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COMMUNiCATION BEYOND CULTURE:

**Talking with “the others”**

**FOREWORD**

I would like to thank my coordinator, *Professor* *Jørgen Gulddahl Rasmussen*, for guiding and supporting me through the development process of this thesis, and to *Agri* *Nord*’s recruitment team, especially to the team-leader *Vittus Bernlov*, for offering me the possibility to participate and to observe the multi-cultural interaction.

In addition, I would like to thank the persons, who have agreed to be interviewed and to discuss about such a sensitive issue.

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Abstract

A consequence of globalization is that the multicultural organizations has become an ordinary element of nowadays landscape. This new reality seems to challenge the leaders, therefore new strategies are explored.

The starting point to this thesis is the conflictual context that emerged from the contrast of the different taken for granted of natives and foreigners from farms in Nord Denmark. Consequently, the aim in this thesis is to discover why the dialog between the two parts is deficient and what the eventual alternatives to improvement are.

Using the social constructivist theory of Berger and Luckmann, Potter and Wetherell, Voloshinov, Bakhtin, CMM this thesis search first to understand human representation of themselves and of the reality, so that human communication models become meaningful, and secondly to discuss how the communication between culture can be improved. The empirical part of this thesis is based on a reflexive analysis of individual interviews, focus group and cases aiming to explore the communication phenomena that occur when different social and cultural groups interact.

The empirical analysis results are structured in three sections, corresponding to the recruitment and onboarding phases, and to the ongoing process of intercultural communication. The results stress that both Danes and foreigners have a mixed *I-it* and *I-Thou* approach regarding “the other”. Consequently, when *I-it* approach is adopted, the dialog is impossible. The different taken for granted regarding financial stability, about employee’s role, about what may and may not be uttered are other additional elements that are blocking the communication. As expected, the use of a foreign language the low English level, the Danglish phenomenon and the different nonverbal habits are hampering the dialog. In this respect, the communication shall be reviewed, considering that the context and the details behind actions and attitudes are a silent language. Through an *I-Thou* approach the small signals and inconvenience should be brought in a dialog where both the centripetal and centrifugal powers to coexist, and hopefully the fusion of horizons will occur.

Finally I want to mention that this thesis do not pretend to be the absolute solution to the researched issue, but to turn the attention from the *form* (cultural dimension approach of communication) to the *essence* (the I-Thou approach and context significance). The thesis can be extrapolated to the issue of foreigners working onboard. Even if the research has focused on the relation between East Europeans and Danish in the agricultural industry, in the context of a collaboration with consultant and recruiter, there are many general aspects that can apply to the general topic of intercultural communication.

Abstract - *Danish*

Blandt globaliseringens konsekvenser er de multikulturelle organisationer, blevet en almindeligt i det nutidige erhvervsliv. Denne nye virkelighed udfordrer lederne, og derfor udforskes nye strategier.

Udgangspunktet for dette specielle er den konfliktfyldte kontekst, der opstod fra kontrasten i de forskellige taget-for-givet forestillinger, af både danskere og udlændinge fra gårde i Nordjylland.

Derfor er målet med dette speciale at opdage, hvorfor dialogen mellem de to sider er mangelfuld, og hvilke eventuelle alternativer, er der til forbedringer.

Analysen bruger disse social konstruktivistiske teorier af Berger og Luckmann, Potter og Wetherell, Voloshinov, Bakhtin, CMM, først for at forstå den menneskelige præsentation af sig selv og af virkeligheden, således at de menneskelige kommunikationsmodeller bliver meningsfulde, og for det andet at diskutere, hvordan kommunikationen mellem forskellige kulturer kan forbedres. Den empiriske del af dette speciale er baseret på en refleksiv analyse af individuelle interviews, fokusgruppe og observationer, som vil anlægge en case form. Formålet med denne undersøgelse er, at udforske de kommunikations fænomener, der opstår, når forskellige sociale og kulturelle grupper interagerer.

De empiriske analyseresultater er struktureret i tre sektioner, svarende til de rekruttering og on-boarding faser og til den løbende proces af interkulturel kommunikation. Resultaterne understreger, at både danskere og udlændinge har en blandet ”Jeg-det” og ”Jeg-Du” tilgang til "de andre". Følgelig, når vedtages den ”I-det” tilgang, er dialog umuligt. De forskellige taget-for-givet forestillinger med hensyn til den finansielle stabilitet, medarbejderens rolle, til hvad der må og ikke må blive sagt er andre yderligere elementer, der blokerer kommunikationen.

Som forventet er dialogen hæmmet af brugen af et fremmedsprog, det lave engelsk niveau, den Danglish fænomen, og af de forskellige non-verbale vaner. I denne forbindelse skal kommunikationen revideres, i betragtning af, at konteksten og detaljerne bag handlinger og holdninger er ”et tavst sprog”. Gennem en ”I-Du” tilgang, de små signaler og besvær bør bringes i dialog, hvor både de centripetale og centrifugale kræfter eksisterer side om side, og forhåbentlig en sammensmeltning af horisonter vil finde sted.

Endelig vil jeg nævne, at dette speciale ikke foregiver at være den absolutte løsning på det undersøgte spørgsmål, men at vende opmærksomheden fra *formen* (den kulturelle dimension tilgang til kommunikation) til *essensen* (”I-Du” tilgang til kommunikation og kontekst betydning opmærksomhed).

Specialet kan fremskrives til emnet om udenlandsk arbejdskraft. Selvom forskningen har fokuseret på forholdet mellem østeuropæere og danskere i landbruget, i forbindelse med et samarbejde med konsulenter og rekrutteringskonsulenter, er der mange generelle aspekter, der kan finde anvendelse på den store emne ”interkulturel kommunikation”.

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Chapter I

## 1.1 Intro

We live in a sophisticate era, where the word simple is replaced by the word complex. There are almost no boarder to human imagination and ambition; and there are almost no boarders between the four corners of the word! In this context, the national culture is invaded by “the others”; this happens both directly, through a mass movement of foreigners but also indirectly, through products, media, music and fashion, etc. As a result, different individuals are living together, and this change causes often conflicts and frustration.

Extrapolating this problematic to the organizational level, the situation appear to be even more acute, considering that many companies have subsidiaries in different continents, but also that in the same location are working people from diverse culture. How can things work in this organizational context? How can persons with different cultural background interact in a productive way, minimizing the risk of conflict and misunderstanding?

During my internship period, I got involved into this modern topic, of multicultural environment at workplace. On one hand, it seems to be fascinating, based on the multiple challenge, it implies, but on the other hand, working with multicultural issue, is seems sometimes hopeless, because culture is such a sensitive topic. Why is that? Maybe because cultures are the glasses through which individual see and understand the reality (Berger and Luckmann[[1]](#footnote-1)[[2]](#footnote-2)). Therefore, it gets almost impossible to accept, that “the others” are seeing the world in a different angel.

Let me introduce this issue through a short example: when discussing with some Danish friends, about the differences between cultures, one of them began to tell a story, something that happened to her. A friend of her was about to get married with an East European boy. For this event, many guests come to Denmark, and some should live in her house for few a days. At suppertime, the oldest guest seemed to be agitated. He was looking on the table, speaking and gesticulating all the time. The host asked polite, what the problem was, and she found out that “the bread was missing”. Unlikely the Danish, “the eastern people“ used to eat bread to almost any type of food. The next morning, she served some cold cuts with bread. The oldest woman have raised up, she took the cold cuts tray, and began to share the food, until the tray was empty. They used only few slice of bread. As a conclusion, my friend added, *that seemed very impolite to me*.

Imagine now the everyday routine from the organizational life that makes the episode above to look as a minor incident comparing with the organizational tensions. Day by day, the number of cultural discrepancies is increasing, and so do the employee’s frustration. How can then the team work efficiently together? There is a multitude of answers to this question. Maybe getting more knowledge about cultural differences, or a good leadership strategy. Some will say that team building will help, or building a “common code” in the organization, aspects that can be incorporated in a unifying organizational culture. I do agree with all of those opinions, but for me, it gave good meaning to start with understanding of culture and of what happens, when different culture come together: the multicultural phenomenon. This was the topic of my latest project. But after deepen the multi-cultural issue, and forming an understanding of it, a new question has gotten my attention. The question is, as mentioned before, how can this intercultural collaboration become more effective and less conflictual? Through retrospective reflection about the situations, I have met during the internship period[[3]](#footnote-3); several possible ideas to improvement have crossed my mind:

* A more relational leadership approach
* Reviewing the on-boarding strategy, as well as the recruitment process
* A better collaboration between consultancy team and farmers[[4]](#footnote-4)
* More focus on the activity planning and motorization
* Working with the understanding the concept “culture”, avoiding the prejudices and stereotypes tendencies

If we relate to Potter and Wetherelll affirmation[[5]](#footnote-5) about language*: it simply is the most basic and pervasive form of interaction between people,* then in all activities that implies human interaction, or more accurate the interaction between foreigners, leaders/farmers, and consultants, language, communication, is an essential element. There can be stress out that communication plays a key role in the fulfilment of all the goals mentioned above. I do not stress that communication is the main issue in an organizational priority list, because all the different pieces of the puzzle are as vital for organization’s development, but I argue that all of them are facilitated by good communication.

Returning to the multi-cultural aspects of twenty*-*first century organizations, communication becomes an acute topic, considering the fact that,where different culture meets, there are different taken for granted, and so reading between lines can become an overwhelming process. So in this respect the communication pattern within multicultural organizations has to be revised, reformulated and reinvented.

This represents the starting point for the present thesis, regarding communication between cultures.

### **1.2. Project structure**

For a better understanding of this thesis, and the perspective from which it is conceived, I will first present shortly the experience I had during the internship period, and so, in the next subchapter, the conclusion of my last project. The ending of the first chapter will detail the method that stands as basis for this thesis.

The meaning I attribute to this writing make sense from a specific socio-philosophical perspective. Therefore, in chapter II I will combine different philosophical opinions and theories regarding communication and intercultural communication. The theoreticians that will be included in this chapter are Berger and Luckmann, Gergen, Potter and Wetherell, Volosinov and Bakhtin. At last, I will introduce the CMM theory (Communicational management of meaning) by W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon E. Crone

In the third chapter, I will analyze the empirical data, which relates to my internship period, getting the individuals reflexive interviews, the focus group discussion and the observation, which I name cases, through the lens of the theories presented in the second chapter. The order after which the analysis chapter will be structured corresponds to the recruitment phase: recruitment, onboarding, and the everyday tasks. I have choose to structure this analysis as such, because I observed that, when different people meets for the first time, it is more difficult for them to communicate, but with time, they seem to develop a common language, a common code, a collectively dictionary, where there is easier to read between the lines.

The last chapter will resume the whole thesis, coming with reflections, with new questions and ideas, in the sense of facilitating the communication within the multicultural organizations.

### **1.3. Problem definition**

As mentioned in the introduction paragraphs, the cultural mix is a habitual ingredient from any cosmopolitan landscape, from any postmodern society. Obviously, some places register a higher concentration of “the others” than others do, but the concerns that appear are more or less the same:

* Shall I “speak” with *them*?
* How to “speak” with *them*?
* Will they understand me?
* What are they thinking? etc.

The reason I set the word *speak* between quotation marks is that through the word speak, I am not referring exclusively to the use of verbal expressions, but to speak, to talk or communicate can be a simple look, an eye contact.

Returning to the questions above, those are also making part from the everyday routine within organizations. I have heard and seen those questions, those concerns, as a confusing factor that slows down the organization progress. The natural consequences is that this dilemma of ***communication beyond culture*** became the topic of this thesis.

The issue of the present thesis is hence:

***What makes the intercultural communication to be a problematic issue, and how can different culture better communicate together?***

To discuss about communication it implies certainly the clarification of the meaning this thesis assign to the term communication, as well as the frame description, the socio-philosophical perspective on the world.

Through the question *how can different culture better communicate together,* it is not intended to provide a “quick fix”, but more to invite to a reflective process, through which the reader will pick the favorite ideas and will build further on them.

***From abstract to concrete -*** problem definition

I would like to put the problem definition into a concrete frame, to guide the reader more efficient through this thesis.

Considering the intercultural communication, as a double lens, formed by communication and intercultural interactions, this thesis intend to set the three phases from the *consultant-farmer-foreigner* collaboration under this lens. The purpose of this analysis is of course to understand this phenomenon and to facilitate it, in other words, to follow the three main actors: *consultant-farmer-foreigner* through the three phases, which I have identified in this collaboration.

The figure below will summarize the practical purpose of this thesis.

1. Intercultural communication - and **recruitment** process

 2. Intercultural communication – and **onboarding** process

 3. Intercultural communication – an **ongoing** process

 - Intercultural communication issue

*Fig. 1.2. Concretization of thesis topic*

Furthermore, in the next subchapter, the method that stands as basis for this thesis will be presented and detailed.

### **1.4. Method**

Because I would like to facilitate the reading and the review of this thesis, so that you, the reader, will easier get through the aspects you are interested in, I will describe in this subchapter the methodology that I have used in collecting the empirical data.

*The idea of approaching any problem through multiple methods is one that most of us "honor in the breach* (Morgan: 1984, p. 253). As the previous quote highlights, one of the latest tendencies in the academicals field is combining different research method, for gathering different perspectives regarding the researched issue.

In this respect, I have chosen to combine in my research for the actual thesis:

* 6 - reflexive interviews
* Focus group discussion
* Cases, or put in other words, observation from the internship period.

First, it will be presented the methods of data collection, in the order presented in the list above, both the theoretical frame and the concretely implementation of the methods, and in the ending of the subchapter, there will be an argumentation for the method of data analysis. The theoretical that are most used in this subchapter are Alvelsson and Morgen, but there will be brought into attention several other names too.

1.4.1. Reflexive interview

As mentioned before, this thesis is a result of the internship experience and it connect as well with a previous project about culture and multicultural phenomenon in organizations. Therefore, some of the data I had collected for the previous project will

I will first describe the reflexive interview using Alvelsson’s theory, and in the second part of this section, I will present why I have chosen this method to empirical data collection, but also concrete details about how the interview took place.

1.4.1.1 What is the reflexive interview?

There is no longer a novelty between scholars, that the qualitative research methods are gaining more and more popularity. This tendency is based on the belief that the interview is a *complex social event*[[6]](#footnote-6), and that it influences the stories the interviewee relate. Therefore, the data cannot be seen as “undeniable truths”, and the context become a key detail in data understanding. This belief is also revealed in the following citation: *we cannot lift the results of interviewing out of the contexts in which they were gathered and claim them as objective data with no strings attached.* (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 66)[[7]](#footnote-7)

Another characteristic of this method is that researcher should focus not only on the fieldwork,, but much more on data interpretation. *Instead of relying strongly on the researcher, to optimize the interview, as a technique or tool and/or to work hard in interview encounters, at getting interviewees to be honest, clear, and consistent. The message expressed here is rather that the hard work should be conducted at the desk and that this is not primarily a matter of coding and processing data in an objective way. Fieldwork is, of course, important, but the complexities and pitfalls involved call for careful, ongoing reflection*. (Alvelsson, 2003, p. 30)

This method is not referring to an objective interpretation, but to interpreting the stories from different perspectives, different theoretical viewpoints: *it includes opening up the phenomena through exploring more than one set of meanings and acknowledging ambiguity in the phenomena and the line(s) of inquiry favored..*. (Alvelsson*,* 2003, p. 14) This reflexive interpretation refers also to *careful listening to subjects[[8]](#footnote-8)*.

Referring to interview interpretation, Alvelsson (2000, p 147) is advocating for listening the stories with the purpose to:

* Identify significant themes, in our case: communication,
* Find the dominate ideas, understanding vocabulary and discourse
* Underline the variations in ideas, vocabulary, meaning, e.g.

To resume all the descriptions presented above the reflexive interview can be defined as a qualitative research method, through which beside the attention that is offered to design the interview frames and beside the awareness of the context influence this has on the stories, a new suggestion is brought into attention: the reflexive interpretation.

Furthermore, in the next section of this chapter, it will be described how the reflexive interview was concretely implemented to gather some of the data needed for my thesis.

1.4.1.2. Reflexive interview implementation

In the following section, I will detail the motivation that stands behind this method choice, but also how I concretely designed and realized the reflexive interview.

The reason I have decided to use the reflexive interview, as one of the methods for gathering the empirical material, is based on two aspects. The first one is my early experience with implementing questionnaires. That time, I had the feeling, that the rigid frame of a question-answer context, is placing the interviewee in such a formal role, that he would be in an ongoing rally, running after offering the “right” answers. But maybe more determinant to my choice is the openness that is characterizing the reflexive data interpretation, of this qualitative method.

The other reason for the choice of this method, as well as for the other two research methods, presented in this subchapter, is that this is completing the social constructivist approach that is characterizing this thesis.

These interviews have been partially used in my last project, but because I consider that I have a considerable empirical data material that relate with the intercultural communication topic, in those interviews, my intention is to review them, and to use the significant story from those.

About designing the interview, the period for implementing the interviews was four consecutive weeks, between October and November 2014. The interview took place, for two of the interviewees, at their own residence, and, for the other five, at their working place. My intention was not to take them out, because I considered that having a discussion in a familiar place, will create an informally atmosphere, and will reduce the distances between the interviewer and the interviewees. Therefore, the interview to take place at Agri Nord’s office. The interviewees should not feel interrogated, but invited to narrate, to express their stories in words. The duration of the interview was in average 30 minutes, depending on how talkative the person was, or in one case – on the time pressure.

I have chosen 10 persons for having a discussion with, around the cultural issue, about how is to work at farms in Denmark, about what differences they had identified between the two cultures, and about how they are seeing themselves, the farmer and the other foreigners. From different inconvenience, I come to interview seven persons, as following:

* one Danes farmer (Interview 6)
* one Danes middle-leader (Interview 7)
* two Ukrainians middle-leaders (Interview 3 and 5)
* three foreigner employees: two Romanians and one Ukrainian (Interview 1, 2 and 4)

An important specification is that I had met all the interviewees before the interview took place, and we have to know each other through some other activities, which the internship involved. I consider this to be a relevant aspect, because I could feel that all those persons have not interpreted the interview situation, as a very formal one, but more as an exchange of views.

Another mention that must be named here is that I have ensured the interviewed persons that theirs names – identity – will not be specified in the thesis. To utter a discontent about your working situation, about the relation with the farmer, middle-leader, colleagues, it can turn to be a bad move, to deteriorate the situation even more. Especially in the situation of foreigners, where, in my opinion, is a double power-game: employer-employee and native-outsider, I have observed some the foreigners started the interview with rigid answers as: everything is fine, we are very satisfied, and there is nothing that goes wrong here. But as the discussion has deepen some issue, and I come with examples from some other persons, a narrative turn (Currie & Brown:2003[[9]](#footnote-9)) took place, and they come to open themselves, to come also with some aspects that can be improved.

Returning to the interviewees list above it can be seen, that I intended to get several perspectives, to see the issue from different angles. I considered that the intercultural interaction could be understood better when seeing the issue from both points of view, hearing the stories of the two main actors: Danes and foreigners. It can be observed that the number of Danes interviewees is lower that the number of foreigners interviewees, this was not an intended allocation of the interviewees, but as it appears evident in the interviews, the Danes, or in other words, the leaders, are generally more aware of the cultural differences, or maybe they have reflected more on this issue. It is also relevant to add here that one Danes, whether he is farmer or middle-leader, comes to communicate in his daily activities with several foreigners, and so to get a better understanding and comparison of “the others”. On the other side, the foreigners working at farms are a limited connection with the host culture, living and working usually in the same place, relative isolated from the towns, villages or big cities. The farmer, or/and the middle-leader will so be the only Danes they have a certain relation with, and so the knowledge about “the others” are limited to the comparison with one or a few persons. In this respect, I consider that the interviewee’s allocation is relevant for the issue of this thesis.

Turning back to interview design it must be mentioned that the interviewees were working in three different farms. The foreigners can be divided in two categories, after the period they have been working in Denmark, as: beginners and experienced. The Danes interviewee’s different positions at the farms. I decided so, because in a big farm, where there are several middle-leaders, the farmer does not get to spend a lot of time with the foreigners in the daily activities, but the middle-leader is going to do so. The age of the foreigner interviewees is between 23 and 31 years old, and the Danes interviewees is over 40. Both Danes interviewees are men, while four of the foreigners that participated to the interview, are women.

In the preparation of the interview, I have framed an idea of how I want the interview situation to be perceived by the participants and this was to be seen as a dialog, and of what I want to obtain: the stories they believe to be meaningful. (Alvelson:2003)

As the text below highlights, the reflexive interview has not a fixed structure, it rather describe “a direction” or the topic is intended to discuss, and so the interview becomes a conversation, a dialog between the interviewee and the interviewer.

*Qualitative interviews—in opposition to "talking questionnaires" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987)—are relatively loosely structured and open to what the interviewee feels is relevant and important to talk about, given the interest of the research project* (Alvelson:2003, p 13)

I had some “”in case of emergency” questions prepared, to use if there was too difficult to frame a dialog, but with one exception, I have not got through them. This exception, when the first part of the interview became actually a question-answer situation, was caused by the fact that the interviewee was to ashamed by her English level, and come with as few words as she could. In this case, I have stopped the interview, and started over again, in her native language. The result was more than expected, the interviewee started to tell stories after stories, with a huge desire to talk about her experience.

