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INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICA-
TION AND COMMUNICATION ISSUES IN M
ULTILINGUAL ORGANIZATIONS

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Anniina Järvi
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Useiden kielten käyttäminen nykyaikaisissa organisaatioissa on ajankohtainen aihe työympäristöissä Suomessa. Itse asiassa harvat ihmiset pystyvät menestyä ilman toisen kielen käyttämistä päivittäisissä työtehtävissään. Myös tehokas viestintä on olennaista organisaatioissa. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli saada käsitys siitä, kuinka monikielisyys vaikuttaa työympäristöihin. Tämä opinnäytetyö vastaa myös siihen, mitkä ovat olennaisimmat viestintään liittyvät ongelmat monikielisissä työympäristöissä Suomessa.

Tämä tutkimus tehtiin laadullisena tutkimuksena. Aihetta tutkittiin toteuttamalla puolistrukturoitu haastattelu, johon osallistui neljä osallistujaa. Jokainen heistä työskentelee eri organisaatioissa Vaasassa. Osallistujien vastaukset olivat tämän tutkimuksen ensisijaista tietoa ja toissijaiset tiedot kerättiin luotettavista lähteistä, kuten kirjoista ja verkkosivuilta.

Haastattelutulosten perusteella olennaisimmat ongelmat liittyvät vieraiden kielten ymmärtämiseen sekä tiedonkulkuun. Toisaalta, tulokset osoittavat, että esimerkiksi kirjallinen ja digitaalinen viestintä koetaan tehokkaiksi. Lisäksi kahden tai kolmen kielen käyttäminen vaikuttaa olevan tavallista eri työympäristöissä ja tietyt tekijät näissä ympäristöissä ovat merkki tehokkaasta viestinnästä.

Avainsanat Organisaation viestintä, monikielisyys, tiedonkulku, kielimuurit

ABSTRACT

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The use of several languages in contemporary organizations is a relevant topic in organizations in Finland. In fact, few people can prosper without the use of a second language in their daily tasks. Moreover, effective communication is vital in organizations. The aim for this thesis was to gain an understanding on how multilingualism impacts an organizational environment. This thesis also provides answers to the question regarding the key issues in internal and external communication in multilingual organizations in Finland.

This study was carried out as a qualitative research. To investigate the topic, the author conducted a semi-structured interview in which four participants participated. Each participant is employed in a different organization in Vaasa, Finland. The participants' responses were the primary data of this research and secondary data were collected from trusted sources like books and web sites.

The interview results suggest that the issues relate mostly to the understanding of foreign languages and information flow. On the other hand, the results indicate that for instance written and digital communication are found effective. Moreover, it appears the use of two or three languages tends to be usual in the different working environments and certain factors in these environments are a sign of effective communication.

Keywords Organizational communication, multilingualism, information flow, language barriers

CONTENTS

TIIVISTELMÄ

ABSTRACT

1	INTRODUCTION.....	7
1.1	Background of the Thesis.....	7
1.2	Purpose of the Research.....	8
1.3	Research Questions.....	9
1.4	Limitations.....	9
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	11
2.1	Definition of Communication.....	11
2.2	Process of Communication.....	11
2.3	Different Methods of Communication.....	13
2.3.1	Verbal Communication.....	13
2.3.2	Non-verbal Communication.....	13
2.3.3	Written Communication.....	14
2.3.4	Listening.....	14
2.4	Digital Communication.....	15
2.5	Erin Meyer’s Communication approach.....	17
2.6	Organizational Communication.....	18
2.6.1	Effective Communication.....	19
2.7	Multilingualism.....	19
2.8	Communication Channels.....	20
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	22
3.1	Research Method.....	22
3.2	Data Collection.....	23
3.3	Data Analysis.....	24
3.4	Background of the Interview and Participants.....	24
4	RESEARCH RESULTS.....	26
4.1	Analyzing the Findings.....	26

4.2	Discussing Key Findings.....	31
4.3	Answering the Research Questions.....	35
5	CONCLUSIONS.....	40
5.1	Ethical Questions.....	40
5.2	Validity and Reliability.....	41
5.3	Summary.....	43
5.4	Suggestions for Further Research.....	45
	REFERENCES	46
	APPENDIX 1.....	51

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1 The Communication Process – in Action.....	11
Figure 2 Digital Communication Model.....	15
Figure 3 Erin Meyer's Culture Map – Communicating.....	16
Figure 4 Visualization of the Interview Process.....	24

1 INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication has become more challenging in contemporary working life (Abdushelishvili, 2020: 11). Especially, organizations with a large number of employees and several levels of hierarchy are often having difficulties to manage business communication in an effective way (Martic, 2023). Furthermore, Egeland (2017) stated that the lack of communication is the cause of one-third of all project failures.

Effective communication is vital among organizations. In fact, the life of a business can depend on how effectively communication is transmitted (Gupta & Bansal 2020, 3). One of the most common causes of dissatisfaction in workplaces is the poor quality of information flow. An example of this is distributing information of workplace events too late or not providing enough information. (Mohsen, 2018)

According to Bergbom (2023), more and more workplaces are becoming multilingual. To provide more accurate information on this, Tanner and Lassus (2018: 127) suggested that three languages – Finnish, Swedish and English – have been said to be the most important languages in business life in Finland. Another study suggested that only four people out of 100 participants can prosper in their daily work without using English (Karjalainen & Lehtonen, 2005).

1.1 Background of the Thesis

The above-mentioned facts reveal that it appears to be a strong connection with how effective communication and languages can affect on working environments. Thus, the author considers that there is a need for more research in this field. To be more specific, this study covers organizational communication issues in both internal and external communication situations. The study focuses on four persons who work in Vaasa, Finland in multilingual working environments.

The idea of the study is of the author's personal interest in the field. The author spent one semester abroad in 2022 where she was in multiple situations where there was a language barrier or communication issues, such as group projects in which people communicated mostly in their own mother tongue because of their incompetence in fluent English communication skills. Additionally, she was in situations where a plethora of different languages and cultures were in the same team and was able to communicate in multiple languages, either fluently or just on an elementary level. These are some reasons why the author is intrigued to study these issues from the point of view of employees working in Finland.

When it comes to the aspect of multilingualism in this study, the author herself is multilingual by being able to communicate in three languages fluently as well as having studied four more languages on an elementary or basic level. For this reason, the author finds multilingualism in working environments in Finland an interesting area to conduct research in.

The core aim for this thesis is to gain an understanding of how multilingualism impacts an organizational environment.

The objectives for this thesis are

- 1) to provide the reader with knowledge of contemporary communication among employees
- 2) to suggest improvements for challenges in multilingual organizations
- 3) to analyze the current situations and experiences of employees who work in multilingual organizations in Finland

1.2 Purpose of the Research

Earlier research conducted about similar topics are mostly related to team communication in organizations and more specifically in multicultural organizations. That is why in several of the earlier research the focus is on Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Some of them examine the topic regarding only virtual team communication and communication during a pandemic. Also, several of the ear-

lier ones examined the topic from a viewpoint where there are many different nationalities in one team and the authors utilized Richard Lewis' cultural types model.

