TRAINING THE OFFICE POLYGLOT

An explorative study on language training in MNCs

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ABSTRACT OF
BACHELOR'S THESIS

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Objectives
This study aims to shed light on the phenomenon of language training in Multinational Corporations in order to determine (1) typical outcomes of language training, and (2) factors conducive towards said outcomes. It also attempts to find frame the relationship between factors and outcomes to better understand the dynamics of language training.

Summary
For this study, five employees in Multinational Corporations who had received language training, and one employee who had undertaken personal study efforts were interviewed to obtain perceptions on factors and outcomes of language training. Findings were coded and themes formed. Finally, a conceptual framework for the dynamics of language training was deduced and the practical implications of the findings discussed.

Conclusions
The outcomes of functional work communication, social integration and comfort with using target language were identified as typical outcomes of language training. Meanwhile, the factors of motivation, self-efficacy and optimism, personal tutorage, immersive environment, learning atmosphere, support and accessibility were identified as important input factors that were conducive towards said outcomes. Motivation was further found to be a mediating factor between factors and outcomes.

Key words:
Language training, international, training transfer, multinational corporations, explorative research, interview, content analysis
Language: English

Grade:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Language is an increasingly central issue faced by Multinational Corporations (MNCs). Notably, it has been found to be a key issue in the horizontal communications among units in an MNC, which is associated with the creation and transfer of knowledge (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2014), utilization of subsidiary competencies, and decision-making coordination among lower levels of an organization (Charles and Marschan-piekkari, 2002). On an individual team level, language barriers can have implications on key issues such as trust formation (Tenzer, Pudelko and Harzing, 2014). As such, it is evident that language management is a key aspect of any MNC's human resources (HR) policy.

In language management, HR in MNCs have a variety of tools available, including language-specific recruitment, language training, and foreign transfers. Training in particular is necessary when the objective is improving the language proficiency of existing employees. This could occur for a variety of reasons, including the adoption of a foreign language as an MNC's official corporate language (Charles and Marschan-piekkari, 2002; Mikitani, 2016), and the expatriation of employees for expansion or even career development purposes (Fumuto, 2011; cited in Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2015). Some companies simply respond by sponsoring language training and making it widely available, as seen with German Multinational Siemens, which allowed all of its employees to learn multiple languages at the company's expense (Lester, 1994). However, the probability of non-completion is high and the benefits to the company unclear and ambiguous (Charles and Marschan-piekkari, 2002). Unclear training benefits are not however specific to language training. In HR literature, a "transfer problem" has long been observed (Baldwin and Ford, 1988; Clarke, 2002; Burke and Hutchins, 2008), highlighting a disconnect between training expenditure and actual organizational outcomes. Georgenson (1982) cited in (Grossman and Salas, 2011) found that only 10 percent of training expenditures transferred to job outcomes. In response to this, various studies have been undertaken with the goal of identifying

factors that support transfer (Axtell *et al.*, 1997; Gaudine and Saks, 2004; Chiaburu and Marinova, 2005). However, little has been done in this regard with the specific context of language training.

1.2 Research Problem

As earlier noted, language training is an expensive investment with uncertain benefits. This is partly due to the inherent difficulty in language acquisition as a skill, but also partly due to the lack of research into corporate language training in so far as defining measurable outcome is concerned. Indeed, there is dearth of research on this subject, with most research approaching either training generally (Baldwin and Ford, 1988), or language from a strategic, organizational perspective (Marschan, Welch and Welch, 1997; Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2015). A better understanding of language training is thus necessary to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate investment in this field.

1.3 Research Questions

In relation to the problem above, this study aims to answer two research questions:

1. What are typical outcomes of language training in MNCs?
2. What factors are conducive towards effective language training?

1.4 Research Objectives

As noted earlier, there is a research gap on the subject of language training in MNCs. This study aims to contribute towards the understanding of language training by firstly identifying: (1) Typical outcomes of language training, and (2) Factors conducive towards the attainment of said outcomes. These will be observed through exploring

trainee perceptions, drawing upon their insight as subjects of the training themselves. Through understanding these factors, it is hoped that HR policy will be better focused and planned to achieve desired outcomes.

1.5 Definitions

The following terms will be defined for the specific purposes of this thesis:

1. *Language training*

Language training will refer to any form of instruction provided by a company to its employees, with the purposes of enhancing the ability of said employee in a language other than his/her native language.

2. *Multinational Corporations (MNCs)*

An MNC can be any enterprise or corporation that conducts economic activities in at least one other country other than its home country.

3. *Training transfer*

As defined by Baldwin and Ford (1988):

> Positive transfer of training is defined as the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in a training context to the job.

4. *Language acquisition*

References to the term "acquisition" will imply Krashen's (1982) acquisition-learning distinction, by which acquisition refers to the implicit, subconscious process of gaining competence in a language, while learning refers to the conscious study of a language, for example through the study of grammar and rules.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To better understand the factors affecting language training, the field of training transfer in human resources (HR) was consulted, as it is a closely related and much more developed field than language training specifically. The entire body of literature is organized well by the framework created in Baldwin and Ford's (1988) seminal work, which outlined the three main "training inputs" of trainee characteristics, training design and work environment. This model was later refined by Grossman and Salas (2011), who identified the factors that have been found to have the most consistent relationships with training transfer. This abbreviated set of factors is shown in Figure 1 below, and has served as the base on which further literature was identified. Identifying these key factors helped form what Eisenhardt (2011) refers to as "a priori constructs", guiding ideas which will help in identifying the actual factors conducive to language training.

Furthermore, second language acquisition literature was consulted, specifically to aid in the understanding of training design factors. This was done as second language teaching research offers and skill-specific insights that general training design factors do not.

2.2 Trainee characteristics

Trainee characteristics refer to factors conducive to training that are inherent in the trainee. They account for the bulk of variability within companies, where training design and the work environment are for the most part held constant.

Trainee Characteristics
- Cognitive ability
- Self-efficacy
- Motivation
- Perceived utility of
- training

Training Design
- Behavioral modeling
- Error management
- Realistic training environments

Learning & Retention

Generalization & Maintenance

Work Environment
- Transfer climate
- Support
- Opportunity to perform
- Follow-up
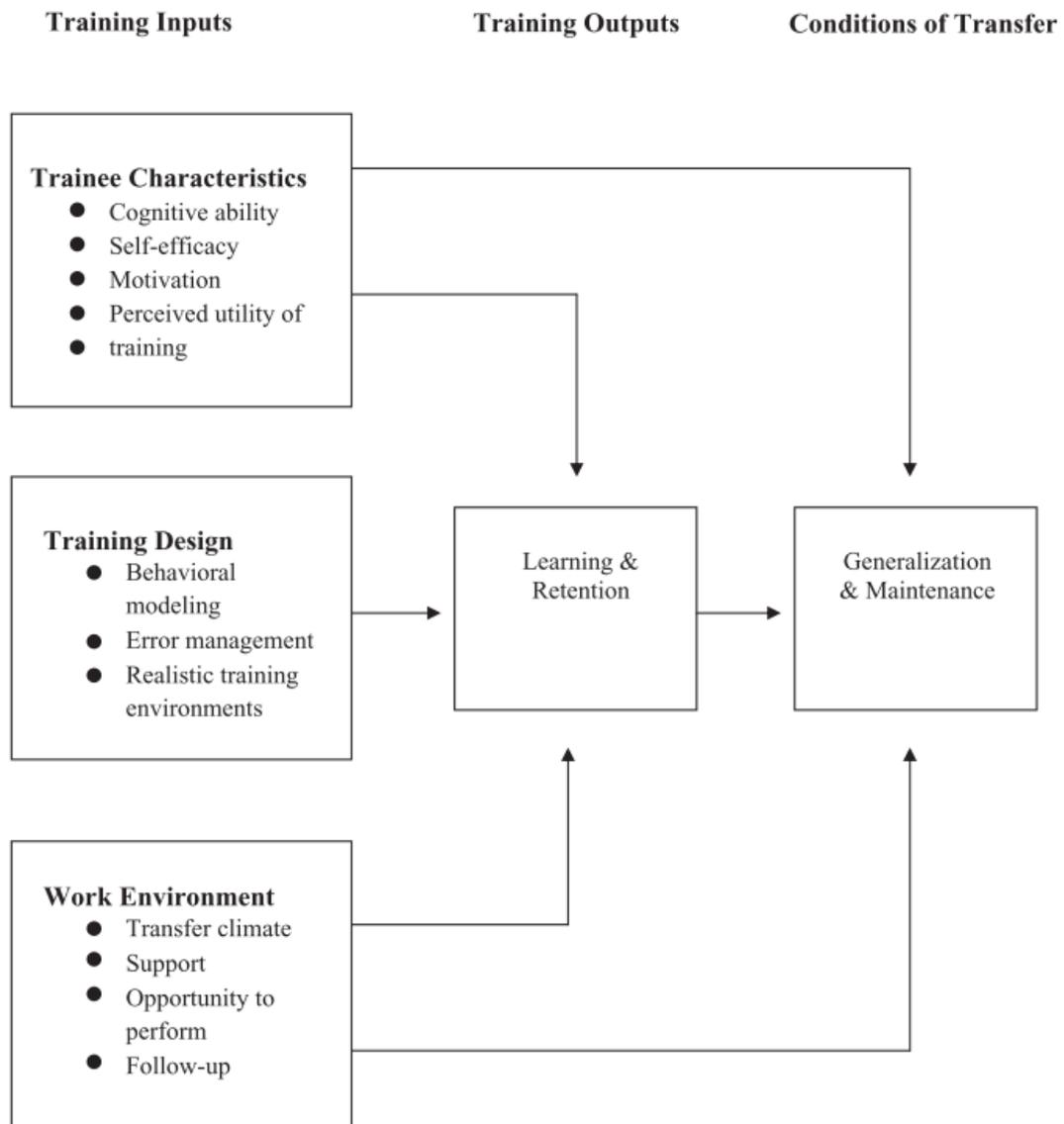
Figure 1: A Model of the Transfer Process. Adapted from Baldwin and Ford, 1988.

2.2.1 Cognitive ability

General cognitive ability is perhaps the most widely accepted factor (Baldwin and Ford, 1988; Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Grossman and Salas, 2011). Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) found that the better training results of Air Force trainees was linked to variations in attentional resource capacity, which in turn is linked to intelligence.

What is empirically found is intuitively true, as it is clear that a higher cognitive ability would lead to better processing, retaining, and generalizing of trained skills given a constant level of motivation.

2.2.2 Self-efficacy

In recent years, self-efficacy has been increasingly prominent as a cognitive motivator and regulator of action. Bandura (1982) defines self-efficacy as judgments that individuals make about their ability to perform given tasks. Its importance as a factor in not merely transfer but achievement is due to its diverse psychological effects. It influences the choice of pursuits and social milieus, goal setting, the choice between self-aiding and self-debilitating thinking processes, and ultimately persistence in hardship (Bandura and Wood, 1989). In transfer training literature, studies have consistently found self-efficacy to have a strong impact on transfer (John *et al.*, 1993; Holladay and Quiñones, 2003). As language learning is a large undertaking, it is clear that persistence in the face of obstacles is a key factor to improvement.

2.2.3 Motivation

Motivation is an especially important factor as it has been often found to be the critical factor in successful language acquisition (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, 2007). In transfer literature, many studies have used the concept of pre-training motivation as a proxy to transfer (Noe and Schmitt, 1986; Tracey, Tannenbaum and Mathieu, 2001; Chiaburu and Marinova, 2005). Among the antecedent factors found of pre-training motivation which have been tested and confirmed are career involvement, mastery-approach goal orientation, self-efficacy, and career planning. These are explained in greater detail in Table 1 below. The wide range of factors proposed clearly shows that motivation is a complex phenomenon; these problems are unfortunately compounded further due to the nature of language as a skill with close ties to our sense of identity (Norton, 2007). To make the abstract somewhat more concrete, (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003) define two forms of motivation orientation, integrative and

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instrumental. Integrative motivation is made up of both openness to the cultural context of a language and attitudes towards the learning situation. He postulates that motivation towards learning the language as a skill can promote the "acquisition of individual elements of the language", but that it is the cultural openness that facilitates higher levels of mastery, such as automaticity of thought. This can be contrasted with an instrumental motivation, which is related to career prospects and other more practical purposes. Furthermore, issues of identity-work can also have implications. Receptiveness to learning and hence motivation is likely to be higher when a trainee's desired identity is aligned with learning opportunities (Warhurst, 2016), for example if a trainee sees themselves as "change-oriented". While the theories of motivation are many and the factors broad, it can be summarized that motivation for language training in the workplace will revolve around some function of personal and career growth.

Factor	Description	Studies
Career involvement	The degree to which one's career is important to one's life.	Noe and Schmitt (1986), Tracey, Tannenbaum and Mathieu (2001)
Mastery-approach goal orientation	A focus on increasing learning, persisting on the face of failure and learning from mistakes.	Chiaburu and Marinova (2005)
Self-efficacy	One's capabilities to exercise control over events to accomplish desired goals.	Tracey, Tannenbaum and Mathieu (2001), Chiaburu and Marinova (2005)

| **Career planning** | The extent to which one strategically plans one's career. | Noe and Schmitt (1986) |

Table 1: Factors of pre-training motivation

2.2.4 Perceived utility of training

An interesting factor is the perceived utility of training. Burke and Hutchins (2007) synthesized extant literature on the topic as follows:

> *"Perceived value or utility of training can be influenced by trainees' evaluation of: (1) the credibility of the new skills for improving performance, (2) a recognized need to improve their job performance, (3) a belief that applying new learning will improve performance, and (4) the practicality of the new skills for ease of transfer."*

Generally speaking, trainees that perceive both the skill and the training as relevant to their career will be more successful in transferring the necessary skills. This has been confirmed in various studies (Axtell *et al.*, 1997; Lim and Morris, 2006). Perceived utility does seem to overlap with the concept of instrumental motivation from language motivation literature, but also extends to the trainee's view of the training itself, suggesting the need for some kind of composite factor in a model of language training effectiveness. This would be made of two parts, the career motivation aspect and the attitude aspect towards language training.