Now that the reflexive interview method has been detailed, the cases method will be presented in the following section.

1.4.2. Focus group discussion

Under this section, I will first argument my choice to include this type of research in data gathering for this thesis. Furthermore, I will shortly include some theoretical frames for this method, and then the description of the concrete implementing of focus group research method will be detailed.

1.4.2.1. Motivation

When the idea of this thesis started to take form, being more clearly, that I would like to explore the intercultural communication issue, I realized that I already had a lot of knowledge, regarding this topic. If I was directly involved in this issue in no more than three mounts, and I got to meet so many situations, and to learn so much about this topic, than what about those persons, that are working with it in the daily routine on the job? With this thought in mind, I have asked the recruitment team from Agri Nord to schedule a meeting special destined to a discussion about the intercultural communication.

I have used focus group as an auxiliary research method, to deep-in the individual interviews and the observations as cases. The main reason for my choice to include focus group to the research methods for this thesis was the fact that, as named it in several times before, this thesis is as an answer to the problems I met during my internship period. Thus, this issue of intercultural communication is not a totally new to me being brought into discussion many times in the daily activities during internship period. So, having already plenty empirical data referring to this thesis topic, I considered relevant to centralize them through a group discussion, or maybe it can be called a group retrospective reflection, in the sense of analyzing what the situations we have and know through the accumulated knowledge of the recruitment team regarding the intercultural communication in the Danish farms.

Because I have seen that the recruitment team members were discussing occasionally between the daily tasks some problematical aspects regarding the communication with foreigner both candidates and employees, it seemed interesting to challenge them to articulate theirs opinion and questions, and to frame a debate regarding this issue.

Through the interaction of different points of view there is usually achieved what Gadamer calls a fusion of horizons[[10]](#footnote-10), and this is referring actually to the fact that when different perspectives comes together with an openness to share meaning and to hear and reflect on what the others are saying, then the individual perspective will be enlarged. This new perspective will be a result of the fusion of participant’s visions.

Even if it has already spotted some characteristic of the focus group method, an accurate theoretical description is needed. In the following paragraph, you can find some theoretical details regarding this research method.

1.4.2.2. Theoretical frames

Before we go further in the methodological argumentation, I would like to delimit shortly the understanding I assign to the term focus group, using the theory of David Morgan.

Focus group is a small group discussion around a subject established by the researcher, discussion that usually is not lasting more than two hours (Morgan: 1996, p. 254). A moderator, who is often the researcher himself, typically coordinates the discussion.

The definition of focus group is according to Morgan (1996[[11]](#footnote-11)) *a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher*. It is both a dialog and a group interaction through dialog.

Another mention from the author is that, to a focus group meeting, no one acts as the interviewer, but the researcher’s intention is to obtain a discussion. The primary strength of this method is the interaction of the participants, that are explaining themselves to the others, both consensus and disagreement being in the same place.

Fern has done a research regarding the number of participants in a focus group and the relationship between them there in 1982[[12]](#footnote-12). The research showed that the results from the group with four participants was not differing a lot from the results obtained from the group of eight persons. When comparing the moderated and the unmoderated focus group results, there was predominant similarities between the results. And again, when comparing the results from the groups of strangers with the groups where the participants knew each other before the research, there were not significant differences. As a conclusion there can be said that the focus group is a flexible research method.

1.4.2.3. Concretely implementation of the method

This section will start presenting the participants to the focus group discussion. Then it will be described in detail, what have concretely happened during this meeting. The section will end with some personal reflection regarding this type of research.

The participants

The focus group meeting took place at Agri Nord office, a familial location to the participants, and all the team members have participated. The persons involved in the focus group are:

- the team-leader, which will be called in this thesis person B

- the most experienced team member, which in this thesis appear as person C

- an experienced team member, which is named D in this thesis

- the newest team member, that has almost one year experience on the job, named F in this thesis

Beside the recruitment team, there was another person present to the conversation, a Ukrainian young woman, experienced in leading foreigners’ team at Danish cow-farms. She is named E in the analysis chapter. Even if the participation of this person was not planned, but have emerged from the here&now situation, I could see that it helped to have the both perspectives (foreigners and Danes) confronting each other at some point in the conversation.

Another aspect regarding the recruitment team is one team-member, that is considered to be an associate, and that is working part time together with the recruitment team, and this person is the wife of the team leader. This member of the team is from Romania, and she is also a Danish language teacher, learning the farmer’s employees the Danish language. Even though she was not present to the focus group discussion, there are several references to her name, therefor I will include her in the team members, and she will be called O.

The age of the participants was between 25 and 50 years old, and regarding the gender of those, there were to men and three women.

The meeting

The focus group discussion lasted one hour, from 10 to 11, and it came as an extension to the periodical team meeting and to the presentation of foreigners’ situation at cow farms from North Denmark. The last presentation was made by a Ukrainian young woman, which has been working at Danish farms for eight years, and who was now in an internship period at Agri Nord.

The focus group meeting has begun with a short presentation of the observations I had during my internship period, regarding the relation between farmers-foreigner-consultants. I have chosen to start the meeting in this way, because I considered, that having a visualization of the topic, with some concrete situational example, would avoid the “dead pause”, which could occur sometimes in conversation, and I considered that doing so, would keep the focus on the chosen topic. I intended also to change the perspective from which the “situations” are analyzed, knowing that there is a tendency for separating the subjects between “them and us”, tendencies that exist in all individuals[[13]](#footnote-13). I have started in purpose with this “voice” in my presentation, and turning, after short time, to a more relational approach. It must be specified here, that the intro presentation was just a starting point, and that actually I didn’t get through the whole presentation, because the discussion became dynamic and the participants got very quickly involved into it.

The fact that I have participated several times to team meeting, and so that we knew each other, conferred a familial atmosphere to the focus group discussion.

My role as a moderator was not a formal one, because I have stressed from the start that they are the one that have the practical knowledge regarding the intercultural communication dilemma.

Personal reflection about the focus group discussion

I will present some retrospective reflections regarding what have occurred during the focus group discussion that I hah with the recruitment team from Agri Nord.

First, I was impressed by the dynamism of the discussion that occur during the focus group meeting, and it seemed that the topic was in the thoughts of the team members. Although it seems that, the team members are aware of the problematic issue, the fact that there are so many actors involved in this game: recruiter/consultant, farmer, foreigner, middle-leader foreigner employee and foreigner student; it makes it even more difficult to handle.

I have actually never heard them articulating and expressing theirs reflections and thoughts referring the intercultural communication, because in the avalanche of the daily tasks, it gets difficult to find time to discuss this kind of issue.

The empathy was the central attitude that speak through the discussion, with some variations, here and there. I was impressed to see that beside the tendency to separate the discussion subjects into *we and them*, there was always minimum one person, and not the same person, that came with a comment to equilibrate the situation. F. ex. if there were discussing about how ridiculous is that the eastern are sitting outside in the evening, just speaking and looking at each-other, a Danish have interrupted the discussion, saying that this fact could be an effect of the climate. He was suggesting that with other climate in Denmark, it could be possible that people where more outside, and vice versa.

Personal view regarding focus group as a research method

There are several weaknesses and strengths when choosing to use one research method comparing with another one. I would like to add in the following section my own reflections regarding the way I perceived this method, both the strengths and weaknesses I see in using focus group in a research. These observations are meant to help in an upcoming research, and nowise to combat it.

Strengths:

The focus group is not only a valuable source of knowledge, but it also shows how individuals within a group take particular stories to make a common accepted meaning about them.

I also consider that when several persons come together to discuss a topic, the concentration of information is actually higher that in an individual interview. This statement is based on the fact that when a single person is standing face to face with an interviewer, he will usually not take long time to reflect about the issue, because of the dead pause, that come as an awkward moment in the dialog. On the contrary, in a group discussion, when one is speaking, the other are not only listening, they are also articulating theirs own opinions regarding the topic, and so the reflection can come more I deepen, and it ensure a broader coverage of the debated topic.

Because the team members together decide the recruitment politic, and how to guide the farmers in leading the foreigners, it is relevant to see them in interaction, in dialog about the intercultural communication, and to see how the individual opinions are emerging in a collective meaning.

Weaknesses:

Comparing with the individual interview method, I consider that it was more difficult for me, a moderator, to keep the discussion focused on the researched topic, and not to deviate and detail too much some other related aspects of the topic. This tendency is present also in the individual interview, but in the group discussion, as focus group, it can occur even more. I consider that if the moderator, the researcher, is interrupting the discussion, with the intention to turn back to the researched method, it can result in setting a barrier and framing a formal context, where the participants can feel forced to provide information, and this can affect the openness for dialog.

Another observation, regarding this method, is that it is happening often, that different persons are starting to speak in the same time. In this sense, there is the possibility that the ideas, the person, which has not come to utter his thoughts, will be forgotten, or that the person will choose on purpose not to turn back at them, since the discussion has changed the topic.

I will though use again, when needed, this research method, because the interaction of the participants, the exchange of ideas and experiences, the retrospective group analyze, is from my perspective a valuable source to generate knowledge.

**1**.4.3. **Cases**

*“Case studies that tell a detailed story draw upon the reader’s common place reasoning process better that those that do not….the case study that has more narrative gives a better opportunity to the reader to self-conclude*.”, sustain Perkins and Blyder in the book Narrative and Professional Communication[[14]](#footnote-14)

The reason, I have choose to include the observations I made during the internship period, is first of all that I cannot detached myself from the new perspective I got, regarding this thesis topic, through the relations and the situations I have been involved. The second reason to this choice is, as I stressed before, that I would like to address myself to an active reader, a reader that is reinterpreting and analyzing the stories, the ideas, and the reflections presented in this thesis. Therefore, I aim to provide as many details as I can include in the limited pages of this thesis, and in the limits of the written language.

**Reflection regarding subjectivity in case analyses**

Through retrospective reflections, I intended to recreate the stories I have been witnessing myself, but also those that have been told to me.

You might be questioning the authenticity of the stories, referring to my level of involvement, as a result of being a part of the team, and taking over there’s own taken for granted. I consider thought that being three mounts between the recruitment team, as an observer, and sometimes having the “intercultural analyst’s” role, has kept some distances, and minimized the chances for the fusion between theirs taken for granted and mine.

 It can also be set under question my appurtenance to “the others”, as being a foreigner in Denmark. Even if I am not qualify to evaluate this appurtenance, I see myself being between cultures, being more aware about the taken for granted from my old, or native culture, and from my new, or adoptive culture. I believe that when an individual is facing another reality, another culture, then the possibility for reinventing himself is opening. I do believe that when individual are living within a new culture, they are facing some existential questions. As deeper and as longer the relation with “the other” gets, as higher chances for reinventing himself the individual will have. In conclusion, I consider myself critical enough for seeing the “good and bad” from both foreigners and Danes.

1.4.4. Data interpretation method

Although in the next chapter the topic regarding language, narratives and discourse will be widely debated, I consider appropriate to mention it shortly here as well, because it relates with data interpretation method. All data that I have obtain from the research methods, described above, will be interpreted from a narrative perspective, analyzing the stories of the interviewees.

The results from the empirical research, or in other words the data obtained, is in fact constituted from a series of stories, What I aim to emphasize here is that through the method, chosen for the research, this thesis require, the result will not take an objective form, as facts, numbers or percentage. The data obtained will rather be the stories, the points of view, the perspective on the reality, viewed through the eyes of each interviewee.

” *a narrative analysis … opens space for a discussion of motives and purposes, power and domination, aspirations and follies, vanity and self-doubt, ambiguity and polyphony” (Tsoukas, 2005, p. 102)*

As the citation above points out, when handling stories, the discussion becomes an essential element to data interpretation. I intend to dig deeper into what has been said or not said, and into the other aspects regarding the topic of language, in particularly, and the topic of communication, as the broader topic, relating to the context, speculating different possibilities to interpretation.

This section is ending the method subchapter. Next in this thesis it will be described the internship experience, to frame the context, which stands as basis for this thesis, and implicit, to offer a better understanding of this thesis.

1.5. Internship experience – an alarming signal

The alarming signal, or in other words, the starting point for this thesis, is, as named before, the internship experience. It may sound scandalous to call it “alarming signal”, but meeting different situation, and seeing that the cultural differences is holding back the players in this intercultural relationship, in our case the Danes and the foreigners, holding back from a maximum performance and involvement, made me call this section thus. This “cultural barrier” can be something real, or imaginary, and here I mean that it can happen to exaggerate the events interpretation, and to place every small misunderstanding or differences, on the cultural background.

So to offer a broader perspective of the whole situation, I will present in the following subchapters details about the organization, I have collaborate with, and about the type of activity I have been involved in. Considering that I am addressing to an active reader that will interact with the text[[15]](#footnote-15), this information is meaningful, in my opinion, because if the reader has details about the intercultural context from Danish agriculture, he will better understand the meaning in this thesis, and he will easier articulate his own opinion.

1.5.1. About Agri Nord

Agri Nord is both a farmer’s association, and a consulting company. The organization took form already in 2008, through several fusions between some smaller associations, from the region Himmerland, Denmark. Now Agri Nord is one of the biggest player on the market in North Denmark, with around 180 employees, that are offering professional consultancy to clients, mainly from agricultural industry. Agri Nord’s offices are located in Aalborg, Aars and Hobro.

Through the variety of services, the company offer to its clients, there is a new opportunity for the farmers, and that is the professional recruitment of the foreigners, which are the market’s request.[[16]](#footnote-16) The candidates are usually young persons, with age between 20-24 years, from East Europe.

The recruitment team is helping with the on-boarding process, and it offers consultancy regarding HR strategy, staff politics, organizing team meetings, coaching, trainings, etc. Even more, in the different periods of a month, it will be at least an Agri Nord employee that will visit the farm; it can be, for example, either the specialists in agriculture, or the financial consultants. This aspect is important, because when people from different departments are talking together, they come to meet different perspectives, about the situation on a farm, and to understand it better. With other words, there is a permanent relationship between the farm and Agri Nord. Thereby I can state that the recruitment team has an overview of the situation of foreigners that are working at the farms from North Denmark, about what implies the meeting of different cultures at workplace.

**1.5.2. Internship period**

I have meet Agri Nord on a university course, and when I applied for internship, I was already interested in the cultural differences within organization, but I was focusing most on recruitment process.

As I began to meet the farmers, on one side, the Danes and the foreign employees on the other side, I observed that there was a lot of wondering and frustration, regarding the differences between cultures. The new issue that got my attention was: *what is culture and how is the individual affected by its culture, and how the different persons from organization perceive the multicultural phenomenon, the cultural differences*.

The activities, I got involved in, during the internship period, have offered me the opportunity to come in contact with the international environment that becomes a more and more usual in Danish farming industry. I met farmers and workers, both Danish and foreigners, I got there’s stories, and I have also created some stories together with them, but over all this achievements, I have collected a multitude of observations, that I will use in this thesis.

Through the three mounts internship period, I was involved in the following activities:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The consultant team meeting
 | This activity refers to the team meetings of the Recruitment and HR consultancy department from Agri Nord. Beside the information about specific situations, about the strengths and weaknesses of the team performance, those meetings were the moment of evaluation, where the members of the team reflected on their status regarding the intermediary role between farmers and employees, both Danes and foreigners. |
| 1. Staff meeting
 | To be a part of the staff meetings from different farms it provides a plenty of data about the tip of the iceberg, about the visible problems that arise from the daily activities. In this king of meeting was participating: the farmers, the middle leaders and the employees, both Danes and foreigners. |
| 1. Appraisal interview (MUS):
 | In the context of a conflictual situation between a middle manager and an experimented employee, I have sustained two appraisal interviews, this being the first time they had participated to this type of meeting.  |
| 1. Community of practice training (Erfa Gruppe):
 | I have participated to the meeting of foreigner’s middle-leaders, from Poland, Ukraine, and Romania. This meeting was a part of an experience-changing program, which gathered different teams of farming workers, from North Denmark, to participate in a competition, regarding knowledge sharing through social media. The final purpose of the program is evidently the professional improvement.  |
| 1. Skype recruitment interview
 | I have tried this Skype interview as a recruitment method only one time, but it helped me to feel the nerves, that are characterizing the candidate, the willingness and determination to find a job abroad. This conclusion have been confirmed also by the other contacts, I had with candidates, through phone, email or social media. There shall be notice, that the candidates in generally are not questioning the job offer,  |
| 1. Employee onboarding
 | When following a candidate through the recruitment stages, from CV analysis, to the first month in the job, it is an evolution line, that is, in the most cases, not an ascending one. It seemed fascinating the changing within the voices, which the candidate have used, form the first stage to the first month at the working place.  |
| 1. Conflict resolution
 | After the first week in the job, the candidate was very close to be fired, because the team could not collaborate with him. In these conditions, I had to find out what was going on, and to act in the sense of reconciliation.  |
| 1. Danish language courses
 | A group of 11-12 foreigners was participating twice a week to Danish language classes. Why is this experience helpful regarding this thesis? It is based on the stories that I heard, about how it is to work with another culture, and implicit, to communicate with it. This was the perspective of what I am calling “new entry” in Denmark, and at the Danish farms. |
| 1. Other activities
 | * Correspondence with candidates through mail, phone, social media,
* Meeting regarding Work Place Assessment (APV) – through this meeting I became more familiar with the dangers that can appear, when working at farms,
* Helping in the process of obtaining the residence in Denmark,
* Recording an informational video at a pig farm, destined to the candidates that are looking for a job in Danish farms. This activity was my first and only contact with the working environment from the farms, and so, it helped me to understand better the context.
 |

Some of the activities named above will be detailed in Chapter II: Communication, where these will be treated as cases, and analyzed from the theoretical perspective.

1.6. From culture to multi-culture: the theories behind

This subchapter will present different understanding of culture and of the multi-culture, or as I like to call it the meeting of cultures.

As the introduction paragraphs emphasized, the reason I get to write about intercultural communication is the experiences, I have become a part of, during the internship period. The first step in reflecting on the conflictual situations, that occur when different cultures meets in an organization, was to attribute a meaning to the culture and to the meeting of cultures. This was the topic of my last project, as I have mentioned before, and this topic represents also the starting point for the thesis you have in hands.

How can be discussed the intercultural communication issue without a cultural and multicultural understanding?I consider so meaningful to review, in the following section, the main assumption from my earliest project: *Cultural differences in organization - a challenge of globalization*.

It happens often to be in a controversial discussion on a topic, and to realize at some point, that the meaning the participants assign to one word (that symbolize the topic) are sometimes very different. To be able to argue about intercultural communication assume first to delimit the meaning it is assigned to culture and multicultural phenomenon.

Culture is described as[[17]](#footnote-17) the totality of concepts, ideas, worlds that are framed within a society. It is seen as the *most important adaptive mechanism* one that is not given, or formed once and for always, but it is always in a changing process, reinventing itself. This *fragile phenomenon* is a *tool for survival* to the individuals that are sharing it*.* (anthro.palomar.edu)

Relating to the definition of culture, I will introduce the following text:

“*What is ‘real’ to a Tibetan monk may not be ‘real’ to an American Businessman. The ‘knowledge’ of the criminal differs from the ‘knowledge’ of the criminologist. It follows that specific agglomerations of ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ pertain to specific social contexts, and that these relationships will be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts.”* (Berger&Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* p. 15).

As the previous citation underlines, the social context is a determinant element in understanding a phenomenon, an incident or a person. The same reality is seen different, is interpreted different by the multitude of eyes, which are looking at it. What does that mean? That culture is influencing the way we understand the world around us, and the way we communicate. So how can individuals with different cultural background communicate efficiently to conduce the organization to success? One possible answer is, as named before, to find out the differences, and to act according to this code list. There are plenty theoreticians that have researched culture from this point of view, one of them being Geert Hofstede.

**Geert Hofstede** realized a quantitative research, within IBM marketing department, and totalized 70 nations[[18]](#footnote-18). The research is based on circa 100 000 questionnaires. This has been the largest research regarding the cultural differences, and Hofstede’s theory is, certainly, the most popular theory, when referring to intercultural issues[[19]](#footnote-19). He has identified fire cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertain avoidance, and two newer one. This theory has been criticized as containing too much determinism[[20]](#footnote-20). It is not my intention to detail this theory. I have name it because I have found it in plenty books[[21]](#footnote-21), and because it contrasts to my understanding of intercultural approach.

*Is culture a thing, stable, isolable, describable, categorizable, a social force?[[22]](#footnote-22)* This thesis is not neglecting the differences between cultures, as mentioned before, but to start the dialog focusing on differences, and even more, to consider that cultures can be measured and limited to some indexes, may raise some problems when leading an organization.

To sustain the affirmation above, I will use **Ming Xie**[[23]](#footnote-23) theory, which stresses that in the intercultural meeting there will be in the same time *two distinctive cultures,* but when those meets and works together, a newthirdelement is taking form: the *intercultural process*[[24]](#footnote-24)*.* According to this theory, it will not be sufficient to categorize this two culture, because from this interaction, a third element take place, the *intercultural process,* and this meeting will affect the way the individual understands his own culture.[[25]](#footnote-25) This theory points out that when different culture are interacting, the individual is reinventing himself, and redefining its own conception about his culture and about the other’s culture. The deeper relation get and the longer time the interaction lasts, the higher chance for the changing will be.

