A Narrative Study of Professional Identity: How Employees at Roima Intelligence Perceive Their Professional Identities in the Context of English as Corporate Language

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Abstract

The following thesis examines the field of English as a corporate lingua franca and how it may influence employees not native in English. In this regard, the overall focus is on the influence English as a corporate language may have one employees' perception of their own professional identities. This field of research is of significant relevance, as English is becoming increasingly integrated in international business, for which reason a growing number of employees are confronted with English on an everyday basis. Thus, it is important to understand the implications the implementation of a corporate language may have on a company's internal stakeholders, as these constitute an essential resource for the companies.

In the light of these considerations, this paper sets out to examine how English influences employees' perception of their own professional identities with a departure in a parent company and its subsidiary. The aim is to uncover both negative and positive consequences of implementing a corporate language as well as to examine to what extent and for how long these may impact employees. This is achieved through a qualitative approach departing in a philosophical framework of social constructivism and further with the inclusion of qualitative research methods, as it relies on narrative and discursive methods. The data analysed in this paper derives from semi-structured interviews with current employees at Roima Intelligence in both Denmark and Finland.

This study found that the impact English as a corporate language may have on employees differs dependent on the individual, as not all are influenced. Nevertheless, some tendencies were identified, as the participants tended to establish a parallel professional identity to their native-speaking one, thereby suggesting a contextual identity. Furthermore, through a comparison of the Finnish and Danish participants it was derived that English's impact on the professional identities decreased over time, which further occurred parallel to a shift in their narratives from being a counternarrative to supporting the notion of a corporate language. Across the participants it was further found that English may limit one's development in terms of one's native-speaking professional identity, thereby negatively affecting both the individual and the company. Lastly, a key finding was that English appears to enhance a them versus us notion between the parent company and the subsidiary, which in turn may result in challenges for both the professional identities and collaboration across departments.

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1. Introduction

It may be redundant to state that companies have become increasingly internationalised within the past two decades, as they operate across 'borders' in a broad understanding of the word. The tendency to expand across markets is not a new phenomenon, as companies have expanded to secure markets for decades (Prohorovs 2022). However, companies' increased presence on different markets may result in certain challenges when expanding, such as communicative and cultural boundaries. Thus, the employees both at subsidiaries and parent companies may experience an integration process as challenging to their professional identity, as they are placed in unfamiliar contexts (Aichhorn & Puck 2017). This context may not align with the employee's perception of their skills or can establish a communicative arena in which the employee feels insufficient. This may then affect the company's development if it does not consider the needs of its employees, as the professional identity of the individual is challenged, thereby potentially resulting in ineffectiveness or low job satisfaction (Popova-Nowak 2010).

Expansion processes may be of an organic or inorganic nature; however, challenges may occur across both strategies. As mentioned, one of these challenges is the communicative distance that can result from language barriers between departments when they do not share a common language (Feely & Harzing 2003). In particular, an inorganic takeover may result in barriers, as certain forms of communication as well as procedures may already be rooted within the subsidiary resulting in uncertainty (Cheng & Seeger 2012). The uncertainty may manifest itself through one's perception of own professional skills if these are challenged by communication. For instance, the technical terminology of an employee may be challenged when communication changes language (Aichhorn & Puck 2017).

In the light of the possible language barriers, a communicative medium is required for the company to operate across its divisions and work towards the same goal in a cohesive manner (Feely & Harzing 2003). Following the logic by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999), this is frequently achieved through the implementation of a corporate language, as a practice of translation brings its own challenges. The medium chosen is typically English, as the language is widely spoken and acknowledged as the lingua franca across several industries. The term lingua franca is widely accepted as describing a shared language by groups of different linguistic backgrounds not corresponding to the one utilised as the shared language (Shenkar, Luo & Chi 2014). Thus, numerous companies decide on English as their corporate language (Kankaanranta et al. 2018).

