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The Powerful Translator - Informal Translations in a multilingual environment: A Case Study of a Multinational Company in Luxembourg

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Abstract

While language proficiency and the status of different individuals have been shown to provide important power advantages to those individuals, the act of doing informal translations in work-related situations and interactions with co-workers has not been given much attention. In fact, little is known about how so-called non-professional translators are enhancing their inter-organizational standing, and more needs to be done to better understand how these "bridge builders" are perceived within the company. In this paper, the Theory of Power as well as that of Translation is applied to grasp this complex phenomenon of shifting power dynamics when informal translations are done on a regular basis, and recent concepts and frameworks are used in this study to unpack these episodic encounters between colleagues. To this end, a qualitative interview study, grounded on the interpretivist approach, was conducted in a multilingual MNC in Luxembourg. In total, 7 front-line employees and managers are being examined, while interviews are done in 5 different languages in order to do justice to the multilingual environment. This research extends literature in the realm of International Business (IB) by providing new relevant insights on the paraprofessional translator and their potential influences on others. Indeed, translators are rather perceived as neutral agents with the main goal to help out in difficult situations for the sake of clarification and simplicity. The main emphasis of this study is to realize and appreciate the complexity of this multilingual reality and become more aware of informal translations as a potential source of control and power.

Zusammenfassung

Während die Sprachkenntnisse und der Status verschiedener Personen nachweislich wichtige Machtvorteile für diese Personen darstellen, wurde der Tätigkeit des informellen Übersetzens in arbeitsbezogenen Situationen und bei Interaktionen mit Kollegen nicht viel Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Tatsächlich ist wenig darüber bekannt, wie sogenannte Nicht-Professionelle Übersetzer ihr Ansehen in der Organisation verbessern können, und es muss mehr getan werden, um besser zu verstehen, wie diese „Brückenbauer" innerhalb des Unternehmens wahrgenommen werden. In diesem Artikel werden sowohl die Machttheorie als auch die Übersetzungstheorie angewandt, um dieses komplexe Phänomen der sich verändernden Machtdynamik zu erfassen, wenn informelle Übersetzungen regelmäßig durchgeführt werden, und es werden in dieser Studie neuere Konzepte und Rahmenwerke verwendet, um diese episodischen Begegnungen zwischen Kollegen zu enthüllen. Zu diesem Zweck wurde eine qualitative Interviewstudie auf der Grundlage des interpretivistischen Ansatzes in einem mehrsprachigen multinationalen Unternehmen in Luxemburg durchgeführt. Insgesamt werden 7 leitende Angestellte und Manager untersucht, wobei die Interviews in 5 verschiedenen Sprachen geführt werden, um dem mehrsprachigen Umfeld gerecht zu werden. Diese Untersuchung erweitert die Literatur im Bereich der Internationalen Betriebswirtschaft (IB), indem sie neue relevante Erkenntnisse über den paraprofessionellen Übersetzer und seinen potenziellen Einfluss auf andere liefert. In der Tat werden Übersetzer eher als neutrale Vermittler wahrgenommen, deren Hauptziel es ist, in schwierigen Situationen im Hinblick auf Klarheit und Einfachheit zu helfen. Der Schwerpunkt dieser Studie liegt darauf, die Komplexität dieser mehrsprachigen Realität zu erkennen und zu würdigen und sich informeller Übersetzungen als potenzielle Quelle von Kontrolle und Macht stärker bewusst zu werden.

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There are no facts, only interpretations. (Friedrich Nietzsche)

1 Introduction

For most people, translating, in its essence, seems like a simple and straightforward task, and especially multilinguals don't notice them or don't consider the task as worth mentioning, often downplaying the consequences of conducting translations along the way in the workplace. Individuals frequently make translations on their own in order to self-translate or to help others who speak another language, however inappropriate translations, or interpretations, can have detrimental effects, mainly caused by cultural differences or ambiguous words (see e.g. Welch et al., 2001; Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014). In fact, translation encompasses a wide range of activities and processes, but in the vein of this study, we mainly concentrate on informal, day-to-day situations where there exists a certain amount of translation requirements in a firm, in our case a multilingual company situated at the heart of Luxembourg. As will be clearer after reading the theoretical background, translation must be understood here primarily as oral translations, often referred to as interpretations, and the informal nature as these leads us to investigate the behaviour and influences of the so-called "paraprofessional" or "non-professional" translator who translates during informal interactions and might pursue specific goals (Koskela, Koskinen & Pilke, 2017; Nord, 2014; Massey & Wieder, 2021; Piekkari et al, 2019; Venuti, 2019).

Furthermore, an English language policy can strongly influence how communication in an organization works, and therefore takes on a crucial role in this study. In fact, much research has analyzed English as a corporate language, which is a form of language standardization in order to reduce the potential for miscommunication, and how the English language proficiency and status of different individuals can influence cooperation and group dynamics internally, amongst others (Welch & Welch, 2017; Gaibrois, 2015; Puck & Aichhorn, 2017; Neeley, 2013; Hinds et al., 2014; Tenzer et al., 2021). Cultivating an English language mandate in a firm can bring both positive and negative aspects to the fore, for instance, it can benefit English native speakers significantly, but also level the playing field for the majority of employees (e.g. Steyaert et al., 2011; Neeley et al., 2012).

The power that employees and managers may hold in order to make their own choices and decisions is named in the literature "discretionary power" and is a useful conceptualization in International Business (IB), because it takes into account various dynamics linked to the language policy of an organization at the front-line level (Sanden & Lonsmann, 2018). Most research has focused on extending theory on formal language policies, language skills, subgroup dynamics and practices used by employees to better navigate through the challenges that multilingualism poses on them (Vaara et al., 2005; Gaibrois, 2018; Hinds et al., 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017; Wilmot, 2017). The translator has received increasingly more consideration by several authors in recent years, ranging from the paraprofessional translator's work in moving organizational practices across languages to diverse translation responses to enhance customer service (Piekkari et al., 2019; Piekkari et al., 2013). Koskela et al. (2017) have come up with translatorial actions to identify how translators cope during informal translations, while Massey & Wieder (2021) have identified some "hidden power" which lies in the translator's hands, and which can be seen as a valuable asset in (adaptive and creative) strategic planning and organizational design.

All in all, individuals intervene as boundary spanners in situations where two (or more) people or groups of people seek for advice to convey the meaning of what they want to say (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Barner-Rassmussen, 2015; Tietze et al., 2017). This is the case when non-native speakers come to interact with each other, be it with one of their colleagues or with a client who have different mother tongues. Investigating how so-called "bridge individuals" step in to translate a particular word or sentence, and how this influences the perception of power, will be of primary focus in this study. To give an example, we can think of a situation after a business meeting, where a German and a French native speaker want to summarize the key points just discussed in English, and another German employee, after being asked by his German colleague for help, steps in to translate a certain word or sentence from German to English to his French colleague. In such "episodic social interactions" (Clegg, 1989, p.211), it is likely that translation becomes an act of border patrolling that enables certain individuals to enter the "circuit of power" and play games (Janssens et al., 2004). Thus, informal translation may become an act of power, allowing non-professional translators to showcase their interests, influence decision-making and even expand their social networks (Vaara et al., 2005; Sanden & Lonsmann, 2018).

1.1 Research Gap

There is, however, only limited evidence as to how translation activities affect successful international business activities and, more precisely, multinational enterprises' (MNEs) success in general (Piekkari et al., 2014). In fact, the role of language and translation in the service industry has to date obtained only very little attention, as underlined by Piekkari et al. (2013).

Lonsmann (2011) found that spontaneous and informal help from co-workers is an effective way to overcome language barriers, but there has been little research that tried to understand how translations between colleagues have the same potential. Furthermore, Piekkari et al. (2014) already pointed out that power dynamics can shift due to certain individuals' elevated language competence, but there is no certainty about how these people will use this power, while the relationship between language and power has received more attention only after Peltokorpi & Vaara (2014) and other authors stressed the urgency of this topic.

Further studies have focused on intraorganizational power sources, such as how subsidiaries might increase their power and regain control through their language use and critical acts of translation (Logemann & Piekkari, 2014). Ivanova-Gongne (2023) drew upon different levels of power dynamics that emerge from diverse business interactions, mainly those of individual managers in internationally operating SMEs, while considering the home and host countries' linguistic contexts. Looking at these studies, there remains a gap in dealing with non-professional informal translators and their (positive and/or negative) influence within a multilingual MNE from a bottom-up perspective, which is a crucial area of interest not yet recognized in the field of IB. Capturing such informal interpretations, and the respective shift in power, is difficult, and asking relevant agents can be the key to better understand how paraprofessional translators use their translation skills and are perceived in an inter-organizational context to draw important conclusions for both managers, employees and external people. An appropriate research question will be conveyed next.

1.2 Research Question

The aim of this study is to understand the relation between informal translation and the emergence and perception of power within the case firm. This is a dynamic approach which can be best analyzed by qualitative case study research where the main goal is to throw light on yet undiscovered relationships and give an insight into the investigated phenomenon. The interpretivist approach is a suitable one as we will be able to better understand the perceptions of power of front-line employees who are confronted with language-related issues on a daily basis and consider multiple voices during the interview process. Focusing on individual agents' inner world and understanding how they perceive the paraprofessional translator's role in shaping power is thus a highly relevant topic in this vein of inquiry. Therefore, the research question I seek to address is:

RQ: How do non-professional translators exercise power under an English language mandate in a multinational company?

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. The next chapter will display the theoretical background, while the interpretive method used for both data collection and analysis are depicted in the third section. The findings derived from the Luxembourg context are presented and discussed in chapter four. The final part of this thesis offers some concluding remarks and goes into more detail about the main contributions, implications, limitations, and future research paths.

2 Theoretical Background

This chapter gives a theoretical outline of the key theories, concepts, assumptions and terms used in this study to have a better understanding of this highly relevant and complex research area. On the one hand, the main theories are the Theory of Power supported by several authors during the last decades, which describes the activities and processes of how people become powerful actors in daily work situations, thus influencing their colleagues at work. On the other hand, this study takes a closer look at the Theory of Translation in a multilingual work environment, with the main focus on informal translations done by non-professional interpreters. In fact, individuals with different levels of language skills interact on a daily basis with their peers, which is why it is worth taking a closer look at how translation is done, when, and for whom, and what the potential power of these “unofficial” translators looks like (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio, 2011).

The first part gives the reader a thorough understanding of the power dynamics that exist in organizations since each individual communicates best in his or her preferred language and holds different language resources. The basic theory is the Theory of Power supported by Foucault (1968; 1975; 1978) and Luke (1974), which describes the exertion (social) power and effects of different power relations in organizations. We will then consider a so-called “Circuit of Power” by Steward Clegg (1989), highlighting the main channels through which power flows in the context relevant for this study. Furthermore, as most people have experienced situations where communication was hindered by uneven language skills, informal translation is a powerful practice to enhance inter-organizational understanding. Therefore, it will be crucial to delve deeper into the Theory of Translation, including non-professional translators and the specific (informal) translation activities and the processes. Last but not least, a policy prescribing which language should be used within the company can be both empowering and disempowering for certain individuals, emphasizing the role of translators across the whole organizational network. We will close by a short synthesis of this chapter.

2.1 Theory of Power

In this chapter, the Theory of Power will be introduced as it will serve as a linchpin for this study in terms of how employees and managers in a multilingual company are perceived as having or exercising power when stepping in to conduct informal translations. In this study, we will mainly look at the concept of “discretionary power” introduced by Sanden & Lonsmann (2018) with an emphasis on communication practices of front-line employees and managers, using a bottom-up, employee-centered approach on the micro level of everyday interactions. Furthermore, the concept of power relevant for this study has been primarily developed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who has revolutionized the study of power by stressing its diffuse and relational nature and viewing it as something held by individuals or institutions. In works like "Discipline and Punish" (1975) and "The History of Sexuality" (1978), he introduced the concept of power and knowledge and explored how the former is exercised through discourses and social practices (Gaibrois, 2015), which in the following will be looked at more deeply. Before returning to the main focus of this study, we now proceed by looking at some important historical chronologies and implications to the subject of power to get a clearer picture of the key perspectives and achievements within this realm of study.

In fact, power has received a lot of attention in the scientific research area, and the roots of various traditions go as far back as to Hobbes and Macchiavelli in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (see e.g. Clegg, 1989). In short, Hobbes and his successors aim to describe what power “is”, while focusing on the causality of events, while Macchiavelli tries to interpret what power “does”, with an emphasis on strategy and authority (Clegg, 1989, p.5). In social studies, “power” has often been conceptualized in different ways, where the key is to understand power relationships as well as the multifaceted nature of “societal” or “organizational” power (Vaara, 2005). With this, classical writers and philosophers including Marx and Weber have analyzed the dynamics of power in depth too, with the former linking power with class structures and confrontation in society, and the latter holding a more pluralistic or complex view. Next, Lukes (1974), who is often cited as the standard reference for the topic of power, pointed out that those who can control the meaning also have the ability to make others powerless, while stating that people oftentimes are not aware of this construction of reality. This led to an acknowledged view that power is generally not only something held by certain individuals but also embedded within social structures. The author also sees the individual as having a moral responsibility and exercising power with their own agency and acting under conditions of a certain autonomy. Thereafter, Giddens (1984) has favoured a more “classical” perspective according to which power is the ability of agents to mobilize certain rules and resources, while Foucault (1984) stated that social practices and structures influence subjectivities and identities of social actors, as will be described in more detail below.

Moving forward, traditional analyses in organizational theories have often distinguished "legitimate power", exercised by people higher up the ladder in a classical hierarchical setting, and "illegitimate power" in social networks and actor relationships (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992). In fact, many scholars have argued that it is precisely such informal relationships that are the most interesting and relevant power dynamics in organizations (Mintzberg, 1983; Vaara, 2005). This is also what this study will focus on, trying to shed light on informal translators who are able to influence the power relations within a multilingual work environment. As Clegg (1989) has put it: "Power is about politics, not just in the formal sense but more broadly, about the politics of everyday life" (Clegg, 1989, p.149). Furthermore, the author also highlights the fact that power cannot only be manifested in doing certain acts, but also by ensuring that things do not get done at all. Talking about power more broadly, the author states that a person A has potential power to get person B to do something that this individual would not have normally done, if A wishes B to do so.

According to Foucault (1968, p.220), power can be defined as a "set of actions upon other actions", which shows the relational character of the concept of power between individuals. In fact, the author, in his later works, wanted to provide a non-economic description of power, emphasizing that the one over whom power is exercised is regarded as a person who has the ability to act, and that this person can respond with a multitude of different reactions leading to diverse results, underpinning the bottom-up perspective taken in this study. The key assumptions in this study are therefore the relational side of power between employees of the organization at hand, as well as the stabilization of these relations within the organization through structures and routines, such as the practice of using English in daily work interactions. In other words, power is not something that people possess, but as something that operates within relationships and social networks, and Clegg (1989) highlights in his work the relevance of routines in organizations in order to stabilize power relations. In line with this, it is necessary to introduce the concept of <u>resistance</u> to cope with power relation, which can be seen as a strategy by the individual to reverse a specific situation, where employees challenge existing power structures and advocate for more equitable language practices. (Foucault, 1984; Clegg, 1989; Gaibrois, 2015). Generally speaking, employers in an organization are confronted with at least two sources of resistance, namely that their employees hold both discursive and bodily capacities. Concerning the latter point, employees might resist the dominance of a language by maintaining the use of their native (or a secret) language, while the former can be explained by the fact that employees are pushing for greater linguistic inclusion within the organization, for instance by asking for a specific language training. In this context, another strongly intertwined conceptualization relevant for this study is that of power and knowledge, as knowledge is both a product and a tool of power, shaping how people think and act (Gaibrois, 2015; Clegg, 1989). Taken together, resistance represents "an opposition to the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification" (Foucault, 1982, p.210f., as cited by Gaibrois, 2015, p.36), meaning that language skills and the ability to step in to conduct informal translations can create an uneven playing field for those involved, and that the less (linguistically) knowledgeable individual can either succumb or resist to such practices.

We now turn to some other important terms and concepts which are relevant for informal translations and related to the text above. The languages spoken by individuals are critical resources and part of their human capital, which gives them the opportunity to make choices about whether, when and how they employ their language skills (Piekkari et al., 2014). Human capital is basically an individual's set of knowledge, skills and abilities gained through life-long learning and not something the company owns but only the individual him- or herself. In fact, people hold certain agentic power and can choose whether to employ their language skills in favour of the company's interests or not. This possibility of foreign language use is a consequence of the dynamic and complex interplay of individual and organizational interests. This is particularly important in the context of informal translations when interactions between employees cannot easily be tracked by the company management.

When speaking of language and its implications on power, informal social networks are not always obvious, but are used extensively, and in some cases contrary to the formal direction of top management. We will look at informal networks in more detail in section 1.2.1, however, it is important to understand that network formation depends on a process of interpersonal interaction, requiring a meaningful language relatedness between two or more social actors (Piekkari et al., 2014). In fact, language forms social dynamics and influences the quality and strength of relationships supporting interpersonal interactions. Trust also plays a crucial role because it enables a deeper level of informational exchange and has to be built over time. This is an important point as it is difficult to build trusting relationships with boundary spanners such as translators who occasionally help out with their enhanced language skills and therefore it is of high importance to cultivate a strong social network as well. As one can imagine from their own lives, maintaining strong relationships and having trust in other people can foster power for those involved.

In contrast to human capital, social capital is the quality created between people and can be defined as a process where social actors set in motion their various network connections to get access to other actors' resources (Knoke, 1999). Acquiring new language skills allows people within an organization to enter new networks, thus enlarging their social capital and human capital as well, as long as they become more fluent through further interactions within this social network. All in all, it is plausible to assume that power can be created and better kept by those individuals who use their language resources in as many informal interactions and by translating and thus showcasing their competence to their peers.

Code-switching involves alternating between languages or dialects within a conversation or across different contexts. In a multilingual organization, employees might switch languages to navigate power dynamics, build rapport, or assert authority, and thus it can be a strategic tool for managing power relations, but it can also highlight or reinforce power disparities between different language groups (Vigier & Spencer-Oatey, 2017).

Logemann & Piekkari (2015) have introduced acts of translation to the discussion of intraorganizational power, particularly power over meaning (Ferner et al., 2012). With this, the translator occupies a position of considerable influence, particularly when the proficiency in the company language is limited in the focal entity (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). In this context, the translator may assume the role of a language node (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999b), engaging in gatekeeping behaviour information flows through several people or departments. It becomes evident that the translation assistance sought and provided was through a so-called "advice network" (Piekkari et al., 2013). Barner-Rasmussen (2015, p.145) points to translator's potential as consensus building creators, who "leverage their linguistic and cultural savvy by interpreting and managing not only their own responses but also those of others nearby, thus helping to frame day-to-day interaction in consensual terms". Requests for translations may give rise to a power struggle, with translators having the right to accept or reject requests (Sanden & Lonsmann, 2018), while the authors also find out that the ad hoc nature of the majority of collegial assistance contribute significantly to overcoming language barriers. Language skills that other participants do not necessarily possess allows translators to exercise some hidden power and gives them the opportunity to independently reshape the meaning, underscoring how language proficiency can restrict or enable participation in key organizational functions, affecting employees' career trajectories and influence. (Piekkari et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in a recent paper by Ivanova-Gongne et al. (2023), the authors analyze International Business interactions and its relation to self-perceived power, thus shedding more light to how people in organizations perceive different power dynamics. In fact, social perception can be described by how people form judgements of others, which is something most people continuously do to successfully navigate through their lives (Pfeffer, 2010). More precisely, people start forming impressions of other individuals in the first few seconds of contact and these first impressions are usually highly accurate in predicting important future evaluations. When referring to power and the perception of it, it is important to mention some literature on status, as these areas of research are closely interlinked. In fact, power is differentiated from status in that "power is based in resources, which belong to an actor, whereas status exists entirely in the eyes of others" (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p.363–364, as cited in Hinds et al., 2014, p.553). Furthermore, Neeley (2013) posits that a loss of status refers to an existing evaluation and perceived experience of loss, rather than an objective measure of positional change. If actors believe that they have lost their status, they are also likely to believe that they will be excluded from advantages that desirable status positions can offer them. Thus, in the context of this study, non-professional translators want to enhance their relative positions by using their language skills appropriately and helping out their colleagues with informal translations.

Last but not least, Weinzierl (2023), among others, say that the use of the corporate language, typically English, by MNTs can result in differences in language proficiency levels between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs). Despite the adoption of corporate languages for communication at work by multinationals, other languages are often used in informal situations between coworkers (Lauring & Selmer, 2010). Consequently, employees tend to communicate with those with whom they identify and feel comfortable, which frequently results in the formation of in-group and out-group dynamics, which can give rise to a culture of exclusion (see also section 2.3.3).

Authors	**Year**	**Journal**	**Main research question (Title if no RQ*)**	**Key Findings**	**Focus of the study**
Sanden & Lonsmann	2018	European Journal of International Management	*How do front-line employees use their discretionary power to cross language boundaries in MNCs with top-down English language mandates?*	"Discretionary power" is a useful term to introduce to the international business and management literature, as it captures the dynamics of language policy implementation at the front-line level, where employees often have to depend on ad hoc and informal solutions when crossing language boundaries.	Employees having the power to make a choice among possible courses of action and inaction.

Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari & Säntti	2005	Journal of Management Studies	* Language and the Circuits of Power in a Merging Multinational Corporation	Language skills become empowering or disempowering resources in organizational communication and these skills are associated with professional competence, which leads to the creation of new social networks. A lack of language skills can falsely create "a strong sense of professional incompetence" (p.609).	Concentration on the language policies of multinational corporations and their effects on national identity/subjectivity construction processes in organizational settings.
Gaibrois	2018	Research Institute for Organizational Psychology	*How do employees of multilingual organisations account for hybrid language use? What consequences of using hybrid languages emerge from these accounts?*	Identification of diverse hybrid practices which are used by employees. For instance: "everybody his/her language"; "using broken languages"; "mixing languages"; "using jargon"; "creating new languages".	Investigating different forms of language use which develop in so-called "in-between-spaces" between languages.
Hinds, Neeley & Cramton	2014	Journal of International Business Studies	*How do asymmetries in language fluency contribute to an us vs them dynamic common in global teams?*	Extendinig theory on subgroup dynamics in global teams by adding language as a potential faultline dimension, showing how power struggles activate faultlines. Language assymetries are aligned with geographic location and nationality and are able create potential fractures in the future.	Articulation of how subgroups become salient and are reinforced in global teams and how language can act as a lightning rod for these dynamics by attracting and conducting the tensions.
Tenzer & Pudelko	2016	Journal of World Business	*How do language differences influence team leaders' and members' capacity to capitalize on position and expert power?*	Formal language policies are an important linguistic moderator of the power dynamics in MNTs. Individuals with high language proficiency may claim expert power, even if their task-related knowledge does not match their linguistic superiority.	Caption of under-researched complexities and elucidation of the interplay between language and power on the team level.
Wilmot	2017	International Journal of Cross Cultural Management	* Language and the faces of power: A theoretical approach	The choice of language policy can be viewed as a particular application of power and employees seek to resist such choices.	Relationship between language management policies and power.
Logemann & Piekkari	2015	Critical Perspectives on International Business	*How do key actors in a focal headquarters-subsidiary relationship exploit language and translation as intraorganizational power sources?*	Subsidiary power is enhanced through the common company speak, which allows not only bottom-up but also horizontal communication and benchmarking. Translation is a performative act aimed at regaining control and power from below.	Analysis of the ambiguities between company speak and power, providing a better understanding of how intraorganizational power is redefined through language use and acts of translation.

Table 1: Key studies on power (own illustration)

All in all, one effective way for employees to keep their position and build a power base is to help those with more power enhance their positive feelings about themselves, because people like those who are similar to them, and thus favour their own groups (of language) and disfavour competitive groups (Pfeffer, 2010). With this, language resources can be an important source of power for those people owning them to use those resources strategically to help others whose support they need and thus gaining their favour. This happens, for example, when information flows through you, which means that one source of power is determined by the control that one individual has over the communication flow.

To conclude this chapter, a short discussion on the Theory of Power will be held to highlight the main scope of this study. In fact, research on multilingualism often showcases power as something negative and to avoid, which is probably also the first instinct of the reader (including the author) (see e.g. Steyaert et al., 2011; Gaibrois, 2015). This negative view is often problematic, not only because an often too static and rigid perspective on power dynamics, but also because of the generally held assumption that there are always winners and losers in interactions where this dynamic can shift rapidly, even more so in the context of informal translations. However, power in social interactions can also encompass positive aspects with no "bad" intentions from the side of the non-professional translator. In fact, the "power over" can be replaced, in some situations, by a more active and flexible perspective of "power to" do something in order to help out. For instance, informal translators can seize opportunities, take the responsibility or initiative, or simply relate to other multilinguals in order to enhance cooperation and participation within the company. As mentioned earlier with the concept of resistance, people might be open for help and would like informal translators to step in to help with a difficult word or to forge new connections, which reduces overall resistance. However, the negative view on power cannot be neglected, neither on the individual level (e.g. exercising power over others), nor on the meso level (e.g. the superiority or inferiority of certain language groups), nor on the macro level (e.g. cultural or historical dominance of a certain group) (Hinds et al., 2014; Vaara et al., 2005; Clegg, 1989). Nevertheless, as the agentic role of individuals, and therefore a particular freedom of choice for them (such as their creativity and self-reflection), plays an important role in this study, I will position myself in an objective, interpretative manner essential to this work. For this, I intend to bring up the micro-processes of translation further below, while also drawing on the "circuit of power" brought up by Clegg (1989), which, in a next step, will be looked at in more detail.

2.1.1 The Circuit of Power

A notable effort has been made by Steward Clegg (1989), who states in his book called "Frameworks of Power", that power has become one of the central concepts of the social and human sciences par excellence, and where he brought into play a highly relevant framework called the "circuits of power". Within this framework, he comes up with three interconnected levels of analysis, explaining why the term "circuit" has been used (see Table 3 below). The first, and most important one is that of “episodic power” relationships which can be described as concrete situations where different social actors interact with each other. This can be any situation of interaction which arises on a regular basis between two or more employees, where translation skills become empowering or disempowering resources. The second part of this framework includes specific rules of practice that “fix” relations of meaning and membership, both defining social actor’s identities and subjectivities while having episodic interactions. This can be linked to the different language backgrounds that employees hold, emphasizing the effects of their respective mother tongues on the social relationships, as well as their self-perceived power within the organization. Furthermore, Clegg (1989, p.202) says that power is made up of rules which have to be “disciplined and regulated” if new powers are not to be produced and existing powers transformed. Therefore, and as a third step, there are inter-related structures of domination established by the social practices and techniques empowering or disempowering the actors, which are represented by the English language mandate in the multinational company, having important implications on the internal communication and work dynamics. All in all, this framework helps understand the power implications of informal translations in multilingual organizations and shows the three major dimensions.

	Concept of Power	**Power implications**
Language / Translation as social interaction	Episodic power in social interaction	Translation skills as empowering or disempowering resources in day-to-day interactions Translation skills as part of professional competence
Language and the construction of identity / subjectivity	Power as part of a person's linguistic background / language capital and mother tongue	Construction of superiority and inferiority relationships Formation of in- and out-groups as well as informal networks Creation of different levels of self-perceived power
Language and the reification of structures of domination	Power as a mandated / fixed control mechanism	Internal communication of the multinational company Reconstruction of work dynamics

Table 2: The framework: Power implications of informal translations (own illustration)

The stabilizing and fixing factor in circuits of power is mostly the organization itself, and rather than viewing power as having two distinct faces or being layered into different dimensions, it is more accurate to conceptualize it as a process that may traverse distinct circuits of power and resistance (Clegg, 1989). In terms of the temporal dimension, power may be conceived as occurring within a well-delimited framework in which there are systematic relationships between agencies and events, where the reference is only to the main interests which people with agencies have. In other words, a "principle of action" may be specified whereby agencies "act so as to gain control of those events in which they have an interest" (Clegg, 1989, p.212). It is possible that power may be contained within the episodic circuit only, or alternatively, it may flow through the second (dispositional) and third (facilitative) path.

Vaara et al. (2005) identify a way in which language skills become empowering or disempowering resources in organizational communication, how these skills are linked with professional competence, and how this leads to newly created social networks, thus becoming what the authors term "circuit of power". It is not only the proficiency in the corporate language that matters, but the set of languages that an individual may possess. The weighting places on certain languages is context-driven in terms of the degree to which a set of languages delivers power and influence. The other side of the "power coin" is that a lack of fluency in the corporate language can have a disempowering effect and even cause some individuals to feel isolated (Piekkari et al., 2014, p.64). What is more, the formation of shadow and ghost structures illustrate the importance of connections that allow employees to overcome more formal barriers (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Piekkari et al., 2014). Thus, informal networks can become a powerful and invisible movement enabling members quick access to a large base of potential knowledge, which is often referred to as "back channeling", as people access network contacts to facilitate information flow and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the possession of relevant information can provide an individual with a source of expert power, where he or she is able to control knowledge flows, enabling the establishment of vital contact networks (Mintzberg, 1983). In fact, networking brings you into contact with more people and keeps you in contact with them, thereby increasing the chances that when they need advice, they will call upon you. Thus, networking creates a virtuous cycle, as the increased visibility increases the individual's power and status, and this higher then makes building and maintaining social contacts overall easier (Pfeffer, 2010).

In discussing the theory of power, my concern with Clegg's Framework is that it appears overly ambitious in attempting to integrate episodic, normative, and structural elements into a single cohesive model. This effort to unify diverse dimensions of power holds potential risks to oversimplify the complexities inherent in each of these domains. For instance, episodic power, which deals with specific events or interactions, operates on a different scale and time frame than normative power, which shapes behaviours through social norms, or structural power, which is embedded in the broader organizational or societal framework. By trying to bring them together, this approach can blur the distinctions between these forms, and thus potentially overlooking the fluid and often contradictory ways in which power operates across different contexts. Additionally, the notion of “circuits of power” suggests a relatively static conceptualization of power relations, as if they are fixed or stable entities, however, power is inherently dynamic, constantly shifting in response to changes in context, agency, and resistance. A more flexible and process-oriented understanding of power would better capture its evolving nature, especially in a multilingual, multinational organization where power relations are constantly negotiated, which is why this study will try to capture these dynamics.

2.2.2 Language, communication and power

Language confers advantages upon those who are proficient in the dominant language, yet simultaneously disadvantages those who are less proficient (Bourdieu, 1991; Vaara et al., 2005). It can facilitate the transfer of information, but it can also create a barrier to mutual understanding between heterogeneous groups (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). In other words, the positive and negative consequences of language use are an inherent aspect of organizational life (Clegg, 1989). Therefore, the term "dark side of language" encompasses any deliberate act of verbal, physical, or psychological abuse that results in adverse consequences within the organizational context (Beeler & Lecompte, 2017). It is not surprising that the dark side of language is intertwined with the brighter side in international settings. It is important to note that language-based power is not inherently negative, it is rather the manner in which this power is exercised that determines its impact. In fact, fluent team members and managers can prevent the negative consequences of language from manifesting by employing their linguistic abilities to facilitate the participation of less proficient speakers and should the majority or even all employees be required to work through a non-native language, it becomes considerably easier for non-natives to problematize issues of misunderstandings, ambiguities and misinterpretations (Puck & Aichhorn, 2017).

Language has been defined by diverse researchers in many different ways over the years and it is often taken for granted that people have certain linguistic repertoires, however, we need to be more specific about the term “language” as a clear definition is not so clear-cut as often thought. Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty (2008, p.4) for instance provide a three-way definition when saying that language is “the system of sounds, words, signs, grammar and rules” for (1) communication in a speech community for spoken, written or signed interaction, (2) storing and developing cultural knowledge and values, and (3) displaying, analyzing and structuring the world as well as the personal and social identity. Generally speaking, one can combine language with culture, knowledge and power, which is why for most people "language" has always represented the core of culture, although what is understood as "culture" has been debated oftentimes in the past and natural languages in particular represent the heart and symbol of specific national and ethnic cultures (Vaara, 2005). Thus, language can also be seen as an embodiment of culture, due to the fact that it influences the way people behave and how they perceive the world. In fact, Reiss & Vermeer (2013) state that cultures use language as their conventional medium of communicating and thinking. Nevertheless, language needs to be viewed as a separate element to better grasp its implications and role in international business (Piekkari et al., 2014). In this study, the organizational, social and cultural contexts will serve as a backdrop to the analysis. In the context of a multinational company, the present study adopts the perspective that languages are to be understood as systems of meanings for employees interacting with each other in order to understand the intended message.

Furthermore, language can be explained by introducing three main sides, or layers, which can be used in the workplace (Welch et al., 2005; Piekkari et al., 2014). The first, and most important one for this study, is the everyday spoken or written language used for interpersonal, inter-unit and external communication. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the interpersonal spoken language as it is most appropriate analyzing informal translations occurring between different-speaking front-line employees. The key assumption is that employees with different mother tongues interact with each other and occasionally find it difficult to express themselves in English or French, for example. The second layer of language is the company speak, here English, which includes special terms and management process terminology specific to the firm, and which evolves over time. The third side of language is named professional or technical language which can be used to include or exclude other people from another group. The second and third layer of language can create certain barriers to communication and make it more difficult for employees to understand each other. The company speak has important implications for this study which will be analyzed further down below. The third layer, however, will not be analyzed further, as it does not represent the main focus of this study and because it is less relevant in a service multinational company.

