingualism means in the workplace, how it changes and to what effect. During reflective participation, the trainees heightened their socio-pragmatic awareness of diversity in the meaning-making process. Moreover, they ceased to construct their personal multilingualism as proof of professional competence and started to see it as the basis of their own well-being, personal self-realisation and growth. As such, they re-coupled the social and linguistic aspect of their language use and aligned their stances with the permanent staff. This study aims to inspire more innovative approaches with a potential direct effect in multilingual workplaces, especially in those welcoming workers from monolingual or otherwise homogenous social environments.

KEYWORDS: multilingualism, workplace, European Union, sociolinguistic, stance, trainee

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1 Introduction

The present investigation contributes to the recent focus on folk-socio-pragmatics (Bridges 2017, Rymes 2021), critically rethinking contextualised assumptions, motivation and reasoning behind daily language behaviour. It builds upon a pilot study conducted in the same workplace (as reported in Lovrits and de Bres (2021) and is part of a larger project examining language practices in a European Union institution. The main research question asks what multilingualism means for a team of language professionals and how this understanding shapes their perception of language practices at work.

A team of language workers was chosen for this study to highlight the need for critical, constructive debate on the functions and effects of the notion of multilingualism at the interpersonal level. The analysis namely addresses one of the practical problems of the critical applied linguistic debate – the suggestion to disregard the standard language norm. (Canagarajah and Wurr 2011, Kirsch and Duarte 2020). This may not be easy to accept in some professions, especially for language workers, since the idea of languages as separate and professionally curated systems literally pays their salary. However, the junior participants in this study still realised, they needed to rethink their initial idea of the acceptable language use in a cosmopolitan work environment.

The general perspective of this study is anchored in the social constructivist paradigm and follows its humanistic legacy which accentuates the agency of individuals in a social world they build together (Berger and Luckmann 2001 [1966]). From this point of view, the analysis highlights the negotiable part of the shared social reality and

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demonstrates how raising meta-pragmatic awareness can alter what is considered unquestionably given. Meta-pragmatic awareness is a conscious reconstruction of meaning, allowing dialogue partners to understand each other's intentions (Verschueren 2012). However, the participants had to make explicit the often unsaid (unwritten), yet communicated intentions which referred to pragmatic background knowledge, beliefs and expectations, traditionally investigated by socio-pragmatics (Yule 1996).

As for the main term, structural (or social, institutional) multilingualism will refer to a space where more than one named language is used and personal (individual and social) multilingualism to lived experience with more than one language. In previous research, personal multilingualism has sometimes been referred to as 'plurilingualism' (Ehrhart, Hélot and Le Nevez 2010). However, the difference between the social and individual character of multilingualism is important to participants in this study – as such, the terms 'personal' and 'structural' multilingualism will be used to highlight the characteristic distinction.

This study also supports the critique of decoupling language from its social context for the purpose of selling it on the (labour) market, discussed as language commodification (Duchêne 2011, Heller 2010). However, the description of the place and sample will make it clear that constructing a sharp conflictualist opposition between the workers' and the organisation's interests would be inappropriate here, since individual development is encouraged and social experience at work is already considered an important aspect of the language use.

The presented research methodology is guided by one critical aspect in particular. Critical voices of the last decade have denounced methodological nationalism, which links state, citizenship and language (Kraus 2018) and focuses on the structural hegemonic power of state over "its" language through "its" citizens (Bourdieu 2001 [1991]). This study does not treat participants as representatives of states or "their" languages and, when possible, refrains from referring to participants' national affiliations. The author also adopts the critical theory's refusal of the terms "native speaker" (Dewaele, Bak and Ortega 2021), "native language" (Doerr 2009) and "mother tongue" (Yildiz 2012). Since these notions are still part of the participants' discursive space, they will be referred to in quotation marks, which are, according to Bourdieu (1998 [1994]), one of the most powerful signs of denial.

The text structure is organised as follows. Section 2 will introduce the participants and the place of research. The following section on methodology will describe the steps of data gathering, reflect on research positionality, and explain how the sociolinguistic analysis of stance fits the purpose of the study. The findings will be presented in Section 4, starting with a contextualisation of structural multilingualism and the tendency towards English-only internal communication in the institution. Further analysis will unveil that the tendency was shaped by unquestioned assumptions on competence and efficiency in trainees. Since these assumptions have since been readjusted, the last subsection will trace the change in the construction of multilingualism and the effects of this change on the experience of the last cohort of trainees in the sample.

2 Place of research and participants

Data were collected in one of the units of a European Union (EU) institution in Luxembourg. The unit provides a transversal service in the field of terminology and communication, collaborating with about 110 translators from 24 translation units (representing the 24 official languages of the EU). It is neither defined by a single standard language nor is it a political representation of a nation state; it supports the institution as a whole. Such units are typical for the institution, so the studied unit is representative of the institution in this regard. It also adds to the critical exploration of language workers' freelance experience (Codó 2018) and language awareness of language workers in business (Koller 2018).

Another defining factor of the research setting is a psychologically safe environment (Nurmi and Koroma 2020) and a flat, non-hierarchical managerial approach. The team was led as a learning organisation in which management focused on their employees learning situationally relevant information rather than standardising their work (Le Boterf 2018). This managerial style makes the chosen method of participative research possible to realise in practice, but also arguably limits representativeness (cf. a highly competitive environment, as investigated by Detzen and Loehlein 2018).

The aspects of mobility and the multilingual environment also characterised the unit as a global urban workplace (Blommaert and Backus 2013). Nonetheless, the team is not ‘superdiverse’. Its members did not experience issues regarding ethnicity or religion, only one of the participants was male, and all participants had a European background. Moreover, all workers in the unit were university graduates. Otherwise, they came from different parts of Europe and their educational and socio-economic background varied. Over the course of two traineeship terms in 2020 and 2021, 12 persons participated in the study.

This article will henceforth refer to the trainees as *juniors* and the staff (the head of unit and the tutors) as *seniors*, to accommodate situations in which hierarchy and differing work conditions may have had an effect. The seniors had at least 18 years’ work experience in the institution and came from a multilingual and multicultural background, with relevant degrees in translation and terminology. They had moved around, first for their studies and then for work in various European countries, before settling down in Luxembourg where, according to the last statistical report, 180 languages are spoken (STATEC 2021). Societal and personal multilingualism had been a part of their everyday life for decades, both in the private and professional context.

In contrast, the trainees (with the exception of the Luxembourgish one) had recently come from monolingual countries and their experience was entrenched in their previous national environment (Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Poland and Germany). The German and the Luxembourgish trainees were bilingual in their home language and English, having both studied in the United Kingdom. The trainees had a wider educational background – linguistics, terminology, translation, teaching, journalism, and

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media and communication.[20]

The trainees applied for the internship online, knowing from the call for applications that a "very good knowledge of English" was required. The unit did not select applicants with a B1 English level or lower. Other language skills did not play a role in the selection process. The regular duration of the traineeship was five months and its purpose was to introduce trainees to the work of EU institutions.

3 Method

A traditional method of research in multilingual workplaces would infer participants' socio-pragmatic considerations from what can be observed in the workplace and what is described by participants in one-off interviews (Karhunen et al. 2018). Instead, a more dynamic approach has been adopted in this study, aligning with Rymes' (2021:28) assertion that "we can best learn about society by looking at the way we talk about our words".

The data collection was inspired by the principles of participatory action research. These were established as a way of improving research practice in social sciences in the 1940s (Morales 2016). The initial idea was linked to small group dynamics but has since evolved to apply to various fields of humanities and social sciences, including: psychiatric micro-approach (Schneider 2012), teacher development

[20] This way of presenting the participants has been adopted to ensure the anonymity of the individual participants.

(Morales 2016), facilitation of community empowerment of linguistic minorities (Junker 2018), and large-scale transnational interdisciplinary research (Masson et al. 2021). What the varying participatory action projects have in common is that the researcher and participants engage in iterative reflection and action in order to empower the participants and improve their social conditions. The researcher is not a neutral listener but rather an active helper in challenging inequality. The participants are in charge of their own actions as well as what the desired "improvement" should be.

Participants in the present study were steering the process less than is usual in traditional critical action research in minoritised communities (McIntyre 2008). Nevertheless, they brought in topics relevant to them, and it was their experiences, needs and desires that were addressed by the eventual managerial measures. The seniors had less to say in the process of identifying issues but, at the same time, they had more power over structural changes based on the research insights. The next subsection describes how data collection was organised in more detail.

The researcher arranged several phases of qualitative longitudinal interviewing in which participants were asked to reflect on topics linked to multilingualism in the workplace.[21] After each round of interviewing, thematic pre-analyses were shared with

[21] All participants had given their written informed consent to become part of the study before their first interview. The participants were also given an opportunity to review the submitted

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the participants, so the participants had the opportunity to comment on the researcher's understanding of their accounts as well as respond to other participants' comments. Semi-structured qualitative interviewing served as a base and further techniques were introduced to triangulate the interview data – reflective drawing, observation of several meeting discussions, and a written reflection.

The interview process started in September 2020 with an initial round of semi-structured interviews with four trainees (further referred to as T1). The aim of this round was to check what topics from the pilot project in 2018-19 were still relevant in 2020 and what new issues considering language practices, if any, had arisen. A preliminary thematic analysis of data from the first round showed that many trainees still felt that their language expectations had not been met (as discussed in Lovrits and de Bres (2021). After two weeks at work, the four new trainees (T2) wrote one full page (A4) about their expectations regarding language use. Based on this information, interviews were constructed with questions addressing the trainees' expectations about their stay as well as their first impressions about the language use at work compared to their initial expectations.

In October 2020, the first round of interviews with three seniors (S1) was conducted, focusing on their view of how languages are used in the unit and at the

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manuscript. The study obtained ethics approval by the Ethics Review Panel of the University of Luxembourg on 26.06.2020, under the reference ERP 20-025 WorkLingEU.

institution. They were also asked to reflect on the topics that had arisen in the previous interviews with the trainees: the (in)formality of language use, the predominance of English at work, the proofreading of English texts, and the limitations of working from home.

In December 2020, a second round of interviews with T2 trainees employed reflective drawing (Molinié 2009). The T2 trainees were asked to sketch visual metaphors of how languages were used in the workplace. They also talked about the language use they had observed or actively participated in in the unit. The drawings served as props, while also bringing more playfulness and more open affective load to the reflection process.[22]

In the third round of interviews with T2 trainees in February 2021, the trainees went through a gathered collection of visual metaphors, and individually reflected on how their expectations were met during their stay and what the research participation meant to them. In total, the T2 trainees were interviewed three times. As such, the interview rounds that took place during the traineeship term will be referred to as T2.1, T2.2 and T2.3 in the text.

The topics and issues became a matter of discussion in the team and one of the tutors asked for two brief presentations of the preliminary insights for the whole unit, which were followed by a short discussion in December 2020. The researcher was asked to

[22] Since the drawings did not directly contribute to the analysis or interpretation conducted in this study, they will not be included in the data presented in this article.

present the insights to the unit again in February 2021, with the aim of better preparing the team for the newly arrived trainees. The fieldwork concluded with the final round of interviews with three[23] seniors in May 2021 (S2).

All exchanges happened online. The researcher offered alternative languages for the interviews (French, German, Luxembourgish, Czech and Slovak) and the Luxembourgish and the Slovak interviewees chose to use their first language. The remaining interviews were conducted in English. The interviewing was audio-recorded and produced 30 hours' worth of semi-structured in-depth interview transcripts (on average 1 hour each). Two tutors and three trainees were interviewed only once since they either left the unit before the next round of interviews or came when the data collection was finishing.

The researcher's active role in qualitative interviewing both limited and opened new horizons, so it was not to be eliminated but controlled (Deppermann 2013). The researcher inspected any possible effects of her mutual positioning with the participants and took care to maintain the anonymity of the information shared outside of the interview. The researcher was a relative insider in the unit (Holmes 2020), having realised two observation study visits in 2018 and a pilot project in 2018 and 2019. The researcher's access to the unit was therefore seized as a unique opportunity for a rare, in-depth, longitudinal inquiry into an EU institution. The researcher's overall experience and background positioned her in between the newly arrived juniors and the nearly-local

[23] Two of them had already been interviewed as (S1).

seniors, both linguistically and professionally.

The analyses were based on the concept of sociolinguistic stance (Jaffe 2009). Stance is a complex analytic unit that allows for a layered investigation of the meaning-making process. The overall stance consists of the following aspects (Park 2011): (1) the speaker's *positioning* (2) towards and *object* of stance (3) with an expressed *affect/judgement* and (4) *mis/alignment* to the perceived or imagined stances of other speakers. This study investigated recurrent, more stable stances in participants' accounts, following Jaffe's (2009) approach to stance as a recurrent pattern indexing broader social phenomena.

The interviews were transcribed in the respective languages and coded by hand in English to indicate sequences where participants' stances referred to multilingualism. Following the linguistic anthropology theory, which analyses function and effect of language use (Saville-Troike 2003 [1982]), multilingualism was traced both as a possibility (for instance, a desire for multilingualism or its perceived role at work or in life) and as an effect (of the real use of more languages). The stances were analysed in the context of the interviews since not all stances were explicit, particularly the potentially politically sensitive ones.

The study's anchor point is the social construction of multilingualism, which is analysed through the participants' stances on language use at work. The aspect of mis/alignment was rather peripheral as stances were not analysed in stance-turns of a dialogue but as examples of a recurring combination of stance patterns. As such, the signalling of mis/alignment did not occur as often as it would in conversation analysis. The remaining constitutive features of stance were followed to highlight how multilingualism is constructed differently from varying positioning and with varying affective load.

4 Findings

4.1 Structural multilingualism as a political imperative and economic concern

The EU values multilingualism on principal philosophical and political grounds and its institutions are officially and structurally multilingual (Iskra 2021). Although the pattern of language practices differs from institution to institution and unit to unit (Wodak 2013), equality of languages has been a key principle of the EU institutions since their inception (Iskra 2021). In this political context, the unit under research addresses the international public in many languages.

The seniors' stance on multilingualism at the institution focused on the political (democratic) need to include one official language from each member state but also expressed concern for the difficulty of translating and interpreting all documents into every official EU language, as illustrated below:

Excerpt 1[24]

[24] Transcription conventions are as follows:

S1: … at the end, everything is translated in all languages. Everything legislative. Some administrative internal documents are in English, French and German, but only internal ones. Otherwise it is that languages are equal. So, if we decided to publish articles in other languages than the one working language, which is

?	= rising intonation
.	= falling intonation
(*laugh*)	= paralinguistic features
this	= stress
.. ... ….	= pauses of varying length
[ ]	= implicit reference
(…)	= omitted text part
-	= truncated speech
R:	= researcher
S1:	= senior - first round
S2:	= senior - second round
T1:	= trainee from the 1. term
T2.1:	= trainee from the 2. term - first interview
T2.2:	= trainee from the 2. term - second interview
T2.3:	= trainee from the 2. term - third interview

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English, we would have a big problem because we would need to publish in all languages. And practically, this would not be possible.

The excerpt above describes the language regime – the institution must use all official languages for normative content. In contrast, using all official languages in daily communication is framed as a logistic problem – too expensive and complicated, thus something which "would not be possible" (here with regard to publications but elsewhere in the interviews more broadly in terms of the logistics of translation).

The excerpt also shows the senior taking the position of a loyal employee for whom the structural organisation of language work is not a matter of personal opinion. However, Jaffe (2009) points out that no stance is also a stance. That said, a general acceptance of the situation can also be inferred from the context. When the seniors disagreed in the interviews elsewhere, they communicated it. They either signalled it non-verbally (by a change of intonation, pace of talk or laugh) or openly (for instance, "I don't want to talk about this because I don't want to be considered disloyal").

Furthermore, despite the three languages mentioned above, all participants asserted that English was the predominant internal (vehicular) language used in the unit and even in the institution. It is clear that, despite the United Kingdom having left the

EU, the English language has remained.[25] Participants refer to this actuality as a rational choice and economic remedy, framing the 24-language multilingualism of the institution as an unattainable ideal. For the participants, the decision to keep English seems to be directly linked to the construction of multilingualism as both a political imperative and economic problem. The senior in the excerpt below recalled that the predominant use of English was more politically questionable when English represented the political power of the United Kingdom:

Excerpt 2

```
S1: I even remember .. uh, people .. in the upper
hierarchy to say: "We will have even less problems with
the Germans, French, uh, Spanish people .. Italians
saying: 'Why English?'"
```

After Brexit, relying on a language which is no longer symbolically owned or ruled by any EU member state may be more politically viable because it does not directly thwart the equality of all 24 official languages. In any case, the seniors do not appear to support the idea of adding (back) more vehicular languages to English as the current main

[25] Malta and Ireland are bilingual countries with English as their second language. However, only one official EU language can be chosen per member state. In this case, Maltese and Irish were chosen, respectively.

lingua franca in the structural setting of the institution.

The juniors were much less concerned about the political connotations of multilingualism in the institution and had less information regarding the processes and their historical development. Also, unlike the seniors, they did not position themselves as representatives of the institution vis-à-vis the researcher and their utterances did not suggest any caution regarding politically sensitive stances. However, they did not question the position of English as the sole lingua franca either.

4.2 Personal multilingualism as a dichotomic value to communication in English

Although English being the main vehicular language at the institution was a non-issue for the participants, their *own* communication in English was considered personally limiting. When discussing the common stance of juniors on the topic of limitation, one of the seniors reflected:

Excerpt 3

```
S2: It can be the same, not only for the native
English speaker, but also for somebody who is obliged
to work only in English, or only in one language. You
feel uh .. limited.
```

The excerpt above implies that multilingualism, from the personal perspective, means "not being personally limited" and frames it as preferable compared to using English only. Seniors also often expressed their dedication to supporting multilingualism in the team and appreciation for being able to regularly use more languages at work (all used at least five languages comfortably and fluently). Speaking several languages was a personal joy for them and not any external requirement that would help them gain more power, climb the organisational ladder (cf. Detzen and Loehlein 2018), or succeed in a neoliberal market where personal multilingualism is considered an advantage (Barakos and Selleck 2019).

In contrast, trainees concluded that their experience was monolingual, despite encountering several languages at work. They used French when communicating with employees in other areas of the institution (security guards and cleaning and publishing services). Most of the trainees in the trainees spoke their first ("native") languages to the seniors. Nonetheless, neither of these exchanges was considered multilingualism at work in the trainees' eyes. This finding aligns with the Anglophone trainees' perception from the pilot project in 2018 and 2019. The juniors' stances on multilingualism continue to revolve around varieties of English in the workplace and a widely shared disillusion about the perceived non-existent opportunity to practise more languages (regrets based on the "lack of multilingual experience").

Such a situation is not unknown to the theory. A multilingual community does not necessarily guarantee personal multilingualism for every individual (Saville-Troike 2003 [1982]). The intriguing aspect here is, while the seniors did not feel restrained in fulfilling their potential for multilingualism and using other languages at work, the juniors often (unhappily) did. This difference would be less surprising in a more hierarchically managed team, but in this workplace, the juniors had no clear reason for feeling restrained from using more languages. So, the situation became a matter for further exploration and a differing stance towards competence in language emerged as a recurrent issue.

4.3 Multilingualism as proof of juniors' competence

While the juniors cared about being judged for their linguistic output in a multilingual environment, the seniors did not, and were moreover *aware* of their not caring. In the excerpt below, the head of unit spontaneously mentions the aspect of (not-so-perfect) linguistic competence:

> Excerpt 4
>
> S1: I try to practise them [languages] because if you leave a language, it leaves you. So, every time I can practise with somebody the language I know, I do it. … And of course, there also, you don't need to be perfect.

Similar to other seniors in the team, he says he strives for his personal best. He is concerned a language may "leave" him, as if he were in a personal relationship with it. His stance is clearly personal as he does not refer to practical work requirements, which is in accordance with the further analysis.