Although English is widely spoken, it does not entail that familiarity is equal among speakers of the language. In this sense those who engage in communication in English may not be entering conversations on the same terms, thereby establishing an imbalance of the actors (Aichhorn & Puck 2017). This may in turn result in various consequences that potentially outweigh the benefits of a shared corporate language. Among the consequences, scholars such as Aichhorn & Puck (2017) have argued that individuals' perception of their own professional identity or sense of status may be influenced in a negative manner. Skjeggestad et al. (2017) observed that language barriers may lead to others questioning the competency of employees with less language proficiency. Furthermore, this sense of professional identity may result in additional consequences. For instance, research, such Rosales's (2021) study, suggests that the phenomenon of impostor syndrome may occur with the individual employee, as they feel insufficient for their role. This may manifest itself through a decreased sense of professional identity when the employee does not perceive their communicative abilities adequate in terms of technical terminology. Thus, challenges may arise as corporate languages are implemented, affecting both the individual and the company. This essentialises the importance of management and IHRM when expanding to new markets, as negligence in a communicative regard may lead to consequences for the involved parties.

In continuation of the effects English as corporate lingua franca may have one the individual's perception of professional identity and the company's bottom line, communication in English may likewise affect the social aspect of the employees (Skjeggestad et al. 2017). This may then result in a distance between employees with different language proficiencies, thereby resulting in group formations. Studies have likewise suggested that professional identity may influence employee engagement and participation, thus affecting the company's bottom line (Popova-Nowak 2010). This may then lead to loss of knowledge, as the employees do not interact with each other in a manner that may encourage knowledge sharing, thereby potentially reduce a company's knowledge output.

As the world becomes increasingly globalised and companies expand, the tendency to utilise English as corporate language may likewise increase. Therefore, this area is a relevant field of study, as an understanding of the consequences of this choice is required to navigate across markets. Studies suggest that management plays an essential role in terms of successful company integration such as knowledge sharing and communication (Aguilera & Dencker 2004). Similarly, English as a corporate language may influence professional identity, which indicates that these areas are interconnected. This in turn suggests that for the company to successfully navigate foreign markets, their internal communications must be considered prior to and during the integration process (Aguilera & Dencker 2004). Therefore, the interdependence between business success, corporate communication and professional identity are essential to understand. These considerations have led to the following research question:

How is employees' perception of professional identity impacted when English functions as a corporate lingua franca between a parent company and its subsidiaries?

The following sections outlines the theoretical framework of professional identity and English as a corporate lingua franca. Subsequently, the methodological considerations as well as the research design are presented. In continuation of this, the method of analysis will be presented following an introduction to the field of narrative studies. The data derives from interviews with employees at Roima Intelligence (Roima Int.) and its subsidiary, Roima Denmark (Roima DK), which has recently been acquired. The narratives in these interviews will be analysed according to the perspectives presented by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou. The findings will be discussed in relation to the perspectives presented in the literature reviews and suggestions for Roima Intelligence's case will be discussed. Lastly, the paper will discuss suggestions which top-management in companies could consider prior to implementing English as a corporate language to ensure efficiency, employee satisfaction and low turnover rates.

2. Philosophy of Science

The following section addresses the philosophy of science which forms the foundation for this study. Furthermore, the ontological and epistemological standpoints are presented. The aim is to account for how social constructivism contributes to this paper as well as how it may influence the methodology. This perspective was chosen as this paper is interested in the perception of professional identities as well as how it is constructed through narratives, which are possible to examine from this understanding.

2.1 Social Constructivism

At a fundamental level, a social constructivist perspective views the world as a construct which is shaped in social interactions, suggesting that objectivity does not occur, as knowledge is co-created in interaction and may differ between individuals (Colin & Køppe 2014). This means that the perspective assumes that each individual has a unique interpretation of the world, as it depends on their interactions throughout life (Colin & Køppe 2014). In addition to knowledge being created through interaction, social constructivism further suggests that individuals learn through interactions, which is then what contributes to the knowledge creation. Thus, it is assumed that learning is a constant social process. It should be noted that the interactions which help co-construct knowledge are not solely with other individuals but can likewise be with the environment in which one finds themselves (Colin & Køppe 2014).

In terms of this paper, social constructivism affects which methodological choices made, as not all types of data or methods of analysis are suitable for this perspective. Since the perspective highlights that knowledge is constructed through social interactions, it likewise implies that research should focus its attention to the process rather than the knowledge itself (Colin & Køppe 2014). In this regard, social constructivism tends to rely on qualitative research methods, which further includes qualitative data. Thus, the theoretical understandings in which this study departs is rooted in social constructivism, as it is assumed that identity is constructed through interactions and not an intangible entity which does not change over time (Carr 2021). In terms of methods and data, qualitative approaches have likewise been taken, as the study departs in semi-structured interviews and analyses these through narrative and discursive analytical tools. The philosophical understanding of this paper will, in addition to determining the methodological choices, further have implications for which phenomena are observed as well as how these are understood.