Furthermore, communication plays a substantial part in our daily interactions with family, friends, colleagues and everyone else we deal with in our lives. Already the world-renowned Austrian-American psychologist, communication theorist, and philosopher Paul Watzlawick used to say that one cannon not communicate, suggesting that we are all senders of particular words and signs, either verbally or non-verbally. In fact, communication is crucial to any organization, especially when several language groups are mixed within a multinational company, which brings additional communication challenges for the multilingual company (Piekkari et al., 2014). When considering the impact of language, it is important to grasp the basic communication model where the sender transmits a message to the receiver via an appropriate transfer medium, such as face to face, email or telephone. What is important is that the sender should be able to accurately and meaningfully encode the message by choosing the right channel of transfer, and that the receiver is able to understand the message as it was intended to (see also Figure 4 in section 2.3.2). In this study, where language barriers play a crucial role, translation will often be used by front-line employees because the receiver is unable to fully understand what has been said, and intermediaries play a key role in effective communication by stepping in and helping out.

Moving forward, the relationship between language and power is one which has to date received comparatively little attention in the extant literature (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2014). The role of natural languages in our social life and the impact it has on our social relations cannot be emphasized enough, especially if we look at the benefits of communicating effectively in a multilingual organizational setting. What is important for this study is that the usage of different languages between colleagues makes translation activities indispensable, thus in turn influencing the individual perceptions of power dynamics and relations. The power of language is particularly visible when examining the many different challenges managers are faced with when trying to control the use of language in internal communication (Sanden, 2020). The ability to communicate effectively in a given language can facilitate the formation of language-based networks that in turn facilitate the acquisition of information and knowledge and those with the requisite language skills may find themselves occupying gatekeeping positions, facilitating the flow of information between merging organizations. Consequently, their influence may extend far beyond the formal position in everyday organizational life (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). From this perspective, language proficiency is not only a critical organizational capability but also a strategic career asset whose importance varies with organizational strategy, structure and language design. Tenzer & Pudelko (2017) state that differences in language proficiency have a more profound influence on power dynamics than their absolute skill levels. In the context of the multilingual firm in this study, this means that employees can exercise more power if they speak several languages (such as Luxemburgish, German, English and Italian for example) at an adequate level and have a broad social network with their different-speaking peers, than if they only speak good English. However, language competence may deliver power to certain individuals within the company but there is no certainty about how this power will be used (Piekkari et al., 2014). It is to be taken for granted that language use is always loaded with issues of "power, hierarchy and dominance, as well as contestation, resistance and transformation" (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2024, p. 207). Furthermore, in order to be regarded as a powerful individual, the person needs to act and speak with power (Pfeffer, 2010, p.142), because as Winston Churchill once commented on the power of language, "words are the only things that last forever".

Along with the key concepts introduced above, further important ones will be shortly highlighted in the following. Language coping mechanisms are mainly responses, whether undertaken intentionally or reactively, which become the basis of an evolving language strategy, defined as the pattern of language policy responses an organization uses to cope with the multilingualism in their international operations (Welch & Welch, 2017). Such coping strategies can include the adoption of a common corporate language, website translation or the assistance of external providers. A corporate language policy in this case refers to the general guidelines and systematic activities developed with the aim of regulating the internal modes of communication within a company (Kassis-Henderson, 2005).

Language diversity is defined as the cross-linguistic contact between individuals through a shared language which helps to "interpret, understand, and respond to information", thus improving possibilities for communication as a whole (Lauring & Selmer, 2012, p. 158). However, the term language diversity does not only mean that individuals speak a multitude of mother tongues but also that they hear what is being said in a variety of different ways, because these people are prone to use different interpretive mechanisms due to their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This important observation often goes unnoticed, as most of the time individuals are not fully aware of their limited capacity to understand the entire message correctly, and therefore are not hearing the same thing as others would. This also plays a crucial role in this study, as front-line employees do not always hear the exact meaning of what has been said by the sender because they use different mother tongues to interpret for themselves (see also section 2.3.3 below).

Authors	Year	Journal	Main research question (Title if no RQ*)	Key Findings	Focus of the study
Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki & Welch	2014	Journal of International Business Studies	*How do IB authors account for the translation decisions they make in their research?*	The meaning of languages has only a certain equivalence and translation can be used both for data analysis and as a source for gathering data.	Challenges in the perception of translation in the context of international context.

Ivanova-Gongne, Barner-Rasmussen, Torkkeli & Elo	2023	Industrial Marketing Management	*How do individual managers in SMEs draw upon the home and host countries' linguistic contexts when making sense of language use in intercultural business interactions?*	Certain variation in how Russian respondents make sense of the role of language in their intercultural business interactions. The context and language, as well as translation power dynamics are intertwined, generating an additional level of power dynamics that emerge from the business interactions.	Approach of individual-level struggles related to understanding and handling linguistic boundaries in internationally operating SMEs as sensemaking processes.
Neeley	2013	Organization Science	*Do nonnative speakers of a lingua franca perceive status loss in the context of a lingua franca mandate? And to the extent that they do, how do nonnative speakers of the English lingua franca respond?*	Regardless of their English fluency level, nonnative speakers express a sense of status loss. Their levels of language performance anxiety and job insecurity were distinctly shaped by their self-assessed fluency level. Nonnative speakers respond differently depending on their self-perceived fluency.	Native speakers' communication behaviour and the factors that provoke or deepen feelings of incompetence in nonnative speakers.
Piekkari, Tietze, Koskinen	2019	Organization Studies	* Metaphorical and interlingual translation in moving organizational practices across languages	Paraprofessional translators' work is significant in the moving of organizational practices across languages. The meeting of languages provides local translators with a whole new space to actively influence the ways in which incoming organizational practices are received and changed.	Understanding the interplay between metaphorical and interlingual translation can illuminate the role of translator agency in the discursive constitution of multilingual organizations.
Gutierrez-Huerter, Moon, Gold & Chapple	2020	Journal of International Business Studies	*What are the micro-processes (i.e., the activities undertaken by translators) that lead to specific types of translation in the transfer of a practice from HQ to its subsidiaries?*	Deep understanding of the micro foundations of translation when transferring practices from HQ to subsidiaries. Shows the importance to understanding the social, spatial, and temporal situatedness of translators in the use of specific translation types and demonstrates the dynamic, open-ended nature of translation.	Practices between the headquarters (HQ) of a multinational enterprise (MNE) and its subsidiaries and micro-processes that individuals deploy to translate organizational practices that are being transferred.
Piekkari, Welch, Welch, Peltonen & Vesa	2013	International Business Review	*How do MNCs and individuals handle the translation requirements associated with working in a multilingual environment?*	Translation responses are an important part of the provision of customer service. Self-translation and the use of social networks are the most common responses, whereas the central translation department was infrequently called upon.	Investigation of everyday translation behaviour undertaken by practising managers and employees who are not trained as professional translators.
Koskela, Koskinen & Pilke	2017	Target	*To what extent does the meeting-talk exhibit translatoriality? Who takes on translatorial roles in the absence of professional translators and interpreters? What types of translatorial action are there?*	Three types of translatorial action (duplicating, summarizing and expanding) were distinguished to identify how translators proceed when translating during informal interactions.	Paraprofessional translators making use of their language skills while interpreting alongside their main job.

Piekkari, Welch & Welch	2014	-	Language in International Business: The Multilingual Reality of Global Business Expansion	-	Understanding and acknowledging the complexity that the multilingual reality presents, highlighting the role of the individual social actor and the linguistic resources they hold.
Massey & Wieder	2021	International Workshop on Management & Language	* Harnessing a Hidden Power – International Corporate Communications, Translators and Translatorial Agency	The hidden power of translators can be seen as a valuable asset and is not sufficiently integrated in strategic planning and design. Paraprofessional translators exert more agency and adopt a more adaptive and creative translation strategy than professional translators.	The oftentimes unnoticed power of translation represents an unused resource that can be crucial to how organizations develop and reach out to target groups and markets worldwide.

Table 3: Key studies on language and translation (own illustration)

To conclude, research suggests that employees might be able to rise in the hierarchy owing to their valuable language skills (Gaibrois, 2018; Logemann & Piekkari, 2015), or even to find themselves in more powerful positions than under normal circumstances (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). Language skills can be interpreted as empowering or disempowering resources (Vaara et al., 2005), and as a source of individual power and influence (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Janssens et al., 2004; Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2014). Conversely, a number of studies suggest that employees with few or no skills in the relevant language face stumbling blocks leading to potential hindrances which range from remaining quiet in the context of episodic social interactions owing to a lack of language skills (Vaara et al., 2005) to encountering serious obstacles to career progression (Steyaert et al., 2011). We now move on to the Theory of Translation used in this study to set another foundation for this study, namely informal translations and the power implications they have on the multinational corporation.

2.2 Theory of Translation

In a multilingual world, translation is an omnipresent reality for all those people involved not only in international business, but also in foreign affairs, inter-governmental cooperation, sports and all kinds of situations where people from different cultures come together. Translation can be seen as a way to "cope with the demands of localization of languages" (Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014, p.27). Furthermore, the constant need for translation requires employees and managers from different organizations to consider possible ways to enhance their internal and external communication. Although the rapid development of machine and computer-based translation has put the human translator in a novel position, the ongoing globalization of businesses and human communication in all kinds of areas, in both formal and informal situations, makes sure that translation needs to grow and diversify. At the beginning of this century, a large body of research has emerged on the role of language issues in international business and management studies, but there has been little specific focus on translation (Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman, 2007; Harzing, Köster, & Magner, 2011; Kassis-Henderson, 2005; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a). This may be because much of the work has concentrated on manufacturing rather than service multinationals, where translation is critical to service delivery and quality. But even in the service literature, the role of language and translation in service encounters has received limited attention (Piekkari et al., 2013).

As communication is at the heart of international business, we may conceive many of these multilingual workplaces as spaces of translation, with their explicit or implicit language and translation policies (Kalra & Szymanski, 2023). Michael Cronin (2006, p. 68) sees the multilingual, multiethnic space as first and foremost a "translation space", a space where translation takes place for mutual understanding and where multilingualism exists. In other words, the multilingual organization analyzed in this study is a space where translation happens on a regular basis to ensure comprehensibility and where multilingual repertoires from different individuals meet and mix (Koskinen, 2020b). Thus, in the everyday work of the organization, translation is much more widespread, fluid and permeable, and the recurring orality, as opposed to written translation, makes it even more short-lived and dynamic. This will also have important implications for this study, as the focus lies on oral translations, or interpretations, where front-line employees act in multiple situations in an uncoordinated manner outside of their formal job description. This ongoing movement between different languages is defined as "translatoriality", and once looking at this phenomenon, we can recognize that translatoriality is embedded in social life in most parts of the current networked world.

Next, we proceed to the key definition of an (informal) translation, as well as some concepts and assumptions relevant for this research study. Translation is defined by Piekkari et al. (2013, p.772) as "the process of moving communication from one language to another", while the term "translation" is used both for written and oral communication, whereas "interpretation" is often used specifically for oral communication (Piekkari et al., 2014; Sanden, 2015). As mentioned earlier, the concept of translation is used as an overarching term, and synonymous to interpretation, concentrating on the oral transmission of words and meanings. In fact, translation is not restricted to formal contexts involving professional translators, but also comprises the wide range of informal day-to-day situations, often by people who have no defined translation role (see section 2.3.2). The broad conception of translation that circulated within different research strands suggests that the English definition of translation does not usually exist in other languages (Jaivin, 2013, p.3). For instance, in English the word derives from Latin "translatum", meaning that a word or idea is "carried across", or "translating something from one place or realm". The author states that in Hindi ("anuvad") the translation process suggests "to tell again", while in Japan there exist different words for translation to show differences in quality such as "setsuyaku" (humble, clumsy) and "choyaku" (better than the original). In this study, we might stick to the idea of carrying across and keeping the original meaning from one language to another, while additionally taking into account the cultural nuances. As this study takes place in Luxembourg where two different families of languages converge (romance for French and Germanic for German and English, while the latter can be seen as mixed), this latter point will have an important influence on the quality of this study.

Informal communication is not easy to study but can be important for an organization since it involves all other communication beyond formal communication that takes place between employees and within the organization (Keyton, 2017). Informal messages can also be sent via emails, by phone or online meetings, and can be verbal and written, although they usually occur orally as unplanned communications between employees. Bovée & Thill (2021) for example describe informal communication as the conversations employees may have with colleagues during their workday in unconstrained settings, such as coffee breaks or after a business meeting. In this study, informal translations therefore can be defined as unscheduled and spontaneous interpretations done by so-called non-professional translators with strong language skills in order to translate a word (or a meaning) form one language (or culture) into another. How informal translations can lead to different power dynamics will be analyzed more in depth in section 2.3.1.

The theory of translation used in this study is the skopos theory, because actions, such as translations, are, by definition, goal-oriented and purposeful (see e.g. Koskela et al., 2017; Nord, 1997; Massey & Wieder, 2021; Piekkari et al, 2019). Thus, translation can be seen as a situated, multimodal and purpose-driven activity involving multiple actors, factors and interests, taking into account the interpretations and cultural filters present in the focal company (Venuti, 2019). These skopos-led translations are applied by the non-professional human translator who crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries during informal communication where translatorial action is needed. Furthermore, translation, according to skopos theory, can be seen as a form of communicative interaction between social agents, rather than a simple transfer from one language to another (Chidlow et al., 2014). To sum up, skopos theory assumes that the communicative aim is obtained through different possibilities of evaluating a meaning or a word with all its cultural nuances, and that the translator is seen as a language and cross-cultural expert, or at least knowledgeable agent for interorganizational communication.

For the goal of this study, the paraprofessional translator acts upon his or her knowledge with a specific purpose in mind, namely, to interpret certain words or meanings to convey a message which has not been fully understood by other actors involved in the complex multilingual setting, and it will be this skopos which is transmitted in a target culture adequate way. However, we might suppose a situation where the language-savvy translator doesn't want to interpret immediately and that his/her aim is to withhold his or her real intention for a moment in order to obtain the best possible position (Vermeer, 1998). In this case, the goal of translating can be precisely not to showcase what he or she really means or intends to do, as it would be favourable for the engaged translator not to be clear about the eventual aim and which can have power repercussions for those involved.

Oftentimes, the oral (and sometimes written) translation needs to be adapted to the target-culture of the receivers to enable them to capture what the sender is aiming at (Vermeer, 1998). The author also states that translating depends on the skopos, or aim, intended of the translation, and thus cannot always faithfully represent what has been said as it can miss the point. Hence, the translator has to interpret the meaning or some words so that the skopos of the intended message is understood by all sides. Therefore, the quality of an informal translation, as described in this study, is one which is adequate to its purpose and transmitted according to the respective cultural norms, values, etc. What is more, given the different contexts in which these translations can take place, there can be no optimal or right translation and hence the interactants have to rely on each other and assume the correct translation if they have not understood something (Nord, 1997; Chidlow et al., 2014).

A translator mediates the travel of ideas and frames foreign words, concepts and practices so that they make sense in the local context (Logemann & Piekkari, 2015; Becker-Ritterspach et al., 2010; Boxenbaum, 2006). In general, we can therefore define non-professional or paraprofessional translators, both terms will be used as synonyms, as doing translations alongside their other occupational tasks, while often not even recognizing that they are active interpreters when interacting with their colleagues (Koskinen, 2017; Koskinen et al., 2020b). In other words, these individuals are professionals and translators, but not professional translators and thus interpret alongside their main job in order to accomplish their primary duties within the MNC. The skopos of this type of translator can be described as involving all participants in the discussions held on a regular basis and enabling participation by rephrasing the key words and meanings in a way that everyone has the ability to understand the content, thus preventing miscommunication. In this study, we assume that the non-professional translator shows active engagement and a certain curiosity towards the topics encountered as well as the flexibility and courage to step in in an unprepared but controlled manner.

Lastly, the concept of heteroglossia has particular relevance to intercultural management as it refers to different speaking styles, word usage and accents (Beeler & Lecompte, 2017). Heteroglossia has become an asset in today's multicultural workplace, and, according to Steyaert et al. (2011), multilingual groups work best when the choice of language is appropriate to the context and the language skills of the participants. In fact, translators can greatly assist in the exchange of information between two parties who do not have sufficient language skills to engage in direct communication, or who want to engage with their peer, who have different mother tongues, on a deeper and more personal level (Neeley & Dumas, 2016).

All in all, employees may have to resort to ad hoc solutions to deal with a language problem on the spot, even in cases where there is an established language policy, as shown in Piekkari et al.'s (2013) study of a corporate translation department, where employees often opted for self-translation or turned to their network rather than using the company's translation services. Lønsmann (2011) finds that ad hoc and informal help from colleagues is the most valuable resource in overcoming language barriers, and Tietze (2010) also shows how language-skilled employees can take it upon themselves to help colleagues who need language support. A common misconception about translation is that it is a mechanistic, neutral transcoding process from one natural language to another, fully preserving an invariant core of meaning across languages and cultures (Massey & Wieder, 2021). Crucially, however, translation is a situated, multimodal, skopos-led (purpose-driven) activity involving numerous actors, factors and interests, including the interpretations and cultural filters used by human translators, as well as the clients, recipients and end users of their work (Venuti, 2019).

2.2.1 Translation Activities and Processes

Translation activities in organizations encompass a wide range of informal and formal tasks, as highlighted by Piekkari & Tietze (2021), and the paraprofessional translator has critical resources for managing language plurality and ensuring effective communication in multilingual environments. Furthermore, translation is seen as a way to navigate language diversity and address hidden processes in organizational operations. Tenzer, Terjesen & Harzing (2017) embrace the "transformative power of translation" (Brannen, Piekkari & Tietze 2017, p.501) and invite researchers to cross disciplinary boundaries and turn to translation studies. And as Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio (2011, p.293) put it: "Somewhere in between, products, systems, plans, visions, strategies, budgets and contracts [...] are translated. Which aspects are selected for translation, by whom, how faithfully the translations are carried out, at what cost and to what standard of quality", the authors do not find a clear answer. A significant contribution to contemporary developments was made by Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert (2004), who proposed to move to translation studies to better understand how international companies deal with language diversity. Together, these studies unravel the nature of everyday translation work, the identity of translators, and the direction of translation flows and processes in multilingual contexts (Piekkari & Tietze, 2021).

Piekkari et al. (2019), for instance, construct a conceptual matrix that explains the relationship between interlingual translation and metaphorical translation (i.e. sense-making processes) in multilingual settings. In fact, Translation Studies are often concerned with the transfer of meaning between the written or spoken words, and while people usually see translation as being rather mechanistic, focusing on how single words are expressed in the other language, interlingual translation emphasizes the importance and complexity of conveying intended meanings, which opens up a whole new arena for translatorial agency for non-professional translators. Their resulting invisibility increases their agentic power by removing the constraints of having to explain, justify or account for their decisions. Furthermore, in metaphorical translation scenarios, the authors also found out that paraprofessional interlingual translators engage more often in translation activities alongside their recognized organizational role and therefore are more integrated into organizational reality than translation professionals. Because of their dual role, these agentic translators are more likely to use their agency in both interlingual and metaphorical translation (see Table 4). So far, there are no accounts that bring together interlingual and metaphorical translation as mutually constitutive processes, and by integrating insights from Translation Studies, Piekarri et al. (2019) try to explain how organizational practices change in translation, bring to light translators' linguistic resources and the power positions and hierarchies they create, and make visible the consequences of multilingualism in organizations. In this study, the focus lies on interlingual translations with an ongoing process of looking for and finding the right words and meanings in another language (and culture), but a metaphorical translation can offer important additions, because it sees the translation as an ongoing sense-making and -giving process and puts the paraprofessional translator more in the foreground.

Key dimensions	Interlingual translation	Metaphorical translation
Definition	A process of reverbalizing meaning in another natural language	A process through which practices change when they are carried over to a new organizational context
Main objective	Finding relevant equality between the source and target text with required adaptations to fit the translation in the new context	Matching the new practice in the new context and making it locally suitable
Basis for translation	Language- and text-based	Language- and text-based, including the materialization of practices
Translator	Mostly professional translators, but increasingly also paraprofessional translators, who undertake interlingual translation	Paraprofessional translators (i.e., managers, employees and consultants), who undertake both metaphorical and interlingual translation
Agency of the translator	Invisible	Visible
View on the translation process	Translation as a decision-making process, while completing and directing it through language choices	Translation as an open-ended, ongoing sense-making/-giving process

Table 4: Comparison between interlingual and metaphorical translation (Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2019)

Since front-line employees analyzed in this study hold different language skills and proficiency levels, and formal meetings require specific communication in order to fulfil their goals, some sort of translatorial action is required for a business meeting or other forms of interactions to be effectively carried out (Koskela et al., 2017).

As described above, informal translations are actions which have to accomplish a certain *purpose* and can be specified as "translatorial actions" in order to translate messages from one language to another with the help of a professional translator (Holz-Mänttäri, 1984; Nord, 1997). Furthermore, the recipients of the translation activity at hand usually have the ability to deduce and attribute a certain meaning to what has been just translated in their preferred language, which can be described as the *function* of a translation (Vermeer, 1996). A third interesting point can be made, namely the *intentions* displayed by the actors helping out and doing their interpretations, which come only from the translator him- or herself and may differ from the general translation purpose. In fact, the skopos, function and intention can, but don't have to, coincide, as they can be perceived very differently from the individuals involved. Doing informal oral translation, however, is a type of translational action where the source and target text are both presented only once in oral form and thus are difficult to observe, track and capture. Hence, unless documented or recorded in meetings, the translator's role is rather short-lived and impermanent and the words spoken vanish as soon as they have been spoken (Reiss & Vermeer, 2013; Cronin, 2006).

One crucial way of conducting the translation task by oneself is self-translation which "allows for quick responses and has other positive aspects, including a high variety, pleasure, and confidence for those translating" (Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014, p.41). Alternatively, the sender or receiver may use some form of external assistance to carry out the translation activity. Technological solutions are unlikely to completely replace the immediacy, cultural sensitivity and adaptability of knowledgeable human translators in many informal and social situations where business is discussed. In today's rapidly changing world, novel tools such as artificial intelligence, DeepL, Google Translate and other translation software is widespread across all areas of different forms of interaction and needs to be taken into consideration in the conceptual framework of this study.

The activation of the social network is another key factor in the translation process and ultimately in the ability of the firm to respond to its global customers and global language needs (Piekkari et al., 2014). In fact, new members of staff are more likely to revert to formal routes than existing personnel because they tend to lack the work-related networks that can be used for translation purposes. Some relationships are particularly strong due to frequent interaction between employees and the resulting reciprocity based on trust. Company-based networks comprise contacts made through work related activities such as interactions with external clients, government officials, former colleagues and professional bodies. In contrast, individual-based networks are the result of social interactions with former school or university colleagues, friends and relatives. A study by Piekkari et al. (2013) suggests two elements of the so-called "advice network", namely finding someone to ask and someone who can perform the task, which can be either a business or a personal contact.

Two German professors, Hans Georg Wolff and Klaus Moser, offer, in this study's context, a reliable definition of networking: "Behaviors that are aimed at building, maintaining, and using informal relationships that possess the potential benefit of facilitating work-related activities of individuals by voluntarily gaining access to resources and maximizing advantages" (Wolff & Moser, 2009, p.4). For instance, it may be that successful people have more social contacts not because the networking guides their success but because other people want to stay in contact with them to obtain the benefits of their status (Pfeffer, 2010). In line with this, Sanden & Lonsmann (2018) state that the ability to ask a colleague for help largely depends on one's individual network and social relationships at work. As employees' networks may themselves depend on their language skills, this ad hoc approach to collegial help may be problematic, especially for employees without a large network in the company. What is more, Vaara et al.

(2005, p.611) showed that the position of the language node, in this case the person helping out, is not always an enviable one, as the extra language work may take the person away from their own busy schedule or cause them to suffer from work overload as “translation machines”. What is more, translation activities may be further constrained by concerns about the security of confidential company information and knowledge in areas such as sales strategies, technology transfer and training.

In the following, the most important factors concerning translation activities are introduced and explained. In many situations, the most effective translation is <u>rapid</u>, so that the recipient of a communication can immediately formulate a response in the relevant language, as it is the case in many situations, including customer service, sales and other similar work. Furthermore, <u>immediacy</u> is especially important in informal, social and other forms of person-to-person interaction. However, in face-to-face situations, it may not be possible to ensure highly <u>accurate</u> translation, and while translation in such situations may require a quick response, it also allows for an adaptation and clarification to ensure that the information is delivered and understood between the two parties (Piekkari et al., 2014). Therefore, in the case of a multinational company with multilingual employees, informal translations need to be quick, accurate, <u>low-cost</u> and, of course, <u>confidential</u>. What is also important for this study is that the <u>task complexity</u> as well as the <u>nature and criticality</u> of the translation task will be considered to better understand and categorize how paraprofessional translators conduct informal translations.

The *translation process* involves various actors, factors and activities, from formal translators to informal paraprofessional translators, while this study focuses on the latter. Research by Piekkari et al. (2014) illustrates the dynamic and context-dependent nature of translation in multinational corporations, and it becomes evident that the translation of information is an essential aspect of international business and without translation, IB would be unfeasible and impractical. In the field of organizational studies, the concept of translation is defined as "a process whereby an object changes from one state to another as it moves within and across organizational settings" (Wæraas & Nielsen, 2016, p. 247, as cited in Outila et al., 2021, p.1583). For the purpose of this study, translation is the process of adapting the original message in order to render it accessible to the target audience within the context of the local environment. While the lay understanding is often mechanistic, focusing on mapping how individual words are expressed in another language, interlingual translation scholarship and practice emphasize the importance and the complexity of carrying intended meanings across (see e.g. Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2019).

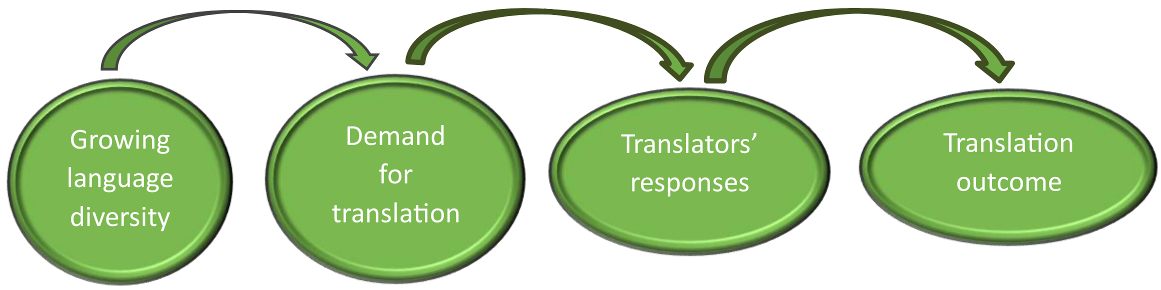

Figure 1: Basic translation process (own illustration)

In Figure 1, we can see the basic process for front-line employees in the context of this study, where a translation need arises due to communication challenges and a rising language diversity between employees. With this demand for translation, the non-professional translator comes into play and helps to render the needed information accessible for their colleagues. If the latter don't decide to get help and/or the former doesn't step in to translate, the individual can decide to self-translate, for instance by using an online translation tool or by asking a friend or family member, or just do nothing. In the case where these employees get help by non-professional translators, a translation outcome, which ideally includes the correct translation of the word or meaning which is in line with the translator's main purpose, is reached.

2.2.2 Micro-processes of informal translations

We now turn to a more detailed description of the various tasks done by the paraprofessional translator, who either consciously or unconsciously carry these out in a different manner. In fact, Gutierrez-Huerter et al. (2020) identified a sequence of micro-processes in which three types of translation activities emerge. By mapping these micro-processes, identifying the conditions under which they occur, and connecting them to the certain types of translation, the authors provide a comprehensive understanding of the micro-foundations of translation when transferring practices from headquarters to subsidiaries. The framework elucidates the significance of comprehending the social, spatial, and temporal situatedness of translators in the utilization of specific translation types, thereby demonstrating the dynamic and open-ended nature of translation.

What is important, is that the organizational design and decision-making structure acts as a barrier or facilitator to the micro-processes of translation. The authors, during their data analysis, made a deductive analysis of the three types of translation, namely filtering, repurposing and coupling. In this study, these three translation tasks are complemented by two additional types, namely summarizing and expanding to make better sense of the informal translation process (Koskela et al., 2017). In our context, micro-processes refer to the sequenced activities, efforts and experiences of translators that unfold before and after the transformation of the message is carried over. As the individual responses are very subjective and each context and subject is different, not every step might come into play, or they might occur in another sequence. However, these types provide a strong foundation for the basic translation process, which will be complemented by these types in a next step.

- *Summarizing* is a linguistic practice which often comes across meetings, sometimes irrespective of language, and is reshaped in the bilingual context so that it becomes an important factor in involving the participants during a meeting. Essentially, summarizing is a rather strategic activity that prioritizes efficiency and relevance and makes it a valuable tool in multilingual communication with the goal to preserve as much of the original content as possible, while keeping the original meaning.
- In the context of this study, *filtering* occurs when non-professional translators eliminate or downplay particular features of an interactional discussion in two different languages which may be perceived as unattractive and occasionally hides the true meaning of what is to be said. A paraprofessional translator thus filters out what he or she thinks is the most important aspect and asks how and where best to intervene in the given situation.
- The third translation type, namely *repurposing*, refers to a change of meaning to enhance its understanding in the new context of the other language or culture. The message is decoded and reformulated for the target language and culture, while also adapting the tone and style of communication, as well as the intent of the message.
- *Coupling* and *expanding* take place when boundary-spanners add new words, symbols or metaphors, amongst others, to what has been originally said to simplify the overall meaning. When coupling or pairing the informational content, the informal translator tries to connect and influence the words or meanings in a meaningful way in the target culture, trying to maintain and conserve equivalence and consistency along the way.

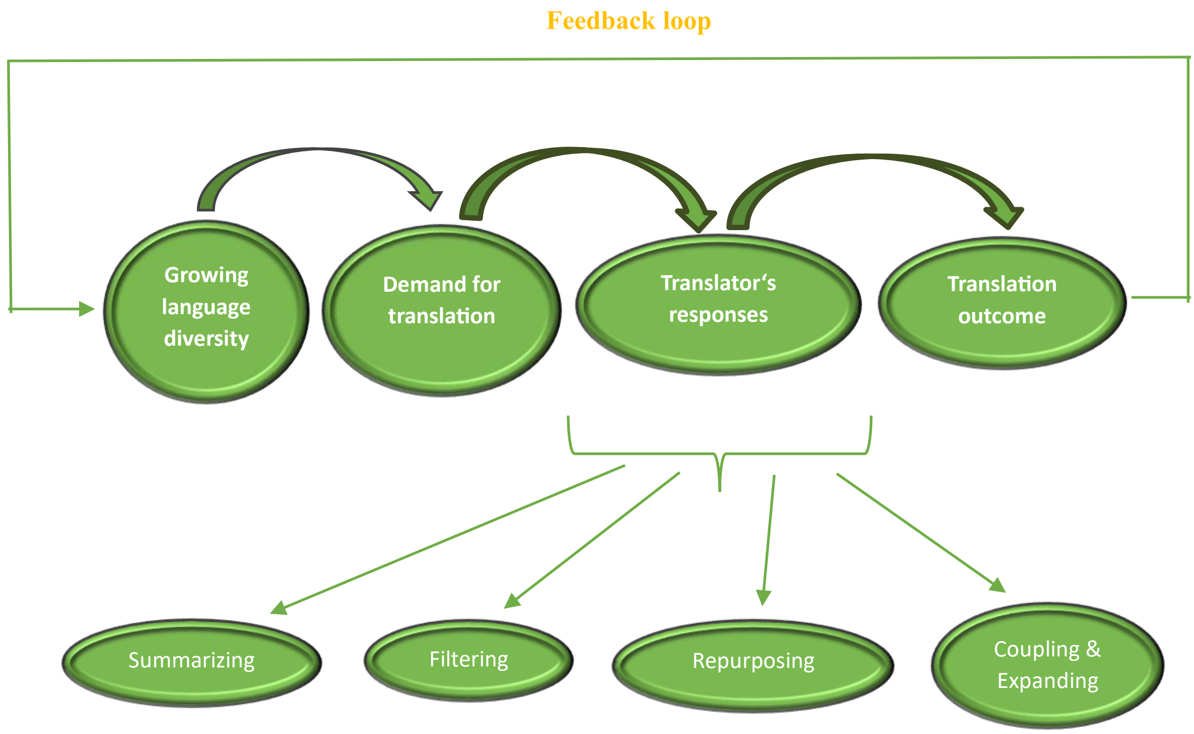

Figure 2: Extended framework of the micro-processes of informal translation

In this extended framework we also find a feedback loop to account for possible corrections and adaptations, which adds to the dynamic nature of informal translations. In fact, non-professionals during informal translations, as all people, change their behaviour constantly and learn from their mistakes (and hopefully also from what went smooth) and ask themselves questions such as "Did I translate the word correctly?" or "Did I respect the other culture by adjusting my style of communication enough, if at all?" to ensure that the translation was done in an appropriate and respectful way.