Notably, when talking about linguistic accuracy, the seniors distinguished between and took different stances on daily communication and language products, i.e. terminology entries, translations or publications. The first was a matter of individual human experience, while the latter a matter of standardised professionalism to them. The linguistic product has to be perfect according to the standard language norm (and sometimes also nuanced in socio-historical, political or legal terms). For these language products, the seniors rely on their colleagues – specialists (proof-readers, editors, legal departments, etc.). In contrast, human communication should primarily be effective, not perfect.

It is also worth noting that the professional linguistic outputs of the unit were never the product of one person's work. This is what Le Boterf (2018) points out about competence in modern workplaces in the service economy – a worker has to share the organisational vision and strive for the best solution in every situation, but competence is shown through a *common effort* adjusted to the actual needs of subjects involved in the situation. Indeed, the shared responsibility to find linguistic mistakes in linguistic outputs is what the participants emphasised as a striking contrast to the situation of freelance workers. Both trainees and seniors recounted dark stories about the pressures and deplorable conditions of (freelance) work for language agencies on the free market.

The seniors and juniors further shared certain stances on personal linguistic competence in English and their first languages, which were never under scrutiny. When

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it came to language choice, competence in English was simply presumed. The same indifference to actual linguistic performance applied to the first languages (often referred to as a "native language" or "mother tongue" by the participants). These languages were considered an "obvious" and "natural" choice whenever the situation allowed for them. Communicating in the first language was not associated with misunderstanding, as if it never happened.

Nevertheless, the initial perception of competence in the multilingual exchanges of the juniors was different to that of the seniors. Unlike in English and the "native" languages, in which competence was not considered an issue, the legitimacy of other languages for day-to-day communication had to be ascertained as it was not "obvious". Trainees internally scrutinised language competence according to accuracy and mistakes and often dropped the idea of using an alternative language. Using an alternative language triggered the assessment of competence according to the perception of fluency, mistakes, and the potential for misunderstanding and other face-threatening discursive events (Yule 2010 [1985]).

Overcoming the focus on linguistic mistakes (the language learner's lens) and the accompanying fear of losing face as a competent worker, had to be supported by a special dose of "bravery". Even speaking to colleagues required this type of consideration, as reflected on by one of the trainees:

Excerpt 5

T2.2: Yeah, I think about *(smiling)* the- wha- what language to use with them every time *(giggle)* depending on how I feel, uh, on the specific day. If I feel brave, I'm just gonna go in Italian *(laugh)*.

This type of internal self-check was further pronounced in the juniors' communication with the seniors. While the juniors observed that the seniors were much more confident using other languages, the juniors initially linked the higher level of confidence to the higher hierarchical position. In their eyes, the seniors could afford to use languages they did not speak with a "native" or perfect standard language accuracy, simply because their seniority meant that they did not have to prove their professional competence through language. If the trainees judged their own or other trainees' linguistic competence as "weaker", they regularly preferred not to use the alternative language and resorted to what they considered the "default" with automatic legitimacy – English:

Excerpt 6

T2.2: Uh, and you- when you're just a trainee, and you uh don't know everyone that well, and you are not- not spending time together in the office, it's hard to build that .. relationship with permanent staff members that is going to be, like, close enough,

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personal enough for you to start thinking about: "Today, let's maybe switch to a different language." You just keep everything to a short email just to get things done because you know that they're busy. So you're just going to use English because that's the most efficient way of working.

The abstract above denotes personal closeness, which is supposed to compensate for the lack of seniority (and the related lack of confidence in their own competence). This sentiment recurred in the juniors' interviews, mirroring the seniors' focus on familiar communication. Indeed, the trainees were initially missing the confidence and the human aspect of communication. However, the following two sub-sections will present the change in stances after trainees had the opportunity to rethink their intent and the real effects of their language behaviour, so as to discuss them in the team.

4.4 Multilingualism as open-mindedness and flexibility in languages

Initially, both the trainees and seniors considered the trainees' "monolingual English" usage to be an inevitable state of affairs shaped by the needs of the organisation. With the exception of one trainee who had studied critical sociolinguistics, the participants initially considered their language decisions as obvious or automatic non-decisions, as in the following example:

Excerpt 7

T1: So, I don't know, I don't really think about, like, what's going on. How do I decide? It's just natural, I would say.

Trainees from the T1 team only participated in one-off interviews and had no opportunity to reflect on the "naturalness" of their decision. However, the T2 trainees could revisit and discuss stances towards languages and their use at work and they found untapped potential. After the initial interview, two of the four T2 trainees were confident enough to ask for an alternative language for their own practice. One of them mentioned this as one of the defining moments that changed her perception of language use. In the last interview, she elaborated on what she had learnt about languages and multilingualism during the traineeship:

Excerpt 8

T2.3: I feel that working in a multicultural team makes me feel more confident in using my working languages. I feel like more open minded. (…) So I feel this kind of .. uh, flexibility in my- in my way- in my relationship with languages. (…) I'll just mention the example that when I realized that I could talk to (name of the assistant) in Spanish- I- I could do that, so I did. *(smiling)*

Taking a positive affective position towards her new understanding of multilingualism, the trainee refers to a situation in which she was initially afraid of making too many mistakes and was therefore reluctant to talk to a member of the permanent staff in Spanish. The decision to do so was so important to her that that she mentioned it as the example showing her learning outcome. It marked the change in the trainee's stance on multilingualism, now understood as open-mindedness and flexibility with languages instead of the perfect, seemingly monolingual performance in many languages.

Indeed, mistakes were initially a big topic for the terminology trainees, who were also translators and teachers. Their realisation, that language use in real life is governed by the rules of effectiveness rather than accuracy, was shared by the other T2 terminology trainee. When she was asked what she had learnt about multilingualism during her stay, she responded:

Excerpt 9

T2.3: Um, that you have to strive for perfection if you need .. your language skills to be perfect, so depending on your needs- on your personal needs, but in a- .. in a multilingual environment, there's nothing bad. No one is there to judge you if you make mistakes so .. you can live multilingualism in a more relaxed way and in a funny way where everyone can

```
learn from each other and even though the
communication is not perfect because we may not
understand each other- but simply because our
representations of- .. uh, of the word are different-
uh, it doesn't mean that there cannot be effective
communication.
```

In the excerpt above, the trainee stresses the personal character of linguistic needs, showing that she has liberated her personal reasoning from the generalised explanations. She reflects on learning that multilingual communication can also be a social experience of joy, mutual support and acceptance. She also points out that misunderstanding is not solely a matter of linguistic accuracy but can also happen because people may have different ideas about how the world functions around them. On the contrary, the non-standard use of language or a mistake does not necessarily make communication less effective. Both T2 terminology trainees concluded that their language competence is of no concern to anyone but themselves. As such, they gained the "flexibility of open-mindedness".

4.5 Multilingualism as a safe harbour and normality

Towards the end of the data gathering process, the trainees' reflections began to include more intimate topics. In this regard, the two T2 communication trainees also amended the ideal of language accuracy, but their stance was less linguistic and more personal.

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Approaching their language competence from a slightly different angle, they found that they were able to overcome their inner feeling of personal inadequacy. In her final interview, one of the T2 communication trainees suggests that the most important thing new trainees should know is not to be afraid to use more languages in the multilingual environment:

Excerpt 10

T2.3: I would say uh .. to be confident, not to be- not to be scared. And um to explore different possibilities and to always look for, uh, some ways of.. um, progress, I don't know, improvement, this is a really good opportunity to start maybe learning a different language, uh, because in this environment, you just naturally feel the need to learn languages.

The "natural" need to learn languages seems to be a social effect rather than a non-reflexive assumption, as was the case in the initial interviews. The trainee felt good among people who loved using many languages, so she wanted to do so too, to share the joy with them. The potential for financial gain or a hierarchical pay-off in the future was not important at that moment, it was rather her experience of multilingualism as social togetherness.

The last of the four T2 trainees made the most profound realisation when tracing her learning curve from her early school years, where she was shamed by teachers for mixing languages as a bilingual child, to her traineeship, where she expressed gratefulness for the multilingual experience that had brought her peace of mind:

Excerpt 11

T2.3: … the teachers actually thought it was bad to raise someone bilingually and it would just confuse me and .. they basically told me that I was just stupid.

(…)

Most often in my life then, people would actually ask me, do you feel more (*nationality*) or you do you feel more (*another nationality*)? And um .. that was really hard for me growing up, because it was like a little bit of an identity crisis? (…)

I would really enjoy to stay in a multilingual environment. Because sometimes it just- You know, if you're like the only half (*nationality*) person in your small town. Then you feel like the alien, like the outsider. And here, everyone can speak more than one language. So it did really .. um, it made me feel like I'm normal?

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This last excerpt shows the burden that must be carried by certain individuals due to the effects of language ideologies encountered in early childhood. It also demonstrates that a well-managed multilingual environment can act as a healing space. Over the course of the traineeship, the trainee began to feel that she was neither an intruder nor a failure, but a competent professional who belonged in the workplace. It is remarkable that the trainee developed this feeling of normality in a mostly virtual workspace during a global pandemic. It also shows the level of respect trainees were given, despite working there as juniors for only five months.

5 Conclusion

This study employed triangulated qualitative research techniques to look for answers to the question: what does multilingualism mean to a team of language professionals and how does this shape their perception of language practices at work? Five types of constructions of multilingualism helped to build an understanding of the situation in the workplace and the needs of the trainees coming from monolingual social environments. First, structural multilingualism was considered a political imperative and economic concern. Next, personal multilingualism was constructed as a dichotomous value to communication in English, then treated as proof of juniors' competence, further re-invented as open-mindedness and flexibility, and finally embraced as a safe harbour and normality.

The structural multilingualism was constructed as an economically impractical political imperative. For internal communication, English was seen as an easy alternative. Moreover, the politically driven need for multilingualism in the institution seems to have been further outmatched, in favour of English, by the extended work-from-home restrictions in 2020-2021. Thus, despite the commitment to multilingualism on the political level, the monolingual regime of using one internal language was perceived to be the right choice for the *institution* – a decision the participants did not contest.

However, their stance changed when they switched their positioning and the situation “English versus multilingualism” was judged from a *personal* perspective. The monolingual use of English became a factor that unpleasantly limited desired personal multilingualism. Moreover, participants understood personal multilingualism to be a self-confident performance in several languages, as well as an act of personal closeness, but the confidence and familiarity were initially lacking in the juniors, which limited them to English. The seniors did not care about making mistakes in their day-to-day communication, so they could not imagine this being an issue for the juniors, whereas the juniors felt insecure using their full language repertoire and focused on maintaining their “professional face”, both in front of peers and seniors.

Given that only the trainees who participated in the longitudinal interviewing changed their perspective, and no change was observed or reported in the seniors’ behaviour during the time of the trainees’ interviewing, it is likely that it was the opportunity to reflect in research that triggered the change in the trainees’ construction of multilingualism. The seniors did not notice that the trainees felt hindered in their language choice. Only through the researcher's additional questions on motivations and perceived effects of language use did the trainees realise that they had limited themselves. While they were initially guided by their learned aversion to "mistakes", they later decided to move their mental focus from competence to conviviality, which better balanced their expectations of language use and its potential in the workplace.

Analysis revealed that it was less the structural conditions and more the trainees' personal interpretation of other peoples' stances (the presumed judgement of their professional competence) that limited their use of alternative languages. The trainees identified their internal acts of self-language policing and have decided to be more confident with languages in their day-to-day lives. When they realised that they could refuse the applied linguistic lens focused on the mistakes, they started to guide their use of languages with newly gained confidence in their own communicative skills, emphasising mutual understanding. They ceased to construct multilingualism as proof of professional competence and started to see it as a fundamental aspect of their own well-being, personal self-realisation and growth. In so doing, they aligned their stances with those of the seniors and so re-coupled the social and the linguistic aspect of language use in day-to-day life, feeling freed and more comfortable using their whole personal linguistic repertoire. Striving for accuracy ceased to be a criterion for communication and instead became a personal joy or specific professional aspiration.

That said, participants often declared their "love for languages" with reference to their professional position as language workers. Language as a system with standard norms was at the core of their thoughts on multilingualism. They have not renounced the existence of separate languages and their link to member states. However, they drew a line between linguistically precise professional outputs and day-to-day communication, where multilingualism can lead to self-actualisation and create affective personal bonds.

This study aims to inspire more innovative approaches with a potential direct effect in multilingual workplaces, especially in those welcoming workers from monolingual or otherwise homogenous social environments. The first is employing the participative research method in workplaces. In this study, participants felt free to talk about their work experience and to experiment with the use of languages because the workplace management was friendly, open-minded and acknowledged the importance of life-long learning at work. However, this aspect may limit the relevance of the findings in highly competitive or strictly regulated workplaces. Another approach is to engage in longitudinal and in-depth interviewing while refraining from methodological nationalism. Ceasing to see the participants as representatives of standardised named languages allowed for new perspectives and a profound understanding of the socio-pragmatic processes happening in the workplace.

Ultimately, the participants in this study are sending a common message to managers, teachers, and learners: multilingualism is a social experience in which self-confidence and conviviality matter more than the number of languages and their standards. State-guaranteed language norms have a particular place, but it is not one from which they can automatically rule all human experience. They remain a reference for specialised tasks and outputs of translators, terminologists, or professional proof-readers, but language in real life is about more than linguistic performances measured against standard language norms – even in the life of high-profile language workers.

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Chapter 10. Reconstructing the meaning of language choice (Article 3)

Lovrits V., Langinier, H., and Ehrhart, S. *(accepted with minor revisions)*. French and language ideologies in a multilingual European Union institution: Re-constructing the meaning of language choice at work. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*.

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Review/Editing	x	x	x
Supervision			x
Funding acquisition			

TITLE

French and language ideologies in a multilingual European Union institution: Re-constructing the meaning of language choice at work

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates stances in reflective interviews to identify cultural patterns that shape the meaning of language choice within an international unit of an EU institution in Luxembourg. We employ the analytical concept of "language cringe" and propose a complementary concept, "language push," to showcase the effects of language ideologies in day-to-day talk about languages at work. Our analysis reveals that, within a workplace culture that encourages flexible and convivial use of multiple languages, French speakers have to deal with the effects of the "logic of honour," which is culturally associated with the use of French in France. Based on our findings, we suggest that language choice should be considered a cross cultural dimension in multilingual environments, and that language-sensitive management scholarship should broaden its considerations beyond the traditional issues of language proficiency, namely by inspecting relational and affective factors that shape language use in multilingual workplaces.

KEYWORDS: multilingualism, French, English, European Union, stance, language ideology, language push, language cringe

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1 Introduction

Multilingualism within European Union (EU) institutions has always been a sensitive issue (Phillipson, 2010; Wodak et al., 2012; Kraus, 2018). While each member state can select one official language for communication with their citizens, the internal language regimes remain complex and dynamic (Kruse, 2012). In the past, French held a central position as the internal language. Since the 1970s, however, English has progressively been claiming space (Sokolovska, 2016), especially after the 2004 "Eastern" enlargement (Krzyżanowski, 2010). This trend has led to political tensions (Sokolovska, 2016) and sparked political efforts to restore the role of French in the EU institutions (Chazan & Brunsden 2016; Schoen, 2022). Against this backdrop of the political historical context of language use in the EU institutions, the present study focuses on the language choice between French and English at the micro-level of language use in an international workplace.

Our research treats language as a social practice (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014; Karhunen et al., 2018), while emphasising the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 2001[1964]). Our study is qualitative and interpretive (Bonache, 2021), and takes an emic approach (Szkudlarek et al., 2020). We inspect the performance and interpretation of language choice from multiple perspectives as they emerge in the research investigation. In particular, we employ the "sensitizing concepts" (Blommaert and Rampton 2011:11) of language cringe (Park, 2011) and language push (our conceptualisation), through which we reconstruct patterns of the implied interpretative (cultural) frameworks that make certain individual choices self-evident to some actors, while remaining invisible to others.

Within the paradigm of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 2001[1964]), we understand "culture" as an interpretive framework of sedimented knowledge, which is organised around a core concern and followed by representations that help address situations where the core concern is evoked (d'Iribarne, 2009: 310). Culture represents a shared mental universe that allows for a common way of understanding and acting (d'Iribarne, 2009). Cultural interpretative frameworks do not necessarily require legitimisation in stable environments (d'Iribarne, 2009). However, the explicit negotiation of meaning becomes particularly relevant in contexts marked by increased transnational mobility. This brings about a plurality of expectations (Verschueren, 2000), notably in teams that have to deal with the varying ideological constructions of the ideal worker (Wilmot et al. 2023).

Central to this study is a personal language choice between two languages at work. While this might appear to be a niche concern within the predominantly monolingual and English-focused global scholarship (Tietze, 2004; Liddicoat, 2015), motivations and effects of language choice are of significant importance in international organisations, especially in the EU institutions that promote multilingualism (Kruse, 2012; Leal, 2021). With the increasing speed and scope of international migration over the last few decades, adopting the "multilingual way of seeing" (Piller, 2015) and understanding and managing language choice may become even more vital in international business and other organisational contexts that are characterised by high international turnover and changing language policies (Garrido, 2022).

This study is part of a sociolinguistic project that investigates metalanguage in a multilingual terminology and communication unit of an EU institution in Luxembourg. Building on previous findings within the umbrella project ([anonymised, 2021; 2022]), our study focuses on reflective metalinguistic stances, i.e., stances towards languages and speakerhood (Spotti & Blommaert 2017). We trace how a culturally constructed preoccupation with refined language performance in the French cultural context (d'Iribarne, 2009; Siepmann, 2006) comes across in a more relaxed international workplace of an EU institution that prioritises conviviality and friendly relationships in multilingual exchanges ([anonymised, 2022]).

While we focus on a culturally French context (d'Iribarne, 2009; Siepmann, 2006) that puts a lot of weight on the "aesthetic" function of language, achieved through its elaborated or "poetic" form (Cameron 2004: 314), this aspect should not be understood as linguistically intrinsic to the French language or speakers. Instead, those features are socially constructed (Bourdieu, 2001 [1991]) into interpretations of what constitutes "professional" communication. Similarly, the more relaxed approach to language use in the international unit does not simply result from the presence of multiple languages. We argue, rather, that it is shaped by metalinguistic awareness (the ability to reflect on language and its functions), flexibility, and adjustment to the communication partner (Barner Rasmussen et al., 2023). Sociolinguistics would term this a multilingual "way of seeing" (Piller, 2015).

2 Theory

Our research draws on the theory of language ideology (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Irvine & Gal, 2000). We define language ideologies as socially constructed sets of beliefs which mirror, construct, and reinforce a social hierarchy of languages, varieties, and speakers. While it is possible to conceptualise language ideologies as a mere set of beliefs without considering their function of social stratification (Barner Rasmussen et al., 2023), the original concept of language ideologies has a strong critical aspect, highlighting their illegitimate effects in the society (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Irvine & Gal, 2000) and in the workplace (Lønsmann, 2014). From the critical theory perspective, the main function of language ideologies is to rationalise power relations linked to language use, which fortifies normative discourse on languages at the societal level and, in turn, influences interpersonal interaction (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

The central issue with language ideologies lies in their manipulative character. By shaping attitudes and beliefs towards members of different cultural groups, they give rise to stereotypes and prejudice (Vivian & Brown, 1995). Essentially, language ideologies are stereotypical rationalisations that connect personal characteristics to specific language use patterns. They frame certain languages, their variations, or speakers as inherently superior while attempting to present themselves as a neutral or 'obvious' depiction of sociolinguistic reality, discouraging critical discussion. In this sense, language ideologies function as tools of "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 2001 [1991]), disguising social distinctions as natural differentiations and discouraging any scrutiny of their effectiveness. As a result, individual speakers deal with the fallout, as language ideologies exert dominance over the ongoing discourse (Kraft & Flubacher, 2023).