2.2 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

In terms of epistemology, this is concerned with the nature of knowledge, justifications, and beliefs (Blackburn 2016). In particular, a distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is embedded in this term. It is therefore a framework in which one can understand how knowledge is produced, depending on which stance on takes in terms of objectivity and subjectivity (Levers 2013). With objectivity the assumption is that absolute truth can be claimed, as the world is independent of the understandings of individuals (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012). On the other hand, subjectivity in this regard refers to the notion that knowledge is influenced by the individual. The inclusion of a social constructivist understanding entails that a subjective stance is taken, as it is assumed that there is no absolute truth, but rather numerous 'true' perceptions of the world, in the sense that they are true to each individual.

In relation to ontology, this is concerned with the world and categorising elements in it. In this regard, it is related to realism and relativism, as these assumptions changes how the world may be categorised. The former views the world as independent of individuals' understandings, which means that it may be observed objectively, thereby indicating the presence of an absolute truth (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013). In contrast, the latter views the world as relative to individuals, which suggests that there is no such thing as truth, since the world is relative to who is perceiving it (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013). Due to the social constructivist nature of this paper, the assumption that the world is relative is adhered to, as the focus is not on what the professional identities of the participants are, but rather on how and why they are narrated as they are.

3. Literature Reviews

The following sections depart in two areas of research: professional identity and English as lingua franca (ELF). Research within these two areas will be discussed to determine recurring themes and debates. The two fields will then serve as the theoretical background for this paper, as they constitute the context in which this study unfolds.

3.1 Professional Identity

Prior to exploring the field of professional identity, one needs a fundamental understanding of identity itself. This term is relatively broad and abstract; however, consensus appears to be that identity is in a constant state of change for the individual and further defines how one sees oneself in social contexts (Carr 2021). Furthermore, the term encompasses a notion that an entity with certain characteristics exist, meaning that it describes an individual with certain traits that distinguishes them from other individuals (Bothma et al. 2015). One's identity may therefore differ, dependent on the social situation, as these constitutes different groups to which one can assert oneself in (Carr 2021). In this regard, Bothma et al. (2015) described how interaction may initiate change in identity. Nevertheless, scholars have further argued that there are certain aspects of one's identity, which are part of a deeply engraved context that is relatively constant, such as self-biography (Venn 2020). Thus, certain identity markers are independent of the current social context, as they relate to the past. Regardless of the status of identity markers as core or changing, studies have shown that individuals insert themselves as "the "who" of action" (Venn 2020), for which reason their identity is asserted into their narratives. This may further be the case in terms of one's perception of own professional identity, which is dependent on how the 'who' interprets and narrates themselves in a specific professional context.

In relation to the term professional identity, one must be aware that some scholars use different terms encompassing the same notion, such as work identity or career identity (Kasperiuniene & Zydziunaite 2019). This paper adheres to the term professional identity. Furthermore, a distinction between careers and jobs is required, as a professional here is defined as one with specialised knowledge within their area of expertise, whereas jobs may not necessarily require industry specific knowledge or training. Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Gunnarsson (2009) argue that anyone who is paid for their services are professionals.

As early as 1988, Abbott described how changing environments, both externally and internally, may influence professions. In continuation, he defines professions as dependent on the specific problems they work with. For instance, a common problem or area for marketing professionals is product or company branding, which then allows one to group them into a marketing profession. As a profession relates to specific problems, then arguably there are also specific characteristics for each profession, which may be manifested through the professionals' identities. According to Kasperiuniene and Zydziunaite (2019), professional identity is "a homogeneous whole of the professional and personal self." This aligns with Meijers' (1998, 1) notion of career identity as a "structure of meaning", where the employee connects their personal competencies and motivations with their organisational role or an ideal role corresponding to their own perception of ability. It is further argued that the formation of a professional identity is a social learning process, which once more emphasises the importance of interaction in identity development. The understanding of professional identity as an alignment between capabilities and roles is further resonated in Popova-Nowak's 2010 paper, as she suggests that it can be defined as self-perception in the context of one's work. The professional identity in this sense reflects one's perception of capabilities in terms of specific work-related tasks. Popova-Nowak goes on to distinguish between occupational identity and work identity, as the former is characterised as an individual's sense of having professional skills in a certain field, whereas the latter, as mentioned, refers to the self-perception one has in the context of their professional role.