To sum up, individuals are at the heart of any response to a translation request, and how they react, sometimes in stressful circumstances, can be critical to internal workflows and information exchange, customer and stakeholder relations, and translation quality. The volatility of translation demand therefore makes it difficult for management to predict and plan language resources (Piekkari et al., 2014). In addition, the social network, which often takes place unnoticed, is critical to the translation process and the company's ability to respond to its global customers and other language needs. All in all, translation can be viewed as a process of recontextualization from one language and culture to another (e.g. Chidlow et al., 2014). In line with skopos theory, the role of the paraprofessional translator is elevated, because he or she is eventually the one to modify and balance the multiple reflexions involved in the translation process and brings to bear his and her own worldviews and experiences, translational norms and preferred strategies, while understanding of the source and target culture. Venuti's (2008) cultural politics perspective similarly agrees that the translator is not a neutral transmitter of the meaning of the source text, but rather the active co-producer of the target text. We now move on to the last part of this chapter, which are the influences that power has on the key aspects.

2.3 Implications of Power

In this section, the main influences that power has in the context of this study will be examined in more detail in order to grasp the importance of the topic at hand. More precisely, the critical factors and concepts which have been outlined above, and which are interconnected with informal translations, will be put together, as well as the role of the paraprofessional translator and, eventually, the English language in the context of the multilingual company. Different dynamics can create a complex web of influence, where informal translators mediate not just a particular language, but power relation within the organization.

2.3.1 Informal Translations

In this chapter, informal translations and their role in having or exercising power in the context of a multilingual organization will be introduced in greater detail. The concepts displayed in Figure 3 have already been explained earlier and are depicted in the conceptual framework down below. The way and intensity in which informal translations are influenced by, for instance, the language diversity of the company and social networks of a front-line employee can vary in space and time and will strongly depend the agentic roles that people take on in their interactions when conducting informal translations.

As will be discussed further below, paraprofessional translators have, through the prism of Organization Studies, been described as holding a "hidden power" (Piekkari, Tietze and Koskinen, 2020, p.1315) as they have the capacity to alter the meaning through a chain of interpretative decisions they make when they translate (Massey & Wieder, 2021). This enables them to play a pivotal role in the strategic and operational communication that takes place within multilingual organizations (Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2020; Koskinen, 2020b). Similarly, Janssens and Steyaert (2014) adopt an understanding of a human-centered multilingualism that conceives of language as a social activity and highlights the manner in which users mobilize multiple linguistic resources to express their voice. Such hybrid practices may give rise to the emergence of novel enactments of power relations, as the creativity and dynamism of mixed language use "undermines hegemonic linguistic practices and produces new possibilities of speaking and communicating" (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014, p.634).

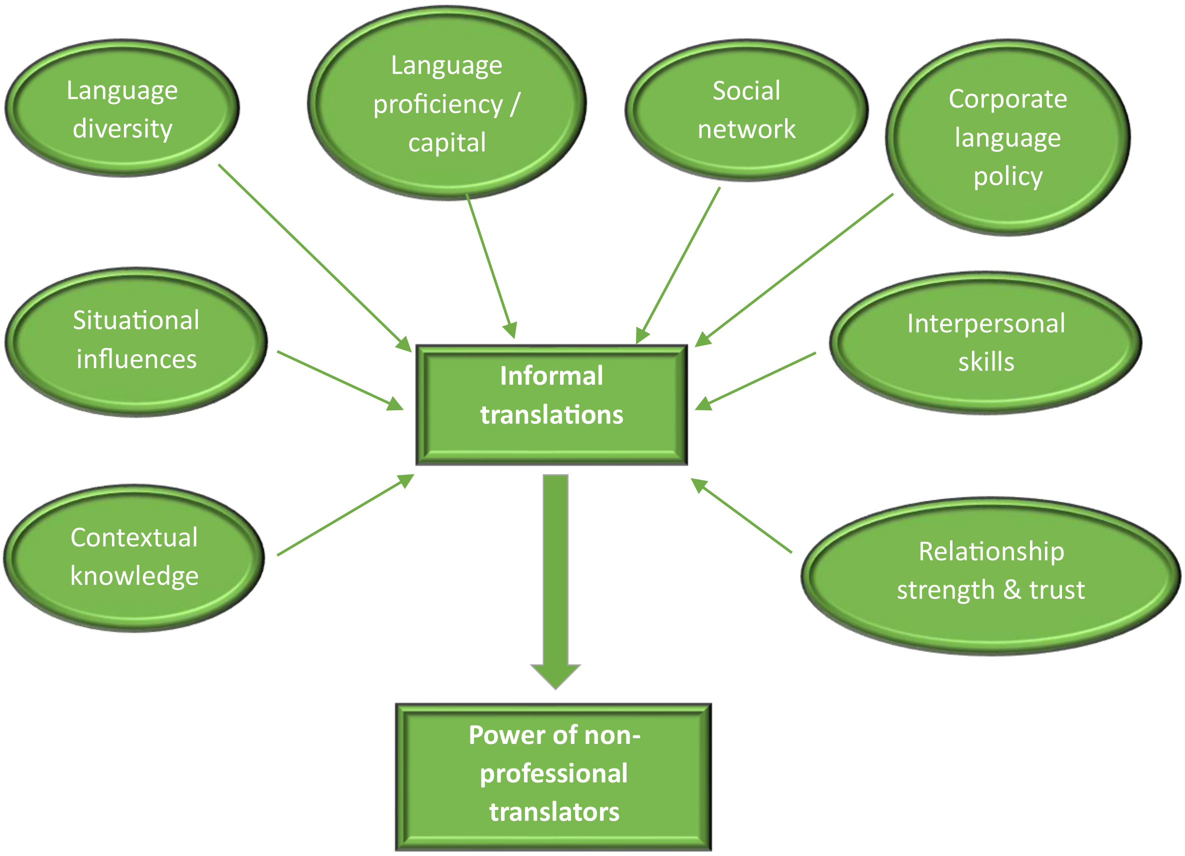

Figure 3: Conceptual map

Figure 3 shows a conceptual framework which includes the most relevant contributors and factors influencing in one way or the other informal translations leading to a certain power base of non-professional translators. What is important to mention is that this map is not exhaustive and can be further enlarged over time, if new and relevant factors are required.

Furthermore, Baker (2018) examines how translation is not a neutral activity but one that can influence power relations, especially when conflicts and miscommunication occur. Although the author's focus is much broader, her insights have relevance for understanding how informal translation within a multilingual firm can become a source of power. We will now move on to the role of paraprofessional translators and the impact they have on informal translations and power dynamics relevant for this study.

2.3.2 Paraprofessional Translators

In this section, we will take a closer look at who carries out the translation task within multinational companies, what the role of these so-called "paraprofessional translators" is, and how they use their language resources and accommodate situations with their language skills to exercise power by influencing how a particular situation is going to evolve.

Paraprofessional translators, as defined above, represent an interesting sub-group of "boundary spanner" and Barner-Rasmussen (2015, p. 145) point to their potential as consensus building creators, who "leverage their linguistic and cultural savvy by interpreting and managing not only their own responses but also those of others nearby, thus helping to frame day-to-day interaction in consensual terms" (e.g. Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Tietze et al., 2017). These individuals are thus often seen by other members of an organization as facilitating specific instances of communication between two groups by spanning interlingual boundaries as they translate certain meanings that are not clear to everyone. This is particularly interesting because, unlike professional translators, they are not subject to specific norms, codes of conduct or professional ideologies, thus shifting the boundaries of translation behaviour (Koskinen, 2020b). This leads to the notion that these not trained translators have the power to undertake bolder translations and thus exert more agency. This goes in line with the study of Sanden & Lonsmann (2018) who use the above-mentioned concept of "discretionary power" to explain how and why front-line employees diverge from the corporate language policies, emphasizing the bottom-up perspective of employees on corporate language management.

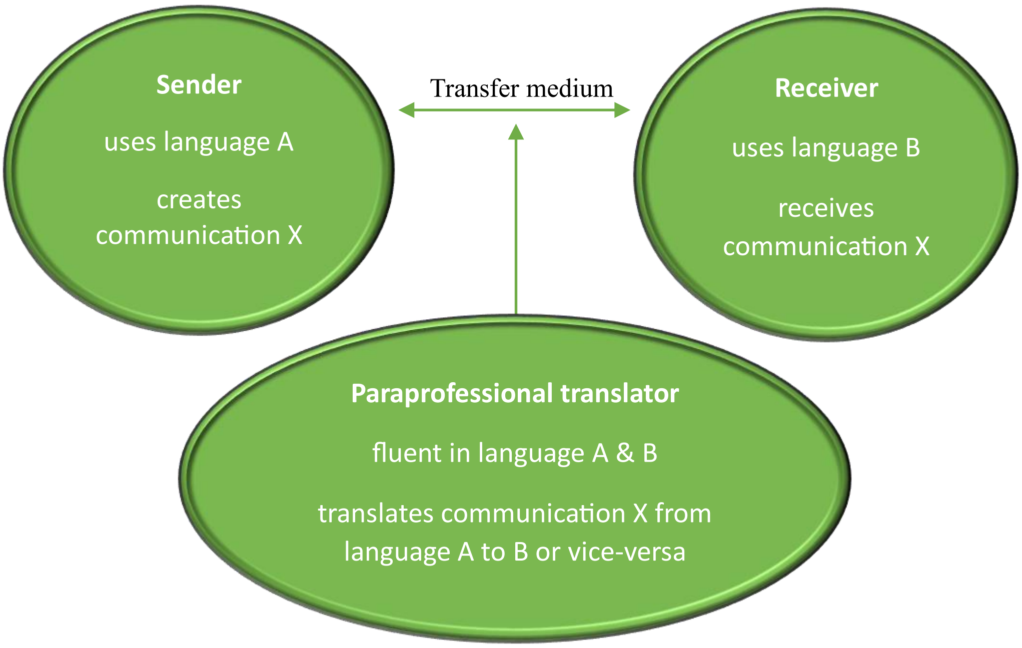

Figure 4: Influence of the paraprofessional translator in the translation model

Speakers mobilize their multilingual resources in complex and simultaneous ways, by moving away from any singular norm to perform a range of creative and dynamic discursive practices. Translation is done by volunteering members of staff who have other roles in the company, rather than by trained translators or people employed for that task (Cogo & Yanaprasart, 2018). Furthermore, the presence of trained and untrained professional translators and interpreters has tended to be seen by translation scholars as a potentially disruptive source of tension, as can be seen in Figure 4 above (Perez-Gonzales & Susam-Saraeva, 2012). Professionals without formal translation training have generally been more inclined to work for lower translation fees, thus undermining the social recognition of translators' professional freedom as an asset worthy of appropriate remuneration. However, it is the non-professional translators and interpreters, i.e. people who not only have no formal training in language mediation but also work for free, who have always posed the greatest threat to labour market structures as well as to the identity and livelihood of translation professionals. Non-professionals do not usually receive professional training in translation and are not "indoctrinated", so to speak, into certain professional norms, such as those that require close adherence to a source text (Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva, 2012). They are more willing to "innovate", to play around with the material at hand, to retell it in a way that is likely to be more interesting and understandable to their audience, often because they are part of the audience themselves.

Venuti's (2017) work discusses the power dynamics inherent in translation practices and that translators can either assert their influence or remain invisible, which is relevant for understanding the dual role of informal translators as both mediators and power holders. In metaphorical translation scenarios we might encounter paraprofessional interlingual translators who are involved in translation activities besides their acknowledged organizational role and are therefore more extensively embedded within the company than translation professionals (Piekkari et al., 2019). The possibility for active decision-making also shows the translator's agency and space for active participation in adaptively repurposing for instance the translated text to fit the intended skopos of the translation process (Holz-Mänttäri, 1984; Vermeer, 1996). For volunteers and the paraprofessional translator, the purpose of the translation is oftentimes more personal than for professional translators who provide their services to clients, and the former can therefore be expected to take on more agentic roles. Last but not least, the English language relevant for this case study will be looked at in more detail, while also looking at the consequences for the informal translator.

2.3.3 English Language Mandate

In this study, the focus lies on aspects of power in the use of English in the case firm and the various perspective on English in the literature, while allowing both a critical and positive view with regard to the English language (Steyaert, Ostendorp & Gaibrois 2011). On the more critical side, I will address English proficiency as a source of individual agentic power as well as a source of division between employees who hold different organizational positions. On the positive side, a common company language, such as English, provides employees with a common ground for better and more effective coordination, participation and overall communication (Gaibrois, 2015). Here, we will employ Janssens and Steyaert's (2014) proposition to explore the micro-variations of English as a "multilingual franca", and to see the use of English as a dynamic relational process where individuals in the company are regularly in touch with their different-speaking colleagues.

Generally speaking, a language policy can be defined as a sociocultural process that includes official acts and documents as well as everyday language practices that convey normative declarations about legitimate and illegitimate language forms and uses, and can have important implications, amongst others, for the status, rights and roles for all employees within the given organization (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty, 2008). In this study, the case company operates mainly under an English language mandate, which means that all documentation as well as formal business meetings are held in English. However, French also takes an important role, as many of the employees and clients speak this language and is often used in interactions between managers, colleagues and the firm's clients. Furthermore, German is the main communication language at their mother firm in Frankfurt, Germany, which means that it is used extensively in the German city, while English and French remain the dominant languages in Luxembourg. In its final outcome, English has emerged as the natural choice and deserves special consideration because of the need to communicate effectively, to create a balance of power and to establish a neutral language policy (Vaara, 2005). English was thus constructed as the "lingua franca" or "universal" language that would be the most natural and legitimate choice for the (at least officially) communication in the multinational corporate context.

The growing body of empirical research examining the mandate of English in the global workplace sheds light on the politics of language choice (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Vaara et al., 2005) and language fluency as a source of power and status (Hinds et al., 2014; Neeley et al., 2012). Given that translations are situated on the border between two social worlds, they can be operationalized in a way that constructs in-groups and out-groups, inclusion and exclusion (Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2019). As language can be used as a tool to create and recreate power (Gaibrois 2015; Yanaprasart and Gaibrois, 2017), the policy of monolingualism does not guarantee the success of interpersonal interaction (Welch & Welch, 2008). Research has also compared the use of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in professional contexts "to the ability to use a computer: you cannot do your job without it in today's international workplace" Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p.399, as cited in Cogo & Yanaprasart, 2018, p.100). BELF is conceptualized by Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) as a communication code which is shared and neutral in nature, where difficulties can arise because non-native speakers are typically uncomfortable using English, which can lead them to avoid or withdraw from communication or revert to their native language to avoid embarrassment, affecting also the power relations in the organization (Neeley et al., 2013; Puck & Aichhorn, 2017). This concept of BELF is particularly important for this study, as there is not a strictly prescribed policy of using English, but it is rather a general practice and demand to have good English skills at work, as well as the requirement to speak either German or French additionally to English.

In principle, a common corporate language is a form of language standardization introduced to reduce the potential for miscommunication inherent in multilingualism (Welch & Welch, 2017). Through a unifying language, management seeks the integrative benefits of facilitating the flow of information and transfer of knowledge across the global firm, but it is important to keep in mind that each country, especially in the case of Luxembourg and other multilingual countries, has its own language characteristics and requires a different approach. Furthermore, language mandates are a specific form of organizational action that help shape status dynamics between native and non-native speakers, as Hinds et al. (2014) have found out. Another critical finding of Neeley's (2013) study was that achieving English fluency did not protect nonnative English speakers from feeling that their status in the organization had been diminished.

In this study, where many employees have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, it is challenging to find a common ground where everybody speaks the "same" English, although most individuals adapt quickly to their job requirements where they have to deal with the English language on a daily basis. In fact, English as a common language brings with it certain control effects and power disparities, as resourceful speakers cross linguistic boundaries to express their voice and form new linguistic possibilities (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014). Neeley et al. (2012) argues that native English speakers in an organization may experience a status gain under a lingua franca mandate because of the benefits they derive from speaking in their native language, while for non-native speakers, who by definition are linguistically subordinate to native speakers, the opposite may be true. For instance, in the financial world in which the case company operates, native English speakers have it naturally much easier to express themselves by using the appropriate words and metaphors than their peers, who, in turn, can only speak at ease in their respective mother tongue. Those employees who are fluent in English are able to increase their influence and organizational standing, while others face a loss of status and limited career prospects (Neeley, 2013).

The way in which companies deal with diverse language challenges remains mostly unknown (Weinzierl, 2023), which means that it is not very clear how a language mandate shapes power dynamics in the case company. What is more, the diversity of language does not only imply that different mother tongues are spoken but also that people hear them in different ways as they have different mechanisms for interpretation to better make sense of the information received. Voss et al. (2014) also endorse this in their case study focused on MNT work in Luxembourg where the authors highlight the anxiety caused by misunderstandings due to different levels of language proficiency which can have, for instance, a critical impact on the coordination within teams (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Tenzer et al., 2021). In fact, communication styles frequently differ between team members according to their cultural background, as some cultures prefer a more direct and others a more indirect approach to communication, which can also contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Despite multinationals adopting corporate languages for communication at work, other languages are often used in informal situations between coworkers (Lauring & Selmer, 2010). Hence, employees prefer to communicate with those with whom they identify and feel comfortable with, and this can often lead to the creation of in and out groups, creating a culture of exclusion. For example, if French employees are searching for words and start speaking their native tongues with their French colleagues, this code-switching can be regarded by the German employees as rude and disrespectful and can cause negative feelings in them as they do not understand what they are speaking about (e.g. Vigier & Spencer-Oatey, 2017; Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Hinds et al., 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017).

Several authors have pointed to the democratizing effects of using English as a lingua franca, and also to a more "positive" perspective of English (Steyaert et al., 2011; Gaibrois, 2015). What will be interesting to see in the vein of this study, is the phenomenon that employees oftentimes perceive a certain parity in the communication when utilizing the rather simplified English spoken by non-native English speakers (Neeley, 2012). In their study of the Swedish-Finnish merger, Vaara et al. (2005, p.609) found that "for the Finns using English was a sign of "equality" vis-à-vis Swedes. In this way, they had professionally the same starting point as their Swedish counterparts". As in this study's case company situated in Luxembourg, it is not unusual that three or more languages are spoken on a daily basis, which adds to the power dynamics as well as to the need for informal translations.

This study's interest in employees' communicative practices, such as informal translations, is linked to the studies mentioned above in that it investigates how power is related to top-down language management, but also at a more micro level, with a focus on each individual's agency (see e.g. Sanden & Lonsmann, 2018; Gaibrois, 2015). The aim is thus to take the analysis to the front-line of employees and focus on how they cope with the need for informal translations in their daily work, as well as how those paraprofessional translators use their discretionary power when facing multiple languages.

To sum up, those who are bilingual often find themselves in a particularly interesting position in the communication interplay, however, not all the outcomes are positive from their perspective. For example, they can often be overburdened with communication and translation activities, and in challenging and complex communication environments like MNCs, the pressure to translate meaning and adapt it to local conditions increases (Logemann & Piekkari, 2014). Furthermore, the authors suggest that translation is not a mechanical exercise to ensure equivalence of meaning between corporate and subsidiary languages, but rather a performative act aimed at regaining control and power from below. By standardizing the language choice for all corporate personnel, a shared language establishes a common framework for in-house communication in spite of employees' many different language backgrounds (Sanden, 2020). It remains to be seen in this study if the common language, mainly English, but to some degree also French and German, can be seen as rather positive by employees, or if the negative effects bear stronger in a multilingual environment.

2.4 Synthesis

The synthesis integrates the key concepts and theories discussed, emphasizing the complex interplay of language, power, and translation in multinational corporations. By exploring the roles of power and language policies, the theoretical framework provides insights into the dynamics of communication and translation in multilingual MNCs. We have outlined two crucial theories in this study, namely the Theory of Power and Translation, with a focus on informal translations, non-professional translators, as well as the English language mandate. Translation activities and the corresponding processes have also been studied in greater detail and will help to underpin the Findings section with the analysis of the interviews.

The Theory of Power was used as a crucial starting point to better understand the different conceptualizations, most importantly that of resistance, knowledge and language proficiency, but also focusing on the negative as well as the positive side of power. What is important for this study is to bear in mind that power is a broad concept with different definitions and many intertwined concepts, but we will stick with the ones outlined above and focus on power as being relational and dynamic in social interactions. We drew mainly from the ideas of Clegg and Foucault and adopted an integrative view on power in the multilingual organization.

In a second part, the Theory of Translation was introduced along with the skopos theory, which can certainly encourage us to see translation in a wider perspective, not just one that encompasses linguistic relations between source and target texts (Vermeer, 1996). It also accords the translator greater freedom of action, at least in theory, this means the freedom to treat the source text in any way that serves the skopos of the paraprofessional translator. Bad translations, on this view, are simply those that fail to meet the skopos, for whatever reason, or those where the skopos assumed by the translator conflicts with the one intended by the sender or with the function inferred by the recipient. It is crucial to keep in mind that no translator ever deals with real objects, but primarily with perceptions and interpretations he or she accords to them. Overall, translation itself can be conceived of as a part of data and as a source of contextual insights and conceptual understanding (Brannen, Piekkari & Tietze, 2017). Here, the latter was looked at in more detail, while the former will take an important role in the methodology section of this study, covered in the following chapter.

3 Methodology

This chapter is going to address the key decisions made concerning the methodology of this study which focuses on a qualitative research design, and which aims at achieving the research objectives in the best possible way. In the first section, the single case study will be presented in more detail, covering the context, phenomenon, unit of analysis, case company, as well the case selection. The second part will lay its focus on the data collection process, including the sampling strategy, semi-structured interviews and the interviewees, followed by the data analysis in a third step, primarily covering the question of how the data will be organized. In a last step, the critical criteria for ensuring the quality of this study, as well as the ethical considerations will be highlighted. All in all, this chapter aims to provide a clear understanding of the how the underlying research techniques and methods interplay to provide a coherent picture.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is most often conducted through an "intense and prolonged contact with participants" in a naturalistic setting to investigate the daily lives of individuals, groups or organizations (Miles, 2019, p.22). In other words, it looks for dynamic phenomena in their naturally occurring environments by analyzing social actor's meanings (Gephart, 2004, p.456). This methodological approach integrates different paradigms and styles of research and its reporting, while leaving a space for creativity for the researcher (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Generally speaking, a paradigm is an analytical instrument and consensual pattern used by researchers to help them integrate structure with a certain process to inquire into the world, while a process is basically a sequence of action or interaction related to a phenomenon, and which evolves over time (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, the qualitative aspect comes from the researcher approaching the person of investigation in an open-ended, intimate and holistic manner, while the former can be seen as the instrument of data collection, who interviews and observes the respondents of the study (Evered & Louis, 1981; Jonker, 2010).

In this study, I will follow a qualitative research design and an interpretivist approach in order to develop a better understanding of a relatively unexplored phenomenon (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), namely how non-professional translators exercise power in a multilingual service MNC. In this multinational environment, employees, managers, and customers interact on a daily basis and the need for translation is omnipresent. Furthermore, this inquiry requires a deep understanding of the respondents' views and perceptions, and therefore it is crucial for the researcher to immerse himself into this phenomenon, which can be defined as "a problem, an issue, an event, or a happening" which is substantially influenced by the respondent (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.124). Thus, the phenomenon in this single case study can be described as the (perceived) power which emerges when non-professional translators use their language skills to actively assist in the informal translation process. This involves examining how these individuals, who are not officially designated translators, influence communication, decision-making, and potentially power dynamics within the organization when they step in to translate for colleagues. Opening this black box of informal translation is suited for this qualitative research, thus providing insights as to "how", "who" and "why" individuals act in particular contexts (Doz, 2011).

With this comes the philosophical grounding, underpinning this study, which is interpretive sensemaking (Welch et al., 2011; Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). This stream of research posits that those individuals being studied attribute meaning to their own behaviour, and that the researcher is part of their world, while the latter grasps the context, narratives and their personal engagement in a particular case which cannot be generalized in the way that a positivist approach, for instance, usually does (Welch et al., 2011). Here, the rich contextual descriptions are essential to understand the human experience of non-professional translators (NPT), and those interacting with them. I will thus emerge myself into the case of the multilingual MNC in trilingual Luxembourg and be responsible for the interpretations in this field, "making observations, exercising subjective judgement, analysing and synthesizing, all the while realizing [my] own consciousness" (Stake, 1995, p.41). This case furthermore includes the specific employees and managers who act as paraprofessional translators, the instances or situations where these employees intervene to translate, and the interactions and outcomes resulting from these translations. This case will be of high interest, as there remains a "need for comprehensive conceptualizations of human nature and human interactions in social collectives as knowledge-creating beings" (Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006, p.77). Therefore, in this study I will undertake thick descriptions of the perception and behaviour of NPT under the lens of the Theory of Power and Translation Theory. With this in mind, it becomes clear that qualitative research is the most appropriate way to study this topic, and it will help to conduct the data collection and analysis in an optimal manner.

Considering some technicalities, interpretative scholars oftentimes write themselves into their text, for example by applying the pronoun "I" which shows reflexivity about their individual position during the research process (Piekkari et al., 2022). According to the authors, different language use within the study can serve as a way to construct meaning as well as creating and maintaining relationships, which will be an important point for this Thesis. Furthermore, Xian (2020) highlights translation as a cultural practice to recreate meaning and knowledge, for instance by interpreting a foreign concept, supplement it with local knowledge relevant to the target language and then reframe it comprehensively according to the domestic style. Similarly, Barner-Rasmussen & Langinier (2020) state that translanguaging practices, as described in the theoretical part of this study, are deeply embedded in the socio-historical context of the respective geographical location, which adds to the importance of multilingualism. All in all, I will thus make sure not to distort the data at hand and bringing in relevant cultural and linguistic knowledge which will be needed to translate and make sense of what has been said during data collection.

3.2 Qualitative Case Study Research

As the aim of this study is to collect high-quality data by taking into account the participant's lived experiences in a MNE context, which is something that can be effectively done by choosing a case study approach to understand the phenomenon. Using case studies as a tool for qualitative research can be described as a "strategy that examines, through the use of a variety of data sources, a phenomenon in its naturalistic context" and aiming to confront theory with the empirical world (Welch et al., 2011, p.743). In fact, case studies address questions about how meaning is given to particular social experiences which are created by social actors (Gephart, 2004). To mention Piekkari et al. (2009, p.569), case studies need to use a variety of sources as well as a phenomenon in its naturalistic context, with the goal of "confronting theory with the empirical world".

3.2.1 Case study selection

Case study selection is what lies at the heart of the case study research as it is a meaningful way to capture complex configurations of events and structures (Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki, 2018). For the selection of the case study, it is crucial that the researcher asks the questions what, how and when to select in order to get a clear understanding of the case study and couple these points with the theoretical context of the study, as well as the interpretation of the findings to ensure trustworthy results (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016). The authors state that the site selection, data replication, and data triangulation are of high importance and that the researcher needs to rationalize how and when to choose a single case. In fact, it is easier to argument for a specific case than a representative one because it is possible to gain rich insights into that special case that another case would necessarily provide (Siggelkow, 2007). In simple terms, "sampling will define the case further" in order to get a clearer picture (Miles, 2019, p.26). For the purpose of this study, the company was selected about six months prior to the first interview in order to have enough time to prepare the theoretical foundations and interview guide.

In this study, I will rely on the case study approach (CS), because it seems appropriate to deal with international business (IB) with its emphasis on local contextualization and meaning (Fletcher et al., 2018). Furthermore, the sole purpose of this study is to understand the case itself, which includes participant's experiences, meanings and actions (Stake, 1995). As of the empirical unit, a total of 7 interviews targeting front-line employees and managers in the case firm were conducted in August and September 2024, who thus represent the focal entity investigated and discussed (Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki, 2011). In order to understand what has been selected, the unit of analysis has to be studied because it can tell something about what the researcher wants to find out at the end of his or her study. Additionally, each unit of analysis requires a different kind of data collection, as well as a different focus for data analysis (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, it is closely related to the research question, which in this study sounds as follows: *How do non-professional translators exercise power under an English language mandate in a multinational company?* Thus, the "What to select?" can be answered with the power implications within the context of the multilingual company emerging during informal translations in which non-professional translators take on an active role. Hence, the analysis is conducted at an individual, bottom-up level where employees will be interviewed and observed and will convey their experiences and perceptions about informal translations leading to changing power dynamics. For this purpose, the Theory of Power was selected to fit into this study in order to have a strong theoretical foundation. As this approach is case- rather than variable-oriented, which means that codes emerge during the process of data analysis, it can be described as a holistic case study (see e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994).

When to select the case is also highly important, and finding a case for a research project can be a daunting task, and it is often found in the course of research, whereas theory can lay out an important starting point, although the direction may still lack precision (Ragin, 1992). Furthermore, it is not straightforward to know exactly where the narrative will start and end, and thus casing requires the filtering of empirical evidence to define cases and theoretical concepts or ideas which have been worked out. Generally speaking, cases can be selected ahead of time or can change during data collection (Miles, 2019). The case firm was selected at the beginning of the research project, as the researcher was able to gain access to the company's human resource manager early on and had already done an internship in the previous year where he could observe an interesting phenomenon of informal translations potentially leading to changing power dynamics.

3.2.2 Context

Context is multi-layered and makes the investigated phenomenon what it is. In fact, it is defined by Michailova (2011, p. 130) as a "dynamic array of factors, features, processes or events" due to organizations' increasingly more complex nature and the context can oftentimes lead to substantial changes of causal dynamics of the processes and relations. The author highlights that there is no true meaning without a context, and it has the ability to provide a more easily interpretable and theoretically compelling pattern than any other factor could display in isolation. Therefore, the context implicates a specific connection which is to be made, while contextualizing means that observations conducted by the researcher need to be linked to the facts in an ongoing process and be located within a conditional structure (Plakoyiannaki et al., 2019; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The context, in other words, shapes the construct, and can often be given a different meaning when looked at in another cultural context or point in time (Prasad, 2017).

The <u>context</u> of this study includes the multilingual environment of the MNE where English is the official language, but other languages are commonly spoken. It encompasses the challenges and dynamics of operating in a setting where not all employees are equally proficient in English, leading to the need for ad-hoc translation. The organizational context is also very important, as it is related to the structure and culture of the Luxembourgish multinational company. It involves the company's policies on language use, the informal networks and relationships among employees, and the scenarios in which non-professional translators step in. French, German and Luxemburgish are all officially used languages, which adds to the complexity of the phenomenon looked at. Furthermore, I also consider a socio-cultural context, which looks at the cultural backgrounds of the employees, including mainly their native languages, but also the cultural norms related to communication and hierarchy. Thus, the cultural nuances are also considered as they might influence how translation and interpretation are carried out informally.

3.2.3 Single Case Study

I use the single case study because I am concerned with the development of idiographic explanations and diving deeper into the dynamics of informal translations (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). With this, I will use a variety of data sources while analysing the phenomenon in its naturalistic context and confronting the Theory of Power, as well as Translation Theories, with the empirical world (Piekkari et al., 2009). As an interpretive approach is used, the single case helps the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of local, emic meanings, while also staying open to alternative standpoints and tensions in the research setting (Welch et al., 2013). Furthermore, Siggelkow (2007) states that single case studies can offer captivating examples with its unique case, which is not possible to see when analyzing (an)other organization. From the above mentioned, it becomes clear that single case study research is the most appropriate when the research question is formulated as "how" something occurs, mainly when looking at a phenomenon as the one described (e.g. Yin, 2018).

Stake (1995, p.85) highlights that case studies with its narrative character can offer the reader an experience "so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves", and in addition to this, specifies that single case studies offer naturalistic generalization. In other words, the reader and observer of the single case study can compare his own situation with the situation described in the work and transfer his own implicit knowledge to generalize the case study to his own personal environment. Scholars even argument against using multiple heterogeneous cases and take advantage of the deep insights that single cases offer (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991).

Reflecting on this research, informal translations can often lead to a shift in power dynamics, as not everyone has the ability to speak multiple languages and thus step in during informal discussions. The case firm, as will be seen in more detail in the next section, is a multinational company situated in Luxembourg with many employees from different countries and cultures. This is a unique case, because Luxembourg has ever since been a multilingual country where the majority of people speak three or more languages and enables them to have a large social network and build relationships with many people from different nations. The objective is to see how these paraprofessional translators act and perceive power relations that happen on a daily basis.

3.2.4 Case Firm

Zeta-Kappa, a German-owned company situated in Luxembourg, is chosen as the case firm, because much previous research on language in international business has been conducted mainly on Nordic MNCs with minority home-country languages (Fredriksson et al., 2006). Luxembourg is a trilingual country, and many employees can speak three or more languages, because many come from other countries, have their parents who taught them a different mother tongue, or learned multiple languages at school, while often it is a combination of these factors.

Delving deeper into informal translations and the resulting power dynamics is highly interesting, as the company provides services for the international market and 60 domestic markets worldwide, with customers in 110 countries. Zeta-Kappa's core products and activities include innovative solutions for securities issuance, settlement, custody, order routing, asset servicing, as well as collateral, lending and liquidity management. The MNE holds an "AA" ranking and operates in more than 100 currencies worldwide. The main objective of the company is to provide safety, reliability and guidance to their clients in order to help them achieve operational efficiency and risk reduction, while settling over 1 million transactions on a daily basis. Hence, the need for low-cost, high context and quick translation is often required, as the firm does not provide professional translation in-house, and has to rely on an effective internal communication with other employees or their clients.