Two main types of language ideologies are particularly relevant in this study; their description below follows Woolard and Schieffelin (1994). First, the language ideology of *purism* constructs the standard variety of language as superior to other language varieties. It elevates the standard language and frames non-standard language use as socially embarrassing. Per this language ideology, any non-standard expression is considered a ‘mistake’ and judged as ‘bad’. The second language ideology, *native-speakerism*, elevates the ‘natives’ over the ‘non-natives’. It places the ‘native speakers’ at the top of an imagined social hierarchy of language users, from where they are seen as having automatically mastered ‘their’ language – as though they were both the owner and the most precious source of the language. A combination of the two above ideologies then constructs the idea of the ‘native speaker’, who is supposed to be the ultimate source of the most socially preferred variety of language. Those ideologies also create and support the idea that the ‘native’ language is automatically preferred over the ‘foreign’ language, simply because linguistic proficiency instils mental comfort.

One of the practical consequences of purism and native-speakerism is that other types of language use are framed as socially less valuable. Thus, any non-idiomatic or non-standard language use (be it a dialect, idiolect, interference of another language, or a simple mishap) threatens the language user’s social standing. This effect is further pronounced in cultures where strong aesthetic concerns and sensibilities are assigned to language use, among which Siepmann (2006) lists French culture. Furthermore, the preoccupation with potential linguistic embarrassment, as a fear that “makes members of the society uneasy or even anxious” (d’Iribarne, 2009:314), also aligns with the value of professional “logic of honour”, which d’Iribarne (2009) puts forward as culturally French. In that regard, the language ideologies of purism and native speakerism are part of the socially constructed knowledge about language, within which they are manifested as a preoccupation with a ‘perfect’ (‘native’ and ‘pure’) linguistic performance.

While the concern with standardised or ‘native’ language can be observed in various cultural contexts (Gunnarsson, 2014; Wilmot et al., 2023), it is not universal. This is particularly evident in multilingual work environments (Langinier & Ehrhart, 2020; Detzen & Loehlein, 2018) and teams employing English as a shared lingua franca (Nurmi and Koroma, 2020). Previous research within the unit under investigation highlighted that non-standard language use in internal communication was perceived as an integral aspect of life in the multilingual environment ([anonymised, 2022]). Consequently, the present analysis illuminates the consequences of divergent language ideologies related to the use of French within a workplace culture that aligns with the language ideology of multilingualism (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2023), favouring effective multilingualism over monolingual proficiency.

Thus, we explore the intersection of two cultural perspectives in an international work environment: one emphasising a ‘perfect’ (French) language and the other prioritising effectively practised multilingualism. This discursive encounter of language perspectives at work is manifested in the metalinguistic "stances" of our participants. The concept of stance involves three key components (Jaffe 2009). First, there is an object towards which a person takes a stance (here, the choice of language). Second, speakers take a stance when positioning themselves towards the object (we will talk about "language cringe" and "language push" as two types of stance positioning). Third, a stance expresses the speaker's alignment or misalignment with another speaker or stance (personal dis/approval of other people's stances). Stances often express affective or normative values and mirror organisational and societal norms (Cameron 2004) that define what can be thought and said, encompassing "identity claims, beliefs, assessments, appraisals and other forms of evaluation and positioning" (Lovrits & de Bres, 2021: 404). Therefore, the concept of stance is useful for in depth investigations that link individual perception (micro-level) to organisational context (meso-level) and a broader societal macro-level (Coupland et al., 1998), represented by language ideologies and differing cultural frameworks in this study.

The analysis focuses on stance positioning in particular, through the concepts of language cringe and language push. *Language cringe* represents a moment in discourse (text or talk), in which the language user is apologetic about his/her language use, thus taking a deliberately *inferior* stance positioning towards the communication partner. Since language cringe has primarily been examined in the context of English, this study pioneers the development of language cringe in relation to French. Language cringe regarding other languages, and in particular languages at work, remains a promising underexplored area, both in managerial research and sociolinguistics. Initially coined in learning settings (Park, 2011), the term has since been applied in various contexts, such as discourse on multilingualism in Australian families (Torsh, 2020) and among Anglophone immigrants residing in Luxembourg (de Bres & Lovrits, 2021).

The function of language cringe is to address the fear of negative social consequences fuelled by language ideologies, a fear that has been discussed as "foreign language anxiety" (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). It aims to elicit sympathy and pre-empt potential reproaches regarding potential non-standard or 'non-native' language use (de Bres & Lovrits, 2021). It is less tied to objectively measurable performance (linguistic competence/proficiency) and more to the social evaluation and negative judgement thereof, making it a predominantly cultural rather than linguistic issue. Indeed, what is "cringey" in one culture may not be perceived as such in another. At the same time, the concept is relational rather than referential, as its purpose is to manage the socially assessed appropriateness of language use, rather than to describe objective language competence or proficiency, which can be very high (Park, 2011).

As a complement to language cringe, which features an inferior positioning in discourse, we coin language push as a novel concept in our study. *Language push* represents a *superior* stance positioning between persons that are otherwise on the same (social, organisational) level. In our data, language push will be represented by a unilateral decision to use or not to use a language, without agreeing on that choice with the communication partner. Eventually, the concepts of language cringe and language push, nested in the cultural frameworks of perfect monolingual proficiency versus effective multilingual communication, allow for conceptualising and answering our research question: "How is the language choice between English and French performed and interpreted in the multilingual EU institution context?".

3 Previous research

The language-sensitive stream has introduced reflection on language use and its organisational and relational implications for management research (Angouri & Piekkari (2018); Tietze & Piekkari 2019). It has investigated the impact of a subsidiary context on language practices (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013), the joint influence of the geographical location and the corporate environment (Langinier & Ehrhart, 2020), or the impact of language ideologies on shaping attitudes towards language, hence communication (Barner Rasmussen et al., 2023). Additionally, analyses focused on individual exchanges in multilingual settings (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008) have revealed how language choice emerges from the subjective perception of shifting power dynamics within interactions across different space and time scales. This has enriched scholarly understanding of how power relations influence these practices (Vaara et al., 2005). Moreover, studies from multinational and cross-border companies have demonstrated that employees may successfully challenge official language regimes they perceive as unfair or unfavourable (Trépos et al., 2016, Nekula & Marx, 2014).

Furthermore, many studies have focused on the uneven linguistic proficiency linked to power struggles, that have often been interpreted with reference to the 'native' versus 'non-native' categories (Brannen et al., 2017; Woo & Giles, 2017; Śliwa &

Johansson, 2014; Gunnarsson, 2014; van der Worp et al., 2018; Wilmot et al., 2023). Critical voices across disciplines and fields have meanwhile questioned the linguistic relevance of the 'native' aspect, exposing the socio-political implications of the terms 'native speaker' (Dewaele & Saito, 2022), 'native language' (Doerr, 2009) and 'mother tongue' (Yildiz, 2012), both in scholarship and practice. However, the exploration of the intention attributed to language choice, beyond the considerations of personal linguistic comfort, is relatively rare in workplace research (cf. Nekula & Marx 2014).

That said, language-sensitive scholarship has already challenged the relevance of certain beliefs about corporate language use, developing previously established cross-cultural management themes such as team dynamics, human resource management, or corporate language strategies in international workplaces (Beeler et al., 2017). We join those efforts, taking a dialectical approach that acknowledges the mutual influence of normative structures and individual agency over them (Beeler et al., 2017). We aim to broaden management perspectives beyond exclusively national cultures and languages. This is in order to critically rethink some assumptions (Tietze & Piekkari 2019), including those shaping meaning making in the workplace (Kassis-Henderson, 2005).

To date, language-sensitive managerial research has targeted companies rather than non-profit or public organisations – hence our choosing the latter as our place of research (Angouri & Piekkari, 2018). Research in the EU institutions is also relatively rare (Krzyżanowski, 2010; Wodak et al., 2012), showing that internal language practices remain diverse in the EU institutions. The language of internal communication remains a matter of personal choice and team constellation in the EU institutions (Leal 2021). However, language use also remains an important matter of political struggle for control over internal processes and resources at the level of EU member states (Phillipson, 2010; Kruse, 2012; Kraus 2018). This represents the general institutional context of our study.

4 Methodology

Together with Szkudlarek et al. (2020), we underscore the importance of context, as well as an emic approach to the investigation of language use in the workplace. Electing to explore emergent information in depth, rather than follow a pre-structured investigation, we have taken a micro-focused interpretivist approach and investigated one phenomenon from a variety of perspectives. As our study is based on a purposeful, i.e., non-representative sampling (Smith, 1984), it does not aim to *"reflect a single, converging explanation (as is typically done in qualitative positivism), but [...] show how the same phenomenon is experienced and viewed from a plurality of viewpoints and perspectives."* (Bonache, 2021:42).

The interpretivist approach has slowly been gaining momentum in international business research (Szkudlarek et al., 2020). This approach complements the traditionally strong comparative dimension of cross-cultural management scholarship (Søderberg & Holden 2002), which is positivist and structuralist in nature, and hence implicitly static (d'Iribarne, 2009). The advantage of an interpretivist approach is that it adds a processual and dynamic aspect to the understanding of the needs of international human resources management and allows for investigating context-based issues and processes of meaning-making (Szkudlarek et al. 2020; Bonache, 2021; Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2023).

Furthermore, our place of research represents a challenging-to-access yet highly visible setting, providing a unique opportunity for “sensitive case” sampling (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). All members of the unit participated in research, which, together with iterative interviewing, allowed for an in-depth, qualitative and reflective investigation of their motivations for language choices and the effects thereof (Holmes et al. 2016). Our participant group was comprised of workers coming from nine EU countries, among which were trainees on a 5-month paid traineeship, their tutors and the head of unit. A total of 12 people (one man and eleven women) participated in reflective semi-structured interviews, which mapped their stances towards multilingualism and language use at work. They were given the choice of participating in English, French, German, Luxembourgish, Czech or Slovak. All participants had at least a C1 level in English, the default working language in the unit. Proficiency in French varied more from participant to participant (B1-C2), as it was not a job requirement at their place of work.

We gathered data in iterative semi structured interviewing via virtual platforms, due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The process of interviewing resulted in 30 hours of recordings – one hour long each, on average. The data gathering followed participatory action research principles (McIntyre, 2008). Businesses and organisations have employed action research on a larger scale since the 1980s, to investigate and steer processes of change (McIntyre, 2008). It can yield a similar output to the collaborative management approach, but it is better suited to investigations of more loosely structured teams (Coghlan et al., 2012). The benefits of action research are specifically underscored for innovation management (Ollila & Yström, 2020). A methodological prerequisite is, as in any qualitative study, that the researchers adopt a habit of "reflecting (on the process and progress of their research) and being reflexive (considering their shaping influence on the research and its influence on them)" (Holmes et al., 2016: 5).

A detailed report about the data gathering has been published in a previous report (Lovrits, 2022). The most important aspects of the research process are that our participants actively shaped the research agenda (the participatory aspect) with a common aim to better understand and potentially enhance their work communication (the action aspect) through their research experience (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). The topics initially set for common discussions were general – participants were asked to reflect on their language use, its motivation and effects. As the participants' stances towards French and French speakers emerged as an important topic, we decided to proceed with the micro-analysis presented in this article, in order to unveil how the particular language choice between English and French is performed and interpreted. The patterns of their choices were unclear at first glance, and therefore required an in-depth discourse analysis.

In the first step of the analysis, we used f4analyse software to identify transcript segments containing stances toward French or French speakers as the objects of stance. Next, we identified participants' positioning as instances of language cringe and language push. Our further analysis followed the socio pragmatic tradition (Blommaert, 2007), which aims to establish discursive links between individual intentions associated with a certain language use as well as the actual effects thereof in the given social context.

We present our findings in the next chapter. Starting with a brief introduction of English as a "default language" in the potentially multilingual unit, the first section demonstrates how language choice was performed as language cringe and language push among two trainees (section 5.1), both in a discourse context within the trainee team (in section 5.2), and among the staff (section 5.3). We interpret our findings in light of previous findings about the "convivial" (Boesen et al., 2023) multilingual workplace culture in the unit (Lovrits, 2022), in contrast to what has been theorised as a culturally French "logic of honour" (d'Iribarne, 2009).

5 Findings

When reflecting on language choices at work, our participants did not make reference to the local context. This is noteworthy, since Luxembourg recognises three official languages and its official administration is multilingual (de Bres, 2014). Their relative disconnection from the local context aligns with previous research indicating that the workplaces of EU institutions are more akin to a "microcosm of Europe" (Wodak et al., 2012:159). In the workplace context, where all workers were either actively plurilingual or at least striving for a multilingual experience at work, English was unanimously considered to be the default vehicular language, as exemplified by one trainee's verbatim:

Excerpt 1

`… something happens and I feel like: "Oh, okay` now we have to talk about- you know- let's go back to English", to our safety zone, in a way.

Reflecting on the reasons for the predominance of English in their work, our participants came to a shared conclusion that mobility across a wide European area pushes for one vehicular language, which happens to currently be English for them. Although no single EU member state can impose 'its' language onto others, the participants' views aligned with Kruse's claim (2012) that languages are a matter of member states' political interest. Regarding the adoption of vehicular English, one of the staff members noted:

Excerpt 2

It- it wasn't imposed or- imposed authoritatively, it was bottom-up, but keep in mind that part of this .. bottom *(laughing)* were the MEPs [members of the European Parliament] and, uh, the- um, the governmental representatives, the experts in the- in the different bodies of the European Union.

The above excerpt exemplifies the unit staff's view of English. With characteristic playfulness (expressed through linguistic amusement at the unintended pun on 'bottom' in the above extract), the staff members framed English as a common language, recognised both across and within the institutions as a result of the democratic process of developing language preferences within the EU institutions. However, as our further analysis demonstrates, the idea of English as a ‘default’ language may not have been universally recognised or appreciated within the institutions.

5.1 Discursive cringe followed by discursive push

Our analysis of instances of language cringe and language push starts by a reflective recollection of a language choice between two trainees – Elodie and Margaret (all names henceforth are pseudonyms). Elodie, coming from France, was considered a ‘native French speaker’ in the unit. For Margaret, French was a ‘foreign language’ that she wanted to practise at work. As Margaret anticipated that simply starting to speak a ‘foreign language’ might be frowned upon, she first performed a language cringe, apologising for her imperfect French. She gives her reasons in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 3

I feel always the need to talk French. I really love French but I'm afraid of talking it. I mean, because I don't feel secure about the knowledge of the language yet. And I have people who know French- I have the friend trainee who’s our colleague and French is her mother tongue and I have also other people who speak French and they are now friends. But I feel the need to add, every time that I see them- to move forward after the “bonjour”- to say I’m sorry for my mistakes, I am not used to talking French...

Margaret, wanting to use French but fearing the social rejection of her mistakes, talks about apologizing for her French. That should elicit a discursive green light to use the language without losing face, which is a function of language cringe previously identified in applied linguistic research (Park, 2011). However, Margaret's language cringe did not elicit the expected effect.

Instead of reassuring Margaret that speaking non-standard French would be fine, Elodie performed a language push for English. From the theoretical lens of stance positioning, Elodie took a superior discursive position in communication with an otherwise socially equal partner, by unilaterally deciding on English as the right language of communication. Elodie mentioned that she often experienced language cringe related to French. She giggled and seemed uncomfortable when talking about the language cringe addressed to her:

Excerpt 4

I just speak English because (..) I don't want to embarrass the person in front of me either. I start to speak French and- and they just tell me *(giggling, acting)*: "I don't speak French very well, I'm sorry!"

To Elodie, the language push for English was an obvious reaction to the language cringe related to French. The possibility that a language learner might wish to speak French "not very well" was not an option that Elodie considered, let alone negotiated.

That said, the traditional assumption that individuals favour their 'native' language for the sake of linguistic comfort and communication control does not apply to this situation. If language proficiency and one's own 'native language' comfort were automatically the decisive factors, Elodie would have chosen her 'native' French, while Margaret would have favoured English. They both did exactly the opposite: Margaret wished to step out of her comfort zone and practise her imperfect French, whereas Elodie opted for English so as not to cause social discomfort to her colleague.

Despite the shared intention to foster friendly communication, the enactment of language cringe and language push had negative consequences for both trainees. Elodie, as the recipient of language cringe, felt uncomfortable and attempted to rectify the situation with a language push for English. Meanwhile, Margaret wished for more opportunities to practise speaking French. Unfortunately, Elodie was unaware of Margaret's desire to step out of her comfort zone, as Margaret did not dare to openly request that they communicate in French. The implied language ideologies in their mutual stance positioning hindered an open negotiation of their language choice, as they provided 'obvious' interpretations of the other's stances.

Moreover, it might seem that Elodie had the upper hand in the situation, drawing on her superior 'native speaker' position, while the practical effects were unfavourable only for Margaret. However, Elodie's language push for English cannot simply be interpreted as an expression of “power in and over discourse” (Wodak et al., 2012). The next subsection will continue to build a thick description of the context for Elodie’s language push for English, exposing that the language push happened in a discursive space, where the choice of French, especially by French speakers, was generally frowned upon due to cultural stereotypes. Thus, Elodie’s decision to choose English also represents her own face-saving strategy.

5.2 The trainee peer-group context

Within the peer group, Margaret’s wish to practise French was rather an exception. Other trainees repeatedly shared unpleasant experiences that they had when using French outside of the current work context. Keeping with the stereotype that French people ‘misbehave’ when communicating with someone whose French is non-standard, the trainees talked about disliking French people’s fixation on ‘proper’ French. Consequently, many trainees made it clear that they preferred *not to* use French and they were very vocal about this. In the stance below, one of the trainees explains an old affective source of her unwillingness to use French:

Excerpt 5

```
I think like, when someone says something not
correctly, or has a weird word or vocabulary or
whatever, it means that he knows a language that
is not his or her mother tongue, so, I think
that that should be appreciated and not laughed
```

```
at because if you laugh at people, they'll most
probably just shut down and they won't be using
that language any more. This is what happened
to me with French in Paris.
```

Other interviewees also shared similar experiences. Indeed, they collectively held a stereotype of French people pushing for 'proper' French in Luxembourg and France, presenting those experiences as a recurrent topic of small talk among the trainees. Although Elodie was considered a dear colleague who used English "as a native", the nature of the trainees' discussions about French and French speakers still fortified the French stereotype – Elodie was simply a singular exception to the rule. This represents a form of language ideology manipulation known as "erasure" – this occurs when generalised beliefs about a social group persist, even when individual experiences with its members contradict stereotypical views (Irvine & Gall 2000:38).

Moreover, the trainees' general negative stance towards French speakers was so strong that even Elodie herself joined the discourse of national stereotyping, suggesting that *"they* [the French] *often pretend they can't speak English"*. Thus, by choosing English, Elodie also fought off the negative stereotype of a French person who unilaterally imposes ('proper') French on their communication partners. Within the peer-team context that harboured strong stereotypical biases against French speakers, choosing English served as a face-saving strategy for Elodie's position in her peer group. Additionally, Elodie could see a further reason for choosing English that is demonstrated in the last section of this chapter.

5.3 The staff members context

In contrast to the negative stances among the trainees, staff in the unit positioned themselves towards their own use of the French language with an explicitly positive affective load. Those who had worked in the institution for over two decades even linked French to what one of them called *"the old good days"*, suggesting nostalgia for a time when French was more widely spoken in the institution. They also felt fully proficient and comfortable in French. Furthermore, the staff in the unit actively encouraged multilingual exchanges at work, often mentioning that they were consciously trying to use all the languages they knew as much as possible. All staff members spoke at least five languages fluently, were affectively invested in personal multilingualism, and encouraged it in their trainees. The unit also had a habit of using the local languages of their external partners:

<u>Excerpt 6</u>

> `And uh .. we gave also, at least, uh, I would say 15 courses to universities. […] And we give it each time, uh, in the language of the university. […] So, this, we try. When we can, we try to .. approach people in their language.`

In contrast to the staff members' emphasis on adjusting to communication partners, self-actualisation, and a learning-oriented approach within the unit, a different perspective emerges in the mainstream institutional discourse. This perspective centres on the comfort of the speaker's own 'native' language, as observed in an article in the internal journal of the Court of Justice of the EU (Stryhn Meyer, 2020:20): *"In interinstitutional joint committees, it is common practice to use both French and English, thus giving the members and invited experts the possibility to choose the language in which they feel more comfortable."* This framing of language choice aligns with the traditional focus on comfort and proficiency in international workplaces.

