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Internal Intercultural Communication and its effect on Employee Engagement

A Case Study of a Danish Company
with a Workforce Comprising Diverse Nationalities



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Master's Thesis

English and International Business Communication

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Abstract

This master's thesis is a qualitative research that studies the relation between employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication. It is a case study that researches how internal intercultural communication affects the employees' engagement at the company Eurowind Energy A/S, which is a Danish company that has a diverse workforce with different nationalities among the employees.

Academic studies have proven that internal communication can be decisive for employee engagement and the enhancement of it within organisational matters. Employee engagement is a field that more and more companies across the globe are becoming aware of, as studies show that employee engagement also can have a positive impact on a company's growth. Moreover, globalisation brings along workforces that comprise of multiple nationalities. And in this connection, recent studies show that intercultural communication competencies are vital for the efficiency in terms of internal communication, when a company has a workforce that comprises multiple nationalities. Therefore, the intercultural communication aspect of a company's internal communication becomes important to recognize and consider, when a company wants to enhance the engagement level among their multinational employees.

In order to carry out the research, three research areas are employed: employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication. These three research areas form a theoretical framework that is used in the analysis of the data collection, which consists of eight interviews conducted with employees from Eurowind Energy. The eight semi-structured qualitative interviews have been subject to the template analysis coding process. The codes form the newly gained knowledge that is analysed by using the theoretical framework.

Two research questions steer the analysis. The first research question stems from the assumption that internal communication affects employees' level of engagement, and it therefore researches which internal communication elements within Eurowind Energy that affect the employees' engagement. The second research question contains a mix of internal communication and intercultural communication, and it seeks to discover what perceptions that the employees at Eurowind Energy have of the internal intercultural communication at their workplace. The results from each of these research questions are considered in the discussion of the thesis.

Finally, the problem statement is answered in the conclusion. The research showed that the three research areas employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication are inevitably interrelated, and of great importance for companies with workforces that comprise different nationalities.

The research concludes that the internal intercultural communication at Eurowind Energy comprises elements that both engage the employees and elements that lowers their level of engagement. It also shows that attitude and support go a long way. And that a language policy is necessary for a company that has a multinational workforce.

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1 Introduction

Across the globe, more and more business leaders and managers are becoming aware of the importance of employee engagement. More businesses and organisations are showing greater interest in the concept, as it is recognized that having emphasis on engaging employees can have a positive effect on businesses' success in the long run. It can even be decisive for a business' effectiveness, growth, innovation and competitiveness (Welch 2011, 328). Through the past years, there have been many proposals to what the exact definition of employee engagement is, but also suggestions to what elements that are most important to focus on, when a business wants to enhance employee engagement. Most researchers who have carried out studies on the subject seem to all reach the same conclusion, which is that internal communication is paramount for cultivation of employee engagement (Welch 2011, 329).

Internal communication has been recognized as an important factor for decades. However, previously the focus has been more on a managerial perspective and not so much on the perspectives of the employees. Most businesses value effective internal communication, but research shows that to some extent they neglect the part that for example gives the employees information about much their efforts counts, and other types of feedback that employees value. This means that employee engagement calls for internal communication that matches the needs of the employees. (Ruck and Welch 2011, 294-295).

Not only are employee engagement and internal communication aspects that seem important for businesses to address. In step with globalisation, more and more businesses also face having workplaces with employees with different nationalities and diverse cultural backgrounds (Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze 2019, 77). This adds another level to internal communication, as intercultural communication is now added to the mix. Studies show that intercultural communication competencies can be important for the efficiency of internal communication when the workplace has employees with different nationalities. Workplaces that have a composition of employees with diverse nationalities require that the employees and the managers have to acquire "[...] a complex set of skills and devices such as the ability to interact, negotiate meanings, share information while demonstrating empathy and integrity for people [...]" (Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze 2019, 78). This means that when having international employees, the internal communication goes to another level and to some degree must be more important than ever before (Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze 2019, 78). The workplaces must also consider the aspect of the intercultural communication which then is naturally placed within internal communication. And since intercultural communication is part of the internal communication, this will also have an effect on employee

engagement. This entails that internal intercultural communication is of great importance in terms of employee engagement.

How businesses with an international workforce handle this challenge with internal intercultural communication being paramount for enhancing employee engagement, which in the end can be decisive for the business' growth, is a very interesting subject to investigate. Therefore, this continuous interacting relation that internal communication, intercultural communication and employee engagement have with each other will be my focus in this research. My focus will be on how internal and intercultural communication can affect employee engagement in a company that has employees with multiple nationalities.

Eurowind Energy – Company presentation

In this investigation, I have chosen to cooperate with the Danish company Eurowind Energy A/S (EWE). At EWE's headquarter in Hobro they have employees who have another national background than Danish, and therefore it is a company that is interesting for me to use as a case in my study. To be exact, EWE has a total of 97 employees – of whom seven are international.

EWE also has branches outside of Denmark, but I will only focus on the branch in Denmark, the headquarter in Hobro, and its employees. EWE is a Danish company that “[...] has evolved into being a leading developer and operator of PV and wind turbine projects.” (Eurowind Energy A/S A 2020). EWE aims to be the leading developer within sustainable energy and invests in and manages wind turbine projects locally and globally. Right now, EWE's main markets for wind turbine investments are Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom, Bulgaria and Southern Europe (Eurowind Energy A/S A 2020). The company was founded in 2006, and over the past couple of years EWE has had a rapid growth, both in terms of expanding to bigger markets, but also in terms of gaining additional employees in its headquarter in Denmark and in its branches outside of Denmark. For example, EWE currently has branches in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Rumania and the UK (Eurowind Energy A/S B 2020). As the headquarter in Denmark has seven employees who origin from another country than Denmark, EWE is a company with a workforce of mixed nationalities.

In consequence of having branches in many different countries and having multiple nationalities in the workforce, Eurowind Energy cannot avoid considering the fact that both internal and intercultural communication must have an effect on the daily work life of their employees.

1.1 Problem Statement

As just mentioned in the introduction, it would be interesting to research how the internal communication and intercultural communication at Eurowind Energy affect the engagement of the employees. As intercultural communication competence is something that is important to take into consideration, it is interesting to research whether or not Eurowind Energy manages to enhance and cultivate employee engagement in terms of internal intercultural communication. In order to do so, the following problem statement will steer this research:

How does internal intercultural communication affect the employees' engagement in a company with employees with different national backgrounds such as Eurowind Energy?

Research questions:

1. What conditions and elements of the internal communication affect the employees' engagement at Eurowind Energy – and how?
2. How do employees at Eurowind Energy perceive the internal intercultural communication at their workplace?

In the problem statement, I use the term 'internal intercultural communication'. When written like this, I refer to the internal communication taking place between employees who have different international backgrounds. Therefore, the internal communication in these instances also contains intercultural communication, and for this reason the communication is both internal and intercultural.

My research focus is on the connection between internal communication, intercultural communication and employee engagement. I want to research how and if internal and intercultural communication affect employees' engagement within a company.

The research questions will be helpful in terms of guiding the analysis in the right direction and for providing an answer to the problem statement. The research questions are numbered, but this is only done to show in which order they will be treated in the analysis. Even though they are numbered, they will still work closely together in answering the problem statement. The first research question looks at the general connection between internal communication and employee engagement, and how this expresses itself within the company. The second research question focus on examining how intercultural communication specifically affects the internal communication and then also employee engagement.

The research questions give away my stance in terms of social science as I use the word “perceive” in the second research question. Such choice of wording means that I am interested in the subjective interpretations of the employees at Eurowind Energy and that I research a phenomenon that is socially constructed within a community. In my case, I examine the interpretations that the employees have together in the community of their workplace. This stance will be elaborated further in section 2 about theory of science.

1.2 Thesis structure

I have now presented the underlying circumstances that makes my investigation interesting and my motivation for digging deeper into these research areas. I have also laid out the problem statement and its appertaining research questions. They will in cooperation be guiding for the research.

First of all, I will express my stance in terms of theory of science. Afterwards, I will review and discuss literature that is concerned with the three research areas within this thesis: employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication. In the end of the literature review, I will provide my theoretical framework based on the knowledge I acquired from doing the literature review. Next, I will present the methodology and chosen methods for the thesis. Then I will analyse the empirical data collection in the shape of interview transcripts using the chosen analysis method template analysis. Finally, I will discuss and conclude based on the findings that the data yields.

2 Theory of science

In this chapter, I will first present the theory of science that I have chosen for this research. Next, my ontological position will be elaborated and explained. Then, I will clarify my epistemological position. Lastly, I will specify how it all applies to my research.

The research that I will carry out in my thesis will be done by undertaking the paradigm within social science research that is called constructivism. Constructivists believe that there is no definite nor clear truth to anything, as the truth within constructivism is subjective and socially constructed. This means that the closest people come to some sort of truth – is the truth they can find within social communities, where people's opinions and interpretations are the same about something (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 36). Consequently, this scientific viewpoint comes from a way of understanding social reality as something that is constructed based on subjective interpretations and meanings. All societal meaningful symbols or objects are therefore human-induced phenomena that can both construct and change social reality. Concurrently, social reality has great influence on how humans construct phenomena. (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 33) (Hatch 2013, 33-34, 36). In my case with Eurowind Energy, the employees constitute the community within the company. The employees can together construct their own truth in terms of the phenomenon intercultural communication – based on their perceptions of the social reality within the company. How they interpret and verbalize the social reality and the phenomenon within the community affects the social reality that they are part of, which once again affects the people within the community.

Naturally, my ontological position is also within the paradigm of constructivism. In theory of science, ontology is “[...] concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality.” (Grix 2002, 177). Within the constructivist ontological position, it is claimed that any social phenomenon and its meaning are continually being constructed by social actors. This means that a social phenomenon is not only being constructed within social interactions, it is also forever changing (Grix 2002, 177). This also applies that within constructivism all phenomena are always socially constructed. Furthermore, the ontology of constructivism is relativistic, meaning that the opinions that people have on truth and what is real can be different – and these opinions are dependent on how people individually view different things in their social reality. This means that phenomena within constructivism are never of objective nature and are found within social constructions (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 36).

In my case, the ontological position expresses itself in the way I investigate the chosen phenomenon for this research. The phenomenon that I am researching is internal communication. To be exact, it is the internal communication within the company Eurowind Energy. This means that the employees and managers within EWE are the social actors who construct the phenomenon of internal communication. It is

within their social relations that the internal communication of EWE is being constructed. Simultaneously, the internal communication will affect the social reality of the social actors inside the company, namely the employees and the managers. Furthermore, it is within the interpretations and shared opinions of the employees within the community of the workforce that the truth about the social reality is and phenomena are constructed. Therefore, it is also relevant for me to obtain the employees subjective opinions on internal communication by interviewing them. More on this on page 37 in the methodology section.

The epistemological position within constructivism says that knowledge is subjective. In social research, epistemology is concerned with "[...] the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality [...]" (Grix 2002, 177). This means that within constructivism, knowledge about the world is found within people's opinions and interpretations. All individuals each have their own opinions on several things and therefore also varied interpretations of the world (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 36-37).

In my case, this means that for me to obtain knowledge about the social world that constructs the phenomenon, internal communication at EWE, I will have to obtain the opinions of the social actors who are taking part in constructing the phenomenon. In this case, the employees at EWE are the social actors who are constructing the phenomenon of internal communication. Therefore, I will have to get my knowledge from the employees at EWE since their subjective opinions construct the social reality of EWE.

In my thesis, I am researching the phenomenon internal communication at Eurowind Energy. My focus is also on intercultural communication and employee engagement, and they are both to be found within internal communication. Therefore, the overall phenomenon that I am researching is internal communication. However, I will be focusing on the interrelatedness between employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication.

As mentioned previously, the employees at Eurowind Energy are the ones who experience and co-create social reality at EWE and the phenomenon internal communication. And it is within the shared subjective opinions of the employees that social reality is being constructed. Therefore, knowledge about the social reality within EWE is best obtained by getting a hold of the employee's subjective perceptions and opinions. Consequently, qualitative interviewing is a good method for me to get knowledge about the social reality by getting information about the employees' perceptions of the internal communication within the company. Interviewing the employees can give me insight into how they view the internal communication, and their statements will perhaps show me what truth they have constructed within the social reality of the company. This means that I am gaining knowledge about the social reality inside of Eurowind Energy by

collecting and investigating the subjective interpretations that the employees have of the phenomenon internal communication.

The research areas that I have chosen for my theoretical framework also go in line with the mind-set of constructivism. Within all three research areas (internal communication, intercultural communication and employee engagement), my experience is that all investigations are based on subjective perceptions and researches done on the relationships between people and accompanying social constructions.

The research questions and results are found within the subjective opinions of the people who participates in the research. The three research areas and my theoretical framework will help me to reveal the relational processes between the employees that affect the social reality and the construction of internal communication.

The methodological position within constructivism is explained in chapter 4 on page 37. This is also where I will elaborate on the methods used in this research.

In the next section, a literature review on the three research areas will be carried out.

3 Literature Review

In this chapter, I will unfold the three research areas that I will employ in this thesis. The three research areas cover *Employee Engagement*, *Internal Communication* and *Intercultural Communication*. The research areas will with each of their theoretical elements help me in my investigation of the internal communication at Eurowind Energy. I have chosen these three research areas as they complement each other and seem to be interdependent. Also, the perspectives that they each provide will be helpful in finding an answer to this thesis' problem statement.

At first, I will present the research area concerning employee engagement, then the research area of internal communication in connection with employee engagement, and lastly, I will present the research area of intercultural communication. They are presented in this order, as the second section with internal communication is functioning as a connecting tie between the two other research areas, namely employee engagement and intercultural communication.

After the presentation of the three research areas, I will in section 3.4 Theoretical Framework (on page 33) sum up the most important elements of each research area and work out an overview of the elements that will be used in the analysis, and how they will work together in the analysis as well.

3.1 Employee Engagement

In this first section of the literature review, I will seek to cover the field of employee engagement and clarify how the term arose and developed subsequently.

3.1.1 Overview of approaches

Nowadays, Employee Engagement has become a buzzword. However, it is a term that is still being researched and many researchers try to classify and understand it. Byrne argues that for a company and its employees to get full advantage of employee engagement, then it needs to be understood clearly in its term. There are many different clarifications of the term and it often creates confusion, as the term can be closely related to other similar terms (Byrne 2015, xv-xvi). I will now, try to define the term and highlight some of the different clarifications of employee engagement.

Mary Welch investigated the concept of employee engagement in her article 'The evolution of the employee engagement concept: communication implications' in 2011. She arranged the development stages of the concept into three 'waves': pre-wave, wave 1, wave 2 and wave 3 (Welch 2011, 329). I will

follow these stages in the next sections of this literature review. Afterwards, I will look at how the concept has been dealt with after Welch's article in 2011 and up until present time.

Pre-wave stage

In the pre-wave stage (before 1990), it was first recognized that there was a general need for employees to be engaged in both their jobs but also in the actual organisations where they work (Welch 2011, 329). In 1966, D. Katz and R. L. Kahn touched upon the concept of employee engagement, as they identified the link between engagement and effectiveness within organizational matters (Welch 2011, 329-332).

Wave 1

Wave 1 (1990-1999) began in the early 1990s and here William A. Kahn played a significant role in the development of the concept of employee engagement. Kahn has later unofficially been appointed to be "[...] an academic parent of the employee engagement movement [...]" (Welch 2011, 332), even though he never uses the actual term employee engagement. Instead, he uses the term 'personal engagement'. However, his term personal engagement is related to organizational and work-life matters just like employee engagement is. Kahn argued that three psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety and availability) are decisive for an employee's ability to fully engage oneself in one's work role performances (Welch 2011, 332). Kahn's theory on personal engagement will be unfolded and explained further and more thoroughly in section 3.1.2 on page 15.

Overall this decade was characterised by many practitioners becoming aware of the term employee engagement after academics have been drawing more and more attention to the term (Welch 2011, 332).

Wave 2

In the second wave (2000-2005), both practitioners and especially academics were very interested in figuring out where to place the definition of employee engagement (Welch 2011, 332). In 2001, Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter wrote an article on the subject job burnout. In this article, they explain the term, and in this connection, they place job engagement to be the opposite of job burnout. They explain it like this: "(...) engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy – the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions" (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter 2001, 416). The three burnout dimensions are: exhaustion, cynicism and ineffectiveness. In their article, they refer to employee engagement by using the term job engagement, and they conceptualize engagement to be "[...] the positive antithesis of burnout [...]" (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter 2001, 417). They also characterize engagement as being "(...) a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor,

dedication, and absorption.” (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter 2001, 417). With vigor they mean that the employee is energetic and highly interested in putting effort into one’s job, but also capable of resistance in difficult times. Dedication points to an employee feeling enthusiasm and being strongly involved in one’s work, and almost feeling pride in performing one’s tasks. Lastly, absorption refers to a pleasing state where the employee is totally preoccupied and engrossed in one’s job tasks and almost not able to untie oneself from the task (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter 2001, 417).

In 2004, Schaufeli and Bakker followed in the same path as Schaufeli did in 2001 with Maslach and Leiter. Schaufeli and Bakker verbalize that for a long period of time there has been a focus on what is negative in connection with one’s job, and how that negative focus could be changed by looking at the positive side of things instead. Also, they note that engagement was initially invented as a positive angle to the negative. In their study, they research the differences and similarities of job burnout and job engagement. They conclude that one needs to employ different measures in order to reduce job burnout as opposed to the measures that one needs to employ in order to enhance engagement. This means that the two terms of the different states of minds cannot be seen only as each other’s opposites. There is more to it than that (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004, 293-295 + 308-309). Schaufeli and Bakker call it job engagement and they think that it should be seen in the context of organizational behavior (Welch 2011, 333). They define job engagement as “[...] a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004, 295). The three dimensions that were just explained in the previous section.

In 2004, May et. al. tested Kahn’s theory from 1990 and supported his view that psychological conditions have an effect on employee engagement (Welch 2011, 333). They also found out that the condition meaningfulness was the one to affect a person’s engagement the most. The condition of safety was also really important. And within safety, all determinants were of great influence and among these the determinant supervisor relations had the strongest effects on employees’ level of engagement. The condition of availability ranked the lowest in importance (May, Gilson and Harter 2004, 30). May et. al. argue that engagement has to do with how individuals employ themselves in the performances of their jobs. They describe it like this: “[...] engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job involvement in that individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs.”

In 2004, Hewitt Associates highlights engagement as being an important role in every company’s success. They point to the necessity of putting effort and resources into improving employee’s engagement levels at workplaces (Welch 2011, 333). Hewitt Associates defined engagement this way: “the state in which individuals are emotionally and intellectually committed to the organization or group, as measured by

three primary behaviours: Say [...] stay [...] strive" (Welch 2011, 332-333). According to Hewitt Associates, Say, stay and strive were behaviors in which one could measure whether or not an employee was emotionally and intellectually committed to the workplace. Say refers to the way the employee speaks of the company to coworkers and customers. Stay points to the employee being determined to stay with the company no matter what other offers that person may get. Strive refers to the employee putting extra effort into one's job and being an active part of successes (Welch 2011, 330).