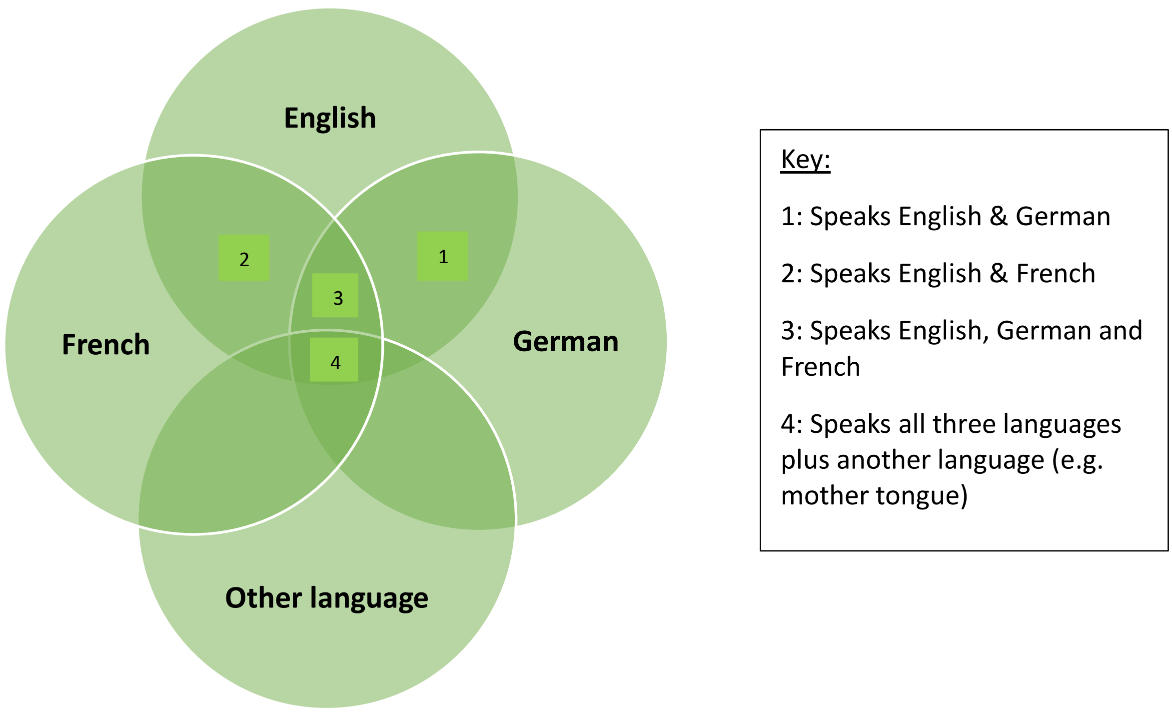

Figure 5: Language combination in the case firm

Furthermore, the case firm in this study satisfies the condition of being an MNC in the service sector, because apart from Luxembourg, Zeta-Kappa occupies 11 other locations, including, for example, Hong Kong, London, New York, Tokyo and Sydney, however none of these can show such a diverse linguistic landscape as Luxembourg does. The multinational and multilingual company has also been growing since 2000 in Luxembourg and is embedded into large corporations that are international in their operations, visions and strategies (Aggarwal et al., 2011). The Zeta headquarter is located in the emerging business and financial centre in Kirchberg, Luxembourg, while the new Kappa headquarters are located nearby the centre of Frankfurt, Germany. Prague is the headquarters of two Kappa companies: Zeta Operations Prague and Zeta Services, where employees work on the development and maintenance of Kappa's IT systems, focusing on the areas trading, clearing and settlement. The specialized development teams are frequently cross-border entities made up of employees from various locations and the projects thereby profit from the strong network between the Zeta-Kappa locations in Prague, Frankfurt and Luxembourg.

Last but not least, Luxembourg provides a suitable context with its unique language policy and multilingual profile of their workforce, as mentioned above. More precisely, three languages, namely French, German and Luxemburgish, are official languages and might be used in dealing with other individuals, while English is being employed as the common corporate language in the company in focus (Van der Jeught, 2016).

3.3 Data collection

In this study, data will be collected according to a careful sampling method of the participants and the responses gathered during the qualitative research, which will include mainly interviews. To address the issue of informal translations and their power implications in a multilingual environment, we will continue by looking at the sampling strategy of the participants. What is important to keep in mind is that the collected data in different languages needs to be translated adequately and thus will be subject to language related decisions influenced by the cultural, political and institutional context (Xian, 2008).

3.3.1 SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS

The question of <u>how</u> to select the sample or data sources at hand becomes highly relevant in this section and can be described as the general application of the sampling strategy. In this study, I opt for interpretive sensemaking and will use a purposeful sampling method, which will provide the case study with "information rich and illuminative" data and where the phenomenon is at the heart of the research (Patton, 2015, p.48). This ensures that the interviewees are relevant informants for the aim of this study and knowing how "things are done" within the organization. With this, I will contact individuals who fulfil the following criteria (see e.g. Plakoyiannaki & Budhwar, 2021): People with at least one year of experience in this particular company, speak at least three different languages and have a role where they either interact with customers or with other colleagues on a regular basis. This will ensure that participants have already made some experience where they themselves or other non-professional translators have stepped in to assist in a particular situation where translation was needed. Also, these individuals will have established already some social and work-related network that can be used for a potential translation purpose (Piekkari et al., 2014).

After contacting and speaking to these pre-selected individuals who occasionally act as informal translators, I use a snowballing approach to ask some respondents about other possible bridge builders within the organization with whom they interact and are known as having high language proficiency as well as an appropriate position within the company. By this, I expect to gain further access to informants who have previously been involved in informal translations. In total, I have 7 informants to conduct the interviews in 5 different languages (two in English, two in German, one in Slovak, one in Luxembourgish and one in French) (see Table 5). During all this process, it is important to keep in mind that selecting should be conducted in a balanced way and viewing this selection process as an opportunity to learn (Stake, 1995). The interviewees got space to discuss their experiences in their own way and shared insights about how power emerges from non-professional translators stepping in in different situations and under various circumstances (Peltokorpi & Xie, 2023). Last but not least, the order of questions was kept flexible to better accommodate the respondents' train of thoughts, while also leaving out some more unimportant questions when time ran out during an interview (Tenzer, Pudelko & Harzing, 2013).

Participant number	Gender	Job description of interviewee	Years working in the case firm	Date of interview	Interview duration (minutes)	Location of interview	Interview language	Level of English (self-assessed)	Language skills	Number of transcript pages
1	F	Project Management	1, 5	09.08.2024	38	42, Avenue JF Kennedy / 1855 Luxembourg / Luxembourg	Slovak	Fluent ("C-level")	High (4)	9

2	M	Physical Security Specialist	25	13.08.2024	31	42, Avenue JF Kennedy / 1855 Luxembourg / Luxembourg	Luxembourgish	Satisfying ("B1")	Very high (5)	5
3	F	Physical Security	16	13.08.2024	23	42, Avenue JF Kennedy / 1855 Luxembourg / Luxembourg	German	Satisfying ("Okay")	Low (2-3)	9
4	F	Sales and Relationship Management	7	14.08.2024	33	Microsoft Teams	English	Fluent	Very high (5-6)	7
5	M	Head of Clients Services Luxembourg	13	19.08.2024	54	Microsoft Teams	English	Fluent	Middle (3)	10
6	M	Physical Security Specialist	13	21.08.2024	26	42, Avenue JF Kennedy / 1855 Luxembourg / Luxembourg	German	Fluent	Middle (3)	7
7	F	Learning Experience	11	25.09.2024	34	Microsoft Teams	French	Satisfying	Low (2-3)	8

Table 5: Overview of interview participants

To sum up, Dyer & Wilkins (1991) state that the core of case study research is not quantitative but should bring to the table rich insights into a specific organizational context, while arguing that concentrating on fewer cases is better that having multiple, heterogeneous cases. What is important to keep in mind is that the people interviewed during the research process are being asked to formulate their perspective on the topic at hand as clearly as possible, while the researcher formulates his interpretations of the material based on each individual's accounts.

3.3.2 Interview Process

At the beginning of this study, the company was selected in time and the human resource manager was asked for permission to conduct the interviews with selected participants. At first, the latter was not prepared to share the firm's sensitive information, but after assuring and communicating the ethical considerations mentioned below, she agreed. During the open-ended interview, it is usual that the analysis and interpretations happen along the way, because the interviewees describe their perceptions very differently, which can lead to new relationships and patterns (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). This means that during the interview, the researcher sums up and reflects back on what has been said, thus interpreting the flow of meaning and co-authoring what has been found out, rather than just collecting.

Before each interview, be it on site or online via Microsoft Teams, the researcher has sent an email to the participant with all necessary information. Here is the main content of a selected email:

Dear XY,

I will soon be completing my Master's degree in International Business at the University of Vienna and am currently conducting interviews for my Master thesis.

I would be very grateful for a short interview with you, because you fulfil the criteria of being a suitable participant for my study. The topic is about everyday, informal translations in everyday working life and how different native speakers perceive other people who act as so-called "non-professional translators". It also focuses on the power dynamics within the organization. I would have to record the conversation in order to transcribe it, but of course all names and the company will be kept completely anonymous.

Would [Date] be convenient for you? If so, please feel free to suggest a time and we could meet up together, preferably in person.

Thank you in advance!

Yours sincerely,

Rickard Rolko

The respondents all answered in a positive and accommodating way, and the interviews took place between one and three weeks after sending the email.

During the interview, it was very important to get familiar with the person and build trust, which can be difficult to reach in such a short timeframe. The common language and the fact that it coincided mostly with the participant's mother tongue helped to gain a better relationship quickly and feel more comfortable on both sides (Outila et al., 2021). The researcher also remarked that the interviewees felt more at ease when speaking about this language-related topic because they could express themselves better in their native tongue. Finally, the participant consent was handed out to the person in front of the researcher, which was important for the interviewee to be assured about the confidentiality aspect and keep their language use professionally. The interviews lasted between 23 and 54 minutes, while about 30-35 minutes represented the average time.

After the interview, the researcher was able to retrieve all information in the correct manner, including the audio-recorded tape and the researcher's own perceptions directly after the interview. During the whole process, I also focused, where possible (e.g. when waiting for the participant to come into the main entry hall), to observe employees interacting together and making potential translations, however, this turned out to be difficult and not very structured. Nevertheless, some interesting encounters between various people were observed, which will be described in more detail in the Findings section.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

For the purpose of this study, I used semi-structured interviews, where the respondent has the possibility to share his or her perspective in an open manner, and where the researcher has enough flexibility to react what is being said, while relying also on a pre-defined set of leading and follow-up questions. Kvale's (1996) seven steps will be used down below to discuss the interview process in more detail and to account for the context of this research approach. In an interview conversation, the researcher "asks about and listens to what people themselves say about their lived world", whereas in this "inter-view", knowledge is co-constructed between both the interviewer and the interviewee (Brinkmann & Steinar, 2018, p.2). The interview was conducted normally in the participant's mother tongue (except for P4 and P5, and to some degree P2), as this enabled greater detail and more freedom to the interviewee and does not restrict data collection from the researcher's point of view. The interviews were conducted, as mentioned above, in five different languages (English, French, German, Luxemburgish and maybe Slovak), where the employees could make their own suggestions.

Last but not least, each interviewee's language skills have been evaluated on a subjective scale (from low to very high), both from their perspective and that of the researcher. There is no employee in the sample with low language skills, as this would suggest that the respondents have no potential being a non-professional translator, and due to the fact that only employees with at least two languages are allowed to work in the case firm. In Figure 2, the 7 different interviewees are placed on the graph below showcasing their respective skills to speak multiple languages. We see that, except from Participants 3 and 7 who can speak English and German (P2) or French (P7) (and the other language only to a certain degree), all the participants are language-savvy individuals with high language skills, which reflects back on the multilingual environment where they are working.

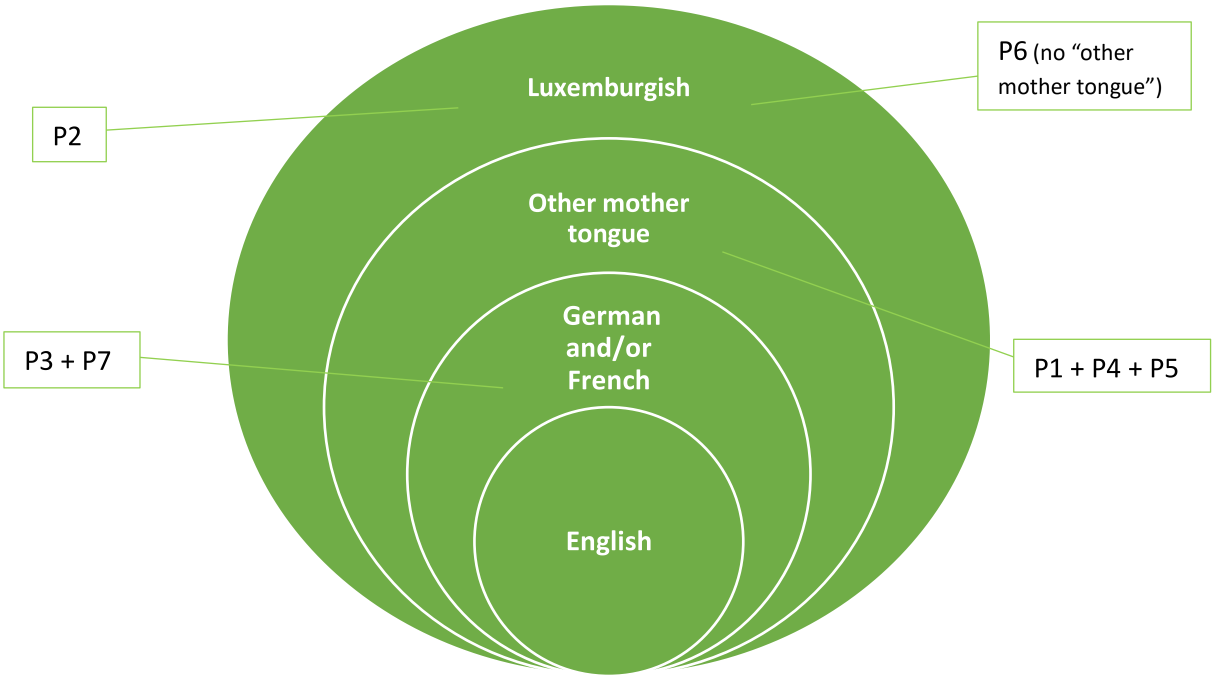

Figure 6: Language combinations of interview participants

Furthermore, physical face-to-face interviews were preferred, however situations arrived where the researcher had to deviate and use online interviews due to geographical and work-related challenges. At last, three out of the eight interviews were held online, which turned out to be nearly as effective as a personal encounter, although this inhibited the process of doing more detailed observations on site. However, information exchange should not have been inhibited by the online medium used, which was Microsoft Teams. As qualitative analysis involves not only interpreting interviews, but also observations and documents (Patton, 2015), I used some observations of potential informal situations where people engaged in discussions and where their behaviours became observable. The goal was to immerse into specific and related situations and encounters, which follows the same line of thinking as interviewing (Stake, 1995).

Furthermore, Kvale's (1996) seven steps of interviewing were used during the whole interview process, and although there are no specific rules to be followed when conducting a research interview, there exist standard choices of methods which I used at different stages in this study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). This was helpful in order to adequately prepare the interviews in advance and also staying open during the whole investigation process which asks for many intuitive decisions to be made by the interviewer.

1. The first step to be taken is thematizing, meaning that the purpose of the investigation and conception of the theme are clearly formulated before the interview starts. Here, the

why and what questions should be clarified before the question of how is posed. Therefore, I asked for instance “What do you think when some of your colleagues uses his or her language skills to translate something for others?” before asking “How do you think this influences power dynamics in your company?”

2. Secondly, the interviews and the study as a whole had to be designed regarding the desired knowledge production and the implications of the study. At the start of the interviews, the participants were shortly asked general questions about their job, e.g. “Please provide examples of your work in the organization” in order to introduce themselves and their function at the company (see e.g. Neeley & Dumas, 2016). Considering the script of interview questions in more detail, there are three main stages during the interview process (Stoian et al., 2018). During the first stage, I asked more general probing and indirect questions to invite the respondents to speak openly about how the different languages are perceived and used within the company, without stating which concrete dimensions are to be taken into account (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). For this, I used questions such as “What are, in your opinion, the key factors for making communication in English work?” or “How do you feel when speaking to colleagues who have different mother tongues?”. The second set of questions covers mainly specifying questions regarding the translation (micro-) processes and activities used by non-professional translators in informal situations. The aim was to identify the functions that these bridge individuals take on. One example question was “How do you ensure that the information is understood by all members who have attended e.g. a meeting?”. The third stage includes specifying questions about perceived and actual power arising during day-to-day translation activities, such as “How did your colleagues actually react when you translated some words?”. The aim here is to sensibilize the respondents to think about how for instance status gains are perceived by speaking fluent English and thus being able to translate certain words or meanings to others (Neeley & Dumas, 2016).
3. The third step consists of the interviewing process itself, while taking into consideration the place, time and other technical factors of the interview, as well as the recording and notes taking during the questioning. Interpersonal relations of the interview situation are also accounted for at this stage. I started the interviews with a collection of descriptive data about the interviewees and their role in the MNC and continued with open-ended questions related to their work experiences, as well as inside and outside their current company (Peltokorpi and Xie, 2023). The interview guide (which can be

found in the Appendix of this study) diverged slightly in regard to whom the questions were asked (according to their position and role), and also taking into consideration cultural and linguistic aspects as well as the gender of the respondent (Alvesson, 2003).

4. Fourth, transcribing usually takes place, with a thorough preparation of data analysis by transcribing the oral speech to a written text. This was done verbatim with the software tool MAXQDA, while redundancies and filler words have mostly been taken out of the transcript to ensure a more fluid read. Furthermore, in the transcripts, the interviewer can be identified as participant 1 (P1) and the respondents as participant 2 (P2). In total, transcriptions have been conducted in about 55 pages.
5. Fifth, the interviews are analyzed with the help of MAXQDA, and together with field observations, the data is systematized. More precisely, the interviews were brought into the software tool and analyzed in the respective language. However, codes and categories were written in English from the beginning, while the researcher read the different passages in the interview language several times in order to get a better feeling of what the respondents intended to say. Hence, quotes were dragged to the corresponding codes within the software until all relevant passages could be assigned. Concerning the observations, they have been written down in English in a physical notebook to ensure better comparability done by the researcher and reducing the amount of translation.
6. As a sixth step, verifying needs to be done to guarantee the validity, reliability and generalizability of the interview findings. Results thus have to be consistent, so that the investigation shows what is intended to be shown. In this study, some quotes needed to be adjusted after initial coding to better fit the themes and because the researcher got a better and more nuanced feeling for what has been said and was able to dive deeper into the subjective worlds of the participants. Translations were done by the researcher on his own, or, if necessary, some words were looked up in an online dictionary to get a clearer picture of the text. As three different language families are included in this study, and some phrases are not the same in another language, the meaning was interpreted in the best possible way in order to reflect the original meaning more trustfully and reliably.
7. Lastly, reporting is the final step where the findings are communicated in a scientific manner, while also taking into account the ethical aspects (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Capturing the exact words of the respondent is usually not so important, as it is what they mean by it what counts (Stake, 1995, p.66). The findings will be reported and discussed in the next chapter. As interviews are spaces for co-construction between the

researcher and the respondents, questions asked by the interviewer will occasionally be included in the findings section (see e.g. Outila et al., 2021).

Welch & Piekkari (2006) identify four main language decisions to be made for researchers, namely choosing the project, access, interview and post-interview languages. It is important to be conscious about the decision which languages to use, but it can happen at times when some decisions are made more unconsciously, for instance when I didn't want to create an embarrassing situation, or when the choice of one particular language simply appeared "natural" to the researcher in a given context. By managing all the spoken languages used in this company, I was able to communicate and understand all participants in the spoken languages. This is extremely valuable, as data can be collected directly and without any substantial interpretations from other parties, which enhances accuracy and validity. Trust also played a crucial role by establishing an atmosphere of rapport that made sure that the respondents have given honest and open responses (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). It is thus vital to "be an open book with your project", while also acknowledging that interviewees, who voluntarily offer their time, insights and privacy, are doing the researcher a huge favour by participating in the study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p.54).

For the purpose of this study, a romantic as well as the localist approach were both used as a philosophical positioning during the interviews. The latter was aimed at to build rapport and trust with the interviewee, as mentioned above. More precisely, the native language was used in order to enter the world of the respondent more effectively, which produced more open responses (Alvesson, 2003). The localist approach was also applied because of its social and interactional nature, where the data is jointly produced by both parties during the interviews (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). With this view, language is used primarily as a way to construct a shared perspective on reality rather than as a mirror on this specific reality. For instance, the interviewee shares his or her experiences and perceptions with the interviewer, who in turn dives into this shared reality and asks further questions in order to better understand what drives the respondent's own views.

To demonstrate this with a specific example, here is a short extract from the interview with participant 4:

P2: (…) I would bond much easier with somebody from my country. And because they are much more, they come to higher positions much easier. They pull each other up.

P1: Yeah. So, does it also have to do with the social network or the relationships you have?

P2: Additionally, yes. Once again, social network, it's done much easier between men only because as I said, 98% around me are men. They feel better between themselves. They're always chatting about sports just to relax their situation on something super stiff. (P4 - Transcript, Pos. 72-74).

Last but not least, the interviewer needs to be, amongst others, knowledgeable, clear, gentle and open (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). This means that the researcher knows what to pursue in his/her inquiry, pose simple and short questions, and tolerating different rates of thinking and pauses to indicate to the respondent that it is acceptable to bring up unconventional opinions for instance. Furthermore, he or she must conduct an informed conversation about the topic and knowing what is important to pursue. Next, the interviewer has a clear structure, introduces the goal of the interview and tells what was learned in the course of the conversation while also asking if there are any questions concerning the situation at hand. Other characteristics to bear in mind is to remember what has already been said during the interview as well as interpreting so that he or she can confirm or disconfirm what is said. Finally, the shorter the interviewer's questions and the longer the respondent's answers, the better (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

3.4 Data analysis

Following Stake (1995, p.71), the analysis of data basically means "taking something apart", while this can also be interpreted as "taking our impressions and observations apart". The author argues that each researcher needs, through his or her own experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work best for him or her. The interviews are "self-reported", which means that the story of each interviewee is self-reliant and does not require many additional explanations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p.92).

As data analysis is done in several stages, the key idea for this part is to organize the research data, here the interview transcripts, into a coherent whole, while assigning meaning to the so-called "labels" which have been retrieved from what has been said from the respective participant (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, the data is not being analyzed on a quantitative scale but captures instead deep insights into the social world of each participant, as well as the researcher's own feelings. What is important is that this process is iterative and needs to be done multiple times, because it can change often according to the various interpretations.

The aim of this study is to analyse where, when, why and mainly how power emerges during the informal translation process. In other words, how do individuals exercise power when they step in to offer help, showcasing that they can handle the situation better than other employees? How does power emerge as a consequence of correctly translating what is being asked for? And how do different employees and managers perceive informal translations when done by their peers? No matter how power is perceived, it becomes clear that these individuals hold certain agency in these informal interactions, and hence taking on an active role when two or more people are involved in challenging situations where language issues arise. As mentioned in the theoretical part, power does not necessarily have to be viewed as something negative but can also show positive means which are employed by the paraprofessional translator.

As mentioned above, I use the software tool MAXQDA (2024) for my analysis and coding process, which allows me to build the concept and demonstrate the framework (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). Then, I will make use of a thematic analysis to familiarise with the data (Williams et al., 2023). More precisely, I will make use of the Gioia Methodology (GM) which integrates conscientious standards and a systematic procedure in order to get trustworthy results (Magnani & Gioia, 2023). With this, the first step will be to read each individual's transcript several times to grasp the respondent's interpretations and create analytic (informant-centered) codes and categories. The second step groups these transcripts and establishes broader 2nd-oder (theory-centered) themes and concepts. These themes will then be aggregated into higher-order dimensions, usually underpinned by references from the informant's 1st order quotations (Gioia et al., 2013). Let's have a look on one concrete example, considering the following quote: *In the past, I have been very much in contact with our colleagues based in Frankfurt who prefer to speak German. And, I personally have never learned German. (..) So the English was the compromise, but nobody was at ease. And, knowing German would be like the reduction of the distance, it would be nice [to know the language]. Look, I understand that the other guys prefer to speak German. If I could speak German, I would (P5 - Transcript, Pos. 25).* This preceding quote was then categorized into "Linguistic Challenges" with the second-order code "Navigating communication barriers" (as the individuals engaged were using English as a compromise) and the aggregate dimension of "Discretionary Power" as this looks like a specific episode within the company where the employees use their skills to properly cope with different situations and act accordingly. Last but not least, the researcher must identify the categories that allow him or her to move between the themes, and all that comes afterwards depends on that identification.

What is important to highlight is that, in this interpretive study, the alternative perspectives of the interviewees need to be taken into account in order to understand their experiences. The GM helps to do this by systematically using data structures that account for 1^{st}- and 2^{nd}-order understandings of what the participants have said to the researcher. The key assumptions in this study are that employees are knowledgeable workers and that the goal of this research is to produce a plausible and justifiable explanation of how informal translations can lead to a change in power dynamics and perceptions (Gioia et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the interviews were analyzed and coded separately, while associating phrases with their respective categories which were created by key terms given by the respondents and interpreted by the researcher. In total, 34 categories (1^{st} order codes), 7 second order themes and three overarching aggregate dimensions were found and written down (see Figure 3 below). As this is a crucial part of this methodology section, this model is outlined before the reporting of the findings, as suggested by Gioia et al. (2013).

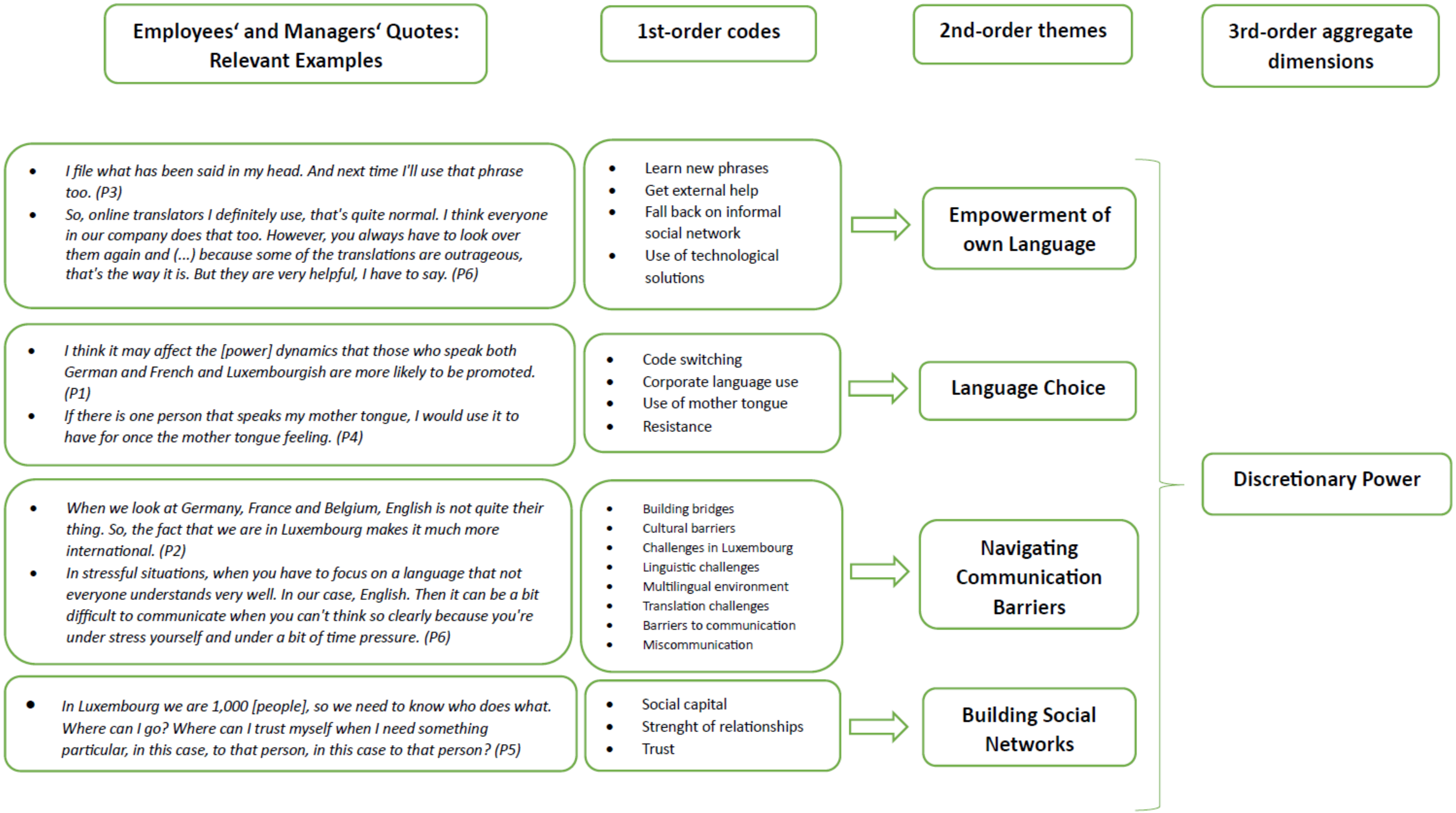

Figure 7: Synopsis of the data structure

Employee's and Manager's Quotes Relevant Examples	1st-order codes	2nd-order themes	3rd-order aggregate dimensions
• *Some have no problem with this at all because it's simply the case that you can't speak all languages. And others are somewhat ashamed of the fact that they need translation help or a translator because they are unable to speak or understand a certain language. (P6)* • *Obviously, the speed of the translation and (...) I think it has to be very quick when you translate something orally, it has to be (...) Otherwise you forget the beginning of the sentence, you forget the end. (P7)*	• Translation responses • Aim of translation • Informal translation factors • Self-translation	**Translation Task**	**(Self-)Perceived Power**
• *But there are certainly also people or colleagues who don't want that or who are uncomfortable with it or think it's not conducive to the status they have. (...) to have to admit that they need help. (P3)* • *[Other employees] can't do anything about it because you're better in something, expressing something. It's more pleasant to listen to you. You are the one to be taken. (P4)*	• Language level • Personal characteristics • Loss of perceived status • Perceived advantages	**Status of Employees**	
• *I think that there could also be colleagues who don't say certain things because they don't have the means to do so. (P3)* • *People who speak several languages naturally have an inherent advantage. And they also have a better chance of getting higher positions, I'd say, because the higher you climb up the career ladder, the more language skills are required. (P6 - Transcript, pos. 88)*	• Communication style • Interpersonal skills • Language proficiency • Position	**Demonstrating Expertise**	

Figure 7 continued

3.5 Quality criteria

As done by most qualitative researchers and as mentioned above, I used multiple data sources (including observations), but the heart of this study is the semi-structured interview to retrieve both retrospective and real-time experiences by those individuals engaging in informal translations (Gioia et al., 2013). This pluralist approach for the quality assessment of qualitative research is also forwarded by Welch and Piekkari (2017), who argue that the high context-sensitivity in IB inquiries due to cross-border, cross-cultural, and cross-language phenomena does not account for a single set of evaluative criteria anymore. To get the most out of these interviews, building rapport and trust, through local language use, will be of great importance, as it might be sometimes difficult for respondents to open up on the topic at hand (Welch & Piekkari, 2006; Tenzer et al., 2014).

Furthermore, I have considered several criteria to make sure that the quality of this study is not undermined and in line with current qualitative research requirements. Hence, these criteria need to match the underlying philosophical stance, which is interpretivism, in order to ensure and strengthen paradigmatic awareness and pluralism (Plakoyiannaki & Budhwar, 2021). Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the four most important pillars to conduct this inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sinkovics et al., 2008; Welch & Piekkari, 2017). First, credibility suggests that the case study is "time- and context-bound" and thus only interpretable if it is undertaken under similar circumstances, taking into account that the researcher faithfully represents the different constructions held by the respondents (Welch & Piekkari, 2017, p.719). Next, transferability showcases that the researcher is familiar with the context and able to conduct the research in its natural environment. As this study uses multiple data sources, the interpretation of the results can only be made through the analysis of all this evidence, interviews as well as participant observation, and connecting these with the context. As an example, before and after the interviews, I made sure to observe the participant's behaviour when they crossed paths with their peers in different situations. This enables other researchers to experience similar findings and see what would have happened had the researcher not been there (Stake, 1995). With this in mind, the third criteria is that of dependability, where Welch & Piekkari (2017) argue that replicating the findings is not possible, as both the interviewer and the interviewee change during and after the research process, as does the environment. Nevertheless, the data collected is well documented and asserted, and the researcher aims to describe the physical situation good enough in order to give the reader a sense of "being there" (Stake, 1995, p.63). Last but not least, confirmability takes into account the researcher's subjectivity in the interpretation process, while assuring that the results are internally consistent and backed by the data gathered (Welch & Piekkari, 2017). Having trustworthy findings is furthermore also an important criterion and can be achieved by discussing and justifying the methodological decisions about the context, research design and data analysis in this study (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016). For instance, I kept data in the original language but created codes in English as the common language of analysis, while relying on my own translation and interpretation skills and resources. Here, it is important to keep in mind that key interpretations should not be based on the researcher's interpretations, but mainly on those people being studied (Stake, 1995).

