

Working in four official languages: The perceptions of OGB employees on the role of language in internal communication

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Working in four official languages: The perceptions of Oxfam GB employees on the role of language in internal communication

Objectives of the study

Language in internal communication has been studied from the perspectives of common corporate languages, how language plays a part in mergers, and language effects in headquarter-subsidiary relationships. Language enables communication by providing a tool. This thesis aims at studying how language plays a role in internal communication within a global organization and will examine this from the perspective of employees. The study aims to answer to the following main question: What is the role of language in internal communication in a global organization? The main question is followed by two sub-questions: How do four official languages operate in a global organization? What are the perceptions of employees on language choice and use in internal communication?

Methodology

This study was based on a qualitative approach, using the case-study method for data collection. The case organization was Oxfam GB (OGB), a global non-governmental organization. This research focused on three different regions within the organization and obtained data from all regions to gain a comprehensive view. The regions included in the study were the Latin American & Caribbean region (LAC), the West African region (WAF) and the South African region (SAF). The data was collected through three different means, which were: focus group sessions, interviews and an online language survey. The data consisted of 7 focus groups, 20 interviews and 176 responses to the online survey.

Results of the Study

The research findings indicate that the role of language in internal communication is either an enabler or hinderer of communication. From the results of the study on OGB we can see that the presence of language in internal communication is significant. The employees felt there was a lack of structure and guidelines to the use of languages and that the quality and timeliness of translations needed to be improved. English was mentioned by employees as being the dominant language and they reported that this also created a barrier to employees in communications and career progression. Languages were also mentioned in the sharing of information, indicating that information was not shared if there was no common language. Recommendations were presented for OGB as to how they could better manage the relationship between language and internal communication.

Key Words: Language, internal communication, language diversity, NGO, employee communication, corporate languages, lingua franca, organizational communication, language competence, knowledge communication

Neljällä virallisella kielellä työskenteleminen: kielen rooli sisäisessä viestinnässä Oxfam GB:n työntekijöiden näkökulmasta

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Kielten käyttöä on tutkittu sisäisessä viestinnässä eri lähtökohdista. On tutkittu esim. virallisia yrityskieliä, kielen vaikutusta yrityskauppaan ja sitä miten kieli vaikuttaa pääkonttorin ja tytäryhtiöiden suhteeseen. Kieli on tärkeä työkalu, joka mahdollistaa viestinnän. Tämä pro gradu-tutkielma tutkii kielen roolia sisäisessä viestinnässä globaalissa organisaatiossa ja tarkastelee tätä työntekijöiden perspektiivistä. Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on löytää vastaus päätutkimuskysymykseen: Mikä on kielen rooli sisäisessä viestinnässä globaalissa yrityksessä? Pääkysymystä seuraa kaksi alakysymystä: Miten neljä virallista kieltä toimii globaalissa yrityksessä? Mitkä ovat työntekijöiden näkemykset kielen valitsemisesta ja käytöstä sisäisessä viestinnässä?

Tutkimusmenetelmät

Tämä tutkimus on pääasiassa kvalitatiivinen ja käyttää case-tutkimus metodia aineiston keruuseen. Tutkimusorganisaatio oli Oxfam GB (OGB), joka on globaali hyväntekeväisyysjärjestö. Tämä tutkimus kohdistui kolmeen eri alueeseen organisaation sisällä ja tietoa kerättiin näistä eri alueista, jotta tutkimus kohteesta saataisiin monipuolinen kuva. Nämä alueet olivat Latinalaisen Amerikan ja Karibian alue (LAC), Länsi-Afrikan alue (WAF) ja Etelä-Afrikan alue (SAF). Aineisto kerättiin kolmen eri menetelmän avulla: ryhmähaastattelut, yksilöhaastattelut ja nettikyselylomake. Aineisto sisälsi seitsemän ryhmähaastattelua, kaksikymmentä individuaalista haastattelua ja 176 vastausta nettikyselyyn.

Tutkimuksen tulokset

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat että kieli sisäisessä viestinnässä joko mahdollistaa tai estää viestinnän. Tutkimuksen perusteella selvisi että kielen merkitys OGB:n sisäisessä viestinnässä on tärkeä. Työntekijät olivat sitä mieltä, että organisaatiossa puuttui tietty ohjaus ja linjaus siitä, miten eri kieliä pitää käyttää ja että käännösten laatua ja aikataulutusta pitää parantaa. Työntekijöiden mielestä englanti oli dominoiva kieli organisaatiossa ja sitä kautta siitä tuli myös este työntekijöiden viestintään ja uramahdollisuuksiin. Kielet myös mainittiin tiedon jakamisessa, koska työntekijöiden mielestä tietoa ei saatu jaettua jos ei ollut yhteistä kieltä käytössä. Tutkimuksen pohjalta tehtiin suosituksia OGB:lle, jotta organisaation pystyisi paremmin työskentelemään eri kielillä ja parantamaan kielen asemaa sisäisessä viestinnässä.

Avainsanat: Sisäinen viestintä, kielellinen monimuotoisuus, hyväntekeväisyysjärjestö, työntekijöiden viestintä, viralliset kielet, yrityskielet, lingua franca, yritysviestintä, kielen osaaminen

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The role of language in internal communication

Language and communication are important in the world of organizations as they are becoming more multinational and multilingual. Thompson (2003) states that “*communication is the basic feature of social life, and language is a major component of it*”. In other words, language enables communication to take place providing the tool to communicate with. Communication within organizations has received increased attention as organizations are realizing the effect that communication can have on organizational success. Communication has been identified as an essential part of an organization’s effectiveness as internal communication enhances knowledge sharing (Burgess, 2005; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1988, Ghoshal, Korine & Szulanski, 1994). Communication is possible through a shared language, which is why language is a significant factor in international communication situations (Harzing & Feely, 2008).

Communication is related to the study of language because, as Reeves and Wright (1996) explain, communication issues may present themselves because of language issues, but one cannot understand these issues without thoroughly investigating an organization’s internal and external communication. In addition language can have an effect on the relationships between headquarters and subsidiaries (Harzing & Feely, 2008), the success of cross-cultural work teams (Von Glinow, Shapiro & Brett, 2004), and knowledge sharing within a global organization (Welch & Welch, 2007). Additionally Cameron (2005) states that language is no longer invisible and organizations are becoming more aware of the value of language.

Feely and Harzing (2003) indicate that in order for companies to be able to coordinate their “geographically, culturally, and linguistically diverse” operations, they need to efficiently be able to organize their internal and external communications. Charles (2007) further explains that organizations need to understand the importance of language in internal and

external communications and develop tools such as language policies and strategies to assist in these issues. Marschan, Welch and Welch (1997) argue that foreign languages have long been seen as a vital factor in international business, because languages enable people to communicate with one another. However, language due to the minimal amount of studies on the topic, it has seemed to be overlooked in the past and has recently become of importance in business due to the increasing number of organizations with multinational staff. There have been language studies related to language policies, corporate languages and language standardization; however there is a lack of studies in relation to multinational corporations working in multilingual environments (Piekkari & Zander 2005.) The present study is particularly relevant because of the multinational and multilingual world that we currently live and work in. People of all cultures who speak different languages are a common sight in most workplaces, therefore a study of how multiple languages work within a workplace is significant to both international business and communication research.

Past research of language use within global organizations has been quite minimal; however, there have been a few studies that have identified the importance of language in business communication (see Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, & Piekkari, 2006; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Marschan et al., 1997; Marshcan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999a, 1999b; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari & Säntti, 2005; Welch, Welch & Piekkari, 2005). These studies have looked at the issue of having a common corporate language, how language plays a part in mergers and the general issue of how language impacts communication within an organization. Most other studies have dealt with communications within an organization and only a few mention the issue of language paying more attention to cultural issues or diversity (see Kalla, 2006; Irrman, 2006; Vuckovic, 2008; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Puck, Rygl & Kittler, 2006; Nikko, 2009). Language has also been examined as a barrier to headquarter-subsidiary relationships by Harzing and Feely (2008), who focused more on the impact of language on management. Kalla (2006) studied internal communications in the multinational corporation (MNC) context and explained how previous studies have dealt with internal

communications from different aspects, such as change management or communication audits. Other researchers, such as Chen, Geluykens and Choi, (2006) studied the importance of language in global teams from a linguistic perspective, examining how language is spoken, such as directly or indirectly, versus the use of different languages. The topic of corporate languages has been studied only by some researchers (Fredriksson et al., 2006; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), examining the choice of a corporate language and the actual language use within an organization.

Most internal communication literature (see Smith & Mounter, 2005; Szukala & O’Conor, 2001; Farrant, 2003; Holtz, 2003) discuss the issues of internal communication and its effectiveness. A few studies mention the aspect of culture in communication, but very little attention has been paid to the effect of language on communication and the role that language plays in internal communication. No previous studies of language in internal or external communication within NGO’s was found; however, as stated by Cornelissen (2008), communication activities are important in private and public organizations, which seems to indirectly infer that it would be important in third sector organizations as well. In addition it can be inferred that even if no communication studies have been conducted within an NGO environment, since communication is important in all sectors, the results of this study can be analyzed according to the theory formulated for private sector studies.

The effects of language diversity in a multinational corporation has been studied by Fredriksson (2005), whose research shows how previous studies about language diversity have been about companies from smaller language groups internationalizing, whereas her study concentrated on a company originating from a larger language group, German. The research of the present thesis is about a mainly Anglophone organization branching out to other countries and then incorporating four official languages. Fredrikssons’ (2005) study focused on a private sector industry, but the results in relation to languages used can be compared to the findings of this thesis, which was conducted in the third or non-profit sector.

Welch et al., 2005 argue that language is vital for international management and influences the success of intercultural communication, negotiations, knowledge sharing, headquarter-subsubsidiary relationships and the overall functioning of a multinational organization. Language seems to be an issue of discussion in relation to international management and communication; however, there seems to be a lack of a comprehensive body of research on the topic of the role of language in organizational communication. Previous studies demonstrate different aspects of language and provide a good background analysis into the topic.

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of language in communication and provide new insight into this neglected area of research. The aspects studied in this thesis are the communications that take place within an organization, including communication from headquarters to subsidiaries, subsidiaries to headquarters and between and in subsidiaries. Furthermore, the internal communication of an organization will be studied from the perspective of language use and choice.

1.2 Case organization

The case organization Oxfam GB (OGB) is an international non-governmental organization (INGO) dedicated to assisting countries around the world to reduce poverty and suffering by providing different types of aid (About us, n.d.). It was founded in Oxford, England in May 1942, with the original name the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief and began by raising funds to assist others by opening up charity shops in the United Kingdom (History of Oxfam International, n.d.). OGB has since become a water and sanitation developmental organization, providing water, sanitation and health assistance to different parts of the world (Employee intranet, n.d.). OGB has become a global organization operating in over 70 countries around the world and campaigns for change, does developmental work and is involved in providing assistance in emergency situations (About us, n.d.). OGB is registered as a charity in England, Wales and Scotland and is part of Oxfam International, an association of 13 different Oxfam's' (History of Oxfam International, n.d.). Oxfam

International was formed in 1995 because the different Oxfam's' (located in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Quebec, Spain, France, Germany and the USA) involved felt they could have more of an impact as a joint force than working independently (History of Oxfam International, n.d.). Oxfam International (OI) works as a joint association of all the Oxfam's, and the OI board includes representation of each Oxfam that meet annually to discuss the OI strategy (History of Oxfam International, n.d.).

The case organization OGB was found as they were seeking a Master's thesis student to conduct a language diversity project for them. OGB have four official languages and they were interested in studying how languages operate within their organization and the issues their multiple language approach may be causing. The language diversity project for OGB consisted of examining what languages are used by employees and how languages may have an effect on career development and/or progression. In addition to the language diversity project conducted for OGB, the research consisted of additional aspects that allowed for the development of this thesis. In this thesis, OGB will be investigated as an organization in general, and its NGO status will not specifically be emphasized.

1.3 Research Objective and Questions

The overall goal of this thesis is to examine the role of language in internal communication within a global organization from the perspective of OGB employees. This includes examining the functioning of language within a multilingual work environment, analyzing what languages the employees use at work and how languages are involved with internal communication. In addition the study aims to examine how language and communication function within a global organization and how an organization operates with four official languages. This thesis focuses on the perspective that employees have on the use of language in internal communications in formal and informal communication. This study focuses on one main research question with two sub-questions, all of which are shown below.

What is the role of language in internal communications in a global organization?

- How do four official languages operate in a global organization?
- What are the perceptions of employees on language choice and use in internal communication?

To sum up, the study will examine the overall role of language in internal communications, focusing on how four corporate languages operate and finding out about the perceptions of employees on language and communication.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis will begin by a thorough investigation into languages and communication within organizations. Previous literature and research will be looked at and the main points identified in the following chapter. At the end of the Literature Review, the theoretical framework for the study will be introduced. This chapter will be followed by chapter three, explaining the Methodology. Then the report will continue with the fourth chapter, which explains the findings of the study. The Findings chapter will be succeeded by the Discussion and Recommendations, which will further detail the findings and the recommendations. The report will be ended with the sixth chapter, the Conclusion, which will bring together the ideas of the report.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of an investigation into three phenomena related to language use in multinational organizations; i.e. organizational communication, language and diversity. This study will focus on internal communication and the impact of language on such communication. In this thesis, internal communication refers to all the communications that occur within an organization in its internal environment. The overall aim of this chapter is to link the way communications and languages interact within an organization and thus provide a basis for this study.

The literature investigated relates to previous academic research conducted on communications and language, mostly in the context of private industry organizations. The present case organization is a non-governmental organization; however, since the study examines employee perspectives it is assumed that the type of the organization does not significantly affect the results obtained. Therefore, the issue of the organization being a non-governmental body is not specifically addressed.

The chapter begins with an account of organizational communication in section 2.1, which is then followed by section 2.2 outlining the matter of language and communication, ending with section 2.3 describing organizational diversity. The literature review will lead to developing a theoretical framework for the research which will then be used to assist in the analysis of the empirical findings.

2.1 Organizational Communication

This section will discuss views of communication within an organization. O'Rourke (2010) defines organizational communication as the different communication practices that take place between people within an organizational setting. This study examines organizational communication, focusing on communication that occurs internally within an organization, described by Bovée and Thill (2001) as being all the communication practices that occur from headquarters to subsidiaries, subsidiaries to headquarters and between and within subsidiaries. This research only concentrates on internal communication, excluding external communication, which is communication to and from the organization to its external

environment, such as customers or shareholders (Bové & Thill, 2001). The subsections 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 present the different aspects of communication within an organization, starting with internal communications and ending with knowledge communication.

2.1.1 Internal communication

There are various possible approaches towards communication in relation to organizations and business. Communication can be divided into organizational, corporate, business, or managerial communication, with each discipline surfacing at different times during the 1900's (Reinsch, 1996; Cheney, 2007; Argenti, 1996). Reinsch (1996) explained how it would seem that business communication emerged first in the early 1900's as the right way to write and speak in business. Cheney (2007) found that organizational communication began in the mid 1900's because of an enhanced interest in how people in organizations were communicating with one another and with the media. Managerial communication seems to have developed from business and organizational communication, as a combination of the skills needed to conduct communications with employees, as indicated by Smeltzer, Glab and Golen (1983). Argenti (1996) stated that corporate communications emerged as the PR (Public relations) function to help firms deal with external and internal messages, whether formal or informal. Communication was first studied within the private sector businesses and it was mostly researched through managers in senior level positions (Cheney, 2007). Business communication focuses more on actual communication skills needed to communicate effectively (Argenti, 1996) such as writing emails and memos (Stuart, Sarow & Stuart, 2007). Organizational communication has its basis in organizational behavior and/or management, instead of in communication studies, which makes it encompass all communications within an organization from a behavioral perspective (Argenti, 1996). Internal communication could be viewed as situated in all these disciplines, as it functions within an organization (organizational communication), it can be internal corporate messages (corporate communication), it involves communication skills (business communication) and it involves employees, who can also be managers (management communication).

Welch and Jackson (2005) explain how there are many different approaches to internal communication and that some refrain from defining what internal communication is as it can involve so many different components. Smith (2008) proposes that internal communication can also be said to be staff communication or employee relations. On the other hand Cornelissen (2008) states that internal communication is a part of the corporate communication function, defining it as being “communication with employees internally within the organization”, and adding that due to modern technology the definition has changed, meaning that internal messages may be transmitted by employees to external sources. Concurring with Cornelissen (2008), Welch and Jackson (2005) argue that the division between external and internal communications has become unclear as, e.g. internal emails can be forwarded to external sources, making internal communication external. For the purposes of this thesis the term internal communication will refer to all formal and informal communications that are transmitted within the organization.

Communication seems to have recently become increasingly important in the operations of an organization and most organizations now have implemented corporate communications functions. Tourish and Hargie (2004) propose that organizational communication has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the organization, as it enables an organization to share information and knowledge. Clampitt and Downs (1993) further propose that effective communication can directly benefit an organization by, enhancing productivity, increasing employee satisfaction, augmenting innovation and reducing costs. These propositions would seem to indicate that communication is an important factor of organizational effectiveness, as it has a direct effect on different areas of business. Andrews and Baird (2005) conclude that internal communication is important because an organization will only prevail if their internal communication is efficient and competent. Furthermore, Cornelissen (2008) identifies that communication between managers and subordinates, and communication from the organization to employees are both important areas necessary for an organization to be effective and to ensure employees remain motivated.

Internal communication has been studied previously in relation to multinational corporations, or MNCs. An MNC is an organization that functions in different countries, which is a similar structure to the case organization Oxfam GB (OGB) studied in this research. It does not work in the private sector as MNC's do, but it does work in different countries and across boundaries. The internal communication of an MNC takes place in different languages and in different countries (Fredriksson et al., 2006), which is similar to the internal communication of OGB. Fredriksson et al., (2006) further mention that it is important to examine the various languages within an organization in order to understand the use of a common language.

Kalla (2005) developed a framework for internal communications that combines the different areas of communication. The framework indicates how business communication, organizational communication, corporate communication and management communication are connected to one another and form an integrated function. This perspective was developed to provide a way to view internal communications as an interconnected function and through this provide organizations with the better possibility of sharing knowledge and having it benefit the organization (Kalla, 2005). The framework includes all the formal and informal communication processes that take place within an organization, as well as the communication competences of employees and managers (Kalla, 2005). Integrated internal communication as presented in Figure 1, provides the framework for what aspects of communications will be viewed in this study in relation to language. All four different approaches are intertwined in this framework and studied in this thesis in combination with language use.

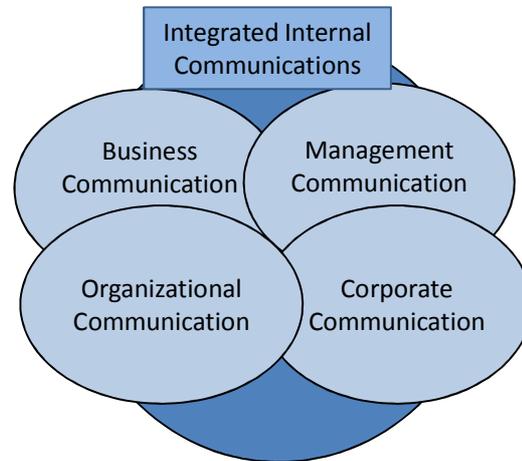


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for integrated internal communications, Kalla (2005, p 306)

There are different groups involved in internal communications activities within an organization and they involve employees of all different levels. As identified by Welch and Jackson (2005), the different groups are: 1) Internal line management communication, 2) Internal team peer communication, 3) Internal project peer communication and 4) Internal corporate communication. Internal line management communication is two-way communication between employees and their managers, internal team peer communication is two-way communication between employees, internal project peer communication is two-way communication between employees involved in a project and internal corporate communication is mostly one-way communication from top management to all employees (Welch & Jackson, 2005). Internal line management communication as defined by Welch and Jackson (2005) can be found in different levels throughout an organization, as most employees have a line manager, even if they are managers themselves. Internal team peer communication includes communications between employees, possibly also including managers, but occurring in a team or group setting (Welch & Jackson, 2005). This shows that the type of communication that is conducted depends on the groups involved. Smith (2008) mentions that the audiences involved in internal communication are front-line staff, line managers, middle and senior managers, and board/directors. Furthermore Smith (2008)

points out that in the environment of an NGO, the internal audience of an organization is different as in addition to employees there are trustees/volunteers/members. In this thesis the internal communication audience includes only the employees of OGB, as they were the only ones to be interviewed and no trustees/volunteers/members were involved.

2.1.2 Formal communication

Internal communication includes parts of corporate communication, which as defined by Argenti and Forman (2002) is the formal communication that takes place externally and internally within an organization, such as corporate press releases to its external audience or memos to staff. Corporate communication at the macro level is communication targeted at external audiences and at the micro level those that are internal communications to staff (Argenti & Forman, 2002). Furthermore Bovée and Thill (2001) explain internal formal communications as the official messages that are sent within an organization and usually from the headquarters or senior management to the rest of the organization. Welch and Jackson (2005) expand on the previous definitions of internal formal communication, as internal corporate communication and it being a way for an organization to increase employee commitment to the organization, for employees to feel a sense of being included, and to be aware of the issues and goals of the organization. According to Argenti and Forman (2002), only in the past five years have organizations begun to see the importance of their employees and the correlation between employees and a successful business. The more relevant and important information that is provided to employees, the more they are likely to be committed to the organization and working productively (Argenti & Forman, 2002).