2.3 Training design

Training design refers to factors that are specific to the training process itself. In training transfer literature, the strategies of behavior modelling, error management and realistic training environments highlighted by Grossman and Salas (2011) are among

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the most prominent. However, in the specific context of language training, there are more appropriate alternatives in second language acquisition (SLA) literature. For example, "error management" is much better described by the grammar correction approach. As such, SLA literature was consulted for this section.

2.3.1 The grammar-translation approach

The grammar-translation approach is what comes to mind when a traditional classroom setting is mentioned. The principle characteristics of it are a detailed emphasis on grammar, focus on reading and writing over speaking, instruction through the learner's native language, deductive grammar teaching and accuracy of translation as a priority (Klee, Richards and Rodgers, 1986). By definition it fails to prepare students for the challenges of producing spoken language, which in the MNC business setting is perhaps most important.

Indeed, a distinction is often drawn between communicative and grammatical competence (Canale and Swain, 1980; Campbell and Wales, 2016). Among the key issues of this approach is the overemphasis on grammar correctness and form. Empirical studies provide evidence against grammar correction, with studies finding that students who did not receive grammar correction have more positive attitudes towards writing (Truscott, 1996), and that grammar correction had little to no impact on the reduction of surface errors and the promotion of higher-level writing (Kepner, 1991).

However, it is important to note the significance of individual variety as a factor in language acquisition, and it may very well be that certain individuals benefit from error-correction. Furthermore, whilst grammar correction is generally ineffective, grammar explanation can play a useful role in learning grammatical forms that are not easily induced (White, 1987 cited in Fotos and Ellis, 1991). Instruction in the native language of the student similarly is useful in situations where brief explanations are the most efficient path to comprehension (Klee, Richards and Rodgers, 1986). It is clear that

whilst the grammar-translation approach is flawed, there is value in leveraging the mature linguistic and cognitive capabilities of adult learners in certain situations to facilitate acquisition, through for example the use of their native language.

2.3.2 Oral approaches

Situational Language Teaching (SLT) and the Audio-Lingual method are methods that arose independently yet share many similarities, in that they were both conceived to address the need for greater conversational proficiency. Key features of both are the focus on sentence structures rather than grammar and intensive oral drilling (Klee, Richards and Rodgers, 1986), which suggest the view that language is a skill to be practiced and mastered rather than a subject to be studied. SLT was innovative in the use of meaningful situations to practice sentence structures. A form of the audio-lingual method, which was practiced in the US army was particularly successful, producing conversationally fluent speakers in six to nine months (Schueler, 2014). While these results are impressive, it has been argued that they are more due to the design of the program rather than pedagogical theory, as the program involved high contact hours with native speakers of the language with mature, highly motivated students (Klee, Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Nevertheless, the army method highlighted the importance of intensity and oral practice in second language learning.

2.3.3 The communicative approach

The communicative approach emerged in the late twentieth century and is the basis for most modern language instruction. It is best described as an approach rather than a method, as it has no specified methodology, only that communicative competence and meaning be made the goal of language teaching (Klee, Richards and Rodgers, 1986). This is in contrast to the focus on form and grammar of the grammar-translation approach, and the focus on sentence structure of the oral approaches. Classroom activities under the communicative approach involve completing tasks that are mediated through the language being learned, in the context of real world tasks.

Littlewood (1981) distinguishes between functional communication activities, such as comparing sets of pictures and noting differences, and social interaction activities, such as conversations and role plays. Research has generally found communicative approaches to be valuable; Savignon (1972) found that learners that spent an hour a week dedicated to communicative tasks fared better than those had had spent it doing oral-drilling or cultural learning on communicative tests on communicative tests, while results on grammatical tests was similar. Oller and Obrecht (1968) found that language drills were significantly more effective when language was related to communication. Conversely, evidence against the communicative approach was found by Palmer (1978), who noted that students who had communicative classroom activities did not perform better on communicative tasks than students who had standard grammatical approaches. However, it was highlighted that the students in the standard program had opportunities to practice communication outside of class. Thus it may be that the communicative approach has value in providing variety, after a certain point which there are diminishing returns.

2.3.4 Immersion environments

Another approach worthy of mention is that of using immersion environments. In particular, the increase in language skills of students who had studied abroad relative to their peers who had not, as measured by pre- and post- test scores, has been documented (Wilkinson, 1998). A combination of factors is responsible for this, a prime one being the increased opportunities of using the language, with some situations that force learners to use the language in order to accomplish daily tasks. Research has even found that immersion environments can inhibit the cognitive use of native languages as linguistic crutches (Linck, Kroll and Sunderman, 2010). In the context of MNCs, this makes a strong case for the language training of expatriates to be conducted in host countries rather than home countries.

2.4 Work environment

2.4.1 Transfer climate

Rouiller and Goldstein (1993) as cited in Grossman and Salas (2011) defined transfer climate as "observable or perceived situations in organizations that inhibit or facilitate the use of learned skills". It includes characteristics such as cues that prompts trainee to use new skills, peer and supervisory support and consequences, but is based on employee perceptions more than objective truth. As a composite factor it is made up of the various specific factors discussed below. However, it has been distinguished on the grounds that it has been found to strongly correlate with transfer outcomes (Clarke, 2002; Lim and Morris, 2006). Perhaps transfer climate has a cognitive effect on the self-efficacy of employees, serving as a variable that guides their beliefs as to whether or not transfer will be successful.

2.4.2 Support

Support refers to behaviors exhibited by people in the work environment that have a beneficial impact on transfer. In this context "people in the work environment" can be broadly broken down into supervisor and peers. Supervisors can support transfer through setting specific and difficult goals, providing timely feedback, giving recognition and encouragement, and modeling trained behaviors (Grossman and Salas, 2011). Kontoghiorghes (2001) identified supervisory support as one of the strongest factors affecting training retention after 3-6 months. Similarly, Clarke (2002) found a lack of reinforcement and feedback to be a key variable in transfer failure. However, owing to the broad nature of support and undoubtedly the many forms it can come in, not all of which are necessarily successful, there have been conflicting findings. Van der Klink, Gielen and Nauta (2001) failed to establish any link between supervisory support and enhanced transfer. While it is most likely that supervisory support aids transfer, it is likely only so if done right.

With the lens on language specifically, the social nature of language as a skill suggests that support is especially important. In one study, it was found that the support in the form of encouragement and timely correction provided by host families in language immersion programs was a key factor in linguistic development (Wilkinson, 1998). In an organizational context this could be in the form of positive attitudes towards the trainee's efforts, and perhaps even mentors fluent in the target language.

2.4.3 Opportunity to perform

Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve gives clear evidence as to the importance of practicing a skill after learning it to improve retention (Murre and Dros, 2015). Accordingly, Ford *et al.* (1992) identified opportunity to perform as a critical factor for transfer. Clarke (2002) similarly found that a lack of opportunities to perform was the most significant inhibitor to transfer, and recommended that managers decrease employee workloads to give them opportunities to practice new skills. On a related note, opportunities to perform naturally arise when the job has a real need for the skills being trained. Many studies have as such recommended the use of a transfer of training needs analysis prior to considering any training (Gaudine and Saks, 2004; Lim and Morris, 2006). In the context of language training, it is clear that this will translate to having an environment where the target language is frequently used. Literature on immersion environments support this (Wilkinson, 1998; Linck, Kroll and Sunderman, 2010).

2.5 Conclusion

From extant literature, it is clear that the training environment is a dynamic system affected by a multitude of factors, where the trainee, the training, and the organization all play crucial roles in determining successful transfer. With language training as the skill in question, these issues undoubtedly become even more challenging due to do complexity of language as a skill, and the high amount of motivation and persistence required to achieve any level of mastery. As such, HR plays a crucial decision-making

role, from recruitment and selection, to choosing the appropriate training methodology, and all the while fostering a supportive transfer climate. Through studying the relative importance of the factors affecting language training, it is hoped that some light is shed on the areas of particular importance, and thus where more attention should be focused.

3. Methodology

To address the two research objectives, ie. (1) to identify typical outcomes of language training and (2) to identify factors conducive towards the attainment of said outcomes, primary research was conducted. A qualitative approach was chosen, through conducting interviews with MNC employees who had received language training.

The qualitative approach chosen can be described to be a mix between a case study and a phenomenological approach. Case study research is a research strategy that focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings (Eisenhardt, 2011). In this case, each individual trainee's experience was treated as an individual case study, and was explored thoroughly to understand the factors present. Phenomenological research on the other hand is research that aims to describe a "lived experience" of a phenomenon (Waters, 2017). This study is phenomenological in the sense that it draws upon the experiences of recipients of language training.

The approach chosen for this study was largely based on Eisenhardt's (2011) approach of building theories from case studies, due to the exploratory nature of the research objectives. As she puts it, case studies are appropriate when "little is known about a phenomenon" because it does not rely on previous literature or prior empirical evidence. Furthermore, as Mintzberg (1979) argues, theory building requires "rich description, the richness that comes from anecdote". While quantitative data is very useful for validating hypotheses and eliminating bias, it is rich qualitative data that is required to form new perspectives and see connections where there is little existing

theory. Lastly, the close ties between empirical evidence and theory building ensures that any emergent theories are grounded in reality, and thus fit the goal of giving practical direction to HR practitioners on the issue of language training. Because of this case study approach, the research can be said to be fairly inductive in that it draws upon the experiences of each employee to form generalizations. However, it is also somewhat deductive in its use of a priori concepts of training transfer in informing the emergent findings.

3.1 Method

The findings of this study are drawn from a total of six qualitative interviews, of which five were conducted with employees at various MNCs who had received language training. The only exception was of an employee at a German MNC, who had not received training but rather learned through actively trying to speak the language. With the exception of the prior mentioned German MNC employee, who was interviewed over an instant messaging platform due to time constraints, the remaining employees were interviewed through Skype voice calls, each lasting about thirty minutes. All participants were asked to reflect on their experiences, describing their training/learning process, their training/learning outcomes and the key reasons for their success/failures. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed.

3.2 Sample and data collection

The sample used for this study was recruited was based on a mix of purposive and convenience sampling. The purposive aspect is evident from the criteria placed on interview subjects, that is, that they must be employees in MNCs who have underwent or are currently undergoing language training. Furthermore, employees from a wide range of backgrounds in different parts of the world were interviewed, in order to obtain a diverse range of perspectives to enhance the generalizability of any resultant theory.

The convenience element in the sampling is due to the lack of funding for this study, which led the author to utilize available connections to find leads on interview targets, rather than approach sampling more systematically, for example by contacting companies based on specific criteria.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured, and were constructed based on the overall research objectives while being informed by training transfer and second language acquisition literature. In summary, the participants were asked about four main areas. They were asked to (1) describe the training process undertaken to acquire a foreign language, (2) note what improvements (outcomes) were observed through their training process, (3) explore why they believe they made progress with the language (factors) and (4) elaborate on other experiences they had with learning languages. When being asked about factors, participants were also guided to discuss factors pertaining to each of the three categories informed by training transfer literature, these being trainee characteristics (Bandura, 1977; Axtell *et al.*, 1997), training design (Klee, Richards and Rodgers, 1986; Linck, Kroll and Sunderman, 2010) and work environment (van der Klink, Gielen and Nauta, 2001; Clarke, 2002). The full list of questions can be found in the appendix.

3.3 Evaluation of data analysis approaches

The exploratory nature of this study and the qualitative text data obtained from interviews made content analysis a suitable means of data analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defines content analysis as "a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses", and distinguishes between three main types of content analysis: conventional, directed and summative. All three involve the derivation of codes from exact text words, and the later grouping of codes to form overarching themes that can demonstrate relationships and form theory. The main difference lies within the coding process: in conventional content analysis, codes are emergent and derived solely from

text data; in directed content analysis, codes are influenced, or perhaps even dictated, by preconceived theories and concepts; while in summative content analysis, attention is paid to the frequency of word occurrences and the meaning implied by their frequency.

The directed content analysis style was chosen as a best fit for the objectives of this study. This is because while the research is exploratory and the objective is theory-building, it is also guided by prior research on training transfer. More specifically, factors were coded with training transfer variables in mind, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and transfer climate, while new codes became extensions of the existing theory. This allowed for the study to discover new insight while still drawing upon relevant existing knowledge on training dynamics. With this line of reasoning, purely conventional content analysis was avoided because of the inability to incorporate existing theory. Summative content analysis was not used because the frequency of certain words occurring and their contextual meanings would be somewhat biased, as the semi-structured nature of the interviews led to certain topics being discussed more in each interview. However, a quantitative consideration was done in triangulating between inter-case data, as codes derived in interviews with more than one participant were given more importance.

3.3 Description of data analysis procedure

Each interview was transcribed into a word document, and given code letters for the purposes of anonymity. Each interview in effect became a unit of analysis. Content analysis was then performed on each transcript. Each interview was read multiple times, and portions of each were chosen to be coded based on several criteria, the primary one being relevance to the research objectives of identifying outcomes of training and factors conducive to training. However, various other parts were also selected for coding, for reasons such as relating to concepts in training transfer

literature, being stressed by the interviewee, being mentioned multiple times, or simply standing out as an important point.

Related codes from within the same interview and across different interviews were grouped into code groups. These code groups were then classified as either outcomes or factors, depending on the nature of the group. They are discussed in further detail in the findings section below.

4. Findings

4.1 Typical outcomes of language training

The first objective of this study was to identify outcomes typical of language training. As the term "outcomes" can come to mean a wide variety of situations, it was defined more narrowly in this study to mean linguistic benefits occurring to the trainee as a result of the training, which provide some benefit to the company.

4.1.1 Functional work communication

One of the more concrete outcomes found was with cases in which language training enhanced, or even enabled communication for work-related purposes. The most straightforward example of this is in the case of foreign placements, as exemplified by an employee from a Japanese Multinational who was expatriated to a Malaysian subsidiary:

> *"I was working in Malaysia, and of course they (colleagues) cannot speak Japanese. They speak English and Bahasa. So I needed to speak English…if I didn't get the training course at first, maybe I cannot speak and I cannot work in Malaysia."*

Furthermore, in international work environments there exist instances in which a foreign language is needed to participate in discussions, as a Finnish employee at a French multinational recalled:

> *"But of course it also benefitted me professionally, like what I said that learning the professional language then helped me to participate in meetings that were held in French, for example. So, I mean it did help me in my job for sure."*

A Malaysian employee at a German multinational found that his newfound language proficiency enabled him to communicate and hence collaborate with colleagues that he would not otherwise have been able to:

> *"I speak German to the colleagues who don't speak much English - mainly to take/give instructions, get help, and discuss problems."*

In all these cases, language training helped employees to function more effectively and bring value to the company, simply through being able to communicate more flexibly.