Moreover, not many earlier researches examine just one person's experiences and views about communication in that person's occupation. Most of the earlier researches focus on how a whole team communicates within one company. That is why the author considers that there is a need to conduct further research on examining four persons' views who all work in different companies.

1.3 Research Questions

Answering some research questions will help the author to present the main issues to the reader. The main question the author's study achieves to find the answer to is:

- 1) What are the key issues in internal and external communication in multilingual organizations in Finland?**

In addition, there are two sub-questions:

- 2) Which characteristics are the most important in internal communication?
- 3) How does multilingualism appear in the interviewees' daily tasks?

1.4 Limitations

There are certain limitations to the research that the author will conduct. The first limitation concerns the size of the group that the author will interview. As there are four interviewees that participate to the research, the results cannot be generalized due to the small group size. Thus, the author can draw conclusions from only four persons' answers. In case there were more participants than

four or all the participants were to work within the same organization, the results would be simpler to generalize.

Another limitation concerns the bilingual area of Finland, the city of Vaasa. The research focuses on the four participants who are all located in Vaasa, Finland. This limits again the results so that when the author analyzes the results, she can only draw conclusions from the persons' results who are employed in Vaasa. The author considers that the chosen participants will provide valid answers to this research since she was aware these persons' occupations are situated in a location in which it is common to apply two or more languages in working environments.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition of Communication

Communication can be defined as interaction between two individuals. It is a type of interaction between two entities, where information from one individual to another is being transferred. For example, Keith Davis, a scholar, has defined communication as follows: "Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another." Also, scholars Newmen & Summer has defined it as "an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions between two or more persons". (Gupta & Bansal, 2020) Moreover, communication can be written, verbal, non-verbal or listening (Vain, 2021).

2.2 Process of Communication

The communication process contains certain factors as well. The process starts with the actual way of communication (an action), which is either a verbal or non-verbal method. The person (sender) is getting the message through by first having to encode it for transmission. When the message is being encoded, it goes through a medium (channel). After that follows the process of decoding the message to the person who receives the message. Then the message has been transmitted to the receiver and they can start to response to the message. (Gupta & Bansal, 2020)

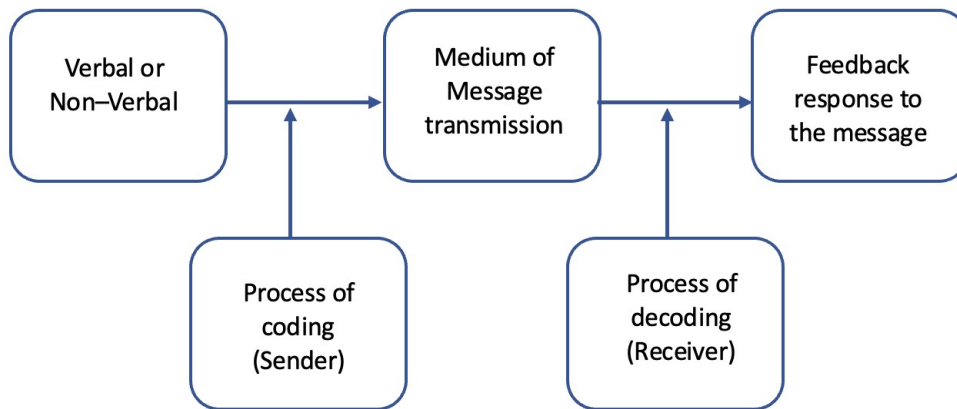


Figure 1 The Communication Process – in Action

The process of communication demonstrates the transfer of a message from point A to point B. It contains various factors which all as a whole form the communication model. Gupta & Bansal (2020) suggest the process contains of the following elements:

- Communicator or Sender
- Message
- Language
- Medium
- Receiver or Communicatee

In this type of process, there must be a medium involved since otherwise the message cannot be transmitted. In fact, without the following elements the communicative process is not possible to be complete (Shastri, as cited in Gupta & Bansal, 2020):

- Communicator
- Process
- Motivator
- Effect of communication

- Answering

2.3 Different Methods of Communication

2.3.1 Verbal Communication

In the verbal form of communication, the spoken word is being used to communicate with another person or persons. A common type of verbal style of communication is face-to-face communication. In addition to this, verbal communication can also be over the phone or video call. However, face-to-face communication is the preferred method. As verbal communication can be formal or informal, a great deal of how effective the communication is, will depend on different factors such as speed and volume of the words as well as clarity of speech. (Vain, 2021)

Also, Willkomm (2018) states that the words are not the factors that matter the most but complexity of the words and intonation. Additionally, Butterfield (2016) emphasizes that communication is successful only when both the speaker and listener understand each other. When the aim is to communicate effectively, one should pay attention to organize the message in a clear and logical way. This means for instance eliminating unnecessary words like jargon and technical languages and limiting the amount of information. (Butterfield, 2016)

2.3.2 Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication includes essentially any type of body language. This can be for instance hand movements, touch as well as facial expressions and eye contact. Like in the verbal communication style words are being used to communicate with someone else, non-verbal communication supports to transfer the message to another person or persons. What type of body movements one person conveys to another person, can bring a strong message to the receiver of the

message. For instance, facial expressions tell the most how one is feeling. By smiling or frowning one delivers a clear message to the receiver. (Vain, 2021)

2.3.3 Written Communication

In written communication, the style of writing, vocabulary and grammar affect on how effectively the message is being transferred. Written communication is somewhat more beneficial than non-verbal and verbal communication since it is useful when there is a need to provide detailed instructions. Especially in a business setting it is advised to write in a suitable language and to pay attention to correct grammar and spelling. (Vain, 2021)

In fact, written communication is the most formal type of communication out of all types (Kaul, 2014). According to Ranger (2023), the way a person transmits their thoughts through written words might have a considerable effect on how other persons perceive and understand one another. Because of this, Ranger (2023) also emphasizes one should focus on certain essentials when it comes to effective written communication. These essentials include for instance the communicator to be clear and concise when conveying information. Additionally, the communicator should pay attention to the structure and grammar of the message when the aim is to be an effective communicator. Another essential Ranger (2023) mentions is to use the language effectively. This means one should use language that is appropriate, selecting relevant words and avoiding jargon.

2.3.4 Listening

Listening, and more importantly active listening, is an essential part of communication (Vain, 2021). Active listening not only includes listening to the speaker but also understanding why the speaker is communicating a specific topic to the receiver. When listening and focusing to the message of the person talking, one is able to engage and respond in an appropriate manner. Again, this type of communication is important when it comes to a business setting. (Monnet, 2022)

According to Bamgbose (2022), a person may not have control over what they hear but they can control what they listen to. Listening is often undervalued since the quality of a person's speech is highly related to how attentive listener that person is.