In a multinational setting, formal communication can be seen as the communication between headquarters and subsidiaries (Bovée & Thill, 2001). Harzing and Feely (2008) explain how language can have an impact on the relationship between headquarters and subsidiaries, because of the different cultures and languages involved. The relationship between headquarters and their subsidiaries in relation to language and communication has been outlined by Harzing and Feely (2008) to consist of the following attributes:

- Subsidiaries usually speak the language of the headquarters as a foreign language, causing employees at the subsidiaries to feel uncomfortable when communicating because they may not be proficient in that language
- Communications between headquarter management teams and subsidiary management teams can be challenging due to differences in language
- Lines of communication can be interfered with, when a subsidiary employee may be a national of the headquarter country and take over communications for other subsidiary employees
- When non-English speaking companies choose English as their corporate language, it might be the headquarters that have to work in a foreign language
- The relationship between headquarters and subsidiary can include different views on who has the control to make decisions, such as which languages to use

These different aspects show the complex relationship between headquarters and subsidiaries, due to the multitude of nationalities and languages that exist and these can interfere with internal communications. From this it can be seen that language is a factor to communicating effectively, as not only is it the different languages that exist but also the attitudes toward the use of languages. Language was studied in horizontal communication at Kone Elevators by Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002), who concluded that the communication issues at the company stemmed from a lack of a common language and inability to completely understand colleagues due to low levels of language competences. In other words, problems in communicating with other people may not be due to language competence but not being able to fully understand one another or share information.

2.1.3 Informal communication

Differing from formal communication, informal communication is hard to study but can be important for an organization since it involves all other communication beyond formal communication that takes place between employees and within the organization (Andrews & Baird, 2005). Bovée and Thill (2001) describe informal communication as the

conversations employees may have with colleagues during the work day in casual settings, such as coffee breaks. In addition Stuart et al. (2007), state that informal messages can also be communicated via emails or over the phone. Therefore, informal communications can be verbal and written, although mostly occur orally as unplanned communications between employees (Andrews & Baird, 2005). Informal communications can have detrimental impacts on organizations if inaccurate information is spread, which can only be combated by efficient and informative formal internal communication (Andrews & Baird, 2005). This thesis will not focus on informal communication as it is harder to study, but will include some aspects of informal communication that were mentioned during the process of researching the internal communications of OGB.

2.1.4 Channels of communication

Communication in the past has been seen as a simple path going from communicator to the receiver of the communication; however further research has determined that communication is a circular process where the communicator and receiver take turns communicating and receiving (Andrews & Baird, 2005). Several models of communication have been developed to illustrate how communication works (Szukala & O’Conor, 2001, p 99, Stuart et al., 2007, p 15). Szukala and O’Conor (2001) explain that the traditional model of communication includes a sender, receiver, message, noise and feedback. This model was further developed by Stuart et al. (2007) and named the transactional communication model (Figure 2) which in addition to the above mentioned aspects includes the channel of communication and the context in which the communication takes place. Both models indicate how messages are sent from sender to receiver, and feedback sent from receiver to sender. The process of communication in itself is a complicated process and becomes more complicated when language and culture are added into the mix. According to Stuart et al. (2007) the effectiveness of a message depends on whether the receiver receives the message in the way the sender intended it to be received. The meaning of a message can be altered if the sender and receiver have different cultures, backgrounds, religions and so on,

which interfere with the perception of the message and if both do not share a common language, it is harder for the message to be received (Stuart et al., 2007).

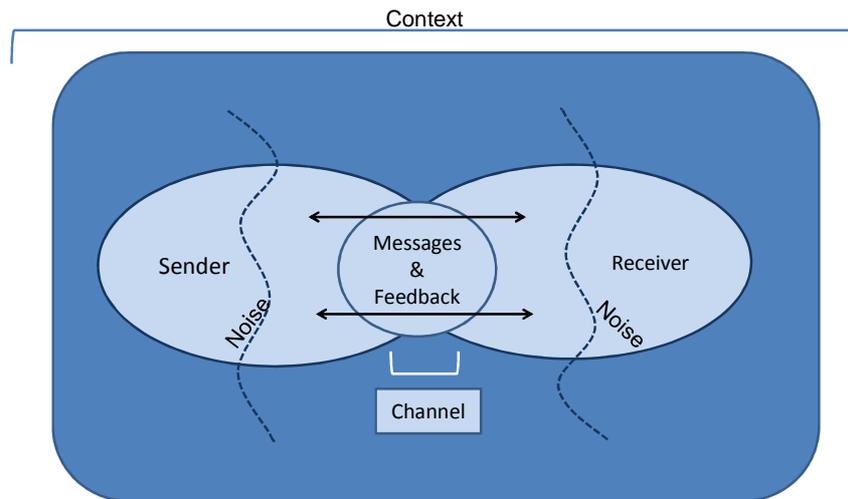


Figure 2: Transactional communication model, Stuart et al., 2007, p. 15

There are many different internal communication channels and they can either be formal or informal. As stated by Stuart et al. (2007) formal verbal communication channels can be: teleconferencing, presentations or speeches and informal verbal communication can be: face-to-face, company socials, or phone conversations. Formal written communication channels can be: reports, letters, memos, newsletters and policy handbooks and informal written communication can be: emails, notes, memos or intranet. However it would seem that the status of the formality of the channel does not always correlate with the formality of the communication, as for example face-to-face communication can be formal or informal communication. One can conclude that both formal and informal channels can be used for both formal and informal communication, and that the formality of the channel of communication mainly indicates whether the channel is used more for formal business use

or everyday business use. In this thesis these different communication channels will be examined through which languages are used. The formality of communication is not specifically studied, as the thesis will concentrate on all written and verbal communication that occurs within the organization.

O’Kane, Hargie and Tourish (2004) explain how technology has allowed organizations to communicate more with their internal and external stakeholders via electronic messages, which decreases the amount of time of sending messages and information being transmitted, as well as the cost of communication. Cornelissen (2008) identifies internal communication in relation to technology as being divided into two areas: 1) management communication; and 2) corporate information and communication systems. These are defined as: 1) management communication being communication between employees and their managers and 2) corporate information and communication systems as the messages sent from organization to all employees (Cornelissen, 2008). Management communication is often face-to-face, although email is also used, whereas corporate information is often transmitted via electronic means, be it email or intranet (Cornelissen, 2008).

Email is a very popular channel of communication that is used for formal and informal communications (Stuart et al., 2007) and people are now relying more on electronic communication than traditional methods such as telephone calls (O’Kane et al., 2004). O’Kane et al. (2004) state that email may be the faster way to communicate, but also communication that can be misunderstood the easiest due to it being informal most of the time and written in a shorter time frame. In addition to email, the intranet has become more widely used for internal communication and becoming the access point of information versus printed company material (O’Kane et al., 2004). Intranets can be effective, as they provide a wide amount of easily accessible information. The intranet allows for an increased amount of internal communication, as a space for anyone within the organization to obtain information and communicate with others; however, the intranet works the best when it is supervised so that information is provided when needed and that it is accurate (O’Kane et al., 2004).

2.1.5 Knowledge communication

Knowledge sharing can be seen as an aspect of internal communication, as stated by Andrews and Baird (2005), as it is sharing knowledge between employees within an organization. Knowledge sharing and information sharing in the context of this thesis will be considered to mean the same thing, as information can be knowledge and vice versa. Knowledge management is being used as a strategy to manage and exchange knowledge within an organization and enhance communication (Andrews & Baird, 2005) and to manage an organization's competence (Zorn & Taylor, 2004). According to Zorn and Taylor (2004) knowledge management as a term has gained significant attention in the past 10 years due to the fact that organizations are realizing that the expertise of their employees is the key to the success of their organization, as they are the ones that hold the knowledge. From the perspective of organizational communication, knowledge management is seen as the intangible knowledge that employees have that allows them to perform and develop their work (Zorn & Taylor, 2004).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) have gained prestige for defining knowledge as being either explicit or tacit, where explicit knowledge is information that can be formalized and tacit is more what a person knows and their personal skills. Furthermore, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) divide tacit knowledge into two dimensions, technical and cognitive. The technical dimension includes a person's "know-how", so the skills a person has accumulated through experience and the cognitive dimension includes how a person perceives reality and the future (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Organizational knowledge is what is created when a person's tacit knowledge is transformed into words to be communicated to others and cannot be done without a shared language that enables communication and knowledge sharing. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) claim that an organization that is able to share their tacit information internally will be at an advantage compared to others, because they are able to learn from each other and share experiences.

The transfer of knowledge occurs through language and communication, and is said to be transferred when received by someone who makes that knowledge explicit (Welch &

Welch, 2008). Knowledge is transferred through communication; therefore the process that knowledge transfer takes is shown by Welch & Welch (2008) in Figure 3, by using a basic model of communication with the aspect of knowledge included. The model shows how language is used to form the message or knowledge and then sent to the receiver who uses language to decode the information and modify it into tacit knowledge. Then the receiver sends feedback back to sender, through the use of language which then reaches the sender. This model shows how languages are an important factor in knowledge transfer.

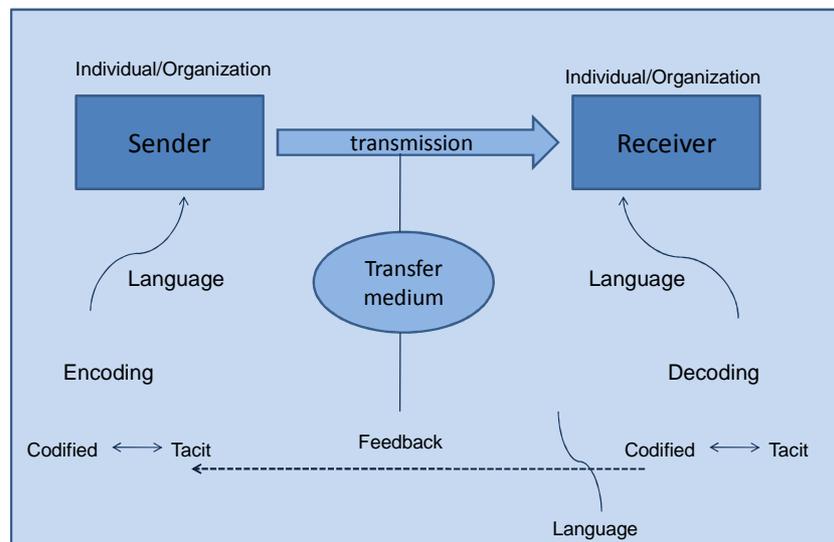


Figure 3: International knowledge transfer model, Welch & Welch, 2008, p. 344

Knowledge management within a global organization is difficult but important and communication is the key to sharing information (Zorn & Taylor, 2004). Knowledge sharing is important for organizations to exchange ideas and information and is made easier if the language is shared. If there is no common language, then the sharing of information becomes difficult or non-existent (Piekkari et al., 2005). An organization could be repeating the same things in different parts of the world, without any knowledge of the other due to

the lack of communication as a result of not having a shared language. Some companies try to facilitate knowledge sharing by having global teams, but this requires employees to possess language skills in order to be able to communicate (Piekkari et al., 2005).

In conclusion, section 2.1 introduced the different aspects of communication in connection to an organization. Organizational communication can be seen as the umbrella term to identify all the internal and external communications that occur in an organization. Internal communication can then be used as the term to define specifically the communication activities that occur within an organization. Communication can be defined in the terms of being formal or informal and can be further defined through channels used for communication. Finally, knowledge communication within an organization is knowledge shared through communication. All these approaches to communication will be addressed in this study in relation to language, which will be the focus of the following section.

2.2 Language and Communication

Language and communication are closely related because language allows one to communicate. This section will examine the relationship between language and communication by investigating the role of corporate languages in general and of English as a lingua franca in particular. Charles (2007) sees language as the essence of communication; however, language can also be the catalyst of problems in effective communication. According to Reeves and Wright (1996), language is often the area that is overlooked within organizational communication, whereas it should be recognized as an important aspect since it allows for communication to take place. Welch et al. (2005), further identify that communication may be prevented from flowing within an organization due to the lack of a common language and messages may be translated inaccurately, causing misinformation.

Reeves and Wright (1996) explain how communication and language are important when we share a common language and even more important when we don't. In addition, communicating in one's mother tongue often makes a person forget the importance of language during communications (Reeves & Wright, 1996), because language comes as

second nature, so one often does not think about its use. Miscommunication issues may present themselves between people speaking the same language, such as an English native speaker and an English non-native speaker, as both may speak the same language but have different meanings for what they intend to say (Reeves & Wright, 1996). However, miscommunications may even arise within two speakers of the same mother tongue, e.g. because they might have different cultural backgrounds (Reeves & Wright, 1996).

A study of language in MNC communications was conducted by Marschan-Piekkari et al., (1999b), at a Finnish company Kone, where 57% of the people interviewed indicated that they felt language was a barrier to communication. Some employees at lower levels in the organization saw it also as a facilitator, allowing those who knew the corporate language to understand communications, but at the same time excluding others who did not understand the language (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b). The interviewees at Kone explained how employees working in lower levels could not be communicated with because of a lack of a shared language, which prevented communication between units within Kone (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b). Marschan et al., (1997) identified how some employees became so called “language nodes”, acting outside of their job description by translating for colleagues or acting as interpreters. Such “language nodes” can assist in translations and be temporary, but not become permanent solutions for effective communication (Marschan et al., 1997).

2.2.1 Corporate language

It would seem that a shared language is important in trying to enable communications. A shared language in the context of an organization is often identified as being the corporate or official language. Furthermore, a corporate language is the language chosen to be used in the external and internal communications of an organization. Language becomes an issue when there are multiple languages operating within an organization, which usually makes organizations, decide on a corporate language to improve communications (Feely & Harzing, 2003) and enable knowledge sharing (Welch & Welch, 2008). Sørensen (2005) as cited in Fredriksson et al., (2006) states that a common corporate language is “an

administrative managerial tool” which has been decided upon by the board of directors and top management of an MNC to assist in operations.

Previous research of corporate languages within MNC’s has been either through the perspective of management or communications. Management research has studied the use of language in international management situations and the effect a common language has on employees, headquarter-subsidary relationships and information sharing (see Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). International business communication studies have focused on the use of English in multinational settings as a lingua franca and how this impacts internal communication (Kankaanranta, 2006; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Nickerson, 2005).

Macleane (2006) states that as companies have moved to becoming more international and global, most non-English speaking companies have decided on English as the common corporate language, as it has been seen as the neutral language. Furthermore, Maclean (2006) explains how English is often chosen as the corporate language because choosing one common language makes it easier to operate and English is the predominant language in international business communications. Often organizations fail to acknowledge the possibility of having multiple corporate languages as was the case with the merger of a Nordic company Nordea. Maclean (2006) argues that Nordea failed to investigate the possibility of having a multilingual organization and adopted one shared corporate language, whereas they could have maximized the potential multilingual staff, instead of making people work in only one language. In most cases it is seen easier to adopt one common language, than to explore the possibility of having a bi- or multilingual organization (Macleane, 2006). In most cases it is not known how organizations decide on a corporate language, it might be chosen formally or it can merely be the language that is used more widely (Marschan et al., 1999a). Therefore, choosing one corporate language seems to be the easier route, but it may not be the most effective or successful option.

Welch et al. (2005) describe how some organizations have chosen more than one corporate language to try to accommodate their multilingual staff and have more flexibility in the use

of languages. As explained by Lester (1994), Nestle, for example chose French and English as their official languages, but allowed employees to use other languages if that suited their communications better. Another example of a multiple language organization was mentioned by Fidrmuc (2007) as being the European Union (EU), which in 2006 had 20 official languages. In 2009 the number has risen to 23 official languages (Languages and Europe, n.d). The EU chooses its languages according to the requests of its member states. The EU is multilingual, because it believes that by using the language of the people it communicates to, it makes the organization more authentic and sincere (Languages and Europe, n.d). The Treaty of Lisbon 2007 states that the EU will “*respect its rich culture and linguistic diversity*” (Languages and Europe, n.d), which means that the EU appreciates diversity and tries to have a truly multicultural and multilingual society. Fidrmuc (2007), however, points out how that the main issue with a multilingual policy are the high costs that come along with it. Additionally Fidrmuc (2007) claims that in order to communicate effectively in a multilingual environment there has to be some form of standardization of communications, whether it is choosing a common language to communicate in or using two or more languages as the chosen languages to communicate in. If an organization chooses to have two or more languages operating equally, it means an increase in costs due to translations and verbal interpretation and delays in the timeliness of translations (Fidrmuc, 2007). The timeliness of translations has caused problems for the EU in delaying some important reforms. Fidrmuc (2007) further states that some issues could be avoided if the EU chose, e.g. three languages as the official languages, instead of having 23 official languages. As can be seen the EU is an example of an organization that is trying to be linguistically diverse but in reality may not be functioning as effectively as it could be due to the multitude of languages.

Whether one or multiple corporate languages are chosen, a corporate language does have several benefits. Feely and Harzing (2003) identify the benefits of having one corporate language as: formal reporting, documents, policies and technical systems are conducted in one language, easier possibility for more internal communications within the organization and making employees within the organization to feel more togetherness. A common

corporate language can make internal and external communications more fluid and less complicated; however, even though an official language can be chosen, it does not mean it is always the language used in practice as discovered by Marshcan-Piekkari et al. (1999a). At Kone, English was chosen as the corporate language, but employees still used the language of the country they worked in (Marshcan-Piekkari et al. 1999a). Similar findings were presented by Louhiala-Salminen (2002) with the case of Nordea in Finland, where the chosen language eventually became English but employees still communicated in the language of the country they were in. Furthermore Marschan-Piekkari et al., (1999a) state that a corporate language should be one that employees know, not just chosen because of its knowledge internationally. Similarly to the previous findings mentioned above, Fredriksson et al., (2006) argue that many organizations see English as a good common language because it is the lingua franca of the business world; however, deciding on English as a common language does not mean that it will work in practice.

Andersen and Rasmussen (2004), found that the case company in their studies had chosen English as the corporate language, but the communication between headquarters and their subsidiary in France was still conducted in French, meaning that French was a skill that was needed. This also impacted the relationship between the two, because not everyone spoke French or English, so only a few people were able to conduct communications (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004). The same phenomenon was noticed by Fredriksson et al., (2006) in a study of Siemens, where English was the official corporate language but other languages operated alongside depending on the subsidiary in question. At the German headquarters employees had a common misconception that the corporate language of Siemens was both German and English (Fredriksson et al., 2006). Additionally employees in Finland knew the corporate language was English, but said that the headquarters in Germany operated in German (Fredriksson et al., 2006). This shows that different languages can operate and employees may not be completely aware of what the status of languages is.

Piekkari et al. (2005) showed how employees may feel the pressure to know the chosen corporate language in order to be able to progress within the company and be able to

participate in meetings and trainings. Employees may also not have the possibility of progressing in their career if they do not speak the corporate language, as was the case with an Australian subsidiary of a Greek company, whose official language was Greek and therefore the employees of the subsidiary could not attain top management positions without knowledge of Greek (Welch et al., 2005). Employees at Kone also experienced this when English was chosen as the corporate language, which sent an unintended message that one would need to know English in order to attain a high position within the company (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). Therefore, in some cases choosing a corporate language may cause other issues within an organization and not be the solution to effective communication.

Luo and Shenkar (2006) mention that when an MNC becomes global, having units in different countries, it usually means that having one language in operation becomes difficult. Some MNC's feel the pressure to have more than one language in operation; therefore, some adopt a strategy of using certain languages in certain areas (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). Some organizations may have multiple languages working within them, but seldom do many have more than one or two corporate languages. Luo and Shenkar (2006) explain how the choice and use of language within a global organization has an impact on the amount of knowledge shared as well as who is able to understand the knowledge shared. Furthermore, a chosen language for formal communications allows the organization to be in control of communications but also lessens the access of others to that information if they are not proficient in that language (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). In addition, Luo and Shenkar (2006) point out that an organization is better equipped to understand the different countries they work in, if they have knowledge of the local language and through that are able to gain the trust of local nationalities. This shows the importance that language diversity has on the operations of an organization in a multinational setting.

2.2.2 English as a lingua franca

Lingua franca is a language that is chosen to be used as a means of communication between people who do not share the same language (Holmes, 1992). This means that the speakers

of a lingua franca are mostly non-native speakers of that language, using it as a means of communicating (Knapp, 2002). As presented by Holmes (1992) in the past the chosen lingua franca was Latin and within the past 20 years in the business context it has become English. English is often chosen as the lingua franca in MNC's because they work across different countries and English may be the more commonly shared language as opposed to the language of the country the headquarters is in (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). For example, in many Nordic countries with company mergers, English has been chosen as the corporate language as a shared, neutral language (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). As Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999a) explain, English is seen as the neutral language, as it is the most commonly shared language; however, some investigations indicate that in reality English may not actually be the commonly shared language and many languages may be used alongside English. On the other hand Vollstedt (2002), states how the official language of an organization may not be English, but that English is still used as the lingua franca in internal communications, due to the increased amount of people being proficient in English. English has gained significant status as the lingua franca of the business world, due to businesses becoming more international and requiring a lingua franca for communication.