4.1.2 Social integration

A less obvious benefit gained by employees who have received language training is a greater degree of social integration with colleagues. In these cases, language acts as a social tool, rather than having a strict functional purpose. A Finnish employee at a French multinational finds this to be the case:

> *"But of course it made my day-to-day work easier when I was able to do it in French with the people that preferred French to English. So at least like I'm sure that it improved my working relationship with some of the colleagues."*

Furthermore, a high level of fluency may not even be required to enjoy the benefits of social integration. Merely attempting to speak the language, and showing cultural

openness can have a similar effect as a gesture of goodwill, as an American employee at a French multinational recalls:

> *"Like I said we have a lot of French people working here, so it's good to start conversations using French, so they feel more comfortable with me, so again it's kind of like a social skill…they try to sometimes say something, or I try to reply in French. It's interesting. It makes the work environment more friendly and comfortable, I guess."*

Social integration is clearly important in international work environments because of its implications for job satisfaction and work motivation (McCloskey, 1990). These findings make the case for more general language training in corporations were there is a dominant culture.

4.1.2 Comfort with using the language

Tenzer, Pudelko and Harzing (2014) noted the anxiety created by language barriers. Gaining proficiency in a language naturally makes employees more comfortable with use of the language around them. An American employee who was exposed to large volumes of French on a daily basis reported being more comfortable after being able to understand some of it:

> *"So besides the overall knowledge, sometimes we get emails in French. I feel a bit more comfortable because I can see and understand; they have translations too so it's not a big deal but I feel more confident… we have a lot of French people and I actually have two guys sitting right next to me, and sometimes they speak French. So I hear it a lot, it's good when you can recognize some words and sentences, so I feel more comfortable."*

4.2 Factors conducive towards language training

4.2.1 Trainee characteristics

4.2.1.1 Motivation

Motivation was the most widely cited personal reason for training success. Reasons for motivation were varied; several different categories were formed from the array of answers. The categories are summarized in table 2 below.

Type of motivation	Examples
Career need	*"Of course they (colleagues) cannot speak Japanese… So I needed to speak English."* *"I hear and use the technical terms every day. You just pick it up after a while."*
Career prospects	*"I moved to the international sales team. Before I moved to the group, I had to learn English."*
Social integration	*"I wanted to communicate with local people and I wanted to understand what's going around me at work."*
Identity-work	*"I'm very interested in different cultures, and I travel a lot."* *"I always respected people that can speak more than one language."*
Self-development	*"It's more just for overall knowledge and social skills"*
Mental stimulation	*"I know it's good for the way you think"*

	"To prevent Alzheimer's *laugh* so it's good to do something to exercise our brains"

Table 2: Different sources of motivation

Perhaps the strongest reason for the existence or lack of motivation was the extent to which the language was actually needed in the workplace. Trainees who had not reached higher levels of proficiency attributed their failure to do so to a lack of need, while those who did cited a career need. For example, one trainee remarked: "*It was not really very necessary for me, because I don't speak French with other employees*". When asked what would help her improve, she replied: "*It's very simple, they have to transfer me to, we obviously have several locations in France, so if they move me there, I won't have a choice, I will be speaking French really soon! *laughs*"*. Conversely, another trainee had a stronger incentive: "*I have to talk in teams, in teleconferences, with Colleagues from Italy. And so I have to use English to talk to them.*"

On a related note, many trainees considered increased career prospects to be a motivating factor. A Japanese trainee mentioned English being a prerequisite for joining an international sales team. Similarly, trainees at a French Multinational mentioned the career benefits of being able to speak French.

Another commonly cited source of motivation was a desire for social integration with speakers of the target language. This is especially the case when the trainee is in a foreign environment, and as such finds language to be a prerequisite to meaningful relationships and in just making sense of the world in general. As another trainee recalls: "*I really like studying languages in general, but then of course maybe the core reason behind it is that I wanted to communicate with local people and I wanted to understand what's going around me at work.*"

Interestingly, issues of identity-work were implied in the interviews. Many trainees described themselves as having a general inclination towards language learning,

seeing themselves as people who were culturally open and that enjoyed learning languages. One trainee even went so far as to describe a jealousy towards people who were multilingual: *"I always respected people that can speak more than one language… you know I was always kind of jealous that you know, oh my all my childhood friends could speak more than one language, and I couldn't."*

Lastly, several trainees mentioned a general goal of self-development as the motivation for language training. One trainee expressed a belief that language learning was holistically good for knowledge, social skills, and mental stimulation. Another cited the neurological benefits of being bilingual.

A point of interest is the possible mediating effect that motivation has on outcomes. Consider the case of trainee A, who was motivated to learn French more for a purpose of general self-improvement: *"Honestly I think it is to get more knowledge about culture, for overall knowledge. Just basically for my own personal development."* This led to a more relaxed pace, with a stronger focus on enjoying the language. *"I think I'm very slow, but I'm happy with what I'm doing, I'm not trying to rush myself and I can say that I understand more, and I'm happy with those classes."* As a result, the outcomes achieved were mostly social-integration oriented, rather than career-based. *"Yeah, they try to sometimes say something, or I try to reply in French... It makes the work environment more friendly and comfortable."*

In contrast, trainee E learned English for career development purposes. He describes a need of English to communicate with colleagues in different countries: *"Because I have to talk in teams, in teleconferences, with colleagues from Italy. And so I have to use English to talk to them."* As a result, the focus is very much on career utility, and outcomes have been related to improvements on the workplace: *"It helps me to improve in my workplace. That I can present topics with some of my colleages, and, in meetings, I know how to give ideas, proposals to people."*

4.2.1.2 Self-efficacy and optimism

Almost all the participants expressed a general belief that their efforts to acquire the target language would be successful. As such, it is likely to also be an important factor in effective training. As one trainee remarked:

> *"My attitude is pretty… is pretty much just stick with it. You know okay, I know I can't be completely immersed unless I moved to France or a French-speaking country, but I also know that if I do this for ten years, I'll probably be pretty well-off, I'll be all right."*

Trainee D, an employee at a German multinational in Germany, demonstrated a link between a more general optimism and effort. Having not learned any German previously, he explained that he just: *"forced myself to go out there and speak, even though I knew I'd screw up"*. He explained that he had confidence in the method, and also had faith that locals would help: *"Since I look fairly young and student-ish I assume people are more willing to forgive and teach."* It is this underlying optimistic belief towards his own capabilities and favourable environmental conditions that enabled him to continue pursuing this approach. After just 7 months, he had attained level of German high enough to be useful in job-related functions: *"I speak German to the colleagues who don't speak much English - mainly to take/give instructions, get help, and discuss problems…For example, when a material exhibits unusual behaviour, we discuss what could have gone wrong during testing."*

4.2.2 Training design

4.2.2.1 Personal tutorage

A salient finding of this study was the importance of having a personal tutor. A key reason for this is the amount of attention afforded to students, which in turn allows for much more speaking practice. As observed by one trainee:

"You get a lot of a lot of attention, a lot of focus, you can focus on the things you know you want to focus on, and you do a lot of practice speaking… in a classroom setting you don't really get to speak all that much."

Furthermore, a personal tutor provides effective and well-timed correction to the trainee. As noted by various trainees, this is a luxury not granted through regular communication with natives, as it requires patience and a shared commitment towards the trainee's linguistic development. However, this is of critical importance in achieving higher levels of proficiency as it can remedy interlanguage fossilization. As noted by another trainee:

"Most French people, they just appreciate you speak French and they don't really think that it's necessary that they start correcting each and every word you misuse… But then when I had this teacher she would suddenly tell me that there are a few words for example that I had been using forever, and that were not actually real French."

An interesting point was the added social aspects of having a tutor. One trainee noted feeling a higher level of accountability, of working harder so as to not wanting to let the tutor down. It is here that the social nature of language as a skill cannot be understated. Also noted was the benefit of being able to enjoy conversations with the tutor:

"It's much nicer than if it was somebody that you'd have to force the conversations with…I think it's for sure something that also motivated me to have the class once a week, because it was nice to spend time with the teacher."

Trainees also reported various other advantages such as personalized pacing, needs assessment by tutor and a higher willingness to make mistakes, as opposed to a classroom setting. To summarize, the personal tutor can perhaps be likened to the "caretaker" described by Krashen (1982) in the acquisition of first languages in

children, who scaffolds language learning, providing high amounts of verbal input at a level appropriate to the child.

4.2.2.2 Immersion environments

Another factor that was consistently raised by trainees was the importance of having an environment to practice the target language. One trainee lamented the lack of opportunities to practice in their home country, while attributing their learning to being in an appropriate environment:

> *"I was in Malaysia for almost one year, so I got the opportunity to use English, so that's why I got English skills, a little bit… in Japan, there are no opportunities to use English."*

A point to note is that being in an immersive environment may not be as useful if there is no need to use the target language. One trainee noted that the widespread use of English led to reduced immersion benefits:

> *"I think hardest things for Americans is that everyone all around the world, because I also spent a lot of time in Korea, it's the same thing, everyone speaks English, so there's not a big like need, you know. There's no, you really have to want to do it yourself, and put yourself in the position to be immersed."*

4.2.2.3 Learning atmosphere

Having a relaxed atmosphere was important to several of the trainees. One trainee related the relaxed atmosphere to making the class more enjoyable:

> *"I had very good teachers. They're very knowledgeable, very approachable, again, it's not like a real classroom, both of them were very friendly… So the friendly environment, that's what I like.*

Another strength of the relaxed learning environment is that it increased the willingness of trainees to try and make mistakes. Trainees contrasted it to more formal

classrooms and even to the real world, were there was a higher reluctance to form sentences and speak due to the possible social repercussions.

> *"In training, I can try to speak English. Because it is training, so if I make mistakes, it doesn't matter."*

> *"It just helps so much when you have somebody who is there only to support you, and you know that they're never gonna mock you."*

4.2.3 Work environment

4.2.3.1 Support

Many trainees cited receiving support from their colleagues during the training process, when asked about factors beneficial to language acquisition. Most notably, colleagues who spoke the target language would from time to time help trainees to practice. As one trainee recalls:

> *"So beside me there are two French speaking people. And after them is another guys who is also taking French lessons, like me. So from time to time we have very interesting discussions, like how do you say that, why do French people speak this way and say certain phrases."*

Colleagues also supported in more motivational ways, such as expressing enthusiasm for the trainee's endeavours in learning the language. One trainee recalled that her colleagues were *"encouraging me to use the language for sure"*. Another said that conversations with said colleagues in the target language helped to lighten the mood: *"I work directly with two people from France, and so I can ask them questions, and we joke around and stuff like that."*

Interestingly, a common finding was that administrative support was not as important, beyond of course providing the course. As one trainee recalls:

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"Of course I think it's already support from the company that they offer this, but it's not that they then like… but I don't think that I needed any additional support from them."

One trainee even mentioned that her boss had mixed feelings towards the training: *"he was like 50-50, he was not sure if I really needed it, so it was not very easy to get permission to take the class."* It may be that with a social skill such as language, close connections such as those of colleagues or personal tutors are more likely to be in a position to provide support. However, one area in which administrative support was welcomed was the convenience of receiving training, as will be discussed below.

4.2.3.2 Accessibility

Accessibility was another important reason cited by trainees for their continued efforts. These mostly revolve around factors of time and location.

Time was an especially important factor for a Japanese trainee, who recalled that his language training was particularly effective because of the time off he received: *"For my training, I could stay in Malaysia, and I didn't work during my training course, I mean four to five months, I just studied English and Bahasa. I can focus on studying."* However, upon returning to Japan training was put on hold: *"From morning until night, I have to work… 9 or 10 (at night) …if I could finish my work earlier, I can get time for training, so it depends on me."*

Time and location are crucial when the training given is not for urgent career needs. It became a deciding factor for at least one trainee who was learning French for general self-developmental purposes: *"If I have to travel, let's say 30 minutes or more, I know for sure I'm not going to be taking any French lessons. So because it was very accessible, you know?"*

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Comfort as an outcome

One of the main outcomes of language training found in this study was a higher degree of comfort with using and dealing with the target language. However, this is not always true. Tenzer, Pudelko and Harzing (2014) provide compelling evidence that the need to speak a foreign language could create anxiety for employees who perceive their command of language to be insufficient. This can have a variety of negative effects, including reducing the situational willingness to trust of the employee. This is likely due to the feelings of inferiority invoked when confronted by proficient speakers of the language (Vaara, 2005). With this in mind, attaining a basic level of a language could indeed reduce comfort, as prior to that no career performance would be expected of the employee. Here, the key variable is whether there is a career need. Where there is no career need, the anxiety from inferiority is likely to be greatly reduced.

5.2 Motivation and its mediating effect

Motivation has established itself in this study as a central factor. A variety of sources of motivation were identified in this study, ranging from personal development objectives to career drivers. These can be classified into instrumental and integrative sources of motivation. Namely, drivers such as career needs, career prospects, self-development and mental stimulation are instrumental, as they push for the language acquisition for the attainment of certain goals or benefits, while the desire for social integration and identity-work are integrative motivators, as they relate to openness and curiosity towards different cultures.

One reason for drawing this distinction is to compare the relative strengths of the motivations. Masgoret and Gardner (2003) argue that integrative motivation is

necessary for higher levels of attainment such as automaticity of thought, and "true language mastery". Indeed, integrative motivation goes beyond the utilitarian objectives of instrumental motivation, pushing for the learner to acquire the more subtle aspects of language beyond that of plain communication, such as native accents and fluency. However, Krashen (1981) points out that instrumental motivation may take precedence as a predictor of achievement, especially where there is a "special urgency" about the language acquisition. The simple rationale is that urgency and need create more occasions for practice. The workplace is very well one of those situations, as a person's livelihood is on the line when career performance becomes linked to language acquisition, and one has both incentive and opportunity to practice All this suggests that at least where speed is concerned, instrumental motivation such as that owing to career need or career prospects is superior to integrative motivation, though naturally they are not mutually exclusive. Trainees with both integrative and instrumental motivation are the ones who will perform with both urgency and curiosity. Figure 2 summarizes the possible states of motivation and their likely outcomes

	Low instrumental motivation	High instrumental motivation
Low integrative motivation	Disinterested complacency	Pragmatic progress
High integrative motivation	Passionate complacency	Inspired progress

Figure 2: Instrumental/integrative motivation quadrant

Another point to consider is the mediating effect of motivation on its outcomes. As earlier discussed, the nature of the motivation has strong implications on the expected outcomes. Expanding upon that with the instrumental-integrative dichotomy, we can further expect that integrative sources of motivation will bring about integrative outcomes such as social integration, while instrumental sources of motivation will cause instrumental outcomes such as functional work communication.