There are three modes of listening: attentive, responsive and active listening. An attentive listener focuses on the speaker and let's the speaker finish their message without interrupting them. A responsive listener demonstrates, with the help of non-verbal and verbal cues, to the speaker that they are listening. An active listener is someone who is able to combine both listening and responding without invalidating any part of the speaker's message. (Hutzel, 2016)

2.4 Digital Communication

Digital communication is not too different from the normal communication process – it only needs a digital communication channel. The channel or type of media can be for instance text, image, sound or video. However, in this digital type of communication there is an exchange of a series of signals through which the communication (transmission of message) is carried out. Then the two basic signals can be transmitted through the digital channel. The information is encoded from the original state into a digital format. This allows the message to be transmitted over a digital communication channel all the way to the receiver who must decode the message in order to be able to have access to the information. (Meinel & Sack, 2014, 10–11)

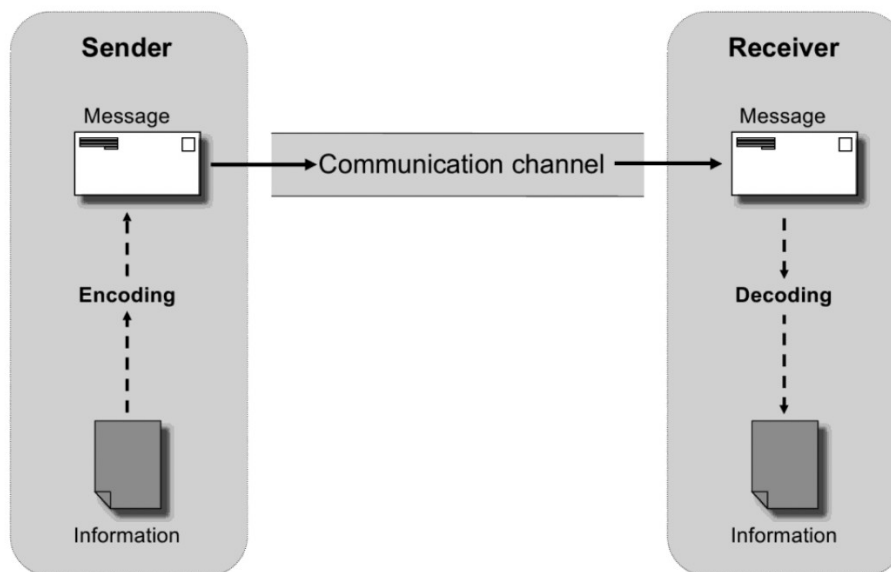


Figure 2 Digital Communication Model

Digital communication is a malleable way of communicating which is why it is a valuable tool to use in business environments. In any modern company, the practice of digital communication has several advantages. (Chester, 2020) Digital communication can be seen as a more effective way of communicating than the traditional way. This is due to the reason being that it is an interactive way of communicating. One person is able to communicate to another person using a digital channel and receive an instant answer. Additionally, when sending something digitally, the message becomes instantly available. This minimizes delays in sending for example important information. Moreover, by sending information digitally is beneficial when the aim is to send the same information to hundreds or thousands of people at once. Lastly, digital communication allows persons to be able to communicate from all areas globally. (*What is Digital Communication?*, n.d.)

2.5 Erin Meyer's Communication approach

One of Erin Meyer's eight cultural dimensions is related to communication. According to Meyer (2014) there are two dimensions in communicating: low-context and high-context. These two are often identified also as direct versus indirect communication.

In a society which has low-context communication, it is typical to be clear in communicating with others, say exactly what one means and be transparent. Words both in writing and speaking often have the same value in carrying a meaning. (*Communicating: Low vs. High Context*, n.d.) As it can be seen from below picture, in the low-context end are located for instance the U.S., Australia and Canada. Whereas in the high-context end are located Japan, Korea and Indonesia. This means in other words that for instance Americans in Japan should focus on what is not being said and conversely Japanese in America should be prepared to the use of direct language. (Lubin, 2015) Finland is located between half way of the chart and low-context end. In other words, in the Finnish society, communicating is somewhat clear and direct but not as much as for instance in the U.S. or Australia.



Figure 3 Erin Meyer's Culture Map – Communicating

In a society that has high-context communication, the communication is implicit and nuanced. In fact, it is common that the speaker does not need to say exactly

what they mean since already the tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions and even the environment are some factors that add the context to the message. (*Communicating: Low vs. High Context*, n.d.)

According to Salo–Lee (2006), in the high–context communication only a small part of a message is expressed verbally. Actually, a large part of a message is interpreted only from the context, such as the speaker’s appearance, communicative situation and non–verbal behavior.

2.6 Organizational Communication

According to Rauramo (2021), in an organization that practices communication within its work community the aim is to allow suitable conditions for the flow of information and cooperation. Rauramo (2021) emphasizes that when ensuring the functionality of communication within the organization, the entire work community is accountable for it. Additionally, the information flow should be sufficient at all levels, namely it should flow from management to employees and vice versa as well as from employee to employee. (Rauramo, 2021)

Organizational communication includes both internal and external communicating. Internal communication means communications that occur within an organization, such as interpersonal communication between employees, employee training modules and professional communication among the organization. (*What Is Organizational Communication?*, 2022)

Conversely, external communication is any communication between the organization and external entities, like other people or organizations outside that organization (*What Is External Communication in Business?*, 2023).

Internal communication is used in organizations for instance to increase sense of belonging and to communicate values as well as practical information within the organization. In contrast, external communication is used for example to im-

prove the public image of the organization as well as focus on increasing sales. (*What Is External Communication in Business?*, 2023)

2.6.1 Effective Communication

When an organization is aiming at organizational success, effective communication is essential. Effective organizational communication has some elements from which it can be recognized as effective. Firstly, it is efficient since the information can be time-sensitive. Secondly, the communication is clear. This is due to the prevention of misunderstandings between the communicators. Thirdly, it is reliable, namely the communication is regular and accurate. Fourthly, effective communication is also confidential since third parties gaining access to sensitive data needs to be prevented. Lastly, effective communication is valid. This means the information consists of factual information. (*Internal vs External Communication*, 2022)

2.7 Multilingualism

Maher (2017) defines multilingualism as follows: “multilingualism is a social situation involving groups or communities who communicate, with varying proficiency, in more than one language, in addition to a national or standard language.” Also, in fact, a multilingual person is not necessarily someone who speaks fluently several languages but someone who uses language for different functions. (Maher, 2017) Moreover, Ibanez (2021) argued that multilingualism refers for example to a social group, such as a company or school, in which several languages coexist.

Kotilainen et al. (2022) discovered that more and more employees in Finland work in languages that are not their strongest languages. This includes both Finnish speakers as well as speakers of other languages. When multiple people who work in the same workplace and do not have a common first language, the

easiest or most practical option is to use English. However, this is not the solution since not every one's English is competent enough to communicate in a working environment. (Kotilainen et al., 2022)

2.8 Communication Channels

Face-to-face Communication

According to Mrázová (2023), face-to-face communication has a central role in organizations nowadays. It is in fact the best technique to fully convey the message to another person. Additionally, it should be used especially for important decisions, such as closing deals or executive-level meetings. Moreover, according to Hooijberg & Watkins (2021), experiences that occur face-to-face, naturally have the potential to maintain focus. This is because when people are physically together, it is more difficult to give up to distractions.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing allows several persons to join one meeting. Even though the persons are communicating via a video connection, it allows one to read another's facial expressions which is why it is a beneficial way of communicating. Some platforms for video conferencing are Zoom and Microsoft Teams. (Crupi, 2022) Video conferencing is a flexible way of communicating in an organization since video conferences allows one to join a team meeting, presentation, interview or training from any location. (*What Is Video Conferencing?*, 2023) Video conferencing became extremely popular in organizations and schools during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and in fact, is expected to grow significantly according to a forecast period from 2022 to 2028. (*Video Conferencing Software and Its Evolution*, 2023)

Email

Emailing allows the sender to communicate with several people simultaneously. It is also a convenient way of communicating since one can send and receive emails anytime and everywhere. (*What Are the Benefits and Drawbacks of Using Email as a Primary Communication Channel?*, 2023) Also, according to Kaye Lockley (2017), email is considered a central channel for communicating, despite other channels that are considered better or quicker.