Louhiala-Salminen et al., (2005) define English as a lingua franca (ELF) in business situations as Business English Lingua Franca (BELF), meaning the shared language between people in business settings, whose mother tongue is not English. BELF speakers use English in business discourse as a way to communicate with others and even though it is a shared language, people still communicate differently depending on their cultural backgrounds (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). It would seem that most of the people that use English within their work environments are BELF speakers, as most companies have multinational employees that have different mother tongues and speak English as a foreign language. Therefore, BELF becomes the shared language of communication in business settings, where the level of English is not important, only if the message is understood. In situations where a lingua franca is used, it is common to find a wide variety of proficiency levels in that language (Knapp, 2002). Charles (2007) mentions that globally the number of non-native English speakers is much higher than the amount of native English speakers. For

example at Kone in 1997, 74% of their expatriates were non-native English speakers (Marschan et al., 1999a) and since the world has become more globalized since then, it would be accurate to assume that the figure has grown. It would seem that the status of English has morphed into being the BELF of the world, and most likely it will continue to be so considering the increasing amount of non-native English speakers.

In conclusion, this section provided a background into the relationship between language and communication, focusing on the areas of corporate language and English as a lingua franca. From earlier research it can be seen that the issue of choosing and having a corporate language within an organization is a complicated matter and that necessarily the chosen corporate language may not be the one that functions in reality. In addition, a multilanguage policy was mentioned, which means that some organizations have chosen to operate in multiple languages. Furthermore, English as a lingua franca was discussed as it has been the most commonly chosen corporate language and the language of choice in most business interactions. The following chapter takes a look into diversity, in the context of multiple languages and cultures.

2.3 Diversity

Diversity within an organization refers to having different people from different cultures and with different language skills working together (Ayoko, Härtel, Fisher & Fujimoto, 2004). It is an important aspect to acknowledge as the modern world is becoming more diverse, which means that organizations have diverse workforces and work in multinational and multilingual environments. Organizations have begun to address diversity by creating diversity programs to allow employees to understand people from different cultures, races, or religions (Kirby & Harter, 2003). The challenge of diversity is to ensure that diverse groups within the same organization can communicate with one another regardless of culture or language (Ayoko et al., 2004). Diversity is an important aspect of effective organizations because it allows an organization to have a multicultural workforce sharing their knowledge (Stuart et al., 2007) and ideas (Modaff, DeWine & Butler, 2008).

2.3.1 Language diversity

Multilingualism can be defined as the existence of more than one language within an organization (Tange & Luring, 2009). Language diversity as a phenomenon has not been thoroughly investigated because it would seem that language has been a neglected area of research even though more companies are working globally (Maclean, 2006). However, Feely and Harzing (2003, p 39) define language diversity as, “the number of different languages a company has to manage”. This definition provides a general description on what language diversity can be within an organization; however, it could be further developed to cover the languages used in communication within an organization.

Piekkari and Zander (2005) identify language proficiency as an individual competence, and argue that the use of languages influences various activities within an organization, such as effective communication or knowledge-sharing. Language has been studied in the past from different viewpoints, such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics and semantics, which concentrate more on the details of language, versus studying language use in the context of business. Henderson (2005) mentions that language is often the aspect that is not specifically studied in relation to international management and is just assumed to be a part of culture and studied through cultural diversity. He further indicates that the lack of a shared language can cause misunderstandings in communication, lack of trust and inability to build relationships (Henderson, 2005).

Welch et al. (2005) identified the many types of languages used within an organization as shown in Figure 4. The three layers of language are 1) Everyday spoken/written languages, 2) Company “speak” and 3) Technical/professional/industry language. The first represents the different languages used for internal communications, the second represents the company jargon used such as acronyms, and the third is other professional language used (Welch et al., 2005). The three layers of language operate within an organization in a connected way and in this thesis all the different layers will be examined from the perspective of internal communication in the context of the case organization.

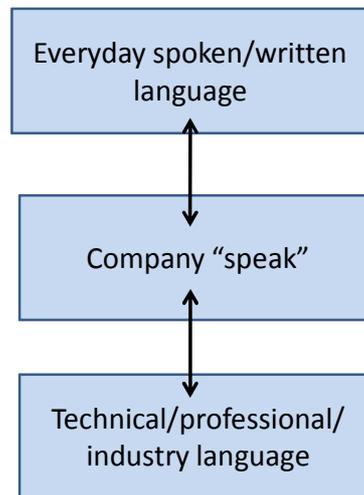


Figure 4: Layers of language (Welch et al., 2005)

In relation to the different levels of languages that exist within an organization, Feely and Harzing (2003) propose that in order for an organization to manage its languages, it has to first look at three different dimensions that can cause language barriers. These dimensions are:

- 1) Language diversity – the different languages within an organization
- 2) Language penetration – the different areas within the organization that are involved in multilingual communication
- 3) Language sophistication – the language competences needed by employees

The first dimension, language diversity refers to the many languages that operate within an organization through its employees, subsidiaries, partners, suppliers, and customers. The second dimension, language penetration, refers to the different sectors and functions of the organization that interact with different languages. In the past this was easier as only a few

people were responsible for cross-cultural interactions; however, currently almost all employees are involved in such interactions. The third dimension, language sophistication, is about identifying what language competences are needed at which levels and analyzing the current competences of employees. (Harzing & Feely, 2003). Feely and Harzing (2003), refer to the Reeves and Wright (1996) linguistic auditing tool for an analysis of the three dimensions mentioned in the previous section. All three aspects have been analyzed in the research of this thesis and analyzed with the assistance of the Reeves and Wright (1996) linguistic auditing tool. This thesis looks at language diversity, identifying the different languages that exist within OGB and looks at the whole organization, which is all involved with multilingual communication. In addition this thesis looks at the language competence of OGB employees.

2.3.2 Cultural diversity

Bovée and Thill (2001) see cultural diversity as the multitude of different people within a group, who can be of different nationalities, ethnicities, races and religious backgrounds. Culture plays an important part in language, because language can be seen as a part of the traits of culture. Culture influences the way a person acts different situations. Therefore, even if people speak the same language, miscommunications can arise when people have different meanings for the same thing or view the world in different ways. In order to be able to communicate effectively in multicultural environments, Ayoko et al., (2004) propose four different capabilities that employees should have. These are 1) understanding cultural differences, 2) understanding one's own emotions and the emotions of others, 3) appreciating differences in people and 4) being able to handle conflict situations (Ayoko et al., 2004).

One of the most distinguished and referred to studies of culture is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (1980). Hofstede (1980) conducted a study in the 1970's about the cultural differences in the work environment based of different dimensions which were power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity. His study showed how different cultures acted in the work environment, and

how different viewpoints can lead to miscommunications. His study has been a relevant point of reference in understanding culture in the workplace; however, at the moment it may not be as current as before due to the fact that the world is more globalized and people may no longer be from only one culture. In relation to OGB, it would seem that some aspects of Hofstede's (1980) study are accurate and can assist in identifying the cultural aspects in relation to communication within the organization. However, there are many people working within OGB with international backgrounds and have mixed cultural backgrounds which complicates the matter of identifying cultural behaviors. In conclusion, this section looked at diversity in the context of an organization, from the perspective of language and culture. Diversity was examined because it is present in most organizations today and is important for the case organization in this thesis.

Overall, chapter 2 investigated literature within the topics of communication, language and diversity. In the first section communication within an organization was discussed, because the context of the research for this thesis is the internal communication environment of the case organization. The second section described different approaches to language and communication, focusing on corporate language and English as a lingua franca. Finally, the third section focused on the issue of diversity and its connection to communication. The following section brings together the previous research investigated in chapter 2, to form the theoretical framework for this study.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework for this study and defines the reasons for researching the role of language in internal communications. The framework, shown in Figure 5 was developed on the basis of the literature studied, investigating the relationship between language and communication within an organization. The different dimensions of internal communication provide the umbrella for the framework and the use of language in different internal communication situations is then analyzed in the context of the case organization OGB.

The theoretical framework begins with what was presented in section 2.1, defining the different dimensions of internal communication that will be analyzed in the empirical findings. As presented by Smith (2008), internal communication can be seen as employee communication, which is the essential aspect of communication investigated in this thesis. Furthermore, Cornelissen (2008) explains that internal corporate communication is the communication from the organization to the employees, which will also be addressed in this thesis. Firstly, in the theoretical framework, the internal communication of OGB will be analyzed from the perspective of employees, relating to staff communication as well as corporate communications and the channels used to communicate. This also ties into the integrated internal communication framework developed by Kalla (2005), because the different communication areas studied can be connected to business, organizational, management or corporate communication.

Secondly, internal communication is examined through the use of language. This research will look at the different languages used in communication and will not delve into the sociolinguistic viewpoint. Thus this study will be looking at language choice in different situations and not the actual use of a language in a given situation. This research will look at the use of language in different situations, but through a more general approach of how languages play a part in internal communication, and not the specific choices that people make to use specific languages. The language section is analyzed through the use of language, whether official languages or English as a lingua franca, and the way that languages are used. The aim is to analyze how internal communications and languages are present within the case organization OGB.

The third level of the framework is the case organization OGB. The use of language in internal communication will be looked at from the perspective of the different employee groups; whether senior managers or employees at lower levels. This means an investigation into how the languages used to communicate with others differs according to who is communicating with whom. The organization OGB is divided into different categories that employees belong to, from senior management to regional colleagues. As explained by

Welch and Jackson (2005), the different groups involved in internal communication are: 1) Internal line management communication, 2) Internal team peer communication, 3) Internal project peer communication and 4) Internal corporate communication. These different groups involved in internal communication are present in OGB and will be analyzed through this study as to which languages are used with which groups.

This study focuses on determining the perspectives that employees have on the role of language in internal communication within OGB. The framework is used to analyze the process of internal communication, which is then analyzed through the use of language and then these are studied according to the OGB group communicated with.

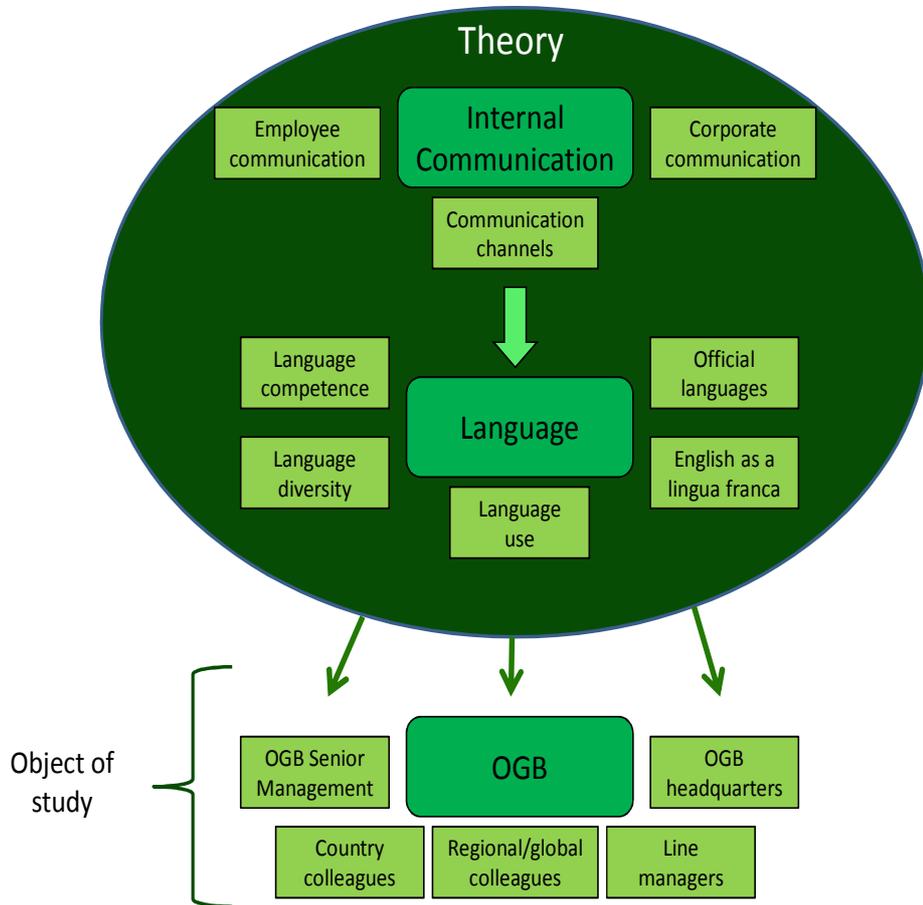


Figure 5: The role of language in internal communications within OGB

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will explain the research methods chosen for this study and the reasons behind choosing them and justifies the choosing of the case organization. Section 3.1 explains the research method, section 3.2 presents the methods of data collection, section 3.3 discusses how the data was analyzed and the last section 3.4 evaluates the quality of the study.

3.1 Research Method

The research conducted in this thesis is a qualitative study based on a descriptive approach, focusing more on social processes than structures (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). According to Collis and Hussey (2003) a qualitative study examines the world according to the perception of the subjects being studied and focuses on meaning. In addition, a descriptive approach as explained by Marshall and Rossman (1995) observes a situation or behavior through a case-study method. The case study method investigates a phenomenon in a specific context through different methods of data and uses prior theoretical perspectives to guide data analysis (Yin, 2009). Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) state that a case study is often chosen as the research approach when studying a single organization and if the research questions contain “how” questions. Furthermore this thesis uses inductive reasoning, which is the process of conducting research on the topic being studied and then comparing that to previous theories on the subject matter (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). Thus, this study aims at understanding and interpreting information obtained from the perspectives of the employees and relating that to previous theories and research.

The case study method was chosen, as it includes obtaining data from different sources such as interviews, conversations, perception or written material to gain a comprehensive view and is a good way to obtain data in cross-cultural settings (Ghauri, 2004). The case study method allows for a variety of data to be collected through different means to complete an overall analysis of the phenomenon. The data for this study was collected through focus groups, individual interviews and an online survey to gain an overall perspective of the organization. A case study research project can contain both qualitative and quantitative data (Yin, 2009), as the data for this study does. However, the data was

mostly interpreted in a qualitative matter, as the study explores the views and opinions of employees.

3.2 Description of the case organization OGB

This section explains the case organization in detail and the way that it operates as a non-governmental organization. OGB headquarters are located in Oxford, England and OGB is headed by the Oxfam's Trustees and Association who are responsible for the actions of OGB classified under the UK's Charities Act (Oxfam's Trustees, n.d.). The organization is divided into six divisions, which are each led by a Director. The divisions are: Marketing, Trading, International, Campaigns and Policy, Finance and Information Systems, and Corporate Human Resources (Oxfam's Trustees, n.d.). OGB is supported, like other NGOs, through funding from the public. OGB divides its funding into two sections, one being unrestricted, the other restricted. Unrestricted funding comes from public donations and the income is used where the need is the greatest. Restricted funding is income donated for a specific program or project and the funding usually comes from institutions, such as governments or the European Union. The use of funds is decided by the strategic plan of OGB and the expenses for the coming year are budgeted and tracked closely. (Corporate Documents, n.d).

The whole organization is divided into eight geographical regions, with each region having a Regional Director and a Regional Center (RC) that is responsible for the countries within the region. The eight regions are LAC (Latin American and Caribbean region), East Asia, HECA (Horn, East and Central Africa), MEECIS (Middle East, Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States), South Asia, SAF (Southern Africa), and WAF (West Africa). Prior to this research the LAC region was divided into two, which were known as CAMEXCA and SAM. CAMEXCA included countries more in the north of the Latin American continent and the Caribbean, whereas SAM included the more southern countries of the continent. The merger of these two areas happened in 2008.

OGB has around 6000 employees working in the 70 countries represented, around 2000 employees based in the UK and 4000 around the world. In addition OGB has more than

30000 volunteers. OGB is a global NGO and has stated that it has four official languages, which are English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. OGB has a Corporate Communications function that controls the corporate internal and external communications. In addition OGB has a translations policy that they follow to try to ensure adequate translations. Furthermore OGB has an Internal Communications Team that has designed internal communications guidelines for the employees of OGB. These guidelines are available on the intranet and include information on the how, what, who and why of communicating internally. The OGB translations policy indicates that employees must have communications (including email, video, intranet, publications, and website) translated if the audience does not speak the language of the original communication. For internal communications this means that any information that is necessary for staff for their work needs to be translated and for external communications this means that any information that is necessary to share with external audiences (Employee intranet, n.d).

3.2.1 OGB units of study

The areas of study chosen were LAC, WAF and SAF because each region has two or more languages operating within their different offices among staff. Each region consists of a regional center (RC) and several country offices, with the RC in charge of the region. The RC for LAC is located in Mexico City, Mexico and LAC consists of 10 countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, English-speaking Caribbean, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru. The RC for WAF is in Dakar, Senegal and WAF consists of 8 countries: Chad, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The RC for SAF is in Johannesburg, South Africa and SAF consists of 6 countries: Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The total amount of employees in all three regions is around 590, with 300 in LAC, 250 in WAF and 40 in SAF.

The departments that exist within these three regions are: Human Resources, Fundraising, Finance, Information technology, Communications, Campaigns and Policy, Programs, Logistics and the Humanitarian department. The employees chosen to participate in the focus groups and interviews were from different departments, in order to gain a wider

perspective on issues from different areas. In addition the language survey was sent to most employees, and the answers obtained had a good mixture of departments.

3.2.2 OGB languages

OGB has guidelines for internal and external communications and translations. At OGB all communications need to be translated if the receiver of the message does not understand its original language. OGB does this to ensure that messages are communicated effectively, that information is available to all audiences and that staff can understand all communications (Employee intranet). OGB has placed a rule that all global communications within the organization need to be translated into the four official languages: English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Beyond these, each region and country can decide on what documents need to be translated and into which language(s). OGB has a translations policy to assist employees in determining what needs to be translated as well as a list of translators that can be used (Employee intranet).

The relevant languages for this study are English, Spanish, French and Portuguese because they are the four official languages of the organization. The official language of OGB used to be only English, but at some point in 1999 a review was conducted at OGB concerning the language policy and it was decided that OGB would have four official languages. They were chosen on the basis of which languages were used the most within the organization. Therefore, this decision was made 10 years ago, whereas it still seems to be causing issues in communication. In the three regions included in this research at least two of the four languages are present.

In LAC all four official languages are present, as English is spoken by most as a company language and because the English Caribbean is part of the region, Spanish is spoken because a majority of the countries are Spanish speaking, French is spoken because of Haiti and Portuguese because of Brazil. In addition LAC has some minority languages in the countries it operates in but they do not manifest themselves in the organization. In WAF mostly English and French are visible in operations due to half of the countries in WAF

being Anglophone, or English speaking and the other half Francophone or French speaking. The Anglophone countries in WAF are Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and the Francophone countries are Niger, Senegal, Mali, Chad. In addition WAF has a multitude of local languages in each country. In SAF English is used in Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and with Angola, Mozambique being Portuguese speaking. Furthermore like WAF, SAF has a variety of different local languages. The local languages in WAF and SAF are more present in the work of OGB because of the local staff that work for OGB and the local partner organizations that they work with.

3.2.3 Choice of case organization

The background to this study was initiated by the organization OGB, as they were interested in studying language diversity within their operations, specifically in the areas where multilingualism existed. OGB has developed a strategy for diversity within their organization and have included language diversity as one of the key points to be investigated. Therefore, the researcher had a preliminary plan for the research and objectives that the International Division of OGB had drafted. The total research project conducted for OGB differs from this thesis, as it was larger and structured on the effects of language diversity in career progression and language training needs. However, based on the study carried out for OGB, the researcher was able to use the data collected to reach the research objective and answer the questions of this thesis.

3.3 Data Collection

The empirical research for this Master's Thesis was conducted between March-June 2009. The methods included focus group sessions, semi-structured interviews and an online language survey. Focus groups and interviews were chosen as data collection methods to gain more individualized and targeted information and the survey to gain a wider amount of information. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state, that interviews are an efficient way to gather data for a study, as they can be individual interviews or focus groups, and allow the researcher to gain a range of data from different participants. In addition, Reeves and Wright (1996) indicate that a survey is a good form of analyzing phenomena related to

languages as it can be accessed by employees when convenient and it can reach a larger population. One of the weaknesses of a questionnaire is that the percentage of respondents might be low and that people may answer without reflecting on the question (Reeves & Wright, 1996). The three different data collection methods were chosen to balance any possible weaknesses in the data collection process. In the LAC and WAF RC's both focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted and the online language survey was sent to the LAC, WAF and SAF regions. The focus groups and semi-structured interviews in both LAC and WAF were conducted in their RC's, in Mexico and Senegal respectively. The face-to-face interaction allowed for personal contact with the employees and the ability to gather valuable data.

The research conducted for this thesis included some parts of the Reeves & Wright (1996, p 7) Linguistic Auditing steps. OGB's objective of the study was not to conduct a complete linguistic audit, but to incorporate it into the overall study of language diversity by assessing the current language competences of OGB employees. OGB wanted to examine how languages operate within the organization since the organization has four official languages and they are unaware of what languages are being used, how they are being used and who uses what languages. Even though this research was not a linguistic audit, the steps to conduct one were taken with this study to ensure the willingness of employees to communicate with the researcher. The focus groups and interviews were arranged in advance by managers and employees were encouraged to participate, which, according to Reeves and Wright (1996) is a valuable step in ensuring that communication is open throughout the research process. Furthermore, the online language survey was promoted by OGB Regional Directors and seen as an important step towards language diversity. The survey was chosen to be online because it was the most efficient way to reach a wider audience and to collect the survey data. The focus groups, interviews and language survey participants were given anonymity to enhance the honesty of the answers. Furthermore, the participants in the focus groups and interviews were chosen from different business functions, for a more comprehensive view.