**Anne Phillips**, in her book *Multiculturalism Without Culture* goes even further, arguing that the anthropologists are playing a huge role in delimiting cultural boarder, and sometimes they are “constructing” here and there, claiming that there are often some political interests in persisting to promote this cultural perspective that *threats culture as a thing* (p.43*). How could we regard something as a force, if the thing, and thus the force, were constantly changing?[[26]](#footnote-26)*

Other authors that come with a more relational perspective regarding the multicultural phenomenon are **Gupta and Fergson**[[27]](#footnote-27) and **Stuard Hall**[[28]](#footnote-28). The first two authors are using the term multiculturalism as an argument in itself, showing that the mass fluctuation of people is a sign for, that people are less bounded to there’s geographical “home”. On the other side, Hall comes with the notion of *hybrid culture*, as being a natural consequences of the multicultural phenomenon. More links and authors, regarding this topic, are to be found in my latest project. [[29]](#footnote-29)

I will stop here the multicultural theories enumeration, concluding that some of the most recent multicultural approach advice to focus on the individual, as a freestanding actor, that even thou is influenced by his taken for granted, by the culture he is a part of, the culture has not an equal impact on all individuals. Even more, the intercultural interaction is an eyes opening opportunity, where the individual will normally start to question some aspects of his own culture or behavior.

Now, referring to the research I did to supply the theoretical argumentation, interviewing seven person, both Danes and foreigners, from farming industry in North Denmark, it came out that:

* people are questioning some characteristics of their culture, after the interaction with the other culture

* there are discrepancies within the stories of individuals from the same culture
* people are sensitive to the deterministic approach, through which people and cultures are classified, even though they are accepting it partially.

Having in mind the theoretical and empirical frames of culture and multi-culture, that have been presented in this chapter, we can discuss furthermore, in the next chapter, about communication and the intercultural communication. There will be deepen the problem definition of this thesis: ***What makes the intercultural communication to be a problematic issue, and how can different culture better communicate together?***

### Chapter II

Communication

2.1. Introduction

My hope with this thesis is to action, to change, to reflect, to break barriers, speaking especially to those that are facing the multi-cultural phenomenon in everyday life. This is why this thesis is not addressing specially, or exclusively, to the academics. Now, it can be that through some points it seems that the thesis is becoming very theoretical, but how can I use the theoretical argumentation to emphasize some statements, if I am not presenting the theoretical first. I have begun this chapter with this mention, because it will be a more theoretical one.

The main questions that stand behind this thesis, why the intercultural communication is a problematic issue, and how this can be improved*,* implies a delimitation of the understanding I attribute to the term communication, and so to what makes the intercultural communication to be an independent topic. Therefore in this chapter, I would like to rediscover the topic communication, seeing it from several perspective; in the beginning of the chapter, you can find some more abstract and philosophical approach of communication, and furthermore of intercultural communication. In these two sections (communication and intercultural communication), you will find references to authors like Berger and Luckmann, that was already introduced to you in the previous chapter, Potter and Wetherell, Buber, Voloshinov, Bruner and others. The chapter will end with a more concrete view regarding communication and intercultural communication, an interesting theory named CMM, by Pearce and Cronen.

Similar to my experience during theoretical sources gathering for my latest project, about culture and multi-culture, when researching the intercultural communication, I have found many materials, that come into details about, for example, how Asiatic or Western communicate[[30]](#footnote-30), what kind of words they use or don’t use, or how they address to each other both verbal and nonverbal. There is a spread tendency to set the different thing, phenomena, etc. in boxes. Even more, there is a significant pattern requirement, regarding intercultural communication, because that make better sense to us, and it can simplify the equation, as I stressed in the latest project. The questions that arise are: who should distinguish these cultural differences and who is qualify to fulfill this process of selection and categorization[[31]](#footnote-31). As an observation to this issue, I noticed that people tend to promote their own culture, as an instinctively impulse. What we know, what we are used to, it have to be the right procedure, and in this case, the proper communication model. As M. Mayerfeld Bell articulates in this article, there is a *subjectivo-objectivism[[32]](#footnote-32)*: what we know and what we are doing must be the truth, the normal way of communicating. Yet, what is the normal communication, or let us go even more into the question, or in other words into ontological aspect, reflecting on what communication actually is.

**Subchapter’s structure**

The following sections of this subchapter will present different perspective regarding communication, dialog and language. The chapter is divided in two parts; the first one refers to communication in general, while the second is focusing on the intercultural communication. In the first part it will be included Berger and Luckman’s theory about how individual is becoming a part of society through language. Then Potter and Wetherell’s point of view regarding the taken for granted and language, and Voloshinov’s argumentation for the importance of context in communication’s pattern interpretation. The second part of this chapter, referring to intercultural communication, will continue Berger and Luckmann’s theory, referring to unsuccessful socialization and to secondary socialization, in the postmodern context, as a support for the issue of intercultural phenomenon and intercultural communication. Continuing the discussion about the relevance of context in the intercultural communication, there will be introduced Bruner’s perspective. The subchapter will go further in the understanding of the topic, with Bakthin’s theory about polyphony and heretoglossia, two characteristics of languages and dialog. The chapter will end with Pearce’s theory: CMM, The Coordinated Management of Meaning.

2.1.1. General frame – Buber

This chapter is the theoretical essence of this thesis, in the context of intercultural understanding, presented in the last chapter. Before we start deepen the concept of intercultural communication, I consider determinant to mention that above all the theory and philosophy regarding language and communication, our perception of the other is a secret ingredient for opening the dialog or choosing the monolog. It is true that this perception is, as we will see in all the following communication theories, in a circular relation with language, and that both are re-creating mutual each other.

In this respect there will be useful to name shortly Martin Buber’s view regarding communication, which is a relational one (Buber: 2004). Buber asserts that there are two types of relations, which can occur between individuals: I-Thou and I-It. In the first type of relation, I-Thou, individuals percept each other as equals, while in the I-It relation the other is seen as an object, as something means to an end. As there will see later in this chapter, for having a dialog[[33]](#footnote-33), which is a two-way communication, there are needed minimum two persons, whose voices shall be consider equal in dialog, none of them tending to predominate.

So, the way we relate with each other is influencing the communication between us, and in turn this perception is of course a result of the stories we live in[[34]](#footnote-34). Having this aspect in mind, we can now go further to the next subchapter.

2.2. Communication – theoretical frame

What does individual understand, when using the term communication? The short definition is **the *act of transferring information from one place to another****[[35]](#footnote-35)***. Some more complex are referring to communication as a activity of** *conveying* [*meaning*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meaning_%28linguistics%29)*[[36]](#footnote-36)*  through this *shared complex symbolic representational system[[37]](#footnote-37),* or as a *two-way* [*process*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/process.html) *of reaching* [*mutual*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/mutual.html) *understanding, in which* [*participants*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/participant.html) *not only* [*exchange*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/exchange.html) *(*[*encode-decode*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/encode-decode.html)*)* [*information*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/information.html) *… but also* [*create*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/create.html) *and* [*share*](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/share.html) *meaning*, in other words, *connecting people.*[[38]](#footnote-38)

In addition to the last definition from above, where communication is seen as the activity, or the process, which connects people, I would like to add, that animals, plants and even bacteria[[39]](#footnote-39) are have also a communication system. So, the different forms of live are interacting with each other, relating with each other, communicating with each other.

There are two major types of human communication, verbal and nonverbal, and as you already know, the nonverbal communication is just as important as choosing the right words, but it is often neglected.

Before we go any further, take a moment and think about your day, about what has happened in this day and on how much time you have spent talking. Is there actually a single significant period of silence? Dreaming is talking with someone ore with yourself, thinking is talking, and even in the silence, the voices are running in your head, the voices of other, the voices of different you. Then we, humans, are spending a lot of time speaking, communicating, or trying to communicate.

**Terminology**

As we discuss about communication in this thesis, I would consider useful to clarify the use of terms I will include in it. In my perspective, communication means the exchange of messages between minimum two persons. We can of course go further and argument that a person can communicate with himself as well, but I would not deepen this view. The exchange of messages can be also seen as an exchange of knowledge or information. How is this exchange taking form? There is used a system of symbols, which can be language, but it not refer only to what is heard, because there is also a body language, for example. Through language, I see all forms we use to express something: a look, a sound, a word, etc. When a person is trying to communicate something to another one and is expecting a reaction, as it usually happens, then I consider that we have a dialog, a situation in which both are actively and directly changing messages. Therefore, to summarize, communication is a dialog, and language is the middle for communication, the system of abstract symbols, through which people exchange meaning.

Furthermore, in the next section, there will be presented and debated the theoretical frame of the topic of this thesis.

2.2.1. Berger and Luckman

***Primary socialization and communication***

Referring to language, the main middle for communication, the authors Berger and Luckmann stress that: *The understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life, (The social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge).* But to understand author’s view regarding communication, we must first refer to the philosophical theory regarding humans, life and reality. Seeing the particular phenomenon of communication in the wider context of human existence will facilitate the debate from this thesis.

When a child is born, the first natural reaction is to cry, and the baby will start to give signals to others, when he feels bad, or hungry, or stressed, etc. This makes crying to be the primary form of communication. The constructivists[[40]](#footnote-40) **Berger and Luckmann** argue that through the first period of childhood, individual is learning the norms, the codes, and the behavior that is characterizing the social group, of which he became a member[[41]](#footnote-41). This process of “taking over” the habitus, the taken for granted of a society or of a social group takes form through language, as the following citation underlines. *Language objectivates the shared experiences and make them available to all within the linguistic community, thus becoming both the basis and the tool of the collective stock of knowledge. Furthermore, language provides the means for objectifying new experiences, allowing their incorporation into the already existing stock of knowledge, and it is the important means by which the objectivated and objectified sedimentations are transmitted in the tradition of the collectivity in question[[42]](#footnote-42).*  To understand the previous citation, I have to mention that the authors articulate a theory referring to the institutionalization of knowledge: externalizing, objectifying and internalizing[[43]](#footnote-43). This theory sustain that when an individual utter his ideas and conception, he is externalizing. This happens, obvious, through language. As the ideas are heard over and over, and others are taking them over, those become a popular concept or behavior, and by time it is so objectified. When a new enter will arrive in the social group, he will be learned to behave and to relate, with all the rules and codes this implies, in other words, he will learn “to be one of them”, this “taking over” is called internalization, and this implies obviously the communication as well. This new comer can be a baby, an “outsider”, or a foreigner.

Referring to language, the authors assert: *Language forces me into its patterns,* and bring as arguments the fact that, when an individual is at home, he uses a specific dialect, a specific language, when at work, he has to use some other language, and so on. The power of language, of the words, of the message we communicate, when choosing to use some certain words, is revealed several times in Berger and Luckmann’s book. *The child learns that he is what he is called[[44]](#footnote-44)*. One example that can be named here, is the lepers, which is seen as normal, and as Good’s son in a social group, and as a rejected and cursed in another social group. (Den Samfundsskabte Virkelighed, p. 192). The way he is called, the characteristics, other attribute to him, are determinant to the process of identity formation.

2.2.2. Potter and Wetherell & Voloshinov

***Language and context***

The human communication is about language, a verbal and nonverbal code, an abstract system of symbols. Potter and Wetherell’s view regarding language is that it represents more: *a medium for knowledge*[[45]](#footnote-45), it is *inseparably involved with process of thinking and reasoning.* (p. 9)

This basic form of interaction between people *is easy to take for granted,* because the code, or as they named it, the *social representation* is a result of the everyday talk, of the communication routine. In every culture, language is an *agreed code for communication* (p. 9), and because it is common accepted in a social group at a given time, it seems also to be the correct, or the normal way to communicate.

Regarding the system of codes through which individuals transmit and interpret messages when communicating, the authors use the term *interpretative repertoire,* which represents “*a lexicon or register or terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events*”[[46]](#footnote-46). I would like to extend the usage of this expression, and I would include in it the reasoning individual use to create meaning, to interpret messages and behavior.

**Voloshinov** also stress that this code *express a meaning, understanding that is common accepted by the members of a social group [[47]](#footnote-47)* (p. 70).So there can be asserted that in a given historical period, in a given location, and in a given social group, there will be a specific language, a specific communication rules (p. 66). The words we hear, the untold words, the body signals, can be interpreted only in relation with the context *a specific ideological context*. Thus, *we never say or hear words*, but the meaning we attribute to those, thereby *we say and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on* (p. 70). This makes communication, and even more the intercultural communication, to be a controversial topic, because the meaning attribute to a word, expression, gesture, mimic differ from group to group, from context to context, from culture to culture. To fulfill the argumentation, this author will be brought again into discussion in the next subchapter: intercultural communication.

***Resume***

I will stop here the theoretical concerning communication, not because I consider that I have included all the relevant aspects that the communication topic involves, but because I believe that the theories presented are the minimum required to get an idea about what understanding I attribute to the term communication, and to what happens through communication. This topic will get to the next level in the following subchapter, where I will discuss it from the perspective of intercultural communication.

To resume the main ideas presented so far in this subchapter, there can be asserted that language, the basis medium through which communication takes form, is the medium through which the child is taking over the rules and routines, the reality, of the social group, in which he was born. (Berger and Luckmann:1986) If the whole process of externalizing, objectifying, and internalizing is happening through language, then there can be affirmed that our reality is formed through language. The objective world of one’s, his own reality, is defined by language, and so it can be said that it is created by language. (Berger and Luckmann). Then in this connection, if we take this topic into analysis the other way round, starting with the concern to understand why someone is communicating the way he does, we have to start with the understanding of the context, this person is a part of, and of the context, a word was express (Potter and Wetherell and Voloshinov).

As mentioned before, in the next subchapter, we will deepen the communication issue, focusing on the intercultural communication.

2.3. Intercultural communication

So if cultures, habits and traditions, are shaped through language, then how can language build a bridge between cultures? This question represent the status quo in my journey through intercultural communication, which is the main topic of this subchapter. In the following, I will refer again to the authors named before (Berger and Luckmann, Voloshinov, Potter and Wetherell), but this time it will be from the intercultural perspective on communication. There will also be included to some other theoreticians as Bruner, Buber.

2.3.1. Berger and Luckmann

***Secondary socialization, unsuccessful socialization and intercultural communication***

These authors have been presented in the previous subchapter. It seems relevant to me to include a few details about what Berger and Luckmann call *secondary socialization,* as relating to the intercultural communication topic. In subchapter 1.4.3 I have described shortly what the authors mean with primary socialization, and this is the first period of childhood, when the child learns to become a member of his family, the social group and implicit of the society. What individual learn in this period will get deep roots, and will become “the reality”, and later the significant reality.

Regarding secondary socialization and the language, or more exactly the native language vs. the foreign language, the authors claims that when someone is learning a new language, he is actually building on an already existing reality, an already existing language. This is why, for a long period of time, this person will often compare, refer and translate all kind of elements to his native language. Only in that way, the new language, or to generalize, the new reality will make sense to him. In time, the new language, or the new life, will get an independent existence. Yet, it does not happen often that the new language reach the same significance, as the native does[[48]](#footnote-48).

I would like to add here, to the secondary socialization topic, a personal reflection; that can be seen as an extension to this theory. K. Gergen articulates in his book *The Saturated Self[[49]](#footnote-49)* . Gergen sees the self-identity as a sum of different faces, as a puzzle of different independent identities: *Saturated self - when a variety of voices and roles are all true, and so it becomes awkward to identify the “authentic self”.* This saturation of selves is a new characteristic of the human actors in the postmodern world. In this noisy existence, there are a lot of drama and confusion. The individual is often going up and down, because *these incoherent and unrelated languages of the self* are coming in contrast with, what the primary socialization “should” provide to individual: a feeling of appurtenance, of comfort, of making sense.  *Everything we know to be true about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision* (p. 7). Already from the primary socialization, the child is meeting different worlds. My own son is questioning my “taken for granted” or my habitus, comparing them with what he is hearing in the other word, (for example, kindergarten). There are different family types, different life styles, and different life psychology. He is asking me and them, why we believe, what we believe, and he is making his own statement: It is weird. Why am I bringing this into discussion? Because I consider that this is an minimum argument, to what I have affirmed before, that the role of primary and secondary socialization are perturbed by the postmodern conditions of individual, as Gergen express: *Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated.* In this respect, adopting a intercultural communication approach that focuses only on identifying different communication patterns, which characterize national cultures, will not match the saturate self-identity (Gergen:1993) of postmodern individuals, nor the hybrid cultural identity of those involved in a intercultural relation.

Returning to the intercultural communication, I would like to mention, that Berger and Luckmann are also underlying the possibility for unsuccessful socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1986: p. 195), saying that when the internalized world is meeting with another reality, then the possibility for identity-redefinition can open new views. Does it mean that all those, which meet another world, are redefining themselves? Not necessarily, but there is the opportunity for doing so for all of them. The authors are also sustaining that the reality that is internalized during the primary socialization will usually have a tendency to decide (Den Samfundsskabte Virkelighed, p. 164). However, this theory can applies to the intercultural meeting, through which people will normally question theirs taken for granted, and this can have two main impacts on the intercultural communication, as following:

* individuals are aware about the relativity of their culture and communication model, which they are used to, and so they become more cautious, when talking, but not necessary when interpreting;
* individuals are disorientated and confuse regarding the way they should transmit or interpret the message, more shortly: how to communicate with the others.

Furthermore it will be presented another author, Bakhtin, who was a philosopher and a linguist, and has written much about language, dialog, and so about communication.

2.3.3. Bakhtin

***“Speaking with voices” – the complexity of language***

There are two theories remained to be presented, before the empirical chapter III will explore and analyze the data I have gathered from my internship. For the abstract understanding of communication, I have chosen Bakhtin’s philosophical theory of language, and then a more contemporary theory named CMM Coordinated Management of Meaning will end this chapter.

Bakhtinian theories are, in my opinion, most relevant to data analysis, and despite it’s abstract level, it confer better understanding of dialog and language. Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian “philosopher of language”, articulates two main elements of a dialog, of the exchange of knowledge, of communication. These main elements are heteroglossia and polyphony.

***Heteroglossia*** refers to language’s propriety to embody *different speech-ness* (p. 19), in other words it is *another’s speech in another’s language[[50]](#footnote-50)*, is all *the social and historical voices populating language.*  It is the sum of languages from different ideologies and profession, languages from different generation, and social class, from different regions, languages from family and friends[[51]](#footnote-51). All these language, mirroring in the same time different life aspects, coexist in a contextual, local or national language. Heteroglossia is the intersection of those: *thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form[[52]](#footnote-52).*

When one is speaking, he is choosing the words and expression from a preexisting dictionary, and is conforming to some kind of unwritten rules of speech, rules that are belonging to a certain social language, which again is a part of a national language. Bakhtin is pushing the discussion to the next level, stressing that in the same culture are cohabitating *different national languages,* affirmation that fits the arguments from section 1.5., according to which the national culture is a mix of different subculture. This theory is important for the topic of this thesis, because it reveals the complexity of national language. In this respect, there can be asserted that not only the fact that two different language are coming together, but also the fact that these language are in turn a complex mix of sublanguages, makes from the intercultural communication an even more sensitive topic.

So, heteroglissia is the multiplicity of *everyday speech-types[[53]](#footnote-53),* combine in different way from the speaker to transmit the intended message. When a young doctor is in dialog with an old engineer, the languages of different generation’s and different professional will come together, and to make a living dialog, one where there is an active change and creation of meaning and knowledge, the participants have to be aware of this phenomenon. Otherwise, there will be high chances for running with two (or more) monologs in parallel, where the speakers are not preoccupied by what the other are hearing, or meaning, but his main purpose is to impose his own opinion.

***Polyphony* & dialog**

Polyphony, term borrowed from the musical world, means for Bakhtin to *speak with voices[[54]](#footnote-54)*. Although it refer directly to the construction of the voices of a character, and the relation between those and the narrator’s voice, the concept can be extended to the general issue of language, dialog and implicit communication. According to the other Bakhtinian, as for having an orchestra there are needed different voices of different instruments, which coexist *independent but interconnected* (Vince, p. 112), to have a dialog polyphony is needed. If there is no polyphony, different voices in equality, there will be a *monolog* instead of a dialog. To abstract even more the concept of dialog, Bakhtin introduces the notion from physics of *centripetal* and *centrifugal* powers, where the first express the tendency of the participant in a dialog to reach a consensus, and the other, the *centrifugal* power represent the tendency of a dialog to make place to diverging opinions. The authors underlines that in a dialog the both powers should coexist.

On the other way, the voice of a single person can also be polyphonic, meaning that different voices of different persons are heard through one’s utterance. When an individual is internalizing another’s subjective opinion as objective, the other’s voice will speak through this individual’s voice. Let us take an example, to take this abstract concept to a more concrete level. When a farmer is explaining, why the foreigners are thinking, the way they do, he is articulating powerfully and confidently the story, he had actually heard from the consultant. In this way, he takes the consultant’s voice, and use it as his own. So through an individual’s voice becomes an orchestra, where there is maybe no total equality between voices, but there is most likely a polyphony (multiplicity of voices).