Phone Calls

Even though phone calls do not allow clear non-verbal communication, it is considered to be a beneficial communication tool, especially for time-sensitive communication (*What Is Digital Communication, and Why Is It Essential to Doing Business in the 21st Century?*, n.d.). Additionally, it is a simple way of communicating to customers and employees (Birt, 2023). Also, phone calls are considered to be one of the quickest way to receive a response. In other words, this communication channel is suitable when one person wishes to communicate quickly, directly and effectively. (Lau, n.d.)

Social Media

Social media communicating is beneficial when the aim is to attract or reach multiple people at once, for example to communicate about the company's new products. It is also a popular way to increase brand awareness. (Birt, 2023) In addition, social media is a beneficial tool when the company is recruiting skilled employees, for example through the job networking site LinkedIn. (*Social Media for Business | Business.Gov.Au*, 2023) In fact, by using social media a company can draw more traffic to its website (Butler, 2022). As an example of this Butler (2022) suggests that a successful social media marketing strategy makes possible the website traffic to develop up to 90 percent.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

There are two types of research methods which are qualitative and quantitative. In this chapter the author will define both methods and explain why she has chosen the qualitative method over the quantitative method. She will also explain reasons for choosing a semi-structured method in interviewing.

Qualitative research is defined as an exploratory method in research. This method is also suitable when the researcher wants to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues. Some usual data collection methods are for instance focus groups, in-depth interviews, uninterrupted observation and ethnographic participation (Alchemer, 2010).

According to Mander (2022), with a qualitative method the researcher is able to find out better answers to why a certain problem is like it is. Additionally, this method allows the participants to give more extensive answers and tell how they feel.

Quantitative research focuses on numerical data and the data is collected for example by conducting surveys, polls or questionnaires. The research contains large sample sizes and the study can often be repeated. By conducting quantitative research, the objective is to determine the relationship between two variables. The collected data are usually formed in tables, charts or figures. These types of statistical models support the researcher to analyze what is observed (Babbie et al. 2010).

According to Mander (2022), the quantitative method allows one to conduct a broader study and thus the researcher will be able to generalize the results more accurately. Additionally, a physical researcher is not necessary for this method. Therefore, the researcher can easily conduct digital or mobile surveys.

Thus, the author has decided to choose the qualitative method. As she is conducting her research on organizational communication within employees in different organizations, her research is about exploring phenomena, as Mack (2005) states. Also, according to Mack (2005), the method the author chose is suitable especially if the researcher aims to obtain culturally specific information about for instance opinions and behaviors.

Moreover, the author has chosen to conduct the interviews in a semi-structured method. This is due to the fact that this method allows versatility of the questions. The questions can be for instance fully open-ended questions and more theoretically driven. (Galletta & Cross, 2013: 24) Additionally, since the idea is to form a conversation, this method may make it more comfortable for the interviewee to discuss about their personal experiences and backgrounds (*Overview of Semi-Structured Interviews (With Pros and Cons) | Indeed.Com Canada, 2022*).

The author considers four interviewees an adequate amount for the qualitative study since fewer participants allow the author to collect broader answers than a quantitative study that would indicate for instance only numerical data. Also, by having a smaller group of participants than in a quantitative research, the author is able to examine culturally specific information, as Mack (2005) argues. Moreover, Dworkin (2012), considers around 5 to 50 participants as a suitable amount of participants in qualitative research. Dworkin (2012) emphasises that for instance the quality of the data and the amount of useful information the author collects from the interviewees play a large role in this type of research.

3.2 Data Collection

The author uses primary and secondary data for the data collection. Primary data is real time data and it is gathered by the researcher by conducting for instance surveys, questionnaires and personal interviews. Secondary data is past data

which means it is data that already exists, such as websites, books and journal articles. (Wagh, 2023)

The author collects the primary data by conducting a semi-structured interview as stated in the previous sub-chapter. The primary data will be collected from four interviewees who participated in the author's interview. The secondary data has been collected from sources that the author considered trusted. These include websites, books, PDFs and journal articles. The reader can find the interview questions in the appendix and sources in the reference section.

The data from the interviews were collected during the time period September 9th until September 27th 2023. The interviews were held in Finnish since it is every participants' mother tongue. Each interview were held as a face-to-face interview. The author recorded every interview with the permission of each participant. All interviews were then transcribed to a word by word document and translated by the author.

3.3 Data Analysis

Once the data has been collected, the author will analyze the data by utilizing a thematic analysis method. The author has chosen this method because it is a suitable type of analysis method when the researcher is aiming to find subjective information like opinions and experiences. Moreover, this method is adequate when the researcher wishes to understand the participants' thoughts, feelings and attitudes. (*Thematic Analysis*, 2023)

After the author has collected all data, the next step is to organize the data in a meaningful and systematic way and putting them together. Then, the author sorts the data into their own themes and possible sub-themes. After finalizing the data into their own themes, the last step is to start writing a narrative based on the collected data. (*Thematic Analysis*, 2023)

3.4 Background of the Interview and Participants

As the author has stated in the introduction chapter, each participant is working in a different company since the author feels there is a need to conduct more research in persons' experiences, opinions and behaviors in different companies in multilingual environments. Each participant's mother tongue is Finnish and they work in companies where two or more languages are used in daily working tasks. The author will present each participant in the next chapter as participant 1 being P1, participant 2 being P2 et cetera.

Regarding the question number 8 whether the participant finds digital communication effective, the author explained in her own words what is digital communication before asking the question so that the participants would have an understanding what it is. Similarly, for the question number 9 about Erin Meyer's scale about low and high-context, the author showed each participant where Finland is situated in it and explained the difference between the two contexts.

Since all of the participants work in different types of tasks, the author asked follow-up questions or additional questions when she wanted a more detailed answer from the participants. Some additional questions were related strongly to the position of the interviewee and it is easy to understand what the position of the participant is. That is why the author will not disclose the additional questions. The author provides more details about anonymity and confidentiality in chapter 5.1.

