

# Language barriers in different forms of international assignments

## **Tassilo Schuster**

Department of International Management  
Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg  
Lange Gasse 20  
90403 Nürnberg  
Germany  
Tel: +49-911-5302-469  
Fax: +49-911-5302-470  
[tassilo.schuster@fau.de](mailto:tassilo.schuster@fau.de)

## **Helene Tenzer**

Department of International Business  
Tübingen University  
Melanchthonstraße 30  
72074 Tübingen  
Germany  
Tel: +49-7071-2975437  
Fax: +49-7071-295534  
[helene.tenzer@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:helene.tenzer@uni-tuebingen.de)

Version May 2015

Copyright © 2014-2015 Tassilo Schuster, Helene Tenzer. All rights reserved.

## **Language barriers in different forms of international assignments**

### **Introduction**

German companies are increasingly operating on a global scale with business operations in numerous countries. International business activities are always accompanied by language-related barriers as they confront companies with multiple local languages and a multinational workforce. To increase the efficiency of corporate communication, documentation and cross-national teamwork, more than half of all companies listed in the major German stock exchange (DAX) have started to implement common language policies (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a; for a general viewpoint please see Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012) and made English their official corporate language.<sup>1</sup> Companies like Adidas, Daimler, Deutsche Bank, and Siemens adopted English as their official corporate language to facilitate team coordination, recruit global talents, integrate foreign acquisitions, and reach global markets. However, language standardization also creates friction among a multinational corporation's workforce and is fraught with challenges (for an overview see Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 2014). For instance, Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta (2005) argue that subsidiaries of multinational companies in non-English-speaking countries encounter difficulties in communicating with other corporate units and employees who lack English skills may not be invited to attend key meetings, thus being excluded from decision-making processes. Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006) add that the adoption of a common language does not automatically improve employees' knowledge of it and that companies regularly choose expatriates to fill key subsidiary positions, a bridging strategy that is quite costly, and not always successful (Osland, 1995; Zander et al., 2011).

Challenges associated with language standardization are of particular importance for expatriate management, as the majority of expatriates is working outside their native language area. Today, the use of long-term assignments is increasingly limited to important strategic purposes, whereas multinational companies frequently send employees on a series of short-term assignments to different destinations for acquiring a global mindset, providing specialized skills on project teams, and addressing specific customer needs (Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007). This development underlines that expatriates are more and more relying on their employers' official corporate language as they are confronted with a high diversity of local languages.

---

<sup>1</sup> All DAX30-companies were contacted in November 2014 to know more about corporate language in these companies.

Expatriates have become one of the most important strategic assets in multinational companies as they execute a broad spectrum of important tasks in foreign subsidiaries with positive effects on various dimensions of subsidiary and headquarters performance (Harzing, 2001; Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004; Shin, Morgeson, & Campion, 2007). To unfold these beneficial effects on performance, it is mandatory that expatriates overcome language-related barriers. Traditionally, language-related barriers have been largely neglected (Harzing, Köster, & Magner, 2011; Harzing & Pudelko, 2014) or were just considered as equivalent to a range of other barriers such as the shortfall of a supportive social network (Bader & Schuster, 2015; Wang & Kanungo, 2004; Wang & Nayir, 2006) or difficulties to adjust to challenging and unfamiliar cultural conditions (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993; Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). Moreover, previous studies underline that multinational companies are focusing on work-related competences when it comes to the selection of potential candidates for international assignments, whereas communication skills and intercultural competences are still considered secondary (Collings et al., 2007; Suutari & Brewster, 2001). However, expatriates strongly depend on their relational abilities, i.e. their ability “to deal effectively with [...] superiors, peers, subordinates, and business associates and clients”, which “greatly influences the probability of successful performance” (Tung, 1981, p. 28). As language constitutes “the basic means of communication in organizations” (Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Sääntti, 2005, p. 595), it represents a critical resource for the success of international assignments.

Just recently, management scholars have started to illuminate the “multifaceted role of language” (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014, p. 496) in international business, mostly in the context of headquarters-subsidiary relationships and global teamwork. A small number of language-related studies in international business has touched upon the importance of language during international assignments (e.g. see W. Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman, 2005; Harzing & Pudelko, 2013; Luring, 2008; Luo & Shenkar, 2006; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Wright, Kumagai, & Boney, 2001), but very few explicitly focus on expatriates as cross-lingual communicators (see e.g. Peltokorpi, 2010; Selmer & Luring, 2015). Based on the crucial importance of efficient communication for expatriate success, the objective of this paper is to analyze language-related barriers that expatriates are facing during international assignments.

To provide a nuanced picture of language-related barriers that expatriates experience during international assignments, we need to consider the tasks expatriates have to execute while being abroad, as these might significantly influence the importance of language proficiency and linguistic capabilities for their success. The existing expatriate literature

acknowledges that different types of international assignments exist and offers a series of meaningful taxonomies categorizing assignment objectives and expatriate roles according to different criteria. To realize our objective we therefore re-classify the assignment types discussed in the most prominent taxonomies based on the degree of interaction with local staff in the host country and with employees at headquarters, thus distilling existing taxonomies into a new, language-related typology. This allows us to discuss which types of international assignments are particularly vulnerable to the language effects which surfaced in recent international business research. In this context, we focus particularly on the complex interplay between a multinational corporation's official corporate language, its parent country language and the local language spoken in an expatriate's host country.

The remainder proceeds as follows: In the next section, we review the key theoretical developments in the emerging literature on language in international business to outline various effects of language on outcomes of international assignments. Next, we discuss selected taxonomies of international assignment types in the expatriate literature and re-classify their constituent parts into a novel language-sensitive typology. Subsequently, we systematically merge the rationales of both literature streams, which allows us to draw differentiated conclusions how language affects expatriate success as a function of international assignment types. Then, we outline the theoretical contributions that our integration of long-standing taxonomies of expatriate roles with recent theoretical developments in language-related management research is making to both literature streams. Finally, we provide important practical implications for expatriate selection, training and global staffing.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **The impact of language on organizational behavior and language-related barriers**

Recent research has connected language barriers to a series of organizational behavior phenomena. Scholars from different disciplines strove to capture the complex influence of language on international business with different methodological and theoretical approaches. However, several theoretical foci crystallize out of the emerging literature: Language triggers emotional responses among employees of multinational corporations, influences their social identity, constitutes an obstacle to trust building and distorts organizational power relations. In the following, we will provide an overview of recent theoretical advances in these areas.