As mentioned above, the concern with the speaker's own (potentially 'native') comfort was in direct discord with the unit's pride about their members' constant learning and ability to shift between languages according to their communication partners. Tina, a staff member from the unit comments on this issue in the excerpt below:

<u>Excerpt 7</u>

```
I mean, there are still situations where we have
people in- in meetings who are just more
comfortable in French, especially our French
colleagues are sometimes- so well- don't have
that- um, don't feel at ease- uh, with- with
languages, especially with English (..) et
cetera. And they, um, continue to speak in
French and the others speak in English.
```

Tina's above reference to "feeling at ease" mirrors a mainstream institutional discourse that considers English and French to be equal alternatives for the internal purposes of the

EU meetings, where both are used legitimately in order to ensure the speaker's language comfort. Nonetheless, the language comfort tied to the speaker's use of their 'native French' is not the only implication made in Tina's stance, as signalled by her expression: "especially with English". There is no linguistic ground for which the French speakers would have a problem *"especially with English"*.

Taking into account the historical and political context of the role of French in the EU institutions, the choice to speak French can also be understood as a symbolic result of the politicised "struggle" between French and English (Chazan & Brunsden, 2016; Schoen, 2022). From Tina's perspective, however, the language push for French in big meetings was rather amusing. Her slightly condescending stance aligns with the unit's cultural framing of language choice as proof of the individual ability to learn and to adjust to the dialogue partner. Tina deliberately came back to the topic a few minutes later in her interview:

<u>Excerpt 8</u>

> Like, I have this other colleague *(smiling)* well, she is capable- we're in a meeting with 20 people, and she's still able to say: "I speak- um, I will be speaking French." *(laughs)*.

It is unlikely that her colleague intended to achieve amusement when they chose to speak their 'native' French in a big meeting where everybody else spoke English. By way of the language push for French, Tina's colleague might have tried to promote more French in the EU institutions, following a cultural pattern of the “logic of honour” that restrains the readiness to discursively accommodate, even in situations of professional service (d’Iribarne, 2009). Alternatively, they could simply have chosen French for their own comfort. No matter the actual reason, Tina laughed when she recalled the language push.

Furthermore, the unit staff’s particular concern with the language push for French resulted in their concerted nudging for more English vis-à-vis the French colleagues outside the unit. One of the staff members even smirkingly talked about a meeting during which they had redirected communication from French to English. This happened after they had asked what language to use and their French *superior* expressed the wish to use French:

<u>Excerpt 9</u>

> So we did the meeting in French, because it was just me [names of two colleagues], and her, so we could speak French. Although, again .. there *[gives a smirk and starts to speak more quickly]* when we started to do the presentation- because we had prepared a presentation- a PowerPoint presentation- which was in English, so, we switched to English again. *[widely smiling]*

Indeed, the staff in the unit intentionally avoided using French with their French colleagues, despite preferring to use French with their non-French colleagues, for nostalgic reasons. They cited various reasons for passing on French; for instance, the writing process would be quicker in English because they could *"skip the French formalities."* The "logic of honour" (d'Iribarne 2009) requires formalities in French, drawing on the importance of status in French culture, which is mirrored in elaborate linguistic performances (Siepmann 2006). The unit's staff tried to avoid this by pushing for English, despite being proficient enough to write formal French. Indeed, they felt 'native-like' in French, and were notably more comfortable in French than English. They continued writing in English, even when their French colleagues responded in French.

At this point, we can loop our interpretation back to Elodie's language push for English. It is clearer now why Elodie considered English to be a "safe" language choice. She was a French person in a trainee peer group that held open stereotypical grudges against French people policing their French under the influence of language ideologies of purism and native-speakerism. Moreover, she was working in a workplace culture that promoted multilingualism, with a staff that found their French colleagues' language push for French amusing, and actively resisted it through their language push for English.

6 Conclusion

We investigated language choice in an EU terminology and communication unit in Luxembourg, aiming to understand how the language choice between English and French is performed and interpreted. First, our analysis unveiled uneven discursive positioning among socially and organisationally equal communication partners, which could not be explained by personal or organisational status. The unequal positioning stemmed from language ideologies, i.e., socially constructed sets of beliefs which mirror, construct and reinforce a social hierarchy of languages, varieties, and speakers (our definition adapted from Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). The effects of language ideologies were exposed as two stance positionings – language cringe (Park, 2011) and our newly proposed concept of language push.

Following Park (2011), we defined *language cringe* as a stance that involves deliberately *inferior* positioning among equal dialogue partners. In contrast to language cringe, we theorised *language push* as a stance that features a deliberately *superior* positioning among otherwise equal dialogue partners. Language cringe aims for the authorisation to use a certain language, whereas language push represents a unilateral decision to use or not to use a language. Both of these stance positionings aim to prevent a "loss of face", which would be based on (potentially politicised) rationalisations upheld through language ideologies; namely purism, native-speakerism, and multilingualism (de Bres, 2014). Our conceptualization aligns with prior research on ideological constructions of the ideal worker (Wilmot et al., 2023), revealing a contrasting tendency—the native language being viewed as an inappropriate choice in a multilingual team.

As a plausible explanation of the differing meanings related to language cringe and language push, we have identified cultural differences between a (multilingual) cultural framework of the unit and a (monolingual) French context. We put into contrast the cultural framework that is characteristic by a multilingual mindset or "multilingual way of seeing" (Piller, 2015), i.e., drawing on conviviality, flexibility, and adjustment of language in (multilingual) social and workplace contexts (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2023;

de Bres & Lovrits, 2021) versus a more norm-focused (monolingual) French cultural framework that prioritises individual control and command of language. We claim that both language cringe and language push are unhelpful effects of language ideologies, while their cultural embeddedness represents another layer of the context for their interpretation. We found that language choice can be a more complicated aspect of cross-cultural communication than it may seem, while "multilingual and monolingual ideologies still dominate social orders with major consequences for individual speakers" (Kraft & Flubacher 2023).

In particular, we demonstrated the following practical implication of the culturally embedded moments of language cringe and language push. One trainee (Margaret) missed the opportunity to practise French at work, because her language cringe was misinterpreted as the desire to not speak French. She neither openly dared to state her preferred language, nor did she try to negotiate it. As such, Margaret left disappointed that she could not practise any language other than English during her traineeship. On the other hand, Margaret's French colleague (Elodie) had to deal with the effects of the culturally French "logic of honour" (d'Iribarne 2009) in a contrasting cultural context of the multilingual workplace. Although she was not positioning herself as a representative of the French language and culture, she still had to bear the consequences of the stereotypes ascribed to French speakers by her peer colleagues. Zooming out to the broadest context of her decision, Elodie made her language choices in light of the staff's stances towards the use of French. The unit's staff preferred an imperfect yet convivial multilingualism over the pursuit of perfect mastery and elegance in language use, which framed the language push for ‘native’ French as inappropriate in the workplace.

In terms of practical relevance, our study has demonstrated that differing assumptions about language use at work remained hidden unless its members were prompted to negotiate language choices, instead of taking their interpretations for universally granted. Indeed, the unit’s management incorporated the topic of open discussions about language use into their onboarding agenda for new trainee cohorts, since explicit talk about language choice and its effects has proven vital in our research. Furthermore, this analysis exposed the effects of the culturally constructed “logic of honour” (d’Iribarne 2009), in which the (monolingual, French) idea of professionalism came across as a reluctance to adjust discourse in a multilingual, international workplace. Therefore, we propose that this aspect should be considered in international teams. Additionally, the fact that tension related to the choice of French was raised as a topic by the participants themselves, not previewed by the researchers, demonstrates the relevance of an emic approach (Szkudlarek et al., 2020) and participatory action research in management research (Ollila and Yström, 2020).

While qualitative, context-dependent and interpretive results cannot be generalised, they can offer a novel perspective on lived experiences and the scholarly understanding of these (Jonsen, Fendt, & Point 2018). Thus, our study may inspire further explorations in research and practice that can help intercultural teams understand and manage communication, particularly by going beyond the difference of communication styles linked to high or low contexts (Hall, 1990) and monolingual standards (Wilmot et al. 2023) towards open negotiation and consideration of the situational context of cross-cultural communication. Blommaert and Rampton (2011) call this the “management of ignorance”. It refers to measures that help to identify the missing or differing knowledge in communication. We suggest considering the differing expectations about when and how much to adjust one’s language choice to the needs and wishes of a communication partner as part of “constructive intercultural management”, which aims to leverage opportunities in linguistic and cultural diversity rather than focus on its constraints (Barmeyer et al. 2021).

Based on our findings, we propose that language-sensitive management scholarship may further expand its focus beyond traditional considerations of proficiency and personal comfort, heading towards a more cooperative perspective on language use as an enactment of self-actualisation, life-long learning and cooperation. Our study particularly points towards the importance of relational and affective factors that co-shape (the meaning of) language use and, consequently, relationships in multilingual workplaces. Language cringe and language push are unhelpful effects of language ideologies that can be limited by management measures, nudging towards open discussions about language choice and its effects. Moreover, we contend that understanding the effects of language ideologies, which are manifested in both national (territorially-bound) and workplace cultures, can enhance critical language awareness in international teams (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2023). This, in turn, can foster greater cultural agility, characterised by the “tolerance of ambiguity, resilience, curiosity, perspective-taking, relationship-building, and humility within a cross-cultural context” (Caligiuri et al., 2022).

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Chapter 11. Linguistic authority in the context of European mobility (Article 4)

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TITLE

Linguistic authority in the context of European mobility: Addressing the empty promise of élite multilingualism

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines linguistic authority in an international department of a European Union institution in Luxembourg. Using socio-pragmatic discourse analysis, it investigates language workers' stances towards language use at work. The findings reveal manipulative effects of language ideologies – (élite) multilingualism and native speakerism – that promote a business-like understanding of the value of language(s) in a public institution. While the institution benefits from this setup, its negative effects seem more pronounced for ('routed') workers in unstable situations of international mobility compared to those who are settled ('rooted'). The paper advocates for increased critical language awareness and seeks to sensitise stakeholders to the effects of language ideologies in professional settings. This discussion is particularly relevant for public institutions that promote multilingualism while using English as the common language of communication. However, it may also inspire other multilingual organisations in which management aims to enhance their employees' work experience.

KEYWORDS: linguistic authority, language ideology, multilingualism, English, metalinguistic, workforce, mobility, European Union

ARTICLE (4) Lovrits, V. *(accepted)*. Linguistic authority in the context of European mobility: Addressing the empty promise of élite multilingualism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.* https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2024.2321394 *(accepted manuscript)*

1 Introduction

As global mobility transforms work dynamics, the role of languages in organisations faces critical scrutiny across fields and contexts (Angouri and Piekkari 2018, Detzen, and Loehlein 2018, Duchêne 2011, Garrido 2022, Karhunen et al. 2018). Discussions revolve around two key topics. The first emphasises efficiency within an economic perspective, or "market logic" (Block 2017), focusing on the perceived challenges of information transfer and the related economic aspects of multilingualism (Grin 2003, Brannen et al. 2014, Wilmot 2022). The second issue is philosophical-political, highlighting the democratic need for linguistic representation and a general concern about the dominance of one or a few languages backed by the socio-economic power of certain states (Kraus 2018, Kruse 2012, Leal 2021, Phillipson 2010, Kruse 2012).

According to critical scholarship (Block 2017), language regimes tend to align with the socio-political needs of powerful actors, rather than with high ideals. Therefore, this study refrains from advocating for a specific language regime in EU institutions. Instead, it makes use of the philosophical concept of authority (Zagzebski 2012) to demonstrate that a critical discussion about day-to-day language use and its effects on workers' lives is needed, alongside the economic and political debates. In that sense, the study joins the recent trend in humanities and social sciences investigating "prosaic multiculture" (Boesen et al. 2023), while focusing on conviviality in multilingualism (Lovrits 2022).

The analysis takes a critical socio-pragmatic approach, emphasising the purpose of language use that links individual intentions (expectations) to their effects within situational and societal contexts (Blommaert 2007). Anchored in the theory of language ideologies (Woolard 2016) and drawing from critical research on language use in public institutions (Sunyol and Codó 2019; Zimmermann and Flubacher 2017), the study examines the role of linguistic authority in an international unit of an EU institution in Luxembourg. Findings reveal that, despite the well-intentioned motives of the unit's management, their low critical awareness (Verschueren 2012) and business-like pressure limited internal linguistic authority, leading to disappointment and structural injustice.

The article primarily addresses subjects concerned by the discourse on language regime in the EU. However, this study cannot be seen as representative of the EU institutions, as preferences for certain language(s) in internal communication vary across teams, spaces, and over time (Krzyżanowski 2010). Instead, the study exemplifies patterns that can conceptually be transferred to other organisational contexts. Underlining the importance of "psychological safety" in the workplace (Nurmi and Koroma 2020), this research is relevant for management aiming to attract and retain younger talents, who seem to be more attuned to their well-being at work than previous generations have been (INSEAD 2023).

ARTICLE (4) Lovrits, V. *(accepted)*. Linguistic authority in the context of European mobility: Addressing the empty promise of élite multilingualism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.* https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2024.2321394 *(accepted manuscript)*

2 Critical discussions on language needs in the EU context

Multilingualism is a core principle of the EU (Kruse 2012). While each member state has the right to choose one official language for communication between the citizens and the EU bodies, the internal language regime is not officially regulated (Leal 2021). Replacing French, which was historically the main vehicular language, English has been gaining ground since the 70s (Sokolovska, 2016). This has been criticised for imposing cultural and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 2010), endangering linguistic diversity and democratic participation (Wodak et al. 2012), thwarting the development of the European identity (Kraus 2018), and reinforcing inequalities (Leal 2021). Nevertheless, despite emerging as a political agenda opposing the prevalence of English (Krzyżanowski 2010), multilingualism has remained a politically sensitive matter (Phillipson, 2010; Wodak et al. 2012; Kraus, 2018), namely because choosing a few more languages does not lead to fairer democratic representation, but rather to "élite" multilingualism (Kruse 2012).

The adjective "élite" signifies the socially constructed value of a few "chosen" languages and, consequently, their superior socio-economic value. The term multilingualism can then refer to the languages used in a certain space or by an individual. It is analytically useful to distinguish the spatial from the personal aspects, because the presence of more languages in a certain space does not necessarily mean that all the individuals use more languages (Saville Troike 2003[1982]), even if they have the language skills. Similarly, in a space where only one language is spoken, individuals may be multilingual without the opportunity to show it (Blommaert 2007). As this potential misalignment is particularly relevant in this study, the article also uses the term "plurilingualism," coined in applied linguistics (Ehrhart et al. 2010) to underscore the personal side to multilingualism. While plurilingualism has been rooted in European humanistic education and intellectualism for many years (Sunyol and Codó 2019), it has also recently been framed as a "competitive advantage" within the market-oriented discourse of market logic (Detzen and Loehlein 2018). This idea is mirrored in the critical discussion of this study.

Critical sociolinguistics has explored "élite multilingualism," while considering both personal and spatial dimensions (Barakos and Selleck 2019). Some educational institutions use the promise of multilingualism as a competitive advantage at the organisational level, to attract students from broader regions (Zimmermann and Flubacher 2017). However, the institutional discourse is not followed by policies, actions, or provision of resources, to ensure that students actually can practise or use multiple languages. This results in an "empty promise of multilingualism," where organisations benefit from multilingualism-oriented migration, while the mobile individuals' expectations about multilingual practice are not met (Zimmermann and Flubacher 2017).

3 Language work in the context of European mobility

As geographical mobility shapes the character of modern society, workers without stable work affiliations (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001) have to navigate a "volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world" (George 2017). Moreover, individuals are expected to be proactive and entirely accountable for their lives, while their failures are perceived as personal rather than structural (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Kasmir ([2018] 2023:4) adds that mobility without affiliation to stable societal structures leads to pronounced "anxiety, insecurity, and feelings of un-belonging".

In this societal context, work experience is often characterised by "routedness". Being "routed" or "rooted" (Jackson et al. 2004:2) does not merely represent a dichotomy between the territorial and de-territorialised, or national versus international. It further encompasses the feelings and effects of (un-)belonging when geographically mobile workers can(not) benefit from a stable work contract or, at least, from the support of their personal networks (Worth 2016).

Furthermore, transnational movement has particularly highlighted the importance of "language work", in which language matters both as a work process and product in the global economy (Heller 2010). Primarily undertaken by professionals with linguistic degrees, language work encompasses a wide range of work types, such as brand consulting, text design, on-line marketing (Koller 2018), call centre services, translation, localisation (Heller 2010), or language training and teaching (Barakos 2019; Codó 2018). Language workers often take up freelance, contractual, or other socioeconomically precarious positions (Barakos 2019; Codó 2018), bearing the costs of linguistic upskilling while adjusting to the changing language needs in the market (Kraft 2020; Barakos 2019). The language industry has also been particularly criticised in research for offering low wages and no job security (Codó 2018, Panaligan and Curran 2021, Koller 2018).

Another aspect that fuels discussions concerning language work is the unequal socio-economic value of languages. Decades-long debates have emphasised the indispensability of English in international cooperation and transnational careers – within the “knowledge society” discourse, English is portrayed as a key driver for transnational development, progress, knowledge exchange, and international mobility (Hornidge 2013). This discourse is supported by the idea that some languages are neutral (‘anonymous’)[26], originating from ‘anywhere’ (Woolard 2016), thus allowing for smooth mobility across state borders. However, mobility is “an itinerary across normative spaces, and these spaces are always somebody’s space.” (Blommaert 2007:73). Phillipson (1993) notes that the trans-national role of languages follows a colonial past.

In contrast (or additionally), a language considered ‘authentic’ (Woolard 2016) is tied to a specific territory and discussed as a ‘native language’. The use of the ‘native language/speaker’ category has been refuted as “native-speakerism” (Kabel 2009), also criticised for its colonial roots (Piller 2018), implied socio-political connotations (Doerr 2009; Śliwa and Johansson), and unsuitability even for language education purposes (Dewaele and Saito 2022). Nevertheless, despite the challenges to its validity across disciplines, ‘native’ varieties are often favoured in the work context (Fredriksson et al. 2006; Gunarsson 2014). This creates tensions and contributes to a “divide” (Block 2017) through unequal socio-economic value assigned to the languages and their varieties (Panaligan and Curran 2021).

[26] ‘Simple’ quotation marks indicate a term with a language ideology background from which the author wishes to keep a distance in this article. “Double” quotation marks indicate a citation.

4 Linguistic authority and language ideologies

To address the previously outlined contradictions of competing discourses on languages, the study has chosen the philosophical concept of "authority" (Zagzebski 2012), further conceptualised as "linguistic authority" in the context of the theory on language ideologies (Woolard 2016). Authority, according to Zagzebski (2012), is the ability to influence how knowledge is (re)produced, interpreted, and used in interaction. Authority can be built, exercised, refused, etc. Thus, a subject (person/institution) has or follows (but "is" not) an authority. This study further distinguishes between internal and external authority, underpinning their relevance for the discussion on knowledge production in a democratic society (Habermas 1981). Individuals exercise their own internal authority stemming from their life in the "Community," while the "State" and the "Market" are external sources of authority that impose themselves on individuals.

Internal linguistic authority draws on self-reflection and critical awareness, representing the individual's control over communication and their own language-related knowledge. It legitimises action and serves as a rational prerequisite for personal *self-fulfilment* – a cognitive representation of "happiness" (Zagzebski 2012). Despite its self-reflective nature, internal authority is not selfish. It is interactive, involving dialogue, negotiation, and compromise to address contradictory information and interests. Indeed, "self-realization and self-determination are by no means merely individual goals" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:49).

In contrast, external linguistic authority is characterised as “a normative power that generates reasons for others to do or to believe something” (Zagzebski 2012: 102; emphasis added). This form of authority relies on impositions, such as societal or institutional regulations concerning languages. Terms like “languagised world” (Jaspers and Madsen 2018) or “languaged labour market” (Kraft and Flubacher 2023:372) underscore the external linguistic authority of the state within its territorial power (Bourdieu [1991] 2001) and the consequent economic value of languages in the (labour) market (Grin 2003).