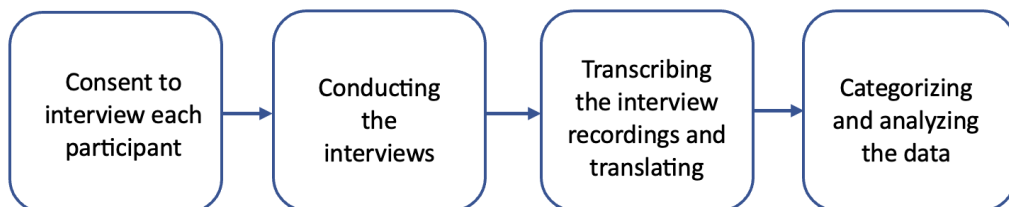


Figure 4 Visualization of the Interview Process

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Analyzing the Findings

The use of languages

“I am open to using two languages” (P2, 2023)

The results show that P2's, P3's and P4's main language in their organization is Finnish and only P1's main language in his organization is English. However, P1 does use Finnish in his work on the daily. The others use Finnish in their work on the daily as well. The results also indicate that P1 and P2 use Swedish a few times a week whereas P3 and P4 use Swedish every day. In addition to Swedish, P1 uses English every day while P2 never uses English. P3 and P4 use English only occasionally or seldom.

When it comes to the usage of foreign languages, P1 and P2 find them slightly difficult whether they were referring to English or Swedish. However, P1 emphasizes that he has used those languages such a long time they have become more fluent. In fact, P3 mentions she uses Swedish more than Finnish and thus it does not cause any issues for her. Since P3 uses English rarely, she finds it challenging. On the contrary to P3, P4 finds the usage of English effortless yet Swedish is sometimes challenging. Mutual answers for why the participants find them difficult are that there might be difficult words or specific jargon. Additionally, a foreign language becomes forgotten when it is not used frequently.

Language barriers

Regarding language barriers in internal communication, it seems there are rarely language barriers. P1 states that there are never language barriers in work tasks but the vocabulary when discussing about free time might cause difficulties to understand if the colleague has a heavy dialect.

However, in external communication P1, P2 and P4 state that the external persons use such complicated words and have a heavy dialect that it is difficult to understand. Despite this, they state that they do understand they meaning but not necessarily every word. Additionally, P3 mentions that sometimes she is not the one having difficulties understanding English but the customer whose mother tongue is not English.

When the author asked how the participants solve language barriers in their tasks with internal and external persons, P1 and P2 prefer to ask the person to repeat what they said or elaborate. P2 also adds that she might ask if the other person can try to speak without a very strong dialect. P3 tells that when encountering language barriers, she prefers to use the dictionary for additional support. On the other hand, P4 considers it is best to invent a circular expression when not knowing a specific word.

Communication methods

“Written communication has been thought out better.” (P1, 2023)

Considering which communication methods are the most effective, it appears written communication is seen as a certainly effective method. For instance, P1 is of the opinion that it is a more substantial method than the other methods. Both P1 and P2 emphasize it is helpful that they are able to revise afterwards what has been written. Additionally, P1 tells that active listening is important. P2 finds not only written communication effective but also verbal communication. This is because when she is participating to trainings in her occupation, the material is written and at the same time the person who presents uses verbal communication. P3 is of the same opinion as P2 that written and verbal communication are the most effective. However, the performance of her work discussion requires both written and verbal communication. Moreover, P4 considers verbal communication the most effective and adds that the usage of non-verbal language for

support makes the communication more effective. He also mentions that when there is no mutual language, non-verbal communication is the only method of communication that works.

Digital communication

“Digital communication is not communication. It is only to convey information.”
(P1, 2023)

“It has made all communication smoother.” (P4, 2023)

The results show that three out of four participants find digital communication effective. P2, P3 and P4 think it is effective due to the reasons that it for instance allows one to send a message to many people at once and it is a quick way of communicating. P3 also tells that it minimizes delays and therefore minimizes misunderstandings. P4 says it is thanks to digital communication, information transmits quicker. P1 does not find digital communication effective. He says that the reason being this is because too easy communication channels causes that the information gets missing and it becomes challenging to find. Essential topics are drowning in the information flow.

Erin Meyer’s study

Based on the results, each participant is of the opinion that the fact that Finland is situated close to a low-context society does apply in their daily work both internally and externally. However, P3 thinks that in external communication Finland is more in the middle than close to the low-context end but points out that she and majority of her colleagues are exactly where Erin Meyer’s study shows. P4 also states that Finland could be situated in fact even closer to the low-context end, meaning that the communication certainly is direct. Moreover, P4 points out that language and especially non-verbal language are indeed direct.

Information flow in organizations

“The organization changes all the time, you never know what to send to whom.”
(P1, 2023)

The results indicate that three out of four participants feel that the information flow at all levels (management to employee and employee to employee) is not sufficient nor effective. P2 states that earlier the information did not flow sufficiently but nowadays it does. She says this is thanks to additional meetings where matters from executive meetings are revised and discussed. The implementation of those meetings has improved the information flow. In contrast to P2, the other participants do not find the information flow sufficient. According to P1, there is simply too much information and too many persons who can be stakeholders which makes the information flow complex. Additionally, P3 explains that the communication from management to employee is not sufficient which causes that it is also not sufficient the other way around. However, P3 adds that the communication from employee to employee is in fact effective and transparent. In P4’s opinion the information flow is not sufficient at all levels due to the reason that the more persons a message is supposed to reach, the information flow breaks at some point and causes that the message does not reach someone it was supposed to reach.

Effective communication

“It should be clear. There cannot be room for interpretation.” (P3, 2023)

When the author asked from each participant if they could explain in their own words what is effective communication, the answers were more or less similar. Common words that can be seen in the answers are “short”, “concise” and “relevant”. Also, P1 and P2 say to be important that the matter is informed on time.

P2 thinks verbal and written communication combined is effective. P4 considers if a message contains instructions, it is best when written in step-by-step form.

Communication channels

According to the question about which communication channels the participants use and whether they find them effective, the results show that P1, P2 and P3 who all use Teams or Skype, find those channels effective. The three think that Teams and/or Skype are effective due to reasons such as one can send quickly and easily messages online and it also is effective for short information. P2 says in emailing there is a disadvantage which is the unclarity if the receiver has received the message if they do not confirm anything. She adds, with phone calls one can inevitably deliver the information right away but there is no information in black and white, which is a disadvantage. As P3 often has to show written material, she finds face-to-face communication as well as Teams effective. On the contrary, P4 finds face-to-face communication uncertain since it cannot be one hundred percent certain that a matter is carried out when it is said face-to-face. He does think email is a more effective way and emphasizes that tasks written on a whiteboard are carried out the quickest.

Regarding in what type of situations certain communication channels are used, P1, P2 and P3 use face-to-face communication daily or several times a week. Then again, P2 uses it only when she asks support from a colleague to a large question. Both P3 and P4 use it in several occasions such as customer encounters, with their managers and with colleagues whereas P1 and P2 use it mostly only with colleagues. P1, P2 and P3 use video conferencing in meetings, trainings, with colleagues and P3 specifically in customer encounters. P4 does not use it often but when he does, it is used for meetings. When it comes to emailing, P1, P3 and P4 use it in internal communication and in cases where there is not an

urgent matter. P2 uses emailing with both internals and externals. Regarding the usage of phone calls, P1 and P4 use it only when something important and urgent is needed. P2 says that more often somebody calls her than the other way around. P3 often uses it in customer encounters and with colleagues. Social media is used by only P2 in situations where she has to update the intranet.