### *Language effects on employees' emotions in multinational corporations*

Given that research on language in organizations is still in its infancy (Neeley, 2013), employees' emotional reactions to linguistic diversity have only very recently attracted scholarly interest. Non-native speakers of a company's official language fear negative evaluations based on their limited proficiency and worry about the related effects on their general career outlook (Neeley, 2013). The resulting emotional conflicts and hostile stereotyping lead to miscommunication, which in turn increases language-based anxiety (Harzing & Feely, 2008; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013). Individuals generally cope with negative emotions by avoiding or modifying situations in which they are exposed to them (Gross & Thompson, 2007). In the specific case of language-induced emotions, they frequently eschew meetings held in a foreign language and selectively choose interlocutors based on their language skills (Hinds, Neeley, & Cramton, 2014). Non-native speakers of the official language also frequently seek relief by switching back into their mother tongue (Hinds et al., 2014; Neeley, Hinds, & Cramton, 2012), thus creating discomfort, irritation and suspicion among colleagues who are excluded from these exchanges (Harzing et al., 2011). This conflict further impedes effective communication and can produce, in the worst case, a vicious cycle of negative emotions. Consequently, language-induced negative emotions can introduce inefficiencies, impede collaborative efforts and lead to losses in productivity and performance on the team level (Neeley et al., 2012). On a more macro level, with respect to headquarters-subsidary communication, these dynamics can hamper strategic decision making on a global scale and impede effective global integration and control (Harzing & Feely, 2008).

### *Language effects on social identity formation in multinational corporations*

According to Henderson (2005), each speech community considers certain forms of communication behavior as appropriate, with speakers frequently, but erroneously considering these norms as universal. If their expectations are not met in communication across language barriers, they may mistakenly attribute language-based friction to their colleagues' personalities and consequently form negative attitudes about members of other language groups. Once these negative attributions take on a leading role, the relationship between language groups can quickly deteriorate. Several authors have therefore established a connection between language barriers and social identities in multinational corporations.

Social identity and self-categorization theories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) are used by language researchers in management to explain why language diversity can separate employees into groups based on a shared language and thus give rise to language boundaries in

multinational corporation (van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010). As the use of specific language nuances signals a sense of familiarity (Chong, Guillen, & Rios, 2010), language-based clusters form within the multinational firm based on homophily, a tendency to interact with similar others (Byrne, 1971; Mäkelä, Kalla, & Piekkari, 2007). These clusters unite employees sharing a common mother tongue, who can easily create and maintain interpersonal relationships and exchange knowledge (Fredriksson et al., 2006). Consequently, language emerges as a key factor for self-categorization and the categorization of others (Harzing & Feely, 2008; Piekkari, 2006). Some sociolinguists even argue that language is a more important marker of an individual's identity than age, gender, or race (Giles & Johnson, 1981). Neeley et al.'s (2012) investigations give evidence of "us" versus "them" divisions between native and non-native speakers of a multinational corporation's mandated language. These language-based intergroup boundaries have detrimental effects that can decrease organizational identity, knowledge transfer, control, coordination, and communication in multinational corporations (van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010).

#### *Language effects on trust formation in multinational corporations*

A number of studies has identified language barriers as an obstacle to the development of interpersonal trust (see e.g. Lagerström & Andersson, 2003; Piekkari, 2006). Feely and Harzing (2003) suggested that language differences can distort and damage relationships and create insecurity and distrust. Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman (2007) specifically revealed a strong connection between language fluency and perceived trustworthiness in the relationship between different units of a multinational firm. Neeley (2013, p. 485) found that a corporate language mandate may lead non-native speakers of the official language to distrust native speakers, fearing they might "deceive them because of their superior language ability". Tenzer, Pudelko and Harzing (2014) investigated these effects in more depth and distinguished linguistic influences on different trust forms. They demonstrated that employees tend to attribute a low overall competence to colleagues with limited proficiency in the working language of their unit, for instance English as the official corporate language, and consequently develop lower ability-based trust in them. If colleagues fail to deliver expected results due to language-based misunderstandings, their integrity-based trustworthiness is judged as low. If they exclude foreign colleagues by switching into their own mother tongue, their perceived benevolence-based trustworthiness suffers. All these effects reduce rationally calculated, cognition-based trust within a multilingual workforce. In addition, the above described anxiety resulting from

unequal language proficiency reduces employees' willingness to make themselves vulnerable to colleagues and therefore impedes the formation of emotion-based trust.

### *Language effects on power relations in multinational corporations*

The pioneering studies on language in international business (Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1997; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999b) already revealed that language diversity substantially influences power relations in multinational corporations. Tenzer and Pudelko (2014) highlighted that disparity in employees' proficiency levels in the official corporate language and the headquarters language is the key reason for language-based power distortions. Employees can achieve informal power in the corporation if they are more proficient in these relevant languages than their colleagues on the same formal level (van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010; Welch & Welch, 2008). Since many multinational firms have adopted English as their official corporate language, native English speakers are particularly likely to achieve language-based positions of power (Tietze, Cohen, & Musson, 2003). Consistent with this proposition, Peltokorpi and Vaara (2012) found that host country nationals in Japanese subsidiaries of foreign multinationals who are highly fluent in English can control information flows between Japanese colleagues with lower English proficiency and parent country nationals with limited or no knowledge of Japanese. On the other hand, employees lacking relevant language skills may be excluded from critical exchanges of information (Fredriksson et al., 2006), are less involved in decision-making (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Zander et al., 2011) and thus experience a relative decline of power within their corporation (Luo & Shenkar, 2006).

Consequently, the distribution of language skills can distort formal power and authority relationships in multinational corporations (Harzing & Feely, 2008). If communication channels are determined by language capabilities rather than formal position in the company so-called "parallel information networks" can develop, meaning that employees rather contact colleagues sharing their mother tongue than speak in a foreign language to the manager who is officially in charge of the issue in question (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014; Marschan et al., 1997). As a consequence, communication may be determined by "shadow structures" gluing subsidiaries together in networks that function independently from official organizational structures (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b).

These disruptive language effects become particularly salient in the context of international assignments. To provide a nuanced picture of language-related barriers that

expatriates are facing, we will now offer an overview of different assignment types and develop a language-sensitive typology.

### **Different types of international assignments**

In the existing expatriate literature, it is often argued that not all international assignments are alike. The following two cases of international assignments within a German multinational company headquartered in Munich can serve as examples to illustrate this aspect. Case 1: The Munich headquarters send a highly skilled German manager to a foreign subsidiary in Sao Paulo to take over the CEO position for the entire Brazilian market. Case 2: The Munich headquarters send a Spanish IT expert from Barcelona to an Indian subsidiary in Bangalore to fix a specific technical problem. Those two cases are hardly comparable as tasks, challenges and performance indicators differ – however, from a traditional perspective both cases would be likewise regarded as international assignments. To take this fact into consideration, various researchers started to describe similarities and differences of international assignments and subsequently developed seminal taxonomies to better understand the nature of this phenomenon (Caligiuri, 2006; Dowling, Festing, & Engle, 2007; Edström & Galbraith, 1977; Harzing, 2001; Hays, 1974).

While these taxonomies focus on various meaningful attributes like control mechanisms and key purposes of international assignments, none considered language-related attributes as distinctive criteria. For realizing our objectives, we decided to re-classify previously identified types of international assignments into a language-related typology without developing novel denominations. Two distinctive dimensions have to be considered, as they are crucial from a linguistic perspective. The first dimension is *interaction with local employees in the host country*. This dimension refers to the need to interact and communicate with local employees and managers in a foreign subsidiary in order to fulfill the assigned tasks efficiently. The second dimension is *interactions with employees at headquarters* and refers to the prerequisite to interact and communicate with employees and managers in the headquarters to accomplish the assigned job efficiently. In the following, we will first review established taxonomies, then re-classify the particular categories along these dimensions, and finally connect them with the above identified language effects on emotions, social identity, trust and power relations in a multinational corporation's workforce.