5.3 Modified conceptual framework for language transfer

Based on the findings and analysis of this study, a chart depicting the dynamics of language training can be deduced. This is shown in the form of a modified conceptual framework, based on that of training transfer, in figure 3 below.

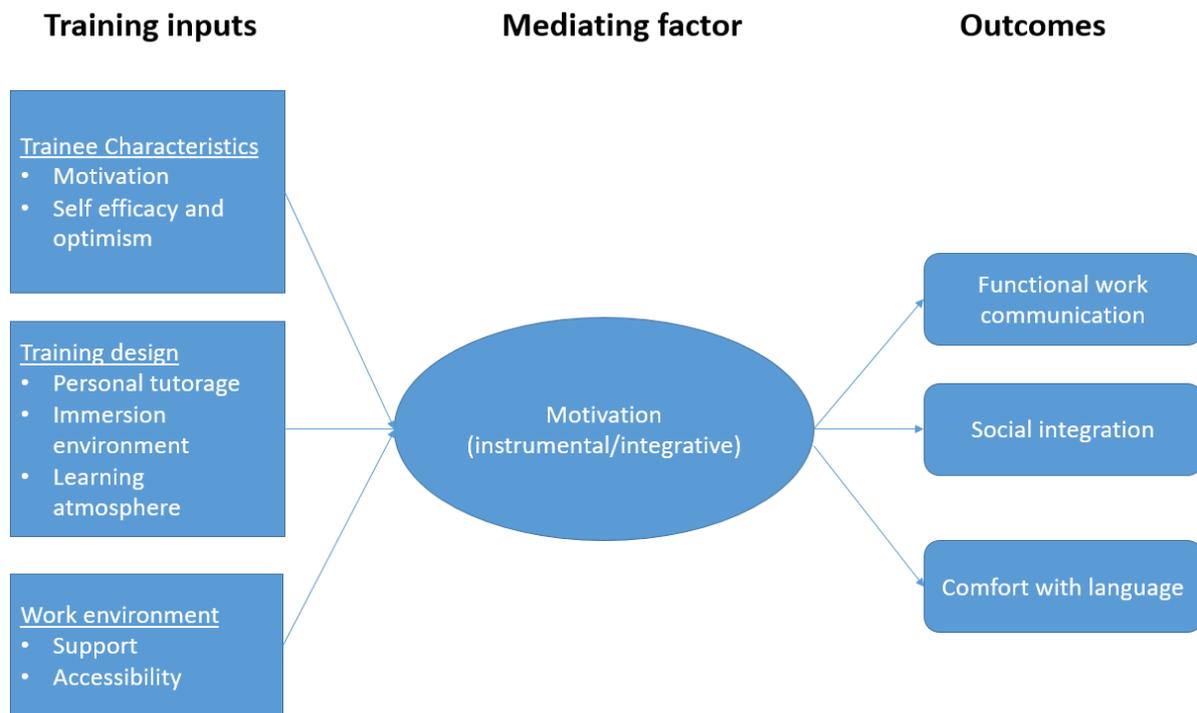Figure 3: Conceptual framework for language training

The column on the right depicts the typical outcomes of language training. On the left is the training inputs which are responsible for bringing about said outcomes; the likelihood that any given outcome will be attained depends on the strength of the inputs. However, it is the mediating factor, motivation, that determines the form in which the outcomes take.

5.4 Limitations

This study is not without limitations. In this section, they will be described in greater detail.

Firstly, this study is limited in that in only explores language training from one perspective: trainee perceptions. This was due largely to the practical constraints of the study, being that it is a Bachelor's level thesis carried out by one student. Further exploration and possible data triangulation could be achieved by obtaining the perceptions of other involved parties, for example language trainers or colleagues of trainees.

Furthermore, there is the issue of the breadth of the sample. Eisenhardt (2011) discusses that the optimal sample size for qualitative studies is one at the point of data saturation, at which more data adds little to no new information to existing findings. In this study, a broad sample was taken from a mix of different MNCs and countries, but as earlier stated the constraints of time and finance limited the sample to that of 6 language trainees. It is unlikely that this is the point of data saturation, and so further exploratory studies may be helpful to uncover more factors or outcomes to achieve a fuller understanding of this phenomenon.

Lastly, there may be errors simply due to lack of experience. All data collection and data analysis was carried out by a single undergraduate business student. As such, there may be issues with the interviews, for example the use of leading questions or insufficient probing on key issues. Furthermore, coding could be flawed, for reasons such as missed codes or unsuitable code groups, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of coding.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Main findings

This study attempted to identify the outcomes typical of language training in MNCs and the factors conducive to said outcomes. It did so by conducting explorative interviews with employees who have received language training in a range of MNCs from around the world, and forming generalizations based on their experiences.

Three main outcomes were identified: Functional work communication, social integration, and comfort with using language. Furthermore, seven factor inputs were linked to their attainment: motivation, self-efficacy, personal tutorage, immersion environments, learning atmosphere, support, and accessibility. These were grouped into the categories of trainee characteristics, training design and work environment, in the style of training transfer literature.

Another key finding was the mediating effect of motivation on factors and outcomes. While the various factors determine the extent to which outcomes are achieved, motivation, and in particular career need, determine the nature and form of the outcomes.

6.2 Implications for International Business

The findings of this study hold practical value for HR practitioners in international business tasked with the responsibility of arranging language training. Firstly, it serves as reference material to HR practitioners, clarifying several possible outcomes that one can expect from effective language training. It also identifies a range of factors that influence the attainment of the outcomes which HR is able to influence. For example, the decision on whether to use a personal teacher or a class, and whether

to have the trainee learn the language abroad or at home, are decisions that HR must make after careful cost-benefit analysis.

Perhaps more significantly, it also clarifies the central role of motivation to the language training system. This should encourage the extent to which HR practitioners take an interest in the motivational factors affecting employees, especially in a field such as language training where sustained effort from strong motivational sources is paramount.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

For further research, one avenue of interest is the exploration of language training from other actors' perspectives. Due to practical constraints, this study only approaches the topic from the perceptions of trainees. Exploring the perspectives of language trainers or managers may yield novel insight that could be used to identify new factors or triangulate existing ones.

Furthermore, the purely qualitative nature of this study means that factors and outcomes are proposed, but not thoroughly validated. It would make sense to conduct confirmatory studies on the various factors and outcomes proposed in this study through quantitative studies, such as a survey of trainee perceptions. Such efforts would add validity to the constructs and relationships identified in this study.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Interview A

Interviewer: Tan Yu

Interviewee: A, Female employee learning French at French Multinational, in USA

Date: February 20th, 2018

Mode: Skype voice call

INTERVIEWER: Could you start by telling me about the training you received? What was it like?

A: So because my company is a French company, they offer to their employees French language classes. It's once a week, and it was not really very necessary for me, because I don't speak French with other employees, but we have lots of French people working there, some of them are temps, so it's good to know language because it's a French company and to say something in French to people was my reasoning.

INTERVIEWER: So there was kind of a social aspect to it.

A: Yes, you could say that.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe what happened in these classes?

A: They provide textbooks, and I started from a really basic level. I've been taking it for several years, and I have a new teacher, it's not like in college, I don't have any tests, but we try to speak more, so it's a very friendly environment, and that's what I like about it. People have different speeds, and unfortunately I don't have a lot of time to practice my language skills at home, that's why we have different paces. I think I'm very slow, but I'm happy with what I'm doing, I'm not trying to rush myself and I can say that I understand more, and I'm happy with those classes.

INTERVIEWER: So you're quite happy with what you've gained.

A: Oh yeah definitely, even with my vocabulary, it helps me with English sometimes, (for words) with the same pronunciation but different meaning, it's good for my overall knowledge.

INTERVIEWER: Going back to the training, you said it was textbooks, it was pretty basic, but it was friendly. Could you describe some of the activities the teacher would have you do?

A: In the beginning, because my vocabulary was zero, we did lots of vocabulary and lots of words, we started trying to make sentences. Now with my new teacher, I've had her for about a year, in almost every class she has some dialogue that I have to listen to, and it's very good because I can see the words and read, it's easier to understand. French people, as you probably know, speak very fast and it's not easy sometimes to understand the whole sentence, maybe just a couple of words. So I listen to a conversation, maybe 2 or 3 times, then she starts asking me questions in English, asking me about what I understand, which I have to describe. Then she starts asking me questions in French, and I try to answer. Then it's my turn to ask her questions. Then we talk about several rules, right now we talk about the present (tense), we will soon talk about the past tense, how to use the verbs. If I have questions, because they have some many rules, she tries to explain as we go, how to say things properly.

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That's what we do basically, for 1 hour. I have a good time. Like I said, I like it. When I started it was one and a half hours, which was a little too much for me, and then we switch to one hour, which for me was perfect, because I don't have to take lots of time from work. Because it's so intense, after one hour I can't really pay attention, so one hour works really well for me.

INTERVIEWER: One more question about the practicalities: Does it happen during working hours or after working hours? How is it scheduled?

A: That's one thing I like about the class: I don't have to go anywhere, it's actually in the same facility as where I work. So the teacher comes, she has a special room which is really small, and I basically don't have to travel. It's 100 meters to get to the classroom, and that's what I like. We usually have a free schedule. Normally we meet on Wednesday, but if she cannot come, or I have some other activities, we can easily reschedule to another time. That's another thing I like about the class: I don't have to travel, and the schedule is very flexible.

INTERVIEWER: Earlier you mentioned that it helps with your overall knowledge, and it relates to your English. What other ways has this language training helped you?

A: So besides the overall knowledge, sometimes we get emails in French. I feel a bit more comfortable because I can see and understand; they have translations too so it's not a big deal but I feel more confident. Like I said we have a lot of French people working here, so it's good to start conversations using French, so they feel more comfortable with me, so again it's kind of like a social skill. Once, I was asked to translate a short scientific article describing an experiment in French, it took me forever *laughs* but it was still a good practice.

INTERVIEWER: So all your French learning has pretty much come from this course, and your interactions within the company, is that correct?

A: Probably yes, but because I was taking classes for several years, we were talking about obviously French history, geography and other subjects. So, I got inspired, and I actually went to Paris, and spent almost two weeks there. I'll be honest with you, it's a very good boost to go to the country and try to speak the language. I'll never forget that when I asked for something in the store, to give me something in a bakery, a dessert, she understood me. It was a very pleasant experience. So yeah, it encouraged me to travel to Paris, too.

INTERVIEWER: Where would you put your levels of reading, writing, speaking and listening in French right now?

A: I still consider myself a beginner, but not like a "beginner" beginner, you can probably say it is "advanced" beginner *laughs*. It's still difficult for me to speak, I'm trying, but I definitely see that I'm getting better compared to how it was several years ago. Again, you see I'm trying to take it more like a pleasure, taking it easy, trying not to push yourself.

INTERVIEWER: I see, so it's more like a hobby, than say a career goal.

A: Yeah, well the thing is there's very little need for me to speak French, let's say that if I live in France, probably it will be more intense, and my speed would be definitely accelerated. But right now, yes, it's more like a hobby, for pleasure.

INTERVIEWER: What factors do you think have helped, or hindered your training? What has really pushed you to learn the language?

A: Lots of factors. Well one of them is that we have a lot of French people and I actually have two guys sitting right next to me, and sometimes they speak French. So I hear it a lot, it's good when you can recognize some words and sentences, so I feel more comfortable. Yeah, probably that's the only thing.

INTERVIEWER: So it was a lot of exposure, and that made you want to learn it?

A: Yeah, plus it's a nice beautiful language, I like France and French history. I'm in a French company, so it's good to understand the culture better.

INTERVIEWER: So these are all, kind of, motivational reasons. To better understand your company, better understand your coworkers.

A: Yeah, I guess, yes, because you see now English is the international language, so if you speak English, you're all set for communication. So that's why I cannot really say that if I don't speak French no one will understand me, so it's not really a necessity, it's more just for overall knowledge and social skills.

INTERVIEWER: So, let's maybe say that you really want to improve you French a lot. What would you say would have to change for that to happen?

A: It's very simple, they have to transfer me to, we obviously have several locations in France, so if they move me there, I won't have a choice, I will be speaking French really soon! *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: So, it's really a motivation, or rather a need problem, you would say?

A: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So when you talked about better understanding your coworkers, it was more on the motivation side as well. What about the actual training? What do you think was good about the training that helped you acquire your language skills?

A: Can you say that again? I'm trying to understand what you're asking for.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, what was good about the training?

A: Well first of all, I had very good teachers. They're very knowledgeable, very approachable, again, it's not like a real classroom, both of them were very friendly. They tried to speak not only about languages, but about traditions, and it's very closely related to language, what they usually say. Like that they say 'ca va', instead of how

do you do. So the friendly environment, that's what I like. And they try to be creative, to customize the class based on different students. We have some Chinese people, for them I know the pronunciation is the most challenging part. So the teachers are very friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so you said they were good. By that do you mean the comfortable (atmosphere), sharing the culture, customizing the class?

A: Oh yeah, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say these are more important than say, the methods?

A: Um, for me, proably yes. And why I'm saying that is we had a couple of students, who started but didn't like the way our teacher was working. So I guess for me the method worked, but for some they were trying to go maybe fast and achieve a lot, and it should be a different class probably for them. Like I said, for me personally, it worked.

INTERVIEWER: And, comfortable atmosphere, was that the most important thing for you? Or was there something else?

A: Plus definitely the knowledge, both of them were French speaking people.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so they were obviously very experienced in their own language, and competent teachers.