Overall, Wave 2 was a time of trying to place and define employee engagement. First, Schaufeli, Maslach and Leiter argued that employee engagement was the positive opposite of job burnout. Then a couple of years later Schaufeli and Bakker realized that employee engagement is not just the positive opposite of job burnouts. The two terms have each their own measures in order to be reduced and enhanced. Schaufeli and Bakker also present the term job engagement. May et. al. test Kahn's theory from 1990 and brand it as highly relevant. Lastly, Hewitt Associates develop three elements to measure engagement, namely Say, stay and strive.

Wave 3

In Wave 3 of the evolution of the term engagement, the academic interest on the subject is massive and the first handbooks about employee engagement are published. In 2006, Saks writes an article where he questions the fact that there is still no truly consistent definition of employee engagement. He looks at previous terms, and he sees two general tendencies (Welch 2011, 333). First, Saks puts together Kahn's theory with the study that May et. al did in 2004 (earlier mentioned in wave 2). May et. al. are the only researchers that have tested Kahn's theory, and they found out that Kahn was right about meaningfulness, safety and availability being conditions that are significantly related to a person's level of engagement. Therefore, these three elements could be part of the definition of employee engagement. The other tendency Saks mentions in terms of defining engagement is the literature on burnout that categorize job engagement as being the positive opposite to burnouts (Saks 2006, 602). By looking at these two tendencies on job engagement and organizational engagement in accordance with employee engagement, he realized that personal psychological factors are decisive for all of these terms (Saks 2006, 615-616). With this article, Saks placed the term engagement as a concept that was not just a buzzword. It was a scientific concept (Welch 2011, 334).

Then in 2010, Bakker and Schaufeli wrote another article. Now, they are calling it *Work engagement*. This means that their focus has shifted from looking at job engagement, as they did in wave 2, to being more concentrated on motivation and how motivation connects with engagement and what the profit is for the

company. They present work engagement as being seen as “[...] “emotional involvement” and as “the state of being in gear” (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010, 11).

This means that in wave three, Saks sums up what has been highlighted in wave 2 and concludes that all terms concentrated on engagement in organizational and work-related contexts have personal psychological factors as decisive elements.

After going through these waves, just like Welch did, I consider it relevant to contribute with Welch’s definition of employee engagement: “[...] employee engagement can be understood as cognitive, emotional and physical role performance characterised by absorption, dedication and vigor and dependent upon the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability.” (Welch 2011, 335). Her definition sums up what Saks also summed up, namely that personal psychological conditions are the pivotal point in employee engagement.

From 2011 up until present time

Now, I have considered and highlighted some of the main views of the concept of employee engagement. But since these sources have been written in 2011 and beforehand, I will also present some of the present approaches in the following.

In 2015, Zinta S. Byrne wrote the book “Understanding Employee Engagement – theory, research and practice”. Byrne goes through similar waves of the conceptualization as Welch did, and finally gives a suggestion on a definition: “Employee engagement refers to a state of motivation, wherein one is psychologically present (i.e. in the moment) and psychophysically aroused, is focused on and aligned with the goals of the job and organization, and channels his or her emotional and cognitive self to transform work into meaningful and purposeful accomplishment.” (Byrne 2015, 23). Additionally, Byrne says that employee engagement seems to be quite similar within different organisations, but the ways it comes across and how it is attempted enhanced are different. Byrne also notes that employee engagement is nothing that one can see. However, it shows in people’s emotional expressions, their behavior and how they verbalize their work (Byrne 2015, 23).

In 2019, Hongmei Shen & Hua Jiang did a study on employee engagement while focusing on internal organizational structures. They believe that employees, who engage in their workplace through work role performances, respond to interactions that are initiated by their employing organizations. And by interactions they mean the organizations’ internal communication and efforts to nurture relationships. They accentuate that the way the organization deals with internal communication and nurturing of relationships is decisive for the employees’ engagement and work role performances. If for example the

internal communication fails to meet the expectations of the employees, then the employees might withdraw themselves and disengage in their work performances (Shen and Jiang 2019, 34-35).

Shen and Jiang agree with Kahn and Saks and emphasize that they define “[...] employee engagement as the enactment and presentation of employees’ selves at work [...]” (Shen and Jiang 2019, 34). They believe that this comes to show in employees’ expressions and thereby in “[...] physical, cognitive, and emotional forms.” (Shen and Jiang 2019, 34). Additionally, Shen and Jiang emphasize that the process of enhancing employee engagement is something that the employees and the organization are equally responsible for. Both sides must be active in the process. A positive outcome could possibly create organizational success and contribute to better individual employee wellbeing and a better workplace environment (Shen and Jiang 2019, 46).

Recapitulation

I have now looked through all stages of the development of employee engagement. It seems that ever since Kahn did his study on personal engagement in 1990, this has been the most central and recurring theory on employee engagement. Many of the other academics also refer to Kahn’s concept and the determinants and conditions that he lines up. Some use Kahn’s theory as a starting point and try to reinterpret it, and others have tested the validity of his theory. They all come back with the same result, which is that his theory remains valid. Kahn even tried himself, in 2010, after 30 years of working with this research area, to reinterpret his theory from 1990. But he ends up reiterating his three determinants of engagement (meaningfulness, safety and availability) (Welch 2011, 334). Because of this, I have chosen to employ Kahn’s theory of personal engagement from 1990 in this thesis. It will be explained more thoroughly in the following section.

3.1.2 William Kahn – Personal Engagement

In this section I will present William Kahn’s theory on personal engagement. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, William Kahn never uses the term employee engagement. Instead he refers to personal engagement. However, when he uses his term personal engagement, it is always in a context with work-life matters and job performances. His theory is therefore truly evident when speaking of employee engagement.

I will present all elements of the theory, but I only go into detail with the parts that are most relevant for the analysis. This distinction and selection will be presented on page 17.

In 1990, Kahn made a study in which he wanted to investigate how people use their selves in varying degrees in their work-life. Kahn was very occupied with the idea that every person has their own work roles which they undertake at their workplace. When talking about how much people employ their selves in their work performances, he uses the terms engagement and disengagement (Welch 2011, 332) (Kahn 1990, 692). Kahn was very occupied with those moments where people either “[...] bring themselves into or remove themselves from particular task behaviors.” (Kahn 1990, 692). He had a presumption that all people continuously either bring their selves into play or leave out their selves – and this also at different degrees and depths of their selves. This means that people from time to time either express their selves or try to defend their selves in momentary actions. Kahn was inspired by Goffman and the theatrical metaphor that Goffman employs. Goffman claims that people in role performances momentarily act out either attachments or detachments. This inspired Kahn to develop the terms engagement and disengagement (Kahn 1990, 692-694).

Furthermore, Kahn wanted to illustrate and accentuate “[...] how psychological experiences of work and work contexts shape the process of people presenting and absenting their selves during task performances.” (Kahn 1990, 694). In order to navigate between these two states of self-roles where the self either is absent or present, he developed two terms, namely ‘personal engagement’ and ‘personal disengagement’. *Personal engagement* is defined as situations where people bring their selves into play in their work roles. This way, their selves become part of their work roles. During their work role performances, when they are personally engaged, they express themselves both physically, cognitively and emotionally. On the other hand, in situations where people show *personal disengagement*, they disconnect their selves from their work roles. This means that people during work role performances will withdraw and protect themselves both physically, cognitively and emotionally (Kahn 1990, 694).

In his research, he wanted to find the conditions that influence people and their level of personal engagement in their work life and their work roles. He found these three key conditions: *Meaningfulness*, *Safety* and *Availability* (Kahn 1990, 695+703). Kahn saw in his study that it is within situations where these three conditions are present that people are more likely to engage themselves fully with their own self in their work role (Kahn 1990, 703):

“People vary their personal engagements according to their perceptions of the benefits, or the meaningfulness, and the guarantees, or the safety, they perceive in situations. Engagement also varies according to the resources they perceive themselves to have – their availability.” (Kahn 1990, 703)

This means that these three conditions are decisive for a person's ability to be personally engaged in their work role performance. Looking at the experiences that the participants of Kahn's study had encountered, he found out that all experiences were generally connected to work elements that either gave the person the motivation to engage or deprived the person from engaging. The three conditions can additionally be explained this way:

Meaningfulness is related to work elements that either give the person the will to engage or somehow deprives the person the will to engage. Safety is connected to elements within social systems, such as management styles, staff and organizational norms. These systems can create more consistency or less consistency and can be more or less predictable and threatening. Availability is associated with a person's individual distractions that can keep one from engaging fully in one's work role performances (Kahn 1990, 703) (Welch 2011, 328).

To get a general idea of the connections between the psychological key conditions and the appertaining elements that are decisive for a person's personal level of engagement at work, I created a model. The model is made with inspiration from the model that Kahn made in 1990, when he created the theory on personal engagement, and with inspiration from the model he created in 1992, when he went into further detail about psychological presence. My version is a fusion of the two models; however, it has its main characteristics from the 1990 model.

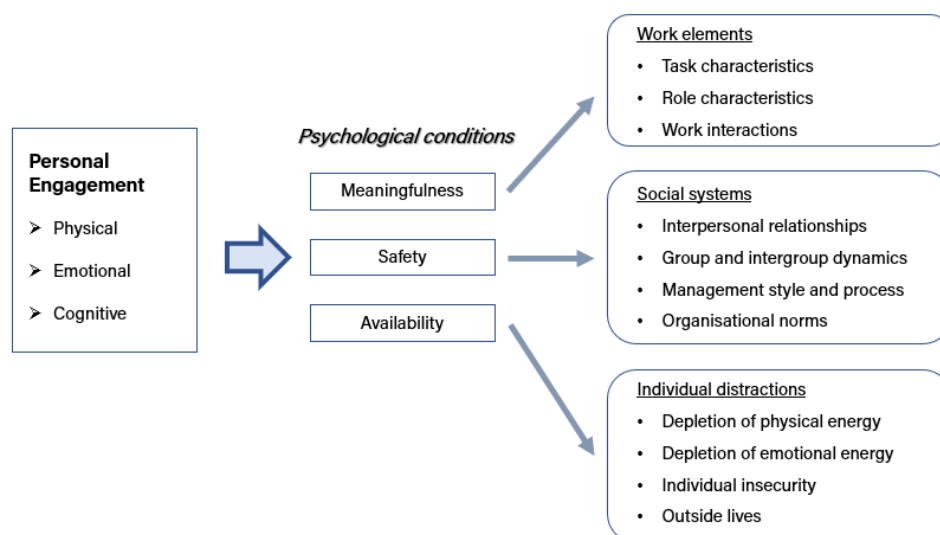


Fig. 1 – My version of Kahn's Personal Engagement theory model, with the psychological conditions and their appertaining elements

This model shows all the elements that Kahn presents in his theory on personal engagement. In my analysis, I have chosen to only use seven out of the eleven appertaining elements. The four elements that I will not be using are: *task characteristics*, *depletion of physical energy*, *depletion of emotional energy* and *outside lives*. The other seven elements that I will be using in my research have been chosen as I find them to be the ones that are most likely to influence employee engagement in terms of internal communication. I am aware that all elements in Kahn's theory somehow can influence internal communication and vice versa, but the chosen elements can either easily affect or easily be affected by internal communication.

Now, I will present the three conditions and their appertaining elements. I will give primacy to those chosen most relevant to my research. The four deselected elements that are deselected will be described but not as thoroughly as the others, and the deselection is mentioned in brackets.

Meaningfulness

In his study, Kahn found out that what matters the most for people psychologically in terms of meaningfulness, is the feeling of being seen and heard in a way where one feels that one is making a difference, and that one gets a feeling of recognition of one's work role performances. It is the feeling of getting something positive back when putting one's self and engagement into one's work performance. Also, if others have little expectations of the person, the person will feel less meaningfulness.

Kahn found out that within the condition meaningfulness, there was a pattern of three factors that seemed to be decisive, namely: *task characteristics*, *role characteristics* and *work interactions* (Kahn 1990, 703-704).

Task characteristics (deselected factor)

When a person is given a task that demands both a certain level of routine and offers something new and exciting as well, then the person feels the greatest level of meaningfulness (Kahn 1990, 704-706).

Role characteristics

Kahn noticed two parts of work roles that can influence a person's feeling of meaningfulness. At first, there can be roles in a firm that one is expected to undertake. Secondly, different roles have different levels of status and influence. Having a feeling of shaping something externally was something that created meaningfulness among the participants of the study.

Work interactions

When work task performances involve having interpersonal interactions with either colleagues or clients

that feel rewarding, people can get a feeling of self-appreciation and of being valued by others when the interactions feel meaningful to the person of course. Meaningful interactions contain both professional and personal elements – and a looseness about where the boundaries go between the two. Often people will develop emotional bonds with colleagues with whom they connect interpersonally. A person's feeling of self-esteem and dignity depends a lot on the relationships and the roles at work, as meaningful interactions allow people to feel valued. If there is lack of respect and no mutual understandings, the relation can make the person feel like he or she is not being valued. In relations and interactions like these, one will automatically be less invested emotionally and most likely also be less engaged in work role performances (Kahn 1990, 707-708).

Safety

Kahn found out that people are more likely to feel psychological safety in trustworthy situations that are “[...] predictable, consistent, clear and nonthreatening;” (Kahn 1990, 708). The feeling of safety gives the person a sense of being able to show and employ one's self without having to worry about how it could affect one's status, career or self-image. On the other hand, in situations where safety is missing or lacking, one will not dare to engage personally nor take risks with self-expressions. So, whenever situations are unpredictable, inconsistent and therefore somewhat threatening, one will hold back (Kahn 1990, 708).

Within the condition of Safety, four factors are evident: *interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process and organisational norms*.

Interpersonal relationships

People feel safe in relations with openness and support. It is a tendency, that hierarchy has an influence on the feeling of safety. People from the same level of the hierarchy trust each other more than they trust people from other levels. In situations where one gets uncomfortable, one will back out on a personal level quicker (Kahn 1990, 708-709).

Group and intergroup dynamics

People will automatically and somewhat unconsciously adapt to a group and undertake different roles or characters within the group, in order to feel safe and accepted in the group. The group dynamic and the assigned unconscious roles within the group have a great influence on each person's ability and will to engage personally in their work role performances, as the level of safety that they are feeling in the group inevitably will be different. Some roles receive more respect and have more authority than other roles. Therefore, the roles within a group have different levels of status, power and safety. Sometimes group

members become aware that they play a supporting role within the group dynamic and as a consequence of this, they have less influence and may be less respected in the group, which maybe reduces the safety and the opportunity for some members to engage fully (Kahn 1990, 709-710).

Management style and process

With a management that is supportive, clarifying and resilient, employees feel more psychologically safe. Supportive managerial environments function somehow like supportive interpersonal relationships and gives the person safety enough to dare to speak up and perform. On the contrary, managements that are unpredictable, critical and inconsistent can create nervousness, fear of failing and a feeling of insecurity. Also, the tone of the management can affect the level of feeling safe (Kahn 1990, 711-712)

Organisational norms.

Norms at one's workplace can be decisive for how much of one's self that one will employ in work role performances. Norms can be official rules at the workplace, but it can also be unwritten norms and rules. In many places, routines will somehow produce norms within in a workplace. People with low status within the groups and hierarchy can be afraid to deviate from organisational norms, as they are already low on safety (Kahn 1990, 713).

Availability

Psychological availability concerns one's readiness to engage without being distracted. Whether the person has the emotional, physical and psychological resources to be available and engage personally.

These four types of distractions can influence psychological availability: *depletion of physical energy*, *depletion of emotional energy*, *individual insecurity* and *outside lives*. (Kahn 1990, 714).

Depletion of physical energy (deselected factor)

Whenever a person is physically low on energy then a person is less engaged, and a person full of energy has a better premise for engaging.

Depletion of emotional energy (deselected factor)

When personal engagement is called for in tasks where one uses emotions, then this can be very draining in the long run.

Individual insecurity

A person can feel so insecure that it prevents one from engaging personally in work performances. One can feel insecure about one's work and one's status. People need to feel secure to fully dare and feel comfortable enough to engage with their selves in social systems (Kahn 1990, 715-716).

Outside lives (deselected factor)

Situations and events occurring in people's outside lives have a risk of bringing them psychologically away from their work performances, and therefore they cannot fully engage (Kahn 1990, 716-717).

For further research, Kahn suggests to look further into how different combinations of the different conditions and the appertaining elements can promote personal engagement in specific situations, how the appearance of some conditions may compensate for a possible weakness in another condition, and to explain differences across individuals. People will for an example react differently to Safety and have different meanings of what feeling safe is to them. Also, the level of courage will be different for each individual and is a decisive characteristic to have in terms of daring to show one's personal self in work performances.

Employee engagement can be strengthened and challenged by many different factors, and one of them is internal corporate communication (Welch 2011, 335). The next section in the literature review will therefore dive into the connection between internal communication and employee engagement.

3.2 Internal Communication

In this section, I will look at internal communication. However, I will not investigate the entire field of internal communication. I will focus on the part that sees a connection between internal communication and employee engagement. This section of the literature review will therefore focus on this connection and what types of linking different academics see.

3.2.1 Internal Communication and Employee Engagement

In 2011, when Mary Welch wrote her article about how employee engagement and internal communication affect each other, there was no corporate communication literature on this connection. She believes that it might have been because of the confusion of the concept and definition of employee engagement (Welch 2011, 328).

Welch discusses the connection between internal communication and employee engagement. In her article, after going through the evolution of the term employee engagement, she highlights that “[...] engagement is dynamic and subject to fluctuation” (Welch 2011, 335). She therefore also argues that this means that engagement can be affected by interventions from the management in terms of internal communication (Welch 2011, 335). Welch implies that communicators should consider the positive effects that internal communication can have on the engagement of the employees. She thereby also wants to encourage communicators to take into account that employees have communication needs (Welch 2011, 328).

Welch makes it clear that “[...] internal communication represents one of the organisational conditions that facilitate engagement.” (Welch 2011, 336). And that the leadership teams’ communicational competences are crucial for cultivation of engagement. In line with this, she emphasizes that internal communication is highly important when wanting to employ employee engagement to enhance job performances. Also, studies, that Welch refers to in her own study, show that employees have a need for clear internal communication for them to feel sure and secure about their place and role within the organisation. Simultaneously, studies also show that poor internal communication will function as a direct barrier to engagement and can cause disengagement. Therefore, it is necessary to have a well-designed internal communication strategy in order to enhance and cultivate employee engagement. Also, the communication coming from the senior management needs to be open and effective (Welch 2011, 338).

In 2012, Welch writes another article on the connection between internal communication and employee engagement. This time around, she focusses on employee’s perceptions of what is appropriate internal communication and which channels that are desirable when employee engagement is enthroned (Welch 2012, 246). Once again, she emphasizes the great importance that internal communication has for employee engagement. The focus in this article is however on which media that is most appropriate to employ for internal communication within a workplace. As this subject is besides my focus in this thesis investigation, I will only just bring out that Welch within this research concluded that face-to-face communication and email messaging were the most favorable ways (Welch 2012, 248).