In addition to the social and competence related aspects of professional identity formation, Turner (2021) argued that the organisational culture as well as one's colleagues is interconnected with one's own values, which corresponds with Venn's (2020) description of identity development. Similarly, Hoyer (2020) mentions values as a determining factor. Drawing on Meijers (1998) and Pryor (1985), Hoyer argues that individuals create a career history, which may help to establish a sense of continuity. In this regard, she points out that some professional narratives do not change despite being unfolded in a new career context. Rather, Hoyer observed in her 2014 study that some professional "clung to a discourse of elitism" (106) when narrating their identity in a new setting. She suggests that one may therefore transfer cherished characteristics of one's previous professional identity to a new one through narratives. This in turn may be explained by a desire to co-construct one's professional identity regardless of social context, but rather based on personal values.

Pivoting to a more specific and defined view of professional identity, Abbott (1988) argued that there are certain aspects constituting a professional identity. For instance, jurisdiction, which is defined as linking the profession to its activities, which then contributes to legitimising the professional. In other word, this suggests a professional's sense of identity is supported by their legitimacy in their profession, as others cannot question their competencies. Abbott (1988, 40) further discusses three tasks that lays the foundation for the jurisdiction: "to diagnose, to infer, and to treat". These do not necessarily occur in order or subsequently, rather professionals may utilise them simultaneously, which is exemplified through Abbott's analogy of doctors diagnosing through treatment. Similar for the three tasks is their connection to the professional's knowledge, as the capability of diagnosing and treating is dependent on knowledge related to the problem. Similarly, inference or reasoning is dependent on pre-established knowledge. Thus, professionals are capable of utilising profession specific knowledge, which in turn legitimise them. They can then draw on the exclusive knowledge in their tasks, thereby enabling them to distinguish themselves.

Similar to Abbott, Sarangi & Candlin (2011, 12) emphasise specialised knowledge as a defining factor of a profession: "the crucial dimensions of specialised knowledge in the working of professions. There is a strong association between professions and the development of scientific knowledge systems." This knowledge further encompasses internal language or discourse within the profession, such as technical terms or abbreviations, which may not be evident for those outside of the group. Thus, they argue that professions can maintain their authority or expertise through exclusive language deriving from their specialised knowledge.

Based on the above, one can characterise the term professional identity in broad terms as a social construct, which influences different aspects in one's self-perception. Furthermore, it can be derived that several factors affect professional identity, as it is in a continuous state of change, due to social contexts, personal values, motivations, experiences, and competencies. In addition, the self-perception of professional identity can impact the individual's sense of self-esteem, well-being and meaning, among others. Lastly, as the individual's sense of meaning, for instance, may influence their motivations, this may continue to influence the development of the identity, thus suggesting that the development of a professional identity is a continuous cycle that feeds itself (Hoyer 2020 ; Popova-Nowak 2010 ; Venn 2020). On a narrower basis, professional identity may derive from the presence of certain factors, such as specialised knowledge and jurisdiction, exclusivity and jargons (Abbott 1988 ; Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Thus, it appears that values, the social contexts and one's sense of belonging to an exclusive group interplay in terms of the perception of one's professional identity.

3.1.1 The Development of a Professional Identity

According to Bothma et al. (2015, 37), identity is shaped and altered through various processes, such as psychological factors that encompasses "the individual's attitude towards work, perception of the work content, level of career or professional development, occupational history, work centrality and person-environment fit". This suggests that both internal and external factors are essential in the development of one's professional identity. Among the external factors, the social aspect is emphasised, as professional identity is partially dependent on interactions. Through interactions, one is able to gain an understanding of roles, hereunder one' own. Nevertheless, interactions are not the sole influence on the development of a professional identity. As mentioned, identity is further dependent on motives, values, and previous experiences. (Venn 2020). If one looks at Popova-Nowak's 2010 paper, she mentioned certain factors that may influence one's perception of professional identity. For instance, she emphasised that it is an accumulation of life experiences, skills, context, work processes and one's professional relations. The professional relation may be understood as Abbott's (1988, 8) notion of "exclusive occupational groups", which possess specialised knowledge. Popova-Nowak further argued that employees have to negotiate their membership of a professional group. This negotiation is supported by one's competencies and capabilities.