A: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so that was on the training itself. What about on the company environment? You mentioned that, well was this training sponsored, first of all?

A: Yeah, you know, when I was talking to my boss, he was like 50-50, he was not sure if I really needed it, so it was not very easy to get permission to take the class. So, we decided that I can try and then because my group is paying for that class, every group has a budget, so the money for my class is taken for our group's budget, so that's why

my manager was a little hesitant in the beginning. But then he got used to it, so it's fine. But I can't really say that it was like a piece of cake very easy to get permission. He was really trying to understand how I can use it, that's maybe why he asked me to translate that specific article for him, just to check if I'm really taking French classes or we're just talking about the weather.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So your manager was kind of skeptical at first, but now he's okay.

A: Yeah he's okay. He's like ah well, okay.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned other environmental factors, like the guys next to you always spoke in French.

A: Yes, it's very good. Actually, you know we, it's a very interesting location, where I am sitting. So beside me there are two French speaking people. And after them is another guys who is also taking French lessons, like me. So from time to time we have very interesting discussions, like how do you say that, why do French people speak this way and say certain phrases. So the guy is usually trying to find out how to say some bad words in French *laughs* but anyway, it's a very good environment, and that's what I really like. I also found out that people sitting not right next to me, but very close. They were taking French in school. So from time to time, we have very interesting discussions in the French language. So it's good to be part of it, good to have a chance to participate and discuss.

INTERVIEWER: Would you perhaps feel left out if you didn't know French?

A: No, I would probably be jealous. *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: So, the French guys that help you guys with French. Would you say that they are very supportive? Or not?

A: Yeah, they try to sometimes say something, or I try to reply in French. It's interesting. It makes the work environment more friendly and comfortable, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Well, at the very least, you'd say that they provide more support than maybe your manager?

A: Oh definitely. He's very practical, so he wants to know what we can get out of it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, sounds like a very practical, down-to-earth kind of guy.

A: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What about the general climate of your company towards employees learning French? would you say that it's positive, negative?

A: Um...yeah, it's definitely positive, not negative.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so are there any other maybe personal factors that have pushed you to learn French? Like an interest in French culture or something?

A: Yeah, definitely that, plus, um, how do I say this, I call it "to prevent Alzheimer's" *laugh* so it's good to do something to exercise our brains, and I thought that to learn another language would be good exercise for my brain.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, I'm trying to really put together this picture. It seems like it is a bit leisure, but also a practical tool for you?

A: Yeah, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: OK, if you were to weigh all these factors, what do you think would be the biggest things that helped you acquire French? You mentioned the teachers being friendly, the friendly atmosphere in the company, and a motivation to better understand French culture. But what would you say are the biggest reasons or factors that helped you acquire this language?

A: Honestly I think it is to get more knowledge about culture, for overall knowledge. Just basically for my own personal development. Unfortunately or fortunately, there is no big necessity for me to speak French, so that's why it's for my own pleasure, rather.

INTERVIEWER: So you would still put motivaiton, and in this case motivation to grow as a person over the other factors like the suppoertive atmosphere, good teachers?

A: Probably, well it's good to have a good friendly teacher right? Yeah, no I still think it's for my own development and knowledge.

INTERVIEWER: And, this kind of reason pushes you even when don't feel like continuing, right?

A: Mmm...

INTERVIEWER: Well, why would you say that this is the most importance reason/driver?

A: *laughs* I'm trying to think about how to answer that.

INTERVIEWER: Take your time, sure.

A: Again, I'm really like...gosh I'm not sure how to answer that question.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, um...how about if you were to arrange these on a scale, the "big rocks" of why you managed to learn quite a lot in this language. What wuld you put first, second, third and so on.

A: The reasons why?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, or the things that supported you to learn. So like, of course motivation is a big one. Having a good teacher, having supportive co-workers.

A: Yeah there was another one.

INTERVIEWER: Convenience, yeah.

A: Yeah actually there was maybe two, another reason why. So it's free, so I don't have to pay. And another reason, like I said, is that I don't have to travel. So it's very close to the place where I work. So those are also very significant. Let's say if I have to pay, and if I have to travel, let's say 30 minutes or more, I know for sure I'm not going to be taking any French lessons. So because it was very accessible, you know?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah very accessible, and also it's a good chance for you to have some personal development.

A: Yeah, and that too.

8.2 Interview B

Interviewer: Tan Yu

Interviewee: B, Female employee learning French at French Multinational, in France

Date: February 21st, 2018

Mode: Skype voice call

INTERVIEWER: Let's start with the training you received. What was it like?

[The interviewer forgot to turn on the recorder, so the interviewee repeated the first part of her answer]

B: So to I don't know if you want me to repeat that but I said that that I was sent by the same I was sent to two different countries by the same multinational so L'Oreal, and the first country where I worked was Denmark and there I was not actually given any language training. I think it was due to quite many reasons I think first of all I was only working in English, so they didn't really expect me to know any Danish for the job. I was doing and then also the system that they have in, I don't know if it's in other municipalities or whether it's only Copenhagen, but in Copenhagen the municipality actually offers free classes for anyone that's willing to take them, and I think that the company thought that it didn't make sense to offer any additional classes through work, which I kind of disagree with because the schedule for the the common classes was quite difficult to to do with the hours that we were working. And also there was a lot of people arriving at the same time as I was when I moved to Copenhagen because that's when they actually established the the Nordic headquarters there so in my opinion it would have been really useful and I'm sure they could have created a big group from inside the company, and we could have done it together at the office which would have made a lot of sense. But then again, I have to also admit I was not too motivated

maybe to learn Danish because I knew I'm not gonna stay that long and it's so easy to to get along in Copenhagen without speaking a word of the local language, which is then maybe a bit different for for France. And and so it was when I moved to France that they they offered me private lessons then at work.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so yeah, private lessons at work. Could you tell me more about what would happen?

B: So the thing is that when you arrive as an expert to the Paris office they will check your level of French, and then depending on the level they either choose to send you to do this intense course of one week somewhere in southern France, which sounds quite nice, and you spent there either one week or then two depending on the level well usually if you start from zero they'll send you there for two weeks right away and you stay in a host family and you go to classes to the school every day for eight hours. I think most of it is private lessons as well, but there are a lot of people take in the same course, but then you are given a teacher based on your level, because of course you can have many different beginners levels as well. When you come back from this class they expect you to start using a bit French at work, and you also get a private teacher that comes to visit you at the office once a week or once in two weeks, depending on how often you you've find the time for it, but I think preferably it would be once a week and it's usually one and a half hours. The method that they were using was was oral, basically, or I don't know of course like it depends of the level so I don't know how it was for the very beginners but at least for me it was only oral. So it didn't get any homework...well sometimes I got a bit of homework but that was kind of oral as well, but yeah just to say that I was not sent to this class or the intense course and in southern France, because when I started I had a call with the school and they evaluated my French to be stronger than or...they thought it would not be useful for me to to take this intensive course. They ended up giving me only the private lessons at the office, which I thought was a shame because I would have wanted to go to southern France for a week or two *laughs* But yeah, so what I had was was this class once a week for one and a half hours with my teacher. When the class started she

wanted to know what my expectations were and what I felt are the areas of improvement that I need help with. For me it was really the oral part of French, and also in specific I wanted to go through topics that were related to my job. Because the thing is that I spoke fluent French already, but I had never worked in French, and the French I learned was when I was INTERVIEWER: 7. So obviously the language was a bit different from from what I was expected to use at work. So we were mainly concentrating on professional French, and we were also going through some grammar, but the thing is that my grammar is quite strong from the from the background I have from school, so I guess she did some kind of test with me in the beginning, I'm not sure how she kind of found out the level that we should begin from, regarding the grammar. But I think or maybe it was just when I was speaking she identified a few mistakes I was doing and then she figured out that these were maybe the areas of improvement in terms of grammar. So we would do some things as well but that was oral as well, so we would practice it together face to face in sentences. And then then what she'd do was that she would record any things that she wanted me to learn from each listen. She would record it on my phone and then I had it for the next week or so before we had our next class. I was supposed to always listen to the things that she had recorded on my phone so that I remembered. It was mainly like maybe there was a sentence that I was always making the same mistake in, for some reason, I had learned to say something wrong, and then she tried to by this like method of repetition, to...

INTERVIEWER: So it was a targeted oral approach, to fix some problems.

B: Yes, for sure yes. But then again I don't know if that was the approach for all the students or if it was just because that's where I may be needed most support.

INTERVIEWER: Just to clarify, I'm most interested in your personal experience. Thank you of course for giving the broader picture as well, but just talk about your own experience.

B: Are there any specific questions you want to ask, or...?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I'd like to find out more about how good your French was before this experience. You mentioned taking classes in high school?

B: Yeah I actually studied French for nine years or something, since I was nine until I was INTERVIEWER: 8, so at the end of high school. But I also spent one year in Quebec and the French-speaking part of Canada during my high school studies, so I had very strong French then, but then obviously it had been already INTERVIEWER: 0 years before I moved to to Paris. I hadn't used it for a long time so it was a bit rusty, but I had a very good basis so I spoke French fluently when I got there. But as I said I don't still think that it was at a perfect professional level, like I would have never said when applying for this job in Paris, I would never said that I'm gonna do it in French.

INTERVIEWER: In what way do you think this language training that you had improved your language? How did it help, specifically?

B: Well I think it's always so much better to have a private teacher, of course it's great luxury that you have somebody who is only concentrating on you *laugh*, and I think for me especially because I learned the language in Quebec, there were a few things in terms of the dialect or even words that I was using that were actually not that common in France. And I think because most French people, they just appreciate you speak French and they don't really think that it's necessary that they start correcting each and every word you misuse just because, I mean for them as well it's the most important thing that we are able to communicate. But then when I had this teacher she would suddenly tell me that there are a few words for example that I had been using forever, and that were not actually real French, or that it was funny that I was using a specific word because it was a word that was used a long time ago, like let's say it was used like hundreds of years ago in France and that's obviously from where the Quebec French has evolved from. So for me, that was very very useful because somebody was there to to really pinpoint the mistakes, I don't know if I can say mistakes because

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that's completely correct to use in Quebec, but it's just a bit like differences of dialect. And then then also, well basically all the mistakes that I was doing, that I had learned to do, because sometimes when you have some things in a foreign language that for some reason you just learned to say in an incorrect way, and you just keep repeating, and like maybe it's nothing, it doesn't bother the person who's listening, because they understand what do you want to say, but like she was really she was really pinpointing these things and teaching me a lot of French sayings that I did not know. Because like in the end there were quite many things that I had never learned, because I didn't learn it at school, because in school it's more the formal French, it's a lot about grammar, it's not that much about speaking and then my speaking I learned in Quebec. So in that sense it was very useful, and then all the professional stuff that I already mentioned, that I did not have when arriving in France.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so to summarize there was a lot of localization?

B: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And, it helped you fix some of your long-term mistakes, which come from it being your second language rather than your native tongue?

B: Or third? *laugh*

INTERVIEWER: And also it gave you the professional vocabulary needed to perform on the job.

B: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else, aside from those things? Did it help, for example, your fluency at all?

B: Well I guess I could also mention that of course it helped with how confident I was about speaking, because I didn't really use French at work that much, especially in the beginning. So I would only use French with some of my French friends that I was used

to speaking in French with. But at work I would prefer to stick to speaking in English, and then it just helps so much when you have somebody who is there only to support you, and you know that they're never gonna mock you... well I'm not saying that my colleagues would if I said something wrong, but you know like it's like you feel confident in that environment to use the language. So for sure it gave me also the confidence to use the language outside of that classroom. And usually I always did it so that if I had my class in the morning for the rest of the day when I got out from the class I'd speak French whenever I could, because I kind of already was in the mood. But then the next day come to work and I might feel a bit...

INTERVIEWER: Frenched out?

B: Yeah.

[Interviewee has to move locations]

B: But yeah you can just go ahead.

INTERVIEWER: So, if you did not have this language training, do you think you would have been able to work in the office, in Paris? What would have been different?

B: I would have for sure, I mean there were people who didn't speak French at all, so in that sense like... yeah I don't know it's difficult to say because a lot of the meetings that I attended were held in French, but I'm not sure if it was because I was there and they knew I understand, like I don't know if it would have been the same way if I was someone who didn't understand a word, because that would just be rude, if they'd still keep doing that. But for sure it's helped me a lot to have the the level that I had when I got there.

INTERVIEWER: I mean, would you have been able to cope without the training that you got from the personal tutor?

B: Yes, I mean I would have been able to cope. But then again I of course see it as a, as something very useful. But still, it is the headquarters, so you kind of expect that it's possible for a person to be there even though they don't speak any French.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I guess I'm trying to find out what difference the training made for you in terms of the career.

B: In terms of the career?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

B: Um... well that that's hard to say because I didn't, you know, like I didn't stay there for that long that I would have gotten promoted or anything that I could say anything concrete, like okay, I could not have gotten this next job, let's say, if I didn't improve the level I had when I arrived. But of course it made my day-to-day work easier when I was able to do it in French with the people that preferred French to English. So at least like I'm sure that it improved my working relationship with some of the colleagues. We can say that.

INTERVIEWER: Now I'm going to go into a bit of the main question I'm interested in. Because I'm investigating the factors that support successful language training. Just now you mentioned that among other things having a personal coach was a big deal. So what other key factors do you think were essential to succeeding in your training?

B: Well for sure the general motivation, I would say from from my side to learn, because I think if I compare myself to many other students, some maybe felt that they were a bit forced to do the training in general. And, even though I really saw it as a great benefit because like...

[Interview was cut off due to connection problems]

...what was the question?

INTERVIEWER: The question was what factors do you think really support your learning?

B: Yeah well for sure my own motivation, and then the fact that it was a private teacher so it was very much concentrated on my own challenges. So I really think that when it comes to language training if the people who are studying are not all at level 0 it's hard to create groups where you could actually have everyone at the same level, especially if their native language is different. So in that sense, I didn't feel at all like wasting my time because like all the issues that we would cover were targeted to me and my language skills. So for sure, the fact that it was a private teacher, and I also think that it was a lot to do with the good relations that I had with this specific teacher, so I think we really hit it off from the beginning, and I think we that's also something that is important, especially if the teachers is a private teacher, that you guys actually find like a good note.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think finding this good note is important? How did it help you?