Welch carried out another investigation in 2012 where she teamed up with Kevin Ruck. They studied the importance of internal communication seen from the perspective of both the management and the employees. When internal communication has been addressed and investigated, it has been from a managerial perspective and not from the perspective of the employees. Ruck and Welch highlight a need for researching what preferences employees have in terms of internal communication in order to ensure that the communication meets the needs of the employees (Ruck and Welch 2012, 294). Welch and Ruck

propose a conceptual model of the elements within internal communication that are decisive for employee engagement. This model and the theory behind it will be unfolded in section 3.2.2 on page 26.

In 2013, Mehta and Mehta wrote a literature review on employee engagement. In this, they highlight many different aspects to consider when wanting to enhance employee engagement. They highlight employee communication as one of the most important aspects. And in this connection, they emphasize the importance of trust and integrity and that “[...] managers should communicate well and go by their words.” (Mehta and Mehta 2013, 209).

Mehta and Mehta argue that it is important that communication in a workplace also has a humorous and relaxed side to it, as this can give the employees a feeling of being in a relaxed atmosphere where they should not be scared to speak up (Mehta and Mehta 2013, 213). The feeling of having a voice gives the employee a greater sense of meaningfulness in one’s job. The feeling of being heard, valued and appreciated is an important factor for employees to having a sense of meaning at work (Mehta and Mehta 2013, 211).

In 2015, Karanges, Johnston, Beatson and Lings did a study on the connection between internal communication and employee engagement. A lot of academics had already verbalized this, but nobody had ever carried out a study to either support or dismiss this hypothesis before Karanges et al. did it in 2014 (Karanges et. al. 2015, 129). They had two research questions:

Research question 1: “Does internal organizational communication have a direct positive effect on employee engagement?” (Karanges et. al. 2015, 129).

Research question 2: “Does internal supervisor communication have a positive effect on employee engagement?” (Karanges et. al. 2015, 130).

Karanges et. al. found that they could support and confirm the fact that internal organisational communication and supervisor communication support are profitable for relationships at work and gives both worth and meaning to the employees. It also plays a remarkable role in the enhancement and maintenance of employee engagement at the workplace (Karanges et. al. 2015, 129).

Just like Mehta and Mehta did in 2013, Karanges et al. emphasizes the importance of including employees in the internal communication. It is important to create a culture within the organisation where one feels comfortable contributing to the communication and verbalizing one’s ideas and point of views (Karanges et. al. 2015, 130).

In 2017, Verčič and Vokić studied the connection between employee engagement and internal communication satisfaction as they list internal communication satisfaction to be one of the key drivers of employee engagement (Verčič and Vokić 2017, 885). Within internal communication satisfaction, Verčič and Vokić found out that there are three dimensions that are highly relevant and critical elements for enhancement of employee engagement. The three elements are: “[...] feedback, informal communication, and communication during meetings [...]” (Verčič and Vokić 2017, 891). Therefore, Verčič and Vokić emphasizes the importance of internal communication as it is very valuable in terms of engaging employees. However, they note that the communication strategies must be adjusted to fit the employees and that the managers must be engaged and ready to be invested in the process (Verčič and Vokić 2017, 891).

Recapitulation

To sum it all up, Welch argues that internal communication can have a positive effect on employee engagement, that communicators must have the employees’ communication needs in mind and that the communication competences of the leadership teams are crucial for cultivation of engagement (Welch 2011, 328). In 2012, Welch and Ruck call for the need to look more at the perspective of the employees – and their needs in terms of internal communication, and not only at a managerial perspective (Ruck and Welch 2012, 294). In 2013, Mehta and Mehta highlights employee communication as one of the most important aspects for enhancing employee engagement. They emphasize the importance of employees being in a culture where they feel comfortable enough to have a voice (Mehta and Mehta 2013, 209). In 2015, Karanges et. al. tested the hypothesis about the connection between internal communication and employee engagement. They found out that internal communication and supervisor communication support give employees worth and meaning, create workplace relationships and that employees should be included in the communication (Karanges et. al. 2015, 129-130). Finally, in 2017, Verčič and Vokić saw a strong connection between employee engagement and internal communication satisfaction. They found three crucial elements for internal communication in terms of the importance in relation to employee engagement, namely feedback, informal communication and communication during meetings. They argue that internal communication strategies must focus on employee needs (Verčič and Vokić 2017, 891).

It seems that there is a through-going pattern in the presented perspectives in this literature review. They all focus on employee communication and the importance of taking the employees’ perspectives and needs into account when completing the internal communication within the organisation, and especially when having employee engagement as a focus. Some of the articles also emphasize the importance of employee voice and management. Since Welch and Ruck focus on all these perspectives in their article from 2012 and

have made a conceptual model that shows the elements within internal communication that are decisive for employee engagement, I will use their theory and model for my investigation. It is presented and unfolded in the following section.

Furthermore, Welch indirectly employs many of the fundamental elements that Kahn also uses in his theory on engagement from 1990. This is another reason why I find Welch's research highly relevant to employ.

3.2.2 Mary Welch and Kevin Ruck – Internal Communication and Employee Engagement

In this section, I will unfold the model and theory made by Welch and Ruck. As mentioned in the previous section, Welch and Ruck emphasize the importance of focusing on employee communication needs within internal communication, and not just managerial needs.

Welch and Ruck reviewed the concept of employee communication needs and found out that the opinions of the employees in terms of what internal communication should contain have not been taken into account. Most companies are good at communicating internally in terms of giving information to their employees about organizational matters. But a lot of companies lack in the area of communicating internally to their employees about employees' individual job performances. Earlier research shows that employees first and foremost want to hear about personal job-related matters and how organizational decisions affect them, and then secondly about information about the company. Employees also want to be informed about what is going on in the company and would like to be consulted in terms of decision-making. Furthermore, employees would like to be informed about how their efforts count. They want feedback on their job performances and to feel recognized for what they do (Ruck and Welch 2012, 295).

Welch and Ruck discovered that organisational identification is important in terms of the psychological state of the employees (Ruck and Welch 2012, 295). Employees who do not feel organisational identification can experience stress, burnouts and withdrawal. Ruck and Welch therefore list the three most important factors for employee engagement as: "(1) having opportunities to feed your views upwards, (2) feeling well informed about what is happening in the organisation, and (3) thinking that your manager is committed to your organisation." (Ruck and Welch 2012, 296). Employees want to commit to the organisation and feel a sense of belonging to it. But for this to happen, employees must be informed about what is going on and to be taken in on advice. Support is therefore important as there is a growing tendency of employees wanting to feel a greater sense of purpose and meaning within their working lives (Ruck and Welch 2012, 296).

After going through 12 assessment studies and the concept of employee communication needs, Ruck and Welch proposed this model:

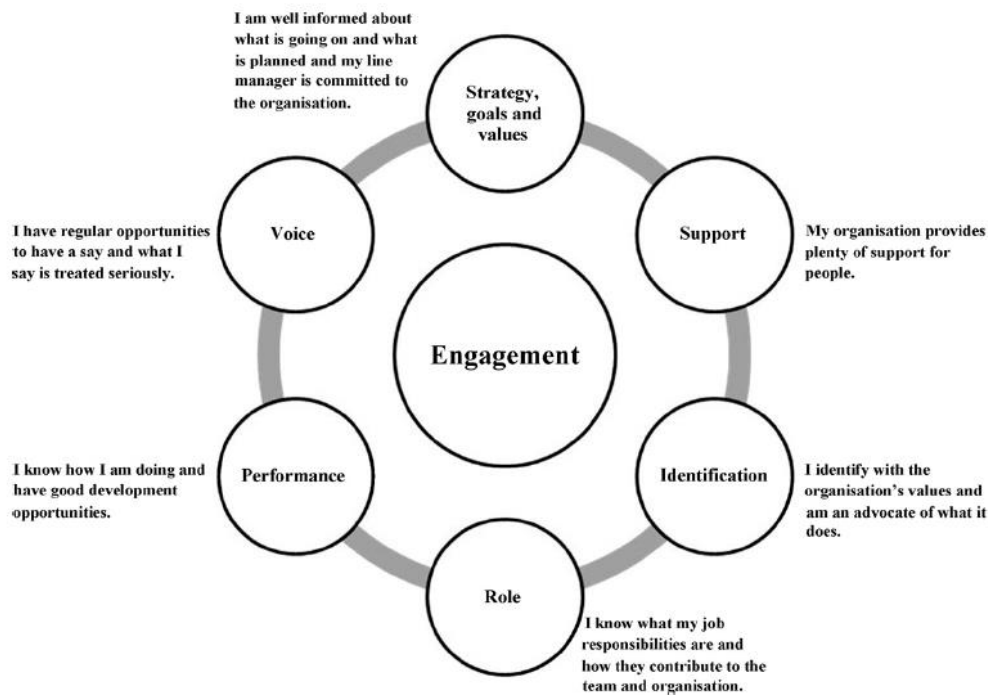


Fig. 2 – "Conceptual model of employee questions to be addressed through line manager and corporate communication."

(Ruck and Welch 2012, 300)

The model shows six subjects that are important to address within internal communication when employee communication needs must be a greater part of the internal communication strategy: *Strategy, goals and values, Support, Identification, Role, Performance* and *Voice*. The model "(...) conceptualises engagement as an outcome of internal communication and specifies employee voice and identification as critical components for engagement." (Ruck and Welch 2012, 301). Also, the dimension *Support* is a crucial factor and it is linked up with the dimensions *Voice* and *Identification*. All six dimensions play a role in terms of enhancing employee engagement, but Welch and Ruck list these three as the most important and substantial drivers of engagement: *Voice, Identification* and *Support* (Ruck and Welch 2012, 301).

Now, the connection between employee engagement and internal communication is thoroughly outlined. However, as this thesis not only investigates employee engagement and the important role that internal

communication plays in this connection, but also examines these terms in connection with intercultural communication, then the next section will concern this matter. Companies that have employees with different cultural backgrounds and different nationalities will naturally have to take intercultural communication into consideration as this inevitably must affect and must be affected by internal communication. And then perhaps it will also affect and be affected by employee engagement as well. Therefore, the next section in this literature review will focus on intercultural communication.

3.3 Intercultural Communication

In this last section of the literature review, I will explore the research area of Intercultural Communication. As my focus in this thesis is on internal communication, I will concentrate on elements that have a connection to internal communication. Since my thesis focuses on a company that has employees with different national backgrounds, the intercultural dimension of communication is important to incorporate and consider

3.3.1 Overview of approaches

Intercultural communication is another research area with many different meanings about what dimensions that are the most important. I will try to create an overview of some of these opinions in order to clarify what intercultural communication comprehends.

First of all, I want to present the definition of intercultural communication as: “[...] the interaction that occurs when people from two or more cultural groups come together.” (Ng and Lillevik 2017, 598). According to Ng and Lillevik, intercultural communication is important for companies or organisations that are dependent on trading or somehow cooperating with other countries and nationalities. Also, intercultural communication is important if the company manages a multicultural workforce. Another part that can be important in terms of having a multicultural workforce, is intercultural competence (Ng and Lillevik, 597).

Some confusion may arise in terms of understanding the difference between intercultural communication and intercultural communication competence (sometimes also written as intercultural communicative competence), and how and if these two are interrelated.

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) refers to a person’s ability to behave and communicate competently and effectively in a setting where intercultural communication is needed. The difficult part of

this is how to figure out what really is the most competent and most effective communication and behaviour in the exact communication situation. It is difficult to measure, and different people might also have different standards and expectations. Michael B. Hinner did a study in 2014 that involved looking at ICC in business relations, and after the study, he argues that it must be up to a third party to estimate the level of competence within a communication situation that has intercultural communication in it (Hinner 2014, 293). This opinion and research support my thesis, as this describes what I am doing with my interviews in my research. Only, I am not supervising a conversation between two or more people. Instead, I am doing interviews where I ask the participants detailed questions about communicative situations where intercultural communication has been present. One might wonder, why I am not investigating intercultural communication competence instead of intercultural communication. And there is a good reason for this. My focus in this thesis is on communication, internal communication to be exact, and the ICC perspective seems to be a broader field to cover. Hinner refers to Guo-Ming Chen who arranges the difference between the two like this:

Intercultural communicative competence has four dimensions:

“[...] (a) personality attributes,
(b) communication skills,
(c) psychological adaption, and
(d) cultural awareness.” (Hinner 2014, 298).

This shows that there are four great dimensions that can be decisive for the outcome of a communication situation where intercultural communication is present. As I already mentioned, my focus in the thesis is on internal communication, and therefore I will only focus on this dimension: (b) communication skills. I will now direct my focus to intercultural communication and try to figure out what is important within this area. However, since intercultural communication skills are a part of the overall term intercultural communicative competence, then this term will be mentioned as well, as these two terms are interrelated.

According to Michael Byram, intercultural communication always has to be considered in terms of what context it takes place in. One should also remember that non-verbal communication is forever present in all communicational situations (Byram 1997, 31). When two people with different nationalities meet, they each have their own assumptions, knowledge and attitudes about both their own and the other person's country, nationality and identity (Byram 1997, 32). The perceptions that each of the participants has of the social identities of each other will be determining for the interaction. Also, people that come from the same country and have the same nationality will naturally have a another understanding of each other and will

thereby potentially also have another interaction with each other than people coming from different countries and cultures will. The level of success within an interaction can be measured in terms of how effective the communication between the two has been. And this is furthermore dependent on both their attitudes towards each other and willingness to adapt to each other. These individual factors of knowledge and attitude are preconditions that the participants bring with them into the interaction (Byram 1997, 32-33). Byram explains that the “(...) four aspects of interaction across frontiers of different countries – knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction – can in principle be acquired through experience and reflection, without the intervention of teachers and educational institutions.” (Byram 1997, 33). Byram presents a schema of the factors that are involved in the learning of intercultural communication:

	Skills Interpret and relate (<i>savoir comprendre</i>)	
Knowledge Of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (<i>savoirs</i>)	Education Political education, critical cultural awareness (<i>savoir s'engager</i>)	Attitudes relativising self, valuing other (<i>savoir être</i>)
	Skills Discover and/or interact (<i>savoir apprendre/faire</i>)	

Fig. 3 – “Factors in intercultural communication”

(Byram 1997, 34)

Byram also speaks about intercultural communication competence. He says that the success of communication should not just be evaluated in terms of the efficiency of the exchange of information. Establishing and maintaining relationships with the ones that one communicates with is just as important. And this is where the extra level with communication competence comes in in intercultural communication (Byram 1997, 3). As mentioned earlier, I will only focus on intercultural communication within internal communication, but I think that these extra layers of ICC are important to verbalise.

In 2014, the researcher Yilin Sun discusses ICC in a blog post within the TESOL¹ International Association, which is a community for professionals within the field of teaching English. Sun collects all the different views that have been presented over time from academics and sums up what she believes must be

¹ TESOL stands for “Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages”.

required in intercultural communication for it to be effective: “[...] empathy, respect, tolerance, sensitivity, flexibility, and openness [...]” (Sun 2014). She also advocates for what she calls to share the communicative burden, meaning that it is more important that the intercultural communication functions than it is important for the communication to be in a certain language (Sun 2014).

Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze made a study on ICC in 2019, and they argue that intercultural communication competencies enhance understanding within a workplace, and simultaneously it increases employee engagement. Furthermore, it lays the ground for effective communication among individuals. This way, less work-related conflicts will arise and harmony between employees with different backgrounds will be maintained (Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze 2019, 77). This statement made it clear that internal communication, employee engagement and ICC are interrelated terms and highly relevant for any workplace that has employees with different national backgrounds.

Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze highlight five major components as being dimensions that are central to effective intercultural communication: “(...) message skills, interaction management, behavioural flexibility, identity management, and relationship cultivation.” (Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze 2019, 78).

3.3.2 Guiding elements

Instead of focusing on a theorist or theory, I have chosen to make a recapitulation of the research area. I will collect the most prominent findings from the previous section in terms of what is most important within intercultural communication and let them be guiding in my research.

In the literature review of intercultural communication, and ICC for that matter, I have touched upon different academics arguing for several elements that are important in terms of having successful and effective intercultural communication.

Here is an overview of the different elements that were noted important:

yram	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Knowledge▫ Attitudes▫ Skills of interpreting and relating▫ Skills of discovery and interaction▫ Establishing and maintaining relationships
Sun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Empathy▫ Respect▫ Tolerance▫ Sensitivity▫ Flexibility▫ Openness▫ Share the communicative burden
Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Message skills▫ Interaction management▫ Behavioural flexibility▫ Identity management▫ Relationship cultivation

Fig. 4 – Elements deemed important for successful and effective intercultural communication

A lot of these elements have similar meanings, and some are more important than others when I keep in mind that I focus on internal intercultural communication and how this affects employee's engagement. I have tried to combine the elements that seem similar in new groups – with new headlines. These headlines will be guiding in the analysis. Here is the combination of the elements and the headlines that I consider to be the most prominent in my case:

<u>Attitude</u> Understanding each other and showing mutual respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitudes ▫ Skills of interpreting and relating ▫ Empathy ▫ Respect ▫ Tolerance ▫ Sensitivity ▫ Flexibility ▫ Behavioral flexibility
<u>Relationship building</u> Showing interest in each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Skills of discovery and interaction ▫ Establishing and maintaining relationships ▫ Openness ▫ Identity management ▫ Relationship cultivation
<u>Language</u> Overcoming possible language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Knowledge ▫ Share the communicative burden ▫ Message skills ▫ Interaction management

Fig. 5 – Guiding intercultural communication elements for the analysis

After I made these new combinations, I now have three headlines for what is important within intercultural communication: Attitude, Relationship building and Language. The grouping of the elements from the theory, that are seen in the right side of the boxes, was very difficult, as some of them can be placed under all three headlines. However, I made the grouping in terms of what I deemed fitting in this case.

As I see it, these three overall elements, Attitude, Relationship building and Language, are elements that can be decisive for the intercultural communicative part of internal communication that I investigate in this thesis. I will return to this figure in the next section, theoretical framework, when all chosen theoretical components are gathered.

3.4 Theoretical framework

In this section, I will sum up the theories from the three research areas that I have dealt with in the literature review and show how they work together to help me answer the research questions and problem statement.