An early, but prominent taxonomy of international assignments was developed by Hays (1974), who differentiated between expatriates as (1) *Structure Reproducers*, (2) *Troubleshooters*, (2) *Operational Elements*, and (4) *Chief Executives*. According to Hays



(1974), a *Structure Reproducer* is an expatriate whose task is to transfer formal and informal structural elements that are established in the headquarters to foreign subsidiaries. For instance, this could be an accounting function, a marketing framework or a production system, which proved to be efficient in the headquarters and thus should be copied and installed in foreign subsidiaries. In contrast, *Troubleshooters* are sent to foreign subsidiaries to analyze and correct a well-defined technical problem, whereas expatriates as *Operational Elements* take over a specific task and thus support the implementation of primary services and production functions in an already existing operational structure. Finally, expatriates as *Chief Executives* are assigned to direct and manage the entire foreign operations – thus mainly carrying out strategic tasks.

Tung (1981) employed this taxonomy and concluded that *Chief Executives* and *Structure Reproducers* require extensive interaction with members of the local workforce, whereas *Troubleshooters* can fulfill their tasks without strong interactions with local employees and managers. As *Operational Elements* take over specific tasks in foreign subsidiaries which are embedded in the organizational structure, it is reasonable to suppose that those expatriates need to strongly interact with host-country peers to share or receive task-related information. In contrast, expatriates as *Troubleshooters* - in extreme cases - are able to do their job and fix the technical problems without having to interact with local employees at all.

Concerning the second dimension, it seems to be obvious that *Chief Executives* have to interact extensively with the headquarters in order to harmonize the subsidiaries' activities with the headquarters' corporate strategy. As *Structure Reproducers* build and manage functional departments by mimicking the headquarters' structure, these expatriates need to interact intensely with employees and managers in the headquarters to understand the replication requirements from headquarters and set up local activities in compliance with them. On the contrary, expatriates as *Troubleshooter* and *Operational Elements* will need a limited amount of interaction with employees and managers in the headquarters. Expatriates as *Troubleshooter* might just have to provide feedback to the headquarters in order to communicate if the problem is solved, whereas *Operational Elements* do not have to contact the headquarters at all, as those expatriates are embedded in the subsidiary's hierarchy and might only informally interact with the headquarters through existing ties in their social network.

A second taxonomy was developed by Edström and Galbraith (1977), who recognized that different reasons for transferring expatriates exist and therefore suggest to categorize international assignments according to their primary purpose (1) *to fill positions*, (2) *to develop managers*, and (3) *to develop organizations*. The first motive for transferring expatriates is *to fill positions* when qualified local individuals are not available or could not be easily trained.

Harzing (Harzing, 2001) commented that the underlying rationale of those international assignments is the transfer of technical knowledge, as companies cannot identify or motivate local candidates who have this technical knowledge to work for the company. Consequently, this category is similar to Hays' (1974) *Operational Element*. The second motive for sending expatriates to foreign subsidiaries aims at *educating high-potential individuals* in international management practices. The purpose is to create a pool of candidates who have the required skills and experience to manage and direct a multinational company. International assignments undoubtedly support those high-potential individuals to develop skills and know-how in international management practices, to learn how to efficiently handle divergent institutional environments and to become culturally more sensible and competent. Finally, Edström and Galbraith (1977) regard international assignments as applicable for *developing organizations*. This motive became visible when multinational companies stopped considering foreign subsidiaries as simple distribution channels for products developed and produced in the headquarters (international strategy) and started to assign strategic tasks to foreign subsidiaries. Today, many foreign subsidiaries act as centers of excellence in which knowledge and know-how are developed for the entire organization and are considered as strategically crucial for the long-term success of the multinational company (transnational strategy).

To evaluate the relevance of language-related barriers, these categories have to be classified according to the extent of interaction with local employees in the host country and the amount of interaction with headquarters as well. Similar to *Operational Elements*, international assignments to *fill positions* are characterized by a high interaction with local employees in the host country, as those expatriates interact with peers from the host-country to share or receive task-related information. In contrast, assignments of this type include limited interactions with employees and managers located in the headquarters, because all tasks are embedded in the subsidiary's hierarchy and can be carried out autonomously from the headquarters' decisions. International assignments to *develop managers* are characterized by a high interaction with local employees in the host country, as developing know-how regarding international business activities, handling new business environments, and acquiring intercultural competence can only be achieved by interacting with and learning from host country nationals. The interaction with employees in the headquarters, however, is only required to a limited extent for the purpose of gaining intercultural competence. Finally, international assignments to *develop organizations* are characterized by both high interactions with local employees in the host country and with employees and managers of the headquarters,

as both types of interactions are mandatory to coordinate strategic tasks, develop knowledge, and transfer it between subsidiaries and headquarters.

A third important taxonomy was developed by Harzing (2001), who is widely referring to Edström and Galbraith (1977) when discussing the constitutive categories. However, in contrast to those authors she puts a specific attribute to the fore – namely the use of expatriation as a control mechanism. Therefore, she distinguishes between (1) *Bears* – expatriates who are used to effectuate personal and cultural control, (2) *Bumble-Bees* – expatriates who control by socializing local employees in the host country, and (3) *Spiders* – expatriates who create informal communication networks to perform their controlling tasks. Expatriates assigned as *Bears* need only low interaction with local employees in the host country in order to control and supervise their actions. However, they still need high interactions with the headquarters in order to receive the tasks delegated to the subsidiaries and to report ongoing issues of the subsidiaries. Expatriates as *Bumble-Bees* are used to transfer shared values, norms and beliefs and thus control by socialization. They have to interact intensely with employees in the subsidiaries in order to make such a socialization happen. However, it is reasonable to assume that those expatriates have only limited interactions with employees and managers in the headquarters as they have internalized the corporate culture prior to their international assignments. Interaction with the headquarters is therefore just needed to keep oneself up-to-date on organizational goals. By having internalized the corporate culture, i.e. having integrated the headquarters' attitudes, norms, values, and standards into one's own identity, expatriates as *Bumble-Bees* can transfer the corporate culture autonomously to foreign subsidiaries, i.e. without extensive interaction with employees and managers in the headquarters. Expatriates as *Spiders* are characterized by a strong personal network between the expatriate, local employees in the subsidiaries as well as former colleagues in the headquarters in which information is informally distributed. Given that expatriates as *Spiders* foster interpersonal linkages to realize informal control and communication objectives, it is reasonable to conclude that those international assignments rank high on both dimensions.