B: Well I think it helped in the sense that, as I said it was mostly oral, so it's nice if you actually want to have a discussion with this person to begin with *laughs* So it's kind of natural because then that makes it more like any other situation like a social situation in your life when you would maybe want to chat with this person anyway, and then at the same time you're actually learning, so it's much nicer than if it was somebody that you'd have to force the conversations with.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so I'm seeing this is maybe an enjoyability factor?

B: Yeah well I think it's for sure something that also motivated me to have the class once a week, because it was nice to spend time with the teacher.

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk a little bit more about the motivation? Why did you see it as a great benefit?

B: Well, I guess it's kind of obvious that if you're motivated to learn it'd help you in the learning process because you are receptive to the information that you're getting.

INTERVIEWER: Well of course, but why were you motivated, why did you see it as a great benefit?

B: Well because I was living in the country, and it made it easier for me to integrate there at the workplace, but also also outside of work, because in France, like what I said about Copenhagen and Denmark is that you can live your life in English, and you're probably never going to encounter any issues even though you don't speak Danish, but it's not necessarily the same thing in France because in many of the places they would only communicate in French. So yeah, it does help in the integration for sure.

INTERVIEWER: Was there anything else? Think about where your motivation came from, I suppose.

B: Well I don't know, I'm generally I'm generally motivated in learning different languages *laughs* I think it's been… I really like studying languages in general, but then of course maybe the core reason behind it is that I wanted to communicate with local people and I wanted to understand what's going around me at work because most of my colleagues were French, so it helped me to also… well I guess there is a big social factor in it.

INTERVIEWER: Was the social factor from your friends, colleagues, or…?

B: Both, for sure both.

INTERVIEWER: Going back to why you're motivated to learn languages in general. Why do you think this is so?

B: Well, I'm very interested in different cultures, and I travel a lot, and I think that if I'm in a country where I can communicate with the local language it's always, maybe the experience is more authentic then, because language is a really big part of culture.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, aside from motivation, having a private teacher and having these good relations, what else do you think were key reasons why you benefitted from this training?

B: I don't know, I feel like I'm starting to repeat myself, but I think that's also the same in all these interviews because you want to dig into one question *laughs* But of course it also benefitted me professionally, like what I said that learning the professional language then helped me to participate in meetings that were held in French, for example. So, I mean it did help me in my job for sure.

INTERVIEWER: I guess I'm going more on, what was responsible for your success? Was it something to do with you, something to do with the training itself, or was it something to do with the company?

B: Mm, well I think what was quite good regarding the training is that it's been tailored for the company, so the teachers that they have, they have been teaching L'Oreal employees for many years so they know the company quite well. So they were able to… because otherwise like teaching professional language just in general, I mean of course you can always teach professional French or business French or whatever, but if you're able to actually tailor the classes to the company employees and talk about topics that, that you know are real topics in the person's job, is of course very good. And then at the same time it's interesting for me as well, when I know that it's not just general but it's actually something that they have tailored for the company.

INTERVIEWER: How supportive of you was the company, in having this language training? Do you think the support from the company made a difference?

B: Well it's a benefit that they offer, so they see it as a benefit that is given to you when you come, it's like part of the expat package in a way. It's even said they even say it in the contract that you sign, that this is like part of the benefits that you are receiving. So, like of course I think it's already support from the company that they offer this, but it's not that they then like… either you take the class or then you don't take the class, and the company is not, like, they're not checking if you're taking your classes or well, probably they are, and some of their systems, because then if the person is not using this benefit it can be given to someone else, but I don't think that I needed any additional support from them. I mean they were already organizing the class, and then I had a teacher that came to the office which made my life easier because I didn't have to go anywhere.

INTERVIEWER: So aside from this, giving the classes, you didn't need much else from the company.

B: No.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned your co-workers were supportive?

B: Yes, yeah they were. I mean, they were encouraging me to use the language for sure.

INTERVIEWER: Being tolerant of your mistakes?

B: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think your base level of French made a big difference?

B: Yes, but then again in the end I didn't stay that long, I think, let's say one year more would have probably made a huge difference, but I did get more confident for sure, in using the language. For me it was maybe, I think my French was the best after I had left and come back for a year, because then I actually forgot my English while I was there, because even though I was in in Canada I was living in a place where people

don't really speak English. So of course compared to that, when I was in Paris I was still using English every day, and I was using it much more than I was using French, but if I compared to the level of French I had when I arrived to Paris, for sure, because at that point I had not used the language for so long in my day-to-day life. I can see a big difference today compared to what it was a year ago.

INTERVIEWER: Now that you've identified quite a few reasons for why your training went well, if you have to order them what do you think are the most important ones?

B: Well I think most important was having a private teacher compared to a group lesson and there's also something about that, that when you know that the teacher is there for you, and they only tailor the class for you, it really makes you more motivated to learn as well. And let's say like, if you if she gave you some homework, well the homework was not homework per se, but the way I explained in the beginning, that she had some things recorded for me, like I would feel really bad *laughs* if I went there the next week and I hadn't taken the few minutes that I should have during the week to actually learn these things. So I guess that in some way also *laughs* motivated me to do it.

INTERVIEWER: So there's kind of an accountability aspect. Especially because you didn't want to upset her.

B: Yeah, yeah as well. Because I didn't want to let her down.

INTERVIEWER: Of course. And, after that? After having a private teacher and having this soft pressure?

B: And of course like, I mean it helps when you feel you're improving, so if you if you really can see that the classes are making a difference it obviously makes you want to continue them.

INTERVIEWER: So kind of, how did you see yourself improving?

B: Well especially in the professional vocabulary like we'd always cover things, that let's say I had been in a meeting, and I wasn't sure what some words meant, and then we would practice using them, and the next time I would go to a meeting where these words would appear again, I would actually understand what they meant. So it was quite concrete.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think the methodology that the teacher employed was important as well?

B: *Immediately* Yes, for sure. For sure, yes. And as I said that it was really like tailor-made for the company and the vocabulary we used and so on, and because if it wasn't it would have been really difficult to find these, like I guess that you can teach basics of a language to someone without tailoring it to a certain company if the base level is low, but then when you start to be on a fluent level already, then it needs to be quite specific topics that you cover, and this is what was made really well by the company that I was studying with.

8.3 Interview C

Interviewer: Tan Yu

Interviewee: C, male employee learning French at French Multinational, United States.

Date: 5th March 2018

Mode: Skype voice call

INTERVIEWER: First, could you tell me about the training you received? What was it like?

C: Um, so it's one-on-one, at first it was with two different teachers, but now it's with just one teacher. So I've gone between doing it once a week to twice a week. You know, depending on how busy my schedule is. Yeah so it's usually for an hour and a half each session, and we we follow through different book series, we started off with the Berlitz method and now I'm doing this book series called Vita et bien, so it's a, you know, rapid method for adults. Yeah so that's about it. We do a lot of things like listening to things from the book, and then asking each other questions and answering questions, trying to focus on conversational comprehension, but we also do grammar and things like this too.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what would you say is the split between conversational and grammar stuff?

C: Probably like 75%, or 70-30 conversational to grammar. I mean the grammar is obviously like, very important in order to do the conversation. But yeah so you know you get out of it what you put into it, so for me it's always I wish I had more time to put more time into it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay cool, yeah you sound pretty motivated to learn French. Could you talk a bit about why you're so motivated to study?

C: Oh so I had a project, the way our company works is uh so you can request to have the French training or they can request for you to have the French training, and I was working on a project where I was a liaison with one of our teams in France, a small team in France. And their English wasn't all that great I guess, and well actually it was pretty good, but their accent was thick. And I don't have a problem with the accent, so, but yeah it was it was funny because I was doing another assignment, normally I'm at the R&D centre, but I was doing an assignment at one of the factories, and I was grabbing a sandwich at one of the sandwich places and an HR manager was there in line in front of me, and she just looked at me and said hey uh, hey would you like to take French lessons? I said hey it sounds like a great opportunity, and the next thing I knew she signed me up for them and I was taking them. So that's how I came to take the French lessons. But that was about four years ago, so I'm just sticking with them. You know, without immersion it's difficult to learn fast.

INTERVIEWER: And you mentioned you were assigned to projects as a liaison, are you still doing that?

C: No, but I do work with a French counterpart a lot, so.

INTERVIEWER: So, how does this French actually come to use in your working life?

C: Um, well for one thing I understand when people are speaking in French, so that's good for me, I understand what they're saying. They're not always aware that… it's not typically enough for an American to speak French. And mostly just I think it's just good for team building, to show that I, you know, care about their culture. But I don't really speak a lot of French, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, moving on to a different question. Was the training you received helpful? And how did it improve your language skills?

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C: Oh yeah very helpful. I had absolutely no knowledge of French when I started, and now I have a probably… beginning-intermediate like level of French. No I'm still not comfortable having an entire conversation in French. But I'm getting there. *laughs*

 INTERVIEWER: It's a long road, learning a language, but a very fruitful one. I guess it would have improved more of your comprehensive skills? Or do you think your reading skills are better?

C: Um, so reading is much easier, because you can create your own pace. For comprehending what people are saying it depends on how fast they talk. You know, so someone who, especially with French, the liaison, blurring things together, sometimes it's difficult to figure out where words start and end, if someone's speaking quickly.

 INTERVIEWER: Why do you think the training was effective?

C: Because it was one-on-one. So it's, you get a lot of a lot of attention, a lot of focus, you can focus on the things you know you want to focus on, and you do a lot of practice speaking. You know whereas I've taken German for years, for probably like eight years when I was younger, but in a classroom environment it's just a lot slower to learn.

 INTERVIEWER: And you think the customization, the tailored attention, that's a big part of it?

C: Yeah, that yeah the tailored attention and just being able to speak more often. You know, in a classroom setting you don't really get to speak all that much.

 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's mostly the teacher talking on and on, and then you do some worksheets.

C: Yeah and then if you have like a language lab, you do a lot of listening but you're not doing a lot of speaking. And listening is much easier than trying to speak, and get to that level of fluency where you're not trying to translate in your head.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you've gotten past that level?

C: Um, sometimes I'm like this, but not always. Okay so I'm definitely, definitely not there for all the time because, you know, my vocabulary is not big enough. Although luckily with French most of the words are the same.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah you can just take a stab at it and… *laughs*

C: Yeah you just say an English word with a French pronunciation and you're good to go.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so that was a bit about the method that you thought was effective. What about, you know, your own characteristics, what do you think helped your acquisition that was specific to you?

C: Um… it's a good question, I mean I just I want to do it, so, I want to learn how to speak other languages. And my attitude is pretty… is pretty much just stick with it. You know okay, I know I can't be completely immersed unless I moved to France or a French-speaking country, but I also know that if I do this for ten years, I'll probably be pretty well-off, I'll be all right. You know, it's not like you forget what you've learned, so as long as you keep it part of your weekly or daily life you know, and I'm always trying to get it to be part of my daily life, but I don't always succeed, but you know, so I also use things like Duolingo; I have the Pimsleur tapes to listen to in the car.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, Pimsleur's great, I'm using those for Japanese.

C: Oh I tried to learn Japanese that's hard. I worked in Japan for four years… yeah and I tried learning Japanese at bars and that did not work *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: You're just missing I guess, the vocabulary, and the intuition of the language.

C: Yeah yeah it's a… it's a weird language, but you know, one of the things I like about learning… so whenever I travel someplace I always want to learn their language just

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because you really understand the people by their language, like how people think. I found its very proportional… or very very, it's a function of how the languages the language is.

INTERVIEWER: There's definitely some feedback loop between like, culture and language.

C: Like the Japanese do not, like they don't use personal pronouns there's a lot of context, assuming things. That's a lot like their culture.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, indirect things, you're supposed to read the mood and the situation. It's a pretty interesting aspect for Japanese, the Japanese language, yeah. Sidetracking a bit, you were in Japan for four years, okay. I mean that's a pretty immersive environment…

C: Yep so I would I wasn't there the whole time, I would go there for like six months at a time, four months at a time. It was immersive, they were at factories where everyone was speaking English a lot. So the people that I work with spoke both Japanese and English, and yeah so there's there wasn't like this big need to, as part of, that's one of the I think hardest things for Americans is that everyone all around the world, because I also spent a lot of time in Korea, it's the same thing, everyone speaks English, so there's not a big like need, you know. There's no, you really have to want to do it yourself, and put yourself in the position to be immersed. But yeah those conditions I could have been more immersed, and I chose not to. But I was in my, I was younger back then, that was like my early 20s.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah there's definitely some difference when you're with someone who can only speak your target language versus when you're with someone who can speak your target language and English.

C: Yeah and in Japan it was strange, because uh they're very xenophobic so they don't like foreigners. Um you know so I'm a white guy with red hair, so I would go on

trains and little kids would point. And it was very funny, but we would hang out at some like American places where a lot of Japanese people would come, but their whole their whole goal is to learn English so they wouldn't speak Japanese, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Not the best setup to learn Japanese.

C: No, even the places that were very much Japanese, I mean I got kicked out of a place once, we went there one night and the next night we went back, and they literally physically removed me from the place, and then point pointed to this sign written in kanji. Of course I couldn't read it, but my friend starts laughing and it was - what's the sign say? It says there's no white people. Like okay, well as an American I was like, wow, that's…. you can't do that.

INTERVIEWER: Kudos to you for still sticking with language learning and cultural openness after that kind of experience.

C: Nah it was funny, it was just funny.

INTERVIEWER: But yeah, going back to that, why are you interested in learning different languages, and where do you think this motivation comes from.

C: That's a good question, I don't really know. I just… I always respected people that can speak more than one language, I think it's good for your mind. Oh I grew up in New Jersey, in northern New Jersey, and the street when I was a little kid that I grew up on had different cultures, like every other house you know there was an Italian family, you know an Italian-American family. There was a family that was from Eastern Europe, I thought it was funny because they one was Polish the other was Hungarian, and they would yell at each other all the time when they get mad, and I thought they were just yelling at each other in another language so that we know what couldn't hear the words they were saying, and I learned late much later when I was adult no, they just were speaking to each other in their mother tongues, and neither one could understand what the other one was saying. Because Hungarian and polish are so

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different, but yeah I would go to my friend's house, they were from Latvia, and you know, you knew it was time to leave when when mom started yelling at them in Latvian. Then it was like, okay time to go, they did something wrong. So that might have something to do with it, you know I was always kind of jealous that you know, oh my all my childhood friends could speak more than one language, and I couldn't. You know, and I'm from, you know, my mother is half Swedish half Italian, but on that side of the family, as soon as they immigrated they didn't keep the language. Yeah just, English yep. So like my great-grandmother could speak Italian but my grandmother couldn't.