Furthermore, external authority can turn to discursive *manipulation* in order to sidestep potential resistance stemming from reflective free will (Fuchs 1993), while still feeding off of its legitimacy. Manipulation can sideline internal authority or make external authority look like internal authority, either by making the option of internal linguistic authority less apparent or by creating the illusion that external authority effectively addresses individual needs. As such, manipulation can be understood as the main function of *language ideologies*.

Language ideologies are mental indexes that group socially constructed beliefs, reflecting, constructing, and reinforcing a social hierarchy related to languages, their varieties, and speakers (adapted from Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). Language ideologies shape “normative expectations and explanatory accounts” (Blommaert and Rampton 2011:14) and influence beliefs about how language works and should be used (Cameron 2000). The beliefs manipulated by language ideologies are typically presented

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as common sense, which inhibits the potential resistance to free will and limits internal linguistic authority.

5 Methodology

This study is part of a broader project examining metalanguage within a communication and terminology unit at an EU institution in Luxembourg. The umbrella project comprises three sociolinguistic studies, with the present article serving as the final contribution. The main research project evolved from a pilot study conducted in the same workplace, previously detailed in (Lovrits and de Bres 2021).[27]

Research took place in an international, cross-disciplinary unit providing terminology and communication services. The unit, collaborating with over a hundred translators across different units, maintained an informational website for a global audience. The participant group consisted of sixteen trainees on a paid traineeship (typically lasting five months), along with four staff members (trainees' tutors and the head of the unit). The staff members had over 18 years of experience, came from multicultural backgrounds, and resided in Luxembourg. The trainees, except for the Luxembourgish one, had recently come from abroad to do their traineeship. All participants had university degrees in linguistics, translation, education, journalism, social media, or marketing. They were proficient in English (C1+) and had working

[27] Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of Luxembourg's Ethics Review Panel (ERP 20-025 WorkLingEU).

proficiency in at least one other language. With the exception of the head of unit, all the participants were women.

Data gathering in 2020-21 took place online due to Covid-19 restrictions, following an in-person pilot from 2018-19. The employed semi-structured interviews were iterative, which allowed for deeper insights as participants discussed their research experience among themselves between interview rounds. (However, some participants were interviewed only once, due to the high turnover rate in the unit.) Additionally, interviewing included discussions over the participants' reflective drawing of metaphors (Molinié 2009), in order to make the iterative interviewing more engaging and facilitate affective stances (Jaffe 2009), i.e., affective positioning towards languages and speakerhood, similar to the study by de Bres and Lovrits (2021). Participants' drawings (Figure 11.2 in the Appendix) were not considered data in the present study. Instead, they served as prompts during the interviews. Now, they visually illustrate the arguments presented in this article.

Interviews were led with respect to participant perspectives, facilitating deep reflection on language use in the workplace. Initial topics were broad, prompting reflections on language needs, expectations and actual language use. Further inquiries included more specific aspects that had emerged during interviewing, namely the role of 'native English speakers' in the team (following up on the previous findings [Lovrits and de Bres 2021]), the levels of language formality and reasons for language choice.

Guided by participatory action principles (McTaggart 1997; McIntyre 2008), the researcher was not merely an observer; rather, she encouraged participants' reflections by offering alternative perspectives, such as: “What would happen if you asked for an alternative language?” The action aspect of research involved shared learning with the aim of intentional improvement (McNiff 2013), which was manifested in certain changes to the standard practices in the unit, as will be outlined in this text. These changes were also detailed in previous reports (Lovrits 2022, Lovrits *in press*).

The interviews were one hour long on average, resulting in 37 recorded hours. Audio recordings were transcribed and coded in their original languages (mostly English, one Luxembourgish, one bilingual Czech/Slovak). Coding started deductively by identifying stances in which the participants referred to one of the sources of linguistic authority. The inductively assigned first-order codes (Market, State and People) were inspired by the theory of communicative action (Habermas 1981). For an overview of the codes and theorised effects, see Table 11-1 below:

Table 11-1 Codes and theorized effects

First-order code	Effects of **external** linguistic authority	Effects of **internal** linguistic authority	**Manipulative effects** > social and individual injustice
State	Common good	Comfort	Politicization **Native-speakerism** > Discrimination based on origin
Market	Efficiency	Achievement	Commodification Marketization **Businessization** > Depersonalized competitiveness
Community/ Persons	Social cohesion	Belonging	Self-doubt > Insecurity **Exclusion** > Un-belonging

The study aims to answer the following research question: "How does linguistic authority feature in participants' stances towards languages and speakerhood at work, and with what implications?" By focusing on the aspect of linguistic authority, the analysis sought to identify the perceived and intended effects of talk about languages and speakerhood (Spotti and Blommaert 2017), and to interpret them within a broader institutional and societal context (Blommaert 2007).

6 Findings

The presentation of findings begins with an overview in section 6.1, introducing the types of linguistic authority linked to the desired effects of language use. The next two sections describe manipulations that limit internal authority and its implications: first, the "businessization" (Pagano 2017) of languages resulting in vain expectation of multilingualism in section 6.2, and second, "native-speakerism" related to the state's hegemony over 'its' language (Bourdieu [1991] 2001) in section 6.3. Finally, section 6.4 introduces a contrasting perspective that resisted the respective discursive manipulations.

6.1 Sources of linguistic authority in the workplace context

When participants thought about their professional outputs, language was always a standardised language backed by a **state**, as illustrated by the metaphor of knights at a round table (N°8). Nonetheless, participants did not politicise language use. They never positioned themselves as fighting for the language (political) interests of any one state. The focus was rather on the rights of people in each respective state, described by one senior as: "the basic right of any EU citizen to be informed in their own language." External linguistic authority stemming from state thus aimed for a linguistic **common good,** achieved through the curated use of standardised languages.

Furthermore, internal linguistic authority referring to a state-guaranteed language was linked to the perception of **comfort** in a local language use by the local people. That said, participants themselves wished to get out of their linguistic comfort zone by using languages in which they did not feel "local". This wish was exemplified in metaphor N°2, which depicts languages as islands surrounded by ocean. According to the trainee-author of the metaphor, the ocean should be crossed despite personal discomfort in "foreign" languages.

Next, external linguistic authority that followed the **market** logic (corporate-like needs of the institution) was linked to the notion of **efficiency**. This framed multilingualism as a costly organisational problem of multiple translation, similar to discussions in international business (Brannen et al. 2014):

Excerpt (1)[28]

[28] **Transcription conventions:**

?	= rising intonation
.	= falling intonation
(laugh)	= paralinguistic features
<u>this</u>	= stress
(..) (…)	= pauses of varying length

```
S2: We would have to bother very much the translators
who would have to revise everything we write in their
language. So, this would really destroy the (..) uh
productivity of our communication.
```

Within the market logic, English was framed as the default language choice, as its use prevented unnecessary organisational costs. As such, participants justified this choice by following the external authority of the institution, which was similar to business organisations in its need for efficiency. English was considered most efficient for the changing environment, because it allowed for the inclusion of more or other people in the

[ ]	= implicit reference
/…/	= omitted text
-	= truncated speech
R:	= researcher
S1:	= senior; first interview
S2:	= senior; second interview
T0:	= trainee; pilot study
T1:	= trainee; 1. term
T2_1:	= trainee; 2. term – first interview
T2_2:	= trainee; 2. term – second interview
T2_3:	= trainee; 2. term – third interview

future (in forwarded emails or with unfinished work). This was particularly relevant in this workplace, as it had a high turnover rate.

Furthermore, internal linguistic authority related to the (labour) market logic framed languages as proof of professional **achievement**. The head of unit was particularly admired by trainees for the number of languages that he could use:

Excerpt (2)

`T2_3: I think for anyone- of course, especially for language professionals or at (the unit)- so, reaching, like, (the head of unit's) abilities to really switch from one language to another in a matter of seconds is something that everyone should be- should be jealous of.`

Internal linguistic authority, framing plurilingualism as personal achievement that can be compared among persons (evoking pride, but also competition), was more present among trainees than staff members. The above-mentioned "jealousy" of language repertoires will be particularly important for the discussion in section 6.3.

As a **community**, the unit represented the source of external linguistic authority for the trainees. Aiming for **social cohesion** through the use of languages, the staff enacted friendly flat management, while supporting what the management scholarship calls "collective competence" (Le Boterf 2017). Consequently, trainees felt that the collective check of language outputs saved them from "the translator's nightmare" of mistakes and enhanced their internal linguistic authority and willingness to explore new ways of work conduct (innovation) in general:

Excerpt (3)

```
T2_2: So they always encourage you to try and do stuff even if you're not perfect and it applies to languages too.
```

Additionally, a visual metaphor of social cohesion (N°13) likens the use of language to a peaceful meadow stream; indeed, the unit was commonly pictured as a sort of "refuge". Comparisons were made to other units and organisations that provide a "national service" in one language – considered "intellectually limiting" – and to the translation industry, which was described as stressful and exploitative. Nonetheless, both claims were also challenged in the interviews, as will be exposed in section 6.3.

Eventually, stances featuring internal linguistic authority that addressed individual needs were linked to **belonging**. Languages were purposefully used for personalised communication, i.e., as a means of creating personal bonds. For instance, in order to create a personalised first impression, external subjects were approached in their local languages. The feeling of belonging was also present in reflections about sharing a 'native' language:

Excerpt (4)

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```
T0: You can talk about like different areas or nights
out or whatever. So I think it's kind of like that.
Yeah, exactly, it's more than the language. It's like
coming from the same area.
```

It is noteworthy that belonging was evoked as a shared territorial context *alongside* the linguistic aspect. Moreover, the excerpt above links the use of a 'native' language to the feelings of interpersonal relatedness without any reference to the territorial (state) control. This is an example of internal linguistic authority, contrasting with the territorially defined linguistic characteristics *of* a(n) ('authentic') language (Woolard 2016) that will be discussed below. After presenting linguistic authority in the context of the workplace under investigation in this section, the following two sections will expose discursive manipulations that prioritize sources of external linguistic authority and their effects in the workplace.

6.2 Businessized languages

Participants' reflections on language and multilingualism often followed a business-like logic. To describe that aspect, this article adopts the term "businessization" (Pagano 2017). Businessization represents corporate-like "assembly-line mentality", which focuses on quantity rather than quality of work outputs in non-business environments (Pagano 2017). It encompasses the "marketization" of languages (Zimmermann and Flubacher 2017), and may lead to their "commodification", as discussed in the theoretical background of critical theories (Heller 2010). The implied overvaluation of the market logic (Block 2017) is particularly relevant for the discussion of the functioning of a public interest (non-business) institution, as the European Union's primary aim is to "… *promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples."* (TEU [1992] 2016). Indeed, economical aims only come in paragraph three of the cited grounding document.

In the interviews, multilingualism was discursively framed as the unit's advantage in building a competitive workforce. It was put in contrast to the presumed limited perspective of monolingualism in political or language units and monolingual countries. Thus, similar to other public interest organisations (Zimmermann and Flubacher 2017, Sunyol and Codó 2019), the possibility of multilingual exchanges was used to attract collaborators who then worked either low-compensation (trainees) or volunteer jobs (external subjects like university students).

However, many trainees left the unit disenchanted over the actual lack of multilingual experiences. This was most concisely expressed in reference to metaphor

N°3, depicting the Greek proverb, *"when you hear of many cherries, hold a small basket":*

Excerpt (5)

`T1: So, you are in a multilingual country and you are in the professional workplace- which is multilingual, so you expect many languages to be heard, to be exercised, to be practised (..) and then you realise that you come to reality- a daily reality- where you need a small basket. Because the main language used is the lingua franca [English].`

Participants shared a belief that the workplace conditions (external linguistic authority) were not favourable to the use of languages other than English. However, further analysis revealed that both the perceived lack of internal linguistic authority aiming to achieve multilingual practice as well as the need for multilingualism were, for the most part, an effect of language ideologies that "businessized" languages.

First, vehicular English was framed as the "obviously" default language through corporate logic and market terminology. A trainee reflects (over metaphor N°1):

Excerpt (6)

`T1_1: English could be the money, like the currency, because we need a currency to buy and to, like, do all` of these transactions. /.../ [Other languages] are like, the billboards that you have- when you're passing around down the road- you have something like- it- it grabs your attention. It can be funny, it can be useful sometimes, but it's not something that (..) really changes your direction.

English had undisputed value for the organisation, while other languages were seen as mere entertainment. In the ideological logic of language ‘anonymity’ (Woolard 2016), English was considered a “safe choice” and the default language, which could be used with anyone and assured efficiency within the institution.

Consequently, as English seemed to be the sole important language for the institution, the need for a multilingual experience was considered a personal whim. Internal linguistic authority could only be used as a personal preference, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Excerpt (7)

S1: When we realise: “Ah, you speak Luxembourgish, may I speak to you to train my Luxembourgish a little bit?”, then we do that, a little bit. But on a completely personal level.

Thus, in a potentially multinational *organisation,* for which multilingualism is the foundation, multilingual exchanges could only happen if individual workers made a *personal* effort (if they exercised internal authority). That said, while staff members used their internal authority to speak other languages at a "completely personal level", trainees often did not dare to ask to practise other languages, even when they shared an alternative language with co-workers.

Furthermore, the temporariness of junior job contracts emerged as a salient structural condition limiting trainees' linguistic authority. They did not have much time to create relevant personal bonds that would support their perception of their own linguistic authority. Moreover, they did not know where they would land their next job, nor did they know what languages they would need for work in the coming months. Interestingly, the precarity of the trainees' temporary contracts came as a surprise to the staff, as illustrated by an excerpt from an interview with the head of unit:

Excerpt (8)

```
      S2: So, I can say it as a head of unit, because
it doesn't concern the institutions. But in big
companies, they abuse the system to- to hire people
with a low salary. And usually they stay one to two
years, and then they let it go because they- (..)
normally, they should have more money and (..) the
companies are- are not willing to give it.
      R: Okay.
```

S2: In the institutions, it’s different. But in the companies, I have experienced it very much. Also, our trainees, we try to find for them the posts. [He gives examples.]

R: Um, they don't get permanent contracts, um, in the institutions. As well. (...)

S2: Now, we try to open to the- to the- to the trainees who are in- we have opened the possibility to do some, uh, exams. And then they are on the so-called CAST lists from where we choose every time we can have a contract available. [He gives details.]

R: Mhm, mhm. Just (..) the CAST lists are again temporary- temporary contracts. (..)

S2: Um, yeah. (....)

In an attempt to showcase good practice in the institution, the head of the unit condemned exploitation in the language industry, whereby employers only offer short-term contracts to the young workforce. However, the temporary character of work has come to light as the actual condition for trainees in the unit, similar to what was pictured as exploitation in business.

Ultimately, despite considering English as the only important language at work and not daring to use any others, most trainees still longed for a multilingual experience.

This was because they considered plurilingualism to be a competitive advantage in the labour market, particularly in the EU institutions. They shared a generalised "the more the better" belief, which featured the influence of the ideology of multilingualism:

Excerpt (9)

`T2: It's important that we know as many [languages] as` *(laugh)* `we can, just to get in, because the competition is really high.`

Nonetheless, in the context of their actual English-only experience and the push to move across countries for short-time jobs, plurilingualism represents only a symbolic token in the hiring process. The trainees aimed to capitalise on the gate-keeping function of plurilingualism in the labour market. It was an elusive entry ticket to a job, not a means to fulfil their actual needs. Only two languages are typically required for jobs in the EU institutions, and once the applicant "gets in", their work is mainly in English. This was also the case for the traineeship.

Additionally, trainees mentioned a preference for learning French and German (in their free time and at their own expense, unlike staff with rolling contracts, who could attend language courses offered by the institution during working hours). The trainees linked their wish to learn those two languages to their usefulness in the EU institutions, which demonstrates their perception of the two languages as "privileged" in the internal communication of the institution (Kruse 2012). This also points to the construction of an élite plurilingualism that preferentially comprises English, French and German.

6.3 Native-speakerism and leveraging of speakerhood

The staff inadvertently deepened the trainees' dread of the looming, post-traineeship job hunt by stressing the role of "native" English. While the staff allegedly valued *"other accents"*, the British variety of English was openly preferred. The 'native English' trainees were traditionally assigned proofreading tasks. One of the trainees recalls:

> Excerpt (10)
>
> `T2_3: And what I was also asked was that some people use American spelling, but at [the institution] we are supposed to use British spelling.`

Some trainees took their linguistic inequality in English for granted, referencing the (language ideology) of 'authenticity' of language (Woolard 2016), which seemed to legitimise the preference for British English for international readers. Others felt that the privileged 'native English' position was unjust: their English proficiency was on a professional level, but this was "not enough". This was in spite of the fact that the unit addressed a global audience, not citizens in officially English-speaking countries – let alone the United Kingdom specifically. As the 'non-native English' felt helpless in a competition that favoured their 'native English colleagues', they repeatedly resorted to excluding their 'native English' colleagues by speaking languages the 'native English' did not know, as discussed in the pilot study (Lovrits and de Bres 2021).

The tensions were only indirectly and cautiously pointed out in the main research interviews, without reproaching anything or anybody. Still, trainees in the main

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research were framing multilingualism as more important than 'native English authenticity'. This extended the "English divide" (Block 2017) to a "language divide" – not only was the value of English varieties compared, but "native English" was also counterposed to multilingualism, in an attempt to "leverage" the ideology of multilingualism and balance out the favourable positioning of the 'native English' trainees. This then resulted in the exclusion of the 'native English speakers', which other trainees considered 'fair':

Excerpt (11)

T2_3: We're not saying it, but of course, the English language in the unit- So, they [native English speakers] may feel more um (..) important, but not in a positive way. /.../

Yeah, I can understand that maybe only native English speakers could be- could feel (..) uh (..) um, excluded. Like, excluded from multilingualism? Um, feelings of inferiority- (..) but, you know *(smiling)*, we're feeling inferior because they're native speakers. They can be- they can feel infe- inferior because they're not multilingual speakers. So, it's fair! *(giggling)*

Contrary to what is implied in the excerpt above, the 'native English' trainees could not be monolingual, since a working proficiency in two official EU languages was required for the traineeship. However, their ability to use other languages was suppressed by the combined effects of businessization and native-speakerism. Although the 'native English' trainees often showed deference and praised everybody's level of English, it was not enough to mitigate their positioning as supervisors of their fellow trainees' outputs.

6.4 Critical internal authority resisting manipulations

Despite the above-described pattern of constraints and tensions, one trainee was able to resist the effects of businessization and native-speakerism. The bilingual Luxembourgish trainee drew metaphor N°4, which was eventually deemed to be the most fitting depiction of how languages were used in the unit, both by the staff and trainees:

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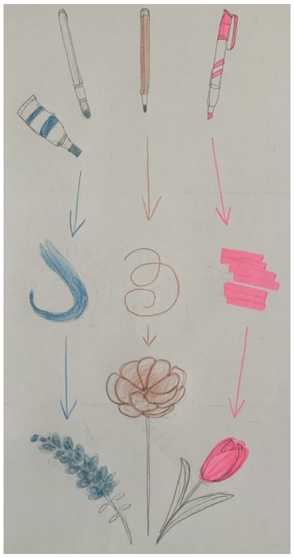
Figure 11.1 Language with flavours



While discussing the above drawing, the trainee expressed her internal linguistic authority, referring to the unit's community as its source. She described how the unit had claimed "ownership" of the variety of English they used at work:

Excerpt (12)

(LU) Also, et ass net d' Englesch- net méi datt Englesch, wa mer an der Schoul geléiert hunn. Datt Englesch, wa mir op der Aarbecht schaffen, ass eent Englescht .. vu- (..) am Fond- (..) eist Englesch. Datt heescht, d' ass- (..) D' Englesch datt geschwat gëtt ass [the unit's] Englesch.

