

Language, Power, and Communication Practices in Multinational Organizations an English Studies Approach

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Abstract: Language is a key tool with which power is produced, bargained, and practiced in multinational corporations, wherein the multiplicity of linguistic backgrounds is intertwined with multifaceted corporate hierarchies. Since international businesses are now increasingly using a combination of English as a lingua franca to communicate and make decisions as well as engage in cross-cultural communication with each other, the language itself is a point of power shaping its organizational identity, employee involvement, and availability of opportunities. In this paper, the author can focus on how the communication patterns, language norms, and discourse patterns in the multinational settings contribute to the allocation of power and inclusion/exclusion. Based on the theory of English Studies, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and organizational communication, this research paper investigates how language policies and professional jargons as well as communicative expectations support structural power relations in subtle ways. Analysis of how employees strategically use language to negotiate identities or to navigate multicultural interactions and challenge or reinforce hierarchies also shines through the analysis. Through using part of the input of linguistic imperialism, critical discourse analysis and workplace pragmatics, the study has made it clear why language is central as a means and as vehicle of organizational power. Finally, the research offers a subtle concept of how practices in communication determine workplace experiences and affect the operations, culture, and equity in multinational organizations.

Keywords: *Language Power, Multinational Organizations, English as a Lingua Franca, Communication Practices, Discourse Analysis, Organizational Hierarchies, Workplace Linguistics, English Studies Approach*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The accelerated globalization process has literally changed the organizational framework and the operations of the modern organizations leading to the coming up of multinational corporations that engage in operations in different linguistic, cultural and socio-political environments. In these kinds of settings, language is not only a neutral way of communicating but it is a strong tool of organizing organizational practices, identities, and hierarchies. Lingua franca English as a prevailing lingua franca in multinational organizations has opened up the participation in border cooperation and performance effectiveness, but has also provided the intricate politics of belonging, marginalization, and asymmetrical power. The language barriers faced by workers of diverse language skills usually complicate their exposure to different degrees of competence, confidence, and availability in the course of an English-mediated communication that further impacts their involvement in decision-making activities and professional development. As an English Studies, language is thoroughly

entrenched in discourse, ideology, and representation, and as such, it presents a significant location to study how power works at an institutional level. Such communication practices as meetings, emails, reports and informal communications avail platforms where power is negotiated and supercharged by the use of language, tone and structure of discourses. Moreover, organizational language policies either expressed or exercised in an implicit manner can be influential in standardization of a form of communication, although in the process they also marginalize some linguistic competences in favor of others. This uniformity is usually in concert with larger socio-economic and historical pressures, such as globalization and linguistic imperialism, which both establish English as a prestige/authoritative language. This means that the most proficient in English become more successful in holding positions of influence with others eliminated to the periphery where their technical skills may be the same. This junction of communication and power, then, serves as a very important field of interest, as it uncovers how

communication practice can facilitate, as well as limit, employee agency in a multinational setting. Besides the role of language in the development of hierarchical structures, language is also critical in developing organizational culture and identity among multinational corporations. The communication practices are not merely functional, but also, symbolic of preoccupation, upholding and strengthening shared values, norms and ideologies which characterize the organizational environment. Discourse can create a professional, competent, and global nexus of organizations that place more value on specific styles of discourse that conform to Western or Anglo-phone standards. This builds up a cultural structure where employees are called upon to conform their linguistic behaviours to institutional demands to the extent of erasing the identity and communicative mannerisms of locals. In the context of the English Studies, critical discourse analysis may be used to analyse the phenomenon, since it focuses on how language reflects power relations as well as duplicates these relations and reinforces them in social systems. The dynamics are actively practiced during interactions by employees who adopt, resist or recreate the powerful communication practices to negotiate identities and roles within the organization. As an example, code-switching, linguistic accommodation, and strategic silence are aspects it uses to negotiate intercultural contact and impressions management when in a workplace. In addition, online communication tools have further enhanced the importance of language in defining organizational behavior as the community is exposed to the written word which may be scrutinized. The international character of multinational organizations, too, requires coordination of time-zone cross-culturally teams, making use of standardized communication routines that cannot necessarily accommodate the range of linguistic diversity. This brings up the key issues of equity, participation, and ethical concerns about the use of language in the world places of work. It is through an English Studies prism that the current study intends to offer a holistic insight into the way language can serve as a resource and a limitation to multinationals. It also indicates the importance of being more critical towards communication practices and language policies to be able to create a more inclusive and equitable organizational environment in which diverse linguistic identities are perceived and appreciated.