4.2 Discussing Key Findings

Regarding the use of languages, it can be assumed each participant uses several languages, if not on the daily, weekly. This is a clear indication also to what Kotilainen et al. (2022) discovered. They found that an increasing amount of employees in Finland use languages that are not their strongest. Despite what the main language in each participant's organization is, each of them use Finnish every day. Thus, it seems clear that whichever the main language is in an organization in Finland, one uses Finnish on the daily. Generally, it seems that a foreign language or two foreign languages can be slightly difficult, especially if the vocabulary consists of jargon or it is not used as often as their mother tongue. The results also indicate that if one uses a foreign language for a long time and continuously, it becomes more fluent. These results refer to what Maher (2017) stated – a person who is multilingual, communicates in foreign with varying proficiency in addition to the country's national language.

In internal communication it appears there are rarely language barriers whereas in external communication there tends to be language barriers. When language barriers occur, they are mostly due to a heavy dialect or complex words. When facing language barriers, the participants either ask the person to repeat or elaborate or the participant themselves use a dictionary or invent a circular expression for a certain word. Based on these, even though there are language barriers in each of the participants' occupation, they all seem to have a clear idea on how to solve such a situation. It should be kept in mind that effective communication has an impact on organizational success (*Internal vs External Communication*,

2022). Thus, in both internal and external situations the involved persons should focus on effective communication, meaning the language barriers should occur less often. The author suggests some improvements regarding this in chapter 4.3.

Regarding different communication methods, even though each participant uses often almost all of the four of the communication methods, it can be assumed the written method is considered an effective, if not the most effective, method. A mutual benefit the participants mentioned regarding the written method is that one is able to look afterwards what has been written. Vain (2021) also states this method is useful when one writes detailed instructions, which is similar to what the participants' mutual opinion indicates. Verbal communication is seen effective when it is used as a supporting method to another communication method such as non-verbal and written communication. Despite non-verbal and verbal communication are effective together, it should be kept in mind that both the speaker and listener need to understand each other. (Butterfield, 2016) Nevertheless, when communicating non-verbally, body movements can bring a strong message to the receiver. However, the results tell listening is not seen as an effective method. To conclude, written communication in itself is an effective communication but also when it has a supporting method.

Digital communication is seen in different ways among the participants. The participants' answers indicate that in one organization it is not effective but in three other organizations it is seen as effective. Even though one participant did not find the digital communication effective, three out of four did. This means the majority finds it effective, in their own ways. One participant might think it is effective since it is quick, another finds it effective because it is smoother than some other way of communication. The participant who did not find it effective said the reason for it is for instance important information cannot be found easily. The digital communication in this participant's organization could become efficient when the core issue were to be examined and change the way the digi-

tal communication is handled and communicated. Chester (2020) says digital communication is a valuable tool in organizational environments because it is a malleable way of communicating. However, as it is clear, when the information goes missing because there is too much of it, it can be assumed digital communication is not always an effective way of communicating.

Considering Erin Meyer's study, each participant is nearly of the same opinion regardless of what their organization's main language is. There are slight differences, such as one finds the two contexts somewhat different in internal and external situations. Nevertheless, each of them agree more or less with Erin Meyer's study. This result suggests that the participants have recognized that Meyer's pattern is true in their daily work. In other words, they do agree with Lubin's (2015) explanation that one should be prepared to the use of direct language. In this case, a person in Finland should be prepared to use direct language to some extent.

Information flow shares different opinions as well. Unlike previous interview questions where for instance one participant finds some way of communication not effective and the rest finds it effective, in this question only one finds information flow to be effective and the rest does not. As to why information flow is not seen as effective or sufficient, there were several opinions. Whether there is too much information and one does not know to whom send a message due to too many stakeholders or the message does not reach someone who was supposed to receive the message. It also seems that when the issues occur, they are to every direction, meaning that they occur from management to employee and vice versa as well as employee to employee. As Rauramo (2021) explains, the entire work community is responsible for sufficient and effective communication. It is clear that when there is the issue where information does not flow sufficiently nor effectively, it is because there are issues at every level of the organization. The author will suggest some improvements for this in chapter 4.3.

What it comes to defining effective communication, although some of the words were different, it seems there is a mutual opinion. The most common word used was “short”. Additionally, the participants referred to that the message needs to be sent on time. Effective communication should contain only relevant information. Considering these opinions, it seems that in these types of organizations where the participants use different communication methods on the daily, the communication must contain certain criteria so that it can be considered effective communication. Seemingly, effective communication is short but it has to contain all necessary information delivered in a manner that there is no room for interpretation. The message also must be sent on time in order that it is certainly effective communication. There are similarities in the participants’ answers to what elements are explained in *Internal vs External Communication (2022)*. Some of the similarities are that the information might be time-sensitive and therefore should be sent on time. Additionally, in both there are mentioned elements such as clear communication and accuracy or relevancy of the information.

The usage of communication channels and how they are used differ from participant to participant. Generally, emails and Teams or Skype are used the most regardless if the question related to internal or external communication. This tells that communication channels that allow one to communicate digitally and convey information quickly from any location are the most commonly used. These answers do make sense since also Crupi (2022) explained this type of video conferencing is a beneficial way of communicating. In addition, face-to-face communication is commonly used when customer encounters are frequent or when other colleagues are physically present. On the other hand, if one’s occupation does not require customer encounters on the daily, face-to-face communication occurs more seldom. Thus, it is clear face-to-face communication depends a great deal whether a person’s usual tasks consist of customer encounters or not. Like Mrázová (2023) mentioned, this method has a central role in organizations nowadays which also comes clear from the majority of the participants’ answers.

Phone calls are utilized the most when there is an urgent or important matter that must be solved quickly. However, distinctly one participant (P3) does use phone calls in customer encounters, with colleagues and manager. This matches also with what Birt (2023) explained – it is indeed a simple way of communicating to customers and other employees. Seemingly, the use of phone calls depends from occupation to occupation and it seems the participants have different preferences regarding on how low of a threshold one decides to use phone calls.

4.3 Answering the Research Questions

What are the key issues in internal and external communication in multilingual organizations in Finland?

The author considers there are three key issues that occur in the participants occupation. The key issues are namely mutual opinions or words the participants used in the interviews and similarities the author noticed in the answers. One of the author's objectives was to suggest improvements for challenges in multilingual organizations. Thus, the author will provide some suggestions how the issues could be improved.

The first issue is understanding foreign languages. This refers to the participants finding other languages than Finnish slightly difficult in certain cases. The occurrence of these are mostly in situations which demand jargon or words that are not often used. As Butterfield (2016) particularly mentions, when the aim is to communicate in an effective manner, one should focus on avoiding jargon and unnecessary words. The author considers that this relates to the use of foreign languages since "jargon" and "words that are not often used", are mentioned in the participants' answers. Lastly, heavy dialects that are used for instance in Swedish cause difficulties understanding certain words in a sentence. Thus, the author suggests that in each organization there should be a discussion how each

person in that organization can maintain a clear and effective style of communication. Additionally, persons who notice that they are often asked to repeat or elaborate what they are saying, could try to reduce the usage of too difficult words or jargon when possible.