In the end of this section, I would add that Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia and polyphony could be approach in connection with Gergen’s theory of saturated self, theory according to which the postmodern individual has a multiplicity of identities that comes out from the different roles he is playing in the every-day life. These different identities are creating different voices, that are coexisting in a unitary voice, this can also be seen as polyphony (if speaking with voices) or as heteroglossia (if speaking in languages)

2.4. CMM: Coordinated Management of Meaning

The motivation that stands behind the choice to introduce this theory in my thesis is actually the process through which this communication theory took form. The process was not a linear one, but more a tumultuous journey, which has gathered together academicians: students and professors, family therapists, meditators, social constructionists and philosopher of science[[55]](#footnote-55). During 20 years the theory was rethought, obviously not changed totally, but reviewed and improved, as different perspective from different contributors have enlarged the understanding of communication. As the author says, this theory is not claiming to be innovative, but assemble something new from the pieces of already existing theories and writings. Having this constructivist approach as basis, this theory caught my attention, and after I went through it, I considered that it could be relevant for my thesis issue.

CMM is a puzzle of theories, not just a single clear one. I choose to include in this thesis the CMM perspective regarding communication, and the CMM model for perciving a conversation, dialog, narrative, to describe the communication pattern used, and to interpret it in order to improve it if necessarily, or to petrify it if needed. In other words, in this thesis there will be presented only the aspects of CMM theory that will be use in framing the understanding of communication topic, and in data interpretation.

2.4.1. The name

I would like first to present the meaning of the name CMM Coordinated Management of Meaning:

* *Meaning* – refers to the fact that communication represent a process through which people attribute meaning to the extern and intern world.
* *Management* - humans have to choose and to manage the meaning they have chosen, so that it creates a logical system of meaning. This management is necessary because of the multitude of meaning that exist both inside, in our minds, but also outside, in the multiplicity of the other’s voices. (p. 10)
* *Coordinate* - individuals have to coordinate the way they are managing meaning. Being a part of a group or a society, the meaning of one has to be integrated in the common meaning of a group, society, etc.

2.4.2. The theory

CMM can not be considered a single theory, because it actually is a complex collection of ideas, that are focusing on understanding of human interactions through communication. This theory has been reviewed and rethought in a long and tumultuous process of creation. The theory took more and more a constructionist approach in understanding the social actors, the social interactions and the communication process. One of the fundaments, on which the CMM theory stands, is that there is *a reciprocal, causal relationship between forms of communication and ways of being human[[56]](#footnote-56).* This reciprocity is conform to CMM an effect of the fact that *people…are both product of as well as producer of the patterns of communication in which we live.* This affirmations comes as an extension to the constructivist point of view, presented previous in thesis, according to which language is not a simply tool for mirroring reality, but a constitutive part of reality[[57]](#footnote-57), and to put it as Bruner says: *language has an a priori role, and this is because it has a creating power[[58]](#footnote-58)*.

With the intention to find different opportunities to improve the communication’s patterns, CMM search first to analyze the way we communicate, to understand and describe these patterns, and through an interdisciplinary collaboration to find new ideas for improvement, if needed (p. 10). The main philosophical question in a CMM perspective is not *what I know*, but what *I should do*. The authors of CMM claim that the everyday agony of life finds the individual in an ongoing roller coaster ride between the questions *what we must and must not do, and what we may and may not do;* this problematic is also know under the name deontic logic. (p.27)

In the table below, you can see the very simplified and compressed form of how CMM analyze a communication pattern. The CMM model is obviously much more complex, but the purpose in this thesis is not to deepen to much the entire theories, but to describe them clearly enough, to understand, what meaning is attributed to communication, what leaders, consultants and farmers should focus on, to improve the communication with the employees, both Danish and foreigners. (p.25)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *How communication works* | *What is communication actually creating?* |
| What context are created for the other?What language is elicited?What tones of voice are elicited?Who is invited to speak and who is not?Who is addressed and who is not? | What kinds of speech acts? (insults, compliments)What relationships it creates? (trust, doubt)What identities? (caring person, authoritative person)What episode it creates? (collaboration, conflict)What type of culture/worldview (strong democracy) |

Table 2.4. Communication pattern analysis, in CMM theory

As the questions in the table 2.4. express, unpacking the meaning of message in communication, in a dialog, is very important. This is so, because people are saying only a part of what the complete message is, and there are more meaning that can be attribute to an utterance. What is uttered is not exactly the same with what individual intended to say. In general people expect the listener “to guess” the message, to intuit the unuttered parts of the speech. In other words, the interlocutor, the listener, is expected to interpret active and continuous, what is being said. (p. 33-34) If we take into account the fact that people from different cultures have different taken for granted, then the “intuition” of what was not uttered or what stands behind a utterance becomes an exhausting process. So again, to set the replies, the narrative, in a context, will offer a wider perspective, and will hopefully facilitate of what it have been said and what it have been not said. “Unpacking” the message refer mainly to the context as a determinant factor in analyzing a communication pattern.

In the following section of this subchapter, there will be presented how CMM theory is seeing and understanding a communication pattern.

2.4.2.1. Basic levels of interpretation in CMM theory

In CMM perspective, there are three main domains when looking to, what has been said, for a better understanding in the sense of anticipating the coming reactions, or avoiding them. These domains are coherence, coordination and mystery:

1. Coherence

Coherence is, according to CMM theory, *telling stories about ourselves, individually and collectively, about the world around us, and about the nature of answers to questions like these* (p.12). This domain of communication can be divided in 6 elements, as centralized in the picture below[[59]](#footnote-59).



Fig. 1.3. ***Communications interpretation levels according to CMM theory,*** Source: www.rdillman.com/

* Content

The content, refers to what it is said. This is the focus in the most communication theories, but according to CMM, is not self-sufficient, it has to be included in a context (this perspective is also articulated by Potter and Wetherell, Volosinov, etc. see the previous subchapters).

* Speech act

Speech act concerns the type of action that is made by the utterance: compliments, reproof, command, and so on. The speech of act is difficult to estimate especially when having two different culture involved in the conversation.

* Episode

The episode refers to the context, the place, the scene in which the utterance takes part. The episode can be taking dinner at a restaurant, being in a meeting at the office, etc. If in one episode an utterance seems to be acceptable, in another it will be hilarious and unacceptable.

* Relationship

Communication, dialog, speaking sets individuals in interaction. It is a relational level, in other words, but it is meaningful to include the previous relationship between the participants, in the analysis of the narratives that are in dialog. Are they completely strangers, or maybe colleagues?

* Self

CMM theory consider that it may also be relevant to relate to the self-conception the participants have about themselves and about the other. This opinion about himself and about the interlocutor will influence individual’s response to an utterance. If an individual consider that he is a serious and intelligent person, he will act and speak mostly according to this role. It is very important to mention here that the self-perception an individual has about himself is shaped and modeled through stories, as Perkins and Blyler are saying: *We live the stories we tell of our lives.[[60]](#footnote-60)* Then the image about self can be influenced through stories. This perspective is like an extension to Berger and Luckmann’s theory about primary socialization, through which the child become, what he is told he is.[[61]](#footnote-61)

* Culture

The cultural patterns, in which we live, are influencing the communication’s patterns we use. Here the term *culture* is not referring directly to national culture, but more to the social group, of which one makes part. These categories can start with gender, age, social class, economical status, race, ethnicity, etc. The national culture has though an impact on the communication pattern an individual is using.

1. Coordination[[62]](#footnote-62)

This aspect of communication has as central the idea that the participants to a dialog, or any other form of communication, should be aware of the other side of the story

Coordination means thereby the rules for interpreting an event or message, and the rules needed to find out how to respond and behave.

1. Mystery

The last element in analyzing communication is a recommendation to be aware that there are also aspects in communication, that can not be predicted, and that the creative power of language can create different images, and that we can not see all of these.

**Resume**

*What makes the intercultural communication to be a problematic issue?*

The individuals that are involved in the intercultural interaction, are disturbed from the reality, they knew. The fact that they are facing another possibilities to see the life and the “truth”, make them to be disorientated, to question some of theirs taken for granted, to question themselves. This makes the intercultural communication an even more sensitive issue, but this is also opening the possibility to a two-way dialog (Berger and Luckmann’s theory about unsuccessful socialization and Gergen’s theory about saturated self). But this process through which the identification of some of the taken for granted takes form, is necessitates long time, a lot of introspective conflicts with the different selves. Then we return to the main questions of this thesis, how can individuals from different cultures communicate together? How can different codes, symbols, different interpretation repertoire (Potter and Wetherell) come together to create an efficient communication, in this case in the farms from North Denmark? And if we search to understand an individual within the context of his national culture, as Volosinov underlines the context importance, another difficulty is standing up: as for instance Ann Phillis, argue that in the context of globalization, the national culture is not such a rigid and homogeneous phenomenon. And how can I know what type of “foreigners”, is him, the one I meet at work, so that I know how to address to him and how to understand his statements?

Ad as if this issue was not problematic enough, there is another aspect of language that make it even more complex. Here I mean Bakhtin’s theory about heteroglossia and polyphony. The language one use is not reflecting only his culture, but also the historical time, he lives in, and the echo from the past. In the same reply, the influence of the profession, of the social class, etc. is speaking together. Even more, individuals are using the stories heard from others, as theirs, as theirs objective reality, and this makes the language polyphonic.

Returning to one of the main questions of this thesis: *How can different culture better communicate together*, I can say that in this thesis is not intended to come with a single answer, nor intended to show “the right way”. This thesis want to be a discussion, a perspective, but not “the only one”.

However, because you, the reader, will probably need to feel that reading this thesis will concreate help you in your daily situations, you meet at job, and because I also see the point of abstract theory, when applied to the daily issues, I have included in this thesis CMM theory. This theory combines the abstract constructionist view with the concrete need, and come with a set of recommendation for understanding and practicing communication, but not with the exclusive resolution.

The context is considered in unanimity the main element in analyzing. So after focusing on what is being said, the words choice, language type, tone, there shall be considered some contextual elements as:

- who the addressee is, and who has been omitted

- what type of feeling that appears after a

- how is individual perceiving himself, the other and what he believe to be the other’s opinion about him

- the other’s possible versions of the story

- the attitude over the other

Now, after going through the theories about communication, will be interesting to move to the concrete situations that are a part of the everyday life. In this respect, the next chapter will analyze the situations I meet during the internship, regarding intercultural communication in agriculture industry from North Denmark.

### Chapter III *Empery*

This chapter will contain the analysis of the empiric data, which I have collected both during the internship, in form of individuals interviews and observations that will be formulated here as cases, and in the following period, as a focus group discussion[[63]](#footnote-63).

The main purpose with this chapter is to focus on the central question of this thesis: *what makes the intercultural communication to be a problematic issue and how different culture can better communicate together*.It is not a matter of incertitude regarding the topic of this thesis, wondering if there are emerging problems between the native and the foreigners, because the fact that I have been witnessing them, I have been informed about them and I have discussed about them, is the reason this thesis took form. The quotation below supports this statement, regarding the difficulty implied when comparing some aspects from different cultures, in this case the different communication models:

*It is clear cultures systematically differ in their theories of the person and self-practices. These differences are exceedingly difficult to analyze and decipher. It is a perilous activity comparing across cultures. But this research is fascinating because at its best it makes our own cultural practice appear strange and unnatural, as if they could be other than they are. [[64]](#footnote-64)*

Through my last project, I have seen that both Danes and foreigners interpret the cultural differences as a barrier. I have notices that there is a tendency to connect the differences between two employees, which coming from two different countries, with the cultural differences, even if it does not apply. In this way, the distance between cultures is accentuated even more. On the other side, I have observed that there is an openness to each other, the Danes seeing in the outsiders an impulse for a better business, both from a cost but also from a efficiency perspective, and the foreigners seeing in their job an opportunity for a better future. This openness is in my perspective an essential element for an efficient collaboration.

In this respect, the topic of intercultural communication seems to be more and more relevant, because it can improve the relation between the two parts. Why is communication a key element in “this intercultural game”? Because even if understanding culture and the intercultural phenomenon, as I have considered being the first step in this relation according to my pervious project, working daily with individuals that are not sharing the same behavior, same codes, and which are acting and reacting opposite to what we are used to, will in time frame a conflictual environment. There are several aspects to be discussed regarding the challenges the intercultural working place implies, but I have chosen the communication’s topic, because I perceive language as the primary bridge that can connect people (Buber: 2010, p. 228) and create the reality (Potter and Wetherell:1987, p.163).

Returning to the following analysis, I am interested to look at the situation from the farms in North Denmark, through the intercultural communication lens. I search to find practical harmonious but also divergent episodes, between Danish and foreigners, and to reflect on theirs connection with the intercultural communication. As CMM communication’s theory suggests, I am interested to see, what kind of responses are following the utterances, what kind of language is used, but also who is involved in the communication and who is not. Hopefully, in the end of this chapter, through analysis and reflections there will emerge some useful ideas to improve the intercultural communication within multicultural organizations.

Regarding the structure of this chapter, there will be followed the phases that the relation between Danes and foreigners is going through in chronological order

 These phases are:

* Recruitment
* On-boarding
* An on-going process

After debating the intercultural issues that characterize each phases at a time, the analysis will be supplemented with some general observations.

In the following subchapter the empirical data relating with the recruitment phase will be analyzed in order to reflect on the intercultural communication issue, and eventually on possible the improvement solutions.

3.1. Recruitment and the intercultural communication

In this subchapter, I would like analyze the intercultural communication, which occur during the recruitment phase. This first phase is formed in turn by different steps, so to frame the context, which is referred to in interviewee’s stories; I will describe first the recruitment process, and then, in next section, the empirical data – the stories – will be analyzed.

3.1.1. The context: the recruitment process

The collaboration between the farmer and the foreigner, or in other words the interaction with the other culture, starts with the recruitment phase. Usually is not the farmer who implements this phase, but he will require a professional service of a consultant. The main reasons the farmer is not recruiting himself are the lack of time, of network, of professional knowledge, and maybe the requirement of being an extrovert, when coming in contact with several different individuals, is also a barrier in fulfilling this step by his own. So, when the farmer realize that he need a new employee, he will normally contact the consultant, in this case Agri Nord recruitment team. There can be various reasons for this need as the growing business, employee’s fluctuation, inefficient employees, or sometimes a declining period in the business, when restructuration of the staff is needed. It can be that this need is not perceived by the farmer, but the consultant, seeing the circumstances under which the farm operates, is coming with a suggestion in this respect, of finding a new member of the team.

After the consultant has a conversation, about what the farmer is looking for, regarding the candidate, there is posted an job announcement on consultant’s webpage as well as on theirs Facebook profile, *Agro Jobs*. The announcement is written in two languages, Danish and English. I would like to include here one example of this announcement, because in my view, it represents the first utterance in the intercultural communication. A job announcement can sound like this: *We need a person with 7-8 years experience in the farrowing unit for a big pig farm around Hobro. Persons who are not EU Citizens may also apply for this job. Start as soon as possible. Call 0045 89 XX .* I am not going comment here the previous announcement, because this section refer directly to the frame, the context, but in the next section, namely the analysis of the stories regarding the recruitment phase, the announcement will be discussed.

Usually in term from a few days up to one or two weeks, a lot of applications are registered on consultant’s webpage. Most of the applicants have been previously interviewed via Skype, mainly to be tested in English, but also to hear about their working experience. Through a database the best applications, or better said CVs, are selected. I have to mention here my opinion about the selection phase, and this is that in this phase there are many selection errors that can be made. As an example, a candidate was not selected to the next phase based on the lack of referrals. This person was an East European, which has been working several years in construction industry, in Italy. It is maybe not something new that in some country many worked in constructions without having a working contract. In this context, it was not surprising to me to hear that he could not bring a reference from his ex-employer. If the candidate was around 22 years old, that construction job could be his only job he had so far. Even more, in many countries from East Europe, the teenagers-jobs are still almost inexistent. In this case, the lack of referrals has not the same meaning as in Denmark, where the teenagers are having a part time job in their holidays, and are used to ask and to get referrals.

So again, the different cultural context a person lives in offer different taken for granted. Without dialog, discussion, without communication, the understanding the other’s behavior and words it will be difficult to achieve a functional collaboration.

Returning to the recruitment phase, after the selection is finished, there will be presented two or three candidates to the farmer. He will decide if the consultant will contact one, two or all three candidates. After hearing about the availability to come at a certain date and some other details, the candidate is informed that he obtain the job and that he will receive an email with further details, about the arriving date and the required documents. In most cases, the candidate will also have a phone conversation with the farmer.

Here will usually end the recruitment phase, the next step in the relation between farmer and foreigner is the on-boarding phase, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

Now, after the context of the recruitment phase has been reviewed, there will be analyzed the empirical data referring to the recruitment of foreigners for the farms in North Denmark.

3.1.2. Recruitment phase and intercultural communication: data analysis

Even if there are only few conflictual situations in this phase, the fact that when onboarding the new employee many difficulties appear can be a sign that these later problems have the origin in the recruitment phase. Then how can the recruitment procedure be reconsidered, to minimize the risk for having conflictual episodes in the next phase?

In this respect, I would like to analyze first the recruitment phase procedure. Then it will be brought into attention the motivation and the expectations both Danes and foreigners have. After bringing into discussion the issue of culture shock and the communication in the recruitment phase, the section will end with a case and a narrative referring to the use of native language and deficient communication in this phase.

3.1.2.1. The process and the message behind

This section will focus on the unarticulated messages that can be perceived during the first steps from the recruitment process.

The recruitment phase is usually lasting one or two weeks and it implies, in the most cases, two phone conversations. As named before, some candidates are participating to a Skype-interview. However, there is not a certain rule by which some are selected to be interviewed via Skype, while other are not.

The first utterance regarding the job is the announcement. Therefore, I would like to include a concrete example of job announcement: *We need a person with 7-8 years experience in the farrowing unit for a big pig farm around Hobro. Persons who are not EU Citizens may also apply for this job. Start as soon as possible. Call 0045 89 XX.*

This announcement was posted on the Facebook page, Farm Jobs. Every Facebook announcement is inviting the candidates to apply on consultant’s web page, where the announcement can also include details about how big the farm is, about the working hours and the possibility of renting a room or a flat. There is no specification about the benefits, which the employee will get from the job.

 Regarding communication, these phone/Skype conversations are the mainly communication form between recruiting team and candidate. It is important to add here that these conversations are actually taking a monologue form (Bakthin:1997). The candidate listen the information about the job and is answering to some questions, usually regarding his working experience. The candidate’s expectations from the job, or eventually future goals, are not brought into discussion. The information, which the candidate is hearing through this interview are general, and it can happen that details about salary or other contractual clauses are not being discussed again, until he will sign the employment contract.

 When referring to the interview as being a monolog, the recruitment team leader, and the newest team member assert:

***There are many information, we have to be sure they know***. (B, min. 49:05)

***Yes, we have to be sure that they know what is the requirement to come here in Denmark. We have to check if they can speak English. We ask them to say theirs birthday, to see if they know the numbers, and so on, to have an idea about the level they have. We have to check if they have some experience, and to say about the working hours. All this information****. (F,* min. 49:07)

Then, if there is not an open dialog, how can an individual, which the recruitment team has never met, and with which there have been changed only a few words by phone, be hired and expected to match a team or a leader?

The recruitment team leader stressed that it would be ideally if the candidates would take the responsibility to search information by themselves, or at least to read the informative attachments from the mail, the recruitment team sends them, and to watch the whole informative video:

***There are some things that they should read by themselves, but they aren’t doing that. How can I say this: when we have an interview, we should just speak together, to see who can speak English. And so, there are many things, which they could check themselves, but they are just not going to do it. Even if we are writing and saying to them: you have to know this things, when we are checking them, they haven’t done it.***(B, min. 50:30)

*B,* the team leader argues that the situation seems to be hopeless, fact that is attributed again to the differences between cultures, as I understand through the question he address later, in the middle of the meeting, to C, when she place herself in foreigner’s role, and says that she would probably also hurry to accept an invitation in Romania:

***But if you were not sure, wouldn’t you read on internet about Romania****? (*min. 31.50)

The discussion regarding the monologue form of the interview continue with F’s point of view:

***F: I have tried that, (*to ask the candidate to inform himself*) and one that comes from Hungary, which has read about the North culture, has used the first 10 minutes to tell me about the climate in Denmark, culture in Denmark and all of that. He was aware of that. We can just go over this point. There were just too much information****.*

We can say from the narrative above, that some candidates accord importance to the recruitment team’s requirement regarding information reading. If so, the situation is not hopeless. Is it possible that these exceptions become normality? Or maybe a more natural question is, what message is actually sent through the current praxis?

Some candidates have friends and relatives that have been recruited by the same team, in this way they are transmitting to each other information about the recruitment process. The new one will in turn transmit to the next candidates that there is no reason to loose time reading this information, because at the interview they are anyway informed about that. The diminution of recruitment team’s credibility, which represents “the Danes” as well, can be an effect of articulating a requirement to the candidates and not including some consequences for neglecting the requirement. In East Europe circulate some unofficial and official texts about the punctuality and exigency of Westerns, so it would be normal that the candidates take the requirements in serious. If these values are not kept in focus from the start, the candidates can conclude that it is a similar context, with the one they come from, more exactly that a lot of requirements are presented, but actually it is accepted not to fulfill all of these.