II. RELEATED WORKS

Studies investigating the interplay between language, power, and communication in multinational organizations have expanded in number over the last twenty years as multinational places of work acquire a greater and greater linguistic diversity. The early literature came into focus with regard to the importance of using the English language as a Lingua franca (ELF), which

facilitates international business activities and studies argued that the use of English can make coordination of international business easier, communication can be standardized (international business) and all knowledge can be transferred efficiently across the boundaries [1], [2]. More recent studies however started to take a critical look at the ideological nativity of ELF that English hegemony in multinational companies recreated earlier hierarchies related to linguistic imperialism and neoliberal globalization [3]. Sociolinguists and critical management scholars have pointed out to the unequal communicative practices that the institutionalization of the English language puts employees of different levels of proficiency in unequal positions as far as career mobility, perceived competence and influence in decision making is concerned [4], [5]. Symbolic power of language is highlighted by the other foundational works based on the theories of Bourdieu, arguing that linguistic capital turns into the resource to be used by employees in gaining power under multinational corporations [6]. The overall results of these studies are to show that language is not a technical proficiency but a social resource, rooted in power engagements. The application of discourse analytic methods in research has also revealed the manner in which organizational communication practices (i.e. meetings, performance appraisals and managerial dictates) tend to favor certain discursive practices in line with the Anglophone standards, which tend to support hierarchical models and how identity is formed among members of staff [7]. The related works made early hence defined a wide concept about the use of language as a structural force in multinational settings which opened the doors to more detailed modern studies which consider the interpersonal interaction, accommodation practice and unequal communication.

Based on these preliminary views, a second wave of literature centered on the micro level of communicative processes in multinational teams, where the focus shifted to the everyday communication patterns of employees living in multilingual environments. Researchers highlighted that multilingual workplaces are a dynamic environment where power is constructed through negotiation, alignment, and resistance in an encounter of communication [8]. Communicational sociolinguists have demonstrated interacting strategies including code-switching, hedging, repetition and repair sequences to be means where employees control misunderstandings, assert control, or alleviate hierarchical strains [9]. Research based on pragmatics also demonstrates that politeness rules, the degree of directness, and cultural-communicative demands play an outstanding role in determining the perception and reaction towards the message in the multinational context [10]. Similarly, the body of work unveils the

fact that linguistic diversity may also create even less obvious forms of exclusion, e.g. when native English speakers control the conversation or when the form of meeting implicitly in support of Western ways of communication. Scholars of organizational communication have looked at the impact of these interactional dynamics on teamwork, knowledge sharing and conflict resolution stating that linguistic inequalities may lead to collaboration hindrances and form invisible boundaries to employee integration [11]. Meanwhile, some studies note the active bargaining of positions by employees as they linguistically accommodate others by matching their speech patterns with those of their apparent power brokers in order to be accepted or competently assert themselves [12]. All of these works reiterate the significance of examining communication as a phenomenon, but as micro-political practices, which are an expression of broader organizational systems of power. The everyday-discourse emphasis provides a useful insight into the lived experiences of employees who are constantly subjected to the need to adjust to linguistic demands in their effort to retain their identities and professional acceptability.

Newer research has broadened the research question to address the policies in the organization about language, digital communication technology, and the overall socio-political ramification of language in multinational corporations. According to researchers, communicative hierarchies, institutional norms as well as, employee involvement are largely influenced by language policies (either formal or unofficial) [13]. Research has indicated that instituting English-only policies or recruiting employees who understand English by organizations creates a risk to marginalize linguistically diverse employees and reproduce systemic inequalities to an organization structure. Secondly, the emergence of digital means of communication like email, video conferencing, and teamwork software has redesigned the interaction in the workplace, increasing the prominence of linguistic performance and pressure on adopting the standardized communication norms. According to the research, the written communication, especially, is a place where linguistic clarity is most likely to be scrutinized, where the employees are seen to negotiate the expectations of clarity, tones, grammar and style within a global digital setting [14]. Scholars that study the digital discourse observe that online platforms have the power to strengthen or disrupt the already prevailing power structures, depending on the implementation of communication tools, mediation, and institutionalization. Additional examples of applied linguistics and English Studies How textual practices, narrative framing and organizational storytelling help to create corporate identity and strengthen ideological frames. Simultaneously, inter-referent research notes the