A fourth taxonomy was introduced by Caliguri (2006), who is the first to provide a theoretical reasoning on how to classify international assignments. She highlights that international assignments can always be categorized by considering (1) the amount of intercultural effectiveness needed in order to be successful on the assignment – which is quite overlapping with our first dimension, interactions with local employees in the subsidiary – and (2) the presence or absence of a developmental component of the international assignment. Based on these considerations she distinguishes four different types of international

assignments. The first type of assignments is called *Technical Assignments*, which is very similar to Hays' (1974) *Troubleshooter* and refers to expatriates that are assigned to foreign subsidiary to fix a specific technical problem. According to Caliguri (2006), technical assignees do not have significant interactions with host nationals working at the foreign subsidiary and thus have little need for intercultural sensitivity in order to work efficiently. Moreover, most tasks those expatriates perform are quite similar to those in the headquarters – for instance technicians on an oil refinery, system engineers on a continuation client site, and system analysts interfacing with a computer system. Thus, it seems reasonable to suppose that expatriates on *Technical Assignments* only interact with employees in the headquarters to a limited extent. Consequently, this type of international assignments ranks low both on the first and on the second dimension. The second type of international assignments is named *Developmental or High-potential Assignments* and is highly overlapping with Edström and Galbraith's (1977) category *International Assignment to Develop Managers*. The main purpose of those international assignments is the professional, managerial, and technical development of expatriates, which according to Caliguri (2006) includes the improvement of cultural intelligence and sensitivity. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that high interactions with host nationals are critical to develop those skills. As discussed earlier, those international assignments only require limited interactions with employees and managers of the headquarters to develop know-how regarding international business activities and to acquire intercultural competence. The *Functional Assignments* in Caliguri's third category are comparable with Hays' (1974) *Operational Elements*. According to Caliguri (2006), those expatriates perform similar tasks as technical assignees, however, they need to interact with host nationals in order to be efficient. Based on these considerations, we conclude that *Functional Assignments* are characterized by high interactions with local employees in the host country and limited interactions with employees in the headquarters. Finally, Caliguri (2006) includes *Strategic or Executive Assignments* as the fourth type of international assignments in her taxonomy. This category has highly overlapping characteristics compared to Hays' (1974) *Chief Executives*. Those expatriates mainly execute strategic tasks such as entering a new market, developing a country base in a new area, or acting as general manager of joint venture. Those tasks certainly require a vast amount of interactions with both local employees in the host country and employees in the headquarters.

The last taxonomy discussed in the present paper was developed by Dowling, Festing and Engle (2007). This taxonomy distinguishes between six different roles of expatriates labeled as (1) *Agents of Direct Control*, (2) *Agents of Socializing*, (3) *Network Builders*, (4) *Transfer of*

*Competence and Knowledge*, (5) *Boundary Spanners*, and (6) *Language nodes*, thus including categories that have been neglected in other taxonomies or have become increasingly important in recent years. The first three categories - *Agents of Direct Control*, *Agents of Socializing* and *Network Builders* refer to control motives and are highly overlapping with Harzing's (2001) taxonomy. *Agents of Direct Control* – which Harzing (2001) named *Bears* – refer to expatriates who ensure compliance of foreign subsidiaries through direct supervision, whereas *Agents of Socializing* – labeled as *Bumble-Bees* by Harzing (2001) – are transferring values, norms and beliefs to foreign subsidiaries to build a common corporate culture which in turn helps to ensure compliance. The development of a strong corporate culture and thus the ability to use more informal control mechanisms can be supported by international assignments as the adaption of common work practices is encouraged. Finally, Dowling et al. (2007) consider expatriates as *Network Builders* who foster interpersonal linkages that can be used for informal control and communication purposes. Harzing (2001) uses the analogy of *Spiders* to describe this type of international assignments. As these categories have been previously described in detail, we just refer to the conclusions drawn there.

Beyond these categories, Dowling et al. (2007) acknowledge that expatriates can act as *Agents of Knowledge and Competence Transfer*. This role highly depends on the expatriates' ability to teach others, to create an environment of openness and to motivate others to share ideas and implement best practices. As those expatriates create the basis for knowledge transfer, we conclude that they need strong interactions with local employees in the host country as well as with employees in the headquarters. *Boundary spanning* refers to activities that bridge internal and external organizational contexts. Expatriates can collect host-country information, can act as representatives of their companies in host countries and can influence local employees and other host country agents. Dowling et al. (2007) provide examples of expatriates who interact with embassies in host countries, enabling them to build networks with governmental agents, to gather market intelligence and to promote the company's profile. The description of this task leads to the conclusion that expatriates as *Boundary Spanners* need strong interactions with both local staff in the host country and with employees in the headquarters in order to achieve their tasks. The last category is labeled expatriates as *Language Nodes*, referring to expatriates who act as linguistic intermediaries (interpreters). This role is crucial if two actors do not have the language skills to communicate directly. In most cases, the expatriate does not have an official position in the communication network, but is released from his or her official tasks to act as an interpreter. In this case again, it can be concluded that

expatriates as *Language Nodes* require strong interactions with both local staff in the host country and with employees in the headquarters in order to achieve their tasks.

By analyzing the categories of the various established taxonomies from a linguistic perspective, we are able to develop a comprehensive framework in which we classify all categories accordingly. Figure 1 illustrates this framework.