The second issue relates to an issue in digital communication. Even though only one participant answered digital communication to not being effective, the author considers it valid to write about since similar answers appear also later from other participants' opinions. The issue to which the participant referred was that important topics and matters are drowning to the information flow, whether it is communicating in Teams or via email. Since there is plenty of information, it goes easily missing. An improvement the author considers for this issue is to focus on creating categories for certain topics. Firstly, if there is an important matter that is communicated via email, the sender should consider sending it as a high-priority mail. Secondly, for certain types of emails each person should create folders. This way the matters remain organized. Additionally, for matters that are communicated in Teams, there could be created own groups for large topics.

The third and final issue relates to information flow at each level in organizations. The answers show that three out of four participants, which is the majority, show that they are not contented with the information flow in their organizations. The issues that occur in information flow vary from participant to participant. Also Mohsen (2018) refers to this issue stating that for instance distributing information too late or not providing enough information are poor information flow. The author considers that for the issues where some participants think there are simply too many persons who are involved in a message or the message does not reach every one it should, there could be only one mutual platform that is meant for certain type of topics such as company news, presentations and files. For daily, shorter communication there could be another mutual communication platform. In case the issue remains, the author suggests that the

sender ensures the message contains every person it is supposed to contain. Regarding the issues that relate to poor communication for instance from the management to employee, the author suggests that in this case also for quick and short communication there could be one platform. In case the communication is face-to-face, both the speaker and listener should focus on being clear and concise as well as listen to the other person and for instance use non-verbal cues to show understanding.

Which characteristics are the most important in internal communication?

According to the interview results, it can be presumed that clear use of languages is an important characteristic. This means one should avoid using too fancy words and jargon. It is clear that jargon is used in the participants daily tasks but in order that every employee understands what is being communicated, one should use such vocabulary which every one is familiar with. In addition, a person who has a heavy dialect should speak in a clear and coherent way and avoid for instance slang words. These characteristics are also mentioned in *Internal vs External Communication (2022)*, where there are stated some similar characteristics as in the participants' answers. These are namely that communication should be clear, meaning there must not be misunderstandings. Additionally, the information that is communicated should be valid, meaning that the message should consist of relevant information. Both of these refer to the participants' answers, though in different words.

Another important characteristic is being able to use the communication methods in daily tasks, even at the same time. Even though there were differences in who finds verbal communication effective and who finds listening effective, most of the participants find the use of two methods at the same time effective. For instance, when communicating verbally, non-verbal communication is there as a support to make the message more clear. This fact is also mentioned by Vain

(2021). She states that non-verbal communication indeed supports verbal communication.

Moreover, effective information flow between management and employees is an important characteristic. The author defines effective information flow as message that is delivered in a digital or verbal form that also is relevant, clear and delivered on time to every person it is supposed to reach. Nevertheless, both the management and employees must be able to deliver the information in such manner that it can be considered effective information flow, meaning that it is not enough if only employees communicate in this way, it must apply to the management as well. Rauramo (2021) also considers this similarly to the author. According to her, the information should be sufficient at both the management and employee level and the information should flow to one to another level and vice versa.

How does multilingualism appear in the interviewees' daily tasks?

Multilingualism appears as the usage of two or more languages at least weekly. Without exception each participant uses Finnish, Swedish and English variably, meaning some of them use at least two of them daily, the others more seldom. This was also mentioned by Tanner and Lassus (2018: 127) where they mentioned that in fact all the three languages, Finnish, Swedish and English, are the most important in organizational environments in Finland. Additionally, the participants who encounter customers in their daily tasks use Finnish and Swedish every day. Then again, the two other participants who do not encounter customers in their daily tasks, use Finnish and Swedish with colleagues.

As it appears from the results, the usage of English varies. Only one participant (P1) out of four uses English on the daily but it must be kept in mind that the participant's main language in his organization is English. He uses English with foreign colleagues and in other daily tasks such as meetings, reports and presenta-

tions. Nevertheless, the participants whose main language is Finnish, use English far more seldom. For example, one of these participants (P2) never uses English and the rest use it only occasionally or seldom. The answer regarding P2's use of English relates to a fact also Karjalainen and Lehtonen (2005) mentioned. Their study showed that only four people out of 100 participants can succeed in their daily tasks without the use of English. Therefore, P2's answer show the author's study to be accurate when kept in mind she had far less participants.

Thus, these results indicate that firstly, in an organization which main language is English, one clearly uses it on the daily. However, it can be seen the working environment consist of additionally Finnish and Swedish speaking persons since one has to communicate in both of these languages on the daily as well. Secondly, if one's main language in their organization is Finnish, it is obvious they use it every day in both customer encounters and with colleagues. The same applies with the usage of Swedish.

The author considers that a person whose mother tongue is Finnish, uses it on the daily in their occupation whether it is with colleagues, customers or in any other form of communication. Swedish is also used on the daily or several times a week, despite what the main language is. The use of English varies the most but generally, if it is the main language in an organization, one uses it on the daily in a number of tasks and situations. If it is not the main language, one uses it seldom and only in few situations.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Ethical Questions

The researcher of a study must comply with certain ethical principles when conducting research. The author will address ethical principles that are relevant in this type of qualitative research.

The first principle relates to informed consent. This means the researcher needs to provide the participants with necessary information about the research, what the participation to the project requires from them and informing them about anonymity and confidentiality related matters. (Wiles, 2013) The author complied each of these. She explained to each participant individually what her research is about and why she asked these specific participants to participate. In addition, each participant was made aware that they are not obliged to participate and are allowed to withdraw of the research process in case one decides so. The author had asked each participant individually for their interest in participating to her research. Each participant answered affirmatively.

The second principle is related to anonymity and confidentiality. According to Wiles (2013), matters regarding anonymity and confidentiality are fundamental in research. The principle means that the participants must be informed what will happen to the data and how it will be handled and reported. The participants must also be made aware if it will be possible that they can be identified from the results. (Wiles, 2013) The author made clear the interview and interview results are fully anonymous and confidential. The author informed each participant that the interviews will be fully anonymous, meaning that the author will not state the participants' names, company names or job titles. In addition, she does not report the data in a way where it is possible to identify the participant or participants. The author also does not disclose or distribute any participants' interview recordings.

The third principle refers to honesty in the research. This means that the researcher may not fabricate, falsify or misrepresent data. The researcher must report the data and results honestly. (Resnik, 2020) By all means the author considers this too an important principle and complied it. She reported the interview results as they were provided to her. The author did not fabricate any answers or falsify for instance a participant's unfavorable opinion.

The fourth and last principle concerns the nonmaleficence of the research. This can be addressed by asking the question "Is there any possibility that the interview might prompt distressing thoughts or memories?" as Walker et al., (2005: 93) stated. The author's priority was to ensure that the interviews are carried out in a relaxed atmosphere where any of the participants does not feel forced to answer something they do not wish to. The author created the interview questions so that they are as neutral as possible and do not cause any harmful emotions to the participants.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

In a research, the researcher must consider the validity and the reliability of the research. The author addresses both of these concepts to consider how reliable the research is.