relevance of developing linguistically inclusive policies, promoting multilingual integrating tactics of communication, culturally adaptive administration forms, and equal opportunities in accessing routines of language instruction. Collectively, the associated literature points to an increasing awareness of the core role of language in organizational power, identity, and fairness, and critical approach to English Studies as an important resource aiding the study of how communication practices constitute the lived experience of the employees working in multinational firms.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The current research is based on a qualitative-interpretive research design that has its foundations in the principles of English Studies, sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis in its quest to identify how language, power and communication practices translate into interaction in multinational organizations. Since multinational workplaces are complicated discursive sites where linguistic archetypes clash with organizational ranks, an interpretive design will allow studying in detail the patterns of communication naturally occurring in workplaces, organizational texts, and narratives of the employees. The study dwells on the determination of the impact of English as a dominant organizational language on authority structures, identity construction and the role of communicative participation. The study is built on methodological basis of the research on workplace discourse to combine textual, interactional analysis and thematic coding to follow patterns of linguistic dominance, accommodation and discursive power markers [15]. This design is consistent with the previous studies in language-in-organization and permits investigating both macro-level language policies and micro-level communicative events. The interpretation of data is put in terms of theoretical perspectives concerning the linguistic capital, linguistic hegemony, and organizational communication, making sure that the linguistic decisions, the relations of power, and the ideology underpin the interpretation in a systematic manner [16]. The multilayered design offers a holistic view of how employees negotiate linguistic expectations, communication practices that demonstrate institutional ideologies and how linguistic hierarchies have been embedded within corporate structures.

3.2 Data Sources and Sampling

A mix of organizational communication artifacts, semi-structured interviews and naturally occurring interactions were used to collect data. Examples of artifacts of communication are policy documents, email messages, meeting transcripts and internal training materials that were acquired in multinational companies in the field of technology, finance and manufacturing. These documents have been chosen as they are institutionalized

communication norms and help understand the impacts of language policies on the behavior of employees. Mid-level employees, team leaders and managers of various language backgrounds were interviewed semi-structured to reveal their experiences with communication practices, expectations of language use and perceived power dynamics. Transcribed and coded Interviews were transcribed and analyzed based on predetermined themes. The interactions, which naturally took place, such as meeting discussions, team briefings, and cross-functional communications, were observed and recorded in terms of capturing real-time discourse formations. Purposive sampling was used to make sure that, individuals who were more or less proficient in the English language were involved in the study to help the researcher get diverse communicative experiences and language difficulties [17]. When thematic recurrence took place within and among subjects, data saturation was achieved and comprehensive coverage of communication behaviours and power related patterns were covered [18].

Table 1. Data Sources and Analytical Relevance

| Data Source Type | Description | Analytical Purpose |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Organizational Documents | Policies, emails, guidelines | Examine institutional language norms |
| Meeting Transcripts | Recorded discussions, team briefings | Identify discourse structures & power cues |
| Interview Data | Employee and manager narratives | Explore linguistic identities & perceptions |
| Digital Communication Logs | Emails, chat threads, collaborative platforms | Analyze written discourse practices |
| Observational Notes | Real-time workplace interactions | Capture spontaneous communicative behaviors |

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is based on the three-step methodology: discourse extraction, thematic coding, interpretive analysis. First, discourse extraction identifies linguistic expressions like keywords, turn-taking patterns, modalities, politeness strategies and labels of identity that are present in an organizational communication. Secondly, the thematic coding is conducted based on the inductive and deductive approach, allowing to identify the themes of the language hegemony, communicative inequality, accommodation, professional identity, and power-based negotiation. The developed linguistic theories, such as Bourdieu linguistic capital, the principles of

critical discourse analysis, and pragmatics of the workplace, inform coding categories [19]. Third, the interpretive analysis projects the latter use of language in the context of the larger organizational power structures, cultural norms and institutional ideologies. This step considers ways in which communicative practices support or undermine authority, ways in which mastering English roles turn into a type of symbolic power, and ways in which workers bargain their status using linguistic preferences [20]. The reflexivity of the analytical framework gives priority to the interpretations being sensitive to the context, cultural differences and the socio-professional realities of multinational work environments. Inter-document, inter-interviews and inter-observations can contribute to validity and credibility (triangulation) [21].