INTERVIEWER: No I totally feel you man, I'm from Malaysia, and my parents speak Mandarin Chinese, which is a pretty useful language to know. But they were raising me with English, and now I'm trying to re-learn it again.

C: Yeah there was a lot of people that spoke Chinese like where I grew up. And it was it was interesting because when I moved away after college, I remember going to work places and just being so shocked to see all these Asian people speaking English with an accent, like it sounds so weird.

INTERVIEWER: With an accent, like a Chinese accent?

C: Yeah a Chinese accent, yeah. Because to me, I've never, didn't really experience that. All my friends they spoke, like I spoke you know, yeah American English. And they could speak Chinese also, but they didn't, do it both without an accent. Like you don't have an accent, right. So just like that. I guess in Malaysia they have accents like Americans.

INTERVIEWER: Well my dad kind of imported the accent I think, because he studied in Iowa.

C: So you have an Iowa accent?

INTERVIEWER: *laughs* Maybe.

C: So, but now you're in Finland now?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I'm studying in Finland.

C: Yeah so how's that language?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's a whole new can of worms.

C: Yeah I've always, I've wanted to learn Swedish because my grandfather was Swedish. So it's kind of like yeah boy, I don't know, I have no real need for that language. Yeah so at least with French, so learning French would be another motivation, is it could be good for my career also to be able to speak French, so.

INTERVIEWER: So you do see some possibilities with, career benefits with French.

C: Sure, absolutely. Yeah absolutely. It's not it's not a disadvantage, that's for sure.

INTERVIEWER: What would you consider your second best language to be? Like, right after English, because you've learned a few.

C: Umm, it would still be French at this point. You know I don't ever speak German anymore, so it's kind of like, yeah like it's really hard to, it but it's funny because when you learn, so I hadn't spoken German in years and when I first started learning French, I started trying to think of how to say something in French, and I would think of it in German, like the German would come back. Yeah I was like well, I know how to say it in German. I don't know why I know how to say that in German, but yeah. But yeah I mean my fluency level, even in German, was never beyond intermediate really.

INTERVIEWER: So now you're kind of doubling down on French.

C: Yeah, yeah. Yeah my goal is to be fluent in French, within the next 20 years, before I die. *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: That's a pretty realistic goal… I'm sure you'll live more than 20 years.

C: I hope so. Well yeah I mean, especially if I stay with the French company, the more I get to travel to France, and you know the more you know…

INTERVIEWER: Have you gotten to travel to France yet?

C: Yeah, I'll be there this summer for two different weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Working in French, or English, or…?

C: It'll be, I'm sure it will be in English. But I'll have the opportunity to speak more French. But I have the opportunity to speak as much French as I want here also, because we have a pretty good population of French-speaking people here at work. Probably like, I don't know, more than 20.

INTERVIEWER: Does that help a lot, with your acquisition?

C: *sighs* I think it actually it does, because you know I work directly with two people from France, and so I can ask them questions, and we joke around and stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say your usage of French usage is with them?

C: Oh it's less than five percent.

INTERVIEWER: So it's not a core part of your communications?

C: No, no. I use it the most when I'm, if I'm in a meeting where I'm the only english-speaking person. Um, I just tell everyone to speak in French, then I can at least be immersed in listening, so. But I find it very difficult to respond in any kind of timely fashion in French, especially to look at technical engineering type questions.

INTERVIEWER: That's understandable. Would you say that your company your company's made it easy for you to learn French? That the environment helped?

C: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

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INTERVIEWER: So you mentioned like having these French colleagues, is there anything else?

C: Nope, like I said, I mean it's like anything, you get out of it what you put into it. You know, I feel like I can always do more, and I know the more I do the better off I am, so. But, it's not easy, like even with the listening using Pimsleur which is excellent, in the car, sometimes it's just like your brain after half an hour of that can't do it anymore, you know. It's too dangerous to try and drive.

INTERVIEWER: You've got to put it on the cooler for a little bit.

C: Yeah, yeah, yep.

INTERVIEWER: So, maybe going back to personal factors, aside from this motivation, and kind of your attitude towards acquisition, was there any other anything else that you think helped you acquire French?

C: No, I mean no. It's just I mean, I've had this opportunity to do this, and you know, if anyone came up to me and said hey, here's an opportunity speak any language, I think I would take it, so.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, it's really the attitude and the openness, to languages.

C: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I mean I have like relatives that speak several languages, you know, my one aunt, by marriage, speaks you know, she's from Eastern Europe, she probably speaks seven or eight languages fluently. It's just something I always aspired to be able to do, you know. Like obviously, I could never get there now because I'm 40, but not without significant effort. But yeah no, I just, I know it's good for the way you think, I know it's… you know there's a lot of scientific literature out there stating the benefits of being bilingual.

INTERVIEWER: Brain plasticity, and stuff like that, yeah.

C: Yeah, yeah. It's just fun.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok, it's fun. You've listed quite a few factors, like the one-on-one nature of the training, your motivation to learn, your colleagues that kind of support you in the learning process. If you have to kind of rank them in an order of importance, which would the most significant factors be?

C: Definitely the one-on-one training, is this the most helpful. You know, especially because like if you if you're trying to learn on your own, and you're with a group of people, the attention you get isn't really, you know you're not gonna get an hour half of that. You're getting it a fraction of that, and you're also gonna be self-conscious, so you're not gonna, when you're on a one on one situation, you're, it's okay to make as many mistakes as you possibly can. And making those mistakes is what teaches you, so. And a lot of times, if you're, you know, with a bunch of French speakers that are not there to, with their focus being to teach you French, then they're speaking too fast, you know that sort of thing. Like you don't really get to participate.

INTERVIEWER: So is it something about the teacher being patient and inclusive?

C: Yeah, speaking slower. Yeah I mean the teacher's basically speaking to you like you're a little kid. You know, so. *laughs* And that's not going to happen just naturally in conversation with a couple of peers. Of course.

8.4 Interview D

Interviewer: Tan Yu

Interviewee: D, Male employee learning German in German Multinational, in Germany

Date: March 13th, 2018

Mode: Messenger Chat

INTERVIEWER: Could you start by telling me about what kind of things you did to learn German?

D: I started out by memorizing phrases from a traveler phrasebook and using those phrases to order food, ask for directions, etc. Then I built upon those phrases, looking up words that I would commonly use in everyday life and creating sentences from them. Later I used internet sources like Duolingo to further enrich my vocabulary. Also I'm starting proper lessons soon

INTERVIEWER: Oh you are? On your own expense?

D: Yep, the company doesn't sponsor interns.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you mentioned. Did you use materials besides Duolingo and phrasebooks? How did you acquire grammar, for example?

D: I didn't use any other materials besides those two. I just practiced speaking a lot - essentially learning like how a child learns to talk. Speak, mess up, learn. I didn't focus too much on grammar from the get go - it just came naturally from listening to lots of people talk.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Where did you get your main conversational input from?

D: I mainly spoken with my colleagues, who were more than willing to teach me, as well as people I meet when doing Latin dances, and yes I took up Latin dancing.

INTERVIEWER: That's impressive! how did they give you feedback? Did they rephrase your sentences, teach you grammar rules?

D: Pretty much. And they taught me how the locals would phrase certain things, as some sentences are grammatically correct but are not commonly spoken in that way by the locals. So I also picked up some local variations of how to phrase certain stuff.

INTERVIEWER: If you were to break down your learning into percentages, how much would you attribute to each source of learning?

D: Grammar - 20%, Vocabulary - 30%, Active speaking - 50%

INTERVIEWER: I mean if you had to break down your learning to informal conversations, Duolingo, and phrasebooks (plus any other relevant sources)

D: Ah right. Phrasebooks - 20%, Duolingo 40% and conversations - 40%, rough estimates.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, can't really get more precise than that. Moving on, how would you compare your German skills before and after this period of time? In what areas have you improved?

D: I'm more confident to voice my thoughts instead of just staying quiet, and my brain is quicker at forming sentences from words, hence I speak with less hesitation or pauses

INTERVIEWER: I see, so there's more automaticity of thought? What about other language skills, such as reading, writing, and listening?

D: Yep. Reading and listening have improved to the point where I can read and process words fairly quickly, and understand about 70-80% of native speakers' speech. Writing is still bad because I never focused much on grammar or spelling

INTERVIEWER: I see. In what ways do you use the language at work?

D: I speak German to the colleagues who don't speak much English - mainly to take/give instructions, get help, and discuss problems.

INTERVIEWER: Could you give examples of some of the problems you are able to discuss in German?

D: For example, when a material exhibits unusual behaviour, we discuss what could have gone wrong during testing, i.e. human error, acts of nature (wind, light etc.), and what we could do to fix it.

INTERVIEWER: Wow, so pretty complex topics. Was it difficult acquiring the necessary vocabulary in German?

D: It was easier than expected, because I hear and use the technical terms every day. You just pick it up after a while. To be fair though it did take me 4-5 months to get comfortable enough to discuss stuff like that

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, is it that some phrases/words come up often so you pick up on them?

D: Exactly. I find out the meaning and immediately put it in context, i.e. speak it in a sentence. That helps solidify its meaning in my mind

INTERVIEWER: Great stuff. How long have you been learning German again? And how would you evaluate/rate your current German ability now?

D: I've been learning since September last year. I did a test recently with the school I signed up with for classes and they put my level at B1 (1).

INTERVIEWER: Would I be wrong to say you're pretty satisfied with your progress?

D: You would actually. There's still a lot of work to be done, and I definitely need to increase my study time to be honest.

INTERVIEWER: I see, that's a good mindset for improving. But yeah, looking back at your improvements in vocabulary, grammar and fluency, why do you think you managed to learn as much as you did?

D: I would say it's because I forced myself to go out there and speak, even though I knew I'd screw up. That's how kids learn to speak, and the locals appreciate you for even trying. In other words, my relatively thick skin helped haha.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I'm sure having thick skin helped. Why do you think you pushed yourself to learn with this method?

D: I saw and spoke to some people at university who had been learning a language for years, studying mostly, and were unable to speak to a native at all. For example, they knew the words for 'nice' and 'hair', but when I asked them to compliment a native speaker on their nice hair, they struggled. So it was quite obvious to me that that method of studying too much before speaking didn't work.

INTERVIEWER: I see, so from the start you had faith in this method more than formal lessons?

D: Yep. The woman who tested me was saying that on average, people who started formal lessons around the same time as me starting my method would only just be beginning to form sentences around now, whereas I could actually hold conversations, her words not mine haha.

INTERVIEWER: I believe em. Aside from the method, what else do you think was important to your learning?

D: Not being afraid to keep speaking even though you may get laughed at for screwing up.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think you managed to not be afraid/embarrassed of speaking? A lot of people have issues with that, as you can imagine.

D: That's a tough one haha. I guess I could say that I forced myself to develop a mindset that if I don't take this chance, I'd probably never get another one, what with me being only here for a year and all. And since I look fairly young and student-ish I assume people are more willing to forgive and teach.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So a mix of motivation due to it being a rare opportunity and confidence that it would work?

D: Pretty much yeah.

8.5 Interview E

Interviewer: Tan Yu

Interviewee: E, Male employee learning English in Vietnamese Multinational, in Vietnam

Date: March 15th, 2018

Mode: Skype voice call

INTERVIEWER: Could you start by telling me what the training you received was like?

E: There are many courses we can join, and we choose by ourselves. At first, I chose a course that is about business speaking and communication. In that class, the teacher focused only on the topic of communication. I had taken just one course on communication, and after that I prepared to, I planned to join an IELTs test. And I thought that I would join a class to have some review to prepare for the test, but at the present I am not ready because I have to go for a business trip. So after this time I will have to do that course for the test. So for me I've only had one course during my training time.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so you took a communication course and now you're in the middle of an IELTS preparation course.

E: Yes, to prepare for the test.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me a bit more about the communication course? What would happen in the class, and how many people were there?

E: In the class, there are about 8-12 people. The teacher would divide us into small groups, 3-4 people per group, and we would discuss a topic that the teacher gives to

us. During the class, the teacher would give us some sentenecs and phrases that we can learn and use for every topic. But I think *inaudible*

INTERVIEWER: I see, so you would be broken into small groups to discuss topics.

E: Yeap.

INTERVIEWER: Is that all you did for your communications course? What else did you do?

E: Um, during that time I had a small club in the company. It was organized by some members like me. They go to other classes, and we organized a small group. Every 2 weeks, we would have this English speaking club to talk together, and discuss some topics that we would choose by ourselves. In that time we would talk together and do some practice, prepare some problems, some games to build vocabulary.

INTERVIEWER: Cool. Could you talk a bit about the IELTS preparation course?

E: I, at the present I just practice to follow some topics from IELTs.

INTERVIEWER: So it's like, preparing for the test, right?

interruption as interviewer changes microphone

INTERVIEWER: So, just now I asked you to describe to me about your courses. Now could you tell me, how did these courses help you with your English skills? What's the change?

E: For me, the first thing is I feel more confident to talk to other people. The other thing is it helps me to keep, it helps me to learn more vocabulary, speak many more sentences than before. I have more ideas about some topics, becauuse before I had the course, I had no idea on what to say to other people so I just talk less. After taking the class, I can learn the idea from every people.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, the last point. After taking the class?

E: After taking the class, I can learn the idea of a topic from other people, then I can talk more with that idea when I see the topic.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, so you have more things to say for each topic, right?

E: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Have the classes helped with your work life, at all?

E: You mean, if the class helps you in working?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, like do you use English in your work?

E: Yes, I have some topics in presentations, and meetings, in *inaudible* argument, it helps me to improve in my workplace. That I can present topics with some of my colleages, and, in meetings, I know how to give ideas, proposals to people, it's just a way to show what you want and...

INTERVIEWER: It's giving you a voice, kinda.