Employee Engagement

As previously explained in the literature review about employee engagement, I have chosen to use only a certain selection of the elements that Kahn proposes in his theory about personal engagement, namely seven out of the eleven elements. Here is the overview of the conditions and which appertaining elements that I will use in this thesis:

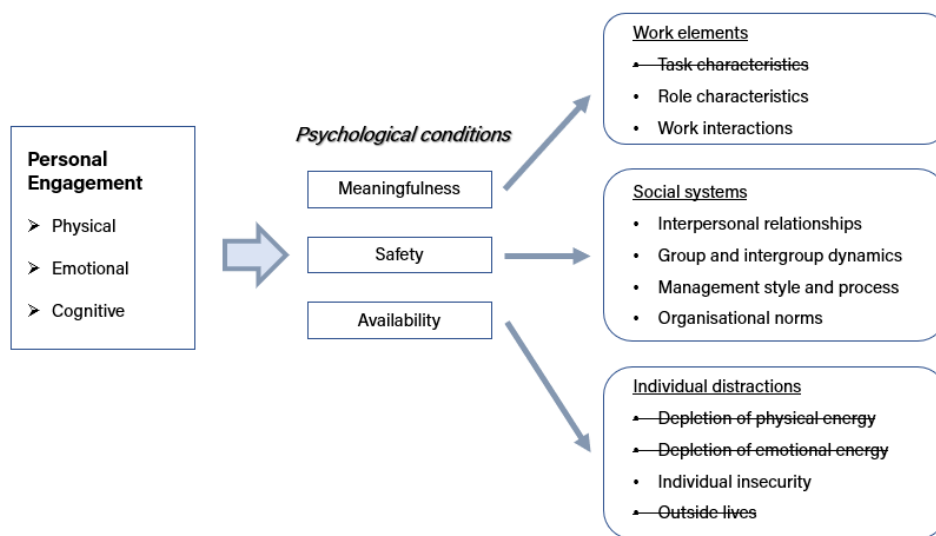


Fig. 6 – Conditions and elements from the personal engagement theory to be used in the analysis
(reproduction modification of fig. 1)

The elements that are crossed out are those of Kahn's elements that I have deselected.

Internal Communication and Employee Engagement

In terms of the connection between internal communication and employee engagement, I found out that there are three elements of the model of employee communication needs that Ruck and Welch present, that are critical components for employee engagement: employee voice, identification, support. But somehow, all six components can affect employee engagement.

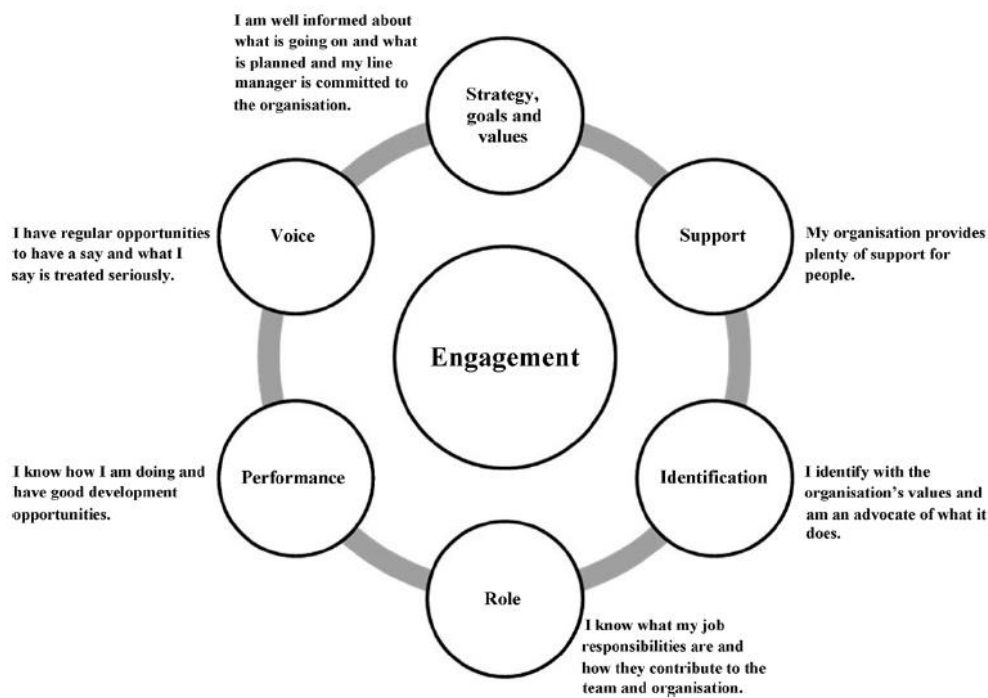


Fig. 2 – “Conceptual model of employee questions to be addressed through line manager and corporate communication.”

(first shown on page 26)

(Ruck and Welch 2012, 300)

I have created an overview that shows the connections between the chosen theoretical elements from Kahn's theory on personal engagement, with these six elements of internal communication that Welch and Ruck presented:

The connection between employee engagement and internal communication	
<i>Kahn's theoretical elements</i>	<i>Welch and Ruck's theoretical elements</i>
<p><u>Meaningfulness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being heard - make a difference - recognition for work performance - Role identification - Work interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interactions with colleagues/clients that feel rewarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → voice → support, performance, identification → performance → identification → support
<p><u>Safety:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feeling safe to employ self in work performances (engagement) - Interpersonal relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feel openness and support, ok to make mistakes - Group and intergroup dynamics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - roles within groups - Management styles and process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supportive environments and clarity = feel safe - Organisational norms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - official and unwritten rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → support → voice, support → role → support, (voice) → strategy etc., support
<p><u>Availability:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual insecurity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insecure about one's status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → identification, role, performance

Fig. 7 – The connection between employee engagement and internal communication

This shows the connecting ties between employee engagement and internal communication. And it is in the shape of this connection that the terms will be used in the analysis to answer the problem statement.

Intercultural communication

In the literature review of intercultural communication, I found a lot of elements that can affect and be decisive for effective intercultural communication. I arranged all of these elements into three groupings and formed three new headlines that have been guiding in the analysis when looking into the dimension of intercultural communication within the internal communication. Here is the overview of the groupings:

<u>Attitude</u> Understanding each other and showing mutual respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitudes ▫ Skills of interpreting and relating ▫ Empathy ▫ Respect ▫ Tolerance ▫ Sensitivity ▫ Flexibility ▫ Behavioral flexibility
<u>Relationship building</u> Showing interest in each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Skills of discovery and interaction ▫ Establishing and maintaining relationships ▫ Openness ▫ Identity management ▫ Relationship cultivation
<u>Language</u> Overcoming possible language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Knowledge ▫ Share the communicative burden ▫ Message skills ▫ Interaction management

Fig. 5 – Guiding intercultural communication elements for the analysis

(first shown on page 32)

Now, I have presented the elements that I have chosen to employ in this research. Finally, I will present one last overview. This overview sums up all elements that will be employed in the analysis:

Research area	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Research elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Role characteristics ▫ Work interactions ▫ Interpersonal relationships ▫ Group and intergroup dynamics ▫ Management style and process ▫ Organisational norms ▫ Individual insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Support ▫ Voice ▫ Identification ▫ Performance ▫ Role ▫ Strategy, goals and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitude ▫ Relationship building ▫ Language

Fig. 8 – Theoretical guiding components for the analysis

4 Methodology and Methods

In this section, I will elaborate on the parts of this thesis' research design that have to do with methodology and methods. First, I will explain the methodology. Next, I will go into details about this thesis' methods both in terms of data collection and in terms of analytical method. Lastly, I will present the analytical design for this investigation. Theory of science in terms of this thesis' research design has already been explained in section 2 on page 7.

4.1 Methodology

First, I want to quickly recap what was presented about social research and constructivism in section 2 about theory of science on page 7. Within constructivism, phenomena are socially constructed, and there is no definite truth. The closest one can come to the truth is to try to find it within people's shared subjective interpretations within a specific community.

Methodology explains how one best can research social reality, and with what concrete methods this can be done (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 27). Methodology within constructivism seeks to find answers within qualitative research and methods. The data collection within constructivism is often made up of some sort of linguistic nature, for example transcriptions of interviews, as it is in my case. The data is used to seek to reveal how social construction is created in a certain case. The goal is to discuss the phenomena in social life that people often view as a matter of course (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 29). Presskorn-Thygesen argues that for constructivists language and the communicative aspect are important as they are a great part of social constructions. Qualitative research is key in constructivism (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 37). Since this thesis' data collection comprises eight qualitative interviews, it fits the methodology within constructivism.

As previously mentioned, Eurowind Energy is the research case in this study. This means that I am doing a case study. When doing a case study, the researcher can focus on a single case study or on a multiple-case study. Both types of case studies want to analyse the "[...] contextual conditions in relation to the "case" [...]" (Yin 2014, 50). The difference between a single case study and a multiple-case study is, as the names say, that a researcher can either look at a single case or look at several cases and then compare these to each other (Yin 2014, 50-51). The multiple-case study is a quite extensive type of study and goes beyond the timeframe and capacity of that of a thesis'. Because of this, and because I would prefer to investigate only one case, this is a single case study.

The advantages of doing a case study are that it is an in-depth investigation that examines how people act and interact with each other within their own communities. The researcher meets the people in their own environment. This way, there is a good chance to get very detailed and honest insights into the problematics that might be present in the case (Maaløe 2002, 31+58). When carrying out a single case study, it is important that the case reflects the theoretical interests of the researcher (Yin 2014, 51). For my part, I have a theoretical interest in the connection between employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication. Therefore, the case I choose for the research should be able to provide these interests to some degree. Of course, one can never be certain to what one might find. My criteria for choosing Eurowind Energy as my case was that it was a company that has employees with different national backgrounds. As I focus on the internal intercultural communication and how it may affect employee engagement within a company, Eurowind Energy might be a case where I could find some of the problematics that I am looking for.

When doing a case study, the research is bound by time and detailed information is collected using certain procedures for the data collection (Creswell 2009, 13). In my case, I collected information by doing interviews and I did it within a timeframe of a couple of weeks. This will be elaborated further in section 4.2.1.1 about empirical data collection on page 39.

Interviewing is a qualitative research method, as the empirical data is collected through interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This also relates to the constructivist worldview as I with the interviews seek to uncover how the participants of the interviews, namely employees at Eurowind Energy, perceive the social construction of the internal communication within the company. It is through the conversation and relation between the interviewer and the interviewee that knowledge is being created – knowledge about the phenomenon that is being researched (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 39). Furthermore, interviewing is a favored data collection method in case studies. When interviewing the employees from Eurowind Energy, I investigate the phenomenon internal communication and its interrelatedness with employee engagement and intercultural communication by trying to understand the experiences and perceptions that the interviewees verbalize (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 19).

In this investigation, I interview eight different employees at Eurowind Energy as I want to examine how internal communication and intercultural communication might affect their level of engagement in their work performances. The interviews provide me with qualitative data that I can investigate in order to search for the employee's perceptions of and experiences with internal intercultural communication and

how this affects their level of engagement. This way, I can get insight into how the internal communication is socially constructed within Eurowind Energy.

4.2 Methods

In this section of this thesis' research design, I will elaborate on the methods for both the data collection and the analysis. At the end, I will present the analytical design which will function as a visual overview of my analytical approach.

4.2.1 Data collection method

In this first section of methods, I will provide an overview of the data collection method and the reflections behind. First, I will give an overview of what the empirical data collection consists of. Then I will elaborate on the conducted interviews and afterwards on the transcription process.

4.2.1.1 Empirical data collection

The empirical data collection consists of eight interview transcriptions generated from interviews that I conducted by talking to and interviewing employees from Eurowind Energy. The interviewees comprise of four Danish employees and four international employees. I chose to interview an equal number of Danish employees and international employees as I thought that it would also be interesting to see whether or not there is a difference in how the two groups perceive the same phenomenon. Also, the issues that comes along with being a multinational workforce might also be experienced differently in relation to being either one of the 90 Danish employees as opposed to being one of the seven international employees.

The reasoning for using interviews as the empirical data collection method will be elaborated further in the next section about interviews.

In order to keep the interviewees anonymous in this thesis, my initial thought was to give the interviewees some sort of code numbers. I would give the Danish interviewees the codes DAN1, DAN2, DAN3 and DAN4. And likewise, the international interviewees would get the codes INT1, INT2, INT3 and INT4. But in my opinion, these codes made the interviewees sound like they were robots and not actual human beings. Moreover, I subsequently read that Nigel King also recommends the use of pseudonyms as opposed to using code numbers, as pseudonyms gives a more personal feel to the analysis (University of Huddersfield C 2020). I will therefore be using pseudonyms for this thesis' interviewees. It can be relevant to be able to

differ the international interviewees from the Danish interviewees. I will therefore give the Danish employees classical Danish names and the international employees names with a more international vibe. Here is a list of all the interviewees and their characteristics such as gender, age, job position and period of employment:

Interviewee	Nationality	Gender	Age	Job position	Period of employment	Appendix
Camilla	Danish	Female	47	Head of HR	4-5 months	3
Laura	Danish	Female	33	Executive secretary	7 years	4
Karen	Danish	Female	52	Receptionist	10 years	5
Peter	Danish	Male	53	Acquisition manager	4-5 months	6
Olivia	German	Female	46	Senior project manager	10 years	7
Julia	Polish	Female	32	Technical project assistant	7 years	8
David	Polish	Male	34	Technical project manager	8 years	9
Angie	Slovak	Female	29	Country manager for Slovakian market	1 year	10

Figure 9 – Presentation of interviewees

The interviews varied in length. The longest lasting interview was 01:13:39 min (A8) and the shortest was 36:12 min (A5). The interviews were conducted in the time frame between April the 15th and April the 22nd 2020. I will present a figure in the next section on page 45 that shows the exact time lengths of each interview.

4.2.1.2 Interviews

As mentioned in the methodological section, qualitative interviewing is a rewarding way to obtain knowledge about a phenomenon. The interactional process between the interviewer and the interviewee creates subjective data about the given phenomenon of the research. Interviewing gives me as a researcher a chance to get an insight into the subjective opinions and perceptions of the interviewees. Furthermore, it is within the utterances that come to light during the interviews that the knowledge about the phenomenon internal communication is revealed and obtained (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 39). In this case, I got information about the internal communication at Eurowind Energy by interviewing eight of their

employees. All interviewees were willing participants, who had signed up for the interview after the company's Head of HR had forwarded my letter with information about my upcoming research.

The eight interviews are all semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview seeks to collect descriptions of the interviewee's subjective experiences in order for the researcher to interpret on a certain phenomenon. A semi-structured interview is not a conversational small-talk session. Neither is it a punctual and closed questionnaire. Instead it is something in between. The semi-structured interview is a professional conversation with a purpose. The interview is furthermore conducted in accordance with an interview guide that has an outline of the certain research areas that are interesting to go through during the interview. The interview guide can contain a list of questions, but it can also simply contain catchwords of importance (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 49). This means that the interview guide is guiding in the conversation of the interview yet not determining. There is room for asking clarifying questions to subjects that may arise during the interview if it seems important and central to the research.

When I prepared the questions in my interview guide, I let the chosen terms from Kahn's personal engagement theory be guiding while I simultaneously focused on making sure that the questions also would contain some elements from internal communication and intercultural communication as well. The chosen elements within internal communication and the model made by Ruck and Welch connect well with Kahn's elements. I already showed this in figure 8 on page 35. In the end of the interview, right before the rounding questions, I have three questions relating to intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is already imbedded and incorporated into the other questions, but I found it important to have three questions that are more distinct to the topic.

The interview guide is therefore constructed in such a way that there are two columns. In the left column are the research areas and in the right column are the questions. This structure gave me a good overview, which helped me make sure that I would remember to involve all important parts of the research areas in the guide. Here is an example of such:

Research areas	Interview questions
Information about the interviewee	Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? - Your name, age, nationality and such.
	For how long have you worked at Eurowind Energy?
	What is your position at EWE?
	What work tasks do you perform at EWE?
	How often do you work with someone with another nationality than your own?
Information about questions in interview	I will just briefly tell you about the different areas we will get around in this interview. My questions will be concentrated on employee engagement and internal communication – with a focus on intercultural communication.
Employee Engagement and Internal Communication	Tell me about a situation with a job task or performance, where you have felt that you were fully engaged. - Which factors do you think contributed to this – that you felt engaged in this situation? - What made you feel comfortable in this situation? - Did the internal communication play a factor in the situation?

Figure 10 – Extract from Appendix 2, page 1.

I focused on asking open-ended questions to make sure that the interviewee would give me answers that would portray the interviewee's opinion about a certain subject. Moreover, I had follow-up questions prepared for most of my questions. This was a great feature as the interviewees, in some instances gave more useful information that was not initially thought of. This way, I made them think again about the details of their first response to my initial question. Furthermore, I was aware of giving the interviewees time to think after they had answered each question. Sometimes the break made them think closer about their answer and the given subject, and they were more specific or detailed when answering. Furthermore, in some instances I would skip the follow-up questions in situations where I felt that the interviewee had already answered them. The interview guide kept me focused to remember to get around all important questions, but it was also flexible.

Here are some examples of follow-up questions:

<p>Internal Intercultural Communication</p>	<p>How would you describe the internal communication in terms of EWE also having intercultural employees?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does this affect you? If it affects you. - Does any of this affect your level of engagement?
	<p>Can you give me some examples of internal communication, where EWE takes into account that their group of employees has mixed nationalities?</p>
	<p><i>Meaningfulness → Work interactions</i></p> <p>Whenever you speak to your colleagues or manager – in what language do you do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have you ever felt that anything would go missing from the meaning (got lost in translation)? - how did you feel afterwards? - how did you feel afterwards in terms of feeling engaged or disengaged?

Figure 11 – Extract from Appendix 2, page 4.

As mentioned earlier, I chose to interview an equal number of Danish employees and international employees. This means that I made two separate interview guides. One in Danish for Danish employees and one in English for the international employees. The content of the questions in the interview guide is the same regardless of the interview and interviewee being Danish or international. However, two of the questions in the interview guide for the international interviewees are only present in this interview guide and not in the guide for the Danish interviewees since these two questions only make sense to ask the international employees. These are the two questions: “Are you conscious about being “different” than your employees and does it have an effect on your work life?” (App. 2, p. 4, l. 1-2) and “Does it ever make you feel insecure or less confident that you are an international and not Danish?” (App. 2, p. 5, l. 17-18). These questions address the international interviewees more as they clearly involve subjects that are only relevant for them to answer.

All questions have a smaller part in the bigger picture of the research. They all help me with answering the research questions and finally the problem statement. Here is an example of a question that contains all three research areas:

<i>Meaningfulness and Safety</i>	<p>Have you ever experienced a situation where the internal (intercultural) communication affected you in a positive way?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what conditions made it work well for you? - did it make you feel more engaged in your work afterwards? - in what way did you feel more engaged?
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Figure 12 – Extract from Appendix 2, page 5.

Here is another example of a question that has all three research areas embedded:

<i>Meaningfulness → Work interactions</i>	<p>Whenever your colleagues or manager speak to you – in what language do they do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have you ever felt that anything would go missing from the meaning (got lost in translation)? - how did you feel afterwards? - how did you feel afterwards in terms of feeling engaged or disengaged?
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Figure 13 – Extract from Appendix 2, page 4.

Looking at the last example, then the first question refers to internal communication since I ask about the way the interviewee communicates with his/her colleagues. The question also refers to intercultural communication as I ask about the chosen language for the communication. The first follow-up question also contains both the research areas, internal communication and intercultural communication, as it investigates how well or not the communication proceeds. As I found out previously, both internal and intercultural communication can have a factor here in this part. The second and third follow-up questions deal with the research area of employee engagement, as I ask questions about how the internal and intercultural communication might affect the interviewee's level of engagement. This shows that all research areas are included, and this can lastly help me in answering the problem statement.