```
(EN) So, it's not the English- not the English we
learned at school anymore. The English we use at work
is the English (..) of- (..) in fact-(..) our English.
That means, it is- (..) The English we speak is [the
unit's] English.
(author's translation)
```

Escaping the manipulative dichotomy of ‘anonymity’ versus ‘authenticity’ of language (Woolard 2016), the English described above is both ‘authentic’ (linked to an experience and history from somewhere) and ‘anonymous’ (allowing for trans-border mobility and intercomprehension). While individual language use differs due to varied backgrounds, knowledge, and previous experiences, everybody “produces flowers”, which is what the organisation needs. Moreover, the trainee explicitly refused British control over the English language outside of the United Kingdom. Indeed, enforcing spelling standards outside of the state’s territory can be understood as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1993), of which the trainee was aware thanks to her sociolinguistic studies and personal ties to a former British colony.

Further aspects might have helped the trainee to make sense of the language situation at work. The trainee’s university degree in sociolinguistics supported her critical metalinguistic awareness and, unlike her trainee colleagues, she did not experience the pressure typically associated with a temporary work placement abroad. She was Luxembourgish and not “routed”, meaning that she had ready access to her personal networks and she was not considering a future career abroad. Last but not least, she had studied in the United Kingdom; thus, her English was considered 'native English'. As a result, she could have used any number of language ideologies to her advantage. Instead, she offered an empowering metaphor to her colleagues, with the aim of overcoming native-English-speakerism and the businessization of languages in the unit.

Ultimately, her critical reflection was welcomed, as participants saw this time as an opportunity to experience a state of heightened awareness about the social effects of language use. Sociolinguistic theory would categorise these effects as "metalinguistic wonderment" (Rymes 2021). One of the seniors regretted the quantity-oriented focus, which did not allow them to act upon what they understood as important for the unit members' linguistic well-being at work:

Excerpt (13)

(SK) S2: Je to veľká škoda že proste musíme produkovať. Musíme produkovať, ale môžeme- mohli by sme produkovať *(úsmev)* takým (..) normálnejším tempom, no. Aby sme mali čas sa i zastaviť a trošku porozmýšľať.

(EN) S2: It's a great pity that we simply have to produce. We have to produce, but we can- we could produce *(smile)* at a (..) more normal pace, yeah. So

that we would also have time to stop and think a little bit.
(author's translation)

Prior to their participation in the research, the staff members did not see that the trainees' conditions for using more languages at work were different to their own. However, the iterative and dialogic character of the research gave them the time to reflect and gain more critical awareness. As a result, the staff realised that the trainees' work conditions were limiting and that trainees' internal linguistic authority needed to be nurtured. Therefore, the staff added the topic of multilingual experience to the onboarding procedure and decided to refrain from their celebration of a 'native English' trainee's presence in the team.

7 Discussion and conclusion

This article shows how language ideologies limit internal linguistic authority by making individual needs seem invisible, unattainable, or unimportant, thus reducing people to their role of workers – either fulfilling the business-like needs of an organisation or representing the linguistic interests of the state. In light of the findings, a critical inspection of linguistic authority is vital in the debate on social justice in the organisation of language work, within the broader discussion about "a conceptualization of Europe that emphasizes its social dimension as opposed to a view of Europe as a market, a demos or an ethnos." Stråth (2011:36). Meanwhile, the task of employing internal linguistic authority is left up to potentially vulnerable individuals, presumably mainly women, who take up more precarious jobs (Worth 2016).

The findings of this study showed that multilingualism was elusive for many trainees in the omnipresence of English in their work. Those who managed to use more languages tended to frame plurilingualism as a competitive advantage, measuring up to the presumed monolingual 'native English' proficiency. Their legitimate need for personal achievement was perceived as fierce competition, as types of speakerhood were positioned against the backdrop of the legitimate organisational need for efficiency. This then spiralled out into a businessized fixation on the financial aspects of languages.

However, the negative effects of businessization and native-speakerism had different implications for the "rooted" and "routed" workers. The internal linguistic authority of the "rooted" participants, i.e., staff members and the Luxembourgish trainee, did not seem to be particularly affected. They employed their internal linguistic authority to fulfil their language-related needs without being pressured by the unpredictability of their next job (location). In contrast, the "routed" trainees framed their language use in the context of their insecurity and uncertainty regarding their future job and its location. They understood that having proof of the right language skills could be their entry ticket to a new job and thus felt torn between the expectations set by (élite) multilingualism and the ('native English') monolingualism.

Furthermore, the analysis unveiled an aspect that has previously been discussed as "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson 2010) – requiring the use of British English – in a multinational institution when addressing an international audience. As long as participants could rely on the collective competence in the unit, most of them did not question the official discourse on the inevitable need for a 'native English' check. They believed that (British) English native-speakerism was an expression of care for the professional output. It is thus important to point out that any type of 'native speaker' criterion, including the terms "native-level" or "first language", is not acceptable as a hiring requirement under EU law (European Commission 2004). If essential for institutional communication, the use of English should be consciously and consequently liberated from native-speakerism.

Indeed, when trainees started to reflect on their individual position and competition in the future hiring process, the inequality created by native-speakerism became evident to them as well. Consequently, the study demonstrated that the attempt to counter-balance the ideology of native-speakerism by the ideology of (élite) multilingualism did not alleviate the burden, but rather added to feelings of un-belonging and exclusion. It highlights that exercise of internal linguistic authority necessitates critical reflection. Although the workplace was generally a psychologically safe environment, this did not prevent the adverse effects of language ideologies. While the participants were university-educated language workers, some with extensive experience in multilingual settings, only the trainee with a critical sociolinguistics background resisted the discursive manipulations. This highlights the strength of language ideology manipulation and the importance of critically informed language education.

Therefore, aligning with the call for more critical awareness in EU translation studies (Leal 2021), this article emphasises the need to acknowledge certain effects of language ideologies that perpetuate inequality and to support internal linguistic authority. Reflection and cultivation of critical metalinguistic awareness (Verschueren 2012), i.e., conscious reconstruction of meaning and effects of language use in the social and situational context, is needed to identify the source(s) of ideological manipulation. This article argues that limiting manipulations of language ideologies can facilitate the revitalisation of "the repressed capacities for expression and communication" (Habermas 1981:580-581, author's translation).

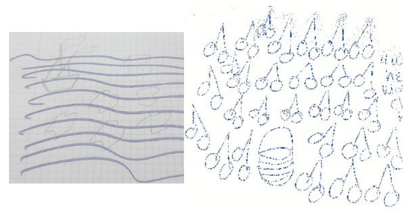
Ultimately, participants in this study intended to pinpoint a difference between the people-oriented management in the unit and the product-oriented approach of the language industry. However, the difference turned out to be smaller than originally believed. The system of short-term engagements assures a stable influx of international workers who offer up-to-date knowledge while only being paid symbolically. As the contracts are short and English is the dominant language at work, early-career workers are left accountable for their linguistic self-skilling based on labour market demands. This does not differ from practices in the business sector, despite the fact that the aim of the EU practices is not financial gain, and certainly not at the expense of young transnational workers. In this context, it is not enough to be aware of the manipulation when challenging state linguistic hegemony (Bourdieu [1991] 2001) or acknowledging the limitations of market logic (Block 2017). Internal authority has to be supported by a change in structural/societal conditions (Zagzebski 2012:234-235), because some kind of "active management" is necessary in a context of conflicting demands and a world of uncertainty (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:50).

8 Appendix

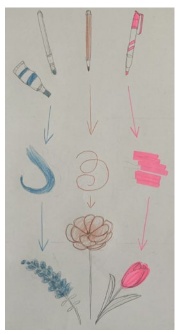
Figure 11.2 Metaphors – overview

1. Islands Leading to Teamwork

2. Moving Between Language Islands and
3. Picking Cherries



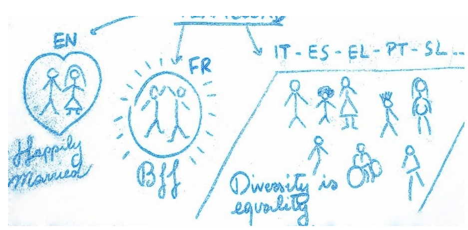
4. Flowers



5. *Language Bubbles (with a photo)*
6. *Labyrinth (with IT tools and projects)*
7. *Family (not visual)*
   Football team (not visual)

8. Knights at a Round Table

9. Belonging in Diversity



10. Alone with IT Office Tools

11. Meadow Stream

12. *Assembly Line (not visual)*

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PART IV. Summary (2023)

Évidemment, il est difficile de dire à ceux qui ont souffert qu'ils ont souffert pour rien.

Of course, it is difficult to tell those who have suffered that they have suffered for nothing.

(author's translation from the French original)"

— *Arnaud Hoedt Jérôme Piron | TEDxRennes*

« La faute de l'orthographe » 15:20'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YO7Vg1ByA8

Chapter 12. Discussion

The articles featured in Part III addressed my research sub-questions against the backdrop of themes that I outlined in the introduction to this dissertation: the negative effects of bureaucratisation (Bourdieu 2001) and marketisation of language (Block 2017), as well as the requirements of the languagised world (Jaspers and Madsen 2018). Acknowledging the legitimate societal and individual need of proficiency in separate languages is important for language professionals who may feel vulnerable in critical language discussions, as well as for managers seeking rational change without radical rhetoric.

My studies have also shown that individuals continue to experience manipulation through metalanguage. This is even the case for language workers in the professional context, where distinct and standardised languages are supported by the state and financially rewarded in the labour market. Moreover, although individuals can recognise some of the manipulation as unjust and may try to mitigate the negative effects of this manipulation at the interpersonal level, their agency faces structural limits (in terms of the conditions laid out in their work contracts). Their actions may even add to the manipulation, when they are led by the idea of doing what is “fair” (such as leveraging the monolingual ‘authenticity’ value of native-speakerism by promoting the ideology of élite multilingualism).

This chapter discusses my understanding of the common themes and implications of the results of my four studies, acknowledges the limitations of my interpretations, and suggests potential directions for further research.

12.1 Native-speakerism in the hiring process

Native speakerism is not the focus of any of my main research studies, despite the fact that I seriously considered investigating seniors' native-speakerism in the hiring process more closely towards the end of 2020. I gathered postings of job vacancies for the traineeship and for other positions, in order to compare them. I also looked for policies and other information about language-related hiring requirements in the EU institutions. However, the 'native English' requirement was never officially stated in the traineeship position descriptions (or in any EU job vacancy that I could find).

In any case, I concluded that a concentrated focus on the hiring practices would lead me away from sociolinguistics and push me towards more legal inquiry. Instead, guided by my main research question, I decided to investigate the affective part of the effects of the 'native' versus 'non-native' dichotomy experienced by the trainees. As the trainees were clear about the unease that this category caused in their peer group, I thought that the seniors might consequently rethink their stance towards the need of a 'native English' check. However, this did not happen.

The seniors kept planning to recruit 'native English' trainees for their team in the future. This fact was openly discussed with me and understood as a legitimate need. Through research-related discussions, seniors understood that their communication about the 'native English' positioning was not helpful for the trainee team. However, they still believed that the 'native English' check was a legitimate need in the unit. I could later observe that they covered this perceived need by 'native English' study visitors and external collaborators/volunteers. Some of them were, coincidentally, students enrolled in my courses on critical metalinguistics at the University of Luxembourg, and they cared to tell me that they experienced something similar to what I had discussed in my classes. This after-research observation exposes the limits of what metalanguage can do, even when in the form of critically-led reflection.

While we never talked about the fact that native-speakerism results in unlawful discrimination based on origin during our research interviews, it could have been on the seniors' minds. The head of unit explicitly denied the 'native English speakers' having any special position in the unit when we talked about my pre-analyses at the last unit meeting in February 2021. The pragmatic aim to rule out any potential suspicion of actual discrimination in the workplace also features in the following excerpt from another staff member's interview:

Excerpt (12.1)