From my point of view, already from this phase, it is transmitted a subliminal message, regarding the role candidate is expected to have, and this is to perform, not to take initiative. As Berger and Luckmann (1990) assert, a person will usually become, what he is expected to be, either in the primary socialization, when applying most, but also in the secondary socialization, phase in which the individual have to adapt to a new world, to a new reality. This perspective can be also found in CMM theory, when referring to self-concept, and it implies the fact that individuals are affected by the perception, they have about themselves, and by what they believe, other think about themselves. We will see later in the narrative analysis that the farmers and the consultants, which are also a part of recruitment team, complain about foreigners not thinking by themselves. They explain this fact through cultural differences. I am not neglecting the fact that in some countries, the employee has in general more freedom and that it can be more loosely hierarchy than in others, but I have seen that humans have a high capacity to adapt quickly to better conditions, so this difference should not be a barrier, if the expectations are expressed and discussed.

I mean here, that if from the start it is sent the message that the candidate is expected to think, to express his personality, to accept or not the offered job, to speak about personally goals, to come with ideas and initiative, maybe they will adopt the presented, and the job performance will be improved.

 If foreigners want the job so badly, as we will see from some following narratives, then they would do what is up to them, to prove that they are the one that deserve to get the job. But they have to see that it is a must, not only an additional option. This aspect is a decisive factor for turning the interview from a monolog to a dialog, because on that way there can be enough time to discuss about the information, not only to present it. It may seems that this aspect is not relevant, but in my opinion the job announcement, the Skype and the phone interview are the first signals in the intercultural communication, so these are the first communication phase.

3.1.2.2. Lack of awareness in the recruitment phase: ***From euphony to disappointment***

This section of the recruitment phase empirical analysis refer to the fact that in general the candidates are not evaluating the job offer considering details about the job as for example: the working environment, the daily tasks, colleagues, culture shock; but they are focusing mainly on the salary, and maybe on the working hours. This would maybe not be a problem, if when coming to Denmark, the focus will remain on the initially aspects, but it almost never does. Once they have started the daily routine, they begin to have much more requirements from the job. In this phase, many of them are switching from euphorically feeling, for having a job, to the disappointment, for not being what they expected. This situation is brought into focus group discussion, when talking about the difficulties foreigners have to adapt when arriving in Denmark. In this respect C, an experienced recruitment team, which has around 3-4 years in working with foreigners, and B the team leader, which has been working with foreigners in over 7 years, state:

**B**: ***I see that when we interview them, they want to offer a good first impression. It is English, they are focusing on, and only English. And so, they are saying yes to everything else: “I know that, I have seen that” etc. But it is communication in English, they are focusing on, when we are talking with them. When I hear O speaking with them, and you speak with them, “now shall I really sell myself and show her those thing”, which they actually can’t. I think they are not searching for them.*** (min. 8.05)

**C*: I also believe that they are hurrying to say yes. Because they want to perform, to show they have get it right, “we are coming, of course we are coming”. But they don’t see the whole. Maybe for me it will be the same, if I shall go to Romania, and I have to make an appointment there. “Yes, I did understood”, and so I will find out a lot of things after that.*** (min. 31.50)

So, in the intercultural communication between the recruitment team and the candidates, foreigner’s excitement for having a job is blocking the dialog, because they focus on making a good impression, more exactly on using English. As normal it may seem to focus on the foreign language, based on the fact that they are hardly ever using English, is comes as a surprise, that they do not considerate the other aspects implied. This idea has been brought into discussion several times, and as you see, it was named already from the start, and then the focus has return on this issue again, in the middle of the focus group meeting. This can be a sign that the team is acknowledging it as a significant recruitment problem, which cause some later repercussions in the communication and relation between farmer and foreigner.

Another interesting element in the texts above is the way the two team-members relate to “the others”. Both texts are polyphonic, because are reproducing the foreigner’s voices. Why are they using the voices of the candidates when referring to them? Maybe to show that this fact is not an invented situation, but that the words have been said, or maybe these voices were uttered with an ironic tone, consequently to the too many similar stories, through which the candidates are not listening.

These two texts have different approaches to the issue. While in the start of discussion, B seems again disappointed of these childish approach of foreigners regarding the interview and the job offer, in the middle of the discussion C is coming with a more emphatic approach, setting her in foreigner’s role, assigning the same response. Can it be that C has a more empathically approach regarding this aspect comparing to B? Martin Buber arguments that in the intercultural communication, the dialog is the only possibility to coming over the differences and frame a relation between the parts (Lumsden, Buber, 20100, p. 228). In Buber’s opinion, the dialog can be achieved through I-Thou relation, in other words through empathy, seeing the other as you, having the same capabilities and problems. It may also be possible that B’s narrative is coming from an inside pain, a disappointment that came after working in so many years with foreigners, coming to the conclusion that there are no excuses to theirs approach, but the cultural differences. On the other side, it can be that the identity C creates, as a sympathetic person (CMM: 2004, p. 23) is a result of the fact that she had more direct contact with foreigners. C is involved in discussions regarding the working contract aspects, regarding farmer’s expectations from the new employee, etc. while B is usually not coming as close to the foreigners.

To C’s statement, that she would probably react in the same as foreigners to the offer to come to another country, B is responding as follows: ***But if you were not sure, wouldn’t you read on internet about Romania****? (*min. 31.50) The fact that B’ position, regarding foreigners behavior, is apparently not affected by C’s narrative, can be interpreted as he would just close the conversation with the conclusion that the other culture is strange. Consequently, the recruitment procedure is good enough and the consultancy in cultural differences is a vital necessity for the farmer.

The debate about candidates’ utterances and communication model is deepen by the recruitment team-members, when they try to see behind the lack of analytical sense. Referring to this issue, the next section will present the analysis of the narratives regarding the motivation that stands behind candidates’ rush to accept the very first job offer.

The motivation behind

The I and Though relation, which Buber is argue for, can be seen as dominating the focus group discussion, even if there are moments when the distances between the two parts are highlighted most, moments where there can be felt the distinction between them and us. The recruitment team is trying to understand what stands behind foreigners the words and acts, looking after the motivation they have for coming to Denmark.

This job is considered to be *a* ***lifetime opportunity to a better life*** (min 31:28), says D, while C continue affirming that ***they*** (the candidates) ***are pressed.*** There can be observed that the Baktinian centripetal forces, through which the consensus can be framed, are at place in this conversation, while B is coming to sustain, what has been stressed so far, with a concrete pressure situation of some candidates, which ***don’t have money enough for food.*** In this context, the hurry to accept the first job offer, without asking themselves or the recruiter about more details concerning life and work in Denmark, does not seems so weird anymore, as B come to acknowledge: ***they have to do something*** to improve the situation they stand in***.***

The dialog between them and us, between recruiters and candidates, between farmer and employees, can become functional once the relation *I – Though* has replaced the *I-it* perspective (Buber:2010).

As a final thought, regarding the recruitment difficulty, which arise from the fact that foreigners are not focusing on the whole situation a job abroad implies, I would add that despite the cultural difference, the interview will become a dialog, if the team will present this “advice” as a must, without which the chances for getting a job are minimal.

3.1.2.3. Communication in recruitment phase and culture chock diminution

When living abroad, a usually reaction to environmental change is culture shock[[65]](#footnote-65). This shock is referring to the feeling and phases an individual gets through, when living “his reality”, and having to start over in a new world. The new comer is initially enthusiastic about the novelty of his new life, seeing differences as an exotic element, but then the multitude of unexpected and of uncertainly makes place to frustration. In time, the adaption of the individual take place and the new reality will become the natural one. However, as Berger and Luchmann (1990) assert through the secondary and to the unsuccessful socialization theory, the old world, represented for example by native languages, memories from childhood regarding national traditions, will remain something special to the individual, even if he can identify more with the new culture.

Connecting this issue of culture shock to the intercultural communication within the recruitment phase, it has to be said that the candidates are not aware about the other side of the coin. What I mean here is that the foreigner candidates are not assessing both weaknesses and straights, a job abroad implies, as the previous section has pointed out. In this respect, it could be helpful to notify the candidates about culture shock already from the recruitment phase, because in this way, the culture shock can be minimized, and the adaptation phase can be facilitated. Anyway, this idea seems more difficult to imply in praxis, in F’s opinion, as she stresses that:

***So, when we interview them, if there are some challenges, these are that we can show different video, about how it is here in Denmark, both culture but work as well, but it is a big difference from seeing it, while you are in your home country, and coming here. Because it is not only the work, that challenge you, it is that you feel isolated, you have to start a whole new network, you have to find out, how things are done here. All things, all challenges, come at once. This is in my opinion the biggest difficulty. But the opportunity is for sure; if they are coming over the first week, that is the most difficult, so it is a chance for they stay.* (**min. 7.09)

Then if so, can it be possible to get the foreigner ready for living abroad, and working after Danish expectations, before he come, and if yes, then how? As F’s narrative stresses, it is much easier to speak about living abroad, then actually doing it, but how can the recruitment phase help the candidate in getting as aware as possible about what culture shock implies. *CMM* (Pearce:1993) model recommend to focus on content, speech act, relation, episode and cultural pattern, when preparing or when analyzing a message. So what message is presented in the video or the written message and how is it conceived? The informative videos that I have seen that Agri Nord’s recruitment team recommends to be seen are amateur filmed, the voice of the person can barely be heard and the information are mainly concerning the job duties. The recruitment team is planning to edit a new informational video and a brochure, in which some of those foreigners, which are adapted to the life in Denmark, will tell the stories about their starting period and about what that has implied. I believe that it can be helpful to include in the video different life stories, both positive and negative, in that way the story of those, which have not adapted to be also heard. I consider this important, because in different context the culture shock is felt with different intensity, as well as different person tolerate different this life change. To present different perspectives implies in a constructivist perspective openness, flexibility and a broader understanding of “the word”. Having a form of an informational confession and coming from an individual that has been in the situation, the candidate is dreaming about, these personal stories can wake candidate’s interest and reflections regarding the life and work abroad.

The ulterior dialog, in the interview’s phase, is also meant to reach a horizons fusion between foreigner’s expectations and recruiter’s anterior experiences. The weakness regarding this recommended method, through which there shall be opened a dialog regarding living abroad is that it may appear expensive. Anyway, if the foreigner is coming unprepared, and in the worst situation is returning home, and the recruitment process has to be started again, then the final cost will get even higher. There is also the possibility to continue the current practice, but the low efficiency of the newcomer is accentuated by the frustration and uncertainty specific to the culture shock, can affect both farm’s economy and the ulterior relation between the farmer and the foreigner, as a Danish middle-leader asserts, that a good start is very important (int. 7, min 27.15).

3.1.2.4. A recruitment mystery: beyond the native language

This section will bring into discussion the topic of difficulties in communication when using the native languages.

The expression *intercultural communication* emphasize the culture as a determinant element when communicating across cultures. Actually, the word communication alone refer to a necessity and difficulty. I remember that in adolescence, I have heard the expression, or I have assimilated for the first time the expression: communication issues. Now it may sound as a cliché to me, but maybe a true one. Why there are so many misunderstanding also when speaking the same native language? While I was involved in different activities at Agri Nord, a story regarding a “recruitment mystery” took shape. After the recruitment process seemed to be finished, the candidate was expected to arrive at the farm. However, the farmer called the recruitment team and informed that the new employee has not appeared. The wonder was huge, because with some days before, the recruitment team had contacted the candidate and he assured them that he is ready to come to Denmark. An important mention, which has to be made here, is that O, an auxiliary team member from Romania, who is also the team leader’s wife, has accomplished the interview and the agreement. Regarding this episode, B comments:

***It is funny with that*** (this episode), ***because my wife is from Romania, and when she is talking with some Romanian, and they are not coming, we ask, why they have not come. I don’t know. You have talked, you have got an agreement in Romanian, what has happened? Because sometimes I am thinking that when two Romanians are talking together, sometimes can there appear as many misunderstandings, as when some are speaking English to Romanians. When we speak, we misunderstand something. I feel also that when speaking native language to some from Denmark, there can appear just as many misunderstandings…*** (B: min. 31)

I have discussed with O about this episode, and she told me that the reason, the candidate has not came was that he did not have the money to pay the bus ticket to Denmark, and that he hoped to borrow the money until the last moment. O got this explanation from candidate’s mother. Another detail has appeared, when discussing with her, and this is that the candidate have asked, if she could not find to him a job at a cow farm instead of a pig farm. Ulterior the candidate has sent an email apologizing for the situation he has created. So now, there where two stories referring to this case, but the last one, regarding the job type seemed to have a determinant role in candidate’s decision, in my opinion.

According to *CMM’s* theory the meaning of a message has to be unpacked, because there can be attributed different, or multiple meaning to an utterance. This is actually a repercussion of the fact that we are articulating only a part of what we actually want to transmit, and that we expect the other to understand between the lines. Considering all this, the context is a crucial element in communication, as underlined repeatedly in this thesis. In this episode, which has been presented above, the context can be represented by the lack of money and job preferences.

If in conversation individuals articulate only a part of what they actually intend to say, then in a short phone call the risk for misunderstanding is even higher. Considering the cultural differences, the personality differences, candidate’s economic pressure and the low number of conversations, through which the recruiter and the candidate communicate, every sign of uncertainly, every hesitation, has to be brought into discussion. A *yes* said half-heartedly can actually mean *no*, or *I do not know*. In this respect, *CMM* accentuates the importance of the tones of the voice, which is used, and *Bakhtin*[[66]](#footnote-66) stresses that manipulating the effects of the context even the most serious utterance can be made comical, so there has to be accorded attention to all the different aspects of communication.

3.1.2.5. Recruitment phase analysis: review

Before we go further to the next phase in the intercultural collaboration between farmer and foreigner, is necessary to refresh the main ideas from recruitment phase analysis through a summary.

The job announcement and the preliminary Skype/phone interview are the first steps in the intercultural communication between the three parts, farmer-recruiter and foreigners. The small details, the chosen and the omitted words, the aspects that are in focus are communication elements as well. Already from this phase, a self-concept is framed both in candidates and in farmer’s/recruiter’s mind, and it is important that the transmitted message from the recruitment phase, regarding the expected self, correspond to the message from the onboarding phase. I am naming here the farmer and the recruiter in the same category, because the recruiter, which will be the consultant later in the intercultural collaboration, is representing the farmer.

Furthermore in this section has been argued that adopting an I-Thou perspective regarding the other, as the recruitment team often did in the focus group discussion, is opening the dialog, and this perspective builds a bridge between the two parts. However, in this type of communication, where there exist more uncertainties than known elements, every kind of signal have to be taken seriously, especially because people do not express the whole message and that in different cultures are different taboos, some facts are uttered, other are not.

Returning to the main questions in this thesis, referring to the recruitment phase, there can be asserted that the intercultural communication becomes an even more problematic issue when:

* the hidden messages are not taken into consideration from the very first beginning;
* the parts are not aware about what the multicultural phenomenon (living and working abroad) implies;
* the I-it relation is adopted;

This thesis is written from an organizational perspective, addressing to the leaders and consultants that are working with foreigners, therefore it focuses on what the leader, the recruiter and the consultant can do to improve the current situation through a better intercultural communication. The number of candidates the consultant is working with is over thousand persons, while the number of farmers is having only one decimal, this is an extra argument to the fact that there are the farmers and leaders to which this issue addresses, and that there is no point to write about how the candidate should report to this process. In the enormous number of candidates, there will be differences in the way they communicate, in the expectation they have, in the way they adapt to a new job and to a new country, but if the process is in a continuous improvement, learning from the controversial episodes, then the chances for higher efficiency are increasing.

In the end of the recruitment phase analysis, I would let the text speak for itself:

***I also believe that we, on the other side, here in Agri Nord, are more … have to be more sure that they*** (the candidates) ***have understand the message, when they say yes, and that we can count on they are coming. Because they don’t have all these information*** (regarding the work and life in Denmark***), when they are coming here, but they shall be informed, when they come here*** (C’s narrative, min. 8.47).

 So maybe there is still place for improving the recruitment process, and maybe if this process is focusing more on dialog, presenting to the candidates different perspectives of the foreigners that are integrated in the Danish life and working place, then the number of problems that occur in onboarding phase will be minimized.

The next subchapter will analyze the narrative that refer to the onboarding phase.

3.2. Onboarding and intercultural communication

This subchapter contains the analysis of the narratives and cases that relate with the internship period, data that connect with the onboarding phase. This subchapter will start the description of the onboarding procedure that is adapted by the consultant and the farmer, so that you can better understand the context to which I will refer. Then the subchapter will continue with the importance of a good start. The topic of language will follow, and will analyze Danes and foreigners perspective referring to intercultural communication in the onboarding phase, fear and nonverbal communication are some of the debated themes. Then the analysis will go further focusing on the process of learning the task, the new job implies. Under this section, the focus will be on farmers complaining regarding the fact that foreigners pretend to be understood the tasks, when they actually din not. The paradox of the foreigners middle leaders, which are facing even more difficulties in onboarding foreigner newcomers than Danish does. The intercultural communication will be the common element that will connect the analysis of these issues.

Even in theory, there is not mentioned a fix period interval that should be allocated to this phase. The reasons, onboarding duration can vary so much, are the level of difficulty, the new job implies, employee’s capacity to learn new things and to adapt to new environments, the ability of the organizational culture to integrate and initiate the new comer, etc.[[67]](#footnote-67). Anyway, the specialty writings refer to the period from acceptance to start, to the first day, first week, the first three mounts and first the year.

## **3.2.1. Onboarding procedure**

I would like to frame the context of the narrative, which will be analyzed in this subchapter, describing first the onboarding procedure that is adopted by farmers and the recruitment team, as I have perceived it in the internship period.

The standard procedure for onboarding the candidates that come to work in Danish farms is more complicated because of the triangular relation between the new employee, the farmer, and the mediator – the recruiter, which often is also the HR consultant. The triangular collaboration, of three parts, can be an impediment to efficiency, if the roles and the followed procedure are not clearly defined. This is in my opinion a weaknesses of working with a consultant, because as I have seen, many small, but significant details can be omitted, not by purpose, but based on thought that the other might have considered them.

Another aspect that affect the communication in the onboarding phase, is the fact that the farm’s organization structure is not similar to the regular organization type, but has some other characteristic as:

- the team is permanently busy;

- the daily routine is full with unexpected elements,

- there is a noisy working environment specific to the farms,

- there are usually small teams with 2 members, (the total number of employees can vary from 3-4 to 20 persons), so the tension between two can be determinant for staying or leaving

- the farmer and the team-leaders are nor specialized in leadership or human relation domain, etc.

The onboarding phase, which is implemented at the farms, as I have been witnessing during my internship period, start with the moment the new employee arrive to Denmark, moment when the farmer becomes the contact person and takes a leader’s role in this intercultural relation. It can be that at the big farms, a middle-leader is named to take care of this phase. Generally, from what I have seen, the onboarding phase is actually a spontaneous procedure. People expect that the newcomer integration will happened natural and that he will learn on the way (here I do not refer to the learning method: learning by doing). There is not a specific procedure to be followed, nor some precise indications to the person in charge with onboarding the new comer. The chemistry between the new employee and the farmer, the middle-leader or the contact person can be decisive for employee’s performance and for the future job satisfaction.

However, as a consequence to the problematic situation, which the deficient onboarding has caused so far, the consultant is searching different solution to improve its procedure. After several discussions referring to this issue, the farmers become more aware about the importance of onboarding the new employee. “The start” of the newcomer was a much-debated issue in the focus group meeting and relating to this issue there has been discussed about the need for informational brochure for the new employee, which the consultant planes to elaborate. This issue has been debated for 10 minutes in the focus group discussion.

The following empirical analysis will emphasize the significance of the onboarding phase, mainly through presenting the both sides of the stories.

3.2.2. A good start

Onboarding represent for me a good start. Referring to that, a Danish middle-leader interviewee stress that:

***It is very important to have a good start, to get a good first impression, and not to be annoyed. Because if some say to a Danish: sweep there, and he says yes, but he doesn't do it, so the first will think that he don't want to do it. Even if it's happening with a foreigner, the same kind of feelings will be generate. And so, everything will go wrong. Instead of an explanation, everything will be destroyed already from the start***. (Int. 7, min. 27:15)

In my opinion, the reflection included in the narrative above comes as a consequence of many years experience in working with foreigners. The interviewed person have been working with foreigners in over seven years, and he reveals two important aspects regarding onboarding phase and the multicultural working place. The first aspect refer to the onboarding phase significance, using the radical word *destroyed* to underline the fact that, if the start is bad, the ulterior effort involved in improving the situation can be exhausting.

The other aspect that the narrative above implies refer to the feeling the words and action generates. More exactly the middle leader assert that the instinctive reaction is to expect and to interpret in the same way the utterance and the behavior the native and the foreigner have. If a response is attributed to a certain attitude, in the native cultural context, then when interpreting the response, the cultural appurtenance of the involved individual is not going to make a difference. As Volosinov asserts: *we never say or hear words, we say and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. (*1973, p.70*)*

This tendency, to interpret the way “the other” speak and react after the own taken for granted (Berger and Luckmann: 2011), is the main conflict source in the intercultural interaction. In the onboarding phase, it would be necessary to discuss the situation that seems strange. In time, the foreigner will learn the cultural codes, which characterize the host culture, and the native will become more tolerant, both understanding that different perspective coexists.