As mentioned earlier, I used the same questions for all interviews, except two extra questions for the international employees. Yet, the lengths of the interviews varied in time. Here is an overview of the interviews – in terms of time, type and channel:

Interviewee	Nationality	Gender	Length of interview	Interview type	Appendix
Camilla	Danish	Female	48:13 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera ON	3
Laura	Danish	Female	38:28 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera ON	4
Karen	Danish	Female	36:12 min	Semi-structured Phone – camera OFF	5
Peter	Danish	Male	46:29 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera OFF	6
Olivia	German	Female	43:30 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera OFF	7
Julia	Polish	Female	01:13:39 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera OFF	8
David	Polish	Male	47:52 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera OFF	9
Angie	Slovak	Female	49:12 min	Semi-structured Skype – camera ON	10

Figure 14 – Overview of interviews

I have previously mentioned that the interviews are semi-structured and mentioned the lengths of the interviews. However, I have not dealt with the fact that the interviews were conducted virtually on the telecommunications app Skype. Since my thesis has been written during unusual times, where a lot of Denmark has been put on lockdown because of the current Corona crisis, I was forced to conduct all interviews virtually. This means that the interactional process that is embedded within a regular face-to-face interview inevitably will change and maybe also be challenged, when having to switch to virtual interactions. Nancy Baym mentions several aspects that are lost or at least reduced when switching from face to face communication to virtual communication. For example, is it harder to interpret people's non-verbal communication, when it takes place virtually, even if it is on Skype and the camera is on. Of course, it helps to have the camera on. However, it is far from the same as being face to face (Baym 2010, 51-52). I will not go into further detail about how the interpersonal communication is affected by having to do the interviews on Skype. But I think it was worth mentioning as I believe that the interaction inevitably is affected and maybe even degraded. However, I am also aware that some people might prefer this type of communication and perhaps they feel more comfortable talking about personal matters when they are

more anonymous in terms of not having the camera on. Personally, I just prefer face to face communication.

4.2.1.3 *Transcription*

All eight interviews were recorded on both the Skype recording function and on an app on my phone in order to make sure that I would have the recording, if one of the two recording functions should fail during the interview.

Kvale and Brinkmann describe transcription as transforming an oral discourse into a written discourse. And since “Spoken language and written texts involve different language games [...]” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 236) then one must consider how to do the transcriptions. For example, during the actual interview, it is a social interaction where both the interviewer and the interviewee have access to and naturally will be affected by body language, tone of voice, accents, speed and so on. And all these factors which are a big part of a conversation can never be directly transferred and reproduced in a written text (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 236). Based on this, I have chosen to do the transcriptions word by word, meaning that all words said by me and the interviewees are written in the transcripts. Therefore, the sentences can seem odd here and there, since I have included all words. But I have chosen to do this as I want the transcriptions to maintain a feeling of being a conversation. In some of the interviews, some of the interviewees change direction during their answer and this is better portrayed when all words are written in the transcriptions. However, I have not noted elements such as noise, laughter, pauses, hesitation, mumbling, sighs and so on. Neither have I added intonation to the utterances. I have chosen to leave out this part, as the majority of the interviews were done without visual contact, and therefore I think that some of the signals will be harder to place correctly when face to face interaction was missing. Furthermore, I believe that the word by word transcription is suitable for my research.

In the transcripts, I have left out all the small talk that naturally occurs between the interviewer and interviewee before and after the actual interview. These parts are not relevant in relation to the research.

The transcriptions are carried out in the language that the interviews were performed in. Therefore, I have four transcripts in English and four transcripts in Danish. When I will be referring to a quote within the Danish transcripts, I will translate the quote into English as closely as possible to the original text in terms of keeping the same meaning, and use this version in the analysis.

4.2.2 Analysis method

In this section, I will explain the analytical approach for this research, and finally, I will present the analytical design that follows the approach

4.2.2.1 Template analysis

In the analysis, I will be using coding in the shape of thematic analysis. To be more precise, I will be using a thematic analysis method called template analysis. Template analysis is made by Professor Nigel King, and it is a qualitative research method that is widely used within research that focuses on investigating managerial and organisational matters. Template analysis can be used on any kind of textual data, but it is mostly used on data collections that consist of interview transcripts (Brooks et. al. 2015, 203). As my data collection is comprised of interview transcripts, this thematical analysis method is relevant for me to use. It is an analysis method that can help me withdraw meaning from the interviews. This way, the analysis method helps me to create new knowledge about the phenomena that I research, and this can help me to answer my research questions and finally my problem statement.

Within template analysis, the researcher brings themes that are chosen in advance to the template. These themes are called 'a priori' themes. The a priori themes have typically been identified as important previously. Probably, the research study has started out with assumptions that certain phenomena will be present in the data (University of Huddersfield D. 2020). This means that the themes are chosen prior to the beginning of the coding process, and these a priori themes will form the coding template.

In my case, the a priori themes that I am bringing to the template are the elements that I discovered in the literature review and summed up in the theoretical approach section as being the most important elements to look for in my research as shown in figure 8 on page 36. These elements are the ones that I want to bring forward to the analysis (University of Huddersfield A). Here is my overview of the chosen themes that I will bring into the coding process:

Themes (Research area)	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Role characteristics▫ Work interactions▫ Interpersonal relationships▫ Group and intergroup dynamics▫ Management style and process▫ Organisational norms▫ Individual insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Support▫ Voice▫ Identification▫ Performance▫ Role▫ Strategy, goals and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Attitude▫ Relationship building▫ Language

Figure 15 – Template for template analysis with a priori themes

The themes are the three research areas employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication. Each theme has codes that belong to it. In this case, the codes are the research elements that I found relevant within the three research areas.

The themes that are chosen prior to carrying out the analysis are expected to be present in the data and to be relevant for the analysis. However, when going through the data, there might be other themes present that also will be relevant to include in terms of answering the thesis' problem statement and research questions, and this is what the research method of template analysis leaves room for. In template analysis, the researcher notes all utterances that seem relevant in terms of answering the research questions and gives them a code. The codes that the researcher gives the utterances can either be an existing code or a new code. The codes can belong to one of the predetermined a priori themes or the researcher will have to create a new theme that is deemed more suitable for the code to belong to. This entails that the researcher might discover some codes and themes that are not on the predetermined template. These new codes and themes will be taken into consideration if they show a tendency of occurrence in the data collection. This means that the predetermined template can be changed and supplemented when going through the actual data. It is recommended that the researcher reconsiders and updates the initial template of themes and codes after having gone through the first small section of the data, and then analyses the rest of the data with the updated template. And finally, after having completed the whole data collection with the updated template, the researcher must again revise the template and make the final changes, if necessary. Then the final template will consist of the most relevant themes and codes and be used for the discussion of the findings in the analysis. Moreover, all transcripts have to be analysed in terms of using the final template (University of Huddersfield A).

Here is a step-by step overview of the coding process when using the template analysis technique:

1. Creation of the predetermined themes and codes that the researcher will use.
2. Transcription of the interviews.
3. The coding process of the data collection begins. When the researcher finds parts that are relevant to the research questions, the researcher adds a code that either belongs to a theme from the list of predetermined themes or the researcher creates a new theme that is deemed more appropriate for the exact finding. It can also be a modification of an already existing theme.
4. After having gone through the first bit of the transcripts, the researcher looks at the codes that were found and revises the list of themes and makes what is called the initial template.
5. When the coding process of all transcripts is carried out, then the researcher makes the last changes to the template, if necessary, and this is called the final template.

6. Lastly, the researcher goes through all transcriptions using the final template to make sure that all codes have been detected.
7. Afterwards, the final template and its containing themes will now be guiding in the interpretation of the data in the analysis.

(University of Huddersfield B).

How the coding process progressed

Now, I will present how the actual coding progressed by using the step-by-step procedure just presented above. I will refer to each step with short headlines.

1. Creation of the predetermined themes and codes

As mentioned earlier in this section, the predetermined themes and codes were found and created in the theoretical approach section. Here is the overview again:

Themes (Research area)	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Role characteristics ▫ Work interactions ▫ Interpersonal relationships ▫ Group and intergroup dynamics ▫ Management style and process ▫ Organisational norms ▫ Individual insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Support ▫ Voice ▫ Identification ▫ Performance ▫ Role ▫ Strategy, goals and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitude ▫ Relationship building ▫ Language

Figure 15 – Template for template analysis with a priori themes
(First shown on page 47)

2. Transcription of interviews

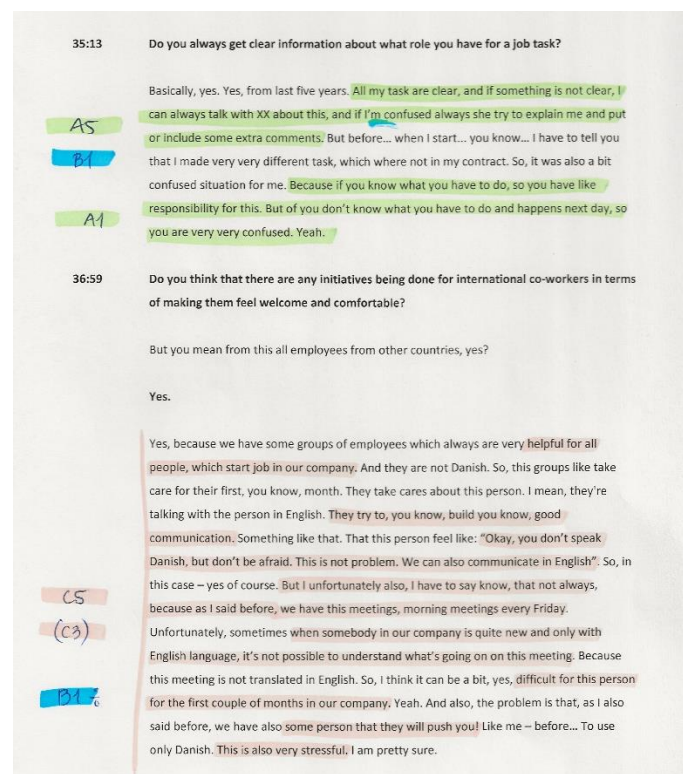
This process is already explained in section 4.2.1.2 on page 40.

3. The coding process of the data collection

In the actual coding process, I gave each code a letter and a number. This way, it was easier for me to write the codes and not having to write the full name of the codes every time they appeared. For example, the first theme *employee engagement* was called A, the second theme was called B, and the third and last

theme was called C. And then the codes pertaining to the three themes each had letters in alphabetical orders starting with A, B, C from the top. Therefore, the code *Role Characteristics* was called A1, and the next code *Work interactions* was called A2, and so forth.

When I detected a code in the transcripts, I would paint the relevant text piece with a highlighter and write the letter and number code next to it in the margin. I had three different coloured highlighters. One colour for each theme. Whenever I would find codes that did not fit into the predetermined codes, I wrote a short code that described the content. All of this was done by hand. Here is an example of the coding process:



4. Revision and creation of the initial template

After having gone through three of the eight transcriptions with the predetermined themes and codes at hand, I looked at the codes that I had written in the margin and found that I had detected three new codes. The three new codes were: *Encounter frequency*, *Corporate internal language* and *Lost in translation*. I quickly decided that they should belong to the theme *Intercultural communication* as they all dealt with this research area.

After the revision, the initial template came to look like this:

Themes (Research area)	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Role characteristics ▫ Work interactions ▫ Interpersonal relationships ▫ Group and intergroup dynamics ▫ Management style and process ▫ Organisational norms ▫ Individual insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Support ▫ Voice ▫ Identification ▫ Performance ▫ Role ▫ Strategy, goals and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitude ▫ Relationship building ▫ Language ▫ Encounter frequency ▫ Corporate internal language ▫ Lost in translation

Figure 16 – Initial template

5. Last coding and final template

Going through the rest of the transcripts, I did not find any additional codes nor themes. Therefore, the final template looks exactly like the initial template:

Themes (Research area)	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Role characteristics ▫ Work interactions ▫ Interpersonal relationships ▫ Group and intergroup dynamics ▫ Management style and process ▫ Organisational norms ▫ Individual insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Support ▫ Voice ▫ Identification ▫ Performance ▫ Role ▫ Strategy, goals and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitude ▫ Relationship building ▫ Language ▫ Encounter frequency ▫ Corporate internal language ▫ Lost in translation

Figure 17 – Final template

Step 6 says to use the final template on all transcriptions, which I did. And step 7 says that the final template will be guiding for the analysis. And this it will be.

4.2.2.2 Analytical design

After having just presented the analysis method in the previous section, I will now provide the analytical design which will function as a visual overview of my analytical approach.

When the coding process is done, I will gather all the information that I withdraw from the data collection. With this new knowledge about the phenomenon, internal communication at EWE, I will seek to answer the research questions and finally the problem statement. Here is an overview of this thesis' analytical design:

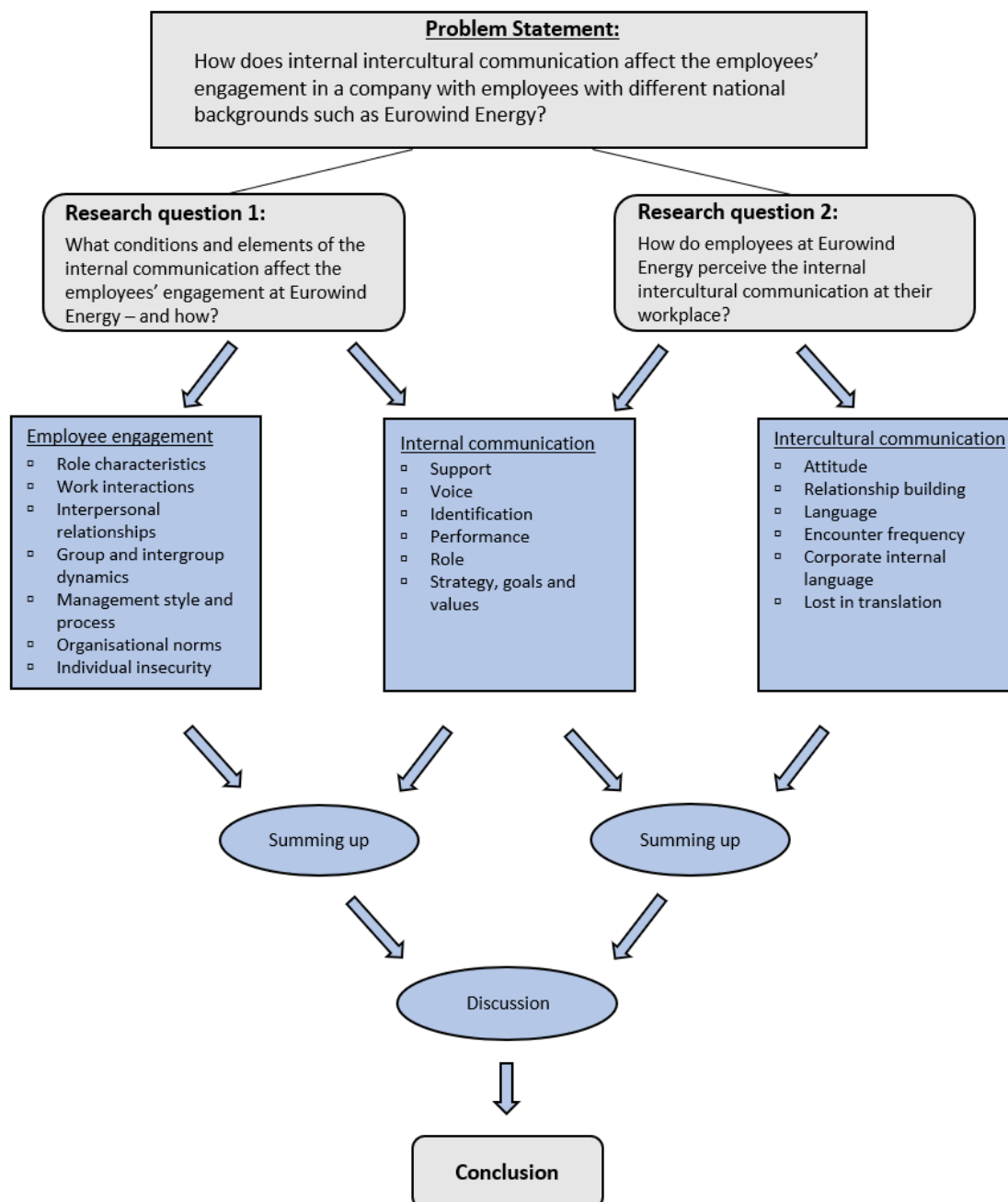


Figure 18 – Analytical design

In the analysis, after having coded the transcripts, I will first look into answering research question 1 and then research question 2. The first research question will focus on the connection between internal communication and employee engagement, and therefore rely on the findings that are situated under these two research areas – and the linking between these. The second research question will focus on the extra level that intercultural communication brings to internal communication, and how this also can affect employee engagement. These findings will therefore be the situated under the research area of internal communication and intercultural communication. This way, research question 1 and research question 2 will steer the analysis. After having considered all the findings that either fall under research question 1 or 2, then each section will be summed up. The outcome of these two sum ups from the research questions will be treated further in the discussion in order to consider the connection between internal intercultural communication and employee engagement. And finally, this will contribute to the answering of the problem statement in the conclusion.

5 Analysis

This chapter comprises the analysis and will be carried out as just explained in the analytical design above. There might be some overlaps between the two research questions as employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication are interrelated. As they often influence each other back and forth between the three of them, it can be hard to make a clean split between them. However, I still estimate this method with the two separate research questions to be most suitable in order to be able to grasp it all. And I believe it is relevant to look at the connection between internal communication and employee engagement before adding intercultural communication to the mix. This way, the dimension of the intercultural communication part will be more explicit as well.

5.1 Research question 1 – Internal Communication and Employee Engagement.

In this first section of the analysis, I will present and discuss the findings from the coding process that belong under research question 1:

- **What conditions and elements of the internal communication affect the employees' engagement at Eurowind Energy – and how?**

This means that I will be handling the utterances that deals with the connection between employee engagement and internal communication, and the interrelatedness between the two. As shown in section 4.2.2.1 about Template analysis, the final template, which had evolved during the coding process of the empirical data, came to look like this:

Themes (Research area)	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role characteristics Work interactions Interpersonal relationships Group and intergroup dynamics Management style and process Organisational norms Individual insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Voice Identification Performance Role Strategy, goals and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude Relationship building Language Encounter frequency Corporate internal language Lost in translation

Figure 17 – Final template
with accentuation of Employee engagement and Internal communication
(First shown on page 51)

In order to answer research question 1, I will process the utterances and the newly gained knowledge that involve elements from the first two research areas, namely employee engagement and internal communication.

To create an overview of the findings, I counted how many times I had noted each code in the interview transcripts. And this is the overview:

Themes (Research areas)	Employee engagement		Internal communication		Intercultural communication	
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role characteristics Work interactions Interpersonal relationships Group and intergroup dynamics Management style and process Organisational norms Individual insecurity 	24 20 30 21 47 13 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Voice Identification Performance Role Strategy, goals and values 	32 22 2 5 10 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude Relationship building Language Encounter frequency Corporate internal language Lost in translation 	53 15 88 8 41 14

Figure 19 – Overview of codes detected – in numbers

These numbers will help me recognize which of the research elements that have been mentioned the most. However, I will still focus on the elements that seem most relevant in connection to the research question.