3.4 Data Interpretation and Linguistic Coding Procedures

Coding of language data was done through the use of a structured linguistic grid that classifies the communication features at the levels of directive strength, lexical sophistication, discourse markers, politeness strategies, and dominance/silence patterns. Interactional aspects including: interruptions, hesitations, overlaps and clarification requests were transformed into conversation analysis processes to identify the way power is practiced during live interactions. Textual analysis criteria were used in the evaluation of written communication, in terms of tone, modality, coherence structures, and implicit ideological markers. The coding was done through a series of cycles of refinement as recommended in the best practices of an interpretive linguistic research [22]. Reliability was also checked through inter-coder agreement checks that were done during preliminary coding rounds so that subjectivity of the work would be limited. The interpretive processes put emphasis on the nexus between the competence of communication, the perceived professionalism and power thus bridging linguistic activities and institutional power.

Table 2. Linguistic Coding Categories and Interpretive Indicators

| Coding Category | Linguistic Indicators | Interpretive Focus |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Power Markers | Directives, modality, assertive tone | Hierarchy enactment |
| Identity Cues | Pronouns, stance markers, self-positioning | Professional identity construction |
| Accommodation | Code-switching, alignment, politeness | Negotiation of linguistic inequality |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Interactional Control | Interruptions, turn-taking patterns | Dominance in communication |
| Ideological Markers | Corporate jargon, narrative framing | Organizational ideology reproduction |

3.5 Ethical Considerations and Research Integrity

The informed consent was given to all the participants, and the organizational anonymity was observed. Documents and transcripts were sanitized with identifiable information being erased to ensure confidentiality. The researches were conducted with respect to the guideline of ethical research on linguistic and organizational research, through transparency, reciprocity and responsible interpretation of communicative data [23]. Another ethical concern was respect of cultural and linguistic differences and the inflexibility of power not based upon proficiency alone, but considering the wider socio-historical context. The approach to methodology therefore guarantees integrity, credibility, and validity of the context in the discussion of language and power in multinational organizations.

IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview of Communicative Power Dynamics

In the analysis, it was found that language serves as one of the key means to exercise, negotiate, and solidify power in multinational organizations. Communication in English became one of the symbolic resources that had a great influence on the employees in access to authority and decision making processes as well as their presence in both the official and non-official communication pathways. Workers who expressed linguistic confidence were more comfortable expressing opinions, dominating conversations, and leading collaborative endeavors, and workers with lower levels of language proficiency tended to avoid or cease articulating their disagreeing positions, or were reluctant to express them. The observations also revealed that English was also a form of professionalism and organizational conformity, as well as a means of communication which formed hierarchical identities. Meeting transcripts showed certain patterns of directive language, Strategic turn taking and linguistic accommodation, where the participants are found to position themselves based on the showing of perceived power differentials in terms of communicative behaviour. In general, the findings reaffirm under- or between-level embeddedness of linguistic practices in organizational power relations determining the allocation of influence as well as lived experiences of all employees, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds.



Figure 1: Inclusive Communication [24]

4.2 Linguistic Participation and Communicative Inclusion

One of the main results of the analysis is the disproportionality in the level of communicative participation among multilingual teams. Verbal interactions were likely to be dominated by employees with a native or near-native command of the English language and have more extended turns, determine the flow of the agenda, and framing. In contrast, less proficient individuals tended to make shorter turns, more hesitations and to self-monitor to restrict their contributions. Written interaction supported the same trend, with those who had greater command of the English language to write more syntactically complex and rhetorically assertive emails, with the rest of the workforce adopting either extreme writing styles, i.e. overly deferential in voice or minimalistic style, which might prevent any judgment. These communication differences would often be interpreted into a sense of ability or management capabilities, to determine what other members of the team appreciated each other and their contribution. Moreover, the authors of the study found that informal communication, including team talks, personal interactions, was prominent in supporting or alleviating linguistic hierarchies in that employees could interact more openly and build up relational identities regardless of the restrictions laid out by official discourse. In general, the patterns of participation are an indication on how linguistic expectations contemplate inclusion, shape networks, and career advancement opportunities.