3.2.3. Communication difficulties in onboarding phase

 In this section, the attention is on language use, on the nonverbal communication and on some barriers, which can affect the communication between farmer and foreigner during the first period of the collaboration between farmer and foreigner. It is obvious that some aspects, which have been discussed in the previous subchapter, will apply also to the onboarding phase, as well as on the whole period in which the two parts are working together. In this respect, the significance of hidden messages, for example, shall be considered as an important aspect of communication with foreigners or native, because when appearing any kind of changes, and individual gets to feel insecure, he will tend to be not communicate the whole thoughts, protecting himself from the unknown. Anyway, I consider that it is not necessary, and maybe not possible, to include all the aspects intercultural communication include in each phase, but I will mention those that are in my opinion the most elementary ones, from what has emerged from the empirical data analysis.

3.2.3.1. Fear, a barrier to communication

When referring to how foreigners communicate, what they are saying, and what is not said, the native usually are shaking the head expressing that the others communication model is not making sense. Why they say that they are coming, when they know that they cannot come? Why they are not saying something, when they are not contented? In my opinion, this problematic is not a matter of different cultural communication model, but it is a matter of a more general context. *CMM’s*[[68]](#footnote-68) theory referring to unpacking the message, based on the fact that individuals are not expressing the whole intended message, but expect the other participants to read between lines, relates also with the fear feeling which is blocking the communication.

The narrative below belong to a Ukrainian girl and through them, she is explaining the reasons behind accepting to stay at a job, which normally she would refuse. This narrative is sustaining my point of view: it is the general context, the situation a person is in, that does not permit that the intended message to be communicated:

***I was alone; I had no friends here, I was afraid to lose my job, to lose money. I paid to come here, I needed to earn money, I wanted to give money back to my family and maybe to help them.*** (Int.3, min. 3.09)

It may be possible that the fear to lose the job, and implicit money, is based on the previous experience, on the lack of financial security from the past. In interviewee 6, a Danish farmer is comparing the native employees, he had so far, and the foreigners. He conclude that for native, to lose the job is not a huge tragedy, because they get some help anyway, while the thought of losing the job seems scary to foreigner, because he know what the lack of money is. (Int. 6, min. 3:50) The foreigners voices are characterized by hetreoglossia, the*contradictions between the present and the**past* (Bakhtin:1993) because the voices of the past are still herd in the present. This fear is internalized through secondary socialization, and the new culture and context, the individual will became a part of; can replace in time this fear with confidence. (Berger and Luckmann:1967)

To complete the examples above, which shows that the incertitude and fear are often feelings, which the newcomer has, I would like to add an observation from the internship period, referring to the distanced attitude foreigners had towards me in the start. When I came for the first time at a farm, where four Romanians was working, it was lunchtime. They came one by one in the kitchen, and I could hear that they were warning each other, to be careful, what they would talk about, because there was a Romanian there (they refer to me). I believe, they saw me as a “spy”, which aimed to inform the farmer if they complained, fact that could damage the relation with the farmer. After a small talk, theirs faces has become more relaxed.

Another observation regarding the foreigner’s behavior, which has direct impact on the communication opportunity, is that both when I was interviewing them and when I was holding the appraisal meetings, they were not open to dialog in the start: *everything is fine, we don’t have any problems, we are satisfied*. What could be the reason to that? Maybe the same that has been named above: they were afraid for losing the job, if they articulate some discontent, considering that it never, or seldom, have experienced that some were interest about there’s opinion or feeling regarding job satisfaction.

How can the leader open a dialog, if foreigners are closing themselves? If we take again Berger and Luckmann’s theory about unsuccessful socialization, and apply to foreigner’s situation, which have arrived in other reality, the new codes will be internalized with time, if the individual accept them. However, for a Ukrainian, that has to pay for staying in Denmark, is unlikely that the elimination of fear will occur through the general context acceptance. Here I mean that as long the residence permit depends on the job they have in Denmark, the fear for leaving the country will force most employees to accept the working condition, they would otherwise not accept. But the micro-context, the working place culture, can help employees to be open for dialog, if adopting an emphatic I-Thou relation, and when showing that they have a value at theirs working place, at the farm. (Buber:2010)

The next section will focus on the particular use of language, and all the language implication in the intercultural dialog.

3.2.3.2. Verbal and nonverbal communication in onboarding phase

This section will analyze the topic of the nonverbal aspects of communication as well as of danglish phenomenon. There will be explored the fascinating phenomenon that occur when different culture work or live together applies also to language, or better said, applies primary to language.

1. From English use to Danglish[[69]](#footnote-69): construction of language

This section will address the issue of the local phenomenon through which the team members are unconscious creating a specific new language, to facilitate the cooperation between them.

When communicating on a foreigner language, there can appear even more difficulties to address and to interpret a message, because it is not only about the word that are choose, but it connect also with the different meanings the same word has in different counties, and about expressions. But when the foreigner language, which is used as a common organizational language, is not spoken at a medium or high level by the team members, the challenges becomes even bigger. This aspect is emphasized by C in the following narrative sequence:

***It is true, that all can speak English, but I can better find word in Danish, that I know they will touch a Danish, or a Danish employee will understand between the lines, comparing with how a Romanian, will understand the word I choose in English for him. It has to be more awake, active, focused… when we are towhead more nationalities, than if we are here and speak Danish.*** (C, min. 15:39)

In the text above C is pointing out that it does not matter if we can speak a foreigner language at a high level, because you can hardly express just as well on the foreigner language, as on the native one. This is also *Bergen and Luckmann’s* point of view, because they stands for the idea that only in a few situations can happen that the new language get the same significance as the native one.The system of communication and language, which is internalized by us already from childhood becomes the way we see the reality, it becomes one with us. (Berger and Luckmann:1966)

As *Volosinov* asserts, *people do not ”accept” their native language, it is in their native language that they first reach awareness.* (1973, p. 81). This idea is accentuated by C’s narrative above, where she says that there is the most natural way to express the interior thoughts through the native language. But Volosinov goes even further, showing that language is who we are.

In the everyday routine at the job, new and experimented employees are creating unconscious a social group with certain unwritten rules, and with a specific language (Berger and Luckmann:1967). Native and foreigners are communicating in English, a secondary language. From the empirical data I got, emerges that the use of English is a big challenge for the newcomer. Four from five foreigner interviewees has mentioned the use of English as being one of the major difficulties they had to face in the start, when coming to Denmark. This is a consequence of the fact that they haven’t used the foreign language before. While the Danish middle leader declare that he is not seeing that there would be some problems implied by the use of English, the Danish farmer stresses that this is actually a strong concern for the foreigners:

***They speak English similar to the way I speak English. We understand what we are saying. I am not speaking English like an Englishman, and they don’t speak English like Englishmen do, but we understand each other***. (Int. 7, min. 10:20)

***The biggest problem with foreigners’ employees is, as I see it, the language barrier. They are very concerned about that. With my own “not so used” English, and theirs “not so god” English … this is the biggest problem, which I see***. (Int. 6, min. 0:21)

Why is behind the contradiction between this two stories? It is even more interesting to find out the possible answers to this question, because I was witnessing an episode where the use of bad English, at the farm the middle leader from Interview 7 works, has caused tension between the team, which shared the same language and the newcomer. While I was in the middle of an onboarding meeting, I was ask to check if the newcomer has some sight problems. The reason the team was considering this possibility, was that when the new employee was asked to take the bucket, which was right beside him, he looked disorientated around, and did not found the bucket. The only problem that has caused this misunderstanding was actually the fact that instead of using the word *bucket* on English, there was used the Danish word *spand*. The phenomenon of creating a new local language, or Danglish, as I am calling it in this thesis, will be detailed below.

The specific task and information, the new employee has to learn, contain many technical words and expressions, terms which neither the foreigner nor the native have used in English. So some technical Danish words are used as being English words. This tendency occurs often subtly and unconsciously, when the English word is not known, and it seems that the Danish word sound like the English one. This phenomenon is causing even more problems to the new comer, because instead for ”just” learning what the new job is about, this mixed language forces him to guess the unknown terms. Usually the newcomer will hesitate to ask about the meaning of the word, if he believe that it is in English, because he is supposed to know English, when coming to Denmark. In this respect, it is preferably that the team is not aware about using Danish terms. It can help to focus on professional terms, as they are used at the farm, and maybe to present them from the start to the new foreigner employee.

The next section will emphasize the implication of the nonverbal communication in the relation between new employee and the rest of the team and between Danish and foreigners.

1. New language: nonverbal communication

There have been presented so far several answer to the main question from this thesis: what makes the intercultural communication to be a problematic issue. The different taken for granted, each culture has, culture shock and the all the challenges living abroad implies, bad English knowledge the Danglish phenomenon are just a few issue that has been debated so far. The discussion that emerged in the focus group revealed that a great significance is behind the nonverbal aspects of communication. This will be the topic of the current section analyzing the implication of gesture, physical movements, mimic and eye contact in the intercultural communication.

**Physical movements and eye contact**

In the context of language difficulties, the nonverbal elements of communication come to supply this deficiency. The sequence and the intensity of physical movements and the combination of those are also meant to transmit a message. These complementary communication elements are, as F asserts *maybe more important in a discussion,* than the utterances. The farmer and the foreigner where maybe forced to discover the hidden potential within nonverbal communication and they are using physical movements in the daily routine to supplement the deficient English: ***a mixed English, bad English with Danish words***. Referring to the phenomenon that can emerge in a social context, through which a group develop a common constructed language and codes*,* C stresses the necessity of body language usage:

***There is used a lot of hands movement in the stable. There is pointing and showing…it is the only way we can teach them, to initiate and to tell them. Otherwise, there will be miss too much.*** (C: 17.15)

Anyway, the use of physical movements and mimic occur usually spontaneous and is not following some specific rules, but individual is trying to supply language deficiency complying some unwritten internalized rules (Berger and Luckman:1967). However, this body signs can also be interpreted different by both individuals, which are sharing the same culture, and by the individuals from different culture. The reason for this misinterpretation is the fact that the meanings individuals attribute both to signs and words are taken for granted and are actually *a culturally constructed convention* (Potter and Wetherell, p.27). Referring to this F states:

 ***This is also something we understand in different manners.*** (min. 17:25)

Questioning our *“normal view”* and *the taken for granted* is best way to come over the cultural differences also regarding communication*,* because as Schutz stresses, being self-critic and self-questions is an evidence for awareness*. [[70]](#footnote-70)*

Apparently, in the daily routine when switching permanently the tasks, there is a tendency not to accord importance to all the details this thesis points out. However, as theoretical and utopic the discussed recommendations may seem, the financial and environmental implication of not focusing on intercultural communication are huge. In this respect, the citation below shows how the production process can be constantly interrupted by a deficient communication:

***I experienced often that the farmer is saying,” I told that to the beginner in the stable”, but the student is saying to me: “I have never heard that”. And that happened because the farmer wasn’t in the same room, when he told the student that. It is important to be in front of the other person, and to look in the eyes, when is something that has to be clarify. It is important not to do this wrong***. (B, min. 18:08)

The other participants to the focus group meeting seem to agree totally with B, and to sustain the point of view he has expressed, his colleague C and F, the foreigner trainee come to supplement his statements, arguing that:

***But this is not just about foreigners, it is also between Danish employees and employer.*** (C, min. 18:25)

***Foreigners are can not understand what they are told, they are focusing on the face, the eyes***. (F, min. 18:51)

I have choose to mention, several times in this thesis, some statements as C’s reply, mentioned above, to emphasize that the I-Thou approach to “the others” has dominated the focus group dialog. The consultants have searched permanently to equilibrate the discussion, to point out that the most communication issue applies also when native speak together. C’s statement above can also be interpreted as a result of a personal experience, when she faced some communication difficulties in the dialog between natives. Maybe if we were better to communicate with those around us, with family, friends, colleagues, then the intercultural communication would not have been such a sensitive issue.

**Mimic**

Even if the globalization has as result the homogenization of cultures, there are still some differences between those. As I have stressed several times in this thesis, in my opinion, the deterministic approach of multicultural phenomena shall be avoid, because it tend to amplify the differences, the distances and the tension between culture (Philips:2009). However, in my opinion, the nonverbal elements of communication implies maybe more difficulties than the use of language. My point of view is based on the fact that individual can guess the meaning of a word from the context, but when foreigner expect an enthusiastic reaction to what he thinks is a great result at job, and the leader’s face is not expressing any emotions, then he may be disorientated.

All the research method used have emerged similar opinion regarding the fact that Danish are usually “in control” of the face expression, of mimic, opposite to the Eastern.

The Ukrainian middle-leader express his opinion about the lack of mimic and physical movements when communicating with Danish, accentuating the difference between the taken for granted the two cultures, between how he would react, and the concrete response he get, which is characterized by the neutrality and control:

***They*** (Danish) ***are dry… if some situations it will be for us finish go and kill myself, they will say, “aha, ok***” (Int. 5, 24:45).

The words he has chosen, “*dry”*, “*kill myself”* and “*aha*, *ok”,* are meant to highlight the contrast between these two reactions, and generalized, the contrast between these two cultures.

E, the Ukrainian, which is in internship period at Agri Nord, has had a lot of experience in working at cow farms in North Denmark, beginning with a student job, and getting to a middle leader position. When referring to the nonverbal aspect of intercultural communication, she has emphasized the particular importance of supplying language deficit with nonverbal elements:

***The foreigners fail to understand;*** *(*therefore*)* ***they are focusing on how he is looking, how his eyes are***. (E, min.18:53)

 Referring to the cultural differences in using mimic and body movement to sustain the utterance, and referring to the communication misunderstanding that this differences might involve, F, the newest member of the recruitment team stressed:

***We are not good to use our mimic. As Danish, we are “stone face”…*** ***When you appreciate someone and say: “it is nice, what you do”, instead of: “Ooh! It is fantastic, what you do”, it is received in different ways*** (F, min. 19:03).

All the nonverbal aspects of communication are decisive, because behind the words and the signs people are seeing meaning. To improve the intercultural communication implies, according to F, to take into consideration the cultural pattern regarding mimic and nonverbal communication (CMM theory:1999). Knowing that the working environment from farms involves noise, movement and tension, in the context of defective use of English and different taken for granted, the mimic and physical signs becomes a significant communication element. To come over the onboarding period, the usage of nonverbal elements can be determinant for both the future performance of the newcomer, and for the relation between the team members.

3.2.3.3. Communicating the job duties

As mentioned before, in the introduction of this subchapter, the onboarding phase refer on one side to the adaptation period, through which the new employee gets to feel a part of the team, and on the other side to the process of learning the job’s duties. These aspects, which the onboarding phase implies, are interrelated, because when feeling rejected by the team, the process of learning the job duties will usually slow down, and if the newcomer has many difficulties in learning to perform the tasks, then the integration into the team can be problematic.

The following empirical will refer to the concrete communication problems that the two parts are meeting in the onboarding phase. The analysis will begin with a description of the problem that was signaled by the farmer or consultant, and then I would refer to the possible communication issues behind.

Foreigner’s communication issues: not asking and pretending to understand

This issue represent probably one of the most visible obstacle in the intercultural communication so far, and yet it persists. This communication problem, referring to foreigner’s custom of pretending to understand, has emerged in almost each discussion I had with the farmers. It is obvious that its consequences causes an immediate impact on the working place environment. In this context it is easy to sympathize with the farmer, considering that the foreigner pretend to understand the described task, and then he is doing something different, or that he makes the requirement is performed incorrectly, and not by mistake, but by not understanding properly the requirement.

The dispute regarding this topic has restarted, as expected, also during the individual interviews and focus group discussion. In this respect, the Danish farmer, when being asked to address an advice to the newcomers, he addresses this issue in a subtle manner:

***Ask! Because there are not stupid questions, now comes the cliché, there are not stupid questions, only stupid answers.*** (Int. 6, min. 13:30)

The previous opinion expressed by interviewee 6 has a different approach, comparing to the following narratives. Even if the utterances are similar in essence, this reply is distinct through:

- the self-awareness emphasized by the mention: ***now comes the cliché,***

- the content: the word choice and the tone he used (CMM:1999),

- the fact that it implies sympathy, or as Buber calls it, the *I-Thou* approach (Buber:2010)

- the speech act, being an advice, an encouragement.

Also referring to the fact that foreigners hesitate to ask for explanations, details, or repeating the task, the team leader is going behind the visible action, and refer to the motivation this tendency is based on:

***It is also how they are raised! In Romania, people do not ask. The pupil are not asking the teachers about something, as I understood. If you are asking the teacher about something, they will see you badly, if the teacher cannot answer the question***. (B, min. 2:22)

Listening the different stories regarding this issue, I have noticed an interesting phenomenon. Before I will detail and argument my statement, I would first introduce the texts in question:

***Generally, from what I hear, it is better to say yes to something you have not understood, than to say no. What I have heard, is that because at home, if you say no*** (that you have not understood)***, others are looking at you, “ha, ha! He is stupid”, while the culture in Denmark is the opposite.*** (Int. 7, min. 23:50)

***They*** (foreigners) ***are scared, because their culture says, “If you ask, you are stupid”. But in Denmark we say:” if you don’t ask, and make mistakes, you are stupid”.*** (Int. 7, min. 7.49)

Interviewee number 7 is an experienced Danish middle leader, whose stories, regarding foreigner’s tendency “not to ask”, are almost similar with the story, the team leader reveal. In the same context of individual interview, while searching for arguments, maybe to support the authenticity of his narrative, the middle leader had a kind of *flash back*, or a moment of reflection, investigating the source of his knowledge:

***…they are saying…the Romanians are saying…B and the Romanians also says… (***Int. 7, min.9:01)

The section of narrative above is an evidence for the polyphonic (Bakhtin:1997), character of interviewee’s story. The voice of the consultant, ***B***, is heard in the narrative above. The team leader has an expert role regarding the issue of foreigners, so that farmers, middle leaders or colleagues, are speaking with his voice.

Even more interesting is the fact that B’s own voice may be polyphonic (Bakhtin:1997), because the supplementary comment he is using, when referring to this issue: ***as I understood,*** emphasize either that this is his own conclusion, or some stories heard from others. These voices, represented by theirs stories, has been probably internalized by B (Bergen and Luckmann:1966), and are used as own personal voice. A wakeup question as: *how do you know that they are raised like that,* can emphasize a reflective process, through which the individual can realize that the statement he made is not a personal conclusion, but a heard story.

I is not a surprise that both foreigners and Danish have different common accepted communication code and interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, p. 141), and that *what* and *when* to ask are taken for granted, because we have seen so far that the communication model is a social construction of a certain social group in a certain time and space. (Berger and Luckmann: 1966) However, is that the reason foreigners don’t ask? I have included furthermore a section from C’s story relating to this issue:

***Nobody is silent I Denmark. We, from the school, are*** (taught): ***just open the mouth and say something, and it is just to keep the hand up***. (C, min. 14:40)

In my opinion, common element in the texts presented above is promoting the own culture, as a method of identity creation. What implication can this and the polyphonic voices have for the intercultural communication at farms? Before exploring the reflections, which the previous question implies, it can be relevant to hear, what the CMM theory calls *coordination,* namely the other side of the stories. The empirical I have in this respect is represented by a situation I have witnessed when onboarding a newcomer and a narrative section from an individual interview. It is not much comparing with what the other side, the farmer-consultant, has to say about this problematic, and this fact is, in my opinion, a signal for the fact that the foreigner are not aware about farmer’s discontent. The following text can be seen in connection with the debated issue, even if, in fact, we come never to discuss directly about it during the individual interview.

***He*** (the farmer) ***just begin to speak, and I think, “it is true, it is not true”, but of course, I do what he says***. (Int. 3, min 37:30)

Communication is not about the words, because words are without any kind of value, if there is not attributed a meaning to those (Potter and Wetherell:1987, p. 25). Communication is about what was intended to transmit through the words, and about the system of communication through which individual chose to say something, or not to say it, choose to use some words or other communication elements, ignoring the other. Referring to the narrative section from above, why is interviewee 3 using ***of course,*** why is she seeing as evident the fact that she has to do exactly what the farmer indicates, even if she is in doubt?