This means that an element that has been mentioned many times might not be the one that is most relevant in terms of answering my research question. But the numbers can give me a clue to what occupies the employees more.

Going through the codes, I see that many of the elements from employee engagement are mentioned almost equally much. But situations regarding *Role characteristics*, *Interpersonal relationships* and *Management style and process* are addressed a few times more than the other. However, the four other elements are also mentioned quite often. In terms of internal communication, the elements *Support* and *Voice* are topics that are discussed more frequently than the other topics. Then the elements *Role* and *Strategy, goals and values* are also mentioned quite often, and then the two remaining, *Identification* and *Performance*, are not mentioned that much. I will cover the elements that tell me something about the connection between internal communication and employee engagement as this is what research question 1 investigates.

Management style and process, Interpersonal relationships and Organisational norms

I will first look into how the employee engagement elements *Management style and process* and *Interpersonal relationships* have been addressed in the interviews. When interviewing Camilla, she told me about a situation where she felt fully engaged. I asked her what it was that made her feel engaged. She told me this: “[...] that they listen to you. That it is being prioritized.” (App. 3, 04:48). Here she is talking about a situation with the management. This situation comes under the *Management style and process* element. Camilla mentions several similar situations during the interview. Here is another example: “I have only been very positive about it. I think that I have presented many controversial ideas here, which have just been accepted right away. I think that has been pretty cool.” (App. 3, 16:24) And in this example, she is referring to her colleagues and how they react to her coming with new ideas. Therefore, this situation falls under the employee engagement element *Interpersonal relationships*, as this is about a situation with colleagues and not the management. At the end of the interview, she addresses the element *Management style and process* again when she sums up what is most important to her in terms of feeling mostly engaged in work situations: “To be listened to and be prioritised.” (App. 3, 44:50). These utterances show that it is very important for Camilla to feel that she is being listened to and prioritized. And when this need is fulfilled, she feels more engaged as she then feels meaningfulness with her job performance. When Camilla talks about internal communication this way, I also see two other codes being present simultaneously, namely the internal communication elements *Support* and *Voice*. These are two of the three elements that Ruck and Welch (2012) highlight as being the most important and crucial elements within internal communication – from an employee perspective. I see that they come to show as Camilla expresses her gratitude of being

listened to and that her ideas are being accepted. She is being taken seriously when she opens up and speaks up, and this is what lies within the internal communication element *Voice*. In relation to this, Camilla also expresses a feeling of *Support* as this feeling naturally comes with being taken seriously and having a feeling of having a voice. Also, this feeling of support comes with the positive way that her colleagues meet her ideas. As mentioned earlier, she feels that they always have their arms open whenever she suggests something (App. 3, 16:24).

Another interviewee who is addressing the employee engagement element *Management style and process*, is Peter. However, Peter talks about this element in a much different way: "Well, we have had some examples where my manager might have shown less tolerance against something that has been said because the person does not understand it." (App. 6, 20:42). Peter's experience is that his suggestions are not being heard in the way that he would like them to. Peter claims that his manager does not understand what he is suggesting, and therefore the manager dumps Peter's suggestion. Peter has many years of experience in the field and he feels that the manager dumps it because he does not understand what Peter is saying. Many people would maybe react to this situation by being insecure in future similar situations. But not Peter. When I asked him if this would affect his engagement, his answer was: "No. It actually just gets bigger." (App. 6, 21:43) He seems to have more experience than his managers and then it annoys him that they will not listen to his suggestions.

In another situation, that he mentions earlier in the interview, he also claims that EWE often "[...] resort to doing things the way that it has always been done." (App.6, 16:58). This utterance falls under the employee engagement element *Organisational norms*, as this is somewhat of an organisational norm to operate like this. Peter's reaction is quite similar to his reaction in the other situation mentioned above as he explains that this just whet his appetite in terms of introducing and implementing changes (App. 6, 16:58).

In connection to this, I want to add something that Laura mentioned in her interview. She had a situation where she got a job task with some colleagues, where they were in charge of the creation of a new website for the company. She refers to it like this: "[...] we were a bit challenged, since some of us actually wanted to hire another company, which was not a local company. It was in Aalborg. But they had a thing with wanting to hire local companies. So, we had to stick with the company that also made the previous website. And the result was okay. But I am convinced that it could have been better if we had chosen another company." (App. 4, 04:15). She mentions this situation, when I asked her to tell me about a task where she was disengaged or felt less engaged. And right after, she adds: "[...] I was a bit frustrated about not being allowed to do what I actually would have chosen to do myself." (App. 4, 04:15). This clearly shows that in these situations where employees feel that they are not being heard or get support, their level of

engagement is affected. For Laura, her level of engagement got lower, as the situation resulted in her feeling less engaged in the job task. In the case with Peter, his level of engagement was also affected, but on the contrary he felt more invested and engaged in the situation. This shows that there is a connection between employee engagement and the elements of internal communication, because in this situation where *Support and Voice* obviously are lacking, the employees' levels of engagement are affected.

Furthermore, both this example with Laura and the example with Peter, shows that the internal communication element *Identification* is lacking. When Laura and Peter feel that they are not a part of the decisions and when their suggestions to performance of tasks are shot down, it will be harder for them to identify with the task and the company. They will feel as though they are not being taken in on the task completely, and this will naturally make them feel somewhat disconnected to the task. Therefore, they will not identify themselves with the task and probably not invest as much engagement in their work performances.

Returning to the element *Management style and process*, Camilla and Peter had very opposite experiences with internal communication in this connection. But Peter also has positive things to say about EWE when I asked him about how he would describe internal communication at EWE. This is what he said: "If you look at the internal culture of Eurowind, then it is very much based on being supportive. It must be protective. Supportive and protective. They have a very familiar, nonverbal way of handling things. They are very much familiar in their culture." (App. 6, 40:59).

The general picture of *Management style and process* and *Interpersonal relationships* is that the employees feel that they are met with support and understanding, when they speak up. Even Laura, who had the situation with the website and choice of company, she mostly refers to internal communication within EWE as being supportive and accommodating. Here is an example of such: "I often sit with the management [...]. And here I think that if I have some kind of contribution or something to say, then I actually feel that they listen to it." (App. 4, 13:08). David and Angie also feel that they are met with accommodation from both colleagues and the management, and that they listen to them (App. 9, 15:21-16:06) (App. 10, 16:32-17:35). Another person, who feels that she is met with *Support* and feels that she has a *Voice*, whenever she suggests something, is Karen. With her coworkers, she talks about it like this: "It's rare that I am refused if I suggest something. They are very open to new initiatives whatever it must be." (App. 5, 15:02). And when talking about speaking up to the management, she says: " [...] I am hardly ever refused. [...] they always meet you in a good way." (App. 5, 15:45) When talking about how this affects her, she says: "Well, it's really nice. If you would always be met with rejection, then obviously you would become demotivated in the things that you want to do." (App. 5, 16:34). This clearly shows, that Karen knows that she will feel less

engaged in her job performances, if she is not met with this support and accommodating attitudes. Olivia also feels that she is comfortable enough to speak up to both her colleagues and the management (App. 7, 15:29). Here is what she says about whether she is comfortable enough to speak up to her boss: “Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Totally. I have good relation to my boss and it’s really good.” (App. 7, 16:57). When I afterwards asked her if this affects her level of engagement, she told me that it was fine (App. 7, 16:57). Later in the interview, I asked her to tell me about a situation where she felt that internal communication had affected her very positively. She told me this: “For example, the yearly interview about the job. It could be positive and negative. But it’s good to get feedback from the managers.” (App 7, 30:58). Here Olivia touches upon the internal communication element *Performance* as she says that she likes to get feedback on her job performances. Afterwards she told me how it made her feel: “Sometimes it’s a good feeling. You know, sometimes you can fly. Otherwise, okay now you have to make more or to impress a little bit more. It’s different.” (App. 7, 30:58). This shows that internal communication and feedback are important to employees, and that it affects the person’s state of mind afterwards. She adds this later in the interview, when we talk about whether the communication coming from her boss affects her engagement: “Yeah, if you get a positive or a negative. Mostly it’s positive, and then I get positive energy. Also, sometimes it’s the negative and then it’s the opposite.” (App 7, 33:52). Another person, who mentions feedback as something that engages her, is Karen. To Karen, what matters the most in terms of internal communication coming from both her colleagues and the management, is that people she works with show her appreciation for what she does workwise. This makes Karen fully engaged in her job performances (App. 5, 22:00).

Another angle to the employee engagement element *Management style and process* is the question whether the employees at EWE feel that they are well-informed and informed clearly enough about their job tasks. Most of them say that they get somewhat clear information about their roles within job tasks, but they also say that they sometimes have to go check up on it afterwards. Laura refers to it like this: “Sometimes, I think that it is very clear. But other times, it requires that I go back one time and ask: What was it again that needed to be done?” (App. 4, 16:48). Laura does not seem to be bothered that she has to ask again (App. 4, 16:48). Karen says that she always gets a clear message about her job tasks (App. 5, 18:42). Peter, Angie, Camilla and Olivia are hired in positions that demands that they shape their own tasks themselves. So, obviously, they are okay with that (App. 6, 22:49) (App. 10, 21:23) (App. 3, 22:14) (App. 7, 18:28). Julia experiences about the same as Laura, and she mentions it this way: “All my task are clear, and if something is not clear, I can always talk with XX about this, and if I’m confused always she try to explain me and put or include some extra comments.” (App. 8, 35:13). David is the only one that experiences

trouble in this area. He says that: “Usually it's quite clear, but there are some tasks which overlap different departments, where it is a bit uncertain who should do the certain tasks. [...] Sometimes it can get mixed up.” (App. 9, 22:12). Afterwards he said that this affects his engagement level negatively (App. 9, 22:12). This must mean that the internal communication element *Role* is not a big issue at EWE. It does not seem to cause problems for the most part of the employees. Only one out of eight interviewees had negative comments in this area. Presumably this means that this is not a factor that affects the employees’ level of engagement tremendously.

Work interactions and Group and intergroup dynamics

Now, I will move on to looking at the two employee engagement elements *Work interactions* and *Group and intergroup dynamics*. These elements can seem quite similar as they both focus on the relationship between people working. The greater difference of the two is that *Work interactions* falls under the psychological condition *Meaningfulness*, whereas the element *Group and intergroup dynamics* falls under the psychological condition *Safety*. So, in this matter the elements can have very different impacts on a person’s psychological well-being. First, I want to present two utterances that Laura expressed, when I asked her to tell me about what it is that engages her in a work situation: “[...] that everybody is engaged and really does what it takes.” (App. 4, 02:09) and “[...] that everybody has an important role and that everybody’s opinion has an impact on the result.” (App. 4, 03:17). This shows that Laura is engaged and that her work performance gives meaning to her, whenever she is working with someone, who like herself invests themselves in the job task. This creates *Meaningfulness* for Laura. This example falls under the element *Work interactions*, but it can also fall under the other element, *Group and intergroup dynamics*, as Laura expresses that she likes everybody to have a say and a share in the final decision. This shows that both things matter to her, namely that everybody is active and engaged – and that everybody is being heard in the process. Just like in the previous section, it is possible to mention that two internal communication elements, *Support* and *Voice*, are also present. They are present, since Laura indirectly states that feeling support and having a voice within a group work interaction are important to her in terms of feeling engaged.

Olivia also told me about which factors of internal communication that makes her feel engaged in a work situation: “Fast decisions and very easy to talk and to help each other.” (App. 7, 05:43). This shows that she thrives in *Work interactions* that are efficient and where all participants are helping each other to make fast decisions. When Olivia experiences these situations, she feels that the work situation is rewarding to her and therefore she feels more engaged in her work performance. When talking about the *Group and intergroup dynamics*, she tells me that everything is fine and that they only joke about her nationality

sometimes since she is German. This is what she mentioned about it: “Sometimes it’s more a joke. You know the Germans are ‘Ordnung muss sein’ or something else. The typical jokes or something. But normally it’s not different.” (App. 7, 14:54). It can be hard to know, but to me it seemed that the jokes only gave a positive vibe to the interaction and not a bullying feeling. If the jokes are okay for Olivia, then the interaction can feel sincere and safe for her. However, if she was offended by the jokes, the group dynamics could make her feel less safe and maybe affect her secureness level. And all of this can in the end affect her engagement level in her job performances. However, I do not believe that this is the case as she speaks very positively about her colleagues throughout the interview.

Unfortunately, Julia has a very different experience with internal communication within *Work interactions*. She says that she sometimes prefers to work alone as she has had some bad experiences: “[...] I have maybe some not good experience to work with some people who was not involved in the same, you know, with the same quality of job like me. And it means that I make my job, but unfortunately also I make job for all two other my colleagues. Because they don’t... Because they were busy, they wanted to participate in some meetings, and it was a time pressure... So, I had to do this myself.” (App. 3, 09:04) Afterwards I asked her if internal communication was a factor in why the situation went wrong, and she said: “ [...] I would like to say you something, but I am afraid that this, what I would like to say you, it will be wrong in Danish. [...] sometimes, it was easy for me to do this job instead for, you know, ask them or try to say something difficult for me in Danish.” I am not sure how this affected Julia’s engagement level, but later in the interview she tells me that situations like these, where she is afraid to speak up because of the language barrier, make her feel uncomfortable and insecure (App. 8, 56:16-57:19) This brings another of the employee engagement elements into play, namely *Individual insecurity*. This element falls under the psychological condition *Availability* and obviously deals with how present a person can manage to be in work performances, when they might be distracted with something else. Something that steels their attention away from the task and prevents them from engaging fully in the task. I think that situations like these can affect Julia for a period afterwards and during this time, she has a hard time engaging fully. The whole situation with Julia and how the language barrier can affect her engagement will be elaborated further in section 5.2, where research question two will steer the analysis.

Talking to David, he tells me this when I ask him to paint a picture of a work situation where he is fully engaged: “[...] if it's a task where I have to use the assistance of some other person, then the dream task is of course, that they are available to assist me and that they have the knowledge and also timewise to be able to help me out with the facts they know. So, I can analyze my work.” (App. 10, 29:15). Here David expresses that *Work interactions* are more meaningful to him, whenever his colleagues gives him the

information he needs. Then the process and his level of engagement in the job task are better. Later on, in the interview, we talk about misunderstandings arising because of minor language barriers. He then expresses that these misunderstanding never worsens the relationship with his colleagues, nor do they affect the group dynamic negatively (App. 9, 32:59). This must be a case of well-functioning internal communication.

Camilla tells me about a situation where the management has assigned her to a job task. Usually this certain type of task is performed by another person in the house. However, he and the management give Camilla the task as he is short of time to do it. However, during the whole process of the task Camilla experiences this: "He really didn't have time to help, but he had an opinion about everything." (app. 3, 07:09) Camilla's reaction to this is: "This makes me disengaged. I don't want that. I don't want a situation where I am assigned to do a task, but then there's still somebody who has a lot to say about it. He was more than welcome to do it. It was not on my request." (App. 3, 07:09). This is an example of *Group and intergroup dynamics* where the internal communication causes Camilla to be irritated and feel less engaged in the task, because of her colleague who keeps interfering with her job task performance.

Camilla later tells me about what elements within *Work interactions* that makes her more engaged: "That process where you sit together and have to cooperate to find a new way to do things, and one that everybody is satisfied with, when they all leave. [...] Whenever you can innovate something. By dialogue. A dialogue where everyone has something to say. Where people listen to each other." (A3, 25:25). This shows that situations where the internal communication is functioning well between her and the employees in a work group and when they even create results simultaneously, are where she feels more engaged and the interaction feels rewarding for her.

Peter says that work tasks where *Work interactions* are far from optimal, are the situations that can make him very disengaged. He refers to a situation where the internal communication between his department and some other departments within the headquarter failed in their interactions. Peter felt that the other department was not handling the task professionally enough in their way of communicating and this made him feel less engaged in the job performance (App. 6, 05:46). This shows that internal communication plays not only an important role for the exchange of information, but also for the engagement that employees will put into their work performances.

As opposed to what Peter expresses, Angie presents a different and more positive side of internal communication in terms of *Work interactions*. I asked her to tell me about when internal communication affects her positively. This is what she said: "[...] if there were some new ideas that I haven't thought of myself presented in their conversation that gave me meaning and inspiration or what else I could do." (App. 10, 35:02). This means that Angie likes the part where she and her colleagues generate new ideas and

inspire each other to go further. Afterwards, she said that these experiences also made her feel more engaged in her further course of her job performance (App. 10, 35:02).

5.1.1 Summing up

I will now sum up all the findings that I have just presented in the previous section.

In terms of the employee engagement elements *Management style and process* and *Interpersonal relationships* I found that whenever the employees at EWE feel that the management listens to them and prioritizes them and their ideas, the employees get a feeling of *Support* and that they have a *Voice*. Many of the interviewees say that situations like these make them feel more engaged in work task performances. This also gives the employees a feeling of either *Meaningfulness* or *Safety* – or both – depending on the situation and with whom the situation takes place. Furthermore, a few of the interviewees express that getting feedback (*Performance*) from the management was fulfilling, and it gave them meaning that they could bring with them to future job performances. Also, the all of them except one has good experiences in terms of getting clear information about what *Role* to fill in different job task performances.

But not all employees referred to internal communication in the same positive manner. There were also some utterances that dealt with insufficient communication, lack of support and management that would not listen to ideas. Furthermore, *Organisational norms* made a couple of the interviewees irritated since a norm within the company put a stop to their initiatives and ideas. In all examples, this caused the employees to feel frustrated, and in most instances, this also affected and lowered the engagement level of the employees. Not being heard on initiatives and ideas can also cause the employees to not identify (*Identification*) with the task and in time also not the company. This may cause them to invest less of themselves and therefore be less engaged in future work performances. These examples just come to show that internal communication really is important in terms of enhancing employee engagement. And that internal communication elements such as *Support* and *Voice* are very important as well.

The general picture of internal communication at EWE is, according to the employees in this study, that it is great and accommodating, and that all colleagues are nice. This, they all agree on. However, it is peculiar that when I dig deeper into the internal communication by asking more questions about for example *Work interactions* and *Group and intergroup dynamics*, they all have something extra to elaborate on. Something that is not necessarily positive in terms of enhancing employee engagement by means of internal communication.

Most of the employees express that *Work interactions* that comprise interactions where everybody is engaged and everybody is being heard, are meaningful to them, and these situations make them feel more engaged both in the actual work performance and also afterwards. Also, *Work interactions* where colleagues generate ideas in collaboration seems to cause the employees at EWE to feel a greater level of engagement.

In terms of *Group and Intergroup dynamics*, most of the interviewees express that they feel comfortable and safe in whatever employee group constellation that they have in each of their departments. The internal communication is functioning well between the coworkers. However, language differences seem to have caused stress and *Individual insecurity* for one of the interviewees, and this prevented her from engaging fully in job performances as this affected her feeling of being safe. Also, one interviewee expresses that miscommunication between departments can cause him to be frustrated and loose interest in the task. Furthermore, clear information on who is assigned to which job performances among the employees is important, so that there will not be any misunderstandings. A couple of examples from two interviewees show that miscommunication can cause frustration and lower engagement in the job task.