3.3.1 Focus group sessions

Focus group interviewing is a good method of gaining data because the researcher creates an informal and open setting for participants to be able to discuss their opinions based on questions asked by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) explain how focus group sessions are good for gaining the views of the participants. The focus group sessions were set up by OGB, to ensure that the attendance of employees would be high since the matter was given priority within the organization. Collis and Hussey (2003) identify focus groups as a good method for gaining information as group members often feel encouraged to voice their own opinions, after hearing other people voice theirs. For the focus group session to be effective, the researcher should create an open environment and record what is being said (Collis & Hussey, 2003), which was the process for data recording as a voice recorder was used and notes taken by the interviewer. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) point out that focus group sessions can differ from each other and therefore affect the amount of information obtained as they are impacted by the amount of people in the group, their personalities, and the relationship between the interviewer and the participants. It can sometimes be difficult in focus groups to distinguish between which participant said what (Bryman & Bell, 2003), which is why in this case part of the focus groups were transcribed during the session by another person and the other sessions took longer to transcribe from a voice recorder in order to determine which person said what.

Three focus group sessions were held in LAC and four in WAF, each consisting of around three to six people. The employees attending the focus group sessions were from different departments within the offices. Appendix 1 shows the composition of the focus groups included in this study. The groups of participants for each session were organized by the organization prior to the researcher arriving, in order for the groups to be diverse, including people from different functions. In addition, the focus groups did not consist of any senior level managers, in order for the employees to feel that they can speak freely about the issues of language and diversity. The focus group sessions were structured according to questions developed by the researcher discussing issues such as language competence,

official languages, English use, languages used at work, translation issues and language training. A sample of the focus group questions can be seen from Appendix 2. The sessions were planned to be more informal and relaxed, therefore, the questions were there to guide the discussion but not determine what was discussed.

3.3.2 Interviews

A researcher can obtain subjective data from interviews, about the experiences of others and can combine it with other data to gain a more objective view (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), which is why interviews were chosen to be conducted alongside focus groups and a survey. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow the interviewer to ask certain questions, while keeping the setting informal and open to the interviewee (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Pre-designed open-ended questions were used as a guide during the interview, and other questions were also asked if they surfaced during the interview, and for this reason the interviews were also recorded. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) note that it is important for the interviewer to introduce the topic being studied to the interviewee and how the answers of the interview will be used, because this will have an effect on how relaxed the interviewee will feel. This process was done with each interviewee to ensure that everyone understood the process.

The number of semi-structured individual interviews in LAC was ten and in WAF twelve. The interviews were not pre-assigned prior to the visit to each RC due to lack of information on who would be available; therefore, all interviews were conducted according to the availability of people. The researcher was able to have interviews with different people from different functions and of different nationalities. The composition of the interviewees can be seen from Appendix 3. The interviews were structured according to questions developed by the researcher in relation to language use and issues at work. The questions used for the interviews can be seen from Appendix 4.

3.3.3 Online language survey

Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) state, that surveys are an effective approach to collecting data when the goal is to gain the opinions of a group of people. A descriptive survey was used in this research because the survey was used as a tool to study the phenomena of language use within an organization (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). Bryman and Bell (2003) on the other hand argue that surveys may not be that effective because the respondent answers specific questions and one cannot ask additional questions. The reason a survey was conducted was to gain more data beyond the focus groups and interviews. The survey was posted through the OGB's online survey system and the questions were designed to provide the information needed and open-ended questions were also included to gain more information if participants were eager to expand their answers.

When developing the questionnaire for this research, the Rotterdam Foreign Language Needs Questionnaire (Reeves & Wright, 1996, p 93-102) was used as an initial guide to determine what type of questions should be included. The Rotterdam questionnaire showed the different tasks where foreign languages may be used, which was included in the research questionnaire to determine when OGB employees use different languages and how often. The survey contained a majority of closed questions to allow for numerical data to be gathered from a larger sample size (Hussey & Collis, 2003), as well as some open ended questions, to gain more opinionated answers. The survey consisted of single closed questions as well as multiple-choice questions, which were used to provide answers to specific settings. The questions for the survey were designed with the assistance of the language diversity project group at OGB and professors at HSE involved with the project. The questions were reviewed multiple times to ensure that the data received will pertain to the study. The questions were designed according to past research regarding the topic and what the goal of this research was. The language survey questions used can be seen from Appendix 5. The survey was piloted by having ten people answer the survey and comment on any aspect of it, which allowed for the survey to be improved prior to sending it to all of the staff in the three regions.

The online language survey was developed in English and then translated into Spanish, French and Portuguese. The translations were also checked by OGB employees who were natives of Spanish, French or Portuguese to ensure the quality and comprehension. The online language survey was translated into the four official languages to promote language diversity and to obtain accurate answers, as some respondents felt more comfortable answering the survey in another language than English. The online language survey was sent out in June to the LAC, WAF and SAF regions and the respondents were given two weeks to complete the survey. The survey was sent to those employees who had an email address and access to the internet at work. The survey was sent to 530 employees, of which 176 answered, making the response rate 33%. The percentage of respondents was lower than expected, which could be attributed to the survey being at first delayed for a few weeks due to technical issues, and furthermore, the links of two of the languages had been reversed, possibly causing employees to be discouraged from answering the survey when the links were corrected. Despite a lower number of responses than expected, the quality of answers was excellent and allowed the researcher to obtain information regarding language issues, although it is not possible to completely generalize over each region.

Out of all the respondents, 40% answered the survey in English, 27% in Spanish, 17% in French and 16% in Portuguese. More than 50% of the respondents were of ages 31-40 and there were almost an equal amount of responses from females and males. The most responses came from the LAC RC, Brazil, Columbia, Guatemala, Honduras and Chad. The largest groups of respondents were either middle managers or worked as supporting staff, such as in administration. Function wise, the largest response rate was from the Programs function. As for language competences, out of those who answered the questionnaire in English approximately half had a fluent level of English and out of those who answered the questionnaire in another language than English, had a moderate to good level of English. Overall 97% of the survey respondents spoke some to fluent English, 80% Spanish, 57% French, 41% Portuguese and 10% Arabic. Almost 12% indicated they spoke other languages, such as German, Swahili, Nepali, Italian, Kiswahili, Hausa, Wolof, Edo,

Russian, Ndebele, Zulu, Shona, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Dutch, Pular, Swedish, Ngambaye, Creole, and Catalan.

3.3.4 Research languages

Marschan-Piekkari and Reis (2004) argue that “the collection of valid and trustworthy data from non-English contexts is likely to require a multilingual approach”, which is why for this research a multilingual approach was used for a portion of the study. Due to a discussion with OGB on which languages to use for the focus groups and interviews, it was decided that using English would be more efficient for data collection as all employees spoke some level of English and hiring an interpreter would create added costs. Therefore, the researcher tried to use standard and simple English, in order for everyone to understand, regardless of English language competence. English was used as the research language in focus groups and interviews; however, in LAC some Spanish was occasionally used by participants to explain things, and the researcher spoke Spanish which eased translations. In WAF some French was used during the focus groups, but other group members would assist in translations due to the researcher’s lack of French skills. In the LAC RC the level of English was high and everyone spoke with ease, except for only a few. In the WAF RC the level of English was lower than in the LAC RC, and there were more people that were interviewed who had trouble using English. Due to the researcher being told an interpreter was not needed, it was decided to not use one, although in some cases it might have helped the information flow and put the interviewee at more ease.

For the survey it was decided that since the research studied language diversity it would be contradictory to send the survey only in English, so it was translated by professional translators into the four official OGB languages and the translated surveys were checked by representatives of the region they were being sent to, in order to check the cultural context in addition to language. The answers of the survey were mainly statistics and numbers, not requiring translation, with the exception of the open-ended answers. The open-ended answers were translated by the OGB translation manager into English for the researcher to use.

Since English was used for the focus groups and interviews it might have caused a difference in the answers if they were conducted in the mother tongue of the participants. Not having a common language between the researcher and participants can interfere with not having as many participants as possible and the amount of information obtained (Marschan-Piekkari & Reis, 2004), which in this research was not the case as people were eager to participate even though English was not their mother tongue. Marschan-Piekkari and Reis (2004) point out that even though international research of this kind is mostly conducted in multilingual settings, language is often not recognized as an issue and its connotation in reference to research is not looked at. In this research, the issue of language was very much present as it was the topic of discussion and it was concluded from the views of the organization that English was the language to use, possibly due to the extra added costs of interpreters and the fact that all employees participating spoke English.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data for this research can be classified as qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data are the focus groups, interviews and open-ended questions to the survey. The quantitative data are the closed questions and multiple-choice questions in the survey. This design depicts the increasing use of different types of data and methodologies in research (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The qualitative means of analyzing the data collected for this research is through a structured process of comparing the data collected to the theoretical framework developed for this research based on previous literature (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005).

Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) describe data analysis as the process of studying the data obtained and trying to find meaning and answers to the research questions posed. The preliminary steps to data analysis are editing and coding; editing being checking that the answers obtained respond to the questions asked and coding being a way to try to determine categories for the data (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). Editing in this research was conducted by checking the information obtained from the focus groups and interviews as well as ensuring the answers to the survey corresponded with the questions. Coding in this research

was conducted through a process of categorization, used in qualitative research, which is dividing the answers according to a category (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). The data obtained was further examined through a data reduction method, which means selecting the information that pertains to the study and simplifying it (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

The data was analyzed through the means of categorization, and the main categories chosen were communication and language, and analyzed according to region (i.e. LAC, WAF, and SAF). This allowed the researcher to obtain the specific information from the data related to both aspects. The data for this research has been obtained from three different regions, with different nationalities working in all regions. This makes it hard to incorporate the cultural aspect as there are a multitude of cultures at play. Therefore, the results are formed on the basis of regional and individual answers including cultural aspects but not specifically pointing those out.

3.5 Quality of Research

The quality of research is determined by its reliability and validity (Yin, 2009). According to Collis and Hussey (2003), reliability is the ability to verify the results and validity is how accurately the data depicts the phenomenon being researched. Yin (2009) describes four different criteria for determining the quality of the research and these are: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. This research is exempt for testing internal validity as it is not applicable to a descriptive research (Yin, 2009). This thesis does not study something caused another phenomenon, but is a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon within a context. The following table describes the three different quality used for this research.

Table 1: Case study tactics for Four Design Tests

Tests	Case study tactic	Phase of research in which tactic occurs
Construct validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use multiple sources of evidence- Establish a chain of evidence	Data collection
External validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use theory in single-case studies	Research design
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop case study database	Data collection

Source: Adapted from Yin, 2009, 41

Triangulation in case study research is the use of different types of data to provide a more overall analysis of the organization (Ghuri, 2004), which was used for the research of this thesis to construct validity. The multiple sources used for evidence were focus group sessions, interviews and an online language survey. In addition data on the organization was obtained from their internet and intranet websites. A chain of evidence was created for this research by documenting the study from beginning to end in order for an outsider to view the process used. The chain of evidence includes the questions used to find information on the organization, followed by the empirical evidence found from the research and ending with the conclusions drafted from the research.

Reliability of a study refers to the question of whether the same data can be obtained if the research were conducted by a different researcher at a different time (Yin, 2009). In this study the original questions used for the focus groups, interviews and language survey have been saved and documented, as well as the information as to who participated in the focus groups and interviews. By developing a case study database, which includes the original data collected and the report developed by the researcher, the reliability can be enhanced (Yin, 2009). For this study all original documentation and a thorough report can provide the necessary reliability.

To conclude, this chapter presented the methodology used for this study, which was a case-study method and the method of data collection, which were semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an online survey. The analysis of the data is conducted using a qualitative approach of comparing previous research and the theoretical framework, to the data collected. In addition, the trustworthiness of the study was examined through reliability and validity. The next chapter will present the findings of the study.

4 FINDINGS

The findings of the thesis are based on the individual interviews, focus group sessions and online survey conducted at OGB. The results obtained disclose the perspectives of employees in relation to language in internal communications in formal and informal communication. Therefore, this thesis does not study internal communication from the perspective of the headquarters, but from the viewpoint of the employees working in the global environment. The findings section examines internal communication within OGB in reference to the role of language in communication, the operations of four official languages and the language choice and use of employees. The section is divided into three themes: internal communication, language choice and use in communication and language diversity. Section 4.1 explains the views that employees have on internal communication at OGB and 4.2 the views on language choice and use in communications. Section 4.3 shows the views on language diversity according to employees. The final section, 4.4 provides a short summary of the findings.

4.1 Internal Communication at OGB

The internal communications researched in this thesis were the different areas of informal and formal communication as depicted in the integrated internal communications framework by Kalla (2005) in section 2.1. Therefore, the internal communications studied were either business, managerial, organizational or corporate communications. This section will discuss the different formal and informal communication aspects in relation to the different languages used by employees. Formal communication in this thesis is seen as explained in subsection 2.1.1 by Argenti & Forman (2002) and Bovée and Thill (2001), as the communications that stem from the organization and communication to employees. In addition formal communication is seen as the formal business matters that employees communicate to each other within the organization. Informal communication is seen as explained in subsection 2.1.2 by Andrews and Baird (2005) and Bovée and Thill (2001) as

being the communications that employees conduct in informal settings, such as coffee break discussions.

The focus of languages in this thesis is on the official languages that operate within OGB, which are English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. The use of languages was visible in internal communication within and between the different regions. In the three regions studied, at least two of the official languages were used. Informally, other languages operated in internal communications, such as local African languages in different offices in WAF and SAF. The employees in each region communicate in different languages either within the office they work in, to other countries in the same region, to countries in other regions or to the headquarters. Overall, the research focused on studying how employees perceive the internal communications within the organization and the languages used.

4.1.1 Communication channels used at OGB

The channels of communication were significant for this study because the context of communications differs depending on the channel used. In subsection 2.1.3, Stuart et al. (2007) identify the different modes of communication that exist within internal communication and whether they are used for more formal business use or informal. The methods of communication that were mentioned as being used at OGB were teleconferencing, videoconferencing, meetings, reports, newsletters, policies, phone conversations, face-to-face interactions, coffee break discussions, emails and the intranet.

OGB has several formal internal communication documents that are sent to staff globally, such as a letter from the CEO, the International Division bulletin, and Oxfam Manager's bulletin and in addition Regional Newsletters sent regionally. Emails are used the most for business communications, meaning sent formally from headquarters or by employees to other employees in daily business use. Employees send formal communication to the headquarters in the form of project proposals or reports. OGB has a tool called OPAL, which they use as a database to share documents inter- and intra- regionally, but there are issues with the language the documents are in. OGB has an intranet, which is a private

network that an organization can use to share information virtually to the whole organization (Bové & Thill, 2001). OGB uses their intranet as a forum for information for employees and available in all four official languages, although not all documents can be found in all four languages. An intranet is an effective way to share information to employees (Bové & Thill, 2001), although if the information is not in this case available in all languages, it defeats the purpose. As one employee in WAF stated:

“If I look on the Oxfam intranet, 90% of the documents are in English. If I try to find the French or any other language version it doesn’t always exist” (HR, WAF)

Another employee in WAF further explained:

“When you go to the intranet there are a bunch of fields and subfields and when you change the language to French, half of the fields disappear, not all of the information is translated, so you get half of the information. In an organization like Oxfam, that is not very fair, at least corporate information should be translated into all four languages” (IT, WAF)

The main issue in LAC with communication channels was with emails within the region, as the policy is that all LAC regional emails have to be sent in all four languages. This has caused some issues with information not being forwarded at all since people are reluctant to take the time to get each email translated. In addition some respondents mentioned that some emails have only been sent in Spanish to the whole region, which caused exclusion of some country offices. As one LAC employee disclosed:

“When using the LAC group email, communications are in the four languages. So you can’t just forward a message unless translated, so some things just don’t get forwarded. This is the problem with a fixed rule.” (HR, LAC)

In WAF the main communication channel issue was the lack of information and material being available in French at the same time as English. Most documents would arrive later or not at all. Respondents in Francophone countries mentioned that it is an issue when

trying to share information with staff or partners when information was not available in French. The WAF RC is based in a Francophone country, which some respondents from Anglophone countries felt made it difficult to communicate if one does not speak French. However, respondents in Francophone offices stated that all regional meetings were held in English, which means that those who do not possess a good amount of English may not be able to participate in such meetings. One WAF employee stated:

“OGB should allow staff to produce reports and proposals in French and not only in English, also working tools in French should be provided”. (Program, WAF)

Overall, OGB uses many different communication channels and the issues with the channels seem to be the availability of information in the official languages and the language that some information is sent out in. The main communication channel used is email and that has caused issues with choosing an understood language, or having to translate into another language. In addition the intranet is not available equally in all official languages, which causes some employees not to receive the same amount of information.

4.1.2 Translation at OGB

The issue of translation was frequently brought up in both LAC and WAF as being an aspect that needed significant improvement in their internal communication. Employees felt that translations of important documents were not always done and that an equal amount of information was not available in all languages. Feely and Harzing (2003) indicate that using translations and interpreters to assist in overcoming the language barrier can help but is not the best solution; as such services can never completely be accurate. This is due to the fact that translators are not always familiar with the issues involved and may translate the meaning rather than the actual context of what is being said (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Marschan et al., (1997) further note that if the quality of translations is poor, it might end up changing the key message of the document and therefore, inaccurate information will be passed on. Key documents from OGB headquarters are translated there and the quality of

these translations has been criticized by employees, with many stating that they were sometimes of such poor quality that you could not understand the message. As one WAF employee mentioned:

“Sometimes we receive news from headquarters in English and French and the translation is faulty. The French is not that correct. The message is not always the same.” (Program, WAF)

From the focus group sessions in LAC and WAF, participants stated that the quality of formal translations was poor and this was mentioned by almost every single participant. However, the online survey showed conflicting information with similar proportions of respondents across the regions agreeing and disagreeing that the official documents were translated well (See Figure 6). Therefore, this could be due to the different documents that are available and the different translators used. It would seem that some translations are done accurately and others are not, but the main issue is more about the lack of translations for each document.

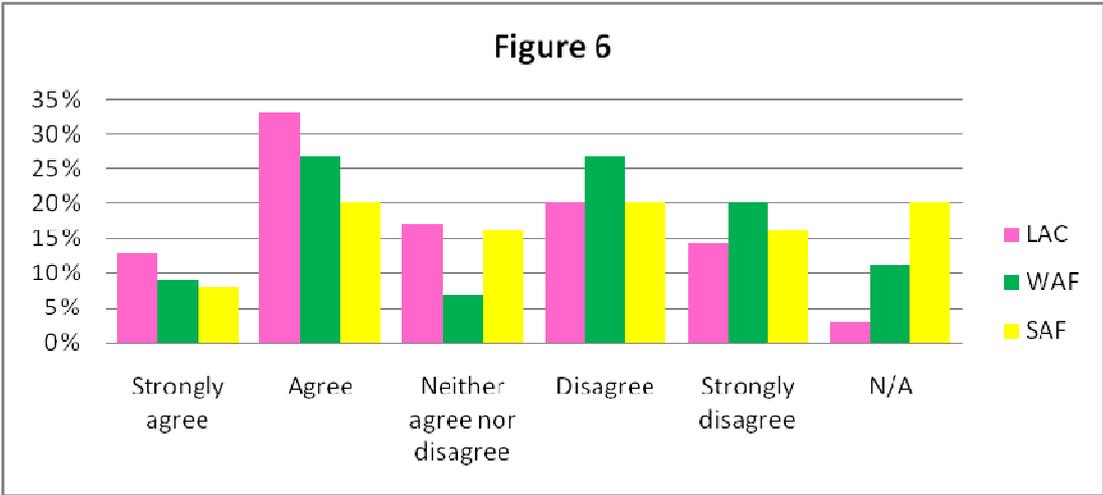


Figure 6: Official documents are translated well into the language of the country I work in

Respondents in LAC mentioned that formal messages are required to be translated into all four languages within the region, which causes delay or people just opt not to share information because of the bother of translation. As stated by a LAC employee:

“In LAC we need to use all four languages, but there should be flexibility, so if you can’t get translations straight away, and it would delay communications, we should be able to use English and Spanish first, and follow up with Portuguese and French when translations are ready”. (Administration, LAC)

Many respondents mentioned that intranet documents and finance and logistics forms were mainly in English. Many countries then translate these documents, meaning that duplicate translations exist. These documents and any other material on the intranet should be available in all languages, so that costs are incurred once by OGB and that information is available to all. Most respondents mentioned that many are word-for-word translations, which change the context of the message and are often meaningless. Most respondents have had to read the English documents in order to fully understand the translated version. Furthermore one respondent felt this showed that OGB does not pay attention to language diversity in practice, and only has four official languages in theory. One WAF employee explained the issues with translations by stating:

“For most of the translations that come from Oxford, I usually just read the English because usually you don’t understand the French. It is not translated well and you get more confused when reading the French”. (IT, WAF)

Translation is sometimes undertaken in regions to communicate with their staff and translate into local languages. Respondents in all regions explained they have regularly undertaken informal translations for themselves and colleagues. Both LAC and WAF RC’s have pools of translators they use for translations if they have time, but in reality, for most emails, they attempt to translate themselves or get assistance from a colleague. This means that many respondents are undertaking translation work in addition to their normal tasks. Out of all the focus groups, interviews and online survey results, approximately 80% used

some of their work time for translation purposes. In the LAC region translation is done in all four languages, in WAF mostly in French and English and in SAF in Portuguese and English. Translations are done daily whether it is translating in a meeting for a colleague, translating emails or documents. Many respondents felt that they used too much time on translations, rather than on their substantive work. One employee explained how translations are a part of everyday work:

“For informal communications, we do our own translations and this happens on a daily basis”. (HR, LAC)

Another employee further stated:

“We often help out with translations, but it is not our job, we are doing a favor. Sometimes I have to say no, because I have no time and I want to do it properly. It is not fair using people when it is not their job, but I understand that the organization has a limited budget, good translations need money and time.” (HR, LAC)

In the survey, respondents were divided approximately equally as to whether they did or did not translate documents for colleagues, it would seem that more translation is done in LAC and SAF (see Figure 7).