As mentioned above, I undertook a purposeful selection as well as a criteria sampling of the interview participants to identify informal translators, while discussing the data analysis of the interviews, thus ensuring credible outcomes. I also used theory to develop the interview guide and make sure that language issues are treated accordingly when conducting the interviews (Williams et al., 2022; Chidlow et al., 2014). In line with this, I discuss translation decisions made during the research process and make my approach to how I cross language boundaries as clear as possible to ensure trustworthy results and better transferability (Cuervo-Cazurra, 2016; Chidlow et al., 2014). Nevertheless, establishing the confirmability criterion will be more of a challenge in this study, as I will not have the time and resources to involve other researchers. However, I will iterate theory with the underlying data to formulate themes and categories, while cross-checking my interpretations to enhance the data structure.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Close attention needs to be given to the ethical implications of the knowledge production through the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, an informed consent about the overall purpose and main features of this study is given to the respondents, while also keeping in mind that the researcher is critical to ensure high-quality knowledge, honesty and fairness throughout the whole research process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Since sensitive data is retrieved, the company's and participant's names are not mentioned in this study. In fact, three main factors have been taken into account, namely privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (Miles, 2019). The first point means to protect the boundaries against giving or securing sensitive and unwanted information. Second, having confidential agreements with the interviewees are very important and have been ensured by the participant's consent. Lastly, anonymity guarantees the lack of identifiers so that it is not possible to know which individual provided which information.

Furthermore, participants must have all the information needed to participate (voluntarily) at the study, and thus will give their ethical approval. As mentioned above, the participant has been given the choice of face-to-face as well as online interviews (Hanna, 2012). This is due to ethical and ecological considerations, given that the researcher had to travel substantial distances at a given point in time to conduct the interview. However, personal interviews were the favoured option. Last but not least, only relevant material will be assessed.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the final results of the qualitative data collected will be first presented and then discussed in greater detail. In qualitative research, it is of huge importance to present the findings in such a way that the reader can easily follow the storyline and learn from what has been found, while the researcher refers back to theory (Doz, 2011). In this interpretive study, knowledge is socially constructed, while it is important to keep in mind that the interviewees' subjective realities and experiences are time and context bound, as mentioned in the previous chapter (Stake, 1995). Thus, I will also present some important observations made during the research process, which also allows the reader to interpret both the interviews and observations for themselves in the best possible way (Leppäaho et al., 2016). To ensure this way can be conducted effectively, the underlying findings will include interview quotes.

In the following, the research question is stated once again to enable a clear understanding of what needs to be looked at:

RQ: How do non-professional translators exercise power under an English language mandate in a multinational company?

4.1 Presentation of Findings

The main goal of this section is to look more closely at how the collected data supports the research question and how they fit together with the theoretical framework. As shown by the data analysis in the previous chapter (Figure 7), two overarching power dimensions emerged, namely discretionary power and perceived power dynamics. We seek to uncover the power dynamics of informal translations in the context of the multilingual case firm.

Before the findings are presented in more detail, it is crucial to remind the reader that the interviews have been conducted in 5 different languages, which means that the sentences, terms and concepts will be interpreted by the researcher in the original language and translated by his own into English. Occasionally, foreign words and concepts will be complemented with critical local knowledge and reconstructed in an understandable way (Xian, 2020). This feeds back on (Piekkari et al., 2022) who themselves investigate interpretive studies and stress how shared meaning and meaning creation have to be in line with the context. In a similar vein, Barner-Rasmussen & Langinier (2020) used the increasingly applied term "translanguaging" to underline how translations and interpretations are done to be interculturally coherent and to enhance linguistic awareness. All in all, both translation decisions and the tone of the respondents will be accounted for and discussed later on.

4.1.1 Discretionary power

In this first section, we start by looking at the agentic power that people within the company have in order to navigate through their daily job requirements. As this overarching dimension includes language choice, building of social networks, navigation of communication barriers as well as the individual's own empowerment of his or her language, it is a promising way to start the presentation of the interview and observation results (see Figure 8). Furthermore, English as the main communication language lies at the centre of this study, and it will be interesting to uncover how front-line employees see its use in their organization in the context of a multilingual MNE situated in Luxembourg. As mentioned in the theory chapter, the main emphasis of discretionary power lies on the everyday communication practices of the managers and employees interviewed. Moreover, this kind of power takes into account the dynamics of diverse language use, where people often depend on rapid and informal translations.

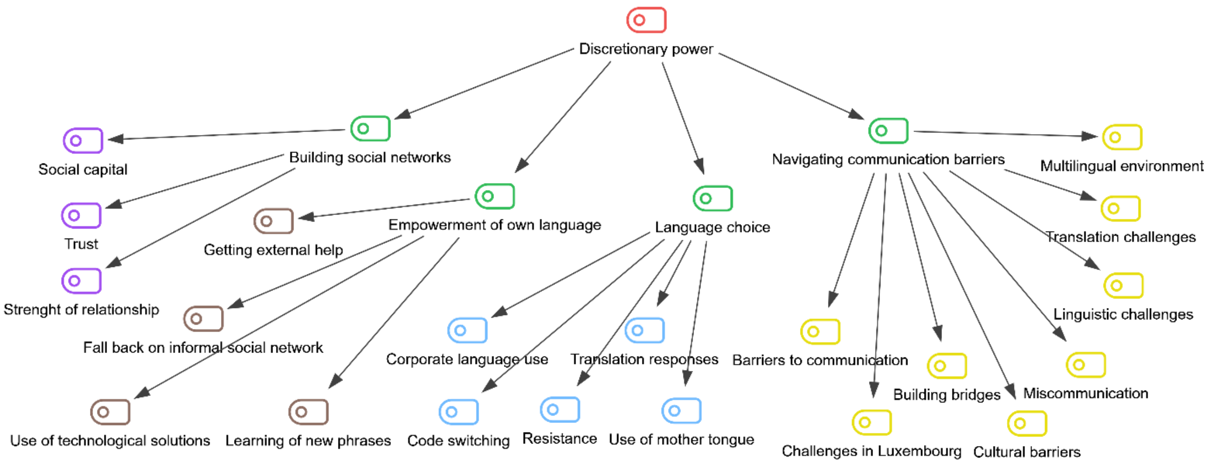

Figure 8: Codes and subcodes of discretionary power

<u>*Empowerment of own Language:*</u>

First, within the 2nd-order code "Empowerment of own language", I identified four recurring themes which include the main aspects of how non-professional translators, who also struggle from time to time to find the right words, make use of different strategies, or solutions, as a way to enhance their own language and translation skills and therefore try to increase their own power base. In the figures at the beginning of each mechanism of power (2nd-order dimension) will be outlined the respective categories covered from left to right, as in the graphical representation(s) below.

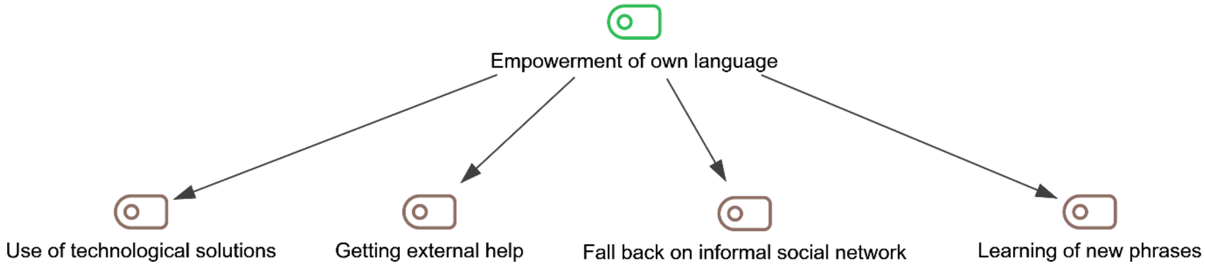

Figure 9: Categories of "Empowerment of own language"

Within the first category, the majority of employees support their already high language skill by using **technological solutions**. In fact, many participants use diverse online technologies to respond to translation needs, such as machine translation tools or specialized software. Some of the most relevant quotes are presented in the following:

[Online translators] make it easier to find small things, for example with emails, it is just copy paste and that makes it easy to translate. There are certain advantages, because I was wrong already oftentimes with words I didn't know (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 51).

I personally use mine [online dictionary] because I've been using this website for years and years. It's one of the Italian dictionaries and they have their own website. And with time they decided not only to provide an Italian word, but also English, the translation from Italian to English and to French. So given that there are the three languages that I speak, many times I go there to see how (...) there is a word. And Google translator for sure (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 76).

Well, I certainly use them. Now, it's not (...) I mean, Google after all, or even a simple dictionary isn't going to give you the right turns of phrase. So, we use them occasionally to translate a word, for example, but not for turns of phrase or when we have to write something very formal to someone. So, it's really for words (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 68).

Sometimes you have to be specific, but you have to be able to find some of the right language to make it have the right tone. And English sometimes sounds very harsh. So, ChatGPT really helps with that, you put like ok, I want it to sound corporate, I want it to sound like this and like that, that's a really big help (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 40).

It becomes clear that even experienced and highly-skilled multilinguals sometimes need help to translate via technologies, which can increase or decrease their power by being able to enhance their language proficiency and thus come across smarter or being looked at as less competent. **Getting external help**, or assistance, also emerged as a key area, because as respondents seek translation help, they actively influence how to respond more effectively to informal translations and hence show greater autonomy. Turning to friends or relatives seems to be an important way to ensure accuracy in translations and communicate more effectively, as can be read from these quotes in particular:

Otherwise, we have a colleague here who's (...) her mum's French and her dad's Australian, so that helps. If I'm really in any doubt, I can always ask her because obviously she speaks English, well it's her mother tongue. We always have a colleague nearby who speaks English very well, who speaks German and who can translate (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 42 & 86).

And I mean, my daughter has English almost as her mother tongue. I would train a bit with her, and we would think of other ways of saying it (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 32).

If I needed external help now, for example, I would ask my children. In particular my daughter, she's really helped me quite often, even without being asked she's said mum, you'd better say it like this or write it like that (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 44).

In a similar vein, respondents described how they formed **informal social networks** of colleagues who could assist with translation tasks within the firm. These networks are valuable and powerful resources, particularly in fast-paced environments where immediate help was required. For instance, participant 4 explained that she *would bond much easier with somebody from [her] country (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 72),* while respondent 5 described his personal experience like this:

The more languages you know and the more people you can connect with, that's really the power I would say. The more situations you can understand, the more situations you can find to translate (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 96).

What is more, participant 4 stressed that the *social network is done much easier between men only because 98% around [her] are men. They feel better between themselves. They're always chatting about sports just to relax their situation on something super stiff (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 74),* and participant 1 stated that:

As long as you speak Luxembourgish, English, German, French and even Italian, you have won, because here you can build completely different relationships between people (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 86).

The last category from this code involves ongoing **learning**, mainly by remembering new words or phrases which the participants wish to keep in mind for future conversations. Respondents frequently mentioned that they were constantly improving their language proficiency to meet the demands of the workplace. This learning was often informal and driven by practical necessity rather than formal language training and will with high probability better their chances of being promoted, for instance. Here are two quotes which underline this thought:

When another person said it, I knew exactly what it meant, and I memorised it. So, I file that away in my head. But I think that's normal. And next time I'll use that phrase too. (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 34).

I have to say that for me it also helps in my daily improvement and to get better in my job (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 40).

However, formal trainings are also an opportunity to learn continually the languages required, although to a lesser degree than before the Covid pandemic, as mentioned by participant 7 who is responsible for such learning within the company:

We also have the opportunity here to take English classes, so it's really (...) if you don't feel at ease in writing or speaking, or both, you can always take English classes (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 30).

Language Choice

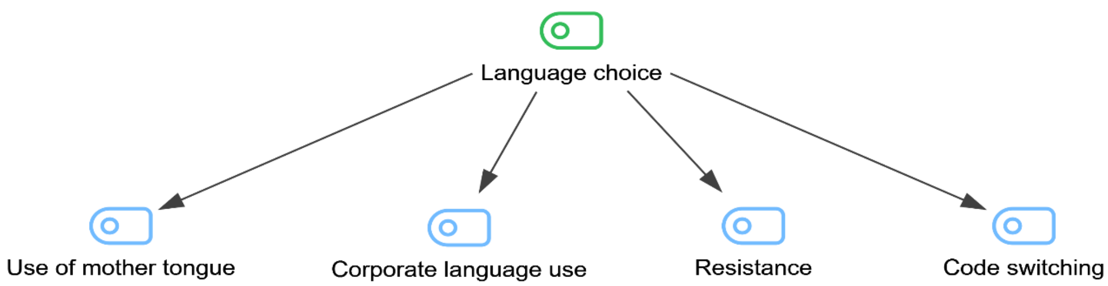

Figure 10: Categories of "Language Choice"

Language choice emerged as another important mechanism of power of non-professional translators to influence the way in which they exert control and influence. For instance, when being asked about which language they use most often in their job, Participant 2 answered:

When I speak with Luxembourgers, I speak Luxemburgish, there are some Dutch people, so I speak Dutch with them. My colleague is Spanish, so when he interacts with other Spaniards, they speak Spanish. So, we try to approach people so that they can express themselves better (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 7), and Participant 3:

I choose the language that suits me the best, and if I know the other person speaks German, I choose German (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 22).

These quotes highlight that employees prefer using their **mother tongue** in many cases and that they are willing to accommodate to their peers if both speak the same language. It becomes clear that the respondents are likely to be considered as knowledgeable individuals with many possibilities to speak to a wide range of individuals personally. As the company speak in Luxembourg is English, but the company's **corporate language** is German in the HQ in Frankfurt, some interesting constellations arise, and many employees see the choice of language slightly differently. In fact, the data reveals that English serves as the common language in the case firm, facilitating communication between colleagues from diverse linguistic backgrounds. For example, participant 5 emphasizes this by stating that *when neither party speak the same language, boom, we speak English*, highlighting the role of English as a default language when no other shared language is available. The respondent further notes that, in his team, *English is the only language that everybody in the team speaks*, underscoring its importance as a unifying factor in a multilingual environment (*P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 13).*

Similarly, participant 4 remarks that English is spoken *out of respect* in situations where colleagues come from different linguistic regions, ensuring that no one is excluded. She refers to English as the *common denominator*, illustrating its role in creating an inclusive communication atmosphere (*P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 14).* Participant 3 further explains that she deliberately chooses English over French when discussing with French colleagues to maintain a level playing field:

Since I've been working here, I generally don't speak French with my French colleagues in many discussions. In this case, I speak English because I think we're both on the same level (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 48).

This choice reinforces the perception that English is a neutral medium, ensuring fairness in interactions. However, some participants also noted that not everyone is equally comfortable with the use of English. Participant 1 points out that *people still don't really want to use English, and I'm talking about the French and the Germans (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 30)*, indicating that, in certain contexts, resistance to using English persists. Nevertheless, she observes that within her workplace, *this is such an Anglophone environment that everybody here understands English*, which suggests that, despite individual preferences, English remains prevalent *(Pos.*

66). The interviewee also mentioned an episode where she and her German colleague came into a discussion with two other German colleagues who insisted to speak English with her, because they knew she was not fluent in German and so *they wanted to make it clear that I don't speak German perfectly so that I don't feel bad (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 80).*

At this point, I would like to describe a short observation which I did when being on-site, more precisely at the entrance hall of the firm in the HQ in Luxembourg. In fact, I was able to see two external people waiting there for their contact person to pick them up, as they are not allowed to enter the building any further without permission. When they finally met, in both cases the contact person started speaking their mother tongue (as was conformed to me afterwards by the human resource manager) which was English and French respectively. The external person hence adapted and continued speaking that language, probably out of respect and they felt subordinate to them, or because they didn't speak another language well enough. We can derive from this a certain shift of power dynamics due to the language choice of the company's employees.

Next, participant 6 interestingly notes the paradox in his workplace, where *the corporate language is, funnily enough, English, even though we are a German company.* This highlights the global reach of English, even in companies with strong national roots, driven by the need to accommodate multinational teams. Furthermore, he describes how he chooses among the different languages within the company as follows:

In normal interactions with my colleagues, I speak mainly German. English is used in official meetings and sometimes French or Luxembourgish with the security staff, which is the official language here in Luxembourg (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 10).

Many respondents feel much more at ease when speaking English to non-natives rather than English natives, which oftentimes comes more naturally. In this context, P6 notes that when being on duty abroad:

I speak English much more freely when I'm in Asia, speaking English with Asians who aren't native speakers, than when I'm talking to English colleagues or American colleagues, because of course you want to be perfect and then you don't speak as freely, I have to say (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 24),

which suggest that while English is widely adopted and often seen as a tool for inclusion and efficiency in multinational settings, its use is sometimes met with reluctance, particularly for people who have the skills and capacity to switch to another language. This then leads to another key category, also stressed in the theory section above, namely **resistance**. This concept has been described as a strategy employed by an individual to reverse a situation in order to resist the dominance of a language by, for instance, using their native tongue in a discussion. One form of resistance is seen in the strategic use of ambiguity or withholding information. For example, Participant 2 highlights how language nuances can create a certain confusion when he speaks about other language-savvy individuals:

Maybe [they can] use words that we don't understand, or that sound the same way but have two different meanings (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 39),

which therefore can influence how communication is perceived and possibly manipulated. Furthermore, participant 6 discusses how potential translators wield a certain power in how they translate information:

He can interpret, just as it came across in his mother tongue, or he can rhyme his part of it. That is dangerous, of course, and if you realize that, you have to put a stop to it immediately (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 78).

Another form of resistance is seen in employee's discomfort or reluctance using a particular language, mainly English. Participant 4 stresses, for instance, that employees who struggle with it might not *be made for this environment.* This reveals a harsh reality for those who resist or feel uneasy using English, where not mastering the language could be perceived as a barrier to fitting into the company culture. The interviewee also discusses a more subtle form of resistance:

It can be also playing stupid. You might understand the word and use the time as if you don't understand the word to earn some time in order to obtain in negotiations some numbers, or to have another idea, or for somebody else to jump in and to save you or save the situation. It can be a good way out (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 58),

showing that sometimes people "play stupid" in discussions by pretending not to understand a word, thus increasing their potential power. However, not all respondents see a power problem arising with this kind of language choice. For example, participant 7 stresses several times that she has not experienced any withholding of information and thus shift in power:

Well, like taking power or withholding information or things like that, no (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 102).

Next, **code-switching** emerged as another important category under the 2^{nd}-order code of language choice and is obviously closely linked to the use of mother tongue and corporate language. Switching between languages allows these informal translators to adapt to the linguistic needs of different audiences and to subtly influence the direction of various conversations. When the interviewees were asked how they deal with the multilingualism within their firm, participant 6 stated that it

broadens your horizons. In principle, you have to think in several languages. You're not just stuck in your mother tongue, you have to keep switching to another language depending on who you're dealing with (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 60),

while participant 3 similarly stressed that

you have to adapt, because sometimes things go up and down. If someone else joins the two of us [at the reception desk] now, for example, I sometimes speak German with my colleague, and she answers them in French, and I might answer them in English. Then it gets so mixed up (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos.36).

This is a unique situation which occurs on a daily basis in Luxembourg, also highlighted by participant 4 in the two following quotes where she speaks about people working in this trilingual country compared to another country:

It's like making it a big deal that you switch from one language to another. And mainly if it happens in countries that speak 1 or max 2 languages, they discuss it. In Luxembourg it is not topic (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 20), and

If there is a German, you speak German because you want to maintain your languages. They are very important for the clients because there are a couple super-German clients that like to hear German. There are a couple of super-French clients that like to hear French (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 14).

Moving between different languages shows high competence and agentic power, not only from their client's perspective, but probably also when other, less fluent colleagues, notice how valuable it is when you can easily switch between languages and translate for different people if needed. We now move on to another key mechanism of power which is related to the just mentioned.

Navigating Communication Barriers

Managing certain obstacles in everyday communication can be a dauting task for most employees, and therefore non-professional translators have the best capability to navigate through these challenges. Here again are sketched out the key categories in the order in which they will be mentioned, from left to right.

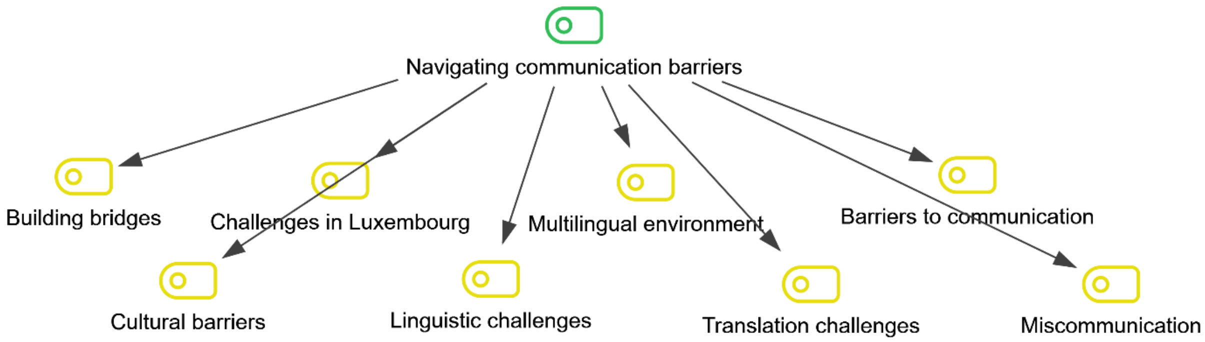

Figure 11: Categories of "Navigating Communication Barriers"

Accordingly, as most respondents view themselves as facilitators, **building bridges** between colleagues who did not share a common language is a vital role for fostering collaboration in this diverse workplace. The following quotes undermine this category:

Yes, it happens more often here in daily business with the service provider that you have to slip into this role because there's no other way. For example, in the ranks of the security service provider, we have German employees and French employees from all over the world. And sometimes you have to mediate between them, because one can't speak French and the other can't speak German. And then you act as a link between them (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 42)

The people working at the cafeteria, not all speak English because they come from France, they only speak French. So, some colleagues who don't speak French, they speak English. And then I saw that there was a problem of communication sometimes. Now, okay, it's not in my direct job, but I remember I intervened actually, to, you know, to ease the communication. (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 56).

So, I also have a lot of people in my job, I had someone come to me last week and said I've got a letter from the bank in Luxembourg, can you help me? Not an issue at all. That was okay for this person, and I was happy to help, and it wasn't a problem at all (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 80).

This shows how these individuals cope with linguistic challenges and build bridges by translating occasionally. Next, informal translators often encounter **cultural barriers** that complicate communication to a certain degree. For example, certain phrases or idioms in one language did not easily translate into another, which sometimes led to misunderstandings. Participant 1, who is originally from Slovakia, sums it up perfectly, when stating:

So, this is the biggest problem. And especially the differences in nationality in understanding communication. Because, of course, the Eastern nations are so direct, and they tend to say everything in this direct, sharp and very informative way. Whereas those Western nations, they'll round it off like that. *I, for example, had a lot of, not problems, but I had to really learn that here those people think very differently because in the West it's a different culture and you have to adapt to the language (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 44).*

Hence, navigating cultural barriers adequately is a highly important task, especially during informal translations. The next category incorporates the key **challenges in Luxembourg** which was described as the main organizational context in this study. For instance, participant 2, who was interviewed in Luxembourgish, was clear to say that

if we look at Germany and all around, for example what comes from France or Belgium, then English is not quite theirs. So, the fact that we are in Luxembourg makes it much more international (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 45),

pointing to the fact that many languages and cultures mix up in this trilingual country and thus necessitating a certain approach to handle communication challenges.

Furthermore, participant 1 sometimes *had trouble understanding in detail what was being said*, stressing that *it's a problem sometimes in Luxembourg, because nobody asks me if I understood, [the communication] was automatically in French* which she couldn’t comprehend that well at that point *(P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 24).* Despite these challenges, participants recognized the opportunities that Luxembourg’s multilingual environment offered, allowing them to improve their language skills and expand their influence in the workplace. Two quotes from a French and German interview participant are forwarded in the following:

Luxembourg is very, very good at that, because the people are very (...) well, they're used to speaking several languages, so that helps a lot (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 56).

Luxembourgers have the huge advantage that they naturally speak four languages. Luxembourgish, French, German and then, relatively early on, they learn English. And many

Luxembourgers are the children of immigrants from Italy, Portugal or Spain. Then there is a fifth language. So, the Luxembourgers are, I think, world leaders when it comes to languages. And you can also see that here in day-to-day business, that there is incredible talent when it comes to languages. And that makes things easier to some extent, because you can usually always switch to a language that the other person understands or speaks (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 58).

The complexity of navigating multiple languages daily creates also **linguistic challenges**, such as maintaining fluency across different languages and ensuring accurate translation. For instance, participant 3 clearly stated that *it is not an easy thing for many to learn or master multiple languages (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 88),* while participant 6 emphasized that due to different levels of language skills, *communication suffers because you are inhibited from talking and you automatically don't talk as much. And that's difficult (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 16).*

Furthermore, participant 1 brings in an example explaining that when French colleagues came from a French company to work in the case firm, *you can see that they are not so confident in English, because you see it in those meetings when people in French will talk very vividly and then they are so rigid in English (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 96),* which then would enhance the position of the non-professional translator stepping in to explain them something in English or German.

Moving on, Luxembourg's **multilingual environment** was both a source of opportunity and difficulty, requiring informal translators to constantly shift between languages depending on the context and the audience. This quote is illustrative of the aforementioned:

It's a cosmopolitan country, so we really do have all kinds of nationalities and so people here, by nature, are used to communicating in several languages. There's Luxembourgish, of course, French, German and English. So, people aren't surprised, and they're already immersed in this environment. (...) This is much more true in Luxembourg than in France, for example. In France, people don't speak languages well or at all (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 56).

However, English is still the standard language used, as highlighted by the same respondent:

Here in Luxembourg, some French people will speak French together, some Germans will speak German together. But as soon as there's someone else in the loop, it's automatically in English. This simplifies the problem (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 82).

Participant 5, who came from Italy to Luxembourg over twenty years ago, described his experience as follows:

The fact that since I moved to Luxembourg, you know, my brain, like, boom, just exploded. Wow (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 62). Furthermore, he explained: *If I was in Italy, most likely Italian and some English would be enough. But in this environment, I think it's not. (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 86).*

Therefore, it becomes even more clear that **translation challenges** can occur on a daily basis and put informal translators in a potentially strong position when they translation demands happen, as described by participant 2 who explained the problem when an external organization was once working with the case firm:

Where I didn't quite manage [to communicate appropriately] is with an external company. When people, who unfortunately don't speak enough French or English, come to us and have a question, it happens that we sometimes talk with our hands and feet (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 17).

Other front-line employees stressed the importance of correct translations:

There are requirements that must be implemented and there are requirements that should be put into place. So, if the translation is not correct, then you have a problem. Then you have to implement measures that are not mandatory in case of doubt. And that's why the accuracy of the translation is a very important aspect (P6 DE-Transcript, Pos. 66), and

as I said, we are a lot of nationalities and yet it is important that everyone knows exactly here in our area, even with such small things, that there are a lot of important little things that everyone has to understand exactly. (...) It is important that the factual content is reproduced correctly (P3 DE-Transcript, Pos. 52).

An important remark was made by participant 1 who described a rather negatively connotated experience when she didn’t know the French language very well and how her French colleagues reacted to this:

There are people who, especially the French, who would look at you in a certain way, well, that you don't know such a word (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 68),

which shows that some people see you as inferior even though you might be the one with higher language skills in general.

Another key category is that of **communication barriers** which frequently hinders optimal communication between colleagues from different linguistic backgrounds, leading to certain kinds of misunderstandings, amongst others. Here are the most relevant quotes which illustrate how the respondents experience failed communication and who, in their view, can be seen as more powerful:

If the communication fails, if you cannot deliver the message and the other person cannot receive it, the communication fails, so nobody wins (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 31).

French people are not known for their linguistic talents, that's simply not their thing. Belgians are perhaps a little better, Germans too. But I can imagine that it's not so easy for these people because they have to deal with other languages. And if you can't do that well, then there is a limitation (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 49).

In stressful situations, when you have to focus on a language that not everyone understands very well, which, in our case, is English. Then it can be a bit difficult to communicate when you can no longer think so clearly because you are also under stress, even under a bit of time pressure. Of course, that's a disadvantage when you're not only dealing with native speakers (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 74).

However, not all respondents see it this way and recognize that there are not many barriers to communication, as stressed by participant 7:

Generally speaking, I've never had this kind of problem, even with certain colleagues, for example, who I've had in the past, certain colleagues from Germany who spoke very good English, but who didn't always feel very comfortable when we had to do workshops or things like that in English. It was never a barrier or something where we felt that someone didn't understand very well, and we were always going to explain to them better or how we understood something. Anyway, I don't think that's a barrier (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 48).

Last but not least, **miscommunication** is closely linked to the previous categorization and non-professional translators often have to step in to clarify or correct misunderstandings, because the firm’s employees are *not all at the same level, so this can lead to problems of misunderstanding or misinterpretation (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 74).* The general response when asked about how the respondents cope with or prevent miscommunication was to explain the person concerned what was meant by it. Here a representative quote from participant 6:

If it really is an important topic that you want to communicate, then of course you have to make sure that everyone understands it and that everyone has the same level of knowledge. And if you notice that no everyone understood what has been said, then you have to ask in case of doubt, "have you all understood it the way we mean it or are there comprehension problems somewhere?" (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 34).

When asked about how the interview respondents viewed misunderstandings, participant 6 stated:

None of us are native speakers. And when we're negotiating with Anglo-Saxons or Americans and it's really about specialised appointments, we're sometimes a bit overwhelmed. You have to be honest. Yes, they have an advantage and that can ultimately lead to misunderstandings (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 20).

Participant 4 was also very clear about her opinion on this topic:

Things lost in translation or things lost due to lack of knowledge or due to not willing to have (...) I mean, the same way it can happen to me that I help, I think 80% of the cases it's me helping, can happen to me that I misunderstand because we all have our luggage behind that makes us have assumptions and judge on things too quick and someone else can help you understand something (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 28),

taking on slightly philosophical traits. She furthermore highlighted that it c*an be [about] miscommunication or something that can be lost in translation. Different language comes with a different cultural background. So of course you can have from time to time some issues, some frictions (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 56).*

Finally, participant 1 also mentioned interesting facts about written miscommunication with emails:

Here's the thing, sometimes a penultimate email lands [in your inbox]. Several mails have already passed through, and the initial communication was in English, German or French. And this is then a problem when you need to find out that whole communication, where and how it originated, because if some parts have been written in another language, that's not pleasant (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 112).

All in all, if you are the one who manages all languages spoken well, you can show immense competence and reduce language barriers or remove them altogether by helping out. It becomes clear that even English can pose certain problems between employees or external people. We now move on to the last categories under the second-order code of building social networks.

Building Social Networks

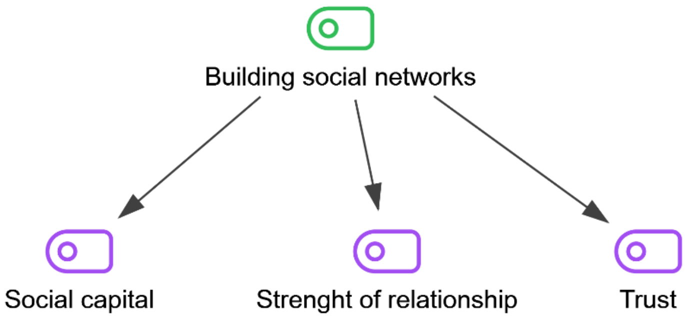

Figure 12: Categories of "Building Social Networks"

Social capital, the network of relationships that translators maintained, was another important factor in exercising power as many respondents relied on their social networks to assist with translation tasks, particularly in high-pressure situations where quick solutions were needed. For instance, participant 2 argues that you can *speak with more people (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 55)*, while interviewee 5 stressed that having a larger social network is related to *the power to give yourself the option to better integrate yourself, for example, with the option to have to be able to communicate with more people*, because *the more languages you know, the more people you can connect with (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 88-92).*

Furthermore, *whoever is a native speaker has it much easier because the bond is there*, as highlighted by participant 4 *(P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 72), and as long as the person speaks Luxembourgish, English, German, French and even Italian, he has won, because here he can build completely different relationships between people (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 86)*, showcasing that these employees can get in contact with much more individuals and translate more easily to cope better with everyday working life.

Next, the **strength of relationships** with colleagues determined how much influence a translator could exert, because they often allowed for smoother communication and more effective translation, as shown by participant 2 who is in contact with many people on a daily basis:

I know a lot of people and people know me really well, so with those who have been here for a long time you can speak normally with, there is no problem (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 15).

Participant 5 explained his building of relationships this way:

The fact that I moved already many years ago to Luxembourg meant for me to meet new people. New people who, like me, left their own countries. And we started our new relationship, and these new relationships turned into some invitations to weddings, mixed weddings. So, the groom from Italy and the bride from Sweden. The bride from Italy and the groom from Israel. You see? And that's what I really like. Because, you know, receiving an invitation to a wedding is the excuse to go and visit some places that not necessarily I would go visit by myself (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 50).