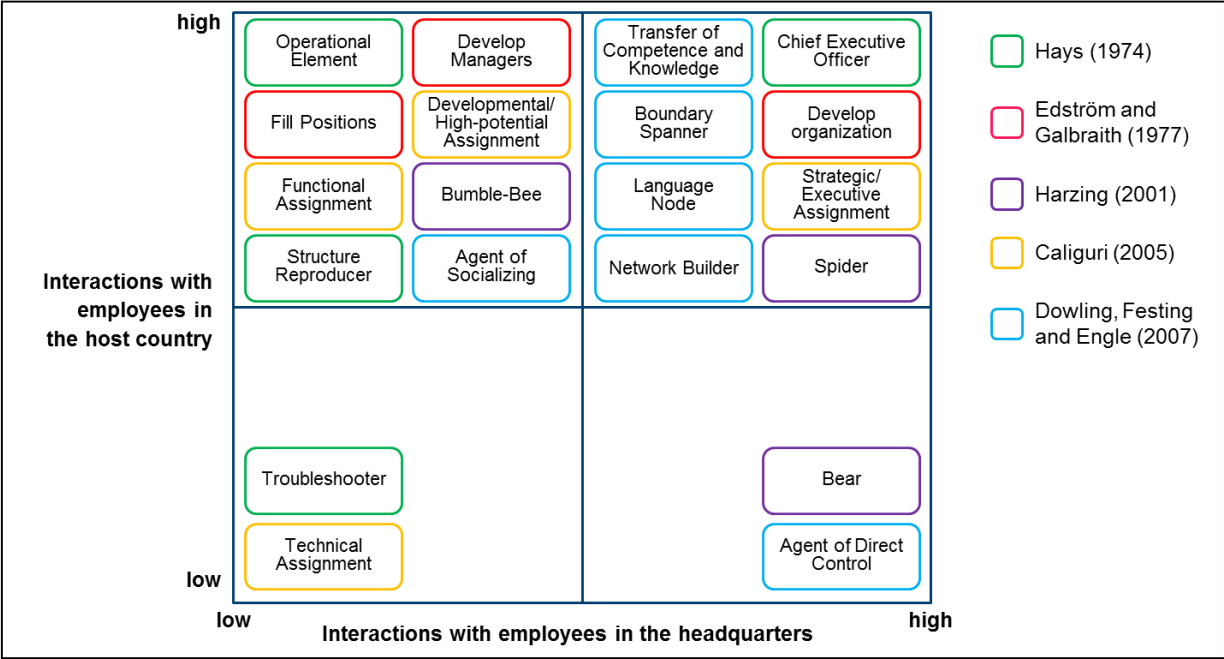


Figure 1: Typology of international assignments from a linguistic perspective

**Discussion**

**The impact of language barriers on different types of international assignments**

In the following, we connect recent findings on language effects in international business with the above developed typology of international assignments, highlighting which types of assignments are particularly vulnerable to the emotional impact of language, its effect on social identity formation, trust and power relations between expatriates and their local colleagues. In this context, we need to consider the complex interplay between a multinational corporation’s official corporate language, its parent country language and the local language spoken in an expatriate’s host country. If multinational corporations designate an official corporate language other than their parent country language, they most frequently select English, which has come to be accepted as the lingua franca of business (Jeanjean, Stolowy, Erkens, & Yohn, 2014; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Even in multinationals operating with such a language

mandate, however, the use of the parent country language remains pervasive at headquarters due to the majority of home country nationals among its staff. Similarly, local languages are still spoken very frequently in foreign subsidiaries, as local employees' proficiency in the official corporate language or in the parent country language is often limited (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013). This corporate multilingualism leads to a dynamic use of language resources (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014), which profoundly influences the working environment of international assignees.

The *emotional impact* of language barriers is most likely to influence expatriates on international assignments that rely on extensive interaction with the local staff in the host country, as most emotions are triggered by particular interaction incidences (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In contrast, communication with headquarters plays a minor role in this respect, as many expatriates are still parent country nationals (Harzing, 2001; Mayrhofer & Brewster, 1996) speaking the multinational corporation's parent language. Thus, whereas interactions between expatriates and the headquarters happen in the multinational corporation's parent language, expatriates mostly communicate with the host country staff in English as the most frequently selected corporate language. To a limited extent, expatriates communicate with the local staff in the host country language as well (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013). However, as many multinational companies increasingly replace long-term assignments with frequent temporary assignments to a diverse set of assignment destinations, such interactions become rarer. Interactions in which both expatriates and local staff do not communicate in their mother tongue are highly vulnerable to language-induced negative emotions. In this context, we need to bear in mind that relative differences in proficiency levels between a multinational corporation's employees trigger more language-based anxiety or resentment than low levels of absolute proficiency (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013). To illustrate this effect, we might consider the above mentioned example of the German expatriate, who was sent from his company's Munich headquarters to a subsidiary in Sao Paulo. If prior international experience has provided him with superior proficiency in the official corporate language English, his Brazilian colleagues or subordinates with lower English proficiency will fear to be judged as incompetent and resent the expatriate's rhetoric superiority. Consequently, they switch into Portuguese more frequently to seek relief from the foreign language pressure. If the German expatriate has only limited Portuguese proficiency - which is highly likely - this code switching effectively bars him from fulfilling his assignment's communicative purpose, in turn creating resentment and/or anxiety on his part. The level of negative language-based emotions would be lower in constellations with more equal proficiency levels. If the German expatriate shared an intermediate level of

English with his Brazilian colleagues, everyone would struggle in conversation, but the emotion-provoking feelings of inequality would be less prevalent. To summarize, language-based emotions endanger expatriate success on assignments requiring a high degree of interaction with locals, particularly if proficiency levels in the corporate and local language strongly vary.

Language-based *social identity formation* is most likely to impede the success of international assignments relying on intense interaction with both headquarters and host country staff such as boundary spanning, network building or other executive assignments. Expatriates can only perform successfully in these highly communication-based tasks if they can efficiently exchange information with their superiors and colleagues in the parent country as well as their local colleagues and subordinates. However, sub-group formation and the resulting antagonism between in-groups and out-groups often hinders this exchange. The host country staff may categorize an expatriate as an outsider to their local organization if he or she frequently interacts with headquarters. Conversely, the longer expatriates stay on their international assignments, the more headquarters perceive them as outsiders to their central unit. Language barriers reinforce the former and weaken the latter effect, as many expatriates are parent country nationals struggling in the local language while enjoying ease of communication with headquarters. The above-mentioned German expatriate in Sao Paulo can use his native proficiency in the parent country language to maintain a good communicative relationships with the Munich headquarters, thus better fulfilling his mandate to report extensively to the parent company. However, this comparative ease of communication in his native tongue may induce him to overemphasize his reporting duties to headquarters, while neglecting his mandate to exchange information with Brazilian colleagues in English or Portuguese. It is very likely that host country employees notice this behavior acutely, interpret it as disregard for their Sao Paulo unit and consequently reinforce their perception of the foreign emissary from headquarters as an outsider. Following the tendency of homophily, they are likely to reduce their efforts to exchange information with the expatriate using the official corporate language, instead resorting to effortless exchange in Portuguese with their compatriots. As a result, the German expatriate will find it very difficult to fulfill his mandate to interact intensely with subsidiary colleagues. To summarize, language-based social identity formation is unproblematic in international assignments that require low interactions with local employees and managers in the host country. In contrast, it endangers the success of international assignments that rely on intense interactions with host country employees, particularly if frequent communication with



headquarters reinforces the expatriate's social categorization as an outsider to the local subsidiary.

Linguistic impediments to *trust formation* are likely to become most salient during international assignments characterized by limited interactions with local employees and managers in the host country. According to Harrison, Price and Bell (1998), a higher degree of collaboration between employees weakens the effects of easily recognizable surface-level diversity (including readily noticeable diversity in mother tongues), but strengthens those of deep-level diversity (including less evident knowledge and value orientations). In contrast, if expatriates interact with local staff only infrequently, they are unable to comprehensively evaluate the (deep-level) competences levels, working principles and attitudes of their local colleagues. Instead, their perceptions of colleagues' trustworthiness remain largely focused on the (surface-level) distortions caused by language-related barriers. The following example helps to illustrate this abstract line of argumentation. If a German expatriate's English proficiency far exceeds the fluency of his local Brazilian colleagues, he may unwittingly associate his evaluation of their task and technical competence with their difficulty to express ideas in English and consequently judge them as less trustworthy in terms of expertise. If the Brazilian colleagues fail to complete the job the expatriate assigned to them, merely because they do not understand the instructions, the expatriate is likely to assess them as unreliable and untrustworthy. If local staff additionally seek relief by switching to their native Portuguese, the expatriate may feel excluded, doubt their benevolence towards him and call their trustworthiness into question even more. Conversely, the expatriate's limited or entirely lacking proficiency in the local language Portuguese can cast doubts on his ability and/or willingness to adapt to the local context, thus reducing his trustworthiness in the eyes of locals. If the Brazilian colleagues and the expatriate interact only infrequently, they have few opportunities to exchange feedback and to clarify these misunderstandings, so language-based distrust is likely to persist. Once again, we argue that relative differences in proficiency levels among a multinational corporation's workforce trigger more barriers to trust formation than absolute proficiency levels and conclude that trust formation would be higher in constellations with more equal proficiency levels. If the German expatriate shared an intermediate level of English with his Brazilian colleagues, everyone would have to make communicative efforts, and would not prematurely judge the trustworthiness of the counterpart. In contrast, interactions with headquarters are not touched by this effect, as long as the expatriate is a parent country national with native mastery of the home country language.