If the previous text is integrated in the larger context of the discussion, it will probably give more meaning:

***If I make mistakes, he will tell, “it is not god because, because”, but I think, some rules are stupid. Of course, I understand if this are Danish rules. When this man*** (the inspector) ***came*** (to check), ***he told me that is like this, and I believed. Because I thought, he was just saying. You know, Danish can do this. Because for me this is something stupid. Why must the cows touch noses? But when this man came, I begin to believe. I think, “is it true, is it not true”, but of course I do.*** (Int. 3, min. 35.02)

Why would an employee doubt the procedure? And if doing so, why not communicating the personal point of view? To explore this questions, I would use two elements of CMM’s theory, namely the self-concept and the cultural pattern (CMM:1999). Interviewee 3 is a Ukrainian girl that has been working at Danish farms in over 6 years, which has a bachelor in agriculture and veterinary field, and who has had a one-year internship in England. It is possible that she is seeing herself as an overqualified middle-leader, and based on what she has learned at university, some of the rules from the farm appear strange. She is accepting the procedure rules, after a second person, a qualified one, is confirming farmer’s theory. From the dialog we had during the interview, I concluded that she was never told about what is the argument behind following a specific procedure. So, because she is not seeing the logic involved in the procedure, and maybe because she was not learned that, or because she learned a different approach, she is now doubting farmer’s utterance. But what is the meaning behind the sentences: ***Because I thought, he was just saying. You know, Danish can do this.*** Is shereferring to the fact that Danish can say something, they do not really believe. Was she meaning that Danish (the farmer) are just giving some supplementary and unnecessary tasks to the employees? Does she mean that this supposition applies to all employees or only to foreigners? Is this actually her voice, or is it a polyphonic utterance (Bakhtin:1997)? These are some direction for a future research, which meant to deepen the topic of foreigners at the working place.

 Also referring to the fact that foreigners seem to block the communication through for example, not asking again, when they did not understood, I would like to introduce an observation from the internship, which will be formulated as a case.

At the on-boarding meeting[[71]](#footnote-71), which took place three days after the foreigner has arrived to Denmark, I have decided to discuss first with the farmer, with the middle-leader, then with the foreigner and at last to have a common discussion between the newcomer, the farmer and me.

The discussion I has with the newcomer was referring most to the fact that he feels rejected by the conational team member, that there are plenty new information, and that he has been told about another foreigner, who learned much better that hi in the first three days.

When talking with the middle leader, he had described a disastrous situation. The newcomer seemed to do everything wrong, not to understand anything. He got also a working plan, but it did not seem to help. The obvious question that stand behind the narrative was; could it be possible that somebody to be that slow to learn?

The middle leader came with concrete situational examples, in which the newcomer’s actions seemed to have no logical explanation. One example refer to the fact that the new employee have been told to clean the stable’s departments, where there were no confinement sows. The newcomer has done the opposite, he have begun to clean the departments with confinement sows. When I asked him about why this had happened, he said that he believed, this was, what he have been told to do. During the discussion, and coming with different situational example, the middle leader has brought into question, I could observe that he has tried to present the reason behind his actions, but he gave up soon, and limited his actions only to listening and agreeing with the middle leader’s narrative.

What has happened there, in the situations mentioned by leader’s narrative? What was the reasons behind newcomer actions? What have happened during the onboarding discussion? Why did he stopped to argument his decisions? The lack of details regarding the communication which emerged in the stable during the first three days, and regarding the way he was introduced to the working place and to job’s duties limit the interpretation I can assign to this case, but there are three observations I see as relevant when referring to intercultural communication:

* **Speech act** – CMM’s theory (CMM:1999) suggest that the type of action an utterance is supposed to cause, is an element that shall be considered both, when conceiving the message, and when interpreting it. The fact that after the first three days the newcomer is told that another one was by far better that him, has more than probably a negative consequence affecting newcomer’s self-esteem, or the enthusiasm he What could possibly be the logic behind this utterance?What was the consequence the middle leader expected to create by using this utterance? Can it be that he thought the foreigner would be motivated to try harder? Was it an unconscious utterance of internal thought? Did he just break out under a busy day pressure, and got to say something he would not normally say?

During the onboarding period, but not only, to ensure an efficient intercultural communication, the speech act shall be considered. Neglecting the consequences worlds can induce, can block the dialog and ruin the future collaboration. Moreover, in my opinion, encouraging an apathetic approach to the newcomer will probably affect negatively the relation between team members, generating feelings as incertitude and caution between employees.

* **Episode: The pressure to make a good first impression** – the same utterance can have different meaning in different episode. The episode this section refer is onboarding phase. In this phase, the newcomer is willing to make a good first impression.

 My opinion regarding newcomer’s action is that the impatience to know the job duties and the pressure to make a good impression were creating a stressful context. I could observe that in the dialog he had with the farmer. After he asked some question, he did not have patience to listen the whole answer, but he prepared the next question, interrupting often the farmer. In this way there was no dialog but a form for monolog; there was actually no communication. To reestablish the connection, which is necessary in a dialog, the newcomer has to be aware about the fact that he is actually not hearing, not focusing on what is said.

As a conclusion in the final this section, referring to this particular aspect of onboarding phase, more exactly to the learning methods and tasks communication, I would like to quote the team leader resume to the discussion regarding this issue:

***This is a good idea*** (that the farmer should ask the newcomer to repeat the request), ***and it is the farmer, which shall do it, because the student*** *(newcomer)* ***feels very insecure, when he arrives to Denmark. It is exactly what we have discussed*** (that shall be done)***, from the first week! It is very important***. (B, min. 58:26)

***Just another thing about that – “I understand, I understand, and they actually didn’t”: foreigners have to learn to say: “can you tell me again, I don’t understand”. And the farmer have to say: “see”, not just saying something while passing by. He must say where the calf is born.*** (B, min. 44:30)

According to the team leader’s opinion, the farmer, the team and the consultant have more responsibility during this phase to initiate a dialog and express the expectations. But on the other side, when discussing about dialog and communication, there shall be minimum two parts involved in this process of transmitting, interpreting and creating new common meaning. As we have seen so far, there are communications issue on both sides; foreigners are blocking the communication by not asking, while the farmer is not paying attention to communication details, to the nonverbal elements. In this respect both, foreigners and farmer, have to review theirs communication models and the taken for granted aspect of the communication from the culture and from the group they are a part of.

Foreigner leaders and communication issue:

The starting point for the current section is a paradox, which emerges from B’s narrative that refer to the misunderstanding between foreigners:

***I can see that when there are some middle leaders, that are foreigners, and that receive a student from theirs own country, from Ukraine or Romania; they have bigger problems with doing something, than Danish have***. (B, min. 13:05)

The team leader is accentuating that he was witnessing a strange phenomenon, and this is that where foreigners are middle leaders, it seems to be even more difficult to communicate with and to lead the newcomers.

I called the situation from the text above *paradox*, because considering that Potter and Wehterell (1987) refer to language, and implicit to communication, as being a social product from a certain time and place and as being taken for granted, then it should be common and accepted by most of the community members. And if culture is a system of shared norms and values, then would it not be naturally that persons from the same culture to relate better with each other than with some from another culture? What is actually happening in this context of foreigner middle leaders?

When B brought this topic into discussion, it was not the first time I have heard it, but the first time I was introduced to this issue have been at an Erfa Group[[72]](#footnote-72) meeting. I have met, through that meeting, five foreigner middle-leaders form Poland, Ukraine and Romania that were changing experience and learning from each other. When they start to talk about the daily challenges, they come instantly to narrate about the beginners. The discussion became centripetal (Bakhtin: 1997), all of them arguing that the “new ones” are learning very slowly, that they are not so smart, and that is very difficult and almost hopeless to work with them. When asked, if they have tried different training methods, or different communicational approaches, the answer was, that they have been trying everything, but nothing seemed to work. When they have been asked to look back at the time they first came to Denmark, and they had to learn a new job, without hesitation they answered in unanimity that learned faster.

As a consequence, at some farms, the students[[73]](#footnote-73) are changed permanently, with the hope that the right ones will be found. Some other farms adopt a different student’s policy, keeping them, not because they are “the one” but because “all are the same”.

To get a broader perspective of this issue, I will refer again to B[[74]](#footnote-74) narrative, which has been presented in the last subchapter. B has emphasized that sometime the dialog between to foreigners seems to be more dysfunctional than the communication between Danish and foreigners:

***Because sometimes I am thinking that when two Romanians are talking together, sometimes can there appear as many misunderstandings, as when some are speaking English to Romanians. When we speak, we misunderstand something. I feel also that when speaking native language to some persons from Denmark, there can appear just as many misunderstandings*** (as when speaking with foreigners).

So if the communication in the native language can bring sometimes as many misunderstandings as when communicating with foreigners, then is no surprise in the dysfunctional relation between the foreigner middle leader and the conational newcomer or employee. However, when four persons of five have similar stories, then this can be called a majority. Even more, as B argue, the foreigner middle leaders ***have bigger problems*** in leading those from the same culture, or in other words, those that are sharing the same *interpretative repertoire* (Potter and Wetherell: 1987), the same values and traditions. How is it possible that Danes lead better foreigners, than foreigners do?

The middle leaders from Erfa Group suggests that the foreigners would not listen to “Eastern” (Ukraine, Poland, Romania). As a consequence of the fact that the beginners did not acknowledging theirs authority, the middle leaders have asked the farmers to fire them.

Why would foreigners accept Danish leaders, and reject foreigners? Why was the communication not working? What stands behind these actions? How to open a dialog?

 Can it be that foreigners prefer Danish leaders because they adopt a non-hierarchical leadership style? Can it be that being native is conferring power and authority? If the choice is based on the authority which being native implies, than we can conclude that there will be difficult for foreigner middle leaders to compete with this status. But if foreigners are communicating and relating better with farmers as a consequences of the leadership style they have adopted, then it means that foreigners middle leaders will succeed to communicate with the newcomers, and to create a good onboarding strategy only if they will adopt a more empathic relation to them.

Behind middle leader’s words and attitude, regarding the newcomers, was an I—it (Buber:2010) approach. The newcomer had no particular value, they could just come and go, and they could be fired, if they would generate a tensioned or conflictual context. Even when they have been asked to remember about what they went through in the beginning, when coming to Denmark, there were non emergence of empathy. Moreover, there seemed to be a unanimity, a centripetal *monologue* (Bakhtin:1987), which had more than one speakers. The middle leaders were not questioning themselves, theirs leadership skills, theirs communication model. Any other versions of the story where rejected, there were no hope for a functional relation with the newcomers. Or maybe the problem behind the leadership failure was that they did not intended to establish a relation with the students.

It seems to me that even if coming from the same country, or from similar countries, the middle leaders and the newcomer have different taken for granted regarding leader’s role. Then if the middle leaders are using a classical communication model, using a monologue, *speaking to* them, not caring about what the other mean (Bakhtin:1987), it is not surprising that the collaboration between them seems hopeless.

3.2.4. Onboarding phase analysis - review

Before beginning the review of the onboarding phase subchapter, I would like to mention that there are two more issue that could be included in this section. From the empirical data emerged that the differences between foreigner’s expectations and the real conditions, the culture shock, and the social aspect of integration, when moving to a new country, are aspects that can affect the work performance of the newcomer. I have chosen not to include the mentioned issue in the onboarding phase, because it have been already discussed, directly or indirectly, in the section referring to recruitment phase. Even if applying to onboarding phase as well, the discussion about those is almost similar whatever phase we refer.

As we have seen so far, in the onboarding phase can occur an avalanche of communication problems in the intercultural collaboration between the farmer, the foreigner, and sometimes the consultant. The mainly problem in communication is language, and when using a foreign language to build a bridge between two cultures, the communication becomes even more problematic. The use of bad English of both the newcomer ant the team, but also the Dangish mutation of the English that is used at working place, make even the most banal situation to be tensioned or awkward. Therefore, the significance of nonverbal elements of communications have been brought into attention in this subchapter, because the use of physical movements can supplement the lack of English.

The daily communication between colleagues, between leader and newcomer, etc. is mainly referring to the job duties. Communicating the daily task is actually a conclusive communication test, because in a noisy stall, when all are busy and in hurry, and above all those impediments, using a deficient language, will push to maximum the capacity of expressing and interpreting the communication. Different concrete situations that signal the deficient communication and the consequences this implies, have been presented in this chapter. The tendency of not asking and pretending to have understood, are just an example about how the intercultural conversation can be blocked.

Maybe when discussing about the communication between cultures, shall include the topic of segmented national culture as well, because, as we have seen in the end of this subchapter, the fact that the conational are facing difficulties, when relating with the other native, can be considered as an argument for unsuccessful *socialization (Berger and Luckmann:1966*). In other words, that people come to question theirs taken for granted, when meeting a new reality. These reflections invoke the situation of foreigner middle leaders that meet more communication difficulties in the daily routine, and in the onboarding phase, than Danish leaders do.

The next subchapter is the last section of analysis, and will consider the issue of communication between culture, as being an ongoing process, that shall never end being in focus, but to become a natural aspect of the daily routine.

3.3. Intercultural communication- an ongoing process

As the title suggests, the intercultural communication is not becoming less significant after onboarding phase is completed, but communication with both foreigners and native shall be an ongoing process, an open two way dialog, through which the communication within the organization is improving in time, emerging through all the unpredictable events and phenomena.

Usually when the communication during the previous phases has been efficient, the model will naturally extend and address to the whole staff, and will last the whole period of intercultural collaboration. In other words this efficient communication model will become the organizational communication language and value, being endless, just taking new forms when adapting to the internal and environmental changes.

The structure of this subchapter is as follows: first, we will discuss about *them and us* approach has on international communication. This topic will include also the *dilemma* of the organizational language*,* as one of the recruitment team calls it. What language shall be used at work, is it English or is it Danish? When shall foreigners begin to use Danish as the principal language at work? These questions have a direct impact both on the intercultural communication and on the organizational communication model. The *them and us* topic will continue with how is the intercultural communication affected by the distance between cultures, more exactly with the tendency of the staff to divide into “camps” into groups, usually these groups will be *natives* and “*the others*”. In the end of this analysis subchapter the topic of the silent communication, or as named before the hidden signals, will be again brought into discussion referring directly to how can the intercultural communication be improved, when the god start was missed.

3.3.1. Them and us

One of the greatest threat for the intercultural communication can be the staff tendency to divide in groups, in “them and us”, in foreigners and Danish, in Western and Eastern, EU and non-EU, and so on. In my opinion, this tendency becomes more evident after the employee get familiarized with the working environment, and begin to observe more the details regarding the relations, tensions, intrigues and other intern phenomena within organization. Why would the intercultural communication be affected by the fact some affinity groups are formed between employees? Would it be normal to intervene to stop this natural tendency? Is it not normal that people that share the same language and values to be more close to each other? Can it be otherwise? Or maybe even more relevant: shall it be otherwise?

The following sections of the current subchapter will debate the *them and us* relationship and its implication referring to intercultural communication, taking concrete narrative and cases as genesis point to the analysis and looking to explore the potential answers to the questions above.

3.3.1.1. English vs Danish – the organizational language

It seems that when having foreigners in the staff, a dilemma is appearing: what language shall be use as the official organizational language. Would it be efficient for the team to use English at the working place? Shall this be a permanent condition? Is it not normal that the foreigner, which live in Denmark shall learn and speak Danish? When is the moment to switch from English to Danish? What will so happen with the newcomers?

These questions concern both the farmers and the consultants. The following narrative will present the arguments that stands behind the two options: to use English or Danish.

***I have an example; yesterday I was starting a team meeting at a farm, and I think that it is obvious: the farmer and I, we are the only two Danish, the rest are from outside the country, and the leader as well. First, he is new, so he had to articulate some expectations from him, what he is expected you to do. And after that, all the team shall come in, but I can see that we have to communicate in English, because there are both Romanian, Ukrainians, and Danish, and there can arise more misunderstandings, than if there were 10 danish, that sit at table.*** (C, min. 14:33)

The dialog continue with F and B voices, which have a different meaning than C (min. 22:30). These team members are arguing that when a foreigner will like to live in Denmark for a long period, than is a normality and a necessity to learn and to speak Danish. C is coming again with her arguments:

***It is a dilemma, which we are facing. Some of them that maybe haven’t been here so long, and which are not that good in English as well, and have to bring them into the conversation. And say to the leader, “now you speak Danish”, and so there are some in the corner, that can barely catch a little English and not at all Danish, and it becomes a very slow process. And we get this to choose: we talk English at work, but then they are not using Danish***. (C, min. 22:55)

What is language that shall be used when communicating in multicultural organization? In the dispute above are both *centrifugal and centripetal* powers at place *(Bakhtin:1997).* All the participants want to come to a conclusion, a consensus, but the opinion are divergent. As a result, each participant left from the focus group with the opinion they had before. There were no conclusion, no accepted solution. This was the only issue where the team has disagreed, and according to how long it lasted, this has been the most debated issue. For 12 minutes the participants have argued about how soon the foreigners shall speak Danish, when they shall start to learn, who shall force them to that.

My opinion regarding this controversy is referring to the motivation behind. To communicate is, in my perspective, to have a dialog. I am not referring solely to the use of words and sounds, but to all aspects that have been discussed so far in this thesis. For *Buber*, to have a dialog is to adopt an *I-Thou* approach. So, what is the reason this issue is so controversial? What are the arguments and the possible approaches behind the two opinions referring directly to the impact on the intercultural communication?

**Why to use Danish as organizational language?**

* Because this change will help the organization will register better economical results
* Because when speaking Danish, the foreigner will integrate better in the team
* Because in this way the farmer and the consultant want to help foreigner to integrate in Denmark
* Because it is easier for the native to express in native language

The motivation behind this change is more relevant than what it is actually about. For a effective intercultural communication, both sides shall approach a empathic and sympathizers position regarding the others. On the other side, the team shall also consider the consequences this change involves:

* to repeat, to make an effort,
* to use simple words and expressions,
* to wait longer time for that the foreigner has managed to express the message,
* to anticipate and guess what the foreigner is intending to say,
* to accept that many words will not be understood, etc.

Why to continue to use English as organizational language?

* Because it is easier than accepting a change
* Because it is more profitable for the organization
* Because the foreigners feels that this confer equal condition to all team members
* Because the foreigners don’t want to learn Danish

Again, the impact, which the chosen option will have on the intercultural communication within the organization, depends on the motivation. If the motivation behind is for example the last option: the foreigners do not want to learn the Danish language, then the intercultural communication is affected. As *CMM* theory underlines *(Pearce:1999*), the speech act is important in transmitting and interpreting a message, because communication is not only about words and codes, but about relations and attitudes.

**Bilingual meetings**

Relating to the topic above, I have to add that I have observed that at staff meetings there are used two languages as following, when there are some general aspects, the conversation is in English, and at some points, sometimes in purpose, other times unconscious, the leader or the consultants switch to Danish. This phenomenon has been discussed also during the focus group meeting, and C refer to the fact that it is important not to play with the alternation of languages. The team leader explain his method, saying that he is having first a discussion with the farmer, in Danish, and then the discussion with the team is in English. Here are the pieces of narrative:

C: ***It is very important when holding a meeting, to not just suddenly communicate over the other, saying; now we just shift in Danish, because there is just something that we have remembered.***

B: ***I take it in Danish with the farmers, to explain it properly, and so we change to English.***

C: ***Or you can choose to have this discussion in the end***.

D: ***I do that, it is exactly what we had discussed*.** (min. 21:45-22:23)

It is interesting to me the fact that it C has observed that this language shift is a threat to the intercultural communication and implicit to the relation between the team members. The context of this dispute was referring to the fact that when two or more individuals, which are sharing the same native language, an interesting phenomenon take place, unconsciously the conversation will continue in the native language. According to *Berger and Luckmann*, this is a natural tendency, but it does not mean that it has to be cultivated. The text below is showing that when having two foreigners, which share the native language, the result is the same:

***In that place, where I was yesterday, it is a Ukrainian leader, a Romanian employee, and we have hired a Ukrainian beginner. Since it is the Ukrainian leader, which will teach the Ukrainian beginner, and believe me, I think they will switch to Ukrainian, when they are in the stable. And I had to explain, at he has to be aware, not to keep the Rumanian outside the group.*** (C, min. 24:50)

 The implication this phenomenon usually has in an organizational context is the *Them and* Us unuttered message, through which the other will feel excluded from the group. I have been at many different meetings and activities at farms, and I have also noticed that those foreigners, which cannot understand Danish, had a different face expression when suddenly the discussion was in Danish, not knowing how to react, sometimes joking, saying, *Yes, yes*, as if they have understood what was said. Regarding the intercultural communication, this feeling of rejection will block the communication, in my opinion, because it implies an *I-it* relation, which is characterizing a *monologue* (Bakhtin:1997), in which at least one part is not interested in what the other has to say.

3.3.1.2. A divided team: ineffective communication

How is communication possible to become an opened dialog, when the team is divided in Them and Us? The differences between cultures stimulates the division of the multicultural team. Why would this be a problem for the intercultural communication? Or what is the message when adopting a Them and Us approach?

CMM theory recomand to reflect on different aspects and question when communicating. In relation with the division of the team, I have choose to focus on two of them:

* What context is created for the other?
* What kinds of speech acts?

**What context is created for the other?** (CMM, Pearce:1999)

I have observed that on the lunch and café break, the team automatically divides. Usually it splits in natives and outsiders. There are also other modalities the group can divide, after nationalities, after a shared language: the Russian speakers. I have noticed that the Danes sit on one side of the table, “the others” on the opposite side. They are discussing in their language – if this is possible, and here I refer for example to the only “Ukrainian” between Romanians, or vice versa.

This issue has concerned the consultant team as well. In the focus group discussion, C said:

*I****t is often in the stable, when we are doing something, differences between cultures is not so big and obvious, but when sitting around the café-table, it becomes obvious, because there are two, that speaks Danish, some Ukrainians and some that are “blending” some English[[75]](#footnote-75)*** (C, min.19.40).