However, most respondents exclaimed that building strong relationships was done most easily with people from their mother country:

I mean, communication is always in English for everyone. But then I have French colleagues with whom I speak French. So, there I know I can speak French (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 36).

I would bond much easier with somebody from my country (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 72).

I prefer to deal with colleagues with whom I can communicate well. Not on an emotional level, but on a linguistic level. That's just easier for me (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 58).

Participant 1, who has been on a business travel for the company in the Czech Republic described her experience as follows:

I have great relations with the team in Prague. (...) They didn't pick me because I'm from Slovakia. That's just a coincidence. But it was great when I went to Prague on a business trip, and I could talk to them in Slovak. Of course, it creates a better bond than if I was some foreign person (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 86),

and she concluded by saying that *as long as you have a good relationship, it will help you at work of course, because that way you have a more open door (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 88).*

Trust has been identified as the last category in this section, mainly because it is crucial in translation work, as it ensured that the translator's interpretation was accepted and respected by others in the conversation. This is highlighted by the following quote by participant 5, who saw trust as a crucial factor when conducting informal translations:

Trust for sure. Because in that moment, you know, the two people rely on you, you know, they cannot communicate to each other, and they rely on you. So, you are creating some trust (...) into two directions (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 70), and more precisely he described the situation like this:

As I was saying, in Luxembourg we are 1,000 [people], so we need to know who does what. Where can I go? Who can I trust when I need something particular, in this case that person, in that case that person? (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 96).

As I have described, there are four main categories under discretionary power where non-professional translators have the choice to influence different kinds of informal translation. As might be clear, it is not always straightforward to identify the underlying mechanisms and therefore the reader should be able to draw his or her picture by the data gathered. What can be said however, is that these informal translators have the capacity to exert control under many circumstances and can direct conversations in one direction or the other. We now move on with the perception of the respondents and how they believe power dynamics shift due to less observable metrics, such as the status or interpersonal skills of their colleagues.

4.1.2 (Self-)Perceived Power

The second dimension focuses on how non-professional translators perceive other's as well as their own power within the organization, particularly in relation to their translation work. Three codes emerged from the analysis: translation task, status of both the respondents and other employees of the company, and the demonstration of expertise in the context of the Luxembourgish MNC, summarized in figure 13.

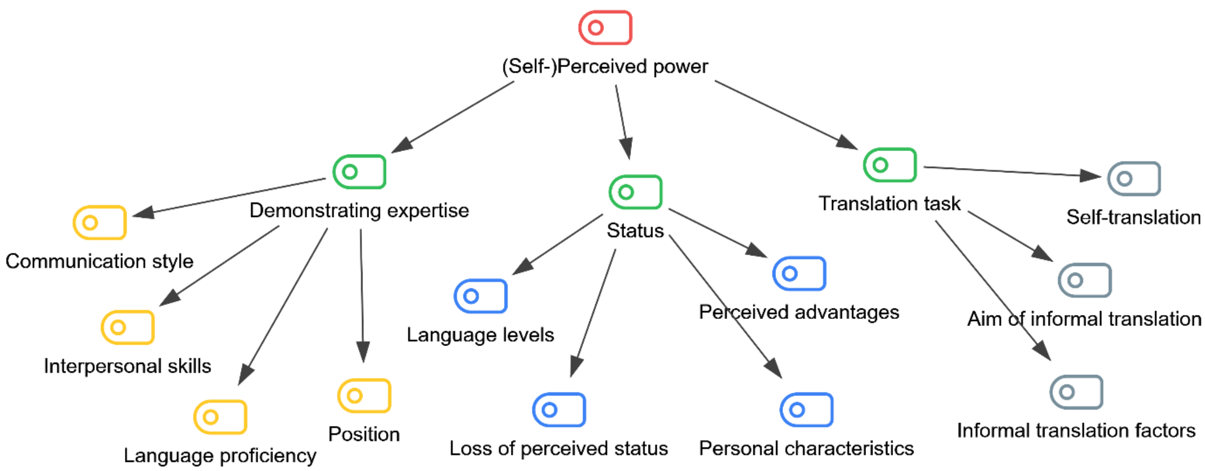

Figure 13: Codes and Subcodes of (Self-)Perceived Power

Translation Task

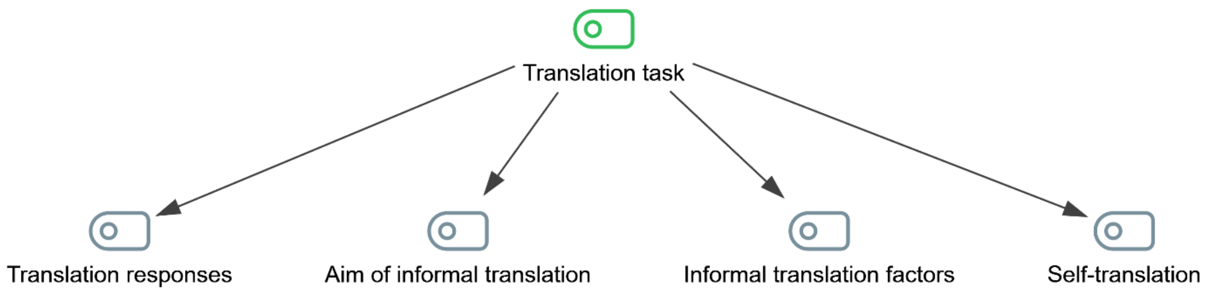

Figure 14: Categories of "Translation Task"

Participants' personal judgement and perception of their translation work played a critical role in how they viewed their power. As a first category, **translation responses** emerged from the interviews and are tightly linked to the translation process described in detail in the theory chapter. To put it briefly again, the process of translation incorporated the steps of summarizing, filtering, repurposing and coupling/expanding and came up as consequence of the rising need for translation due to growing language diversity.

When the participants were asked to provide answers to how they proceed when they don't understand what has been said by the other party, they oftentimes mentioned the repetition or clarification of the intended message. Here are the most revealing quotes from the interviews:

We are all enough humans to say "listen, is this the way you mean it or that way?" (...) I don't have a problem to ask if I haven't understood it, because maybe there is another way that the person can describe it to me (P2 – LUX-Transcript, Pos. 29).

If I don't understand something, I ask or have it explained to me. Even from this English colleague, who couldn't explain it to me in German because she didn't speak German. But then she paraphrased it and then I knew what it meant (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 64).

How many times we are in contact with some offices from India, and they have this particular way of accent or way of speaking. It is not always clear. I mean asking questions like "will you please repeat? Could you please speak slower?" You see, many times and now I've noticed no improvements because I've been away for many years. But especially at the beginning. If I understand that the other person is not comfortable, if you slow down, you know, and you speak slower, it can help. And this is good for everybody (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 31).

The preceding quotes imposingly showcase that when communicating with other people in this organizational context, informal translations are critical to ensure that everyone understands what is being said. Furthermore, it is very important to keep track of the translation process, as can be retrieved by the following two passages of quotation:

When we have to pass on information or communicate with other people, we make sure that everything is clearly written in English or at least translated into English. If the first part of the e-mail is in French or German, then there's always someone to translate afterwards (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 30).

When there are two French people, they both write in French, but then they involve other people in the discussion. So, I'll start in English. Well, but then you don't know what preceded the conversation. Something got lost. Well so this is maybe the only problem that can occur here in the area of translation (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 112).

Furthermore, oral translations are very fluid, as described by participant 7:

The translator has to be even more attentive to the translation. Because when you're speaking, it's a one-shot thing, it's immediate. So, it has to be, I think (...) when you're speaking, it's much harder to translate a concept or an idea because you really have to translate in the moment (P7 FR–Transcript, Pos. 52).

However, when the respondents were asked if they translate on a regular basis, some of them mentioned code-switching as a frequently used solution, which seems normal due to their high language skills, and which puts the translation aspect more to the side. Here is a statement from participant 4:

I don't need to translate, why should I? If [my colleagues] are French, I speak French with them (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 44).

An interesting remark was done by another interviewee when he was asked about the term "translation" and the meaning of the translation process:

I understood that, you know, the language, really, the language is just a decodification of something else, of an idea of something that we like to express. That's why, you know, sometimes if we have the tools, we are speaking one language. But, you know, that specific meaning is better given not translated (..) or decodified by another language. Boom. I take the word from another language, and I put it in my discussion, you see, because that specific meaning is more solid, that specific word is more meaningful in another language that I know (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 62).

Last but not least, the mental process when translating falls also into this category and was described by two respondents as follows:

I speak and I think, indirectly in English. If I write to someone in German, I think in German. When I write in French, I think in French (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 38).

For example, I think in English, and I work in English, and I don't translate it into Slovak at all and I've never done that. I studied in Czech, and I wrote everything in Czech from the beginning (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 50).

These are important remarks which show how individuals respond to the many translation requirements which in turn can influence their power position within the multilingual company.

Next, the primary **aim of translation** was to facilitate clear communication, and respondents often prioritized this goal over strict adherence to literal translation. For example, participant 3 explained that i*f there are three people standing here [at the reception desk] and everyone speaks a different language,* then the aim is to *somehow find a common denominator. Everyone should be able to follow the conversation or the content (P3 DE-Transcript, Pos. 52).*

Participant 4 also mentioned another important episode:

Of course, a CEO visiting our Hong Kong office will have much more precise and more careful translation than (...) a random employee (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 66),

which highlights that the main goal of translation depends on the context and can be different form person to person. Finally, participant 6 made a statement about the personal goal of an employee when conducting a translation:

Of course, you don't know the personal goal. Whether this person is using it to get ahead personally, which is absolutely legitimate (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 98).

We now move on to some key **factors** when doing **informal translations**, because many participants recognized that their translation work was informal and often went unnoticed by the organization, but they still viewed it as an essential contribution to the workplace:

Yes, I think that, firstly, speed. I mean, that's for sure. Then, once again, it depends on what we're talking about. Are we talking about exchanges between colleagues? Is it the translation into non-verbal communication, or verbal communication? Yes, obviously, speed in translation *and (...) I think that when you translate something orally, it has to be to the point (...) Otherwise you forget the beginning of the sentence, you forget the end (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 66).*

Accuracy is a very important aspect. Speed, of course, depends on what it's about. But the accuracy has to be right. So, it has to be clear that the translation also corresponds to what is to be conveyed in the original language, otherwise it will be difficult (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 62).

In business, and it has been proven also in the States, it is simplicity. So being clear, because the more sophisticated you try to be, you screw up and you confuse people. In business, be clear, be precise and be simple. Don't push big words, because nobody has the time. Nobody wants it. Your big bosses, they get tired of reading complex stuff (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 50)

I think the important thing is that sometimes speed is important, sometimes it doesn't have to be perfectly translated, but somebody needs it fast (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 62).

As can be read from these passages, the most important factors when conducting informal translations is the rapidity, accuracy and simplicity of the translation task, and it becomes clear that those who are able to deliver such oral translations or interpretations might be perceived as more persuasive and powerful.

Self-translation is the last category in this section and those who are able to self-translate more effectively, can also respond more easily to informal translation demands, when required. In other words, doing translations for one own is a crucial activity often neglected due to technological solutions and can bring significant advantages to non-professional translators. Many respondents are able to think and communicate in multiple languages, as shown in the following quote by participant 4 and which was already presented above in another context.

I speak, I think, indirectly in English. If I write to someone in German, I think in German. When I write in French, I think in French (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 38).

However, participant 1, whose mother tongue is Slovak, automatically uses English in order to keep it clear and not mix up the languages:

I write in English at English meetings. All my notes are also in English. My notes, I can show, I normally have everything in English, I never translate it (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 50).

We now move on the next section, which analyses the status of employees working in the MNE.

Status of Employees

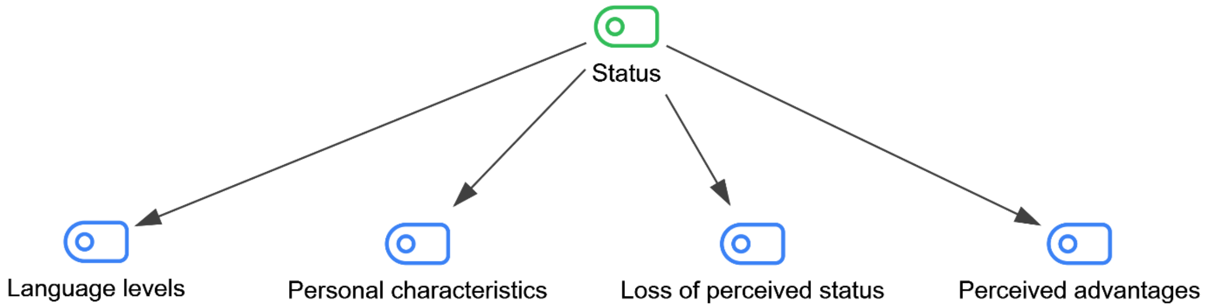

Figure 15: Categories of "Status of Employees"

The status of other potential informal translators has important implications on how the interview participants view themselves and others in the company. We will focus on four main categories, namely the level of language held by people, some personal characteristics they show, when and how status losses are perceived and finally what advantages people have when they are involved in informal translations.

First, informal translators' self-assessed language proficiency, or their **level of language**, determined their confidence in translating and their ability to influence discussions. Participant 6 put it this way:

We have different levels of language skills and if the level is not so high, then communication suffers because you are inhibited from talking and you automatically don't talk as much. And that's difficult (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 16). Furthermore, he is *always impressed by the ability of the staff here to use their language skills to help other employees (P6 DE-Transcript, Pos. 104),* which highlights the fact that even though everybody speaks English in the company, many people still struggle to communicate in other languages, mainly German and French, and therefore need the help of non-professional translators. This perceived power which emerges has been described by participant 5 when he talked about such individuals:

They speak Luxembourgish. They speak French. They speak German. See? So, in that sense, you know, the power to give yourself the option to better integrate yourself, for example, with the option to be able to communicate with more people (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 88).

Participant 3 put it in a more subtle way when saying:

I think if someone can do it [communicate] really well, not just the vocabulary, but also the slang and so on, I think that's cool (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 88).

Last but not least, languages courses have been offered on a larger scale before the Covid pandemic but can still be taken by employees. Participant 7, who is responsible for internal learning, commented on the language level as follows:

In any case, what I've noticed over the last few years is that we used to have a lot of people taking English courses to improve their English. Now there are more people working in Luxembourg. In any case, everyone speaks a minimum of English which everyone is required to have in order to work for us. I've noticed that people generally speak better English (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 88).

The fact that employees are more and more on a similar English level might reduce the power of informal translations as they are less needed and hence effective in their speech.

Each individual shows different **personal characteristics** which can influence the way in which non-professional translators handle the situation at hand. Furthermore, many people don’t want to admit that they need translation help, as illustrated in the following two quotes:

I think it's courageous of the person to demand [a translation], because it demonstrates that they don't understand it 100 percent, but would like to understand it 100 per cent and that's actually very good (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 70).

Some have no problem with [asking for translations] at all because it's simply the case that you can't speak all languages. And others are somewhat ashamed of the fact that they need translation help or a translator because they are unable to speak or understand a certain language (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 84).

Another interesting episode was brought up by participant 3 who works at the front-line at the reception desk. She describes a situation where she is in a discussion with a person, and then another colleague joins the conversation by speaking another language, leaving the receptionist in the dark as she does not understand French in this case:

I sometimes find that unpleasant, regardless of whether I'm the one who needs help, because I think “hello, I'm still here too.” It's actually about my issue here and also for the person on the other side. I sometimes find that unpleasant and then I often notice that here, we've talked about it quite often, that someone is somehow out of the conversation, even though they were actually in it before (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 70).

What is unclear is who of the two employees might be seen as in a more powerful position, but as it becomes clear, such episodes are very context-dependent and based on each individual's perception.

Similarly, this is also the case with the **loss of perceived status**, where the respondents felt that when they were offering help to translate, some colleagues were not at ease with accepting it, mainly due to their status. Participant 3 stated that *there are certainly people or colleagues who don't want that or who are uncomfortable with it or think it's not conducive to the status they have (...) to have to admit that they need help (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 80).* Furthermore, she mentioned that accepting translation help changes over time as you become more accustomed to the multilingual environment:

I believe that as you become more familiar, the problem of accepting help will diminish. As I said, I don't have a problem with it anyway. But I do think that there are people who have a problem with it or don't want to admit it to themselves or to others. I can imagine that over time, when you become more familiar with it, as I said, that this [changes] (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 82).

With this last category of this section, we will have a look at how the respondents **perceive the advantages** of informal translators who might possess unique advantages in the workplace, providing opportunities for career advancement or greater influence. Participant 4 specifies that other employees *can't do anything about it because you're better in something, expressing something. It's more pleasant to listen to you. You are the one to be taken (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 82),* which shows that these translators are perceived differently. Nevertheless, participant 3 replies:

No, in my opinion not (P3 DE-Transcript, Pos. 72),

while also not perceiving any clear signs of power dynamics on this topic:

I don't know if it's becoming a source of power, at least with us. Not necessarily, I'll say, but then again, everyone here speaks English. So, there you have it, at that level it's not something very revealing I'd say (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 84).

As we get to the last section of categories, the diverse power mechanisms do not show clear-cut opinions from the respondent's point of view and leave space to various interpretations which will be undertaken in the discussion section below.

Demonstrating Expertise

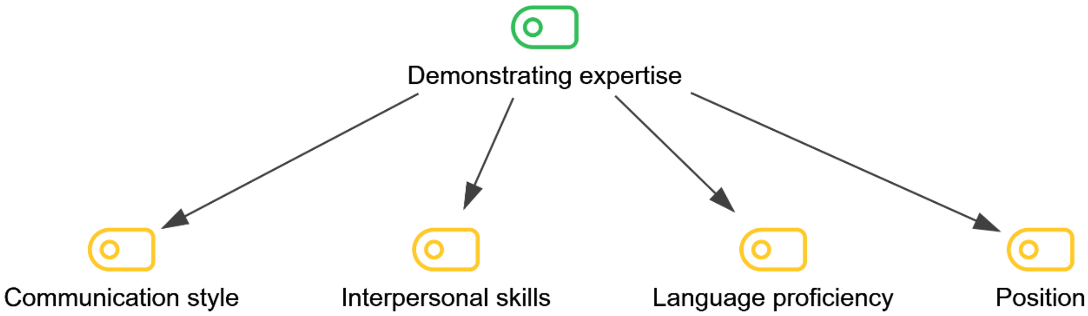

Figure 16: Categories of "Demonstrating Expertise"

Last but not least, showcasing expertise, or a certain level of competence, emerged as a last mechanism of power in this section and puts forward how non-professional translators can be recognized as powerful agents in the MNE. Firstly, the **communication style** has been identified as another category during the interviews. For instance, participant 4 talked about the language use of certain employees and commented them as follows:

They are more present, they are more entitled. So, they are more confident, and they put their agenda much easier forward than somebody that is "Ääh…", on the third minute, you don't want to even listen anymore (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 80).

This is typical when we oftentimes perceive how certain individuals speak, thus having an influence on the power a person might hold. This is also evident when participant 3 spoke about the opportunities of highly communicative and linguistically eloquent employees in the case firm:

Someone who can also communicate linguistically well has completely different possibilities. I think you might hold back more if you don't speak the language as well, even though you could say something to the topic at hand. For example, if there was a meeting and there were 20 people and three of them spoke the discussion language fluently or even better than that (…) then I think they can push themselves more to the foreground and assert themselves more than if someone is sitting there and thinks "I have something to say, but I don't really know how" (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 86).

Second, strong **interpersonal skills**, such as empathy, awareness or having a simple language for example, are essential for effective communication during informal translations. The following quote is illustrative of this:

Sometimes simpler language is better, but if a person understands what they're saying and can transfer it to other people, then maybe that's more welcome than someone who starts out complicated (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 106).

Participant 7 explains:

I think that, generally speaking, the most important thing is to make yourself understand and not be afraid to speak up (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 30),

while participant 2 stresses that *the more fluently you speak, the better you feel, and this person doesn't need to think so much about what they want to say (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 65).* He furthermore talks about himself in the context of switching from one language to another: *I have the advantage that I tackle things quite quickly and can jump quickly from one thing to another (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 21),* suggesting that being able to do that demonstrates other people a higher level of expertise and power. Then, of course, it is important how you can express yourself and use your knowledge in an appropriate manner, as illustrated by participant 6:

To what extent are you able to express yourself in different languages? That is very important, and I also experience that here in our daily interactions (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 16).

Participant 7 adds to this topic the following:

Then of course our managers, I'm talking about managers and senior executives, etc., of course they all have a level of English that is (...) very (...) They perform well in English. I mean, you can't be a manager in finance if you don't speak English. So, it's a given. I think it's more a question of expertise in the field you're in, rather than expertise in the language (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 84).

This quote also exemplifies how the fact that being in a higher position requires you to have also better interpersonal skills and is particularly relevant for managers who need to translate more difficult words on the spot to those who have another mother tongue than English and don't have this expert knowledge. On the contrary, having less experience and knowledge in interpersonal communication can lead to the opposite effect, as explained by participant 3:

I think that there could also be colleagues who don't say certain things because they don't know how, because they don't have the means to do so (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 86).

We now move on to an interrelated theme, namely that of **language proficiency** and how this can be a key factor in determining how much power translators could wield in their workplace.

Generally speaking, those with greater proficiency were better positioned to influence conversations and decisions when doing translations for their colleagues. To my question regarding the main advantages to have multilingual employees in the case firm, participant 6 explained:

There are huge advantages in the interpersonal area, I would say. We deal with a lot of service providers here, including a lot of Portuguese people. If you have security staff who have a Portuguese background and can speak the language, it opens doors and makes things a lot easier, and it also helps to get things moving before things get really heated. Having multilingual employees is a very clear asset (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 72).

The respondents were also asked about their perception of their own English fluency, illustrated by the following quotes:

I've gotten a bit worse here in Luxembourg, because I talk to a lot of Germans, French and so on, and I have the feeling that my English has gotten even worse than it was in Prague, when I was working for multinational companies. But *I have no problem with English at all (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 16 & 26).*

I don't have any reservations about that, or I don't know what to call it. It doesn't bother me. I don't care what language I have to speak. I already feel that confident that it doesn't bother me (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 26).

Of course, you have learned the other languages to an extent that it's not a problem to speak them fluently. In my daily work, my English is comfortable enough that I express it sufficiently well that it's okay (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 16 & 32).

I speak every day these three languages [English, French and Italian] because I'm in contact with colleagues and clients from Italy. And then I'm in contact with colleagues and clients speaking French, you know, from France, Luxembourg and Belgium. And I'm in contact with English clients because they are served by our office in London (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 13).

In the above quotes, all participants have similar views on their English skills, yet they diverge in their individual explanations. For instance, being “comfortable enough” is not the same as expressing oneself in English “sufficiently well” or having “no problem at all”. When being involved in informal translations, this can have important implications on how they are perceived by other colleagues. We might think of having a higher confidence level or a too simplistic vocabulary as potential factors which can change their power within the company.

Some participants also gave their perspective on how they see language proficient individuals, highlighted in the following three quotes:

Someone who speaks fluently does not need to search for the words every time (P2 LUX-Transcript, Pos. 63).

I think if you don't have these language skills yourself, then (...) I could imagine that you are impressed (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 88).

This clearly shows how the power of non-professional translators is perceived and can be brought to a higher level if wanted. In a similar vein, participant 5 describes how the context shapes the perception of knowing multiple languages:

Think about the same person who speaks six languages here in Luxembourg. I mean, you can easily find more satisfactions and the way to use all the languages every day. Or [think of] the same person working, I don't know, in Italy. I can tell you in Milano or, you know, maybe the people speak Italian and English mostly and then what do I do with my additional three languages? It's not an added value anymore because I don't need them. Seeing the context [is important] (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 100).

Operating in such a multilingual environment is coupled with many challenges but also opportunities and thus needs to be valued. Not only English must be seen as a way to communicate, but all available language in order for each individual to preserve his preferred tongue, as highlighted by participant 4:

We don't want to lose our identity. We live in Western Europe. We want French and German to be used. If we do everything in English (...) Jean-Claude Juncker said it's a sad story. Why did we learn languages? It's the beauty of the French language, the beauty of the German language (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 52).

What is also important to mention is that every employee has to take accountability for his language skills, otherwise you may be perceived as lazy or indifferent, which can potentially reduce you power:

At the end of the day, of course, you also have to say that everyone is responsible for themselves to a certain extent and has to work on themselves to reach a certain level (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 94).

This quote suggests that even though you may not be in a position to act as a non-professional translator, you can learn steadily, and with time you may gain status and demonstrate expertise in order to gain more power to help during translations.

Last but not least, an interesting observation was made after one of the interviews with participant 3, who works as a receptionist. To set the scene, an employee was in conversation with the other receptionist (there are usually two receptionists in the entrance hall), and the employee wanted to discuss an issue. The second receptionist (P3) wanted to know afterwards what they were talking about as she saw that the employee was raising an issue which could also concern herself but could not understand the language in which they were talking which was Slovak. So, the first receptionist explained to her what the problem was and only then P3 could give her thoughts on the topic. This means that the first receptionist acted as an informal translator and had the power to translate and explain the topic in her own words, while the second receptionist was in need of an explanation and might have felt subordinate to her or completely excluded if she didn't ask. Hence, the receptionist who translated demonstrated expertise and might also have a higher status if people around her perceive it in that way.

We now move on to the last category of this chapter, namely the participants' **position** within the company, which might influence the extent to which they can leverage their translation work as a source of power. In this study, the topic of promotion came up several times by the respondents and thus points to the fact that lower-skilled employees might perceive informal translators as better suited or even privileged for higher positions due to their language skills. The following two quotes illustrate this:

As long as [an employee] speaks Luxembourgish, English, German, French and even Italian, he has a very good chance to [be promoted], because he can build completely different relationships between people in this company. I think it may affect the dynamics that those who speak both German and French and Luxembourgish are more likely to be promoted. If he's a Luxembourger, then of course he will keep other Luxembourgers in his team. If you have a boss and she's Romanian and you're also Romanian, she's more likely to take and promote the Romanian one than the French one. So, I think that's the way it works (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 86-102).

If you then approach people who you consider potentially suitable and tell them you are suitable for this position, also because of your language skills, then they are sometimes surprised as to what language skills have to do with the position. Of course, they are right to a certain extent. It's not just about the language, it's about the big picture, about understanding the job. But it's *also about the language, because we are an international company (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 90).*

The above quote from participant 6 clearly demonstrates that those who speak more languages naturally have an inherent advantage and a better chance of getting higher positions. He furthermore stressed that *the higher you climb up the career ladder, the more language skills are required.* Nevertheless, the respondent also stresses that *nobody really thinks about it, because it's quite normal for people here in Luxembourg to speak several languages and they don't even realise that they have this huge advantage. It would probably be completely different in Germany. But here in Luxembourg, it's normal for everyone to speak 3, 4, 5 languages (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 88).* This shows that many employees are not conscious of their benefits by being able to speak multiple languages, which would be different in neighbouring countries. Thus, the power that comes with it is also oftentimes not perceived and exploited as it would be the case in a company with a lower level of multilingualism. This is also reflected in the following quote by participant 7 who describes that the English skills within the company are high enough and that no serious power issues emerge on a regular basis:

There's no change [of power] in that respect, strictly speaking, given that English is really a skill that we have that's a bit (...) Here, people speak English automatically, so we don't really have that problem (P7 FR-Transcript, Pos. 90).

Finally, this is backed by participant 1 who also does not see any particular power games being played by translating for other employees, regardless of the position that one owns:

It didn't matter who had what position, someone just translated in a normal way and told him (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 72).

These findings demonstrate that informal translation in the workplace is not just a functional task, but a complex process intertwined with diverse power dynamics mainly based on individuals' own choices and perceptions. Through their language choice, relationships and skills, amongst others, non-professional translators are able to navigate, influence, and sometimes resist the corporate English language mandate, shaping communication in significant ways. This brings us to an end of the presentation of the findings made during the interview process, and in the next section we will interpret the results and put them more into context.

4.2 Discussion

In this second part of this chapter, the key findings from the data gathered in the previous section will be compared with the theoretical background described earlier in order to give an answer to the research question, formulated in this study as follows: *How do non-professional translators exercise power under an English language mandate in a MNC?* Furthermore, we will link the empirical results with previous research and discuss what the main results really mean in practice.

4.2.1 Discretionary Power

Concerning the agentic power of individuals in the case MNE, we have encountered four mechanisms of power where front-line employees and managers can potentially exercise control and influence, whereas not all of them show clear signs of shifting power dynamics. It is important to keep in mind that the context, which makes our phenomenon what it is and without which there is no true meaning in this study, is crucial in order to understand the different factors, patterns and processes which are described here (Michailova, 2011). For example, many respondents described the unique standing of Luxembourg and how this multilingual environment shapes the perception of most employees, because the majority of people don't perceive informal translations as such a significant issue in their daily work. However, if they worked in another company abroad, they are aware that those multilinguals who use their language proficiency and fluency, and thus provide translations for their colleagues, would be seen as much more powerful agents within the firm.

In this study, it has become clear that not only the participants step in to translate in order to help in situations where language barriers arise, but other employees working in the MNE have the potential to conduct this task as well, as pointed out by participant 4 already:

I mean, the same way it can happen to me that I help, I think 80% of the cases it's me helping, can happen to me that I misunderstand because we all have our luggage behind that makes us have assumptions and judge on things too quickly and someone else can help you understand something (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 28).

This is due to the fact mentioned in the previous paragraph, as every employee is required to have proficient language skills and speak multiple languages. As participant 6 stressed:

You can also see that here in day-to-day business, that there is incredible talent when it comes to languages. And that makes things easier to some extent, because you can usually always switch to a language that the other person understands or speaks (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 58).

This would not be the case in many other countries, however, due to the rising globalization and our interconnected world, more and more organizations employ multilingual individuals and thus the phenomenon explored in this study can be transferred to many other companies around the globe. Coming back, non-professional translators are involved in many discussions with their peers while it is difficult to track and observe them due to the highly dynamic and ephemeral nature of informal oral translations looked at in this study. Nevertheless, we gained some valuable insights to answer the research question in an adequate manner, which will now be done step-by-step by revisiting the core mechanisms of power.

Empowerment of own Language

On the one hand, when looking at the different possibilities of front-line employees and managers to empower their own language, there is a clear tendency towards informal translators seeking external help or learning new phrases in order to enhance their vocabulary and hence respond better to translation needs. This can lead to enhanced language resources and offers a better way to help their colleagues to overcome language barriers, as already highlighted by Lonsmann (2011) and Tietze (2010). Furthermore, if these individuals gain quicker access to relevant information and thus have a larger base of potential knowledge, they are seen as more powerful, as mentioned by participant 5:

The more languages you know and the more people you can connect with, that's really the power I would say. The more situations you can understand, the more situations you can find to translate (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 96).

On the other hand, when non-professional translators are not sure whether to translate or not, or don’t have the means to do so, for example under stress, it becomes evident that in the moment they seek external assistance or look up a word on the internet, their power can be diminished, however the consequences are not clearly visible and depends on how critical the nature of translation is. For instance, after a high-stakes meeting between employees with different mother tongues, a non-professional translator could be asked to quickly translate an important financial term from English to German or French. If the translator is uncertain about the precise word and opts to seek external assistance by consulting another colleague or using an online dictionary, this moment of hesitation may temporarily diminish the translator's authority and credibility in the situation and highlight his or her vulnerability. If, on the contrary, the term is less critical, the impact of this diminished power may be negligible.

Language Choice

Next, choosing one's language can be an important mechanism of power for informal translators. For instance, switching between languages is seen as a valuable asset, both in conversations with other employees and with clients. This can indeed lead non-professional translators to navigate power dynamics, build rapport or claim authority, as highlighted by Vigier & Spencer-Oatey (2017). However, in such a multilingual environment it is also perceived as natural and normal, and thus the effects are not as strong as anticipated and stated in the literature.

The use of their mother tongue was more of a revealing factor, as most employees prefer to switch to their own language, mainly in informal situations between coworkers (see e.g. Lauring & Selmer, 2010). Hence, situations frequently arise where people feel uncomfortable and isolated, which can result in the formation of different language groups or the formation of shadow structures in order to regain some power or prevent uncomfortable situations. If possible, the respondents used their preferred language, which means that when conducting informal translations, they tend to engage only in those discussions where they feel at ease, reducing the number of episodes they are involved in, which reduces their visibility and thus the possibility to become powerful agents. However, considering that those employees tend to engage in discussions where they feel comfortable using their mother tongue, this can also allow them to focus on situations where they can excel, ensuring they maintain their reputation and influence within those contexts where their language skills give them an advantage.

Furthermore, the use of English as the corporate language can have consequences of how employees in the firm communicate together due to disparities in language proficiency levels between native and non-native speakers (Weinzierl, 2023), which was not the case in this study, because most individuals are non-natives and thus English does not pose any significant challenges in the internal communication. French employees were amongst the ones who showed the lowest level of English fluency, which has the potential to cause disempowering effects causing them to feel more isolated (Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014). As already put forward by Piekkari et al. (2013), such individuals with lower skills or confident levels, for example, often choose self-translation or resort to their social network rather than asking their peers. In this study, it became clear that those asking for translations are not seen as less powerful and were even described as courageous. This might then lead paraprofessional translators to step in and help those individuals with no specific intention, but of course we might think of situations where unconsciously power shifts to those informal translators, especially if this gets noticed by their coworkers.