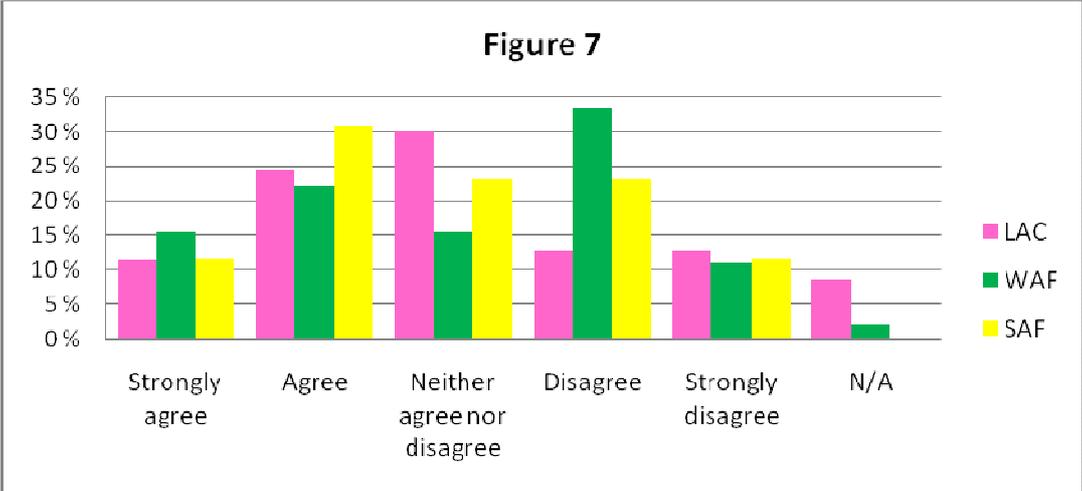


Figure 7: Translating for colleagues is something that I have done

Only official documents or longer translations are sent to the pools of translators, but employees translate everything else. Some employees in LAC who are proficient in all four languages are often doing more translations than others, causing them to bear more of the workload. Most of the translations done by employees involve one or more of the four official languages; however, in some countries translations need to be done in local languages. In the WAF and SAF regions many local languages exist, and documents often needed to be translated for partners into the local language and vice versa for the use of Oxfam. As one employee explains:

“I do a lot of translations French-English-French, such as forms, invitations, some policies. We have a guide that is translated so I use a lot of parts from that when translating other documents. But translation is not part of my job description but necessary to do if we want to communicate with others” (Logistics, WAF)

Respondents also mentioned the high costs of translations and that a lot of their budgets are used for translations. Many respondents felt that regions were not sharing translated documents; for example, some documents may be translated into French but then not shared with other Francophone countries, causing some items to be translated twice and incurring unnecessary costs. In addition respondents stated that more could be learned from other employees if a common language existed or more documents were translated.

4.1.3 Employee knowledge sharing at OGB

Knowledge sharing and management can be defined as knowledge communication, because both terms encompass the act of sharing information through communication (Andrews & Baird, 2005; Zorn & Taylor, 2004). According to Welch and Welch (2008) the transfer of knowledge is done through language and communication, where language is used to form the message and sent through communication to the receiver. Problems present themselves when the lack of a shared language causes information and knowledge not to be shared within an organization. This matter was often brought to attention as employees mentioned

not being able to share information if it was not in a specific language or receiving information in another language and not understanding it, therefore just ignoring the message. In addition in both the WAF and LAC region there was a case of emails not being forwarded in the right languages. This can be viewed from the following statements by employees:

“Sometimes non-Spanish speaking staff receives messages addressed to LAC users, and they are in Spanish. Not good because staff don’t speak Spanish, and then just delete the emails”. (RSMT, LAC)

“We received email messages in Spanish, even though we are a non-Spanish speaking country. I had to try to translate with my knowledge of Spanish into English to ensure that everyone could understand. But the Spanish speaking countries acted as though others could understand Spanish. Sometimes messages were just rejected because they were in Spanish”. (RSMT, LAC)

Also, sometimes messages are sent in both languages, but the non-English version will come later, which causes inequality in the knowledge of employees, as explained by one employee:

“You will see colleagues who have received the English version discussing the issue and the others have to wait for the French version to come before they are informed. It creates inequality. It would be better to have them come at the same time even if it would delay the message”. (Program, WAF)

In addition, the intranet is a key facilitator in information and knowledge sharing within OGB, but at the moment its purpose is being decreased by the lack of information in all official languages. Most employees indicated how the lack of translations caused them not to receive the same amount of information as other colleagues who knew English. The situation was that all documents were available in English, but when it came to other languages the amounts that were available differed between the languages. As stated by employees:

“OGB should allow staff to produce reports and proposals in French and not only in English, also working tools in French should be provided”. (WAF employee)

“It would be important to get Oxford policies in Spanish not only in English”. (LAC manager)

To summarize, the main problems with internal communication as seen by employees was the multitude of languages used in internal communications, the translation of documents and the availability of documents in another language than English.

4.2 Language choice and use in communications at OGB

This section will further analyze the matter of language in internal communications and how OGB employees viewed the matter of language. Language is an important factor in the communications within OGB, as there are so many languages functioning and because language is the tool that enables communication. Most OGB employees communicate more within their country office and region, and only engage in inter-regional communication when needed. Mostly it is senior-level managers that have more contact with other regional staff. Almost all employees seem to use at least two languages in their communications and on a frequent basis. Employees mentioned they have the most difficulty in finding a shared and understood language with those they are communicating with.

4.2.1 OGB employee language choice and use

One of the questions with internal communication raised by OGB was the extent as to which employees use different languages at work and what the differences are between regions. The following tables (2-7) are based on the language survey and depict what percentage of respondents according to region use which languages at work, how often and according to written or verbal communication. The percentages of the tables are calculated according to the amount of respondents for each question, totaling 100%. The languages included in the tables are the four official languages, and other languages that were mentioned by employees such as Arabic and local African languages. Overall 73% of the respondents to the survey use English daily at work. In the LAC RC Spanish is used for daily communication and English with those that do not know Spanish. In the WAF RC both French and English are used almost equally. As for the rest of the offices in these two regions and in SAF, it depends on the country as to which languages are used most, but

English is definitely present in all locations. Most employees use at least two languages on a daily basis, as stated by an employee:

“I have to switch between languages in the office, in a few minutes I can use three languages. I can be answering things in English, using Skype in Spanish, and at any point there might be some French”. (HR, LAC)

The LAC tables 2 and 3 show that the employees in the LAC region use Spanish and English the most in written and verbal communication. It is interesting to see that written English is used more than spoken, and vice versa with Spanish, indicating that English could be used more for communications outside of the region, whereas Spanish is used with country or regional colleagues. The third language used the most is Portuguese, followed by French and even a small percentage of Arabic. Therefore, all four official languages do play a role in written and verbal communications within the LAC region. Focus group participants in the LAC RC stated that Spanish is used mostly for day to day work in the office and that English is used with those that do not know Spanish. In addition it was mentioned that some job functions use more English as the technical language and that databases are in English. English is needed for formal communication whereas Spanish is used for personal interactions.

Table 2: LAC written languages used at work

	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic
Daily	55.7%	8.2%	25.4%	78.3%	1.9%
Weekly	15.7%	1.6%	6.8%	5.8%	0%
Monthly	8.6%	3.3%	1.7%	5.8%	0%
Few times a year	17.1%	18.0%	13.6%	8.7%	0%
Never	2.9%	68.9%	52.5%	1.4%	98.1%

Table 3: LAC spoken languages used at work

	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic
Daily	33.3%	6.6%	25.9%	73.5%	1.9%
Weekly	21.7%	1.6%	3.4%	8.8%	0%
Monthly	7.2%	3.3%	5.2%	2.9%	0%
Few times a year	34.8%	18%	10.3%	13.2%	0%
Never	2.9%	70.5%	55.2%	1.5%	98.1%

The WAF tables 4 and 5 show that English and French are the most widely used and mostly on a daily basis both in written and spoken communications. The fact that both English and French are used by 80% of the WAF employees every day, confirms that the region is operating on a bilingual basis. Arabic and other local languages have been mentioned as being used occasionally, with some employees using Arabic daily. It can be assumed that Arabic is mostly used in Chad, as it is the one of the official languages of the country. In addition, some local African languages such as Kiswahili and Hausa are used by some.

Table 4: WAF written languages used at work

	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic	Kiswahili	Hausa
Daily	85%	78%	0%	0%	5%	2%	2%
Weekly	9%	4%	0%	0%	5%		
Monthly	2%	2%	0%	0%	3%		
Few times a year	2%	4%	0%	3%	8%		
Never	2%	11%	100%	97%	78%		

Table 5: WAF spoken languages used at work

	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic	Kiswahili	Hausa	Zarma
Daily	83%	80.4%	0%	0%	15.6%	2%	2%	2%
Weekly	10.6%	2.2%	0%	0%	9.4%			
Monthly	2.1%	2.2%	0%	0%	3.1%			
Few times a year	2.1%	15.2%	0%	3.2%	6.3%			
Never	2.1%	0%	100%	96.8%	65.6%			

The SAF tables 6 and 7 mention local languages the most compared to the other two regions. The languages used mostly in daily written and spoken communication are English and Portuguese. In addition French is used by some, as well as Spanish. In addition to these, a variety of local African languages are used in communications by some employees.

Table 6: SAF written languages used at work

	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic	Shona	Afrikaans	Zulu	Swahili
Daily	93%	4.8%	37.5%	0%	0%		3.5%		
Weekly	0%	0%	4.2%	0%	0%				
Monthly	0%	4.8%	4.2%	5.0%	0%				
Few times a year	7%	9.5%	4.2%	0.0%	0%	7.1%		3.5%	3.5%
Never	0%	81%	50%	95%	100%				

Table 7: SAF spoken languages used at work

	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic	Shona	Afrikaans	Zulu	Swahili
Daily	92.6%	5%	43.5%	0%	0%	10.7%	3.6%		3.6%
Weekly	0%	0%	4.3%	0%	0%				
Monthly	0%	5%	4.3%	5%	0%				
Few times a year	7.4%	20%	8.7%	10%	0%			3.6%	
Never	0.3%	70%	39.1%	86%	100%				

4.2.2 OGB employee language choice according to communication channel

The communication channels studied in this thesis in relation to language were meetings, video conferences, written reports, emails and telephone conversations. Meetings were addressed in this study as there was a variety of meetings held in all regions in a variety of languages. Video conferences were also discussed because of their presence in the organization and as another instance where language played a part. Written reports and emails were also important as written reports were tied to the formal language policy of OGB and emails were the most frequent channel of communication. Telephone conversations were also investigated to see whether there was a difference in written and spoken channels and language use.

Tables 8-13 show the different percentages of employees in each region that indicated to using a specific language(s) in a specific situation. The different situations analyzed according to language use were: meetings, video conferences, written reports, emails, telephone conversations and social communications. The percentages are calculated according to the number of respondents, taking into account that most employees selected more than one language for each situation. Each question was calculated by the response rate of each region. This is the reason why the percentages do not equal 100%, because the

respondents indicated to using more than one language in a given situation, so the percentage was calculated according to the language and the total amount of respondents.

Meetings

Meetings are important in the context of OGB as they hold different types of meetings, in different location and with diverse participants. In order for a meeting to be successful, there needs to be an exchange of ideas and input (Bové & Thill, 2001), which is why a shared language is important in meetings, to enable all attendants to participate. Meetings with regional centre staff in LAC are held in Spanish and English, depending on the participants, but Spanish dominates. In WAF RC meetings are held in both French and English, depending on the person hosting the meeting and their preferred language of use. Regional meetings in LAC are held in Spanish or English and in WAF they are held in English. In LAC meetings are sometimes held in Spanish because the argument is that there are more countries that speak Spanish, but then again, not everybody does. In WAF the meetings are usually in English, because more people understand English versus French. Therefore, the language of a meeting may be one language during one time and then be something different at another time and also several languages may be used during the same meeting. As explained by one employee:

“I think it works that we use our own languages in the meetings, so that meetings are in English and French. Normally when we run the meetings we speak in what language we are most comfortable we are in. Meetings work only with English and French, any more than that it would be quite difficult”. (Campaigns and Policy, WAF)

Also confirmed by Mondada (2004) in indicating how the European business world is becoming multilingual by the increased use of foreign languages in business interactions, calling the phenomenon “plurilingual”. The research by Mondada (2004) witnesses how in a virtual meeting of different nationalities and languages, the language of the meeting switches with person and/or topic; however, some issues are presented in a group agreed language in the beginning of the meeting. Even if in a meeting English as a lingua franca

was used, some members may forget and use another language and need to be reminded to use English (Mondada, 2004). As two interviewees in LAC stated:

“We never know in advance what language will be used, which makes it difficult to prepare for the meeting. We can assume, but when we get there it could change”. (HR, LAC)

“Using multiple languages at a meeting is difficult; it is like gymnastics with your brain”. (HR, LAC)

Table 8 depicts which languages are used in meetings according to region, and it can be seen that the language mostly used in meetings in LAC is Spanish, in WAF French and in SAF English. English is also used in most meetings in WAF and some in LAC. The table is an accurate measure of the languages used per region; but it does not take into account which languages are used in which countries within a region. Therefore, further investigation was conducted of the survey data to determine which languages are used in which countries. The overall survey results pertain to the regions accurately when compared to the data obtained from the focus groups and interviews.

Table 8: Languages used in meetings

	LAC	WAF	SAF
English	24.3%	68.6%	85.7%
French	5.4%	70.6%	0%
Portuguese	18.9%	0%	32.1%
Spanish	68.9%	0%	0%
Arabic	0%	5.9%	0%

It would seem that the language of choice in LAC is often Spanish, but this is mostly in Spanish-speaking countries. French, Portuguese and English were also chosen as languages used in meetings. The respondents that answered to using French in meetings were from Haiti, and they also indicated to using Creole in meetings but no other languages. Respondents from Brazil indicated using Portuguese, English and Spanish. English was

indicated to be used in meetings mostly by respondents from the LAC RC, although some other country respondents did use English as well. In WAF the language chosen for meetings, mostly either English or French depended on whether the respondent was from an Anglophone or a Francophone country. However, almost all respondents from Francophone countries indicated to using English as well, whereas it was not the case vice versa. This confirms the viewpoints presented in the focus group sessions at the WAF RC, where employees stated that Anglophone countries only use English and which is why Francophone countries need to learn English. In addition to these languages Arabic was mentioned as being used in Chad in addition to English and French. In SAF, English was mentioned as being used in the Anglophone countries and Portuguese in the two Portuguese-speaking countries. In addition the Portuguese speaking countries indicated to using English as well. It can be concluded that even though other languages are used in meetings, English plays a role in all regions and is used for meetings, although it would seem less in LAC than in other regions. This would confirm that there is a dominance of Spanish in the LAC region. Two employees explain the issue with languages used in meetings by stating:

“In LAC meetings it’s a challenge to choose the language when some of the participants speak Spanish, English, French and so on”. (Communications, LAC)

“Sometimes you may start meetings in French with all Francophone people, but at the end we may switch to English because the terminology of Oxfam is in English”. (IT, WAF)

A variety of languages can be used in meetings and it is hard for employees to sometimes be able to participate, especially if they are not proficient in the language of the meeting. Respondents mentioned that interpreters are good, but not always available for meetings. Typically in meetings a colleague will translate for another where necessary, which is also problematic as this may lead to the colleague’s participation being limited and missing information. Some respondents explained that their participation is hindered when the language of the meeting is one that they are not proficient in and cannot fully explain their ideas. Some employees explained that any meeting at headquarters was in English, without

interpreters, which caused some issues for staff whose English language competence was not proficient. Non-native speakers of English felt at a disadvantage compared to native speakers because they could not communicate as well or understand everything. Non-native English speakers felt that native English speakers did not realize the situation and did not simplify their vocabulary for others to be able to understand better. Another interesting issue that was presented was of a LAC meeting held at headquarters, which turned out to be in Spanish, even though the LAC region contains countries whose language is not Spanish. Therefore, some employees were surprised to see this because it is nowhere stated that all LAC employees should speak Spanish. One employee explained the issue with translating during meetings by saying:

“Translations need to be done during the meeting to have the people on board right there and then. You might end up missing parts yourself because you are busy translating”.
(Program, WAF)

Respondents in the LAC region stated that at the regional management and leadership team meetings the chosen language was mainly Spanish, due to the majority of people who speak Spanish. The minorities from non-Spanish speaking countries or expatriates do their best to follow in Spanish, but sometimes have to check with colleagues if they understand and may not be able to fully participate in meetings. In the WAF regional management meetings are held in English, as many participants have good understanding of English, but again this risks some people’s engagement in meetings if they are not proficient in English. As one employee explained the situation:

“The first regional meeting I attended was in English and I was the only one out of 10 that didn’t speak English. They asked me to be near someone who could translate, so someone who was attending would whisper things to me in French, which was really bad”. (HR, WAF)

Video conferencing

Video conferencing was mentioned as it is the way employees at OGB occasionally communicate and hold virtual meetings. Video conferencing tools are used more now in business since technology has enabled their use. Videoconferencing enables people in different parts of the world to communicate via the computer, through a screen, so that you are able to see and hear people at the same time (Bové & Thill, 2001). Videoconferencing is used at OGB to lessen the amount of travelling and enabling virtual meetings to be held. Videoconferencing can be better for communication effectiveness compared to teleconferencing, as one can see the participants and in addition to hearing them, see their non-verbal communication. The LAC RC has a good videoconferencing system. They have a flat screen TV to view the other audience, and have similar systems in all the country offices in LAC. This allows LAC staff to have virtual meetings. Also it is possible to download a small videoconferencing tool and have it on personal laptops, allowing virtual meetings to be more mobile and not tied to a specific location. One employee explained the value of video conferencing:

“Video conferencing has helped in merger meetings that were all day long, it felt like we were in the same room and the visual cues were helpful. It is easier to carry conversations than on the telephone, but it has no added value for one to ones”. (Information systems employee, LAC)

According to the survey English is used for many video conferences, and this may be due to the fact that employees are holding video conferences with people within and outside of their region. This can be seen from the fact that in addition to English LAC uses Spanish, WAF French and SAF Portuguese. (See Table 9)

Table 9: Languages used in video conferences

	LAC	WAF	SAF
English	41.9%	58.8%	75%
French	1.4%	49%	0%
Portuguese	13.5%	0%	17.9%
Spanish	64.9%	0%	0%

Written reports

OGB have a centralized database system called OPAL that stores documents and projects. Employees have the possibility of placing their documents in this system and sharing with all other OGB employees. The only issue with OPAL is that most documents are only in one language, so if an employee writes a project report in French, only those that speak French will be able to understand it. Most survey respondents from LAC, WAF, and SAF felt that documents should be provided in the other official languages and not just English, because some people may not be able to understand them. Table 10 shows that a majority of the documents are written in English and this is due to the reason that they need to be in English for headquarters and that employees who want to share their work with others need to write reports in English. If documents are not in English and they need to send them to headquarters, they need to be sent out to be translated prior to sending them to headquarters.

Table 10: Languages used in written reports

	LAC	WAF	SAF
English	56.8%	68.6%	89.3%
French	4.1%	54.9%	0%
Portuguese	17.6%	0%	25%
Spanish	66.2%	0%	0%

Another issue with documents is that since most of them are written in English, they are mostly shared in English through the OPAL system. Also if some documents are translated in some countries they are not always uploaded into the system, and therefore not shared. This is not efficient for the organization as they are missing out on key document sharing. As one employee explained:

“I have this one colleague who went to Mali and found a very key document only in English when it is a French speaking country but they had this same document in Niger in French. So there is a lack of coordination of translations within Francophone countries in the WAF. Translated documents could be shared so that everyone has the same information”. (Program, WAF)

E-mails

Emails are used often as both formal and informal communication channels, as it is time and cost-efficient to send out emails. The issue with emails arises when employees at OGB do not know which languages to use. In LAC it is said that all emails should be in all four official languages if they are going to be sent to the whole region. In WAF the rule is not as clear, most Francophone countries send emails in both English and French, but Anglophone countries only in English. In SAF it would seem that the majority of emails are sent in English. Some employees explain the different issues related to emails:

“All the official emails that come from the WAF Regional director are always in both French and English, which is good, but the emails that come from Anglophone countries are only in English”. (Campaigns and Policy, WAF)

“I have just forwarded an email that is only in English to LAC RC, as I had no time to translate. I would hope if someone thinks it looks interesting they can ask a colleague to help to translate”. (HR, LAC)

Table 11 shows the percentage of languages used in emails per region. LAC would seem to use all languages, but English and Spanish the most. In WAF both French and English are used at an equal amount and in SAF English is definitely used more. The key issues seem to be the lack of knowledge of the language emails needs to be in and the need to translate them if wanting to share with different countries. It would seem that employees can share information with their colleagues in the same country, but issues arise when they need to communicate either intra or inter -regionally.