The context that is created when the team is divided is not stimulating nor facilitating the communication. In this kind of context are more likely to emerge conflictual situation than a efficient and productive collaboration. To see what makes this tendency to be a threat to communication between cultures, we have to investigate what type of feelings emerge from this phenomenon.

**What kinds of speech acts are created?** (CMM, Pearce:1999)

Actions can be interpreted as message, as communication elements. When for you come into a room, for example, and sit on a place, and suddenly the person next to you is rising and move to another chair, then you would probably interpret his action as a silent message. This type of attitude is what *Buber* calls an I-It philosophy of dialog, or better said a philosophy that is not interested in a dialog, because the other are not seen as important. Then it is essential to ask ourselves about what message is transmitted when some members of the team gather to make a new group excluding the other? What actions are stimulated by this action? *(CMM, Pearce: 1999*) Individuals that do not belong to the group would feel rejected, this would diminish the job performance, and that the self-image may be affected. How will the marginalized individual communicate? He would probably hesitate to express his divergent opinions, and will search for group acceptance. In this respect, the centripetal powers will predominate the communication. Especially in the organization where there is not a high number of employee, to divide for example eight persons in four Danish and four foreigners will be an impediment for the intercultural communication and will block the dialog. Therefore, a Them and Us relation cannot be efficient for the economical results of the organization.

3.3.1.3. Hidden messages – the silent communication

This topic was introduced in subchapter 3.1., when referring to recruitment, but it can applies throughout the entire period of the farmer-foreigner collaboration. The hidden message is also a type of communication, as weird as it may seems. Why is it a communication form, and why would anyone choose to communicate a message using a hidden signal, something that can barely be observed and interpreted? The hidden message is a form of communication because through them an individual intend to signal something to another one and expect that the other will understand and react to the message that he sent. So why would somebody even consider to communicate through some signals that the others might not understand? The language and implicit communication model are taken for granted, and therefore individuals do not consider the other possible meanings that might be attributed to an utterance (*Potter and Whetherell, 1987, p. 27*). The nonverbal actions are also a form of language, therefore the meaning these are supposed to transmit is also taken for granted.

To assess the relevance of this topic, there shall be first presented some concrete examples of what I call *silent communication* usage.

**Behind breaking the rules**:

The first example that I would like to propose to analysis is from a farm with four middle-leaders: three Danish and a foreigner. The consultant was informed that at the staff meeting it would be necessary to talk with the foreigner middle leader, because he had broken the rule. There was an unwritten agreement, that every morning, the polish middle-leader will set the table, while the other four employees had to clear the table. One morning, when the staff came, the table was empty, and because they had to set the table, the daily activity was slowed, and thee team felt offended. On the way to the farm, the consultant told me that on this meeting he has to be reproachful with the foreigner middle leader. When the foreigner was confronted, he said that it did not seemed fair to hem, that only one person was responsible for set the table, while three were needed to clean the table.

So we have an action: *not setting the table*, and a message: *this rule is not fair*. In this case, this was an *unspoken* communication, a *silent communication.* But why did the foreigner not uttered his opinion? Should he not initiate a dialog with his colleagues and team about the *unfair agreement*? Why made him to express his dissatisfaction in such a radical manner? Is it possible that the foreigner is not a communicative person, or that he has a temper? Can it be that this was an extreme signal, which come after he tried to open a dialog without results? How should the leader react to encourage the open dialog and not this kind of rebel action? Is it possible that at the farm predominate a Them and Us relation, which implies Bumber I-It approach, and this is why the dialog is not a usual element in everyday activities? Or can it be that the Them and Us relation is just foreigner’s preposition, which has no real fundament?

As *Voloshinov* (1929) stresses, the utterance, or the communication sequence, can be understood only in a context. While not having details regarding the concrete context of this communication incident, the answers to the previous questions can be considered only with hypothetical. However, this episode is, in my opinion, a communication issue.

**The conflict of taken for granted**

When different culture are in organization, usually individual tend to identify, or to feel more connected with those from the same culture, or from a similar culture. When having a dominant culture, the minority seems to be not normal, strange. Analogues the visible differences, there are differences in what an interviewee calls *different work approach* (Int.6, min. 1.46). The cultural differences are, in my vision, different taken for granted. This contradiction between “what is normal” can be a barrier in intercultural communication. As argued in subchapter 1.6. I am not militating for differences approach of intercultural issue, as for instance *Hofstede’s* theory of cultural dimensions. There cannot be predicted an individual behavior only knowing the national appurtenance *(Philips:2007).* Evenmore, if in the same culture an individual has been in an organization where a classical leadership and communication model was implemented, then when coming to an more relational organization, he will also have a *different work approach* (Int.6, min. 1.46).

**The conflict of taken for granted - *The hard worker case***

In the following case, there will be presented an extreme work approach, which even for a farmer with much experience in collaborating with foreigners was “too much”.

Before an appraisal interview, when discussing with the farmer, I asked him to describe his team members. He began to talk about a Romanian young boy, that was showing a lot of desire for the job, but which would never be able to have a leader position. When I asked him, why he believed so, he came with an example, thatwhen they had to carry together some buckets, if the he had one bucket, and the foreigner two, the foreigner will fill bad and take also the bucket from him, so that he do not have to do anything.

What was behind foreigner’s perceptions action and action? Why would he feel bad if his employee was also working? Can it be that he had internalized this behavior (*Berger and Luckmann:1966*), this organizational hierarchical structure and roles from a previous working place? Can it be that he was trying to transmit a message, to say something?

Based on farmers taken for granted regarding work approach and employees profile, the diagnosis for tis employee was that he would never be able to become a leader, although he was a hard worker. The polyphonic[[76]](#footnote-76) dialog here took place only in the farmer’s mind and the conclusion had the characteristic of a “certainly fact”. But what if “the other” had a different interpretative repertoire (*Potter and Wetherell:1987*), different taken for granted? Could it be that the foreigner wanted to show gratitude for the job, he had? Maybe he believed that he had a “just a hard worker” role, that the job was about “to perform*”*? An important detail that I had find out, when discussing with the other foreign employees, was that the other foreigner employee, which was fighting to obtain a leader’s position, has helped the hard worker to come to this Danish farm. In this case, it is possible that as a gratitude sign, the hard worker would not “dare” to compete with his benefactor for a leader position.

So what was the message and the reassignment behind this work approach? Why did the farmer not opened a dialog about this issue? It may be true that the foreigner did not have the skills or the desire for becoming a leader, but until he is not told about this opportunity, he will maybe not take it into consideration.

What I intended to underline here is that communication includes also the unspoken words, the thoughts that are not articulated in the conversation, and when the participants into dialog have different *interpretation repertoire*”[[77]](#footnote-77).

In the following, I would present two more cases, to illustrate that the lack of communication is characterizing a Them and us approach. It can seem that I am forcing the extension of intercultural topic, and I relate it with too many aspects of organizational context or of leadership strategy. This is obviously not my own assumption, because taking in consideration that the socialization occur through all language aspects, then there is communication behind all socialization forms.

**The conflict of taken for granted - *The Rich Danish mentality***

I would like to bring a concrete example of lack of communication and the conflict between the taken for granted. In this case, both participants are taking for granted a particular image of “the other”, not questioning it and not talking about it.

In an individual interview, a Danes middle-leader created a story to describe “the Ukrainians”. This description was an argument to why they stopped hiring persons from Ukraine.

*They had the mentality that the Danes have a lot of money, and so the Danes have to pay everything. “We do not earn much money; we have to get everything for free!” With this mentality, went they through all the way. So we had them for a year … one and a half year, but we had to try some from Romania.* (Int. 6, min. 22:15)

The middle leader told how after having a party, the foreigners would take the food that was left, and assume that was belonging to them, since they had not so “much money”. He was annoyed by this attitude, because everybody will be happy to get something free. It was hard for him to understand how some individuals can think like that, can consider that is ok to take everything for you. In conclusion, there was no chance to work with this kind of people.

Even though they made a picture about what the other are thinking, they didn’t brought this into discussion. What could be the thoughts behind their actions and conceptions? Did the foreigners took for granted that Danes are not interested in what is left behind? Did somebody tell them that they should not do that? It might be that they were not interested in a dialog, but it might be that the lack of awareness was the reason for this behaviour. Until a dialog is not open, all the possible answers are just suppositions. What are the organizational implication the dialog might have? If through the dialog could occur a fusion of horizons (*Gadamer:1997*), than the dialog could become a part of everyday organizational life, and the collaboration between Danes and foreigner would be efficient. If the dialog was not creating a positive response from the foreigner, then the decision to recruit other employee would be preferred. But if the lack of communication was the problem in that organization, than changing the employee would not improve the situation. Moreover, the staff fluctuation is affecting the financial result of the organization.

**The conflict of taken for granted - *The union case***

The last example I would like to include in this thesis, is an extreme one, in which the misunderstandings, frustration and conflictual environment are included in one story. I have never met the persons involved in this incident, but I was at the consultancy organization right at the climax moment of the story. A foreigner employee has reported the farmer to the union. Many negative aspects, was attributed to the farmer. The serious problem was the precarious condition the employee seem to live in. This story came in the newspaper, damaging farmer’s image, and inclusive to the consultancy company’s name, as farmer’s ambassador. What happened there? What could possible cause such a proportion scandal?

There can not be a unique answer or a single problem that has conduct to this extreme situation. I wander how the communication occurred between farmer and employee.

The farmer’s version of the story was that the employee had destroyed the house on purposed, because he was furious, knowing that he would no longer work at the farm. The decision to fire him was based on the fact that he had many disciplinary issues. The consultants was asking themselves, why the foreigner never said something. Another detail regarding this story came from the Romanian consultant that was the main contact person in the recruitment process. She told me that the foreigner called her, half year before the incident. He asked her to intervene between him and the farmer, because the farmer was screaming often at him. But then she came with another dilemma: how much shall the consultant intervene in the farmer-employee relation?

However, in an organization it is not even necessary to get that far into the tensions and conflict between cultures, because all the aspects regarding misunderstandings, uncertain and frustration are affecting directly and indirectly the organization’s performances.

As a future consultant or HR specialist, I am asking myself:

How to prevent such extreme episode?

Could it be avoid? Was it possible to improve the situation through a better communication?

What has caused it, was has actually happened between the farmer and the foreigner?

It is clear for me that through that action, the foreigner intended to revenge on the farmer. But what could be so stressful to react that way? Why became this relation so deteriorated and conflictual? Where there made some prevention and reconciliation steps?

I am not suggesting that all problematic situations have some general accepted reasoning behind. In other words, there are also some individuals that have experienced an extreme unsuccessful socialization (Berger and Luckmann:1986), as for example individuals with mental illness. But in the context of a majority nonfunctional farmer-foreigner relations, I am wondering if there is not an approach issue.

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), language is *a medium for knowledge*, it is *inseparably involved with process of thinking and reasoning.* This view suggest that individual’s mentalities and reasoning are in connection with language, with communication. Considering this perspective, then communication should be a solution for the relations between individuals.

3.3.2. Ongoing intercultural communication - review

This section will summarize the main ideas that have been presented in the previous subchapter for at facilitate the reading of this thesis.

The main threat to the intercultural communication, after the new employee is integrated, is the “Them and Us” mentality, or how Buber calls it “the I-it relation”. The fact that this approach makes the dialog impossible is the common element in all the sections of this last subchapter.

Starting with concrete cases or narratives referring to the problematics that occur between farmer and foreigner at working place, we had seen if there is a connection with intercultural communication issue. In this respect, the difficulty implied by the use of English, a foreign language for both Danes and foreigner has showed, as expected, that even for those that have good English knowledge it is a challenge to use it, comparing with the native language. Then what about the majority of newcomers, which *can barely catch a little English?* How are they communicating, how do they express themselves and how do they understand what is said? And as this was not complicated enough, a new detail enter the picture, the Danglish phenomenon. Danglish, a similar word to Englishification, refer to the phenomenon which occur when using English, in this case, and using some Danish words as being in English. This makes even harder the intercultural communication, especially for those that are new in the team, because it take times to learn the meanings behind unknown words.

The issue of divided teams is brought into attention, and here I have used CMM’s theory to analyze what message is transmitted through this behavior, what context it creates, so in one words, what are the implication on the intercultural communication.

The hidden message, or the silent communication is a communication mystery, but not an uncommon element of everyday communication. What are the reasons individual use this type of communication?

* To be a complementary form to the verbal messages and physical movement
* Because he do or when and how to formulate the message
* Because he is not sure it is considered normal to express the problem in question

So uncertainty and communication deficientcy are some possible reason for using the silent language. We have seen that behind breaking the rules, working too hard, playing “the poor one”, etc. are some hidden messages.

It is almost impossible, but also exhausting to be in a continuous reflexive process, with the intention of receiving and interpreting the hidden signals, and this is not what I intend to suggest in this thesis. What can maybe help to improve the conditions is to be aware that others do not use the same communication model and that there are some situations in which they are not using words to express their opinion. We have seen that the intercultural communication is affected by the “Them and Us” approach, and even if it may seem a natural tendency, it is a barrier for the communication in the multicultural organizations. For best results on the market, the team shall work together, speak together, and find new solutions in common for both improvements in organization and solutions for a better team collaboration. The differences shall not be ignored, but discussed, understand and created a bridge between the different taken for granted through. This bridge is an open ongoing dialog that has to take every single weird signal, incomprehensible actions or opinions into analysis and discussion.

### 3.4. *Discussion and reflections*

The core assumption for this thesis is that the communication model does not represent a rigid or static phenomenon, but more an ongoing emergent process. Communication is after Potter and Wetherell*[[78]](#footnote-78)* a medium to incorporate new knowledge. So in the intercultural meeting language is an important a dynamic medium to relate and to learn, among others, new communication models.Although the cultural differences cannot be denied, coming with a list of differences, will not transform the intercultural meeting into a simplistic matter. In my opinion, compressing such an intricate issue to a “do and don’t list” when referring to intercultural communication will rather set the actor in a stressful situation, for what if something is missing on that list. Choosing this direction will set the accent on the form and not on “substance”. The postmodern tendency of language analysts is to deepen the mystery of communication, not stopping to the *form*: canonizing and petrifying different communication patterns, but dig into the *substance*: why people communicate the way they do and how the intercultural communication can be improved.

The debate from this thesis can be extrapolated to the native-foreigner relation in organizations from different activity field and from different locations, having some general and basic reflections on the communication between cultures within in organizations.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the current situation of intercultural communication issue in the agriculture industry in North Denmark[[79]](#footnote-79) in order to underline the positive aspects and especially to signal the elements which can be improved.

Considering the specific of Danish agriculture industry to collaborate with Consultancy Companies, the role of the consultant in this intercultural communication game has also been taken into consideration, and so I am referring to them as a “trio” farmer-consultant-foreigner. The communication of this trio relation begin with the recruitment phase, which do not seems controversial or conflictual, but the multitude of problems which emerge in the subsequent phase call its procedure into question.

We haves seen in this thesis that the very first message, which open the farmer-foreigner relation, is the job announcement, because a message takes shape and is transmitted through the job announcement. Therefore, the message’s content and form shall be seen as communication elements. An image of the induced future role of the parts can be shaped already in the beginning from the signals behind the job announcement and from interview form. In this respect, the monolog form (Buber:2010) shall be avoided in the announcement, phone conversation and in the Skype/phone interview. To facilitate a functional future relation a dialog must be opened so that the parts can share meaning and create a message together. If, for example, only candidate’s obligations and skills are discussed, focusing on what he has to offer, and not on his expectations, benefits and rights, inducing a passive role through the domination of dichotomique questions, there shall not be expected that later, when the candidate is in onboarding phase, will be an independent and will show initiative.

But how can dialog be open when both parts tend to speak in monologues; the recruiter tending to *speak to* the candidate (Bakhtin:1997) about the necessary skills, and the candidate not hearing anything else, but seeing a job opportunity and a financial solution? The lack of awareness of the candidate regarding what a job abroad and living abroad implies is concretized in a big scale culture shock, and implicit low job performance. This dilemma has on one side the monolog interview, as a result of foreigner’s lack of wiliness for getting informed self about the life and working conditions from Danish farms, and on the other side the competitive disadvantage of the recruiter, if setting to many tasks to the candidate, which tend to choose the easiest way, as it has been seen so far. But what if these information are presented not as an option, nor as a task, but as an advantage that gives more value to the application. Alternatively, there can be presented openly the reasons that are behind the importance considering this information, and to open a discussion about this issue. If the advantage from reducing the satisfaction rate in the onboarding phase will be considered, then the costs that an extra interview implies will seem almost insignificant.

What will be the future of recruitment procedure, how can this be done more innovative and efficient? A further research shall be done regarding the post-interview perception and to compare with the first week impression, before editing the info material for the candidates, for a better observation of the newcomer phenomenon.

We have seen that when different taken for granted meet at the workplace, communication becomes a challenging issue. An example regarding this statement is the use of a taken for granted *interpretative repertoire* (Potter and Wetherell:1987)*:* if in the relation with a native, a word or an episode will implies a certain feelings and response, the same instinctive reaction will occur in the relation with foreigners. Other consequence, which appear from the conflict of different taken for granted, is the pressure to make a good first impression that is materialized in pretending to understand the task description, and not asking, when these are not understood. The fear to lose the job, and implicit the economic security, is another barrier to the intercultural communication, as observed from the data analysis. So even if the foreigner is not satisfied by some aspects regarding the job, he might not express the dissatisfaction, not to lose the job. The implications of this situation is either that he will quit, when he will have money enough, either that at a maximum pressure moment he will break out expressing in an improper way the inner state, creating a conflictual context, as seen in the union case. As CMM theory suggest (CMM:1999), similar with Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Voloshinov (1929) point of view, the context is determinant in a communication episode understanding. To understand the communication model means to understand how individual is reasoning (Potter and Wetherell:1987)

Furthermore, regarding language usage, it has been observed that the difficulty to express in a foreign language, the low English level and the Danglish phenomenon are obstacle I the intercultural communication both for Danish and especially for foreigners. All these aspects signal even more problematical issue in the intercultural communication. The fact that the farmer and the team is not aware about this language issue makes it even harder to communicate efficient with the other. The nonverbal communication could be used as a significant element in the intercultural dialog, coming to supplement the deficient use of language, but here shall also be considered that the use of nonverbal is not similar in all social groups. This nonverbal language is also internalized according to the social group practice (Berger and Luckmann:1972). Danes are in general not using much mimic and physical movements. So again the different taken for granted, both regarding verbal and nonverbal communication prohibit the intercultural communication.

A common element in all these three phases in the farmer-foreigner collaboration: recruitment, onboarding, ongoing relation, is the “Them and Us” relation. This phenomenon, which becomes more evident after the new employee has adapt at the job, can be observed at the Café break, through seeing the others as the “rich ones”, or through the breakdown of some employee, as seen in the case from the section *Behind breaking the rules* .

On the other side, the “Them and Us” approach is focusing on differences and not on the context or the reasoning behind. This approach will simply stop with the diagnostic that “the others” are strange and eventually that nothing can be done to improve the situation. This natural tendency is not facilitating the dialog. At an organizational level, focusing energy on the parties will reduce employee motivation and collaboration, fact that will represent a decline in organization’s results, and will be a leadership inaccuracy.

Regarding the “Them and Us” approach, it would be interesting to initiate a further research regarding especially foreigners’ opinion about farmer and Danes colleagues. This research shall aim to understand the reasons behind foreigners’ actions and opinions. We can see that interviewee 3 says, “Danes can be like that” (from the case in *p. 96*). It would be interesting to find out what stands behind this perception, and if she is an isolated case.

The conflictual situations, presented in this thesis, are usually connected with cultural differences, but not so much with an improper culture approach and with an inefficient intercultural communication. How can then the communication between individuals from different culture communicate better together? Relating to this question, the following quote underlines that: *Situations of conflict can only be defused or corrected through dialogue, through seeking points in common, through enabling people and communities to talk to each other, through allowing them to share grievances, problems and views, and through encouraging people to see each other as Thou. (*Morgen:2010, referring to Buber’s theory*)*

Seeking the common point mean that there will be both centripetal and centrifugal powers in the dialog (Bakhtin:1997), offering the possibility for different opinions, but maintaining an opened and emphatic attitude to the other. Why to stop with a verdict about the other, saying that: he is “dry”, or not used to think, or never read the info, etc. when uttering the problem, in an emphatic form may be opening a dialog, and maybe emerge in a fusion of horizons (Gadamer:1997), and may be the opportunity for a better relation and collaboration?

I invite you, the reader, to expand the classic understanding of communication to many detailed aspects that include reasoning and feelings, not to look at it, but to see behind it. There are not only words, or tones, or movements, the national and intercultural communication implies, but it is also a circle, formed by the inside network, the externalized aspects, and the extern cycle of relations and elements that are included in communication, in relations, in being. The intercultural research shall not aimed to study the implied parts’ behavior, but to write about individuals philosophical and sociological ontology in the context of environment change, implied by the intercultural phenomenon, which has perturbed theirs taken for granted.

In the context of a growing globalization, the phenomenon of intercultural communication will become an ordinary leadership issue and much evolution is expected regarding it. I look forward to see the future organization model and the future of the intercultural communication. The change shall come from both outside and inside. After all: ***We live the stories we tell of our lives.[[80]](#footnote-80)***

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