Similar to language effects on emotions, social identity and trust, the impact of language barriers on the *power relations* surrounding international assignments is much more acute when it comes to interactions with local staff compared to communication with headquarters. Whereas the exchange of information between expatriates and employees located in the headquarters remains largely untouched by linguistic influences because they communicate in their mutual mother tongue, the formally assigned power balance between expatriates and local staff can be disturbed in several ways by differences in the relative language proficiency. If one side is more proficient in the official corporate language than the other, this party can leverage their superior rhetorical power to their advantage and consequently increase their relative influence. Local staff can also use their native command of the host country language to purposefully exclude less proficient expatriates from information exchanges, thus enhancing their position of power. However, we argue that the power implications of language become most disruptive to the success of assignees who need to communicate intensely both with headquarters and local staff to fulfill their assignment's objectives. Expatriates serving as subsidiary CEOs, on executive assignments, as boundary spanners or language nodes are required to channel information and knowledge from headquarters to local staff and vice versa. Their work as an officially assigned communication channel can be severely hampered if language barriers cause local employees to bypass the expatriate and to use informal communication channels instead.

Let us assume that our exemplary German expatriate in Brazil speaks little or no Portuguese, local staff has to speak English to report to him and obtain information in return. To evade this effort, Brazilian staff may be tempted to seek out a compatriot or any other fluent Portuguese speaker at the Munich headquarters to request information in their native tongue, while only exchanging the bare minimum with the expatriate. If locals eschew interaction with the expatriate, he is not only reduced in power below his formally assigned position, he is also unable to fulfill his assignment objectives. Overall, language effects on power relations are more salient for expatriates interacting intensely with locals, but most disruptive if high interaction with headquarters is also required.

To sum up, we integrate our conclusions into the language-related typology of international assignments to show which assignment types are most vulnerable to specific language effects.

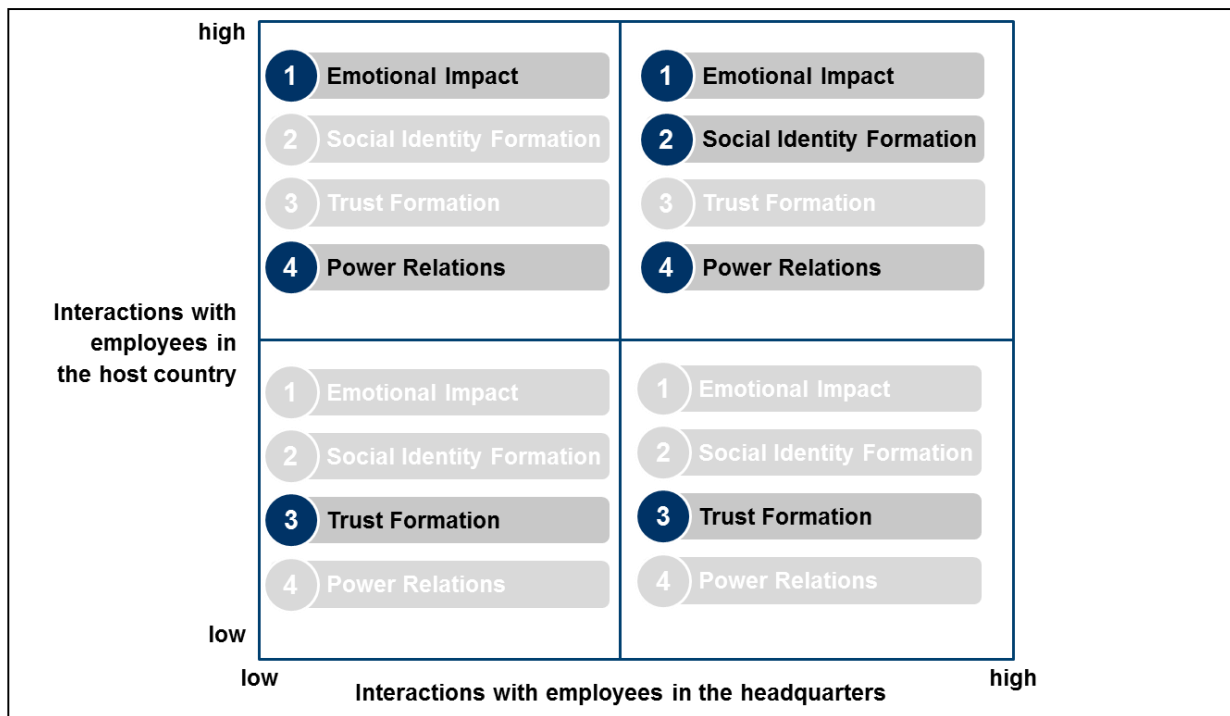


Figure 2: Importance of language-related barriers as a function of different levels of interactions with employees in the host country and in the headquarters

As Figure 2 shows, language effects on emotions and power relations are crucial when expatriates have extensive interactions with employees in the host country. In case of high interactions with employees in the headquarters language effects on social identity formation have to be considered as well. On the contrary, language effects on trust come to the fore when expatriates have only limited interactions with employees in the host country, no matter how intensely they interact with employees in the headquarters.

### Contributions, implications for future research, and practical recommendations

Our conceptual study contributes to the expatriate literature in various ways. First and foremost, the study is among the first that systematically addressed language-related barriers in the field of expatriate management. Whereas previous research considered language as secondary for expatriate success, this study emphasizes the importance of language as a crucial factor, which expatriates depend on to deal effectively with superiors, peers, subordinates, business associates and clients who have a great impact on expatriate performance. A profound understanding of language effects becomes increasingly mandatory to secure expatriate success, as international assignments have changed in recent years from sending expatriates on a single long-term assignment to repetitive short-term assignments in a diverse set of countries, heavily

confronting the large majority of expatriates with language-related barriers. In this context, our study particularly focuses on the complex interplay between a multinational corporation's official corporate language, its parent country language and the local language spoken in an expatriate's host country. Discussing four important effects of language-related barriers, we have shown that language causes negative emotional responses among employees of multinational corporations, restrains a common social identity, constitutes an obstacle to trust building and distorts organizational power relations. Subsequently, the study introduced a language-sensitive typology of assignment types, a distinction helping to understand how strong the impact of language-related barriers will be on desired outcome variables. Whereas previous taxonomies in the expatriate literature have focused on various meaningful attributes like control mechanisms and key purposes, none have considered language-related attributes as distinctive criteria. Our language-sensitive typology closes this gap and accounts for two distinctive dimensions - *interaction with local employees in the host country* and *interactions with employees at headquarters* - which are crucial from a linguistic perspective. Finally, by systematically discussing the complex interplay between a multinational corporation's official corporate language, its parent country language and the local language spoken in an expatriate's host country, the study illuminates that not only a low absolute language proficiency of expatriates and local colleagues, but also relative differences in proficiency levels among the multinational corporation's workforce can hamper expatriate success.