The internal communication element *Role characteristics* turned out to not be that relevant in this study in terms of the internal communication affecting employee engagement. However, many of the employees mentioned this part in the interviews as being important to them in terms of feeling meaningfulness in their job performances. But their utterances about this element did not involve internal communication as a decisive factor for their level of engagement, and therefore it does not have direct relevance to this research.

5.2 Research question 2 – Internal Intercultural Communication

In this second section of the analysis, I will use the same procedure as I did with research question 1. But as a matter of course this section will involve the findings that fall under research question 2, which goes like this:

- **How do employees at Eurowind Energy perceive the internal intercultural communication at their workplace?**

I will therefore be handling the utterances that concern internal intercultural communication and look into how the employees at EWE perceive it through their own experiences within the social world of the company. Once again, I will refer to the final template which has been guiding for the coding process:

Themes (Research area)	Employee engagement	Internal communication	Intercultural communication
Codes (Research elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Role characteristics▫ Work interactions▫ Interpersonal relationships▫ Group and intergroup dynamics▫ Management style and process▫ Organisational norms▫ Individual insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Support▫ Voice▫ Identification▫ Performance▫ Role▫ Strategy, goals and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Attitude▫ Relationship building▫ Language▫ Encounter frequency▫ Corporate internal language▫ Lost in translation

Figure 17 – Final template
with accentuation of Internal communication and Intercultural communication
(First shown on page 51)

I will follow the same procedure in this section, as I did with research question 1. I will process the utterances and the new knowledge that I have gained from coding the interviews, in order to provide an answer to research question 2. I will look at the data that contains elements that fall under the research areas of intercultural communication and internal communication.

Once again, I will show the overview of how many times each code appeared in the interview transcripts:

Themes (Research areas)	Employee engagement		Internal communication		Intercultural communication	
Codes (Research elements)	▫ Role characteristics	24	▫ Support	32	▫ Attitude	53
	▫ Work interactions	20	▫ Voice	22	▫ Relationship building	15
	▫ Interpersonal relationships	30	▫ Identification	2	▫ Language	88
	▫ Group and intergroup dynamics	21	▫ Performance	5	▫ Encounter frequency	8
	▫ Management style and process	47	▫ Role	10	▫ Corporate internal language	41
	▫ Organisational norms	13	▫ Strategy, goals and values	13	▫ Lost in translation	14
	▫ Individual insecurity	17				

Figure 19 – Overview of codes detected – in numbers
(First shown on page 55)

As I expressed earlier, the numbers will only be used for me to get a clue to what elements that are mostly discussed as these might also absorb the employees the most. However, my focus will still be on the utterances that concern the subject of intercultural communication within internal communication in terms of being able to provide and answer to research question 2.

Looking at the codes that I detected, just to recap from research question 1, then the internal communication elements *Support* and *Voice* are mentioned more frequently than the other four elements. Then come the elements *Role* and *Strategy, goals and values*. And the least mentioned elements are *Identification* and *Performance*. Within intercultural communication, the element *Language* ranks highest. Then the elements *Attitude* and *Corporate internal language* come right after and are also expressed many times. Finally, the elements *Relationship building*, *Encounter frequency* and *Lost in translation* are the ones that are referred to the least. As with the previous part of the analysis, the same goes in this part of the analysis. I will look at the elements which tell me something about the way that the employees at EWE perceive internal intercultural communication at their workplace, which is also what research question 2 investigates.

Encounter frequency

First of all, I find it relevant to begin by mentioning how often the employees at Eurowind Energy altogether meet and cooperate with coworkers with different national backgrounds than their own in their

daily work performances. Therefore, one of my very first questions in the interview was: “How often do you work with someone with another nationality than your own?” (App 2, p. 1). I want to add that most of the interviewees that participated in the interviews work in different departments within the headquarters of Hobro. Six of the eight interviewees told me that they work with someone with another nationality than their own every day. And those six are: Peter (App. 6, 02:21), Karen (App. 5, 01:48), Julia (App. 8, 05:00), David (App. 9, 01:28), Olivia (App. 7, 02:10) and Angie (App 10,33:22). Then there’s Camilla, who says that it occurs once or twice a week (App. 3, 02:32). And to Laura it only happens a couple of times every month (App. 4, 01:36). This shows that for the most part, intercultural communication is brought into play daily within the employees’ internal communication. Then it must be worth considering the practice and efficiency of it.

Language

This next section will evolve around all the utterances from the employees that has something to do with *Language*. Previously, in the end of the literature review of intercultural communication, I arranged some intercultural communicative elements under new headlines. I will show these elements here again, as these preliminary elements (in the right-side boxes) might help me in the explanation of the utterances.

<u>Attitude</u> Understanding each other and showing mutual respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Attitudes ▫ Skills of interpreting and relating ▫ Empathy ▫ Respect ▫ Tolerance ▫ Sensitivity ▫ Flexibility ▫ Behavioral flexibility
<u>Relationship building</u> Showing interest in each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Skills of discovery and interaction ▫ Establishing and maintaining relationships ▫ Openness ▫ Identity management ▫ Relationship cultivation
<u>Language</u> Overcoming possible language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Knowledge ▫ Share the communicative burden ▫ Message skills ▫ Interaction management

Fig. 5 – Guiding intercultural communication elements for the analysis

(First shown on page 32)

Now that I will be dealing with *Language* first, then the overall subject is how the employees see and experience the language difference that they inevitably experience in their daily work life, when coworking with other nationalities.

To begin with, I will look at what *Language* they each use in communication situations with a colleague with another national background than their own. I can reveal that there are very different ways to go about it at EWE. First, I will present how the four Danish employees explained this in the interviews.

I asked Camilla what language she uses in these communication situations, and she said: "I do it solely on Danish. [...] the starting point is that I always begin on Danish, and then I can switch if it is necessary." (App. 3, 32:22). She also says that she feels more comfortable speaking in Danish, as she believes that she might be challenged when having to reason professionally on English (App. 3, 37:20). She later adds: "You are not as sophisticated, when it is on a foreign language. It becomes a little bit more basic. And you cannot avoid that it affects the way that people perceive you." (App. 3, 41:49).

When I asked Laura about what language she uses when she speaks to her international colleagues, she gave me a totally different answer than the one I got from Camilla: "It is primarily on English. Now and then in German, if it is a German colleague." (App. 4, 25:02). Right after, I asked her, if she would ever speak Danish to international colleagues. Her answer was a very clear: "No." (App. 4, 25:25). Just like Camilla, Laura admits that she is more relaxed in the communication situation, when she speaks in her native tongue. But she says that she is more than fine with speaking in English, but it does demand more of her. Furthermore, she adds that it does not affect her level of engagement afterwards (App. 11, 29:46).

Karen refers to the internal intercultural communication situation like this: "Mainly, I speak in English or German depending on who it is that I talk to. The Germans we have, to them I speak German. So, it's a mix." (App. 5, 01:48). When I asked her if the language barrier ever affects her engagement level, she responded: "No! Not at all. But if I had to speak French or something, then it probably would affect me, I'm pretty sure." (App. 5, 12:47). To this she adds: "And of course, if you are insecure, then you will not go into details in the same way as you would have, if it was a language that you were skilled at." (App. 5, 27:56).

Peter says that he, like Camilla, speaks Danish to all of his colleagues, and that all colleagues speak Danish to him (App. 6, 29:10 + 31:19). However, he also tells me that he is very accommodating to international coworkers in the sense that he will quickly switch to another language, if this is better for the conversation and easier for the person that he is talking to (10:20). He expresses it like this: "In our office, we have one from Slovakia. To her, we speak English. [...] And the German coworkers at Eurowind in Hobro, to them I speak German to improve my own skills. [...] Then we have some from Poland. Then it is English that we speak." (App. 6, 29:20). He says that he feels most comfortable, when speaking English or Danish, since

these are the languages where he feels that he can express himself best professionally and most confidently (App. 6, 13:06).

This shows that the Danish interviewees have different approaches to the intercultural communication situation. Camilla and Peter will start every conversation by speaking Danish, but simultaneously, they are willing to switch quickly to another language, if this is necessary for the course of the conversation. Laura and Karen on the other hand never starts out by speaking Danish. They always speak either English or German, depending on the person they talk to. Even though, the four of them have different approaches to begin with, they all want to be accommodating by *sharing the communicative burden* with the person they talk to. Furthermore, they add that they feel more comfortable speaking the language, where they have enough skills to reason professionally.

Now, I will present the international employees' expressions about *Language*. Olivia, who is German said that she speaks "All three languages. Danish, English and German." (App. 7, 29:20). And whenever people speak to her, it is in one of those three languages. She tells me that she often works closely with the boss in her job performances and it is always in German (App. 7, 02:52). She adds: "Yeah, for me it's more comfortable if I speak with native speakers. But it's not a big difference, because the Danish colleagues are very friendly." (App. 7, 10:37). However, she does not feel that she is closer connected to the German than to the Danish colleagues. This level of comfort is only in terms of the spoken language (App. 7, 10:37). She also says: [...] I try to talk a little bit more in Danish in the office. But sometimes, it is necessary to switch to English or German. (App. 7, 13:54) She never feels that it disengages her afterwards or in the situation (App. 7, 13:54).

Julia, on the other hand, is the one of the international employees who expresses most difficulty in terms of speaking Danish. She has worked at EWE for seven years, and when she first started, she knew very little Danish and every conversation was hard for her. Now it is better as she has improved from attending Danish language courses and from communicative experiences (App. 8, 05:42). When I asked her, in what language she speaks to her colleagues and boss – and vice versa – she answered: "Danish" (App. 8, 55:27-55:56). She feels more confident now, as she can communicate in both Danish, English and Polish. (App. 8, 14:21). I asked her, when she feels more comfortable. She said: "Maybe when I'm talking English or in Polish, because I can talk quickly and I can try to explain something better. This may be the big difference, yes. Because when I talking in Danish, sometimes I have to think a bit more about what I would like to say. So, it takes time." (App. 8, 15:28) And for this reason, she often switches to English when talking to colleagues (App. 8, 15:28).

David says that he speaks four different languages on a daily basis: “[...] English, German, Polish. Yeah, and Danish.” (App. 9, 01:28). Whenever he speaks to his colleagues or his manager then it is on Danish. (App. 9, 32:59 + 35:18). But when has to call and talk to technicians in another department within EWE, then he switches to one of the three other languages (App. 9, 01:28). He says, that the only communicative situations that can make him feel uncomfortable, is when he must speak German, as this is not his strong side. But Danish is fine for him (App. 9, 42:34).

Angie is from Slovakia, and she only speaks in either English or Slovak. Therefore, she speaks English to her colleagues. This is how she refers to it: “[...] they always talk in English to me. Because I made that clear.” (App. 10, 32:35). “Well, sometimes they try in Danish. But that doesn't go anywhere. So, they have to change.” (App. 10, 34:38). She is very blunt about this, and she justifies speaking English instead of Danish by saying that everybody in her department are already used to speaking English a lot, that EWE is an international company, and that she was hired to speak English and Slovak (App. 10, 27:04 + 33:22). This is how she puts it: “[...] I’m hired because of my ability to understand another language. And that's what I'm doing. So, my entire work is either in Slovak or in English. I don't need Danish for what I'm doing.” (App. 10, 27:04). She also says that she feels more comfortable when speaking to other international coworkers. Not because she prefers them over Danish coworkers, but because of the communicative situation. She explains it like this: “I think I feel more comfortable speaking to the internationals because then I don't feel like they have to change the language they're speaking into English just because of me. Yeah, but other than that, I enjoy talking to my Danish colleagues as much as the others.” (App. 10, 10:34).

From this, it is evident that also these four interviewees feel most comfortable speaking in either their native language or in a language that they master. Three of four will start out by speaking Danish, but will switch to either English or German, if the language barrier becomes too excessive to them. This shows that they want to *share the communicative burden*. The last interviewee does not want to speak in Danish. She will only speak in either English or her native tongue, Slovak. People who want to talk to her will have to adjust to her, which means that she is not taking her part of the communicative burden within the intercultural communication.

The interviewees were also asked about the information that they get from the management, both in terms of how they get it and if it is clear and sufficient. They all tell me about these Friday meetings that they have in EWE, where everybody is gathered and information about all sorts of things is shared, both information coming from the management, but also information from the different departments. The chosen language for these meetings is Danish. These meetings are perceived and experienced differently.

Laura says that she thinks that the internal intercultural communication could be better and that they sometimes translate some of the topics on the Friday meetings into English, but that it happens very last minute and sporadic and not everything is translated. There might be some information that the internal employees will miss out on (App. 4, 21:11). She says this about the information on the Friday meetings: “[...] information coming from board meetings and such, where the boss informs about it on the Friday meeting. That will be translated into English. But obviously, all the discussions that arise, they are not translated into English.” (App 4, 32:14). Olivia explains her experience with the Friday meetings like this: “[...] a meeting with all the employees from Hobro. Then it’s in Danish and I don’t understand everything, or not 100 percent. Then it’s a little bit uncomfortable. But then I can ask my colleagues.” (App. 7, 36:25). Afterwards I asked her, if it affected her level of engagement. To this, she said no. Julia has a similar description of the Friday meetings: “[...] every Friday we have like morning, morning coffee, in this like meeting for all employees in all, you know, canteen. And all our managers or management, if they have something, what they would like to share with us, they talking about this. Yes. And of course, sometimes, it’s something, you know, difficult... yes...So I’m missing some extra, you know, explanation, in English, for example. But I use my good colleagues in department and they always can help me and, you know, explain this... what they talk about.” (App, 8, 32:23) Afterwards she said that it affected her engagement level because she is confused and afraid that she did not get all the details (App. 8, 34:12). Later in the interview, she adds: “[...] when somebody in our company is quite new and only with English language, it’s not possible to understand what’s going on on this meeting.” (App. 8, 36:59) Both Olivia, Julia and find the information coming from the management important, and therefore the Friday meetings are also important to them. Furthermore, David says this about the information that they get at EWE: “[...] I think we are quite okay informed about what's going on both here and in Denmark, but also in the other countries where we operate.” (App. 9, 20:04). Afterwards I asked him, if it affects his level of engagement. He said: “Yes, I think so. Because I think it's important to know that the work you do that it affects the general picture.” (App. 9, 21:11). This shows that the internal intercultural communication is important in terms of employees’ engagement level. Also, this shows that the internal communication element *Strategies, goals and values* are important to the employees, and if they do not understand the information that they get, this element will be missing.

When speaking of internal communication in general, Laura says that information coming from the management is always on both Danish and English (App. 4, 35:02) It is only the Friday meetings that are in Danish only. However, information coming from colleagues and other departments can sometimes be on Danish and with no translation to English (App. 4, 36:17). Julia tells me something a little different: “If this information are for all, you know, employees from all countries, so they get, you know, mail in English, of

course. But if this information are only, you know, useful or important only for us in Danish in Hobro office, so of course, everything is in Danish.” (App. 8, 31:35). When I asked her, if she understands everything, she says: “Sometimes, I have some some some information that I didn’t understand correctly or... Or all information, yeah.” (App. 8, 32:23). Talking about internal communication and international employees, Camilla admits: “I can be in doubt if there might sit a few who do not totally understand it. But it is a fine balance. Should it be done in English then, if there are only a few? There are probably more Danish people who will not understand it in English then. Maybe, there should be more things that were done a little bit more conscious and targeted at the international.” (App. 3, 28:50).

These utterances about the information level within the internal intercultural communication show me that the internal communication element *Support* is somewhat missing, since some employees express that they do not understand the message and it makes them uncomfortable.

Lost in translation

This takes me to the next intercultural communication element, namely *Lost in translation*. About this, Camilla says: “I think that some things can get lost in the communication, when you choose to speak in Danish. [...] I don’t know if they get all the details. I can be in doubt about that.” (App. 3, 32:22) Karen says that she never really feels that anything gets lost in translation. (App.5, 24:01) Whereas, Peter says: “Yes. Most definitely.” (App. 6, 29:20). He adds that he always tries to clear the misunderstanding right away and that it does not affect his level of engagement. (App.6, 29:20). David says that he and his colleagues avoids the problem by just switching to English, whenever speaking in Danish gets difficult in terms of having to explain something to each other (App. 9, 07:31). Olivia says that sometimes something goes missing from the meaning, because she thinks her Danish and English is not that good. But it does not disengage her in her work. She sees it as a learning experience (App. 7, 29:20). Julia says that her Danish is much better than before, but that misunderstandings still occur sometimes (App. 8, 21:46) As mentioned earlier Julia also experiences difficulties in understanding everything at the Danish spoken Friday meeting and this affects her engagement level sometimes (App.8, 32:23-34:12). She also tells me about a situation, where a misunderstanding occurs between her and another employee and they end up both being upset, because they each misunderstood the meaning of the conversation (App. 8, 57:19). This is how the situation affected her afterwards: “[...] I am thinking about the situation very long time. Yeah, so it means that everything always after the situation is in my head. Yeah, yeah. So, I cannot, you know, forget about this very quick.” (App. 8, 57:19). Angie also believes that there is some sort of language barrier and that sometimes things are misunderstood, since she only speaks English and not Danish (App. 10, 09:45).

Attitude

All interviewees were asked, if they think that they act differently, whenever they talk to a colleague that has another nationality than their own (App. 2, page 2). Camilla says: “No. I don’t do that. Perhaps there can be something with the language that you can be inhibited by in some way. But not otherwise.” (App. 3, 11:04) Later, she tells that whenever she speaks to an international coworker, then she tries to slow down the pace of her communication. And she is aware to stop herself from taking over the conversation, if she feels that it is going too slow (App. 3, 38:18).

Julia feels that it is easier to talk to other international colleagues as opposed to talking to a Danish colleague: “[...] this communication with international employees, we have like the same problems, the same challenges. So, I think we understood together better.” (App. 8, 12:22). But she also says, that she feels comfortable in her department: “[...] in my department, we are very open for all international employees. So, in my department it is no problem and always communication is going great (App. 8, 53:56). Laura expresses that most people within the company are relatively good at English and that most people show flexibility in terms of language, when speaking to each other (App. 4, 10:37). In regard to herself, she says: “I think it just comes naturally to me. Ever since I started here, there has always been coworkers with another nationality, and it really is a relatively big part of the company.” (App. 4, 31:24).