Validity

In terms of validity, there are internal and external validity (Wilson, 2017: 208). Both of these terms refer to the quality of a research but have a different meaning. Internal validity refers to if the study investigates what it intends to investigate (Nunan, 1992: 14, as cited in Wilson, 2017: 209). External validity on the other hand refers to the generalizability of the results (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 279, as cited in Wilson, 2017: 208). Another criterion that tells if a research is valid is that the research must be conducted in such environment that does not sway the results. Additionally, a study is considered valid when the researcher

manages to cover all aspects of the concept that is measured and if the interview questions address relevant aspects of the subject. (*Validity in Research*, 2023)

In the interview process, the author paid attention to carefully creating the interview questions so that they are related to the secondary data of the thesis. Because the primary and secondary were closely associated, it can be concluded that this research investigates what it was intended to investigate. She also made sure to ask each interview question in a same manner from each participant, meaning that for instance the questions where she explained a small part of the theory, she explained it in a similar manner to each participant. All the interviews were conducted as semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This ensured that each participant's interview environment was similar and the questions were provided to the participants in a clear way. It should be kept in mind that the author asked the participants follow-up questions that were not listed in the actual interview questions. Therefore, it must be considered not each answer is alike. When it comes to the generalizability of the results, the author considers that these results cannot be generalized. The results appear in these specific four participants' working environments. Thus, it is clear one cannot argue that the same exact results occur in other organizations. In other words, the results are valid only in these four persons' cases.

Reliability

Reliability is defined as the rigor, consistency and trustworthiness of the research. Moreover, knowing if a research is reliable or not, one can ask the question "If someone else did the research would they have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions?" (Denscombe, 2010: 213, as cited in Wilson, 2017: 206) Additionally, a reliable research shows that the researcher is explicit about how the research was conducted (Wilson, 2017: 208).

The author took into consideration the trustworthiness of the primary and secondary data throughout the whole process, meaning that she utilized trustworthy secondary data from several sources and collected the primary data from participants whose answers she knew were trustworthy. Regarding the repeatability and consistency of this research, the author considers that if this study were to be repeated multiple times using the same exact method and similar participants based on their employment, the results would most likely differ each time. The differences could appear because human behaviors and interactions are never the same (Cypress, 2017). Also, no matter how similar the other research's participants working environments are, each of them naturally has own opinions, behaviors and experiences which show in the results. The author also wishes to point out that even though the results show that there are certain issues that occur in multilingual working environments, it does not necessarily mean the issues occur only in those particular environments. If this study were to be conducted in another city in Finland where there is for instance only one language used in those environments, naturally they would have different views, issues and experiences. In other words, the fact that already Vaasa is a bilingual city and the participants are employed in multilingual working environments has a different result than persons who work in monolingual working environments. For the above mentioned reasons, the author considers the study to be reliable when taking into account that a lot of carefulness had been paid attention to throughout the process to ensure the reliability of the research process and the results. However, when taking into account that if this research was repeated, the results would be different and thus this study lacks reliability.

5.3 Summary

The use of several languages in contemporary organizations is a relevant topic when looking at working environments in Finland. Fewer and fewer people can manage without having to use for instance English in their daily work. The au-

thor's aim was to investigate these types of matters. This thesis also focused to investigating certain types of communication within organizations, particularly internal and external communication and matters related to it, such as different methods of communication and digital communication.

This thesis focused on gaining an understanding on how multilingualism impacts an organizational environment in Finland. In order to better obtain the interpretation to this, the author formed thesis objectives. The objectives were to provide the reader with knowledge of contemporary communication among employees, to suggest improvements for challenges in multilingual organizations as well as to analyze the current situations and experiences of employees who work in multilingual organizations in Finland. In addition, the author formed research questions to help the reader understand the research results. The main question was "what are the key issues in internal and external communication in multilingual organizations in Finland?" and the sub-questions were "which characteristics are the most important in internal communication?" and "how does multilingualism appear in the interviewees' daily tasks?"

The theory part and the interview questions were highly related to each other. The theory part, which was the secondary data, consisted of books, articles and websites that the author had carefully chosen and considered them trustworthy sources. The primary data were collected from four interviewees. This research was a qualitative research which included interviews that were conducted as semi-structured interviews.

The results showed that each participant uses two or more languages with varying frequencies. Foreign languages tend to be found difficult when there are complex vocabulary and jargon. Also, language barriers seemed to occur more in external communication than in internal communication. From the four types of communication methods written communication was seen as an effective method and verbal communication too with the support of another method. The

majority of the participants thought digital communication is effective due to its rapidity and smoothness. The participants found Erin Meyer's study overall accurate but with slight differences. Information flow was mainly found as not effective in most cases, except for one who thought it has improved. Most of the participants said effective communication should be short, concise and relevant. Email, Teams or Skype were the most common communication channels used and face-to-face communication was used in varying situations.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

After conducting the interviews and analyzing the results, the author considers there are some suggestions that could be researched further in similar studies.

Firstly, the author suggests that the research could consist of both a questionnaire and an interview. This could be done to better categorize for instance the use and frequency of different languages. As some participants said they use a certain language daily and some weekly, a questionnaire would help to perceive the answers.

Secondly, as this thesis focused on both internal and external communication, the author suggests that one could research for instance only internal communication and thus obtain a deeper understanding of it and issues related to it. Since this thesis investigated them both, it only presents generally the issues related to them. Only one would show the reader more accurate results if the researcher did a thorough research about it.

Lastly, since the results showed that information flow at each level in organizations is a rather large issue, the author suggests that further research could investigate issues regarding information flow for instance in several organizations in Finland to see a broader view of the issue. Therefore, the further study could also focus more on suggesting improvements for the issues.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview questions

1. What is the main language in your organization? How often and in what kind of situations?
2. What other language(s) do you use? How often and in what kind of situations?
3. Do you find it easy or difficult to use a foreign language/languages?
4. When communicating internally, do you have a mutual language?
 - a. Has there been language barriers when team members communicate to each other?
5. What language/languages is/are used when you communicate to external stakeholders?
 - a. Has there been language barriers when communicating to external?
6. If there has been language barriers in your tasks either internally or externally, how have you solved it?
7. The author has written about four different types of communication methods (verbal and non-verbal communication, written communication and listening), which one(s) are the most effective communication methods in your opinion? Why?
8. Do you find digital communication effective? Why or why not?
9. According to Erin Meyer, Finland is situated on a scale close to a low-context society. Do you think this applies in your daily work internally? What about externally?

10. Does the information within your company flow sufficiently at all levels (management to employees & employee to employee)? Please elaborate.
11. Could you explain in your own words what is effective communication?
12. Which communication channel(s) do you use the most often when communicating internally? What about externally?
 - a. Do you find that/those channel(s) effective? Why or why not?
13. In what kind of situations do you use
 - a. F2F communication
 - b. Video conferencing
 - c. Emails
 - d. Phone calls
 - e. Social media?