In a nutshell, our study offers additional theoretical explanations for mixed results in empirical studies concerning language effects on expatriate success and provides meaningful implications for further research. First, the study shows that the impact of language-related barriers on expatriate success is highly dependent on the international assignment type. Consequently, future empirical studies should control for the prevalent assignment type or focus on one specific type in order to evaluate the effects of language on expatriate success. Second, the study provides meaningful reasons why the official corporate language will gain in importance compared to local languages. Therefore, future empirical studies should not only ask respondents about local language skills, but also include questions concerning the official corporate language. Finally, the study draws attention to differences in relative proficiency levels between expatriates and local workforces, suggesting that future empirical studies should not exclusively focus on expatriates' language proficiency, but also check for the proficiency level of key local staff.

Our language-sensitive typology of assignment types and its discussion in the light of common language effects carries important practical recommendations for expatriate selection and training as well. It demonstrates that language requirements strongly vary between assignment objectives and expatriate roles, indicating where multinational corporations need to consider language skills as a key selection criterion and where other factors may take precedence. Language is hardly relevant in assignments requiring little interaction with either headquarters or local staff such as *Troubleshooter* or *Technical Assignments*, so multinationals will be well advised to select the best technician for these jobs. However, as soon as interaction in the official corporate or local language with host country staff comes into play, communicative competence is needed. If interactions with locals become pivotal for expatriate success, like in the case of *Operational Elements* or *Agents of Socializing*, language should be considered as one key factor in the selection and training process. Language concerns should gain highest priority for the selection of candidates fulfilling roles as *Language Nodes*, *Boundary Spanners* or *Network Builders* because the success of these international assignments are strongly determined by the efficiency of handling interaction with both headquarters and the local unit.

Our study does not only suggest which expatriation types multinational corporations should concentrate their linguistic resources on, it also indicates which languages are relevant in this respect. Ideally, expatriates should gain some fluency in their host country language. However, considering the short notice and limited duration of many foreign assignments, this requirement would severely constrain companies' staffing choices. Therefore, proficiency in English as the lingua franca of business is much more important for the success of highly interactive international assignments. Our discussion of linguistic challenges highlights the need for multinational corporations to select candidates with high English proficiency for this type of positions. To expand their linguistic resources, they can provide language training to high potentials, thus enlarging their pool of suitable candidates.

Moreover, our discussion yields the surprising finding that an expatriate's success does not necessarily improve along with his English proficiency in a linear way. If proficiency levels are highly unequal, the standardization of communication around a common corporate language can lead to friction between expatriates and local subsidiary staff. In these cases, multinationals would be well advised to provide English training on a broader basis, aiming to improve language skills also among local employees. This would enable human resource managers to match proficiency levels between expatriates and their immediate coworkers to some extent. As our discussion has shown, the better working climate, solidarity and joint efforts made by

speakers with intermediate, but similar fluency can outperform the cooperation of team members with a higher sum of absolute skills, but friction due to disparate language proficiency.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has systematically connected recent theoretical advances regarding the impact of language on international business with well-established taxonomies of expatriation objectives and expatriate roles. Having shown the differential impact of language in different assignment contexts on a theoretical level, this paper encourages future research empirically investigating the proposed relationships. Both qualitative and quantitative studies will be needed. The former provide up-close insights into the lived experiences of expatriates, whereas the latter can test the strength of the proposed relationships and counterbalance the current dominance of qualitative studies in language-related international business research (Pudelko, Tenzer, & Harzing, 2015).

### **References**

- Bader, B., & Schuster, T. (2015). Expatriate Social Networks in Terrorism-Endangered Countries: An Empirical Analysis in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. *Journal of International Management*, 21(1), 63–77.
- Barner-Rasmussen, W., & Björkman, I. (2005). Surmounting Interunit Barriers Factors Associated with Interunit Communication Intensity in the Multinational Corporation. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 35(1), 28–46.
- Barner-Rasmussen, W., & Björkman, I. (2007). Language Fluency, Socialization and Inter-Unit Relationships in Chinese and Finnish Subsidiaries. *Management and Organization Review*, 3(1), 105–128.
- Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D. A., Shaffer, M. A., & Luk, D. M. (2005). Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: Meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(2), 257–281.
- Brannen, M. Y., Piekkari, R., & Tietze, S. (2014). The multifaceted role of language in international business: Unpacking the forms, functions and features of a critical challenge to MNC theory and performance. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(5), 495–507.
- Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.
- Caligiuri, P. M. (2006). Performance measurement in a cross-national context: Evaluating the success of global assignments. In W. J. Bennett, C. E. Lance, & D. J. Woehr (Eds.),

- Performance measurement: Current perspectives and future challenges* (pp. 227–244). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Chong, A., Guillen, J., & Rios, V. (2010). Language Nuances and Socioeconomic Outcomes. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 69(2), 693–716.
- Collings, D. G., Scullion, H., & Morley, M. J. (2007). Changing patterns of global staffing in the multinational enterprise: challenges to the conventional expatriate assignment and emerging alternatives. *Journal of World Business*, 42(2), 198–213.
- Dowling, P. J., Festing, M., & Engle, A. D. (2007). *International Human Resource Management* (5th ed.). London: Thomson Learning.
- Edström, A., & Galbraith, J. R. (1977). Transfer of Managers as a Coordination and Control Strategy in Multinational Organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22(2), 248–263.
- Feely, A. J., & Harzing, A.-W. (2003). Language management in multinational companies. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 10(2), 37–52.
- Fredriksson, R., Barner-Rasmussen, W., & Piekkari, R. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual organization: The notion of a common corporate language. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 11(4), 406–423.
- Giles, H., & Johnson, P. (1981). The role of language in ethnic group relations. In J. C. Turner & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup behavior* (pp. 199–243). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gross, J. J., & Thompson, R. A. (2007). Emotion regulation: Conceptual foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (pp. 3–24). New York: Guilford Press.
- Harrison, D. A., Price, K. H., & Bell, M. P. (1998). Beyond relational demography: Time and the effects of surface-and deep-level diversity on work group cohesion. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41(1), 96–107.
- Harzing, A.-W. (2001). Of Bears, Bumble-Bees, and Spiders : The Role of Expatriates in Controlling Foreign Subsidiaries. *Journal of World Business*, 36(4), 366–379.
- Harzing, A.-W., & Feely, A. J. (2008). The language barrier and its implications for HQ-subsubsidiary relationships. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 15(1), 49–61.
- Harzing, A.-W., Köster, K., & Magner, U. (2011). Babel in business: The language barrier and its solutions in the HQ-subsubsidiary relationship. *Journal of World Business*, 46(3), 279–287.
- Harzing, A.-W., & Pudelko, M. (2013). Language competencies, policies and practices in multinational corporations: A comprehensive review and comparison of Anglophone,