E: Yes, the way you transfer your ideas to someone else, so that they can understand you.

INTERVIEWER: So, you use English in these meetings, right? Is it because the other people in the meetings can only speak English with you?

E: Yes, because I have to talk in teams, in teleconferences, with colleagues from Italy. And so I have to use English to talk to them.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so it's mainly to communicate with your Italian colleagues.

E: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, go on. You were saying something?

E: *inaudible*

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so now you're more confident and able to communicate with them in English, right?

E: Yes, but there are some difficult points, like the Italian American accent. There are some words that I can't catch immediately. So uh, maybe after I talk with them, and I now the style that they talk with, after that I am familiar with the style and then I can... but at first maybe I don't understand more.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it takes some time to get used to the "Italia" *laughs*

E: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Are you most comfortable with the Vietnamese English accent? Or is it British or American that you're more comfortable with?

E: I think I...both of them *inaudible*. Because the Vietnamese accent...I am familiar with some Vietnamese accents... I can understand at that time, and I practice listening with the American accent, so I also can...

INTERVIEWER: Familiar with the American accent.

E: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, can you tell me a little about your level of English before the training?

E: Actually, I have taken some English courses by myself, and I can speak with anyone, but not as confident as after I started going to work. When I take the course, and started going to work, I had more experience around the way they use English, and the environment for practice. So I think after the course it was better, and my ability to show off, to pass ideas to another person, the way I transfer information.

Because in the course there are a lot of people who go to work with me, I can share with them ideas about learning English, because you don't have time to learn more.

INTERVIEWER: So it seems like the training really made you more experience, more confident, better at transfering information right?

E: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, I'd like to ask you why you think the training was effective. What was good about it?

E: The first thing is it helped me to speak English every day, to learn English every day, and practice. At home, I cannot spend time by myself to learn, but I think with the course I can follow to learn English every day. And, let me think... If I study at home and there are points I don't understand, I have no one to ask, to help me with that difficulty. When I take courses I have a teacher who can instruct me on things like grammar, to fix my pronunciation, to the point that it is better than *inaudible*

INTERVIEWER: Better than doing it by yourself?

E: Yes. I mean in writing skills, it's not as good as the other skills. If I take a course in writing I think it's better than I just... in English it takes more time to write, with more specific grammar...

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's faster than just doing it by yourself.

E: Yeap.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, go on, what else was good about the class?

E: I don't understand, can you explain more?

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think the class was good. The training?

E: I think you already asked me this question.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, do you have any other things to add about it?

E: I think it's just the two points I mentioned.

INTERVIEWER: So the commitment, and having people to ask when you have problems. Uh...do you think there's anything about your company that made it easy for you to learn English?

E: Oh, I said that having better meetings, better presentations.

INTERVIEWER: But, I'm asking did your company help you in the learning process? Like, were they very supportive?

E: Mmm... the company, I think just gave us the time to learn, and um, supported us with the course fees, and we just learn by ourselves, and every 6 months to 1 year the company will have a review about the learning process. Also I said that every two weeks there is a club, and members in the HR team would come to our club to follow and review. And sometimes they talk about the course, asking if we continued with the course, because some of my colleagues have to work too late, and they have no time to take the course immediately, so they have to just...delay, or yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, for you, what was the most important thing? Was it the courses, or the English club, or the HR help? What was the most important thing for you in learning English?

E: I think the most important thing, in the present, is I need to take a course to review, and also we have to *inaudible* to practice, because we have to submit the results of the training process by the end of this year, so we have to gather *inaudible*. And I think the most important thing is the courses, and practice by ourselves. And other things like support from the HR team and the English club is just supporting, because it takes just one hour every two weeks, not much time.

8.6 Interview F

Interviewer: Tan Yu

Interviewee: F, male employee learning English and Malay in Japanese multinational, in Malaysia

Date: March 18th, 2018

Mode: Skype voice call

INTERVIEWER: Could you begin by telling me what the training was like? What did you do?

F: Oh, what I did in Malaysia?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, you went to Malaysia for English training, right?

F: Yes, English, and also Bahasa. I learned Bahasa Melayu (Malay).

INTERVIEWER: I see. Which one did you learn more?

F: Umm...same level.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe you could talk about both then.

F: Yes, but Bahasa is a little difficult for me.

INTERVIEWER: Ah so English is easier for you.

F: English is easier for me, yes. Because, since 2016 I've been in Malaysia, and I started to learn Bahasa and English. I could understand English, but my Bahasa teacher, he taught me Bahasa in English, so that was very difficult for me *laughs*. Because I can't understand English, so that was difficult.

INTERVIEWER: Was your English teacher teaching you English in Japanese?

F: No, English, English. English only.

INTERVIEWER: But with Bahasa you had two languages to work with.

F: Yes, it was confusing, it confused me.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there are any other reasons why English was easier?

F: Because in Japan, we Japanese learn basic English in Japan, I mean, in junior high and high school. So, it wasn't the first time.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, so you had some background knowledge.

F: Yeah, I knew English a little bit, but Bahasa, it was...

INTERVIEWER: Brand new.

F: Yes, yes. In Japan, we don't use Bahasa. *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so you started in 2016. It was for how long?

F: I learned for five months? I think.

INTERVIEWER: And your company paid for everything?

F: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me about what the classes were like?

F: My classes were special classes. By special I mean the classes were 1-on-1. So they...since I cannot use English and Bahasa, so people in those classes, I mean students, they can speak English. The school has advanced classes for Bahasa, not basic classes. You know what I mean?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, they had classes for advanced learners of Bahasa.

F: So I couldn't get in the advanced class, so I chose a basic class. And so, the classes were 1-on-1.

INTERVIEWER: Was your English class also 1-on-1?

F: Yes, 1-on-1.

INTERVIEWER: And was your English class advanced or basic?

F: Basic.

INTERVIEWER: And so both your English and Bahasa classes were basic, and both were 1-on-1.

F: Yeah, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and what would your teacher do with you in these 1-on-1 classes?

F: We started with a very basic curriculum. In bahasa class, we started with "How can I say 'hello' in Bahasa?". So I learned greetings, numbers, weeks, months, and basic..."bunpou" (grammar)?

INTERVIEWER: Bunpou? Let me check...ah, grammar.

F: Ah, grammar, yes *laughs* So I think that level is kindergarten, a level for very small children, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But your English is quite good, were you learning the same basic things for English, like days of the week and hello?

F: Ah, English classes were more difficulty.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I can imagine that. What did you do in English class?

F: Ah yes, I learned basic business English.

INTERVIEWER: So it was a business English course. What kind of things that you do?

F: I did things like writing emails, listening, report writing, and...things like that.

INTERVIEWER: So very useful, practical tasks. And your teacher would coach you as you did the exercises?

F: Yes. Of course grammar, but not only grammar, she also taught me, she did free discussions with me. So I tried to talk, I tried to make sentences.

INTERVIEWER: And, did you do any learning on your own, outside of class?

F: Yes I did, for myself.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

F: I did listening lessons using Youtube, or free sites, with no charge. There are many listening programmes.

INTERVIEWER: I see, so you trained your listening a lot.

F: Yes, and I tried to remember new words. Everyday I got new words, new English words, so I tried to remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Was it like a podcast? Like a radio show?

F: Yes, I watched Youtube, interesting programmes. The teacher introduced them to me. One programme had people who speak English as second languages, like Japanese, Koreans, and other Asian people. They were in school, so they speak English, but it is their second language so they can't speak English very well.

INTERVIEWER: Chotto heta ne (So they weren't very good).

F: Uh yeah *laughs*, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: And funny accents.

F: Yes, funny accents, like me.

INTERVIEWER: *laughs* Wakarimashita (I understand).

F: But that programme was very useful for me.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, very fun, I can imagine. Moving on to the next question, I'd like to know, what you think the biggest improvements are? What did you get from this training?

F: Oh...when I was in Japan, I think I could use Japanese, and I could ask questions in Japanese. But there are no Japanese in my school (in Malaysia), of course the teacher was not Japanese, so I have to use English, so that was a very important point for me. Having to speak English.

INTERVIEWER: And, what did you learn from this whole training?

F: Because...for my work. I was working in Japan, for the Japanese domestic market. But then I moved to the international sales team. Before I moved to the group, I had to learn English, so that's why I started that training programme. Did I make sense?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's because you transferred to this international team, that you had to learn English. Right?

F: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: By the way, sorry if I don't answer; a lot of the time I'll be thinking about what you said and taking notes.

F: Oh, okay *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so that's why you were forced to speak English. What do you think you learned from this training? What's the change, like before the training and after the training? How much did you improve, and in what areas? Speaking, writing?

F: Listening and speaking, I hope?

INTERVIEWER: I think you're quite good, especially with listening. What else, do you notice any change?

F: Because, at first, I could not understand what people are talking about, and what they are saying (in English). But now, I can understand, not everything, but maybe 50%? So my sharing skill was improved.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And did this better level of English help you with your job

F: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, could you give me some examples?

F: Yes. So currently, I'm going to Vietnam, but before that, I was working in Malaysia, and of course they (colleagues) cannot speak Japanese. They speak English and Bahasa. So I needed to speak English. Sometimes, my colleagues and my customers cannot understand what I'm saying, but my colleagues helped me, I mean my colleagues tried to understand what I was saying.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so they were supportive.

F: Yes, yes. So if I didn't get the training course at first, maybe I cannot speak and I cannot work in Malaysia.

INTERVIEWER: So without the training, you wouldn't be able to communicate.

F: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And how did this communication happen? Was it speaking, or was it emails?

F: Both of them, emails and speaking. Conference calls.

INTERVIEWER: So just generally, communication with Malaysian workers, I see. And now, do you still use English much?

F: Not really, because my colleagues in Vietnam can speak Japanese, so I cannot use English much.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, yeah. So, moving on to the next question: Why do you think the training was good? Or what was good about the training?

F: Oh...training.

INTERVIEWER: For example, you said, it forced you to ask questions in English, and you thought that was an important point.

F: Yes. The training was good. Of course, I could get basic skills. In training, I can try to speak English. Because it is training, so if I make mistakes, it doesn't matter. So, I can try, how can I say...

INTERVIEWER: You can try, without worrying about mistakes?

F: Yes yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So was it that you felt more comfortable, maybe?

F: Yes. And teachers modify my English...not modify, but...

INTERVIEWER: They correct?

F: Yes, correct my English.

INTERVIEWER: So when you communicate with Malaysian, for example, Malaysian colleagues, would you be afraid to make mistakes?

F: With my colleagues, not really. But with my customer...I cannot speak much, I cannot talk much. My colleague talked.

INTERVIEWER: *laughs* Ah okay.

F: But with my colleague, I try to speak.

INTERVIEWER: So maybe how comfortable with your teacher is up here, your colleagues are here, and the customers are down there.

F: *laughs* Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Because I guess it's important for a salesperson, the customers. What about the teacher's teaching style? Do you think it was good?

F: Yes. The teacher was very good, for me. But, maybe the teacher was surprised. I mean, because, normally they teach students who can speak English more than me.

INTERVIEWER: So you were not a normal student.

F: *laughs* Yes, that one.

INTERVIEWER: Normally, what kind of students are they teaching?

F: Uhh, maybe, I think, students who can speak English well. I mean, better than me?

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, so how did this affect your learning?

silence

F: But, the class was one-on-one, so...

INTERVIEWER: So it was better, because it was one-on-one? Why?

F: The teacher and I can move forward in my pace.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, so they could adjust their speed to fit you.

F: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What about, you know there are a lot of students who try to learn English, but they end up not being able to speak very well. Maybe they can learn to read and write, but they can't speak. So why do you think you managed to learn to speak so well? I think your speaking and listening is quite good.

F: Oh, thank you. Hmm.

silence

INTERVIEWER: So why do you think you could learn to speak so well?

F: Umm, because I had training course for four or five months. And after that I was in Malaysia for almost one year, so I got the opportunity to use English, so that's why I got English skills, a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: I see, so you would say just because you had the opportunity to use it, and you had a long time.

F: Because, Dean, you know, in Japan, there are no opportunities to use English. Many Japanese don't speak good English.

INTERVIEWER: Well they can always go to the Gaijin (foreigner) bars, right?

F: Yeah, yeah, I should go. *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: *laughs* I've heard about those in Japan. That's where all the Amerika-jin (Americans) go, right?

F: Ah, but I think, that Americans in the bar, they are American guys and Japanese ladies, or Japanese guys. So not for me. *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So not really, your conversation partner type, okay. Lastly, about your company. Do you think they helped a lot with your training?

F: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Could you explain?

F: Yes. Because for my training, I could stay in Malaysia, and I didn't work during my training course, I mean four to five months, I just studied English and Bahasa. I can focus on studying. And now, in Japan, there are some English skill trainings, like teaching how to do presentations, and I can get online...

INTERVIEWER: Courses?

F: Yes, online courses. So there are some English skill courses. So my company is, I think good.

INTERVIEWER: Did they have a good attitude towards your training? Were they very supportive as well?

F: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that helped a lot?

F: Yes, it helped a lot. But actually, there is not much time for training.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm...why?

F: From morning until night, I have to work. So, I need to make more time for getting training.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So is that from 9 in the morning until like 7 or 8 at night?

F: Yeah, 9 or 10, or something like that. Dean, you know, Japanese people work too much. *laughs*

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I know, salaryman lifestyle. So, can't you ask for time off to do training?

F: Time off?

INTERVIEWER: Can you ask for time off to do the training?

F: No. Because if I could finish my work earlier, I can get time for training, so it depends on me. Maybe.

INTERVIEWER: But your company won't give you time, if you haven't finished your work?

F: No.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So, do you think it would help if you company gave you time?

F: Mmm, yeah. So, not me, but some of my colleagues finish working earlier, like 5 or 6 o' clock, and after that they are getting that training. So it depends on...

INTERVIEWER: The person.

F: The person, yes.

INTERVIEWER: I find it funny that you say, they finish earlier, like 5 or 6 o' clock. You know, I'm in Finland, and 6 o'clock is considered finishing late.

F: In Japanese, it's like kouritsu wa warui (the efficiency is bad).

INTERVIEWER: Kouritsu wa warui...is kouritsu like work culture?

F: Hmm...effective?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, efficiency.

F: Efficiency? I think.