English levels tend to be similar in such a multilingual MNE, and together with the use of a more simplified English spoken by non-native speaker, there can be perceived a certain parity in the workers' communication as well as enhanced coordination and participation, as in line with Neeley (2012) and Gaibrois (2015). In other words, some respondents made clear that communicating in a simple manner, *not pushing big words,* and speaking slower can enhance employee's comprehensibility and appearance. However, managers with higher positions and better English skills have a greater power base and are often seen as dominant by many interviewees. However, it is not clear which factors lead to their increased influence on their subordinates, but it is probably a combination of multiple ones. As translations are situated on the border between two social worlds (Piekkari et al., 2019), this can also have important implication for the status in the company and it might lead individuals to reconsider if they demand a translation or not in front of their superiors. Nevertheless, if employees with high language skills can step into a discussion where higher-level employees don't find a word and need some help, it is imaginable that a non-professional translator could improve her or his reputation within the company.

The last point made here is that non-native speakers are uncomfortable using a language which they don't speak well and thus avoid or withdraw from communication, also described as resistance above, affecting power relations in the case firm (e.g. Neeley et al., 2012; Puck & Aichhorn, 2017). Paraprofessional translators might *play stupid* in order to gain some time for different purposes, as illustrated by participant 4. For instance, they can use this additional time to consult with their peers or create pauses during important discussions. Hence, employees can resist the pressure during stressful negotiations by using language as a mechanism to regain control and accepting or rejecting translation requests, amongst others (Sanden & Lonsmann, 2018). Last but not least, non-professional translators may also choose to omit or subtly reinterpret information to shape the outcome in their favour or to align with their interests or those of their preferred language group.

Navigating Communication Barriers

By effectively coping with diverse challenges and taking on so-called gatekeeping positions, non-professional translators can control the meaning in conversations and thus make others less powerful, although many people are not aware of this conception of reality (e.g. Luke, 1974). As Clegg (1989) already pointed out, a person A has potential power over another person B if A is able to direct the actions taken by B which he or she would not have normally taken. In the context of this study, the respondents do not see any issues by navigating such linguistic, translation and cultural barriers as everyone in the company is used to this multilingual environment and there is no perceived surprise that many employees can switch from one language to the other quickly. Again, some interviewees remembered to have intervened in situations where translation help was needed in order to *ease the communication*, as highlighted by participant 5 earlier. Intervening in such situations and doing interpretations for others can be an important tool for those employees who identify as bridge builders because they can gain some influence within the company. If, for example, a person in the cafeteria, as illustrated earlier, gets help by an informal translator, this person can speak well of such translators in other upcoming episodes, which can have a positive impact for those who helped out.

As mentioned in the theory section, multilingualism showcases in many instances that power is something negative because an individual has "power over" somebody else (Steyaert, 2011; Gaibrois, 2015). However, this can be replaced in this study by an active and more flexible view of "power to" help out, ease the communication, or just translate a word with no intention behind. The main difficulties were described as follows:

If the communication fails, if you cannot deliver the message and the other person cannot receive it, the communication fails, so nobody wins (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 31), and there can arise *a problem when you need to find out that whole communication, where and how it originated, because if some parts have been written in another language, that's not pleasant (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 112).*

Hence, informal translations were conducted mainly in order to take responsibility and to enhance cooperation and support within the organization. This then leads to less misunderstandings and misinterpretations if, for example, a French and a German employee are discussing on a topic in their own mother tongue and then switched to English, but something gets lost in translation. If such miscommunication occurs, there is no evidence in the data that paraprofessional translations influence the power relations, contrary to what Baker (2018) stated by saying that translation is not a neutral activity. In fact, the participants' responses indicate that these informal translations happen quickly and often are not even noticed by those who ask for translation help, which means that such interpretations are mostly neutral activities in this multilingual context. All in all, this can be described as a dual nature of informal translations, as they function as collaborative tools that promote efficiency and clarity, yet they also carry the potential for influencing the narrative, depending on the translator's discretion and interpretation, originating from their own perspective within the company.

Building Social Networks

Next, the social network of most employees is a critical resource which they cultivate on a daily basis, and it is vital for the process of translation and the ability to communicate with their colleagues or clients. Cultivating relationships as well as languages can bring you into contact with more people, because *the more languages you know, the more people you can connect with (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 88).* This idea feeds back on Mitzberg (1983), who stated that this might provide individuals with some sort of expert power, while increasing the chances of giving advice or helping others if they call upon you. Hence, those who can be labelled as paraprofessional translators can become some kind of translation department where their co-workers request translation assistance if needed (e.g. Piekkari et al., 2013), which cannot be fully backed by the data, due to the fact that the majority of employees communicate in English and there is no need to ask others for help in most cases. Hence, the English language mandate in the case MNE mitigates in a way the urgency of translation as every employee can resort to English as the common language, which can reduce potential inequalities between diverse language groups. This aligns with our observation that most employees do not need to request translation assistance frequently, as they are already equipped to communicate directly in English, and oftentimes also French or German.

Language shapes social dynamics and the strength of relationships, which was oftentimes mentioned by the respondents who still prefer using their mother tongue, if possible, during work. One can build *completely different relationships between people*, as mentioned above by participant 1, and thus many employees *would bond much easier with somebody from [their] country (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 72).* Being able to speak with more people, and thus being involved in informal translations more often due to higher exposure to other-speaking individuals, was discovered to be an important way to gain more power throughout the company. Trust also played a crucial role in this context, and the fact that most interviewees already worked for a longer period of time in the MNE enabled a deeper level of information exchange between those involved as well as a higher level of confidentiality. This might be another strong mechanism to exert more influence and have more control in the firm, but once again, this also comprises the "positive" power, for example to push forward better cooperation and participant involvement.

To sum up this section, several ways have been identified and underlined in the aforementioned paragraphs as to how non-professional interpreters can exert power by their translation work. Gaining "power over" some situations or other employees can be done more easily when informal translators cultivate a larger base of potential knowledge and use this information for their personal purposes, try to gain time and play with those who lack specific language skills, as well as when they have the possibility to speak with more people and connect better with them in their mother tongue. The best ways to stand out positively is for paraprofessional translators to take responsibility, enhance cooperation and support, cultivate healthy relationships, building trust and having a higher level of confidentiality in case their translations are seen as valuable. As mentioned above however, their acts of translation are mainly seen as a neutral activity in order to effectively respond to emerging translation needs and use both a simplified English and their mother tongue in situations where it is appropriate and comes across naturally.

4.2.2 (Self-)Perceived Power

Translation Task

Speaking of translations, the most frequent translation responses by the respondents were meant to promote clarification and better understanding. Slowing down, repeating what was being said and reminding the other party to *stick to English* are common practices by the interview participants in order to follow the conversation in various situations. Being able to claim such explanations brings the non-professional translator into a position where he or she is perceived as more knowledgeable and having the capacity to steer the conversation in one way or the other. Such episodic encounters, mostly when dealing with employees working in offices from abroad, oftentimes forces front-line employees and managers to alter their way of communication, which can lead to the creation of more adaptive and creative translation strategies, as forwarded by Koskinen (2020) and Massey & Wieder (2021). It is not evident as to what extent power might shift due to different translation responses and being able to make interpretations for those who didn't fully understand what has been said provides the informal translator with a "hidden power" to play a pivotal role in organizational communication, be it internally or externally (see e.g. Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2020).

It also became clear that giving accurate, quick and simple translations has the biggest effect on the perception of other employees, as they wish to gain clarity and don't want to get confused by vague interpretations. Some respondents are used to self-translate for themselves, mainly by thinking in the other language, or by getting external help and using an online dictionary. However, problems can arise when emails get forwarded not in English, but in German or French, and then there needs to be someone who translates what has been written in those languages into English, as was stated by participant 1. This can lead to power disparities, perceiving those who began the conversation in another language as "unprofessional" or "selfish", while seeing the translator as "responsible" and "taking the initiative" to clarify things for each party.

Last but not least, the aim of non-professional translations is often claimed to be much more personal in the literature, taking on more agentic roles. Participant 6 stated that it is not clear what the goal might be of informal translators but indeed agreed that if they used it as a way *to get ahead personally,* it would be *absolutely legitimate (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 98).* In fact, it is not clear if doing translations in informal situations is something to be seen as opportunistic, or simply as doing someone a favour with no particular intention behind. Hence, the translation task can be a difficult one and those who can master it in a clear, rapid and simple manner have the best chances to be seen as authentic and strong, amongst others. We now come to the status of different employees and how their (self-)perception can influence power dynamics.

Status of Employees

To remind ourselves, social perception is best described as the formation of people's judgement and their impression towards others, which many of us do regularly in order to effectively navigate through their lives (Pfeffer, 2010). This is closely linked to the status of individuals because it has important implications as to how we perceive power in different situations and "exists entirely in the eyes of others" (Hinds et al., 2014, p.553). As mentioned in the presentation of the findings, one respondent explained that being able to speak multiple languages and thus make translations more often gives you the power *to better integrate yourself, for example, with the option to be able to communicate with more people (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 88).* Furthermore, if employees can communicate really well and use their vocabulary to make more precise translations, as illustrated by participant 3, it is perceived as *cool,* and those people are seen as more experienced and knowledgeable.

The literature also suggests that those who are natives and fluent in English are able to raise their influence and standing in an organization, while others are confronted with a loss of status and limited chances of promotion (Neeley, 2013; Hinds et al., 2014). This cannot be confirmed, because in such a multilingual environment with English as the corporate language, the English level does not differ dramatically between employees, as mentioned already above. Interviewee 7 also stressed that she does not necessarily perceive any power struggles in their company, because in any case, people can switch to English which in a way neutralises any tensions that might come up between different mother tongue speakers. Most respondents are impressed by the language skills that many of their peers cultivate and think that it is courageous of a person to ask for translation help, because it demonstrates that he or she has not fully understood what was meant, but is ready to demand some clarifications, as described by participant 6. Nevertheless, some cases can occur where people feel ashamed that they need translation help because they are not able to speak one language, mainly French or German. To repeat participant 3 in this context:

They are uncomfortable with it or think it's not conducive to the status (...) to have to admit that they need help (P3 GER-Transcript, Pos. 80).

Another point is that speaking with higher status employees, such as managers, might cause some power imbalances, as employees with a lower position within the company become more aware of their linguistic shortcomings and thus more stressed when stepping in discussion where informal translations are needed. In fact, managers have the personal capacities to better control the course of a conversation as they have better expertise both in their field and in language-related issues, which will be further covered in the last section of this chapter.

Demonstrating Expertise

In this last section we look at how demonstrating one's expertise of being a paraprofessional translator can have effects on internal power dynamics. On the one hand, differences in language proficiency are shown to have a stronger impact on power relations that the absolute skill levels of one employee (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). Participant 6 therefore rightly pointed out that expressing oneself in multiple languages is very important in daily interactions within the company, and also with clients who prefer to speak their mother tongue which can be English, French, German, Luxembourgish or even a fifth language. In fact, those who can offer translation help in these various languages hold a powerful position as she or he is seen as a valuable asset to the multilingual company. These informal translators hence feel more confident in certain situation (Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2019), and *they put their agenda much easier forward than* somebody who lacks the capacity to do such translation activities and pushes them on to others *(see P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 80).* On the other hand, it is unclear, as participant 5 mentioned, if speaking several languages quite well or only one, mainly English, on a very high level, will be required in the future as everybody can look up words online and artificial intelligence will make simultaneous translations much easier and thus probably shift power dynamics when people will interact with each other.

Lastly, having multilingual employees is a valuable asset for the company, as illustrated by participant 6, mainly because *it opens doors and makes things a lot easier (P6 GER-Transcript, Pos. 72).* Although knowing multiple languages is seen as "normal" within the company, the respondents still stressed enhanced opportunities for those who can express themselves better and who cultivate their social network. This is clearly illustrated by the following quote of participant 4:

The moment you reach a proficiency level, it's a pleasure to listen to you. And of course, you're asked to do much more and you are more visible within the organization and in front of clients and so on (P4 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 68).

Participant 1 agrees on that:

As long as [an employee] speaks Luxembourgish, English, German, French and even Italian, he has a chance to [be promoted], because he can build completely different relationships between people in this company (P1 SVK-Transcript, Pos. 86).

On the contrary, Vaara et al. (2005) and Steyaert (2011), amongst others, have found out that low language skills lead to significant barriers to career progression in the context of social episodic interactions. Non-professional interpreters have been showed to hold <u>strong interpersonal skills</u> (such as having courage or empathy) as well as <u>high language proficiency</u>, and thus can use their expertise to reduce the distance between different native speakers when they step in to translate. The following quote is illustrative of the aforementioned:

Knowing German would be like the reduction of the distance. It would be nice. Look, I understand that the other guys prefer to speak German. If I could speak German, I would (P5 ENG-Transcript, Pos. 25).

To sum up, paraprofessional translators can gain control by claiming further explanations during informal translations and other employees perceive them as more powerful when they translate, and hence communicate, both accurately and in a simple manner. Other perceived benefits are, for example, their ability to express themselves in multiple languages, which demonstrates their language proficiency, as well as their usage of higher-level vocabulary, which enhances their status within the multilingual MNE. Oftentimes, interpersonal skills, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, makes them more memorable in their coworkers' eyes and they have the capacity to be promoted much easier. Lastly, demanding and conducting informal translations in daily situations can be both perceived as courageous and smart by those involved, but employees can also feel ashamed and uncomfortable if they get helped even though they didn't ask for it. What is important to mention is that it strongly depends on the individual agents if such interpretations can be seen as annoying and irritating if done more often and in an inappropriate manner, which, however, was not stated by any of the respondents. Figure XY gives a short summary of the key dimensions described in the findings above.

Discretionary Power	*Empowerment of own Language*	*Language Choice*	*Navigating Communication Barriers*	*Building Social Networks*
	Responding better to translation needs Cultivating a larger base of potential knowledge	Using one's mother tongue Using a simplified English Gaining additional time	Intervening in different situations Taking responsability Enhancing cooperation and support	Cultivating relationships Being able to speak with more people Enabling a deeper level of information exchange and confidentiality
(Self-)Perceived Power	*Translation Task*	*Status of Employees*	*Demonstrating Expertise*	-
	Giving accurate, quick and simple translations	Being able to speak multiple languages Using a stronger vocabulary Demanding clarifications	Expressing oneself in multiple languages Showing strong interpersonal skills and high language proficiency	-

Table 6: Summary of key results

All in all, the previous sections show that non-professional translators can benefit from the multilingual environment as they are able to make use of their language and translation skills and being in contact with many people. Furthermore, showcasing one's language skills are all ways to improve their standing within the company and getting promoted is a strong incentive to conduct informal translations when required. As can be seen, it is difficult to find instances of informal translations and some respondents had difficulties to remember concrete episodes of this phenomenon which might lead to a shift in power dynamics. Most interviewees stated that doing informal translations are not seen as something special and only rarely perceived it as a way to gain influence in the MNE. The aforementioned contributes to answer the research question in an adequate manner and it can be said that power is mainly perceived in a positive light, while translations are seen in many cases as a neutral activity done for pragmatic reasons.

In this paragraph we will look at the impact of two further influences which are relevant to consider. First, it is not clear how non-professional translators can leverage their potential power within the company in the long-term. For instance, if informal translations are done only once or twice in a short period, other colleagues might forget about these translation acts quite quickly and there would be no perceived benefit at all. Therefore, being involved in such translation tasks more frequently could be beneficial for paraprofessional interpreters as they would become more visible, and their help can be observed more frequently. Second, it is difficult to discern and predict the diverse factors which can have an influence on power dynamics by looking at this topic more holistically. Possible causes for power distortions other than informal translations can be, for example, the standing in the MNC, the social network of employees, code-switching in conversations or having access to relevant and sensitive information. As we have seen, paraprofessional translators can gain control and thus influence power dynamics through all of these factors separately as well as in combination, but considered in isolations, they can also be influential on their own.

Considering the English language as the common speech in the case firm which everyone speaks, the degree of comfort with the language can still vary. Non-native speakers might prefer their mother tongue for expressing complex ideas or emotional nuances, particularly in informal or high-stress situations. In this context, multilingualism becomes less about compensating for a lack of English skills and more about providing an additional competitive advantage. Employees fluent in other languages can leverage their skills for building broader networks, bridging cultural gaps, and handling external communications with clients or partners. This suggests that while English proficiency levels the playing field internally, multilingualism remains a valuable asset for external-facing roles and informal influence within the firm, and conducting translations informally can be an important tool to better leverage their influence in such a dynamic environment.

Nonetheless, the participants are aware of the language diversity in such an environment and mentioned multiple times that doing informal translations would be a much bigger issue in other countries where paraprofessional translators are able to exercise more power. All that has been said before can be interpreted slightly differently, and it would be the turn of the reader to form his or her own opinion on how informal translators can exert influence and control in one way or the other, both in the context of this study and other possible scenarios in the business world. Ultimately, it is crucial to keep a flexible mind on this topic and always reconsider possible ways how non-professional translators might become powerful agents in different contexts, if at all, and how this might shift over time.

5 Conclusion

This last chapter aims to summarize what we have found out during the research process regarding the research question formulated at the beginning of this thesis. Furthermore, both the theoretical and managerial contributions will be outlined, as well as the key limitations of this study and further directions for future research.

5.1 Summary

In this qualitative study, we have looked at informal translations and how so-called non-professional translators can influence the power dynamics of a multilingual MNE in Luxembourg. At the beginning of this thesis, the theoretical background has been put forward in greater detail, including the Theory of Power and Theory of Translation and the key concepts and most relevant studies in order to shed light on a rather underexplored research topic. The aim was to combine these two theories to better grasp how informal translators act as mediators in an environment where people from different linguistic backgrounds come together and need the help from their colleagues from time to time. The dynamic nature of such episodes can have different effects on the internal functioning of an organization analyzed in this study and hence the power dynamics can shift into various directions. After that, the methodology was outlined and explained the key aspects, such as the philosophical grounding, context, specific case, selection process and interview procedure.

The findings from both the interviews and the observations led to two overarching dimensions, which have been found out with the help of a qualitative software tool and an appropriate Gioia methodology coding scheme and have been named discretionary and self-perceived power. Under these key aspects, several power mechanisms have been described which have been derived from multiple first-order categories outlined in figure X at the end of the methodology section. As this study follows an interpretive approach and relies on thick descriptions done by the researcher, the findings can have alternative explanations when looked at through different lenses. The main results showed that non-professional translators are viewed rather in a positive light by their peers and their translation work is perceived as a valuable task in most situations. However, they can also exert agentic power by cultivating a larger social network, taking responsibility in informal situations or by receiving information they would not normally be able to gather, to name just a few factors.

Finally, as Luxembourg offers an unusual surrounding for many employees, many of the respondents do not see dramatic shifts in power happen and exclaimed that this would be different in other countries. Their awareness of their own and other's language skills as well as their valuable insights into how informal translations are viewed gave a better understanding of how communication and translation challenges are perceived in the case firm. The language diversity in this particular context makes it difficult to generalize the findings in a meaningful way and thus this study can offer important contributions for different areas as can be seen in the next sections more clearly.

5.2 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

As a theoretical contribution, this study's aim was to shed the light on a rather underresearched phenomenon covering episodic encounters of so-called paraprofessional translators stepping in during diverse discussions and conversations to help out with their language and translation skills. Many studies in the past two decades have focused on language-related issues and the English language mandate in diverse organizational settings as well as their implications for power dynamics (e.g. Vaara, 2005; Logemann & Piekkari, 2015; Gaibrois, 2015; Sanden & Lonsmann, 2018; Roshid & Chowdhury, 2024). In this realm, translation has come up as another topic worth studying more closely with the help of qualitative research, and many authors have recently begun to uncover the dynamic nature of translations in the business context (see e.g. Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2020, Ciuk, James & Sliwa, 2019, Gutierraz-Huerter, 2020; Massey & Wieder, 2021).

This study made use of the term "paraprofessional translator" introduced by Koskela, Koskinen & Pilke (2017) and analyzed them with the aid of qualitative interviews and observations in the context of a multilingual MNE in Luxembourg. As these interpreters perform their task in an always changing environment and ephemeral manner and which oftentimes goes unnoticed, we focused on these informal interactions and the way these non-professional translators use their agentic role to shift power dynamics. Up to this point, this constitutes a unique approach to this critical subject and adds to the theory important insights of the inner world of the paraprofessional translator as well as those working around them. Furthermore, this study sheds light on how these translators are perceived and how they can control particular situations where translation is needed when interacting with their colleagues. This is a highly critical theme to consider because if translation fails, or communication gets lost in it, international business cannot be done effectively and in the worst case can lead to unwanted consequences. Therefore, informal translations are worth studying in greater detail, and this research has brought some relevant insights into this complex issue of professional workers conducting non-professional interpretations in daily conversations and their influence on their co-workers and the organization as a whole. More precisely, this thesis broadens the perspective in the context of IB by analyzing and interpreting how informal translations can be a potential source of power.

Lastly, as Luxembourg poses a special context with most employees speaking at least three, oftentimes even four to five languages more or less fluently, as well as the fact that English is the common language in the company (as is the case in many firms around Europe and the globe), this interpretive study expands on many other studies done in various countries in Europe, mainly Scandinavian nations such as Sweden and Finland. For example, these studies have been carried out in countries where there is only one dominant language and in most cases, they consider individuals as bilinguals. Here, this study expands this thinking by looking at multilingual front-line employees more closely and by dealing with all respondents as possible bridge builders who are able to carry out the translation task which can come up during the working day. Furthermore, it offers a nuanced understanding of language mandates in multilingual MNEs, revealing how people do not just standardize communication but also create new layers of communication, resistance, and empowerment by translating for their peers. The purpose of these informal translations can vary from one situation or individual to another, and therefore this line of research is strongly context-dependent.

5.3 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

Not many studies can demonstrate a strong and valid methodological contribution, and at the core this is not much different with this underlying thesis. Nevertheless, this study concentrated on the many translations done during the research process, mainly during the interviews and their respective analysis in MAXQDA, and included some new relevant decisions made which can add to the literature. As already mentioned several times, the interviews were conducted in five different languages and included the interaction with highly skilled individuals in their respective job domain, and which naturally included the bridging of multiple cultural differences. Most importantly, the researcher kept the original interview segments in the respective language, and from these drew direct conclusions about the different categories in English which emerged from the texts. Furthermore, to highlight the language in which the interviews were completed, the abbreviations of each language were made clear in findings chapter (e.g. "ENG" for English or "FR" for French), so that the reader can firstly see in which tongue the interview was conducted, and secondly in order to make his or her own interpretations as to which cultural lens needs to be taken more generally. For instance, if an English reader reads this text, she might view it through the "English" lens, and thus tends to better understand what the person has said in English than if the person was German or Luxembourgish. However, a French reader has the ability to emphasize more effectively with what the French respondent has told the interviewer, as he is more aware of the linguistic and cultural nuances of this particular language, while he might have problems understanding some concepts only known by English-speaking people. Therefore, the original interview transcripts should be available to everyone who wants to read the original passages from the participants, while of course keeping it always anonymous and in a confidential manner.

All in all, this highlights the importance of language-sensitive research practices, such as conducting interviews in multiple languages and analyzing the implications of linguistic choices. This contribution can guide other researchers studying similar or other phenomena in more than one or two languages and being creative with their depictions and illustrations in their research, including the formulation of their interview guide and their approach to the interview itself. In fact, if a researcher has the ability to conduct interviews in multiple languages, he or she should conduct them, or at least be present during those interviews, in order to better connect with the participants and grasp the language- as well as cultural-related challenges.

5.4 Managerial Implications

On a managerial level, this study offers crucial insights into how those in charge in a multilingual organization might better handle informal translations in daily situations. As already demonstrated by Piekkari, Welch & Welch (2014, p. 41), the dynamic need for diverse translation services and activities "makes it difficult for management to anticipate, plan and allocate language resources", showing that managers cannot always see what is happening under the radar, especially in a large MNC as is the case in this study. Therefore, the managers' role would be to implement systems and processes which can incorporate informal translations according to the organization's core principles and show their employees the added value that multilingual workers can bring to the table. An important way to begin (or continue) with would be to become more aware of when translations are required and how these informal activities can be used to enhance communication and overall cooperation among different language groups. This study showed that in a multilingual organization with an English mandate, employees are used to speak English which lowers the need for translations, however native speakers always tend to prefer to speak with other native speakers and the level of English is only rarely the same throughout such a large organization. In fact, local management should acknowledge the informal yet critical role of non-professional translators in facilitating communication and cultural bridging, treating these employees as key assets as well as balance the efficiency of a corporate language mandate with the realities of multilingual settings.

The key question for managers and other high-level employees to be asked is how they can use informal translation in a more meaningful manner both internally and with clients who oftentimes prefer to speak with employees in their mother tongue. In other words, there should be an open dialogue between all employees, and it would be helpful to remind them that demanding translation is normal in this fast-moving world and therefore nobody should lose much time by looking up certain words online or by asking their relatives who often don't respond immediately, if at all. Hence, it would be advantageous for managers to strategically engage non-professional translators in order to mediate conflicts, enhance cross-cultural understanding, and act as informal leaders, turning their discretionary power into a formalized organizational strength. Ultimately, different team leader and managers need to cultivate the use of multiple languages which their employees speak in order for them to feel at ease and accept that informal translations have a positive impact on team dynamics and should be considered as a valuable tool for efficiency.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

This underlying study contains some critical limitations and downsides, both on the side of the researcher and the research process in more general. Firstly, the researcher has relatively little experience in the field of qualitative and interpretive research and therefore needed to learn and make further research on how to conduct semi-structured interviews as well as how to best organize the data, to name just a few restrictions. Secondly, the limited amount of time and resources added to this task, and it is not clear how serious and open the respondents were about the topic presented to them as they saw each other again opposite a student and not an experienced researcher. However, being unbiased towards the research process and the professional job environment (I was able take on information rapidly with no preconceived opinions and with an open spirit), this limitation could be reduced to some degree, together with the fact that I could speak the mother tongue of the respondents in most instances. Thirdly, the study was conducted in a very specific context, including the country and MNE, and it is not obvious as to how the findings would have looked like in a firm with no English language mandate or when looking at another industry other than the financial one, all of which can be seen as a limiting factor of this single-case study approach.

Next, as non-professional translators are involved in many discussions with their peers, it was a considerable challenge to track and observe them due to the highly dynamic and ephemeral nature of informal oral translations looked at in this study. In a similar vein, many respondents could not retrieve relevant information simply because they could not remember those instances where they were translating for their co-workers or the words they were translating. Therefore, it would be a huge addition to accompany those employees and watch and monitor informal translations and the related responses that arise from these. Another possibility to enhance the credibility of the results would be to inform the participants of a similar study to think beforehand of informal translations and the power dynamics and how they perceive such situations in the very moment they occur, all the while keeping track of such situations in a notebook for example to prevent forgetting them. To conclude, due to these limiting factors and the author's lack of resources, future research is demanded to better grasp how non-professional translators might influence the power in a company.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

In the last section, the main limitations have been highlighted and therefore some relevant paths for potential upcoming research will be shortly discussed which are interlinked with those restrictions. First, a qualitative approach is best suited for further research as it enables us to uncover diverse organizational processes in depth (Doz, 2011). For instance, single-case studies with different contexts, as well as multiple case studies can bring more clarity as to how paraprofessional translators influence intra-organizational power dynamics. As already illustrated by Massey & Wieder (2021), the hidden power of agentic translation is still in its infancy and needs more consideration in the near future, and it would be beneficial to further unpack this phenomenon, both in organizations with an English mandate as well as in companies where the employees don't need to speak English. Next, it would be interesting to investigate the long-term impact of informal translation roles on employees' career development and their well-being in their firm. In fact, oftentimes this factor is excluded in the analysis of different data sources, so it could be a revealing factor how this phenomenon can impact the long-term dynamics in an organization.

Thirdly, exploring the technological influences, such as machine translation tools, can be another realm of future research, and looking how this change is reshaping the discretionary power of non-professional translators can bring relevant insights. In fact, the upcoming trends of digitalization where many people look up certain words or phrases online are not yet fully understood, and it would be an appealing addition to see how such translation tools shape power dynamics. Lastly, it would be exciting to investigate cross-cultural differences and how discretionary and self-perceived power are exercised in MNCs across different regions. Taking into account the results of this study, it could be also helpful to be given alternative interpretations by other researchers from different cultural backgrounds, and ultimately combining these with the uncovered codes and categories from this study.

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6 Appendix

7.1 Interview Guide

Theory / Concept	Questions for the interview	Follow-up questions	Adressed to	References used
	RQ: How do non-professional translators exercise power under an English language mandate in a multinational company?			
Question type	**Introductory questions**			Brinkmann & Kvale (2018)
Introduction	Present the topic and research question of the thesis. Ask for consent to record the interview and let the participant know that the interview is anonymous.			
General questions about the job and company	What is your job description? How long have you been with this company? Please provide examples of your work in the organization. How do you usually carry out your daily work? Is it online, offline, or hybrid? In the case of online or hybrid, which media channels are used (e.g. Skype, Teams, Zoom)?	Has any aspect of your daily job routine changes since you have joined this company?	Employees & Manager	
Introducing basic communication and language aspects				
Communication Accommodation Theory; Theoretical conceptualization of Company-Speak	Which language do you use most in your daily work? Which languages do you speak fluently? How does the English language policy in your company influence your daily work? How good would you rate your English language skills? For which purposes would you use another language, e.g. your mother tongue? What are, in your opinion, the key factors for making communication in English work?		Employees & Managers	Puck & Aichhorn (2017)
	How do you perceive your language skills? How do you make sure you understand what is being said in e.g. business meetings?	Please give me an example.	Employees & Managers	Piekkari, Welch and Welch (2014)

Question type	**Probing questions**			
Street-level Bureaucracy Theory	Can you think of a situation where the common corporate language was incompatible with your job demands? Please describe this situation to me. Why do you think, it happened? How does informal communication influence your language choice in your job? How does this choice depends on who you speak with? Why do you prefer using this language?	Do you remember an occasion when you switched languages in your internal communication? What happened in the episode you just mentioned?	Employees & Managers	Sanden & Lonsmann (2018); Brinkmann & Kvale (2018)
Concept of Communication Avoidance	How do you feel when using English at work? How do you (re)act when someone speaks with you in a way in which you don't understand some words or the meaning in general?	What do you mean by that?	Employees & Managers	Lauring & Klitmoller (2015)
Concept of Language Barrier (solutions)	Do you use any strategies or solutions (such as code-switching, adjusting the mode of communication, or using particular communication channels, such as translators) when using different languages? Which communication channels do prefer in your job? E-mails, personal discussions, etc.?	Why? When?	Employees & Managers	Harzing, Köster, Magner (2011)
Concept of Inter-Unit Communication Flows	How do you feel when speaking to colleagues who have different mother tongues? Imagine someone doesn't understand what has just been said, how does this, in your opinion, influence the communication flow?	Could you say something more about that? Do you have any further examples of this?	Employees & Managers	Charles & Marschan-Piekkari (2002); Brinkmann & Kvale (2018)
Question type	**Specifying questions**			
Theoretical insights borrowed from Translation Studies	How do you see yourself, if at all, as having a claryfiying role, by acting as a transmitter of the original language? How do you make sure that the message has been conveyed correctly? How do you and your colleagues make sure that what has been said is also being understood by everyone, e.g. by repeating or back-translating what has just been said?	What did you do then? How did your colleague react to this?	Employees & Managers	Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert (2004)
Co-evolutionary Theory of Internationalization, Language Coping Mechanisms and Language Strategy	Which language coping mechanisms do you use most often in your company, e.g. website translation, adopting a common language, developing appropriate language resources or searching for (external) help?		Employees & Managers	Welch & Welch (2017)

Organizational-level concept of a Psychologically Safe Language Climate; Theory of Psychological Stress and Coping	How does resistance or the avoidance to speak a foreign language impact how you cope with your colleagues? How do you perceive that fluent lingua-franca (English) speakers, who can potentially better influence how the conversation will unfold, can influence their less fluent colleagues?	Do you remember an occasion when this was the case? What happened in the episode you just mentioned?	Employees & Managers	Nurmi & Koroma (2020); (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)
Introducing informal translation activities by paraprofessional (non-professional) translators	I would now like to introduce another topic: Namely informal translation between you and your colleagues in this company. First, I would like to ask you what you understand under being a "Translator". And how do you understand the "translation process" which occurs on a daily basis in this multilingual environment? To clarify, informal translation is incorporated in day-to-day situations, often done by people who have no specific translation role (Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014). Here, we may also call them non- or para-professional translators. Also, I will use the term "translation" in an overarching way, covering both written and oral communication, even if you might be familiar with the term "interpretation" for oral communication. The focus, however, lies on informal oral communication.			
Organizational Theory	How does the fact that the company is situated in Luxembourg shapes how translation is done? How do you feel about this? Which impact do you think that a multilingual environment has on your professional work relationships?		Employees & Managers	Ferner et al. (2012)
Concept of "Localization"	In this multilingual and complex environment like here, how do you cope with translation requirements concerning day-to-day situations? How much weigh do you give to high-quality translations so that the meaning is conveyed appropriately? How do you think your colleagues view this?	Can you please elaborate further on this?	Employees & Managers	Logemann & Piekkari (2015)
Street-level Bureaucracy Theory & Concept of Discretionary Power	How does translating for e.g. a senior manager differ from translating for a peer? What about clients or other externals? What specific words or phrases did you find difficult to translate in the past, if you can remember?	Which factors are most imporatant for you during informal translations? How do translation technologies, such as Google Translate, influence your daily work? Can you please give me some more information on these digital solutions?	Employees	Sanden & Lonsmann (2018)

Skopos Theory and Cultural Politics & Translation Theories	How do you ensure that the information is understood by all members who have attended e.g. a meeting? Do you have employees responsible for the correct translation of what has been said? How would you consider someone who asks for translation of certain words because they have not been understood by him or her? Why?		Employees & Managers	Chidlow et al. (2014)
Translation Theory & Organizational Studies	In the absence of a professional translator, who is usually in a position to demand translations and for whom? How do perceive informal translations? How do you think this is different from professional translation? Do you have a strategy when conducting an informal translation?	e.g. What do you think are the main issues, advantages and disadvantages that arise from the fact that people in your company may use their own languafe skills in a different manner?	Managers	Koskinen (2020b); Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen (2020)
Sociolinguistics and Cosmopolitan Theory	How do you perceive the role of informal translators in your daily work routine?	Can you please provide an example? Have you also experienced this yourself?	Employees & Managers	Janssens & Steyaert (2014)
Concept of Language Absorptive Capacity & Translation Behaviour	What is the role of translation in organizational functioning? What is the role of translation for this company's performance?	Can you please give me examples? Why?	Managers	Piekkari et al. (2013)
Introducing Power Dynamics / Relationships				
	Imagine you step in during a discussion where translation is needed. How would you consider the behaviour of the translator? Does this shift the power dynamics in the group, or does for example the status/position of one individual influence if he or she is willing to translate?	Why? Can you provide an example where you were able to observe this change in power dynamics? How did you feel?	Employees & Managers	Brinkmann & Kvale (2018)
Linguistic Theory of Translation	Consider that someone does decide not to translate, how does this, in your opinion, influence the information flow and power dynamics?	Why? Do you have a concrete example for such a situation?	Employees & Managers	Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert (2004)
Concept of Language Distance	When do you consider language fluency in English or multiple languages to become an informal source of expert power?	Why?	Employees & Managers	Marschan Piekkari et al., (1999b); Mintzberg (1983)
Concept of Psychic Distance and Self-Perceived Power	How does language shape your perception of power in your company? How do you think this influences internal power dynamics? Why?	How do you think most people in your department feel about needing translation help?	Employees	Ivanova-Gongne et al. (2023)
Theory of Status	How do you think non-native speakers feel when using English? How do you perceive this influences the status of these individuals? Have you ever experienced something similar yourself?	Can you provide an example? Can you describe your experience and how this evolves over time, if at all?	Employees & Managers	Neeley (2012); Neeley, Hinds & Cramton (2012)

Theory of Linguistic Eco-systems	How do you think that those employees with high language skills can influence power dynamics in your company? How do you think other individuals see those "boundry spanners", or potential informal translators in the organization? Why?		Managers	Sanden (2015); Piekkari, Welch & Welch (2014)
Concept of "Localization"	How do you perceive translation to be an opportunity for employees/managers to regain control and power in the organization?		Employees & Managers	Logemann & Piekkari (2015)
	Do you have something to add?			
Concluding remarks	Thank the participant			

Interview Guide-Example (Template in Luxemburgish)

- *D'Thema an d'Fuerschungsfro vun der Thes gin présentéiert. Et gett gefroot no der Zoustëmmung fir den Interview opzehuelen an dem Participant gett gesoot, dass den Interview komplett anonym gehaal gett.*
- Wat ass Är Aarbechtsbeschreiwung? Wéi laang sidd Dir schon an dëser Firma? Gitt w.e.g. Beispiller vun Ärer Aarbecht an der Organisatioun. Wéi féiert Dir normalerweis Är deeglech Aarbecht aus? Ass et online, offline oder hybrid? Am Fall vun online oder hybrid, wéi eng Medienkanäl ginn benotzt (z.B. Skype, Teams, Zoom)?
- Huet iergendeen Aspekt vun Ärer deeglecher Aarbechtsrutine geännert seit Dir bei dëser Firma ugefaang hutt?