- Asian, Continental European and Nordic MNCs. *Journal of World Business*, 48(1), 87–97.
- Harzing, A.-W., & Pudelko, M. (2014). Hablas vielleicht un peu la mia language? A comprehensive overview of the role of language differences in headquarters–subsidiary communication. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(5), 696–717.
- Hays, R. (1974). Expatriate Selection: Insuring Success and Avoiding Failure. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 5(1), 25–37.
- Henderson, J. K. (2005). Language diversity in international management teams. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 35(1), 66–82.
- Hinds, P. J., Neeley, T. B., & Cramton, C. D. (2014). Language as a lightning rod: Power contests, emotion regulation, and subgroup dynamics in global teams. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(5), 536–561.
- Janssens, M., & Steyaert, C. (2014). Re-considering language within a cosmopolitan understanding: Toward a multilingual franca approach in international business studies. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(5), 623–639.
- Jeanjean, T., Stolowy, H., Erkens, M., & Yohn, T. L. (2014). International evidence on the impact of adopting English as an external reporting language. *Journal of International Business Studies*.
- Kankaanranta, A., & Planken, B. (2010). BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 380–407.
- Lagerström, K., & Andersson, M. (2003). Creating and sharing knowledge within a transnational team—the development of a global business system. *Journal of World Business*, 38(2), 84–95.
- Lauring, J. (2008). Rethinking Social Identity Theory in International Encounters Language Use as a Negotiated Object for Identity Making. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 8(3), 343–361.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., Charles, M., & Kankaanranta, A. (2005). English as a lingua franca in Nordic corporate mergers: Two case companies. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24(4), 401–421.
- Luo, Y., & Shenkar, O. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual community: Language and organization in a global context. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(3), 321–339.



- Mäkelä, K., Kalla, H. K., & Piekkari, R. (2007). Interpersonal similarity as a driver of knowledge sharing within multinational corporations. *International Business Review*, 16(1), 1–22.
- Marschan, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1997). Language: The forgotten factor in multinational management. *European Management Journal*, 15(5), 591–598.
- Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999a). Adopting a common corporate language: IHRM implications. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(3), 377–390.
- Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999b). In the shadow: The impact of language on structure, power and communication in the multinational. *International Business Review*, 8(4), 421–440.
- Mayrhofer, W., & Brewster, C. (1996). In praise of ethnocentricity: expatriate policies in European multinationals. *The International Executive*, 38(6), 749–778.
- Minbaeva, D., & Michailova, S. (2004). Knowledge transfer and expatriation in multinational corporations: the role of disseminative capacity. *Employee Relations*, 26, 663–680.
- Neeley, T. B. (2013). Language matters: Status loss and achieved status distinctions in global organizations. *Organization Science*, 24(2), 476–497.
- Neeley, T. B., Hinds, P. J., & Cramton, C. D. (2012). The (un) hidden turmoil of language in global collaboration. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41(3), 236–244.
- Nicholson, N., & Imaizumi, A. (1993). The adjustment of Japanese expatriates to living and working in Britain. *British Journal of Management*, 4(2), 119–134.
- Osland, J. (1995). *The adventure of working abroad: Hero tales from the global frontier*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Parker, B., & McEvoy, G. (1993). Initial examination of a model of intercultural adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 17(3), 355–379.
- Peltokorpi, V. (2010). Intercultural communication in foreign subsidiaries: The influence of expatriates' language and cultural competencies. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 26(2), 176–188.
- Peltokorpi, V., & Vaara, E. (2012). Language policies and practices in wholly owned foreign subsidiaries: A recontextualization perspective. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 43(9), 808–833.
- Piekkari, R. (2006). Language effects in multinational corporations: A review from an international human resource management perspective. In G. K. Stahl & I. Björkman

- (Eds.), *Handbook of research in international human resource management* (pp. 536–550). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. S. (2014). *Language in international business: The multilingual reality of global business expansion*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Pudelko, M., Tenzer, H., & Harzing, A.-W. (2015). Cross-Cultural Management and Language Studies within International Business Research: Past and Present Paradigms and Suggestions for Future Research. In N. Holden, S. Michailova, & S. Tietze (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to cross-cultural management* (pp. 85–94). New York: Routledge.
- Selmer, J., & Luring, J. (2015). Host country language ability and expatriate adjustment: The moderating effect of language difficulty. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(3), 401–420.
- Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A., Gregersen, H., Black, J. S., & Ferzandi, L. A. (2006). You can take it with you: individual differences and expatriate effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(1), 109–125.
- Shin, S., Morgeson, F. P., & Campion, M. A. (2007). What you do depends on where you are: Understanding how domestic and expatriate work requirements depend upon the cultural context. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 38(1), 64–83.
- Suutari, V., & Brewster, C. (2001). Expatriate management practices and perceived relevance: Evidence from Finnish expatriates. *Personnel Review*, 30(5), 554–577.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchels (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–74). Monterey: Brooks/Cole.
- Tenzer, H., & Pudelko, M. (2013). Leading across language barriers: strategies to mitigate negative language-induced emotions in MNCs. In *Best Paper Proceedings of the Academy of Management 73rd Annual Meeting*.
- Tenzer, H., & Pudelko, M. (2014). The Power of Language in Multilingual Settings: the Impact of Language Diversity on Power Relations in Multinational Teams. In *Paper presented at the Academy of Management 74th Annual Meeting*. Philadelphia, 1-5 August.
- Tenzer, H., Pudelko, M., & Harzing, A.-W. (2014). The impact of language barriers on trust formation in multinational teams. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(5), 508–535.

- Tietze, S., Cohen, L., & Musson, G. (2003). *Understanding organizations through language*. London: Sage Publications.
- Tung, R. L. (1981). Selection and training of personnel for overseas assignments. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 16(1), 68–78.
- Vaara, E., Tienari, J., Piekkari, R., & Sääntti, R. (2005). Language and the circuits of power in a merging multinational corporation. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(3), 595–623.
- Van den Born, F., & Peltokorpi, V. (2010). Language Policies and Communication in Multinational Companies Alignment With Strategic Orientation and Human Resource Management Practices. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(2), 97–118.
- Wang, X., & Kanungo, R. N. (2004). Nationality, social network and psychological well-being: expatriates in China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(4), 775–793.
- Wang, X., & Nayir, D. Z. (2006). How and when social network is important? – Comparing European expatriates' adjustment in China and in Turkey. *Journal of International Management*, 12(4), 449–472.
- Weiss, H. M., & Cropanzano, R. (1996). Affective events theory: A theoretical discussion of the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 18, 1.
- Welch, D. E., & Welch, L. S. (2008). The importance of language in international knowledge transfer. *Management International Review*, 48(3), 339–360.
- Wright, C., Kumagai, F., & Boney, N. (2001). Language and power in Japanese transplants in Scotland. *The Sociological Review*, 49(2), 236–253.
- Zander, L., Mockaitis, A. I., Harzing, A.-W., Balduza, J., Barner-Rasmussen, W., Barzantny, C., ... Ferreira, R. F. (2011). Standardization and contextualization: A study of language and leadership across 17 countries. *Journal of World Business*, 46(3), 296–304.