Table 11: Languages used in emails

	LAC	WAF	SAF
English	60.8%	80.4%	100%
French	8.1%	62.7%	0%
Portuguese	23.0%	0%	32.1%
Spanish	70.3%	0%	0%

Telephone conversations

In telephone conversations, depicted in table 12, it would seem that in LAC Spanish is used more, possibly because people feel more comfortable speaking Spanish in Spanish speaking countries, versus English. French and Portuguese are used in Haiti and Brazil respectively. In WAF there is an equal amount of English and French used, once again depending on the language of the country, although most Francophone respondents do also use English. In SAF it is mainly English, with Portuguese being used in the Portuguese speaking countries. One employee explains the difficulty with English in telephone communications:

“In the beginning it was difficult to understand English through the phone, because you can’t see people or hear them correctly. You need to concentrate harder on understanding”. (Advisor, WAF)

Table 12: Languages used in telephone conversations

	LAC	WAF	SAF
English	35.1%	74.5%	96.4%
French	9.5%	70.6%	3.6%
Portuguese	17.6%	0%	32.1%
Spanish	70.3%	0%	0%
Arabic	0%	5.9%	0%

It would seem that with telephone conversations English is used less in the LAC region, probably due to the fact that Spanish speakers prefer speaking their mother tongue on the phone, versus in written communications. In WAF and SAF English is used alongside French and Portuguese respectively in telephone conversations. There is a clear difference between the preference of languages used in written and verbal communication.

Social communication

Social communication is mentioned as the informal aspect of internal communication, because it shows a different side to the business issues normally communicated at work. Employees in LAC indicate that they use the language of the country they work in for social communications, whether it is Spanish, Portuguese, or French. English is used if a person does not understand the language spoken. Employees are more inclined to speak other languages in unofficial settings, as one is not explaining difficult matters and can find it easier to express oneself. In addition some employees mentioned trying to learn another language through talking with employees and have found it to help. In WAF the language is English, French or Arabic depending on the country. At the WAF RC both French and English are used, although social communications are mostly conducted in French and sometimes in the local language of Senegal, called Wolof. In SAF it is mainly English and Portuguese, depending on the country, although a large majority of people did indicate

conversing in a local country language as well, such as Shona, Zulu or Ndebele. (See Table 13)

“We use Wolof (Senegalese language) in the office with local people, for informal communications”. (IT, WAF)

Table 13: Language used in social communications

	LAC	WAF	SAF
English	21.6%	54.9%	78.6%
French	5.4%	68.6%	0%
Portuguese	18.9%	0%	32.1%
Spanish	66.2%	0%	0%
Arabic	0%	9.8%	0%

Based on the results some employees feel more comfortable speaking a foreign language in social situations because they are in a relaxed setting and may not feel the pressure to express their opinion. On the other hand some employees do automatically use their mother tongue in social situations, because it is easier to communicate. Therefore, there are two differing aspects that can be seen in the use of language in social communications.

4.2.3 OGB employee language choice according to audience

One aspect of communication and language researched within OGB is the language used with each audience that employees communicate with. This was researched to see if there are similarities and/or differences between the regions in their language choices. The audiences researched were headquarters, regional senior management team, line managers, country colleagues, and colleagues in other regions. The following figures 8-12 show the different languages used by the three different regions according to the audience communicated with.

Communication with headquarters

In the interviews and focus groups almost all employees stated that they use English with headquarters, because no one at headquarters speaks Spanish/French. There were a few people who mentioned having encountered people who speak another language and them being willing to speak it, but mainly the employees at headquarters speak only English. This can be confirmed with the results of the survey that can be seen in Figure 8, where it is visible that English is mostly used as the language of communication with OGB headquarters in the UK. It is interesting to see though that some employees in the LAC region indicated to using Spanish when communicating with headquarters. These employees were from other Spanish speaking countries within LAC and not from the RC. One employee stated:

“I would like Oxford to learn Spanish and communicate with LAC RC in Spanish, since they expect everyone to communicate in English”. (Program Manager, LAC)

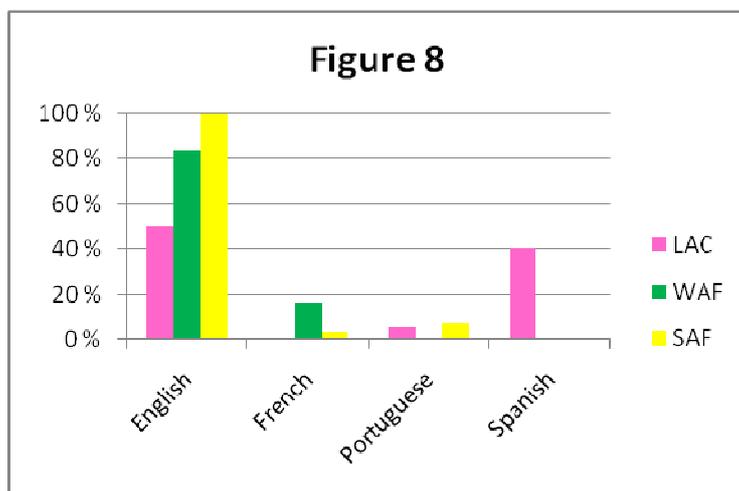


Figure 8: Language of communication with OGB HQ

Communication with the Regional Senior Management team

OGB has senior managers that belong to the Regional senior management teams (RSMT), who are the Country directors (CD) and Regional managers from a region. CD's are the ones who are appointed as the directors of specific country offices and make the decisions for that country and are representatives of that country within the region. Regional managers consist of the different functional managers that operate in the RC, whether it is in HR or Communications and are in charge of that function in the region. Figure 9 shows the language used for communicating in each region with their own RSMT or CD. From the figure it can be seen that in LAC, mostly Spanish is used in the Spanish speaking countries and then Portuguese and French are used in Brazil and Haiti respectively. The employees in LAC that stated using English also stated to using either Spanish/Portuguese/French, which would indicate that English is used with managers that do not speak any of the other languages or the employee does not speak the same language as that manager. This is the case with some of the regional managers in the LAC RC, who speak English and Spanish but none of the other regional languages, so employees may need to communicate with them in English if they do not speak Spanish.

From Figure 9 it can be seen that in WAF, employees use either English or French. By examining the numbers behind this figure it was seen that employees in Anglophone countries use English and in Francophone countries French, although some Francophone employees did indicate to using English as well. In SAF it would seem that the most prominent language is English, with Portuguese being used by some.

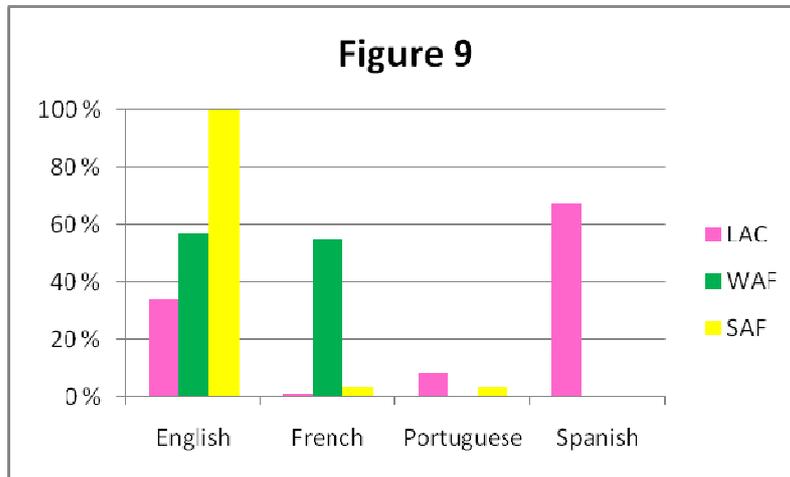


Figure 9: Language of communication with OGB RSMT/CD

Communication with line managers

Figure 10 depicts the languages used with line managers in each region and this once again depends on the country in question. In LAC the main language stated by Spanish speaking countries as being used with line managers is Spanish. English was mentioned by employees in the LAC RC, which could be due to the fact that the RC has some managers that have a better comprehension of English and prefer to use that over Spanish. Portuguese was used in Brazil and French in Haiti, although some did mention in Brazil as to using English as well. In WAF Anglophone countries indicated using English and Francophone countries mainly to using both English and French. From the results it would seem that the language used with line managers depends on the language proficiencies of the manager and employee.

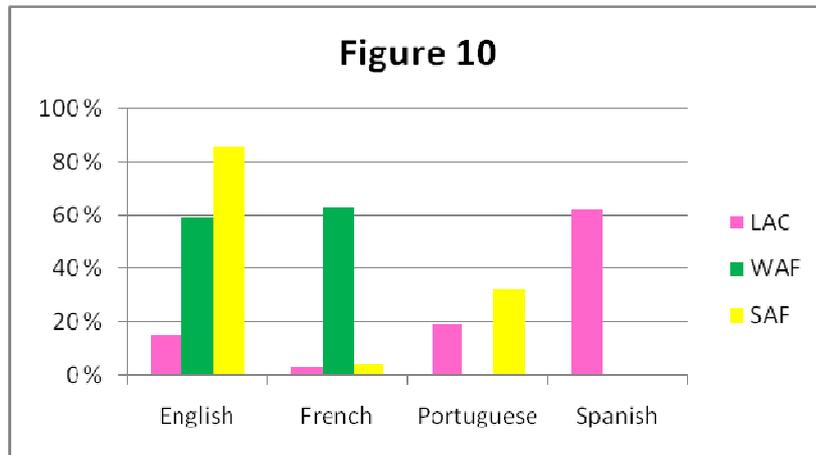


Figure 10: Language of communication with line manager

Communication with country colleagues

Figure 11 shows the language employees' use with their country colleagues. It would seem that the language mostly used in each country with colleagues is the language the office is situated in, with the exception of the RC's. In the LAC RC it was stated that all four official languages are used to a certain extent, although Spanish is used the most, followed by English. Spanish is mainly used for communication in the office unless there are people that do not speak Spanish, and then English is used. In other countries in LAC it depended on the language of the country, with English being used in some situations but not as much as in the RC. In WAF there was more of an equality of English and French being used in the same country, although more in Francophone than Anglophone countries. From the WAF RC focus groups most participants stated to using French in the RC for communications with staff and in the field, whereas English was used when communicating with Anglophone countries or headquarters. In SAF English was mostly used, and Portuguese alongside English in the countries where Portuguese is spoken.

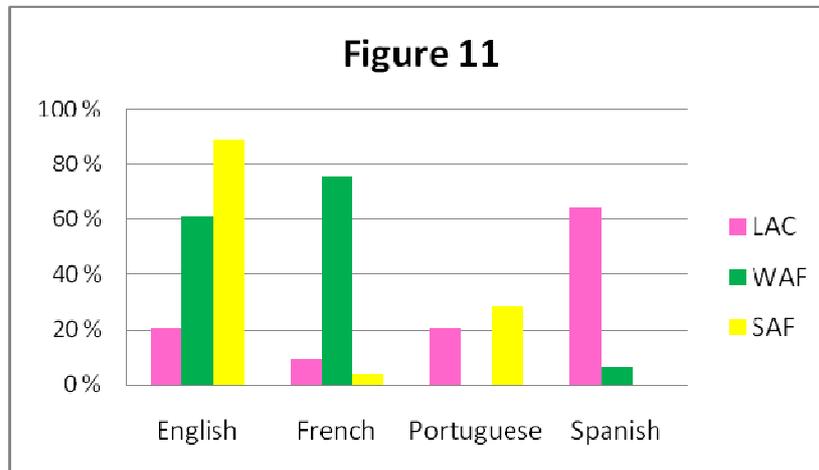


Figure 11: Language of communication with OGB country colleagues

It would seem that the language chosen to be used in given circumstances depended on the person receiving the messages, that most employees used the language their audience was comfortable with. For example in the LAC RC, Spanish was mainly used for communications, whereas if someone did not speak Spanish they would switch to English to accommodate that colleague. Similar findings were reported by Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), when they discovered that the language used by employees depended on who they were communicating with, and that they often used their mother tongue unless there were other nationalities present, when they then switched to English.

Communication with colleagues in other regions

From Figure 12 it can be seen that the most common shared language between the three regions is English. This confirms the idea of English being a dominant language within the organization, not only in formal communications but also between employees. Therefore, even though many of the OGB employees are proficient in many languages, often it is English that is the commonly shared language. Some employees do use other languages with employees in other regions, but is usually difficult to find someone who speaks your language versus speaking English. In the LAC RC focus groups some participants mentioned that when communicating with Brazil or Haiti they communicate through

communication contacts that then pass the message on to the rest of the staff. This is done due to the barrier of language as some employees in either Brazil or Haiti do not speak Spanish or English. These arrangements have been organized to try to ensure that employees understand messages correctly, but this causes messages to go through a contact person possibly delaying or changing the message.

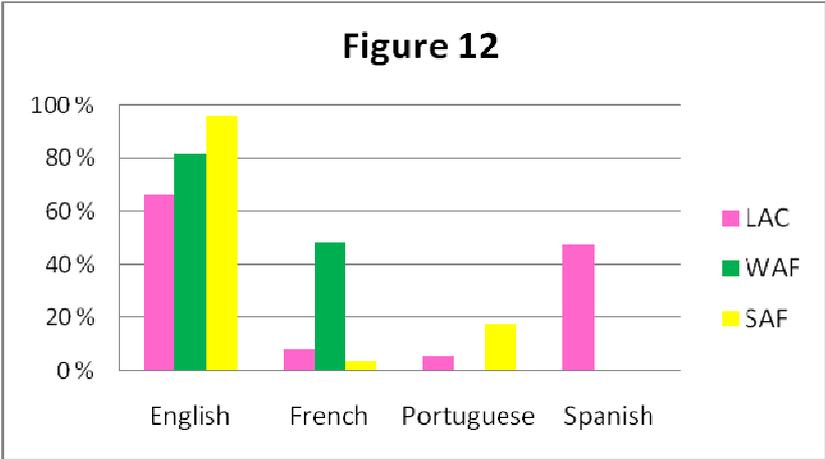


Figure 12: Language of communication with colleagues in other regions

These figures show how languages are used in OGB communications within and between regions and headquarters to gain a clearer picture. It would seem that English is the shared language between the regions and region to headquarters, so this would confirm that English is a language one should know within OGB to be able to communicate to a wider group of people. As of the other languages Spanish, French and Portuguese were all used mainly within the countries that spoke these languages. There were a few mentions of Arabic being used in Haiti alongside French and English.

To conclude, this section showed the issues that languages present in internal communications, from the use of language, to the channel of communication and the audience of the communication. All employees had views on the use of language in communications and felt that having four official languages caused confusion in

communications. Employees overall felt that the lack of a shared language caused information not to be shared and that there was a lack of consistency and transparency within the organization.

4.3 Language Diversity at OGB

This section discusses the matter of the multiple languages at OGB and how they operate. Language diversity is important for OGB because they want to be a diverse organization that takes into account all differences and embraces them. This is one of the reasons why they chose to have four official languages, to try to break away from being an English organization, but a more global one. Employees felt that OGB has taken steps to become more linguistically diverse, but there are still areas that could be improved, such as translations and the possibility to use another language beside English for formal communications. A few employees explain their views on language diversity and OGB:

“Language diversity is complicated and a challenge but it’s something that you need to do”. (Communications, LAC)

“Oxfam is quite an Anglophone organization, we are never going to change anything if we just concentrate on Anglophone bodies”. (Campaigns and Policy, WAF)

A majority of the respondents indicated that English was not their native tongue and they felt that there should be more effort from OGB headquarters to speak in other languages besides English. They felt that headquarters only communicates in English and that employees there should take into account that Oxfam is a multilingual environment. In addition some respondents felt that the documentation sent to Oxford always needs to be in English, whereas if Oxfam really has four official languages, employees should be allowed to communicate in any of them. However, the majority of respondents did state that they agreed that attention is paid to language diversity at OGB, but that this needed to be improved. (See Figure 13).

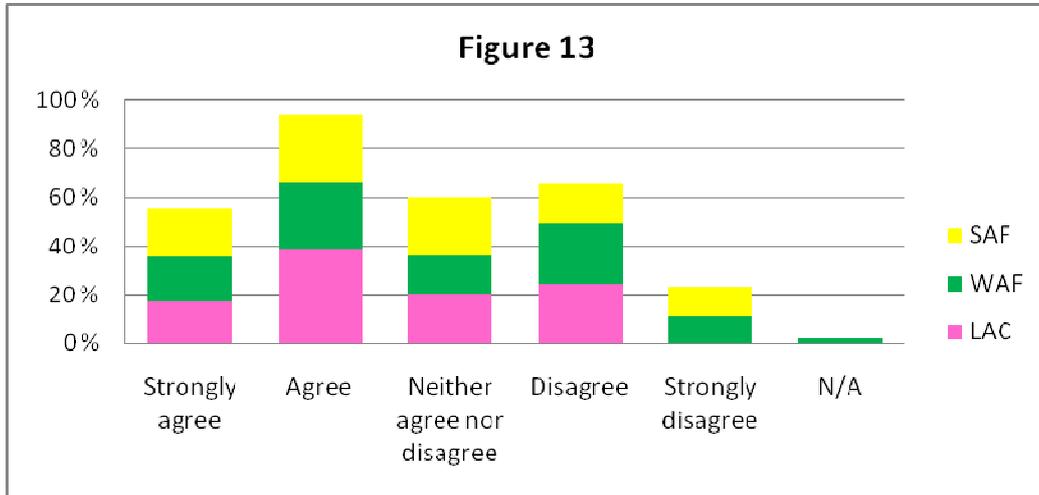


Figure 13: Attention is paid to language diversity at OGB

Respondents felt that local languages should be represented locally in specific countries when necessary, such as in the different programs that OGB has but not officially. A few respondents mentioned that Arabic should be represented, because there is some Arabic-speaking staff. Some respondents mentioned that it would be difficult to have Arabic represented, because even though the written language is the same, when spoken by people from different places, they cannot understand each other. Some mentioned that maybe Arabic should only be represented locally where necessary.

In LAC employees felt that Spanish was becoming the dominant language due to a majority of countries in the region being Spanish speaking. Some LAC employees stated that they felt that since the dominant language seems to be Spanish, there is no interest in being diverse and including other languages. This excludes those that do not speak Spanish such as employees in Haiti, English-speaking Caribbean or Brazil. In WAF employees felt that French was not seen as important as English and that there was an inequality in the operations of the two. Many employees felt that English was given priority and that since the organization has declared four official languages, it should take steps to ensure that is the case. Employees felt as though the four official languages were just stated as such to be

linguistically diverse but that in reality they were not operating equally. Some employees explained their views:

“It feels as though we French speakers are constantly running behind the English speakers and they don’t realize this. They don’t look back to see where we are. They just go”.
(Program, WAF)

“I don’t think that anyone should have more work to do than others, except for language of the country working in and language of the organization, which may be controversial”.
(RSMT, LAC)

Many survey respondents felt that OGB was not being linguistically diverse by having trainings and workshops only in English. Staff felt that this hindered their ability to learn because important information was being only provided in English. Some staff also felt the LAC RC was not a representation of the whole region, as the people that worked there were mainly Spanish speaking, and not of Portuguese, French or English speaking origin. They felt that they were being excluded from information and opportunities. Therefore, the idea is good but that linguistic diversity was not operating as well as it could.

4.3.1 The use of four corporate languages at OGB

Luo and Shenkar (2006) explain how the choice of a common corporate language can begin by being the language of the headquarters and later evolve into something else depending on the growth of the organization. This is the case with OGB, as it began as having English as its corporate language and then noticed how people were working in different languages in different regions and then decided to have the most commonly used languages as official languages. Charles (2007) states how knowing the organizational languages, such as the corporate language or language of the headquarters can give employees who know such languages a greater access to information as well as more knowledge about different organizational matters. This can be seen as an injustice by other employees who may not be able to access such knowledge and feel a disadvantage. Feely and Harzing (2003) point out how one could assume that having one corporate language may decrease any issues,

whereas in reality, deciding on a one language policy does not automatically fix everything. Having only one language operating within an organization may assist in some areas, such as the cost-savings in translations and language training; however, it will also increase the likelihood of having a homogenous pool of employees and lack of diversity within the organization. A multilingual operation could possibly have more advantages by being able to have a diverse staff and connect with multiple countries in their native tongue (Feely & Harzing, 2003).