```
S2: Um, but, uh, yeah, I mean, we could ask this
question during the- the interviews before we select
the trainees, that's a good idea. To see, if- how
interested or how- whether they would like to do it or
not. On the other hand, if they are excellent with all
their other skills and we would like to have them,
this wouldn't be something that would prevent us from
choosing them. You see what I mean?
```

In the excerpt above, the 'native English' characteristics were not framed as a condition *sine qua non*, i.e., something that would not let an excellent candidate pass. In any case, I could not raise legal questions in the unit from my researcher position in linguistics. My research acknowledges that native-speakerism has real effects on status gain and loss in workplaces with an international workforce (Neeley 2013). However, I also wish to point out that a 'native speaker' hiring requirement would not only be illegitimate, but also illegal.[29] Therefore, I believe that even the unofficial tendency for native-English-speakerism calls for an assumption of structural responsibility on the part of the EU institution(s). What is clear from my critical sociolinguistic analysis is that the internal, unofficial, and non-exclusive preoccupation with having a 'native English' trainee on the team was causing feelings of unease and injustice among trainees, and had done so for several years.

It is clear that the 'native speaker' qualification cannot legitimately be part of *official* recruitment policies within the EU institutions. However, my research raises concerns about the unofficial practices that may enact structural injustice and keep control of certain member states over language use (hence resources) in the EU institutions. Therefore, management needs to be trained to make this aspect of multilingual work explicit. Due to persisting native-speakerism, access to jobs may not be equal, despite official declarations. While there is no doubt that the citizens of all EU member states have the right to be addressed in a clear, state-guaranteed language, there is no legal or ethical ground for the requirement of 'native' English in outputs targeting the international audience. Requiring that would represent "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson 1993).

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[29] European Commission. 2004. "Joint answer to Written Questions E-0046/04 and E-0086/04 given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the [European] Commission (5 March 2004)". Official Journal of the European Communities C 84 E, 3.4.2004, p. 301–302.

12.2 Metalanguage in the (potentially) multilingual workplace

The previous section calls for managerial action that would ensure the practical enactment of democratic principles regarding languages in the EU institutions. The critical sociolinguistic perspective provides more of a philosophical and socio-political background. Resting upon the underlying sociolinguistic aspects of my findings, this perspective highlights the philosophical grounding of the legal imperative of non-discrimination based on origin. Unfortunately, the problem of discrimination tends to be obscured through uncritically used linguistic claims, traditionally based on territorial language hegemony and territorial control over the ʹrightʹ language variety (Bourdieu 2001[1991]).

While a state-backed (standardised) language competence and its market value do have legitimate contexts of application and purpose (Jaspers and Madsen 2018), human interaction needs communication across languages for more than that. Communication does not only comprise formal work production, for which state and market dictate the standards (Habermas 1981). It also addresses complicated problems and facilitates forming relationships, and effectively does so, even when linguistic performance does not adhere to a norm or habit (Blommaert 2007). The shared goal is the achievement of the best possible mutual understanding within the socially embedded and subjectively shaped context (Varis and Blommaert 2011). What is more, the context keeps changing in environments marked by high levels of mobility, transborder and otherwise.

My studies demonstrated that even language workers in high-profile jobs acknowledged the relational and affective functions of language and multilingualism. The article in Chapter 9 demonstrated that trainees consciously shaped their language use to better align with their peers' expectations, i.e., making what they actually wished to achieve clear through the varied use of languages. As an action outcome of my research, juniors (the iteratively interviewed T2 group) started to use languages other than English in order to practise. Moreover, seniors decided to integrate topics related to metalinguistics into the onboarding process for their new trainees, so as to prevent future tensions about language choices.

However, my findings also expose that – even under a generally open-minded management and with the shared desire for transparency, collaboration, and togetherness – metalanguage sometimes served as a means of stereotyping or reinforcing other negative effects of language ideologies. This finding was presented in Chapter 10, reflecting how ″sociolinguistic representations circulate, settle on people and their communication, channelling or constraining their position or activity″ (Blommaert and Rampton 2011:13). The French trainee had to deal with an imposed, stereotypically constructed position of French speakers who are not ready to adjust or learn other languages. Additionally, she bore witness to what I would describe as indirect micro-aggressions related to her speakerhood. Paradoxically, this happened despite the fact that the French trainee was considered a dear colleague, and despite her speaking proficient, ′native-like′ English.

Additionally, my findings exposed that the (potentially) multilingual workplace with (potentially) plurilingual workers may "naturally" become monolingual when the wish for multilingual exchanges is not made clear. Indeed, most of the T2 trainees practised more languages after this topic became relevant through my research; however, the T1 trainees' communication language remained monolingual English. Meanwhile, the 'native English' trainees could never really escape the role of 'master of English' that had been assigned to them. Thus, I added the word "potentially", in parentheses, to my dissertation title. I realised that, for many trainees, the experience of working in this multilingual institution only involved speaking English. To them, languages other than English were entertainment, similar to "billboards on the highway", which were built and maintained by English as the main vehicular language.

Furthermore, I would like to underline that the tensions among participants who were disappointed by the overwhelming presence of English did not emerge because of the actual use of language. My studies showed that their disappointment was, rather, based on differing *interpretations* of what it means to use that language and what the purpose of the language choice is. This brings forward the key message of my research. From an interpersonal perspective, what language(s) is/are used in a (potentially) multilingual environment is/are less important than the *whys and wherefores*, i.e., the (interpretation of) related socio-pragmatic intentions ought to align.

Therefore, the merit of metatalk lies in its ability to help address misaligned or misinterpreted socio-pragmatic intentions and effects. Open metatalk can function as "ignorance management" (Blommaert and Rampton 2011:8), addressing the asymmetrical knowing (systemically patterned inequalities) and managing the "not-knowing" (in oneself and in others). In my interviews, both juniors and seniors framed the role of metalanguage as important for (workplace) well-being:

Excerpt 12.2

T2: I think that the permanent team members are already used to working like this, but it can be hard for trainees who come from different backgrounds, different institutions. And I think that definitely communication and <u>verbalising</u> things would help trainees understand what's happening.

Excerpt 12.3

S2: I mean, this is already the case in our everyday relationships- human relationships *(smiling)* that we don't talk enough with each other and, uh, try to solve problems, which maybe wouldn't be there if we <u>talked</u> about them.

However, my research also made clear that metalinguistic wonderment (Rymes 2021), understood as a moment of reflection in a state of heightened awareness about sociolinguistic features, may need more than just *any* thought and talk. The *critical* aspect of metalanguage is crucial – it should not simply reinforce the mainstream discourses, perpetuate stereotypes, and create tensions. That said, knowing several languages and living in a multilingual space does not automatically guarantee critical metalinguistic awareness. My studies, particularly the one presented in Chapter 10, demonstrated that my participants tended to choose a language without consciously reflecting on the reasons and effects of their choice.

Moreover, even a critically guided, reflective discussion may not be free from the discourse of manipulations stemming from language ideologies. The interpretation of language-related behaviour sometimes appears clear on the surface and it is only an in-depth *scholarly analysis* that unveils misunderstandings, as demonstrated namely in Chapter 10. Therefore, more research on the socio-pragmatics of metalanguage may need to wait for a push in research on multilingualism at work in the future.

Eventually, effective metatalk ought to entail *active listening* and the engagement of open-minded individuals, in a way that recognises all the persons and needs at stake. This would further give rise to ethical concerns about when is it legitimate to critically intervene. Cameron (2000:317) suggests that intervention is legitimate when ″this serves some wider public interest″. I would add that this is only valid if the intervention does not cause harm to the individuals concerned. This type of decision-making would require more applied linguistic research and recognition of the topic in teaching and language management policies, in order to eventually make critical and respectful metalinguistic awareness part of the life-long learning process for teachers, managers, consultants and coaches (and eventually part of the mainstream discourse in workplaces with multilingual workers).

Taking into account ethical implications, the riskiest aspect of targeted work with metalanguage seems to be the potential frustrations and traumas linked to language and speakerhood. I cannot stress the following enough: researchers and practitioners of day-to-day multilingualism should bear in mind that exposing favouritism, and, as the case may be, instances of bullying and discrimination, can lay bare personal insecurities and wounds. The pursuit for structural change should never happen at the cost of (potentially) vulnerable individuals; thus, it requires considerable creativity when addressing the issues at hand. I believe that collaboration with ethicists in the field of social work and information technologies may be particularly fruitful in future research.

12.3 Limitations and further research

I have discussed the main limitations of my method and data collection in the respective chapters, as well as in the individual articles/manuscripts. As described in Part II, I have considered all my data, as diligently as possible, in the context of the knowledge I have gathered about the workplace. I only made claims supported by data that I co-constructed with my participants in a way that does not cast doubt on the acceptability (transparency) of my influence.

Additionally, my data construction phase could potentially be longer and follow one more term of trainees. I initially considered following the next traineeship term, which started in March 2021. However, decided that it would be too much burden for the participants. Those who joined me all throughout the Covid-19 outbreak considered their participation closed by their decision to adjust their onboarding process. They had already spent 30 hours of their worktime with me, which was the institution's financial investment in my research. On top of all the stress linked to the pandemic measures, the unit moved to a new building, facing new, stricter security measures concerning third parties. The topics of multilingualism, language choice and language authority that I planned to discuss with them were covered. The data seemed to have reached saturation, at least for the purpose of answering my research question.

Additionally, if I had had more knowledge in the field of information technology, I could have further explored how IT tools/software shape the perception of language needs in the unit. The IT databases in the unit have English as their technical “anchor” language. Equipped with a better understanding of IT, this might have led to an interesting line of inquiry. I have to leave this potential cross-disciplinary topic for another research study.

Another avenue in workplace multilingualism research may be the exploration of contextual and structural aspects, in relation to language ideologies’ susceptibility to negative aspects. Previous research has shown that women, in particular, must find alternative ways of succeeding in their careers – relying on their social networks, specific communication skills and economic stability (Langinier et al. 2024). My data do not allow any direct claims about the effects of gender, but previous studies have demonstrated that it is predominantly women who take gig economy jobs and who must rely on the support of their social networks (Worth 2016). Further, the language industry is infamous for hiring freelance workers, who thus work in precarious situations, among which research again finds mainly women (Panaligan and Curran 2021; Codó 2018).

The methodologic inspiration for further research in (potentially) multilingual workplaces may be the employment of more participatory research**.** This has the potential to stir up the routine standards and norms by inviting newcomers and new emerging information, thus fuelling innovation (Ollila and Yström 2020). Participatory methods would also feed into the trend of working towards a more emic focus of management research, paying more attention to the affective part of the workplace experience (Szkudlarek et al. 2020). Participatory research of the day-to-day communicative experience in multilingual environments can challenge some unhelpful assumptions and standards of unquestioned monolingual/monocultural/hegemonic/nationalist standards. This could be relevant for applied linguistics, and in particular language education, where the standard context still assumes homogeneity (cf. Jessner, Allgäuer-Hackl and Hofer 2016).

Eventually, future research in multilingual workplaces could direct more attention towards the role of "unimportant language" (Blommaert and Varis 2015). The use of mundane talk is crucial for sustaining a Goffmanian level of social cohesion through ritualised conviviality, which in turn functions as impression/expectation management (Blommaert and Varis 2015). Nonetheless, my findings suggest that research may not solely want to focus on the practice of interaction, but also on the reflective meaning-making level of interpretations.

Chapter 13. Conclusion

I undertook my doctoral research with a vision of cultivating personal and collective development in an ever-evolving and diverse society, emphasising the central importance of mutual respect and collaboration. My main aim was to understand the pitfalls and merits of metalanguage in an international language work team in an EU institution in Luxembourg. I investigated my participants' metalanguage through a critical sociolinguistic lens, with the goal of answering the main research question: what can my participants' metalinguistic stances reveal about socio-pragmatic intentions and their implications in the (potentially) multilingual workplace?

My data set was constructed through iterative data-gathering, which included interviews, drawings of visual metaphors, written reflection and observation of meetings. Research participants discussed how communication was taking place, with what socio-pragmatic intentions and to what effects – both with the researcher and with each other. Further, I shared pre-analyses with my participants, which allowed for a deeper collective exploration of the meanings and implications of language use in this workplace context.

In the research context of participatory (folk) linguistics, known as citizen sociolinguistics, I engaged my participants in reflection and explicit discussions about language and speakerhood, sparking their metalinguistic curiosity ("wonderment"). This led to their reflecting upon what they actually meant and intended, as well as what other colleagues might have meant and intended. These reflections unveiled that the understanding of socio-pragmatic intentions was often missing, and that the participants may even have, on occasion, (unintentionally) hurt each other through their metalanguage.

Following the sociolinguistic theory on stance, I analysed metalanguage in the form of affective and normative stances towards languages and speakerhood. Those stances revealed the perception of socio-pragmatic intentions and linked them to practical implications relevant to the work environment, highlighting the lack of a common interpretive framework. Socio-pragmatic intentions were conceptualised as expectations or plans that link a person's goals in communication to broader social discourses, thereby mediating the socio-temporally situated meaning and effects of interaction.

My research exploration resulted in a series of studies, in which I analysed the social construction of meaning through stances towards speakerhood, multilingualism, language choice, and linguistic authority, in the context of wider institutional and social discourses. The results have unveiled a complex landscape of conflicting perspectives and agendas, providing rich insight into how language professionals (mis)understand the social implications of linguistic diversity when they make sense of their decisions about language use at work in an international context.

The pilot study (Chapter 3) focused on the perceptions of trainees who were treated as ‘native English speakers’ within the unit. Considering affective interpretations of their discursive positioning in light of previous critical research findings exposed that non-reflected native speakerism could be the elephant in the room. Opening up the topic of the ‘native speaker’ proved to be relevant for both the pilot and main project participants, in the end. Moreover, the study raised an important social issue of discrimination on the basis of origin – the problem of legitimacy, which would need to be addressed in the internal policies of the EU institutions. Internal language policies are themselves a matter of sensitive international state politics, but the results of my research provide relevant material for research-based revisions of internal (formal and informal) EU policies.

The next study (Chapter 9) shed light on the unreliability of interpretive frameworks in international settings and the resulting metalinguistic needs of newcomers from monolingual backgrounds. The study demonstrated that explicit talk about socio-pragmatic intentions and actual language effects can lead to changes in perceptions of personal multilingualism and language competence. Newly arrived juniors often felt inhibited in their language use, for fear of losing face professionally. These inhibitions disappeared when the trainees made the mental shift of focusing on multilingualism's function as a means of conviviality, instead of interpreting it as proof of personal competence. This represents a finding that can enhance language management in (potentially) multilingual workplaces, particularly inspiring onboarding processes in environments that strive to be "psychologically safe" spaces.

The next study, featured in Chapter 10, focused on conceptual development that would enhance research understanding of the micro-level of workplace communication. It revealed that seemingly unproblematic language-related practices may, in fact, harbour serious misunderstandings based on a mismatch between socio-pragmatic intentions and the effects of interpersonal meaning-making. Theorising effects of language ideologies, the study featured examples of "language cringe" and "language push" – the former as an example of an inferior stance positioning linked to a language choice and the latter as a superior one. The inconsistencies had the unintended effect of limiting the use of French in the workplace, leading to some trainees being unhappy with their choice of language, and some seniors being ridiculed. This highlights the importance of explicit metalanguage in international settings, especially when language management seems to be missing the mark – as it is here with the wish for a multilingual work experience.

The final study in Chapter 11 unveiled that individual intentions in the unit were shaped by the uneven employment of internal linguistic authority. The "routed" juniors had to bear the negative effects of language ideologies more than their superiors. The limitation of internal authority (to decide what language use is appropriate for what occasion) led to the prevalence of English, even though the unit had the potential to be a multilingual place and all the team members were plurilingual. Moreover, it led to disappointment, as the multilingual experience was often the reason the 'native English' trainees wanted to work in an (international unit in an) EU institution. Additionally, tensions were exacerbated by native-speakerism that celebrated the presence and additional proofreading work of the 'native English' trainees in the unit. Ultimately, my report on this study provides an empowering metaphor referring to "language with flowers," and encourages management to cultivate internal linguistic authority in their organizational discourse.

To sum up the findings from the perspective of mismatching socio-pragmatic intentions, each study in my dissertation unveiled one aspect. The pilot study showed that the 'native English speakers' were burdened by seniors' talk about their specific 'native English speaker' positioning, which was intended as praise for their ability to complete additional proofreading tasks. Furthermore, the study in Chapter 9 revealed that trainees wished to experience multilingual exchanges at work, but ended up working in English if they did not openly negotiate their intention to practise languages through an "imperfect" alternative language use. Moreover, Chapter 10 revealed the mismatch of socio-pragmatic intentions linked to language choice between English and French, which led to unfulfilled expectations about the effects of language choice. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 11, the managers intended to create an alternative workplace environment (to the national service units and to some dehumanising workplaces in the language industry); however, by drawing on the language ideology of native speakerism and disregarding the vulnerable position that trainees have in the labour market, they unintentionally participated in businessization of languages.

That said, my dissertation does not argue that one language is more desirable than the other. Instead, my findings imply that it is not possible to find a one-size-fits-all solution without taking into account all the available information about the social and situational context. Rather than looking for cookie-cutter expert solutions, individuals and professionals should learn how to bring their socio-pragmatic intentions into conscious consideration, and openly but respectfully negotiate the feasibility of their goals. As people come and go in dynamic environments with a high turnover rate, language-related decisions have to remain open to changes.

Declaration of AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used DeepL (a language translation software) and ChatGPT (an AI language processing software) in order to improve readability and language of the text produced in English which is not the author′s first language. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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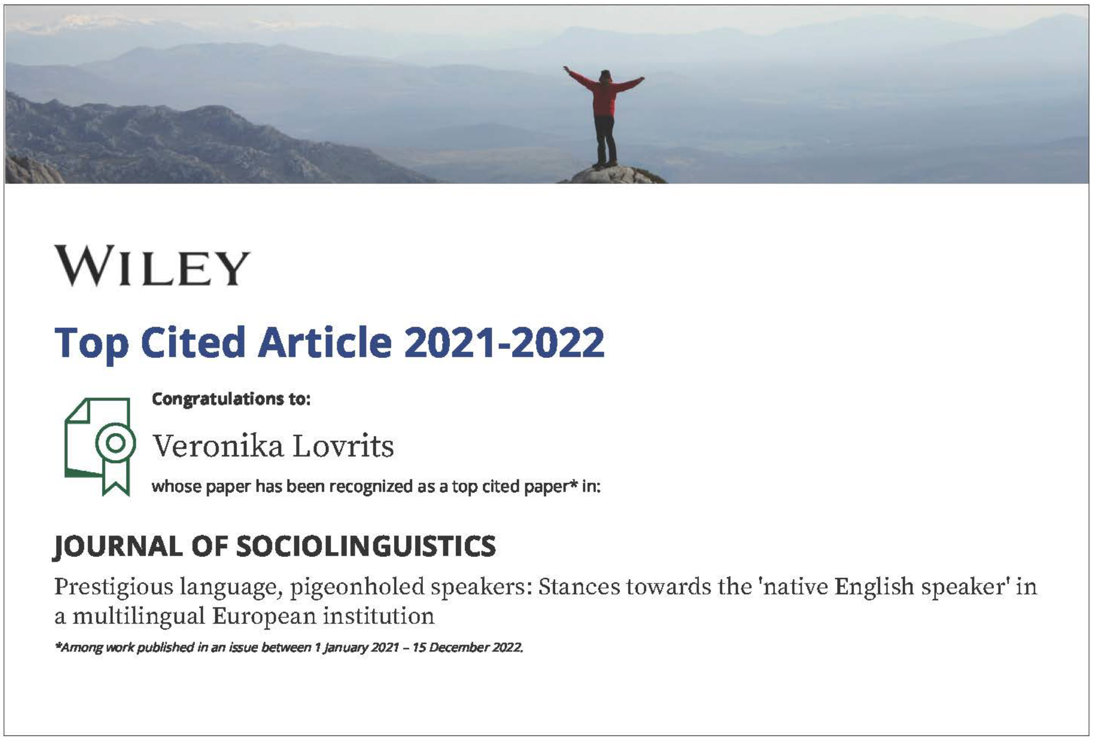
APPENDICES

Appendix A. Top-cited article



Appendix B. Ethics Approval

Prof. Dr. Sabine Ehrhart
University of Luxembourg
Maison des Sciences Humaines
Porte des Sciences 11
L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette

Esch-sur Alzette, 26 June 2020
ERP 20-025 WorkLingEU SA/kk

UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Research project: Innovative approaches to the multilingual workplace (ERP 20-025 WorkLingEU)

Dear Prof. Dr. Ehrhart,

The Ethics Review Panel of the University of Luxembourg has received your request on 09 April 2020, and a revised version on 22 June 2020 concerning the approval of your project: ***Innovative approaches to the multilingual workplace*** **(ERP 20-025 WorkLingEU).**

Your request included:

- application form
- consent form
- information sheet
- appendix

After examining all the documents, the Ethics Review Panel has decided to **approve** the project description and the related documents, in the form provided to the Ethics Review Panel.

Please note that the ERP has to be informed of any changes to the study that affect the parts that were subject to ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,
Best wishes

Prof. Dr Silvia Allegrezza
Chair of the Ethics Review Panel

Ethics Review Panel of the University of Luxembourg
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Cc.: Veronika Lovrits

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Campus Belval [illegible]

Campus Limpertsberg [illegible]

Campus Kirchberg [illegible]

Etablissement public [illegible]

Appendix C. T1 Interview outline

'Innovative Approaches to Multilingualism in the Workplace'
Veronika Lovritš, University of Luxembourg

Outline of the initial semi-structured interview

A. Trainees – initial interview (approx. 40 mins)

1. Opening
   - *What was your motivation to apply for a traineeship in this institution?*
   - *Did the topic of languages play any role in your decision process? Or Luxembourg as a place?*
   - *How have Covid measures affected your plans or stay in Luxembourg?*
2. Policies
   - *Do some languages have a special role in the department? (What is the reason?)*
   - *Is this what you had expected before coming to work here?*
   - *Do you know any rules/habits linked to the use of languages in the institution?*
3. Sociolinguistic identity salient in the workplace
   - *What languages do you know and what have you used here at work (even small exchanges)?*
   - *When you think of the combination of languages you know/want to use/actually use, what personal advantages can you think of regarding your language repertoire?*
   - *Any drawbacks linked to your language repertoire? Any paradoxes?*
4. Expectations towards the newcomers
   - *Are there any special rules for the use of languages at work?*
   - *What is expected from the trainees in terms of language skills and language use?*
   - *Does the category of 'native speakers' or 'mother tongue' have a specific role in the unit?*
   - *Again, is this what you had expected before coming to work here?*
5. Tracking a potential change
   - *Have you experienced any language complication during the first days of the traineeship?*
   - *Can you recall any complicated issues linked to the use of specific languages or multilingual communication from your work-life experience?*
   - *What is your view on languages/multilingualism? Have you learned new communication strategies or aspects about languages and their use in multilingual teams?*
   - *If you should draw a metaphor of languages in the workplace, how would it look like?*
6. Closing question
   - *Is there anything about languages or multilingualism catching your attention that has not been mentioned yet?*

Appendix D. T2_1 Prompt for reflective writing

PROJECT MULTILINGEU 2020-24
VERONIKA LOVRITS (VERONIKA.LOVRITS@UNI.LU)

uni.lu UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Initial self-reflection

on **expectations** and learning **needs**
in the **multilingual** workplace

Date: ……………………………

Nickname: ……………………………

My stance(s) towards languages:

Languages I know and how well...

How can I tell how well I know them?

What I find difficult at the moment?

What I find easy at the moment ...

What I like/enjoy about ... (language X/Y, pronunciation, language use, literature, multilingualism, etc.)

... and what I dislike/don't enjoy