Table 3. Communicative Participation Patterns Across Linguistic Groups

| Linguistic Group | Verbal Participation | Written Communication Style | Organizational Visibility |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| High Proficiency | Long turns, assertive tone | Complex, confident, strategic | High |
| Medium Proficiency | Moderate engagement | Functional but cautious | Moderate |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Low Proficiency | Short turns, hesitations | Minimalistic, deferential | Low |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----|

4.3 Power Negotiation in Multicultural Interactions

Interactional analysis showed that power negotiation is an ongoing process that is influenced by discourse strategies, positioning of identity and linguistic accommodation. The patterns of speech that were often modified by employees include, but are not limited to tone, vocabulary, and politeness tactics to meet the communicative preferences of those in authority or other dominant people speaking languages. Group meetings revealed instances of interactional control such as interrupting, selective recognition and reorientation of the topic, thus emphasizing that power can be expressed through the use of small discourse inferences. On the other hand, there was a group of employees, who implicitly resisted or used self-framing narratives to avoid hierarchical pressure with the help of strategic silence, code-switching, or self-framing. Directness or politeness is a cultural norm that affected how a message was perceived even to the point of receiving a wrong message or perceived power disparities in multicultural groups. These results show that cultural background and organizational setting profoundly impact their communication practices, and that language serves as a tool and a limitation of hierarchical negotiation process.



Figure 2: Intercultural Communication [25]

4.4 Organizational Language Norms and Ideological Influence

The research discovered that organizational norms of language which are embedded in policy documents, internal practices and corporate stories, contributed greatly to the strengthening of organizational identity and communicative expectations. Unified styles and formats of communication, language of the performance evaluation, and the use of jargon were part of a linguistic environment focusing on values of clarity, efficiency, and adherence to global corporate values. Such norms usually represented some implicit

ideological assumptions which had a bias towards Western forms of communicative practices which were assertive, direct and professional. The workers, especially those with a different communicative tradition due to their linguistic or cultural differences needed to make a deliberate move towards modifying their discourse styles so as to conform to the institutional requirements. This linguistic change process influenced the perception of the people of the professional identity and the belonging to the organization. In general, the findings indicate that the norms of language do not merely determine the communication process: they influence the ideological orientation, representation of power, and the shaping of identities.

Table 4. Organizational Language Norms and Their Effects

| Language Norm | Organizational Purpose | Observed Employee Response |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Standardized English usage | Consistency & professionalism | Increased self-monitoring |
| Corporate jargon | Reinforce identity & expertise | Mixed comprehension levels |
| Assertive tone norms | Promote clarity & leadership | Challenges for culturally indirect speakers |
| Formal email structures | Precision & record-keeping | Over-editing by lower proficiency employees |

4.5 Implications for Inclusion and Workplace Equity

Overall, the results suggest that language has a tremendous influence on the organizational equity as it influences chances of participation, recognition, and professional development. The limited-English employees were faced with limitations not because they were less fluent in technical knowledge but simply because communicative demands were usually set within culturally, linguistically definite categories. It has led to the inconsistencies in leadership visibility, influence in decision making, and high profile assignments. Nevertheless, extensive communication practices, including collaborative forms of leadership, multilingual concession, and supportive feedback systems, were also identified to diminish linguistic barriers and optimize participation in the research. These implications imply that organizations need to be critical about their language norms and communication practices in order to establish equal opportunities that have different lingual identities to be appreciated and empowered.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper indicates that language is not only a general means of communication in multinational

organizations but also an effective tool that influences the organizational structures and hierarchies, the creation of identities and the availability of professional opportunities and opportunities. Through its approach to English Studies, the study shows how English as a lingua franca can exemplify facilitation of cross-border cooperation and how it can be used as a means to strengthen structural inequalities. The results show us that communication practices, as formal meetings, as well as digital interactions, are strong and intrinsic to power, where lingo skill and negative influence frequently dictate the inclusion, impact, and noticeable within the organisation. Workers who command English better tend to enforce their positions, and be more active; workers with lesser proficiency tend to feel marginalized yet they might be of equal technical ability. Moreover, the organizational discourse and language norms proved to capture implicit ideological prejudices, favoring some of the communicative styles, which tend to be largely oriented at Western/Anglophone ideals, and influence the definitions of professionalism and competence. The study also highlights the significance of inclusive communication processes in preventing linguistic disparities and the need to encourage a fairer organizational climate. Finally, the study makes a contribution to the wider rhetoric of language and power by showing that communication practices are prominent in crafting workplace experience in the context of multinationals.

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