OGB has had four official languages for the past 10 years, but it seems as though they were meant to aid communication but are causing issues and inequality. All respondents felt that the four official languages, English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese do not operate equally and it depended on the region as to which languages were used more. Even though OGB has decided to have four official languages, in reality they do not seem to be given an equal status within the organization, nor are they used equally. In LAC, employees stated that they use more Spanish than other languages because a majority of informal and formal communications are to Spanish-speaking countries. In WAF, both English and French are used, but that English is often given priority. However, almost all focus group and interview participants, as well as 82% of survey respondents agreed that OGB should continue to have four corporate languages regardless of if they are equal or not, but that equality should be improved (see Figure 14). A few employees explain their views on OGB's four official languages:

“I think it is good that Oxfam has four official languages, because it is a global campaigning organization and you have to reach out to you audience and constituencies”.
(RSMT, WAF)

“The official languages are not equally used, English takes the dominant position”.
(Communications, WAF)

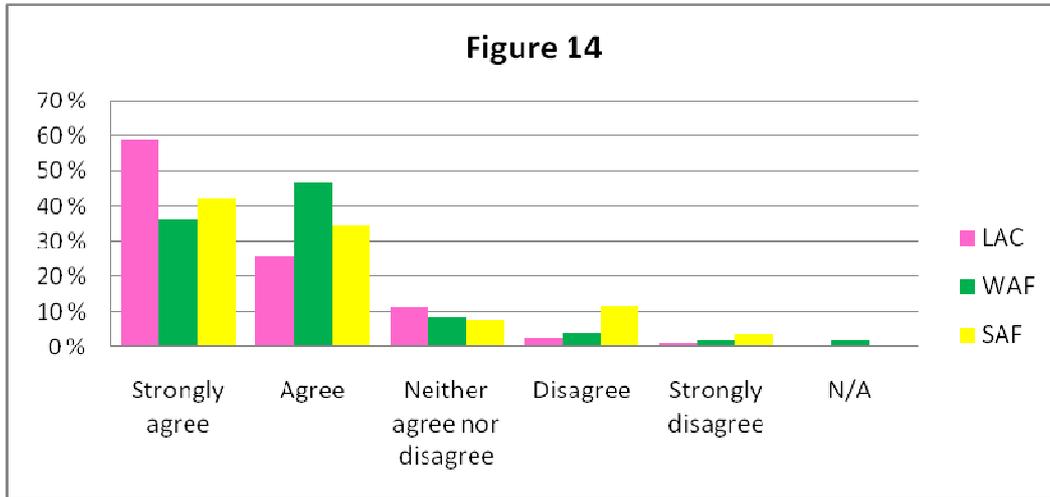


Figure 14: OGB should continue to have four corporate languages

4.3.2 English as a lingua franca at OGB

Lingua franca was defined in subsection 2.2.2 by Holmes (1992) as being the shared language enabling communication, and in most situations nowadays being English. Louhiala-Salminen et al., (2005) further presented that English as a lingua franca (ELF) in business situations can be said to be Business English Lingua Franca (BELF), meaning the shared language between people in business settings, whose mother tongue is not English. In the case of OGB, the use of BELF is very common as most employees are not native speakers of English and use English as a way to communicate. Employees felt that English was the dominant language in the organization even though OGB has four official languages. Employees in all regions mostly strongly agreed with the fact that English is seen as the official language of OGB (See Figure 15). Employees felt that English was used in most communication and that knowing English was more important than knowing any of the other official languages. One employee explained the situation of BELF:

“In a region where there are many different languages, there is no choice but to have a common language, which is English”. (RSMT, LAC)

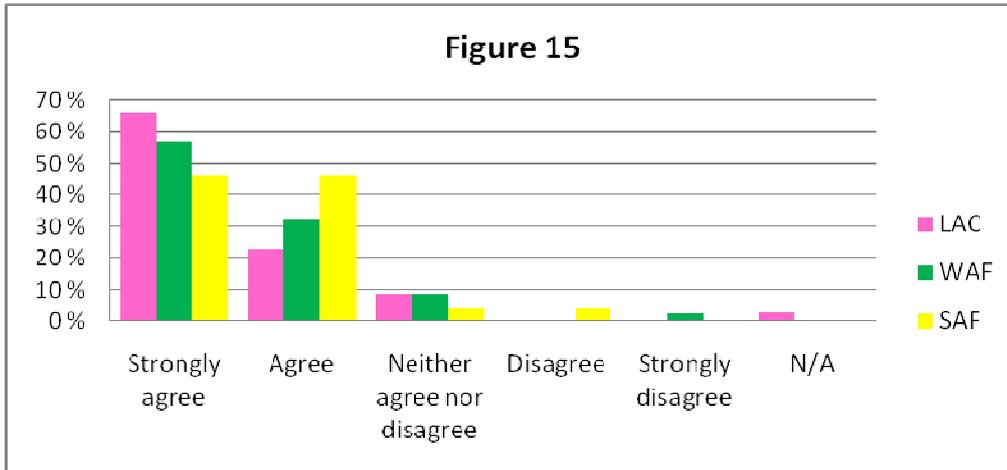


Figure 15: English is seen as the official language of OGB

One employee stated that it would not change anything if English was the only official language by saying:

“Even if we agreed English as the corporate language, in reality the other languages would just be operating informally. Having four official languages is better.”(Information Systems employee, LAC)

Most employees felt that English was the dominant language but were divided in their opinion on whether it was a positive or negative factor. Many respondents felt that communication issues arise from the vast amount of different languages used. Most felt that having four official languages was problematic and caused issues in internal and external communications. However, others said that other multi-lingual regions should adopt this policy. Therefore, some employees wanted English as the only official language and others wanted to continue with having four official languages.

All respondents stated that English was needed at OGB because that was the official language of communication in reporting to headquarters in Oxford. Most respondents believed that without English one could not work well; many respondents explained this was because OGB was an English organization, while some mentioned that English is the

international language of business. The majority of respondents believed that Oxfam GB is a British, not an international, organization. 94% of survey respondents think that English is a necessary language to know at work, which correlates with the views of the respondents in the focus groups and interviews. The difference in opinion was felt by the level of English that employees felt was necessary. Employees stated that the level of English that is needed depends on the job function and position, but most seemed to think that the higher the position the higher the level of English needed to be.

Some employees felt that language diversity was useful in a local context but were in favor of English being the official language as it is a global language and would help communications. Respondents felt that English language training should be given priority, so that more staff could have the opportunity to learn English and therefore English could become an organizationally shared language. Employees felt that it is necessary to know English to be able understand policies and procedures, use databases, write reports and communicate with headquarters. They also felt that it was not an unrealistic expectation and that staff should know English. Some employees explained:

“You work for an English organization, so you should be able to speak English”.
(Administration, LAC)

“If you really want to go somewhere in an international organization you need English”.
(Logistics, LAC)

Those that did not speak English too proficiently felt that this was a barrier to progression, explaining that most managerial positions required communication with headquarters, which could only be done in English. While respondents strongly agreed that employees who speak English have more opportunities at OGB, they were divided in their opinion that English has been a barrier to their own career progression, as most employees have a good grasp of English. (See Figures 16 and 17)

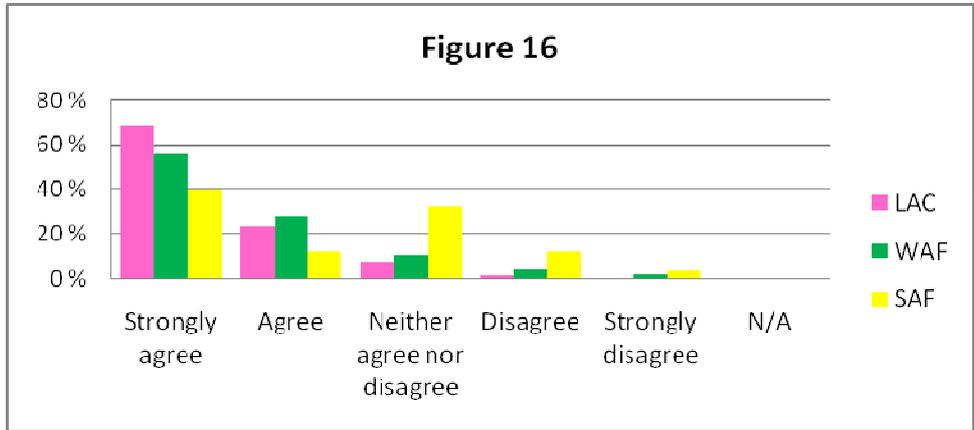


Figure 16: Employees who speak English have more opportunities at OGB

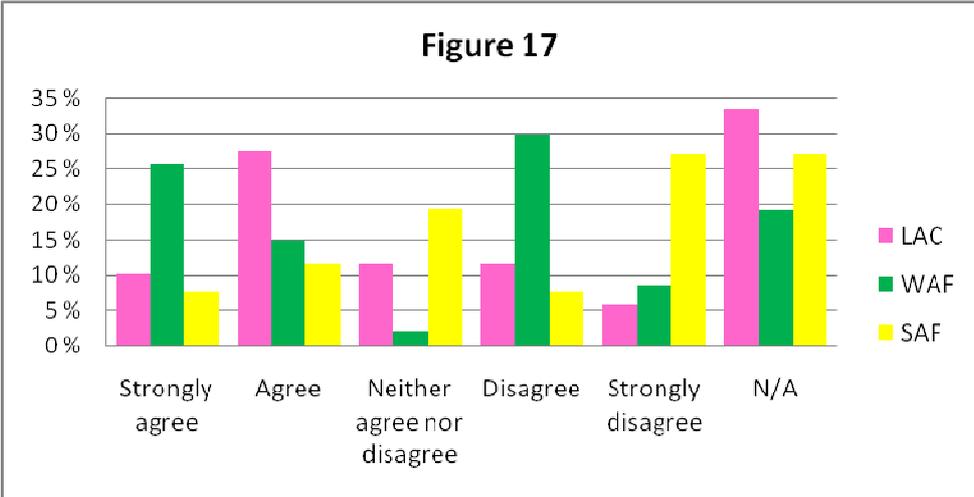


Figure 17: Lack of competence in English has been a barrier in my work

Mostly employees in LAC and WAF agreed that English has been a barrier whereas in SAF they did not. This could be due to the fact that SAF has a majority of English speaking countries. Other languages were also seen as a barrier, because in some countries and positions you do need to use other languages. For example, in the LAC and WAF RC’s you need Spanish and French respectively in most positions. It was a common view in the LAC

and WAF RC's that a person could advance at OGB if they had a high level of English but not if they had a high level in one of the other official languages and only a medium level of English. Therefore, employees felt that they could not progress without a good level of English but did think that all senior management should know English because they are more in contact with Oxford and other people in different regions. On the other hand those employees who did not know English too well felt that it was discrimination to not be able to advance in your career if you do not speak English. They felt that even though OGB has four official languages, you still cannot apply to an international post without knowledge of English due to needing it for communications with headquarters. One employee stated the barrier of English by saying:

“The big language in OGB is English. If you don't speak English in OGB it is really a barrier to move up in your career. For me, OGB means English, to speak English”. (HR, WAF)

Other employees felt that native English speakers do not take into account non-native speakers:

“Native speakers have the assumptions that everyone needs to know English”. (Program Manager, LAC)

“In OGB headquarters, with British people, it is not that diverse and often we have meetings with only native English speakers. I sometimes feel intimidated by the level of English, and it gives me added stress. English is not my mother tongue, and sometimes I doubt my competence”. (HR, LAC)

The issue of native English speakers was very prominent when employees discussed the headquarters of OGB, located in England. Employees felt that it was not fair that non-English speakers needed to learn English to communicate with headquarters, when the headquarter staff could instead try to learn a foreign language. Employees in the subsidiaries felt that the headquarters had no interest in other languages and did not take into account non-native speakers. Many employees expressed frustration when speaking

with native English speakers, because they spoke too fast and used difficult terminology. One employee explained:

“People in Oxford cannot speak Spanish, and the lack of competence is a real problem. People in Oxford don’t even think about that others who come there from the LAC region are speaking in their non-native language”. (RSMT, LAC)

Overall in OGB there are conflicting views on how English should be used in relation to other languages. Most employees felt that English is important but that at times it takes too much dominance over other languages and prevents employees from having the same information or opportunities.

4.3.3 The language competences of OGB employees

Language competence is important in the matter of OGB, as all employees have a high competence in many different languages and unlike many organizations most employees speak at least two languages on a daily basis. According to Kiesling (2005), language competence can be defined as the knowledge of the grammar of a language as well as knowing the right way to use the language to enable others to understand. Charles (2007) states how language competence is seen as an individual trait, whereas currently it should be seen as an organizational issue because of the enhanced need for employees to possess language skills to be able to communicate effectively. Employees who feel they lack adequate language skills to communicate with others can feel defeated and unmotivated, causing lower performance and job satisfaction (Charles, 2007).

According to the regions studied, employees in the LAC region mainly speak Spanish and English, in the WAF region French and English and in the SAF region Portuguese and English. Each person recruited to work at OGB stated that English was a necessary language to know and additional languages depending on the post were either mandatory or preferred. The survey results show that in LAC and SAF a small percentage of respondents do not speak any English. In all three regions the most respondents spoke good to fluent English. In the LAC region a few respondents spoke no Spanish and most indicated that

Spanish is their mother tongue, except for those not from Spanish speaking countries. In WAF and SAF only a small percentage knew some Spanish. In LAC French was spoken as a mother tongue by participants from Haiti or employees who were from French speaking countries outside of the region. Half of the respondents indicated to not speaking French at all. In WAF half of the participants indicated that they were fluent in French, only a small percentage stated that it was their mother tongue. French is often spoken by Francophone countries, but it is not the mother tongue of people as the countries in WAF have many local languages. In SAF only a small percentage indicated to knowing some French. Portuguese was spoken as a mother tongue by Brazilian respondents, but otherwise most of the participants indicated to not speaking any Portuguese. In WAF only a small percentage knew Portuguese, mostly none. In SAF the respondents from Portuguese speaking countries were fluent or it is their mother tongue, some respondents indicated knowing some Portuguese, but a large percentage did not know any. A few employees expressed their relationship with the use of English by saying:

“In English, I feel that I am speaking like a 12 year old”. (Program Manager, LAC)

“You need a good level of English to communicate your position and important issues in English to Oxford”. (Communications, LAC)

Some participants mentioned human resource (HR) complications that can arise from inability to communicate effectively. An example given was that if a person’s manager speaks a different language from the national language of the staff, there could be issues in communicating poor performance issues if one has to do so through a translator. Some others stated that you may not be able to communicate your ideas effectively to your supervisor in a foreign language and therefore it can affect perception of performance. One employee explained:

“For senior positions people should speak the local language and English. The local language is not enough because the managers have to communicate with headquarters and English is not enough because they have to communicate with local staff”. (HR, WAF)

At OGB, it would seem that some employees who had more language competences were often involuntarily placed as “language nodes”, meaning they became the communication channel for two different people communicating with each other (Feely & Harzing, 2003). This took place in LAC and WAF, where employees who knew some language that others did not would ask them to either help them translate emails. Most respondents in all regions felt that translation was a key issue in their day-to-day work.

Respondents believed that the current recruitment approach of prioritizing language skills over technical skills or vice versa was problematic. Respondents felt that prioritizing competences should depend on the particular role, whereas one respondent stated that technical skills can always be learned, but that learning a language is a difficult journey. Some respondents mentioned that recruiting for language competence should be important, because language skilled staff can be an asset in many of the countries that use multiple languages at work. A key issue was staff being hired for senior positions because of their technical skills but without any local language skills, causing difficulties in communicating with staff. Some staff felt that this kind of situation should be prevented from happening in the future. One respondent felt Oxfam should invest more in developing language competence if they chose to hire solely on the basis of technical skills. In addition, it was felt that Oxford should have more language competent staff and not only speak English, because if Oxfam states that it is a multilingual environment then that should also be present in the headquarters. One employee stated the issue with hiring and English:

“Most of the time when you apply for the jobs at OGB the recruiting manager only speaks English, so you can’t get the job. Sometimes you have a really good candidate who knows all about the technical side but can’t communicate in English and you won’t hire him. You will hire the one with fewer skills but with the knowledge of English”. (IT, WAF)

This section provided a look into the views of employees on the official languages, the use of English and their own language competences. To sum up, most employees were satisfied that the organization was linguistically diverse, but felt that the role of English was still too dominant. Most employees felt that language competence was important and that

employees needed assistance in being comfortable expressing their ideas in foreign languages.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The findings showed a wide variety of opinions on the issue of language and communication. All employees did have an opinion on the matter and that the topic of language and communication was relevant for them. In internal communications it would seem that there was difficulty in choosing the language to communicate in, or receiving messages in a language one did not understand. In addition most employees felt that OGB needed to show it was more multilingual by creating more of equality between the official languages, and not placing so much emphasis on English. The findings mostly related to the languages used in situations or with certain audiences, the status of the four official languages, the use of English, translations and the language competence of the employees. The main findings will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, Discussion and Recommendations.

5. DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will connect the findings to the research questions and theoretical framework presented for this thesis. The main aim of this thesis was to examine the perspectives employees have on the role of language in internal communications. In Chapter 2, the literature review presented the previous research conducted on internal communication and language. In Chapter 4, the findings of the interviews, focus groups and surveys were identified according to the theoretical framework. In this section the research objective and questions will be analyzed and answers will be provided.

The main goal of this thesis was to examine the effect that language has on internal communication within a global organization from the perspective of employees. This was further defined by the main research question and two sub-questions, which were:

What is the role of language in internal communication in a global organization?

- How do four official languages operate in a global organization?
- What are the perceptions of employees on language choice and use in internal communication?

5.1 The role of language in internal communication

OGB is a multinational organization that has a multinational workforce and the communication that takes place is intercultural, where employees of different nationalities and locations are communicating with one another (Stohl, 2001). OGB describes itself as being a global organization; however, based on the research of their organization and internal communications, they still have a process ahead of becoming global. A global organization does not identify itself with a certain nation (Stohl, 2001), which is not the case with OGB at the moment as their headquarters are in the UK and they identify with the nation through being a registered charity there and using English for formal documentation. In addition a global organization in the aspect of communication would create more of a global network, meaning that communication would flow effectively within the organization (Stohl, 2001). This is an aspect that OGB has to work on as their internal

communication is not flowing as efficiently as it could, which may be because of operating in multiple languages.

5.1.1 What is the role of language in internal communication in a global organization?

The main research question can be answered by the findings presented in sections 4.2 and 4.3. The role of language in internal communication can be discussed by identifying the different aspects mentioned by the employees. The main role of language is that it enabled or hindered communication within the organization. The issues that employees identified as a result of the issue of language were: the lack of translation of all documents, poor quality of translations, intranet not equal in all official languages, translation of emails by employees and the lack of sharing information.

Employees felt that the lack of formal documents available in all official languages was an important issue. Most employees indicated that the amount of formal documents and policies in another language than English was very minimal. Employees felt that language became a barrier to knowledge as the same amount of information was not available to all employees. This was seen through the policies that were sent to each region and the documents and information available on the intranet. In this instance the role of language in internal communications is either being a barrier to knowledge or allowing the sharing of knowledge if conducted in multiple languages.

In addition employees in all regions mentioned the issue of emails, sending and receiving them. In LAC, the main issue was the language the emails needed to be in and the language they in reality were in. The emails in LAC that are sent to the whole region are required to be sent in all four languages but there were many cases when they were not. Therefore, emails were sent in Spanish to the whole region, with some employees merely deleting the message because of lack of comprehension. Also sometimes emails were just not forwarded at all to other employees because of the lack of time to translate them. Another issue with emails was when corporate emails were sent, they were first sent in English and a few days later a translation would arrive, causing employees to receive information at different times.

In connection to the availability of documents and corporate emails, was the issue of translation. Translation was brought up by all employees because they found most translations to be of poor quality and those that knew English often read the English version because they could not understand the translated one. Most corporate translations are conducted by outsourced translators, who often translated word per word instead of the context. Employees found this a problem, because if one did not understand English, they might receive poor information from the translated version. In addition translations were conducted by employees themselves, and they felt that unnecessary time was spent on translating instead of doing work.

A final point in the role of language was how it played a part in knowledge communication. Without a shared and understood language, the ability to share information does not exist, which can affect the functioning of an organization. Therefore, the availability of documents in different languages, the sharing of emails, the quality of translations all tie into the fact of knowledge communication. The role that language plays in internal communication is the facilitator of information sharing and the ability of an organization to effectively communicate internally. Without a shared language or languages, the amount of information shared is minimal and in turn the amount of internal communication can be near to non-existent. Language as can be seen from the findings of this thesis is an important factor in the success of internal communication.

5.1.2 How do four official languages operate in a global organization?

This sub-question was chosen, as organizations operating with four official languages are extremely rare. From the data presented in the findings, it can be seen that having four official languages is a complicated matter. According to the research in this study the four official languages were chosen originally as the most used within the organization and for the organization to be more linguistically diverse. The intentions of choosing to have four official languages were good, but in reality it may not be functioning as originally assumed. It would be seem that the four languages were chosen to try to include as many employees as possible, but in reality there is still a lot of exclusion taking place as there is an

inequality in the status of the four languages. The main issues involved with the official languages was that they do not operate equally, that English is dominant, that there is confusion as to which language to use and the quality of translations.

The way that the four official languages are currently operating in the OGB environment, is that English is the dominant language used for headquarter communications and the language that is mostly used for formal documentation. Then the other three languages, Spanish, French and Portuguese are mainly used in the countries where they are spoken. It would seem however, that in the LAC region the status of Spanish has become more equal to English as most of the countries in the region are Spanish-speaking. This is not helping OGB be a multilingual organization as Spanish is merely taking the position that English used to have.

The idea of having four official languages was to be more multilingual and allow for more diversity. In reality it is not working as such because employees are feeling that the organization is saying that there are four official languages but in practice they are not actually working in four. In the case of OGB, the fact that they have four official languages has caused feelings of inequality and confusion among employees. Employees are feeling as though some languages may be preferred over others and are confused as to what language they should be communicating in. If OGB had just one official language, it might take away some of the feelings of inequality and confusion, but it would decrease the diversity of the organization, which may not be good. Therefore, to answer the sub-question, four official languages can operate in a global organization but in this case they are not operating equally and there is a lot of confusion involved.

5.1.3 What are the perceptions of employees on language choice and use in internal communication?

This sub-question definitely comprises a variety of information into the choice and use of languages by different employees. The choice and use of language in this study was examined by looking at which of the four official languages employees use most in each region according to the following factors: 1) at work, 2) by communication channel, and 3)

by communication audience. The main aspects was the dominance of English, the fact that employees use two or more languages daily, translation issues and problems with languages in meetings and other situations.

Overall 73% of employees use English at work on a regular basis and see it as a necessary language to know. The other official languages are used mostly depending on the region, with Spanish mostly used in LAC, French in WAF and Portuguese in SAF. LAC is the only region with all four languages playing a part in communications. From the study it was apparent that most employees use at least two languages at work. Most employees did not find the use of two languages an issue, if they felt they were proficient in those languages. There were some employees who felt that in certain regions you needed to know a certain language to be able to communicate as well as in certain positions you needed to know certain languages. Mostly employees who did not know English felt it was a barrier to their work and career progression, when needing to communicate with other regions or headquarters or thinking about advancing within the organization. On the other hand there were English proficient employees who felt that if they knew the local language where they worked, whether it was Spanish etc., it would assist them in their work.