In terms of language use and learning in this workplace:

Language(s) I expect to use at work and how ...

I need to ...

I should pay attention to ...

I look forward to ...

I am afraid of ...

Things I would like to do to learn here ...

I don't want/feel like to ...

"What is important/at stake for me?" and other thoughs on language use and learning in the workplace

Visual elements powered by Canva

Appendix E. T2_1 Interview outline

‘Innovative Approaches to Multilingualism in the Workplace’
Veronika Lovrits, University of Luxembourg

Outline of the initial semi-structured interview

A. Trainees – initial interview (approx. 30 mins)

1. Opening
    - *What was your motivation to apply for a traineeship in this institution?*
    - *Did the topic of languages play any role in your decision process? Or Luxembourg as a place?*
    - *How have Covid measures affected your plans or stay in Luxembourg?*
    - *What languages do you know and what have you used here at work (even small exchanges)?*
2. Policies
    - *Do some languages have a special role in the department? (What is the reason?)*
    - *Do you know any rules/habits linked to the use of languages in the institution?*
    - *What is expected from the trainees in terms of language skills and language use?*
    - *Is this what you had expected before coming to work here?*
3. Tracking a potential change
    - *Has something about languages surprised you positively/negatively?*
    - *Have you experienced any language-related complication during the first days of the traineeship?*
    - *What is your view on languages/multilingualism in general?*

Thank you!

Next round of interviews: 11. December 2020 (alternatively: 09.12. or 14.12.)

Appendix F. S1 Interview outline

‘Innovative Approaches to Multilingualism in the Workplace’

Veronika Lovritš, University of Luxembourg

Outline of the initial semi-structured interview

A. Staff – initial interview

1. Metaphor-related
   - *Would you say that, in terms of diversity of languages, your unit is a specific one in the institution?*
   - *What languages do you personally know, and which do you use at work?*
2. Structural aspects
   - *Is it an advantage to have trainees in the unit? Is there a competition over them in the institution?*
   - *Are there challenges linked to the traineeship for the unit?*
   - *Are some languages more important than others in your work? Maybe at specific times, projects, changing preferences of superiors, etc.?*
   - *English is the main working language for your unit/institution. I am wondering, why English?*
     - *Have you got an explicit or implicit instruction about what languages are appropriate to use in your unit?*
     - *The category of ‘native English speakers’ does not seem to have the same role in the unit nowadays as it used to have when I was there as a Study visitor. Is it a coincidence or change of priorities?*
3. Expectations towards newcomers
   - *With what motivation, would you say, do trainees typically come to your unit?*
   - *Do you give your own explicit or implicit instructions for the use of languages in the unit?*
   - *Trainees have repeatedly mentioned that a named language represents a factor of isolation in multilingual environments. What are your thoughts on that?*
   - *From the time of my previous research, I recall a recurrent tension between trainees over what language is appropriate to use in the trainees’ office. Have you ever been asked to help solving a disaccord over language use at work?*
4. Change and learning
   - *Has the remote/online modus of work changed the language use at work in your unit?*
   - *The remote/online modus of work might have taken away opportunities for informal talk and language use not directly linked to work-tasks and this way also the opportunities to use other languages than English. How do you see it?*
   - *Trainees often feel that superiors are unexpectedly friendly to them. Without the opportunity to mimic ‘senior trainees’ on the same level of hierarchy, a decision on what level of in/formality is expected back by superiors is perceived as a challenge. Would you like comment on that?*
   - *In general, would you say that the role of some languages has changed since you have been working in the unit? Were the expectations concerning the language use always the same?*

Appendix G. T2_2 Interview outline

Title of Research Project: 'Discursive Conditions of Multilingual Practices at Work'
Acronym of Research Project: WorkLingEU

Outline of the semi-structured interview with drawing

A. Trainees – 2nd interview (approx. 40 mins)

1. Opening

- *How is your traineeship going?*
    - *Has something **changed** when compared to the state of your initial self-reflection?*
        - *Can you recall a situation (situations) regarding languages that surprised you ?*
        - *Can you recall a challenging situation linked to the use of specific languages or multilingual communication?*
    - ***What languages have you used** at work so far?*
        - *Are you happy with that?*
        - *Does work from home mean you use different languages or you use them differently?*
        - ***What level of language is necessary** so that a person can use it in the unit?*
    - ***Does hierarchy play a role** in what languages are used or how?*
        - *Do the expectations concerning language skills and language use in the department differ when it comes to the staff and the trainees?*
        - *Do you recall you had to consider an appropriate level/modus of **formality/informality in work communication?***
    - *Has your **nationality** played a role in any situation so far?*
    - ***Let's look at your metaphor.** Could you describe what you have drawn?*
        - *How would you word the main message of your metaphor?*
    - *Do you **plan to learn** something linked to languages at work during the rest of your traineeship?*
    - *Do you want to add anything or comment on something I have not asked?*

Our last interview: mid-February – to look back at what you have learned about language use and multilingualism in the EU institution.

Appendix H. Research report May 2021

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Innovative Approaches in the Multilingual Workplace: Employing Metapragmatic Talk on Languages at Work

PhD project
Veronika Lovrits

Report on the progress of research
January 2021

Communication in the dailiness is central in how we learn and experience life

"The unimportant bits of language that link people across disjunctive events help create the space, out of which new possibilities for mutualities among strangers can emerge."

- Jan Blommaert, 2014
The importance of unimportant language

What has been done so far

- **18 interviews**
  - time total: 17h
- **8 metaphor drawings**
- **semantic pre-analyses**

Preliminary findings
(novel topics for a further exploration)

1. Rethinking multilingualism
2. Acknowledging the social function of language use
3. Need for inciting and cultivating metapragmatic talk

1. Rethinking 'multilingualism'

- **Multilingualism** is referred to as a language performace of two distinct types:
  - **"for service"**
    - client/customer-oriented towards imagined national monolingual recipients
    - stylistically appropriate (written) performance
    - aiming for a linguistic perfection
  - **"for life"**
    - aiming for pragmatic communicative goals
    - to get the work done effectively
    - while nurturing interpersonal relations (incl. the language choice as a favour)
- **English** as the main vehicular language does not seem to empede the overall multilingual character of exchanges that follow a **circumstantial language choice**.

2. Acknowledging the phatic (social) function of language use

- **Opportunities for an "unimportant" talk** due to home-office are **limited**:
  - more written exchanges
  - thus, more often including larger imagined communities and
  - and more often in English ("Who else could read the forwarded message?")
  - and (thus) including less context-based, interpersonal cues indexing personal relationships and "belonging" (less tendency to risk, less creativity?)
  - 'multilingualism' is discursively linked to the notion of 'creativity' in the interviews
- Consequently, proof-readers of English happen to be **symbolically excluded** if not having opportunities to use another language too (a regular pattern since 2018)
  - English is coincidentally linked both to them as individuals and to a "less-personal" communication (English is used when no alternative choice of language is possible)

3. Need for inciting and cultivating metapragmatic talk

- Trainees's general **satisfaction** with the traineeship is really **high overall**.
  However, newcomers have:
  - **various sociolinguistic beliefs and expectations** linked to the use of various languages that often do not match, and
  - a relatively **short time** and **no partcular guidance** to find that out,
  - which can raise tensions and create disappointments.

- Trainees signal **distress about language behaviour** in some communicative situations. Despite a friendly environment, they **do not dare to ask for a change** openly because:
  - they are unsure about the legitimity of their communicative need or
  - they hint towards their need for change but their colleagues do not pick it up without an explicit talk about assumptions and expectations.

UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Thank you for your support of this research!

Veronika Lovrits

Doctoral Researcher

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Appendix I. Research presentation February 2021

Innovative Approaches in the Multilingual Workplace:

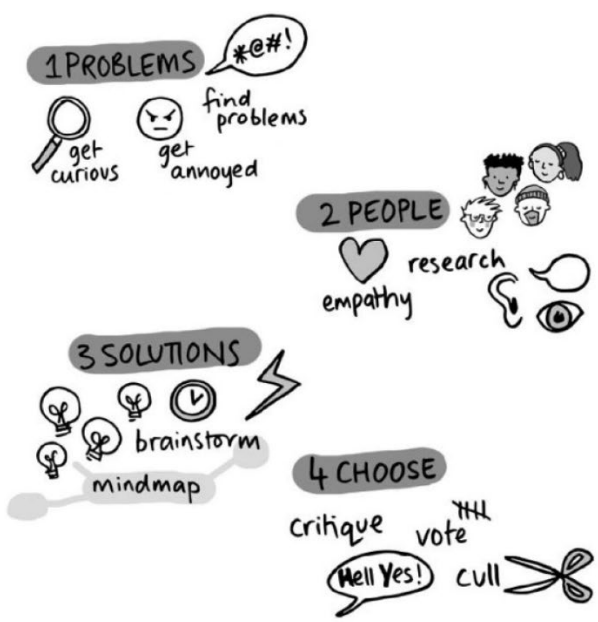
Employing Metapragmatic Talk on Languages at Work

PhD project 2020-2023

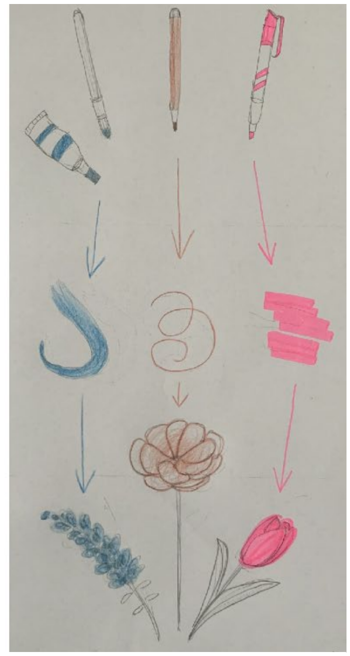
Veronika Lovrits

UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Innovation



Bec Evans: How to Have a Happy Hustle:
The Complete Guide to Making Your Ideas Happen. Icon Books, 2019.



Data collection (2018-2021)

- **22 interviews** with **15 trainees and staff members** (time total: ~23h)
- **9** metaphor **drawings**

Topics for a further exploration

1. **Complicated choices without a common (cultural)** **framework**
2. **The competitive aspect of the 'native English speaker'** **position**
3. **The social function of language and 'unimportant'** **talk**

1. Building a common interpretative framework

- **in/formality**
  - how informal is the actual 'informal'
  - working in a 'big, superimportant' organization asks for formality
- **'funny' linguistic behaviour**
  - comments that unconsciously slip
- **stereotypical generalisations**
  - 'ideological baggage' of certain representations
    - (not) introducing people via their nationality?
- **active use of languages other than English**
  - *Is it pleasant or unpleasant to be exposed to a language I don't know?*
  - *Is the use of 'not perfect' languages legitimate at work?*

2. Balancing language ideologies

- **teamwork vs. competition**
  - adoration of multilingualism vs. the priviledge of the 'native English speakers'
  - when first encountered: 'generic' trainees vs. 'special' native English speaker

- **'native English speaker' has not come to represent the perfect English**
  - they have come to showcase other professional skills
  - when they take special care of your English, you may care for their other languages

3. Nurturing the 'unimportant' talk

- often happens in other languages than English
- so longing for active multilingualism may be longing for 'getting closer', belonging
  - However, *what if English is coincidentally the only option for the trainee?*

- natural opportunities for small talk bring people together
  - more context
  - helps to adjust the mutual positioning

"The unimportant bits of language that link people across disjunctive events help create the space, out of which new possibilities for mutualities among strangers can emerge."

- Jan Blommaert, 2014
The importance of unimportant language

I will be happy to hear from you!

Veronika Lovrits

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Appendix J. Suggestions for potential development February 2021

ISSUES FOR A POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Issue I.: **<u>Complicated language choices in a missing common (cultural) framework</u>**

1) **levels of in/formality**

While trainees know they can be informal in work communication, they often don't know, "how much informal" is their "informal" in the differences of hierarchy/age etc. The use of a context-less or multi-contextual global language may limit little nuances of regard and reverence since a shared interpretative background is missing.

2) **language behavior considered as "funny"**

Trainees acknowledge (many even cherish) that everyone has his/her idiolect and language can be fluid in the multilingual environment. Nevertheless, some features get laughed at. While the influence of other languages on the use of English are most probably considered funny without a bad intention, an openly amused reaction risks rising interpersonal tensions. Translators still have to produce clear and perfect standard language as a work output, for the rest, "languagized" dailiness is arguably a mental burden.

3) **stereotypical generalizations**

Individual experience sometimes gets generalized as a national characteristic (like "The Germans are not able to think figuratively.", "The French are rude and mean to people (not) talking French.", "The British live in their English bubble, not trying to integrate."). Such a generalization prevents solutions if an interpersonal tension arises because trainees consider its cause to be a given "national" feature rather than a situational misinterpretation or disrespect that could be individually addressed.

4) **alternative language choice**

Most trainees long for experiencing active multilingualism at work ("to be like Rodolfo" one day). Thus, they are disappointed if they do not find a way how to start using more than one language during their traineeship. Despite that, they often do not dare to ask for an alternative language of communication out of fear they would look "unprofessional" if they are not "native". Nonetheless, some of those who were incited by this research to talk openly about their wish to use an alternative (foreign) language have successfully altered it, so it is apparently possible.

That said, the situation of "native English speakers" is more complicated. They feel they have value for the team primarily as "perfect monolingual English" speakers. Everybody is keen on practicing English and they feel it makes no sense for the workplace to engage with them in another language. So, for the sake of the well-being of the team, they suppress their longing for active multilingualism at work. They may even consider this stance as a sacrifice they have to make to level up their "native" advantage with the position of other trainees in the team (see Issue II. below).

Appendix K. T2_3 Interview outline

Research Project: 'Innovative approaches to the multilingual workplace: Employing Metapragmatic Talk on Languages at Work' (WorkLingEU)

Outline of the semi-structured final interview

A. **Trainees – final interview** (approx. 40 mins)

1. Opening

I'd like to ask you to reflect on your needs and expectations regarding languages. So, let's compare your initial needs and expectations with your actual experience.

- When you look back at your initial reflection and what we have talked about in our interviews, what comes to your mind? Have your needs and expectations been met?

2. Issues and suggestions

Let's pass to the document with issues and suggestions T. has asked for…

- First, what was your first reaction after you have read it through? Honestly. :-)

Now, let's go one issue after another together.

- And what about the suggestions? Would you appreciate if you got this information as a newcomer? Would you add something?

3. Drawing

Thank you for that part! Let's move on to the metaphors and drawings. Your metaphor of how languages are used in this workplace was a …

- Would you draw something much or slightly different now?

Now, I will share the collection of metaphors with you. If you can relate your thoughts to the document with issues and suggestions for the management, that would be a cherry on the pie for me. I'd be happy for your feedback.

- Is the collection interesting to you somehow? Do you see some patterns? Could you relate to some other drawings? Any surprise?

4. Lessons learned

Let's leave the drawings and talk about what you have realized or learned here.

- Has your view on languages or multilingualism changed thanks or due to the traineeship and, as the case may be, this research?
- In your opinion, what will be important for the new trainees to know about languages in the unit?
- What is the main message you personally take from your experience of a multilingual workplace?
- Finally, would you wish to comment on something, to have the last word in this interview?

Appendix L. T1-S2 Interview outline

Research Project: 'Innovative approaches to the multilingual workplace: Employing Metapragmatic Talk on Languages at Work' (WorkLingEU)

Outline of the semi-structured interview T1-S2

A. T1-S2 (approx. 40 mins)

1. Change of perspective

I'll ask you to reflect and compare your trainee- and staff position as linked to languages and multilingual communication. I will need some general background too, but I'd like to focus on languages in the workplace.

- Would you kindly tell me how has it come **that it was you who got the contract** to cover Ida's maternity leave? A short reflection on how were you chosen?
- You were utterly happy with English only when we talked last time. Would you **wish you could use more languages now**? Or has something else **changed in terms of what languages** you use and how when as a staff compared to your trainee time?

The trainees don't mention tutors in their reflections on what is important in communication in the unit. However, they mention Rodolfo very often.

- Anyway, since trainees don't talk about tutors, I still don't fully understand the tutor's position in the unit. Would you kindly explain to me what are the **responsibilities and tasks** at this position?

2. Lessons learned

Let's discuss the issues that may need more open guidance. It's the document I've sent you.

- First, what was your first reaction after you have read it through?
- Now, let's go one issue after another together. Can you relate or rather not?
- What would **you** say is **important for the new trainees** to know about languages in the unit?
- Have you **personally** realized something **interesting** or **important** about languages and communication at work that you can't see in the document?
- Would you say that there is some space for **development of refinement of the tutor's position** in the initial training and consequent guidance?

3. Closing

- Do you want to mention or comment on something I have not asked?
- Would you be Sherlock Holmes for the rest of your contract? I'd ask stupid Watson questions about what has been time-proven and what could still be improved in the last interview in April…
- I have one technical question. I'd like to ask you who could add me to the WhatsApp group for the communication with the new trainees..

Appendix M. S2 Interview outline

Research Project: 'Innovative approaches to the multilingual workplace: Employing Metapragmatic Talk on Languages at Work' (WorkLingEU)

Outline of the semi-structured final interview

A. Staff (approx. 40 mins)

1. Reflection on the research process
   - It has been a year since I started, more than half a year since we had our initial interview. Let's start by looking back, what did you initially expect from my research? And was the process as you had expected?
   - I can tell now that my research has brought interesting material for theoretical debates. However, publishing it make take a year or more from now. Would you say that our interaction has had already some *practical* effects for you and in the unit? Have you noticed people talking about the topics we went through or doing things differently?
2. Drawings
   - Here is a link to the collection of 'multilingualism at work' metaphors by the trainees. Can you relate your experience to some? Is there something surprising to you?
   - Research shows that ethos of mobility (and linguistic repertoire that allows for mobility) shapes decisions and norms on the institutional level. Somehow in contrast, there is also a clear need of the research participants "to belong somewhere" despite the eternal change of their job positions. We can see in the drawings that many trainees refer to friendly relationships (or loneliness in contrast). Do you want to reflect on this topic?
   - Research participants similarly distinguished 'multilingualism for service' and 'multilingualism for life', the first ruled by a perfection of an individual performance and the second by mutual understanding; the first important for the institution and thus their career, the latter for mental well-being and fulfilling life. Again, do you want to reflect on it?
3. Changes
   - There is no "native speaker" with you this traineeship term, you have no British, Irish or bilinguals among the trainees. What does that mean for the team and personally to you?
   - Would you say it is useful to talk about feelings and expectations linked to languages and their use in the multilingual work environment? As the case may be, how can it be useful?
   - Have our interviews changed something for you personally (about how you look at things, what you do (not do))?
   - Would you say the interviews have changed something similar or different for other people in the unit (have you noticed discussion, a change in what people do)?
   - With my colleagues, we are looking for topics that could help to prepare junior language workers from monolingual environments for work in a multilingual team, be it in an EU institution or in general. In your opinion, is there something about languages and workplace communication that junior workers could be taught before coming to work in a multilingual team?

2. Closing
   - What is the main message you take from your experience in this research?
   - Ultimately, do you wish to tell me something, to have the last word in this interview?

Appendix N. Research report May 2021

UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Innovative Approaches in the Multilingual Workplace:
Employing Metapragmatic Talk on Languages at Work

PhD project 2020-2023

Veronika Lovrits

Practical insights from interviews

Internal document

Overview

1. Complicated language choices without a common (cultural) **framework for interpretation**
2. Alternative ways of using **languages**
3. Competitive aspect of the 'native English speaker' **positioning**
4. Social function of language experience and **'unimportant' talk**

1. Building a common way to interpret (language) behaviour

- **in/formality**
  - How does the level of in/formality show up in the way we use languages?
- **functions of language**
  - language is not only a linguistic system (for work) but also a tool for building relationships (for life)
- **'funny' linguistic comments**
  - watch for comments that unconsciously slip (esp. linked to nationalities)
- **stereotypical generalisations**
  - 'ideological baggage' of certain representations
    - Try not to introducing people via their nationality (as representants of states) but rather their special skills or other individual aspects that make them feel uniquely valued.

2. Adjusting talk about languages

- **EU+Frenglish linguistic jargon**
  - a basic introduction of terminology for the communication trainees and communication and marketing for the linguists would help in the first weeks.
  - A glossary of 20-30 abreviations, acronyms and basic terms (databases, translation portal, YourTerm/EurTerm (similar pronunciation!), term/concept, content management, SEO, feuille de route ...) would facilitate notetaking/understanding in big initial trainings
- Smaller meetings in the unit can be intentionally run **in other languages for practice**
  - To balance the need of security/inclusion and creative development, **talk openly** about:
    - wishes, needs, expectations and feelings linked to the use of English and other languages
    - make clear that language performance doesn't have to be perfect and without mistakes (otherwise communication will be limited to English and 'native languages'. Trainee do not want to look 'incompetent' in the eyes of the permanent staff).

3. Reconsidering the 'native English speaker' positioning

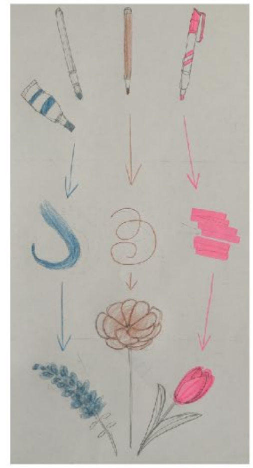
- The "**native English**' is considered as a coincidence, not a skill reached by a personal effort:
  - The term is also loaded with stereotypes, taking down the ability to solve communicative problems.
  - It implicates monolingualism (notice: one distinguishes 'native' and 'bilingual').
  - It does not automatically make a good (and/or dedicated) proofreader (this can be cleared in interviews with the pre-chosen aplicants).
  - Not everything has to be proofread by a 'native'; making the text 'native' can be even counterproductive in global encounters that aim for transnational understanding rather that national/British relevance.
- Nurture the **teamwork**, tone down **competition**:
  - Trainees might feel positioned as 'generic' trainees vs. the 'special' native English speaker if the position becomes too highlighted (inform other permanent team members about this effect too).
  - Automatic 'native' proofreading of everything gives an overt control over work to a peer collegue.
  - Adoration of multilingualism does not *balance* the priviledge of the 'native English speakers', it *adds* to the perceived *competition* of individual linguistic repertoires and language ideologies (!)

4. Nurturing the 'unimportant' talk

- A talk that is not work-related is still important for the feeling of **security and belonging**
  - trainees higly value the greetings in the morning, (decent, non-streotypical) jokes, individual acknowledgement of other life aspects and personal and professional plans (family, health, etc.)
- The 'unimportant' talk happens **more in the office** and in real-life encounters
  - so the offer of personal out-of-worktime meet-ups are valued as a symbolic gesture even by those who can't participate for objective reasons (lunch is better that a week-end crawl)
- often happens **in other languages than English**
  - so the longing for active multilingualism may be a longing to 'get closer', to belong
    - If English is the only option for the trainee, they need to feel the rest of their language repertoire and/or other skills are also valued.

Data collection (2018-2021)

- **26 interviews** with **12 trainees and 4 staff members** (time total: ~24h)
- **9** metaphor **drawings**



"The unimportant bits of language that link people across disjunctive events help create the space, out of which new possibilities for mutualities among strangers can emerge."

- Jan Blommaert, 2014
The importance of unimportant language
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281676862_The_Importance_of_Unimportant_Language

I will be happy to hear from you and meet you again.

UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Veronika Lovrits

Doctoral Researcher
2020-23

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Appendix O. Fellow of Higher Education Academy Certificate

AdvanceHE

This is to certify that

Veronika LOVRITS

has achieved the status of
Fellow (FHEA)

In recognition of attainment against the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and learning support in higher education.

Fellowship reference
PR252667

Date of Fellowship
14/03/2023

Alison Johns	**Stephen Marston**
Chief Executive Advance HE	Chair of the Board of Directors Advance HE

Appendix P. Letter of acceptance

UNIVERSITÀ di VERONA | Dipartimento di LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE

Letter of Acceptance

Verona, November 8th 2023

Dear Dr. Lovrits,
it is my pleasure to inform you that your book chapter entitled

Implications of the managers' preference for 'native speakers' in a multinational team

Has been **accepted** for the following publication:

Le plurilinguisme au travail : méthodes, pratiques, formation / Multilingualism at work: methods, practices, teaching (provisional title), to be published in 2024 by Peter Lang, Series « Champs didactiques plurilingues » (https://www.peterlang.com/series/7086) - « Échanges de la recherche ».

Editors : Giovanni Tallarico (University of Verona) and Laurent Gajo (University of Geneva)

Best regards,

Giovanni Luca Tallarico
Associate professor of French Language and Translation
Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures
University of Verona

Giovanni Tallarico

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