Aféierung vun Kommunikatiouns- an Sproochaspekter:

1) Wéi eng Sprooch benotzt Dir meeschtens an Ärer deeglecher Aarbecht?
2) Wéi eng Sprooche schwätzt Dir fléissend?
3) Wéi beaflosst d'Engleschsproocheg Politik an Ärer Firma Är deeglech Aarbecht?
4) Wéi gutt bewäert Dir Är Engleschsproocheg Fäegkeeten?
5) Fir wéi eng Zwecker géift Dir eng aner Sprooch benotzen, z.B. Är Mammesprooch?
6) Wat sinn Är Meenung no d’Haaptfaktore fir eng gutt Kommunikatioun op Englesch ze gewährleisten?
7) Wéi gesitt Dir Är Sproochfäegkeeten?
8) Wéi stellt Dir sécher, datt Dir verstitt wat an z.B. Geschäftssëtzungen oder verschidden Meetings gesot gëtt?

- Gitt w.e.g. en Beispill.

„Probing Questions“:

9) Kënnt Dir un eng Situatioun denken, wou déi gemeinsam Firmesprooch net mat Ären Aarbechtsufuerderunge kompatibel war? Beschreift dës Situatioun w.e.g. fir mech. Firwat mengt Dir, datt dëst geschitt ass?
10) Wéi beaflosst informell Kommunikatioun Är Sproochwahl an Ärer Aarbecht? Wéi hänkt dës Wahl dovun of, mat wiem Dir schwätzt? Firwat preferéiert Dir dës Sprooch ze benotzen?
11) Erënnert Dir Iech un eng Geleeënheet, wou Dir d'Sprooch an Ärer interner Kommunikatioun gewiesselt hutt? Wat ass an der Situatioun geschitt, déi Dir grad erwähnt hutt?
12) Wéi fillt Dir Iech wann Dir Englesch op der Aarbecht benotzt?
13) Wéi reagéiert Dir wann een mat Iech schwätzt an Dir verstitt e puer Wierder oder d'Bedeitung am Allgemengen ned?
- Wat mengt Dir domadder?
14) Benotzt Dir iergendwelch Strategien oder Léisungen (wéi zB d'Wieselen vun der Sprooch, d'Anpassung vum Kommunikatiounsmodus oder d'Benotzung vu bestëmmte Kommunikatiounskanäl wéi Iwwersetzer) wann Dir verschidden Sprooche benotzt?
15) Wéi eng Kommunikatiounskanäl preferéiert Dir an Ärer Aarbecht? E-Mailen, perséinlech Diskussiounen, asw.?
- Firwat? Wéini genau?
16) Wéi dacks benotzt Dir méi wéi eng Sprooch an Gespréicher a Reuniounen? Wéi steet et mat Äre Kollegen, wéini benotze si méi wéi eng Sprooch?
17) Wéi fillt Dir Iech wann Dir mat Kollegen schwätzt, déi aner Mammesproochen hunn?
18) Stellt Iech vir, iergendeen versteet net wat grad gesot gouf, wéi mengt Dir, dass dëst de Kommunikatiounsfloss tescht den Matarbeschtern beaflosst?
- Kéint Dir w.e.g. bessen méi dozou soen? Hutt Dir nach aaner Beispiller?

„Specifying Questions“:

19) Wéi gesitt Dir Iech selwer (wann iwwerhaapt) an enger Roll, wou Dir duerch Är Handlungen als Iwwersetzer optrett?
20) Wéi stellt Dir sécher, dass d'Noriicht korrekt vermëttelt gouf? Wéi stellt Dir a Är Kollegen sécher, datt wat gesot gouf och vun jidderengem verstanen gett, z.B. duerch Widderhuelen oder Réck- Iwwersetzung vu wat grad gesot gouf?

21) Wat benotzt Dir am heefegsten an Ärer Firma fir mat denen verschiddenen Sproochen emzegoen? z.B. Online Iwwersetzungen op enger Websäit oder um Handy, Unpassung vun enger gemeinsamer Sprooch, Entwécklung vun geeignete Sproochfähegkeeten oder d'Sich no (externer) Hëllef?
22) Wéi beaflosst d'Vermeidung fir eng Friemsprooch ze schwätzen wéi Dir mat Äre Kollegen ëmgeet?
23) Wéi gesitt Dir, dass fléissend Englesch Spriecher, déi potenziell besser d'Gespréich beaflosse kënnen, hir manner fléissend Kollegen beaflossen?
- Kennt Dir Iech un eng Situatioun erenneren wou dest de Fall war? Wat genau ass do geschitt?
24) Wéi beaflosst de Fait, dass d'Firma zu Lëtzebuerg ass, wéi Iwwersetzungen gemaach ginn? Wéi fillt Dir Iech heimadder?
25) Wéi eng Auswierkungen mengt Dir, datt en méisproochegt Ëmfeld op Är professionell Aarbechtsbezéiungen huet?
26) An engem méisproochegen an komplexe Ëmfeld wéi hei, wéi gitt Dir mat Iwwersetzungsufuerderunge fir alldeeglech Situatiounen ëm?
27) Wéi vill Gewiicht gitt Dir op eng héich Qualitéit vun Iwwersetzungen, sou datt d'Bedeitung richteg vermëttelt kann ginn? Wéi mengt Dir, datt Är Kollegen dëst gesinn?
- Kënnt Dir w.e.g. weider driwwer ausféieren?
28) Wei mengt Dir ännert sech d'Verhaalen wann een fir eng méi héischt positionnéiert Persoun iwwersetzen muss par rapport zu engem Gleichgesinnten? Wat ännert sech hei bei Klienen oder aaneren Externen?
29) Wat ass fir Iechd dat Wichtegst wann informell Iwwersetzungen gemaach gin?
- Wéi beaflossen digital Technologien wei Google Translate Är déigelech Arbescht? Kennt Dir mir dozou mei Informatiounen gin wei dei dest Technologien benotzt?
30) Wéi stellt Dir sécher, datt d'Informatioun vun all Membere verstane gëtt, déi z.B. un enger Reunioun deelgeholl hunn?
31) Hutt Dir Mataarbechter, déi verantwortlech sinn fir d'korrekt Iwwersetzung vun deem, wat gesot gouf?
32) Wéi géift Dir eng Persoun betruechten, déi no der Iwwersetzung vun e puer Wierder freet, well hien oder hatt se net verstanen hunn? Firwat?
33) Am Fall vun der Absenz vun engem professionellen Iwwersetzer, wien ass normalerweis an der Positioun, fir Iwwersetzungen ze verlaangen an fir wien?

34) Wéi mengt Dir, dass dëst sech vun der professioneller Iwwersetzung ënnerscheed?

35) Wat sin fir Iech déi gréisst Problemer, Vir- and Nodeeler wann d'Leit hier Sproochfähegkeeten ennerschiddlech benotzen?

36) Wat ass d'Roll vun der Iwwersetzung fir d'gutt Funktionéiere vun der Organisatioun? Wat ass d'Roll vun der Iwwersetzung fir d'Leeschtung vun dëser Firma?

- Firwat? Kennt Dir mir ee Beispill gin?

Aféierung vun Muechtdynamiken:

37) Stellt Iech vir, Dir kommt an eng Diskussioun eran, wou eng Iwwersetzung gebraucht gëtt. Wéi géift Dir d'Behuele vum Iwwersetzer bewäerten? Beaflosst dëst d'Muechtdynamiken an der Grupp, oder beaflosst zum Beispill de Status/d'Positioun vun enger Persoun, ob hien oder hatt gewëllt ass ze iwwersetzen?

- Wiesou ass dat Ärer Meenung esou? Kennt Dir mir ee konkreten Fall beschreiwen, wou Dir desen changement vun der Muecht observéieren konnt? Wéi hutt Dir Iech dobai gefillt?

38) Stellt Iech vir, dass iergendeen decidéiert net ze iwwersetzen, wéi mengt Dir, beaflosst dëst den Informatiounsfloss an d'Muechtdynamiken? Firwat?

39) Wéini betruecht Dir Sproochfléissendkeet op Englesch oder an aaner Sproochen als eng informell Quell vu Expertenmuecht? Wiesou mengt Dir ass dat esou?

40) Wéi beaflosst d'Sprooch Är Perceptioun vun Muecht an Ärer Firma? Wéi mengt Dir, dass dëst d'intern Muechtdynamiken beaflosst? Firwat?

41) Wéi mengt Dir, dass net-mammesproochler sech fillen wann se Englesch benotzen? Wéi gesitt Dir, dass dëst den Status vun dëse Persounen beaflosst? Kënnt Dir ee Beispill ginn?

42) Wéi mengt Dir, dass Mataarbechter mat héije Sproochfäegkeeten d'Muechtdynamiken an Ärer Firma beaflosse kënnen? Wéi mengt Dir, dass aner Persounen dës Leit an der Organisatioun gesinn?

- Firwat?

43) Wéi gesitt Dir d'Iwwersetzung als eng Geleeënheet fir Mataarbechter/Manager fir d'Kontroll an d'Muecht an der Organisatioun ze gewannen oder eremzegewannen?

- Hutt Dir nach eppes bäizefügen?

7.2 Participant Consent

The Powerful Translator – Informal Translations in a multilingual environment: A case study of a multinational company in Luxembourg

- I ……………………………………………………………….voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question <u>without</u> any consequences.
- I have had the purpose of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to <u>ask questions</u> about the study before, during, and after the interview.
- I understand that by participating at the research I take part at an <u>in-depth qualitative interview.</u>
- I agree to my interview being <u>audio-recorded</u>. I am aware that this is not going to be included in the thesis, it is used for data analysis.
- I understand that I can ask for deleting my interview <u>within 1 week</u> after the recording.
- I understand that the Information provided will be treated <u>confidentially</u>.
- I understand that in this research my identity will remain <u>anonymous</u>. This will be done by changing my name and hiding any details of my interview which may give out my identity or the identity of people mentioned in the interview.
- I understand that my interview/parts of my interview will be <u>quoted</u> in the master´s thesis of Rickard Rolko, BSc.
- I understand that a <u>transcript</u> will be made. I agree this transcript to be shown in the attachment of the thesis.
- I understand that I have <u>access</u> to the provided information.
- I understand that I can <u>contact the researcher</u> for further information at any time.
- I have received a <u>copy</u> of this consent form.

<u>Researcher</u>:

Rickard Rolko, BSc
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Email: a12218999@unet.univie.ac.at

<u>Supervisor:</u>

Univ. – Prof. Emmanuella Plakoyiannaki, PhD
Department of Marketing and International Business
University of Vienna

……………………………………………
Date

……………………………………………………………………
Name (in block letters) and signature of the participant

……………………………………………………………………
Signature of the researcher

7.3 Interview Sample

1	[0:00:00.0] **Participant 4 – Interview 4 - English**
2	**Transcript**
3	**P1 (Interviewer):** What is your job description?
4	[0:00:04.8] **P2 (Interviewee):** I am a project manager within the sales and relationship management, that means that within the funds world. Funds are an industry that has been on the uprise for the last 30 years in Luxembourg. Even so, more in the *Kappa* because we had the star as function and segment. And within that world we are now creating, we are carving out a new bank. The whole activity of the funds is being carved out into a new bank. So we're setting up a new bank, and I'm actually leading this project, for the client, my management. So which includes setting up with the jurisdictional approvals in the various countries, in Luxembourg, with the European Central Bank. After that, of course, there the IT people and all the functional flows and operational people and I am leading the stream from client perspective. So I am, it's called Client Migration Team and we are leading that project in that regard. It is the biggest project of *Kappa*. It's quite strategic because this carve out is done in order to do a JV later, to do joint ventures and so on. And yes, that's what I'm doing. I was four years into relationship management. I also speak many languages, did not learn them as you in Luxembourg, I speak also 5 or 6 depending on how you see it. But like English, French, German, which is, according to me, a more difficult to learn them outside of a multilingual environment like Luxembourg, they are from three different language groups. Which is different from speaking Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.
5	[0:02:03.7] **P1:** Yes.
6	[0:02:04.5] **P2:** And so on. But anyway (...) because you have to know things in order to say something into those languages. If it's just languages, it's like all the Luxembourgers here around, having a vocabulary of 2000 words in each of the languages and many of them, not all because of course, they have the lead with lawyers and so on, but many of them have a limited vocabulary without studies. And then it's a very sad story.

7	[0:02:37.6] **P1:** Yeah. That's true. (..) So which other languages do you speak?
8	[0:02:44.1] **P2:** I'm Bulgarian, so I also speak Bulgarian.
9	[0:02:48.0] **P1:** Okay. How long have you been with this company?
10	**P2:** Seven years.
11	**P1:** Alright. So, how does the English language policy in your company, influence your daily work? [0:03:16.2]
12	**P2:** But that's not the policy. You don't call it the policy.
13	[0:03:18.9] **P1:** It's like a company speak or it's (...)
14	[0:03:21.9] **P2:** No, it's (...) If you are in finance, there is no such a thing like policy. Of course it's the German stock exchange. You have everything in German too. But when you want to be good in the world of funds, you don't want to be local. So there is no such a thing as policy. It's such a thing as being adequate. And the only thing that is adequate is English. Because you always have (...) And of course we speak French if there are only French speakers, you go to lunch. (...) If there is a German, you speak German because you want to maintain your languages. They are very important for the clients because there are a couple super-German clients that like to hear German. There are a couple of super-French clients that like to hear French, but if there is one person from Eastern Europe or one person from Cork, you're speaking English out of respect in order not to exclude the person. It's the common denominator, and I wouldn't call it policy, but it's the most common denominator.

15	[0:04:28.4] **P1:** Yeah. Thank you. So for which purposes would you use another language? For example, your mother tongue.
16	[0:04:39.9] **P2:** If I could use it, if there is one person that speaks my mother tongue, I would use it to (thinks) have for once the mother tongue feeling. Of course, you have learned the other languages to an extent that it's not a problem to speak them fluently, but it's another feeling. It's a different thing when you read a book in your mother tongue, and it's a different feeling when you read it in another foreign language, of course.
17	[0:05:11.0] **P1:** Okay. Thank you. How do you feel when using English at work? Do you feel comfortable, because you are used to using English mostly, I guess?
18	[0:05:27.6] **P2:** The question is it is such a best practice and part of my life I've been more working than I've lived in my mother tongue country, in Bulgaria. So for me, the question is not to be asked. There's nobody that feels anyhow, if you have, an Italian that came yesterday from Rome and they feel a bit stressed about English. The first one to hear, I expected him to feel anything, but if he tells me he's feeling weird or he's feeling anything when speaking English, he's not made for that environment. He can go home and that I would understand and so on, because I think people who are not used to multilingual environment or expat environment or something, they ask themselves this type of questions and people just don't.
19	[0:06:29.6] **P1:** Okay.
20	[0:06:32.0] **P2:** It's like making it a big deal that you switch from one language to another. And mainly if it happens in countries that speak 1 or max 2 languages and they discuss it. In Luxembourg is a no topic.
21	[0:06:44.9] **P1:** That's true. Yeah.

22

[0:06:45.9] **P2:** Well, in the financial world. In Vienna, because they stick (...) I mean, they have lots of expats in Vienna, but they have mainly predominantly, it's a predominant Germanic culture. It's a topic, but in Luxembourg it is not a topic.

23

[0:07:04.5] **P1:** Okay. Yeah. That's true. So which communication channels do you prefer in your job? For example, personal discussions or emails? What is your preference, or does it depend?

24

[0:07:17.9] **P2:** It truly depends because you have to play with various communication channels, because if you get stuck with someone via email, you better talk in person. If you get stuck in person, you better leave it time and go ahead with an email. The higher you are, the more you do in person. That's your added value the. But sometimes when you have an execution job, sometimes also in my level or in my (...) you kind of have to do something via email to keep it on track and to have it in your records and to protect yourself because verbal discussions open many doors. They solve many problems, but sometimes they are forgotten after two years, and there are certain occasions on which you have to consider keeping a track or record of something. Yeah, so it depends to a very big extent. But the more you can solve via personal interaction, if it does not make you lose too much time, the better it is because our inboxes are flooded with emails, and emails don't really solve real problems. Real problems are solved by chatting and changing someone's perception with regards to topic.

25

[0:08:43.2] **P1:** Yeah, great. To what extent do you see yourself as having a clarifying role? Like by acting, for example, as a translator of the original languages? Because you speak so many languages.

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[0:09:01.2] **P2:** Once again, can you read it or explain it?

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[0:09:03.7] **P1:** So to what extent do you see yourself as having a clarifying role in some discussions?

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[0:09:10.9] **P2:** All the time. Lost in translation or (...) I mean, that's (...) has been my life. When I was working for BNP, people there were not speaking anything in French, bad English, poor

	German and so on. And I would put on mute and translate to my French colleagues. That was an extreme case. Now here I don't have this because pretty much everybody has convenient English. But things lost in translation or things lost due to lack of knowledge or due to not willing to have (...) I mean, the same way it can happen to me that I help, I think 80% of the cases it's me helping, can happen to me that I misunderstand because we all have our luggage behind that makes us have assumptions and judge on things too quick and someone else can help you understand something. So you have to leave the room in the discussion in order for other people to correct you and to say you might not be right, because when you are always right, you kind of take away the courage from your subordinates to contradict you. And they should not be doing it too much in front of other people, but they have to have the comfort to correct you because everybody does mistakes in that world.
29	[0:10:46.1] **P1:** Okay, great. Which language coping mechanisms do you use most often? For example, website translations or searching for external help. Do you use some of these things?
30	[0:11:04.1] **P2:** You mean like AI, ChatGPT (...)
31	[0:11:06.5] **P1:** Yeah. Or Google translate for example, exactly.
32	[0:11:16.4] **P2:** I have used it probably once or twice. And if I have to issue something more sophisticated, for example, if I have to do public speaking, then I would go through the effort to use a bit of AI to give me alternatives on the language. But other than that, my daily work, my English, is comfortable enough that I express it sufficiently well that it's okay. Because it's normally (...) if you manage people, if you say kind words and you are grateful, it's more worth than making it look sophisticated. The ones that make it look sophisticated all the time are losing too much time for the form as well. If it's, as I said, public speaking, a town hall, when I'm invited to do, then I would prepare upfront. And I mean, my daughter has English almost as (her mother tongue). I would train a bit with her, and we would think of other ways of saying it. But other than that (...)
33	[0:12:30.7] **P1:** Okay, great. I would now move on to more the translation theme. So can I ask you what you understand under being a translator? (..)

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[0:12:44.5] **P2:** I have been translating during my studies. I paid my studies, actually with a translator's job working for the German embassy in Bulgaria. So I know what the translator means from the age of 18, and I have translated texts and documents. Conferences where for eight hours they don't bring you water and you just speak and speak and speak. And so that's in the absolute term. And of course, there is another term when everybody speaks the language and you're still translating in order for the people to get it better.

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[0:13:23.8] **P1:** Okay. And then what do you understand under the translation process which occurs on a daily basis in a company like in yours?

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[0:13:36.6] **P2:** But you mean absolute term or second degree?

37

[0:13:40.4] **P1:** What comes to your mind when you think of a process of translating words or the meanings in general?

38

[0:13:50.4] **P2:** Nothing. I don't have this topic. Okay. I speak, I think, indirectly in English. If I write to someone in German, I think in German. When I write in French, I think in French.

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[0:14:07.8] **P1:** Okay.

40

[0:14:08.5] **P2:** I don't think I need to translate.

41

[0:14:10.2] **P1:** Okay. No, that's completely fine. Thank you. So in this study, I use, informal communication modes and translations between employees on an informal basis. So they are called paraprofessional or non-professional translators. That's just for information. So the next question would be how does the fact that the company is situated in Luxembourg shapes how translation is done? You have already spoken about Luxembourg as a multilingual country.

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[0:14:45.9] **P2:** But there are the translators who have this job to go to them when you have the notary to certify.

43

[0:14:52.6] **P1:** Yeah, that's professional translators. But I speak more like the informal ones in the company. Like how you have explained when you translate something to your colleagues, for example.

44

[0:15:06.2] **P2:** I don't need to translate, why should I? If they are French, I speak French with them.

45

[0:15:11.8] **P1:** Okay. Yeah.

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[0:15:14.0] **P2:** If they are German and normally they don't need translation. I mean, if me as a non-native in those languages, I don't get a word, I ask what it is. And anywhere in the financial world people are civilized enough to stop and to explain you because you can go to a local market with local abbreviations. For example, France is very particular. You can raise your hand and say, I don't understand this, and they explain you and that's it.

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[0:15:43.7] **P1:** Okay.

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[0:15:44.9] **P2:** But I wouldn't call that translation. It's more specific terms and as soon as you know the abbreviations you are okay.

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[0:15:55.4] **P1:** Okay. So and then which factors, for example, the speed or the trust or the accuracy of a translated word, for example, are most important to you when you imagine doing translations for example.

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[0:16:24.4] **P2:** In the business and it has been proven also in the States it is simplicity. So being clear, because the more sophisticated you try to be, you screw up and you confuse people. In business, be clear, be precise and be simple. Don't push big words. And nobody has the time. Nobody wants it. Your big bosses, they get tired of reading complex stuff. That's why very often men make it better because they have very simple minds.

51

[0:17:03.2] **P1:** Thank you. So. (..) The next question would be, what do you think are the most, important issues and advantages that arise from the fact that people in your company may use different languages in a different manner?

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[0:17:45.9] **P2:** It's the beauty of diversity. We don't want to be (...) to lose our identity. We live in Western Europe. We want French and German to be used. If we do everything in English (...) Jean-Claude Juncker said it's a sad story. Why did we learn languages? It's the beauty of the French language, the beauty of the German language. There is not one language that is more beautiful than the others. They all have the right to exist and to be respected and to be spoken. (..)

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[0:18:19.5] **P1:** Okay.

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[0:18:21.5] **P2:** And then when you speak fluent one of those languages and you speak with a native language speaker, it's more authentic because one of the persons is native. And if everybody is speaking English, but we are not coming from an English childhood, you perceive things differently.

55

[0:18:45.8] **P1:** Yeah. That's true. Yeah. Do you see any disadvantages when using more languages?

56

[0:18:55.3] **P2:** Can be miscommunication or can be something that can be lost in translation. Different language comes with a different cultural background. So of course you can have from time to time some issues, some frictions. Because, you know, the Babylon Tower, it's a proof, the legend about it, that language is important. There is beauty in it, like in everything else. The more streamlined it is, the more straight it is through processing, it's it's cheaper, but it's less beautiful. It's like an industrial production. It's the same with work of art or building homes. You construct these modern homes with the, glass and gray and so on, and they are all super ugly. Of course, it takes three times the money to build something that is elaborated, that can be refined, but a little bit wood worked and so on.

57

[0:20:04.2] **P1:** Okay. Great example. Thank you. Now I move on to the last few questions, which include like the power dynamics of the language, but of the informal translations which I focus on. So imagine when a colleague steps in during a discussion between employees where translation is needed or some words are not understood. How would you consider the behavior of the translator? Is there a shift of power dynamics maybe.

58

[0:20:40.4] **P2:** It really depends. It can be, but it can be also playing stupid. You might understand the word and use the time as if you don't understand the word to earn some time in order to obtain in negotiations some numbers, or to have another idea, or for somebody else to jump in and to save you or save the situation. It can be a good way out. We had a situation back then when I was a student, that a letter has been forgotten, not sent. And the excuse was the translator did not translate it, which was not true. But it's a good way out, like every technical staff, to save somebody's dignity and to get out of the situation and to just say something which is not fair. But there are many things in life that are not fair.

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[0:21:35.2] **P1:** Yes.

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[0:21:36.6] **P2:** Same thing here. It can be that because the person does not know the word that you think, oh, this person already, this power shifted over there. No, it can be that he's playing. (..) And the fact that I've asked for a word does not mean (...) the power will shift because I might be just asking it also to cut the speech of somebody super confident or to cut the speech of somebody super mansplaining. I am in a field where only men are. I have it until here to listen to super confident, not so sometimes informed opinions. And sometimes you don't want to play the female victim or something else and you just ask a stupid question to tell them, calm down. Let's change the tone.

61

[0:22:36.2] **P1:** Okay, thank you for this example. Do you have some other.

62	[0:22:42.5] **P2:** This one you can keep it for yourself without my name.
63	[0:22:44.8] **P1:** No, it's all anonymous. Okay. Do you think, like, the status or the position of one person could influence how translations are done. (..)
64	[0:23:01.5] **P2:** If he is doing the translation or if it's done to him.
65	[0:23:05.1] **P1:** Both can be.
66	[0:23:06.5] **P2:** Of course, a CEO visiting our Hong Kong office will have much more precise and more careful translation than (...) a random employee.
67	[0:23:22.3] **P1:** Yeah. That makes sense. So when do you consider language fluency in English or multiple languages to become an informal source of expert power?
68	[0:23:42.8] **P2:** When it is beautiful. When it's well spoken, when it's presented well, like in every language. It's not only for English. The moment you reach a proficiency level, it's a pleasure to listen to you. And of course, you're asked to do much more and you are more visible for your within the organization and in front of clients and so on.
69	[0:24:08.8] **P1:** Okay. Thank you. Then how does language shape your perception of power in your company? You have already mentioned some aspects.
70	[0:24:22.1] **P2:** Native speakers tend to have it easier with the career.
71	[0:24:27.3] **S1:** Okay. Yeah.

72	[0:24:29.2] **P2:** And it's natural. And that's why in the private sector, when you go to the state of Luxembourg, it's not like this. But in the private sector, whoever is native speaker has it much easier because the bond is there. I would bond even if I would like people, but I would bond much easier with somebody from my country. And because they are much more, they come to higher positions much easier. They pull each other up.
73	[0:25:04.0] **P1:** Yeah. So does it also have to do with like the social network or the relationships you have?
74	**P2:** Additionally, yes. Once again, social network, it's done much easier between men only because as I said, 98% around me are men. They feel better between themselves. They're always chatting about sports just to relax their situation on something super stiff. And they (...) This world here is a bit, I wouldn't say retarded, but old fashioned because women here have not worked so much as in eastern Europe where women are all working or used to be the same this one. Now the last 10 to 20 years have changed and that makes it to come to a situation where there are just less women because the fiscal system, the educational system, are such that they make women not pursue their career, women are not pushed.
75	[0:26:15.8] **P1:** Yeah, okay.
76	[0:26:19.1] **P2:** Also, at school girls are as good as boys. And yet, even if they finish medical studies, they exercise it less because the fiscal system makes it comfortable for her to stay home. The society makes her think it's (...) she has to have a good feeling if she sends her kids to kindergarten and various other elements, which I believe it's a pity. And it's a bad way backwards, but anyway.
77	[0:26:48.8] **P1:** I also see it that way. Yeah. That's a pity.
78	[0:26:54.0] **P2:** Yeah (...) Because those who are only men and only between themselves at one point. (..) they feel uncomfortable because if you feel uncomfortable in an environment 50:50, it's not natural. If you are just between, you know, this type of testosterone gorilla behaviour, that's not

nature and there's no balance. And if you have had it for ten, 20 years, you are uncapable after that to have a normal conversation just on something else. I do agree sports is a great topic. So is weather, but there are also other topics. And for me, okay, you should not be speaking eventually about religion, politics and sex. These are the three taboos. But there's so many other topics.

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[0:27:55.7] **P1:** That's true. Everyone has different preferences and there are so many beautiful things. I would now come to the last two questions. How do you think that those employees with high language skills can influence power dynamics in your company? And how do you think other people see it.

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[0:28:18.4] **P2:** They are more present, they are more entitled. So they are more confident and they put their agenda much easier forward than somebody that is (ääh,...), on the third minute, you don't want to even listen.

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[0:28:36.2] **P1:** Yes. And how do you think other employees, which, you know in your company, see this phenomenon? (..)

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[0:28:46.2] **P2:** They see, but they can't do anything about it because you're better in something, expressing something. It's more pleasant to listen to you. You are the one to be taken.

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[0:28:58.8] **P1:** Okay. (..) Then I would come to the last question. So how do you perceive translation to be an opportunity for employees in this firm to regain or gain control or power in general? Like you said before with playing on time, for example, when blaming it on translation, or doing translations.

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[0:29:29.1] **P2:** Here in the financial world, we don't use that.

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[0:29:32.0] **P1:** Okay.

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[0:29:32.4] **P2:** That I've heard, I've seen in Bulgaria it's a predominant one language or two languages culture, you see. Here nobody uses translation as an excuse. Everybody knows to use Google Translate. If somebody says, I don't speak the language, open Google Translate, don't come with that bullshit.

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[0:29:54.1] **P1:** Yeah. Makes sense. Do you have something to add to the interview?

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[0:30:03.0] **P2:** No, I think it's interesting. It would be it's great for you to explore it. Do it. Finish your studies and, Yeah.

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[0:30:21.0] **P1:** Okay, thank you very much for your time!

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[0:30:23.2] [0:32:38.6] **P2:** You're welcome. I wish you all the best. And good luck with the thesis.