Language choice and use was also examined according to communication channel, trying to analyze whether employees used certain languages with certain channels. The communication channels that were mostly mentioned were meetings, video conferences, written reports, emails and telephone conversations. The language choice in meetings depended on who was participating in the meeting and where the meeting was held. The meetings that were held in English were those at headquarters, WAF regional meetings, SAF regional meetings, and meetings where there were some English speakers present. The meetings that were held in other languages were LAC regional meetings which were held in Spanish, even though some participants did not speak Spanish, some WAF RC meetings, and other country specific meetings. From the data obtained it would seem that no matter what language the meeting was in there was always somebody that did not understand due to the variety of nationals of the staff. The most interesting find was the use of multiple

languages during most meetings, even if they were held in a specific language, someone might reply in their native language and sometimes people understood and other times someone would translate. A good example was the meetings in WAF, where employees sometimes held meetings in both languages with everybody speaking either French or English. This allowed employees to feel more comfortable in speaking at a meeting if they could use their language of choice. This obviously means that all participants needed to have some comprehension of both languages in order to participate.

It was interesting to see that most of the written documents conducted at OGB were written in English because of the need to send them to headquarters. In addition some employees wrote them in English in case they were ever going to be sent to headquarters, it was easier just to write them in English to begin with. Some employees felt that the language used in written reports had to be English; otherwise the information could not be shared or would not be shared. So in the case of written reports, employees had less flexibility in the choice of language. The issue of emails was mentioned earlier in the role of language in internal communications, but mainly employees felt it was an important issue as there was a lot of confusion in the choice of language for emails.

The language of choice depending on audience was very similar throughout all the regions, indicating that there is some pattern of the choice of language and audience. Almost all employees indicated English as the language used for communications with headquarters and many stated that there was no choice in the matter as headquarters only spoke English. English was also mainly used when communicating with colleagues from other regions, as it was stated as being the only shared language. As for other audiences, it mostly depended on the language of the country working in, with the exception of the senior management team, who sometimes only spoke English. The local languages of the subsidiaries were mostly used in communications with managers and colleagues.

5.2 Recommendations for OGB

The issue with OGB, its four official languages and internal communication, is the lack of defined rules for employees to abide by or refer to. The fact that OGB has four official languages, is already a cause for confusion as there needs to be defined rules as to when each language can be used or if all languages can be used equally. In addition the main issues that employees felt were the lack of coherency in available documents and translations. Therefore the recommendations of this thesis based on the results of this study are:

- Create an official language policy and guidelines
 - Headquarters needs to decide with the individual regions as to how each language is used and when.
 - To avoid confusion, employees need to know what language they can use.
 - To save costs OGB could arrange that the four official languages operate on an official level and that each region could then have different languages in use. This may affect information sharing inter-regionally, but would allow intra-regionally sharing.
 - If English were chosen as the official language, it would minimize translation costs, but it would decrease the amount of multilingual staff and it would enhance the costs of language training.
- Ensure documents are available in all four official languages
 - If OGB continues to have four official languages and they want them to operate equally, they need to then translate all documents into all four languages.
- Increase the quality of translations and their timeliness
 - If documents are translated, they should be translated accurately. Poor translations will only cause misunderstandings.
- Set guidelines for the languages used in specific internal communication situations
 - Each region should set guidelines as to what languages should be used and when, and ensure that these guidelines are realistic.

- Increase document and information sharing within the organization
 - Documents should be more frequently shared and if in another language, headquarters should provide for translations as knowledge sharing is important
- Provide language training, to allow employees to gain language competencies
 - In addition to translations, language training could be provided for employees to enhance their abilities and be able to communicate more effectively
- Create coordinated communication strategies for all regions and for corporate, and coordinate the development as an organization
 - Internal communication and external communication policies and strategies are being developed for LAC and WAF as a complete communication strategy, which will hopefully assist the regions in their communication issues due to the different languages in use.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides the concluding aspects of this thesis. It summarizes the aims, methods and findings of the thesis. This chapter will recap the main points of the literature review in Chapter 2, and of the empirical findings in Chapter 4 and discussion in Chapter 5. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 6.1 explains the objective of this thesis, and the theory behind the thesis and section 6.2 describes the main findings of the study. Section 6.3 analyzes the thesis critically in relation to the research process and limitations. This section is concluded with section 6.4 presenting the suggestions for further research.

6.1 Research Summary

The aim of this thesis was to examine the role of language in internal communication within an organization, from the perspective of employees of the case organization. There is minimal research into how exactly language plays a part in internal communication, as previous studies have focused more on language diversity or corporate languages. The purpose of focusing specifically on internal communication was to see whether language does have an effect on internal communication and how employees use languages in internal communication situations.

The literature review of this thesis focused on providing insight into organizational communication, languages and communication as well as aspects of diversity. All these aspects are connected, as the background for the thesis is organizational communication and specifically language is studied in relation to it and diversity. Section 2.1 researched organizational communications by examining the different aspects related, which were internal, informal and formal communication as well as the channels of communication and knowledge communication. Section 2.2 further looked at communication through language, such as corporate languages and English as a lingua franca. Section 2.3 introduced the topic of diversity and how language and cultural diversity are present in an organization.

The theoretical framework followed the literature review, and provided the foundation for the research of this thesis. It showed how the umbrella area of study was internal communication, more specifically corporate communication, employee communication and

communication channels. Communication was then further looked at through the use and choice of languages, such as how the official languages functioned and how employees viewed language use. The framework then tied these two aspects together in the area of the case organization OGB, looking at how the different elements of language and communication function within OGB and its different parties.

The research process of examining the internal communication of OGB was conducted by focusing the study on the main research question and two sub-questions. The main research question that this thesis aimed to answer was: What is the role of language in internal communication in a global organization? This was followed by two sub-questions, which were: How do four official languages operate in a global organization? What are the perceptions of employees on language choice and use in internal communication? The answers to these questions were obtained through the focus group sessions, interviews, and online language survey

6.2 Main Findings

The main findings for this thesis were presented in detail in section 5.1, examined according to the research questions posed. A brief summary will be presented here about the main findings. The role of language in internal communication was found by studying the overall functioning of language in internal communications within the organization OGB. It would seem from the research that language does have a significant role in communications, by either enabling or hindering communications and causing confusion. The main issue brought up was the lack of a specific guide and structure to the use of languages within the organization and the lack of equality between the four official languages. In addition the lack of knowing which language to communicate in or having a shared language caused there to be a lack of sharing within the organization, and therefore hindering knowledge communication. In addition Feely and Harzing (2003) state how the effect that language can have on communications cannot be measured in money gained or lost, but rather on the positive or negative impact it can have on relationships, such as having employees feel insecure and distrustful, as well as causing a possible divide within

an organization. Therefore, if employees are feeling that they cannot communicate or are not receiving enough information, they may start feeling distrustful of the organization. This seemed to be appearing at OGB, as employees were feeling that the information was always mainly shared in English and not translated into the other official languages.

The operation of four official languages was significant for this thesis, as it is not commonly seen within organizations. From the findings it can be seen that having four official languages was difficult but that a majority of employees felt that they would rather have four languages than just one. The way that the four official languages currently operate within OGB is that English is the dominant language used for formal and corporate communications, and the other three are used in the countries where those languages are spoken. Therefore, it is possible to have four official languages but that there should be a better structure and guideline to their use.

The main issue that employees mentioned about the choice and use of languages at OGB was the dominance of English at OGB and the need to know English in order to progress within the organization. In addition they felt that information was not shared because not everything was translated. Also some employees would send emails in one language and the receiving audience may translate the email or just delete it, causing information not to be received. Meetings were also brought up as an issue, because some meetings were in English or another language, and some employees may not be proficient in that language and not be able to participate in meetings. Therefore, employees mostly felt the effects of language when trying to share information or progress in their careers.

The findings and recommendations of this thesis correlate with some of the previous researches on the topic matter. As presented earlier, Tourish and Hargie (2004), state how the effectiveness of an organization is tied to the success of information and knowledge sharing. From the main findings, it can be seen that the organization may not be as effective as it can be, since they are not sharing as much information as they could due to multilingualism. As Marschan et al. (2005) explain the lack of a common language makes sharing difficult, which is definitely the case at OGB. Furthermore, languages seem to be a

barrier in headquarter – subsidiary relationships as mentioned by Harzing and Feely (2008), where a lack of a common language or one party using a foreign language can cause lack of communication and miscommunication issues. In the case of OGB, the language used for such communications is English, which means that only those that are proficient in English have the possibility to communicate with headquarters. The findings from this study are similar to some of the findings of the Kone study by Marschan-Piekkari et al., (1999b), where communication was prevented due to a lack of a shared language and that those who had language competences in certain languages could understand more and communicate with different units. Marschan et al. (1997) presented the “language node” aspect, where an employee would act as a translator for others, which is definitely an active function at OGB and conducted by many employees on a daily basis. The one organization that was most similar to OGB is the EU, studied by Fidrmuc (2007), where they have 20+ official languages. The only difference is that the EU has more monetary flexibility than OGB and that having four languages may not be monetarily positive for OGB in the long run. This is where the issue of being an NGO comes to play, as OGB has a strict amount of funds available and need to ensure that funds are being used for the most appropriate causes. Overall the findings of OGB correlate to some of the previous studies mentioned but also showed some new findings about language and communication and how in reality four official languages do operate within one organization.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

This section will discuss the limitations of this study and analyze the study from a critical perspective. As this study focuses on language and communication, it would be possible to examine a far larger scope as there are many areas of communication that language can have an impact on. The project conducted for OGB focused on language diversity within the organization, such as the language competence of employees, the need for language training and the effect of languages on career progression. The scope of this thesis needed to be narrowed down into one specific area, which is why it was chosen to focus on the role of language in internal communications, excluding external communication aspects. Also

this study focuses on spoken or written communication, as non-verbal communication would have required more analysis and expanded the scope too much.

Previous research conducted on languages and communication (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004; Fredriksson et al., 2006; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Marscha et al., 1997; Marshcan-Piekkari et al., 1999a, 1999b; Vaara et al., 2005; Welch et al., 2005), have focused on studying private sector organizations. The results of these studies were used as the basis of the literature review, as there is a lack of studies conducted on NGOs. Therefore, one limitation is the lack of comparable studies to this one. However, the NGO status was not specifically identified as a factor, as the operations of the organization were not examined and the environment was found similar enough to those in earlier literature.

One limitation is that this was a qualitative study based on one case organization, which means that the results may not apply to other organizations. This limits the possibility to generalize the results, but possible similar trends in other organizational environments can be discussed. In addition since OGB is an NGO, it may indirectly have some effect on the type of results obtained. It could be that if the same study was conducted in a private sector organization, the results may differ because of the purpose of the organization. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the results are applicable to other organizations. However, the results can be used as a reference point on the role of language in internal communication.

Also the data collection methods need to be analyzed, as some of the focus group data did not correlate with the language survey data. This could be due to the specific regions answering the questionnaire or the difference in the method. Also the focus groups and interviews were only conducted in two regions, whereas the third region was only included in the survey, which could have had an effect on the results. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, it was felt important to complement the qualitative interview and focus group data with a quantitative survey. The case study method was chosen to try to gain comprehensive results, as explained by (Ghauri, 2004), that it is a good way to gain a variety of information in a cross-cultural setting.

In addition, it is important to mention the language aspect of conducting research, as mentioned in section 3.2.4. Marschan-Piekkari and Reis (2004) state how a multilingual approach to data gathering is important to try to gain valid and trustworthy data. In this study, a limitation to conducting a multilingual approach was that OGB said that the focus group sessions and interviews could be held in English; because employees spoke English and it would limit the need to find funding for an interpreter. This could have possibly decreased the amount of information obtained as most interviewees spoke English as a second language.

Despite several limitations, it can still be stated that this study was able to provide results that are reliable and valid. This can be determined from the points mentioned in 3.4, as the research methods were analyzed and justified and for the most part the different results supported one another.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

There are many different areas from this study that could be further developed and researched. From the results obtained, it can be seen that there is an abundance of different issues involved in the role of language in communication. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, there is a limited amount of research specifically focusing on the role of language in communications and none that have been conducted in the context of an NGO.

Based on the results obtained by this study, five areas of further research possibilities have been identified. Firstly, this study focused on the perspective of the employees of the organization, but to gain another viewpoint, this thesis could be conducted from the perspective of headquarters. The perspective of headquarters on the matter of language and communication is not addressed in this thesis. Secondly, this thesis focused on internal communication, where some external communication matters were discussed during the research process but not included in this thesis. Therefore, the role of language could be analyzed in relation to external communication, which could provide for an interesting addition to this research. Thirdly, the issue of having multiple corporate languages could be addressed in more details, conducting studies on how multiple languages affect corporate

communication. Fourthly, the matter of translations was mentioned often during the research and finding of this thesis, that it could be further investigated. Fifthly and finally, knowledge communication and the effect that language has on it could be a viable study approach, as it was already seen from this study that language can enable or hinder the sharing of information. This thesis focused on the role of language in internal communications from an employee's perspective, obtaining important and valid results to be used for further research and to be expanded into further possibilities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Focus group composition

Nationality	Sex	Mother tongue	Function	Years at Oxfam
Mexican	F	Spanish	Administration	1
Mexican	F	Spanish	HR	7
Mexican	F	Spanish	Administration	4.5
Mexican	M	Spanish	IT	10
Mexican	F	Spanish	Administration	1
French	F	French	HR	4
Mexican	F	Spanish	HR	4
Spanish	M	Spanish	Logistics	3
Mexican	F	Spanish	Administration	2.5
American/Mexican	F	Spanish/English	Administration	7.5
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Communications	12
Ugandan	F	Atso/Luganda/English	Campaigns	1.5
Dutch	F	Dutch	Program	2
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Administration	5
Niger	F	Djerma/French	HR	4
Mexican	M	Spanish	Finance	7
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Program	9
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Administration	3
Benin	M	Dendi/French	IT	2
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Program	4
English	F	English	Program	1
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Funding	2.5
Senegalese/Mali	M	Bamabara/French	IT	4
Senegalese	M	Wolof/French	Finance	2

Appendix 2: Focus group session questions

Language diversity, Time: 45-60mins

Explain that we will be discussing ten questions relating to language use and competence in the workplace. This means what languages are used, how and when they are used and whether employees have the necessary language competences.

1. Do the four official languages, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese operate equally in the LAC/WAF region?
2. What are your language competences, mother tongue?

3. Which languages do you mostly use at work? Do you use them equally?
4. Which languages do you consider necessary to know for your work?
5. Do you consider English a necessary language to know? If yes or no, why?
6. How do you choose which language to use? Does it depend on the person or situation? Country, region, headquarters?
7. What is the language used in a meeting with people from the LAC/WAF region? Other regions? What are some issues that have been a problem during meetings?
8. Do you translate from one language to another at work? Is this done for other colleagues? Is this done for formal reports? Which languages do you translate?
9. Do you think language training is important for OGB to have? How would you like the training to take place?
10. Are there any language issues that you would like to mention?

Appendix 3: Interview Composition

Nationality	Sex	Mother tongue	Function	Years at Oxfam
Chilean	F	Spanish	Program	6
Nicaraguan	M	Spanish	Program	10
British	M	English	Humanitarian	1.5
French	F	French	HR	4
Spanish	M	Spanish	Communications	5
American/Mexican	F	Spanish/English	Administration	7.5
Mexican	F	Spanish	Administration	4.5
Columbian	M	Spanish	Risk Management	7
Mexican	M	Spanish	IT	1
British/Brazilian	F	Portuguese/English	Funding	11
Senegalese	F	Serere/French	Humanitarian	4
Guatemalan	M	Spanish	Risk management	2
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Procurement	6
British	F	English	Program	1
Dutch	F	Dutch	Program	2
British	F	English	Campaigns	3
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Administration	5
Sierra Leone	M	Kono/English	Management	4
Senegalese	M	Pular/French	Program	3
Indian	F	Bengali/English	Program	3
Senegalese	F	Wolof/French	Communications	12

Appendix 4: Interview Questions

1. Name, nationality, position, base location, work experience within OGB
2. What is your mother tongue? What are your language competences?
3. In your role as a _____ which languages do you mostly use and consider necessary?
4. In your role as a _____ what level of English is required? Do you think this a necessary expectation and why?
5. In your role as _____ how do choose which language to use with country/within region/other regions/headquarters?
6. Do you encounter any difficulties in relation to language? How do you manage those difficulties?
7. What language(s) do you use in a meeting with people from the LAC/WAF region? Other regions? Other countries? What are some issues that have been a problem during meetings?
8. As a native (country, language) how has this impacted on working relations and communication in LAC/WAF?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about language diversity or any other comments?

Appendix 5: Oxfam GB Language Audit Questionnaire

Survey of OGB employees on language use and competence

Personal information						
1 What is your gender?	Female			Male		
2 Which category best describes your age at your most recent birthday?	20 years or younger	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 years or older
3 What is your nationality? (The passport you carry)						
4 Which level are you currently working in?						
Senior level manager (Grade A & B) Middle manager (Grade C) Advisor Other line manager Support staff function Other, please specify						
5 Which of the following best describes your role?						
Admin, Communications & campaigns, Finance, Funding, Human Resources, Logistics, Program, Program Technical (e.g. PHEs), Other, please specify						
6 Where are you based?						
LAC Regional Centre Office		West Africa Regional Centre Office				
Barbados		Chad				
Bolivia		Ghana				
Brazil		Liberia				
Chile		Mali				
Colombia		Niger				
Guatemala		Nigeria				
Haití		Senegal				

Honduras		Sierra Leone	
Nicaragua			
Peru			
Other, please specify			
7 Are you on foreign assignment / secondment?	Yes / No		
8 If on foreign assignment/secondment, which country is your permanent base in?			
9 How long have you worked for Oxfam?	Less than 2 years	2-5	6-10 More than 10 years
10 What is your highest level of education received?	Doctor's degree, Master's degree, Bachelor's degree, Polytechnic, Vocational school, Upper secondary school, Secondary school, Other, please specify		

11 We are interested in your language capabilities. How would you assess your own competence in the following languages? (please tick the appropriate box for each language)	None	Some	Moderate	Good	Fluent	Mother tongue
English - written						
spoken						
French -written						
spoken						
Portuguese - written						
spoken						
Spanish - written						
spoken						
Arabic - written						
spoken						
Other(s), please specify						
written						
spoken						

12 When recruited to OGB, how was your language competence evaluated?	Application form	Recruitment interview	Self-evaluation	Written test	Spoken test	No evaluation
13 What was the language for each of the following:	English	Spanish	French	Portuguese	Arabic	Other, please specify
Advertisement for the position						
Application form						
Interview						
Assessment						

Language use at work								
14 Please indicate how often you use each of the language(s) in your current position at work (please tick the appropriate box)								
	Never	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Few times a year			
English - written								
spoken								
French - written								
spoken								
Portuguese - written								
spoken								
Spanish - written								
spoken								
Arabic - written								
spoken								
If other(s) please specify								
written								
spoken								
15 If English is not your mother tongue for how many years have you used it at work?			Less than 2 years	2-4	4-6	6-8	8-12	12 years or more
Do you consider English a necessary language at work?				Yes/No				

17 What is the primary language you use for your communication with each of the following groups at work? (please tick the most appropriate box for each group)							
	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic	Other(s)	N/A
OGB Headquarters							
OGB Regional Senior Management Team/Country Director							
Line Manager							
Teams within OGB							
OGB country colleagues							
OGB colleagues in other regions							
Partner organizations							
Beneficiaries							
Other(s) please specify							
18 Which languages do you typically use in the following situations at work?							
	English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Arabic	Other(s)	N/A
In meetings							
In email correspondence							
In telephone conversations							
In internal presentations							
In social communications (coffee breaks)							
In video conferences							
In written reports							
If other(s) please specify							
19 Are you interested in participating in OGB language training?	Yes/No						
20 What form of training would you like?	Online lessons, Classroom language lessons, self-reading, other						

21 Please rate the following statements by marking the appropriate box	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
1. OGB has encouraged me to improve my language competence						
2. Attention is paid to language diversity at OGB						
3. Language training has been provided by OGB						
4. Language competence is important for career development in OGB						
5. English is seen as the official language of OGB						
6. Employees who speak English have more opportunities at OGB						
7. Lack of competence in English has been a barrier in my work						
8. Colleagues with no language competence in my unit need help from others						
9. My colleagues have better language competencies than I do						
10. Translating for colleagues is something that I have done						
11. I communicate more often in my mother tongue than in any other language						
12. Formal company information should be available in the language of the country I work in						
13. My mother tongue is the official language of the country I work in						
14. Official documents are translated well into the language of the country I work in						

15. OGB should continue to have four corporate languages						
<p>22 Have you had any difficulties at work due to language issues? If so, what?</p> <p>23 Does your work involve translation of any kind, either for your own purposes or to assist a colleague? If so, between which languages do you translate?</p> <p>24 Is language training included your PDP (personal development plan)? If so, what language(s) and have you already had language training?</p> <p>25 If there are local dialects in your region, do you feel that they are represented at OGB? If not, should they be?</p> <p>26 Are there any language or communication aspects you would change at OGB or would like to see a change in?</p> <p>27 Please state anything else you would like to say about language use and competence at Oxfam GB</p>						