Karen says that there is no difference in her attitude whether she speaks to a Danish or German colleague. It’s the same for her. (App. 5, 10:02-11:41). She also says: “[...] I see all as being colleagues regardless of the person being from Romania, Poland or Germany. I speak to all colleagues on equal terms.” (App. 5, 27: 56). As mentioned earlier, Peter is also very flexible and accommodating when speaking to international coworkers (Ap. 6, 10:20). David also mentions this flexibility, and talks about this Slovakian employee who is not good at Danish: “[...] I think it's good that even though we are majority Danish speaking in this company, it's still not a problem for people to communicate in English if they know that you cannot speak Danish.” (App. 9, 23:38). Peter works with this Slovak (Angie), and even though he is very accommodating, then it provokes him that she does not try to accommodate her Danish colleagues. This is what Peter says about it: “[...] she only wants to communicate in English. So, I if we want to talk to her then it has to be in English. Then maybe it would be more respectful also that when everybody else speaks Danish, and she takes Danish lessons, that she maybe also talked Danish. Or just tried. Or else, she will never get better. So, that seems a bit provocative.” (App. 6, 42:40). This is how Angie says about her only speaking in English: “[...] it's embedded in Eurowind that the employees speak other languages. Day to day. It's not like when they're speaking to me, then it's like a once in a week time thing. We are constantly talking and having meetings with people across of Europe. So, I don't believe that for my company that that’s something that they are not used to or need to adapt.” (App. 10, 30:21). She, also says that she thinks that her colleagues

like to practice English, but she also admits: “[...] you might be right that if I would be speaking in Danish, then I would interact with more of them because not everyone speaks perfect English. But I don't think it affects the way people view me.” (App. 10, 14:40).

This shows that the *Attitude* for most part is good in terms of intercultural communication. However, Peter and Angie are not in agreement about the flexibility and attitude in terms of trying to speak another language to accommodate others.

Corporate internal language

After going through most of the analysis for research question 2, it is obvious that there's no broad agreement among the interviewees on how and in what language to communicate internally in terms of being a company with a diverse workforce. Therefore, the intercultural communication element *Corporate internal language* seems very relevant.

When I ask Camilla if they take it into consideration at EWE that they have international employees, she says: “No, it's nothing that we think about. It is nothing that we adjust our communication to. At least, we have not done it. I am not sure that it is necessary here. Not in Hobro.” (App. 3, 30:55) She says that they are very concerned about their external language to other countries, but they do not have a plan for the internal communication in the same way (App. 3, 30:55). She says that she is very aware that if they get more international employees, they will have to adjust their internal communication. But she does not think that seven international employees are enough in terms of makes such big changes yet (App. 3, 39:12). Furthermore, Camilla does not think that is time for EWE to have English as their corporate language, as she believes that some of the people in the management might not be comfortable with it. (App. 3, 41:49). However, she also says this: “In my opinion, you cannot just shrug it off that we have international people. Which I think that we might have done.” (App. 3, 47:51).

Karen says that all communication at EWE is already adjusted to the international employees. But she also says that, if they have a big meeting and only one of the attendants are international, then it is acceptable that the meeting is in Danish. I asked her, where one would draw the line. She thinks that it depends on the situation and how many people being present. She supports her opinion by saying that all the internal employees all understand and speak Danish at some level, so it is not a problem (App. 5, 28:39).

Peter argues that it is important that: “[...] whenever a company decide on an internal language or corporate language or whatever you call it, then you have to make sure that the coworkers that you recruit also have the language skills to be able to understand the communication coming from EWE.” (App. 6, 36:37). Right after, I ask him what the corporate language is internally. Then he says: “I actually don't know,

to be honest. It is the language that is mostly employed, when you speak.” (App. 6, 36:37). It is ironic that Peter, who previously in the analysis advocates intensely for everybody being able to speak Danish, is not sure what the *corporate internal language* is.

David expresses his perceptions of the internal intercultural communication like this: “Well, I think it's quite good. I mean, in our office, the business language, the day to day language is Danish. So, all except one colleague speak Danish. So, I guess for her it's an issue.” (App. 9, 30:40). However, David argues that: “[...] I think it's important to understand to be open to the person from the other culture and be open to, for example, speaking English if the person is not, does not feel comfortable in speaking Danish.” (App. 9, 45:24). He believes that the internal intercultural is functioning quite well (App. 9, 47:02-47:18).

Angie says that she thinks EWE is doing a good job in terms of internal intercultural communication. She thinks it is important to acknowledge the international employee's presence. However, she also says: “I don't think the means of communication need to change that much in order to be able to communicate.” (App. 10, 42:24).

All interviewees refer to the fact that EWE offers to pay for Danish language courses for all international employees and also encourage them to attend (App.4, 17:20) (App. 6, 42:40) (App. 10, 23:31). The offer is optional, but I sense that there is an underlying unwritten rule that one should attend and complete these courses. Julia is an example of that. When she started working at EWE, it was very difficult for her to communicate with her colleagues, as she had a very sparse vocabulary in Danish (App. 8, 05:42) This is how she experienced it: “[...] sometimes it was very difficult for me, because I haven't enough word how to describe what I need to, what I have to do, what should I do, and something like that. So, it was a big challenge for me to do my job and in the same time doing job good.” (App. 8, 05:42) Sometimes it resulted in her doing tasks for other colleagues because she was afraid to speak up, because she was nervous to make linguistic mistakes, when talking in Danish (App. 8, 11:03). About the pressure to learn Danish, she says: “[...] I cannot tell you that somebody from company told me, I mean, from management or from my department boss, that I have to talk in Danish. No. No. But you know, I have had some challenge with some colleagues from my company, that they push me to start talk in Danish. And it was very hard to me. Especially when I were in Denmark a couple of months and they push me more, more, more, more... And it was very frustrated for me, because I am very ambitious person and when I get, you know, critique or something like that, I feel very bad. Very very bad. Every day it was challenge for me.” (App. 8, 15:28). Afterwards she told me that her colleagues had told her that, when she is Denmark, then she has to speak in Danish, and they that would not speak English to her. Therefore, she attended the Danish lessons

because of the pressure from the colleagues (App. 8, 15:28). She expressed this whole situation as being very stressful for her (App. 8, 36:59).

On the contrary, Olivia experienced her start at EWE much differently: “The first year, maybe where I didn’t understand Danish. So, they were very friendly. So, they talked with me in English.” (App. 7, 38:29).

After going through the experiences and perceptions that each of the interviewees have with EWE’s internal intercultural communication, it is obvious that there is some confusion about what the *Corporate internal language* is at the office in Hobro. This causes some unfortunate situations for some of the interviewees, especially Julia. But, also for Peter and Angie, who have opposite definitions of which language use that is the most proper at EWE. In terms of the internal communication element *Support*, I believe that this uncertainty about the language use can trigger a feeling of not being supported – neither from the management nor from coworkers. In Julia’s case, she was not met with support, as the employees forced her to learn and start talking Danish (App. 8, 36:59). I also think that the internal communication element *Voice* is worth mentioning here, as this whole thing with language barriers and learning new languages perhaps can affect the level of security and willingness to speak up for some international employees. Julia experienced this in the beginning of her employment, and it was caused by her insecurity in terms of speaking Danish (App. 8, 36:59). Possibly the internal communication element *Identification* has a role as well. If the international employees have a hard time connecting with the used language and therefore with their coworkers and job tasks. Then they might have a harder time identifying themselves with the company.

5.2.1 Summing up

At first, it was presented that six of the eight interviewees work with a coworker with another nationality than their own daily. This shows that it is worth investigating the practice and efficiency of the internal intercultural communication at EWE.

Looking at the intercultural communication element *Language*, it shows that the employees have very different views on and approaches to how to deal with language in the communication situations that takes place between colleagues with different national backgrounds. The Danish coworkers have much contradictory ways to begin the conversation with international colleagues. Two of them begin on the conversation in Danish, but are willing to switch to another language, if this is better for the conversation. Whereas the other two starts by speaking the language that is best for the international coworker. They all want to *share the communicative burden*, even though the approaches are dissimilar. Looking at the utterances from the international coworkers, three out of four want to *share the communicative burden*.

They all start out in Danish and they are willing to switch language if necessary. By starting the conversation in Danish, they have already accommodated their Danish colleagues in the situation. By contrast, one of the international employees insist on only speaking English and therefore she does not take her share of the communicative burden. All eight interviewees express that they feel more comfortable speaking in a language where they feel skilled enough to be able to reason professionally.

In terms of information about EWE, at least two of the international employees feel a bit cut off from the information that all employees are given on EWE's Friday meetings. The meeting is in Danish with few translations into English. It makes them feel uncomfortable and one of them even feel disengaged afterwards. This is unfortunate, since the employees express that information and the internal communication element *Strategy, goals and values* is important for their level of engagement. Two of the Danish employees admit that the internal intercultural communication could be better. Also, they acknowledge that fact that often something is *Lost in translation*, when the spoken language is Danish. Also, some of the international employees are affected by this in terms of their engagement level. This all shows that the internal communication element *Support* is sometimes somewhat missing in the internal intercultural communication.

Concerning *Attitude*, for the most part the employees express openness and flexibility towards colleagues with another national background. They say that they do not act differently whether it is a Danish colleague or an international colleague that they talk to. However, there is the disagreement between two of the employees, as one of them is not flexible and accommodating in her language, and this provokes the other employee, as he believes that it is a matter of give and take.

About *Corporate internal language*, I discovered that there is confusion as to which language that is proper to use within internal intercultural communication at EWE. Some of the interviewees think that everything is going great, and that there is no reason to make English the corporate language, when the number of international employees at the company is still so low. They also think that some of the Danish coworkers will not be ready for it. One of the interviewees say that she thinks that it is not anything that they can just shrug off, but she also says that it is not yet necessary to adjust the communication to international employees.

EWE offers to pay for Danish language courses for all international employees. It is optional for the international employees, if they want to attend. But utterances about both the interviewees' opinions and their experiences show that it is expected from the international employees that they attend and begin speaking Danish. This pressure is not coming from the management, but from the coworkers. The uncertainty about the *Corporate internal language* and the pressure with the Danish lessons show that the

three internal communication elements *Support*, *Voice* and *identification* are lacking for some of the employees.

6 Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings from the two separate parts of analyses in relation to the three dimensions of the theoretical framework: employee engagement, internal communication and intercultural communication. I will discuss the findings of the research in order to see if the research areas chosen for the theoretical framework are as interrelated, as the literature says that they are. Lastly, I will share my thoughts about the research and ideas for further research.

In the first research question, I focused on investigating the elements of internal communication that could affect employees' level of engagement at Eurowind, and how this would come to show. The research of this thesis confirms that internal communication plays a big part in terms of employee's level of engagement in their daily job performances. In almost all of the communication situations, the internal communication elements *Support and Voice* could be applied and turned out to be just as important as Ruck and Welch (2012) had highlighted them to be. It was mentioned in the theoretical framework, that three out of the six internal communication elements were critical for employee engagement. The three elements are *Support*, *Voice* and *Identification*. The analysis showed that these three elements were more present than the three other elements (*Role*, *Performance* and *Strategy, goals and values*.) However, I believe, that these three less shown elements still are important in terms employee engagement. But somehow the elements *Support* and *Voice* seem to present and have a role in all communicative situations to some degree. The employees expressed that the feeling of being listened to and simultaneously being supported in the manner of having a voice, was what affected the employees' level of engagement the most. Being met with support and accommodation, whether it was from a colleague, boss or manager, was shown to be really vital for the employee's mood and their level of engagement. Situations that had made employees feel less engaged, were situations where employees had not been listened to and taken seriously in their opinions. Also, insufficient communication was proven to lead to frustration and affect the employee's level of engagement to the lesser.

In terms of feeling engaged, it was important for the employees at EWE to feel that their efforts were supported and appreciated, that their thoughts were listened to and that they mattered. Also, clear information on job tasks was preferred, but not necessarily decisive for the engagement level. All employees described EWE as having a culture, where it is okay, and for the most part necessary, to check up on the exact description about a certain task. This did not seem to bother anyone at EWE, nor affect their engagement. For the most part the employees express satisfaction with the internal communication

between the colleagues. However, language differences and miscommunication have caused stress and frustration for some, and this was proven to affect their level of engagement. Most employees expressed that they enjoyed working with other colleagues, regardless of nationality, and to generate ideas together. They like that everybody is involved on equal terms in the task, that everybody is being listened to, and that everybody is as much engaged as themselves. Some of the employees expressed that getting feedback on their performances was important to them and gave them meaning and engagement in future job performances.

Some of the dimensions within employee engagement were present more than others. The employee engagement elements *Management style and process*, *Interpersonal relationships*, *Work interactions* and *Group and intergroup dynamics* were found to be most relevant in this thesis' research. The interaction between the people in the communication situation is what seems to affect the employees the most. *Role characteristics* was also mentioned several times in the interviews. However, it seemed that the need for having a role within a job performance or within the company that was meaningful for the employee, was not determined by how the internal communication was carried out. The employee engagement element *Individual insecurity* showed to be less present than expected. However, I also believe that this element depends a lot on personal traits and individual levels of resistance.

The second part of the analysis, which was steered by research question 2, dealt with the perceptions that the employees at EWE have of the internal intercultural communication. It showed that the chosen language for the intercultural conversations was viewed upon differently among the employees. Some Danish employees would start each conversation in Danish and perhaps later on switch to another language, then others would start by using a language that they knew would be easier for the person, they were talking to. But no matter what the initial approach was for all eight interviewees, they all wanted to be accommodating and they all shared the communicative burden between them. There was only one of the international employees that did not want to share the communicative burden. And it was evident that this affected both the communication and the relationship with some of the other employees. In terms of language barriers, neither of the eight interviewees saw this a problem, as they all always are willing to explain something again – and seven of them are willing to switch the language

The research showed that within intercultural communication, attitude is key. This is also what many of the academics advocated for in the literature view, namely that the most important thing in intercultural communication is to show empathy, respect, openness and flexibility towards other people.

Another element of intercultural communication that was proven important in this research was the ability and willingness to share the communicative burden within the intercultural interaction. All except one of the interviewees expressed great willingness in doing so. The person, who was unwilling, was by one of the other employees seen as being provocative and disrespectful. To her defense, there was no clear policy of language use internally in the company. This brings me to a subject that was frequently mentioned: *Corporate internal language*. The uncertainty about this was very clear, when going through the data collection. It showed that there was no rule as to whether the employees should speak in either Danish or English. But since EWE offers to pay for Danish language courses, it is perceived by many as mandatory for the international employees to attend and to start speaking Danish on a daily basis.

The employees had very different perceptions of what the internal language within the company was. Some said Danish and some said English. Every Friday, EWE has a big corporate information meeting for all employees, which is in Danish. All international interviewees expressed that this could be somewhat problematic for new international colleagues until they have learned Danish. The Danish interviewees justify the meetings being in Danish by saying that it is okay to do it like this, since EWE has many Danish colleagues and not so many international. However, the Danish interviewees also express that there could be done more to accommodate the internal colleagues. But to take the step and make English the language to use internally is too big a step, in their opinion. All eight interviewees express that they feel most comfortable speaking in their native tongue or in a language in which they feel confident enough to reason professionally. Perhaps this could be the reason that the Danish coworkers do not want to change the internal language to English.

Looking at the intercultural communication elements that were chosen for the theoretical foundation, then three new research elements were added to the intercultural communication part of the theoretical framework, since three new codes were found during the coding process. It was unexpected and interesting that one of the newly added research elements showed to have a great impact within the entire research. Here I am referring to the element *Corporate internal language*. Going into the research, I had no idea that the confusion caused by the missing of clear rules in terms of internal language should take up so much space and affect the employees in so many situations. This was an eye-opener to me.

In terms of analysing the data collection by using the intercultural communication elements, it was surprisingly easy to find the intercultural communication elements in the data collection. Prior to the coding process, I had been nervous that some of the elements were not tangible enough. For example, the element *Attitude*. But I experienced two things. First of all, the element *Attitude* was present in almost all

expressions that dealt with intercultural communication situations. Second, the utterances were easier to grasp and analyse than first anticipated.

Thoughts and further research

As Kahn and Welch also have discussed in their research about employee engagement, then there will inevitably also be other things than internal communication that affects a person's level of engagement. Kahn also have the elements within his theory, which are concerned with a person's level of availability and personal distractions, which can affect a person's level of engagement. These were not considered in this thesis, as I focused purely on internal communication. However, there must other things that also affects how receptive each person is for these influences. Some people may be more capable of resistance than others. And different tempers and personality traits must also play a factor in these situations. People will inevitably react differently. When I have been looking at the internal communication, I have mainly been looking at how interactional processes between two or more people can affect a person's level of engagement. But there must also be other factors that can affect the receptiveness that each person has. Influences that are more individual and personal, and not externally imposed.

Another interesting area to discover further would be the problematic nature of figuring out the right time for a company to go ahead and change their internal language in order to accommodate employees with another national background than those of the main group within the workforce. It could be interesting to research which criteria that would be deemed decisive in this matter. In this case with EWE, some of the Danish interviewees argue that it is a matter of how many international employees the company holds. But then it could be really interesting to investigate who and what decides when where to make the change.

7 Conclusion

Now, I will conclude on the knowledge that the research questions helped me withdraw from the data in the analysis. And in order to do that, I will present the problem statement, as this is the question that I will be answering in the conclusion:

How does internal intercultural communication affect the employee's engagement in a company with employees with different national backgrounds such as Eurowind Energy?

First of all, it was very clear throughout the analysis that what mattered the most for all employees and their level of engagement was the feeling of being listened to and experiencing that one's meanings matter. It was also important for all to feel support from both managers and coworkers.

The research showed that all employees were most comfortable speaking in their mother tongue or in any other language that they felt that they mastered well enough to reason professionally. But despite of this, most of the interviewees told me about a willingness among all coworkers to switch language and having an attitude of being flexible in terms of language – and thereby sharing the communicative burden. This attitude made the internal intercultural communication feasible and effective. And this affected the employees' engagement positively.

Furthermore, all employees expressed that they felt mostly engaged in situations, where they worked with colleagues, who were invested in the coworking job performance. And for this to function the best, it is important that the internal intercultural communication does not come in the way. Therefore, sharing the communicative burden was proven to be decisive.

The internal intercultural communication was proven to affect mostly the international employees' engagement. This mostly occurred in situations where the language barrier would keep them from fully understanding the information that was given – or conversations with misunderstandings that was caused by the language barrier. This would for some of the international employees affect their engagement level to a negative sense.

The fact that Eurowind Energy has no clear language policy in terms of the internal corporate language, caused the internal intercultural communication to be something that sometimes made all employees confused about what to think and how to act in various situations. It also caused a little

bit of controversy between two of the employees, as they view the language question differently.

Situations like these with unclarity does not enhance the employees' engagement level.

The research also showed that mastering internal intercultural communication is not just a matter of having language skills, it is just as much, and maybe even more, a matter of showing the right attitude in the communication situation – by showing empathy, respect, openness and flexibility towards other people. Furthermore, it is evident from the research that there is not only a connection between internal communication and employee engagement. There is also a connection between intercultural communication and employee engagement. Many different situations in the research proves this. For example, the situations with misunderstandings because of the language barriers. Some employees were affected by the situations afterwards to the extent that it lowered their level of engagement. Moreover, the international employees experienced difficulties when EWE would have company information meetings in Danish. This created confusion for the international employees and affected their engagement level negatively. Also, one of the interviewees felt pressured by the colleagues to learn Danish. This was not an experience that showed support, neither did it enhance her level of engagement. Instead it made her feel insecure about herself and her language skills.

I can hereby conclude that internal intercultural communication affects the employees at EWE both positively and negatively. Furthermore, it is evident that attitude and support go a long way. And it is important for employees within a company that has a multinational workforce that there is some sort of language policy to follow.

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