In continuation of the social aspect, the success of it is likely dependent on life experience, as this contributes to how one interacts. According to Collinson (2004), the individual's biography contributes to developing one's perception of professional identity, provided that it is being utilised during work. Since biography is part of one's identity (Venn 2020), some parts of previous experiences are always inserted into the work context, either through decision making or in a social regard. Thus, past experiences are an essential part in professional development, as it interacts both with the social and the task related areas. Similarly, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) stated that one' professional identity can be maintained through participation and investment. In terms of the former, this refers to the social context, whereas the latter refers to one's professional engagement. Their study supports the notion that social interactions are among the foundations of one's self-perception of professional identity, as it is created through mirroring oneself with others and receiving validation by others (Pratt et al. 2006). In a likewise manner, the notion of investment can be linked to the social aspect, as an increased degree of engagement with others will correspondingly impact the degree of interaction.

Overall, one can derive that both external and internal factors are essential in terms of developing professional identity. It appears that social interactions, biography as well as values, prospects and motivations play essential roles in the development process. Nevertheless, the above sections have solely focused on the establishment of professional identity, but neglected to address the challenges that may occur. Therefore, the following section focus on some of the challenges that can threaten professional identity.

3.1.2 Challenges and Consequences of Professional Identity Development

Pratt et al. (2006) suggested that a challenge to professional identity may be integrity. However, where they make suggestions for how the individual may solve such challenges, one can further imagine contexts in which an employee is not capable of adjusting to the changes, which may then result in negative consequences for both the employee and the company. One such situation could be a lack of motivation or burnout, which may then affect the company's bottom line as well as turnover rate if the employee decides to pursue other opportunities (DiPietro et al. 2019). Similarly, this may occur if the employee does not see their values align with the company's values, thereby resulting in a lack of person-organisation fit, or a person-job misfit, if the employee's competencies do not correspond to those required by their role (Popova-Nowak 2010). For instance, Wu et al. (2015) emphasises that an overqualified employee may not feel valued, whereas underqualification may result in a sense of impostor syndrome. Similarly, one can imagine that an employee may feel that their professional identity is threatened if they are not fluent in the profession's jargon (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). These aspects can all impact the individual's sense of professional identity, as they cannot align their sense of self with their role.

In relation to the social influence on professional identity, this too comes with challenges when an employee does not feel acknowledged as part of the group or if they do not interact with their colleagues, for instance due to remote working (Seymour-Walsh et al. 2020). This may prohibit the development of their professional identity, as they cannot mirror themselves or be validated by others. Similarly, this may occur in situations where the social aspect is challenged by a language barrier. In these situations, the employee may either feel distanced from the group or inferior in terms of their sense of identity at the workplace (Skjeggestad et al. 2017). Similarly, those who are more familiar with a corporate lingua franca than others in the same social context, may also be distanced from the group. Both of these instances may in turn may lead to decreased engagement, as suggested by Walsh and Gordon (2008), as they suggested that a greater sense of identity reflects in the level of engagement and performance. In a similar manner, Sarangi and Candlin (2011) and O'Neill (2020) state that language is essential in terms of identity and professional expertise. O'Neill proposed that identity and language is an interdependent relationship, suggesting that language may play a role in the development of professional identity. O'Neill further elaborated on the role of language in relation to misunderstandings:

> At whatever level misunderstandings arise there will be an impact on perceptions of professional expertise, identity and accountability wherever language(s) and culture(s) and multiple potential meanings and interpretations, are in play. Such (mis)perceptions will be accompanied by the potential for loss of face and loss of trust, and by the reproduction of people's assumptions of one another that may reinforce stereotypes and ultimately result in social or professional marginalisation (O'Neill 2020, 12).

O'Neill's perspective indicates that language barriers may have a significant role in terms of professional identities. Thus, a corporate language that is not all employees' first language, may result in certain issues, such as 'loss of face', decreased trust or stereotyping.

In addition to the communicative factors that may challenge one's professional identity, scholars have highlighted areas such as a low level of professional culture or community and insecure working conditions (Selenko et al. 2017). Therefore, it appears that several factors may present themselves as challenges to a professional identity. However, due to the focus of this paper, the focus in this section is on the communicative aspect.

If one shifts from the challenges of professional identities to the consequences of a weak sense of professional identity, it appears that a low sense of professional identity may lead to negative consequences for the professional and their company. The employee's notion of meaningfulness and confidence may be decreased (Walsh & Gordon 2008), which in turn may result in decreased effectiveness for the company and thus an effect on the bottom line. According to Haibo et al. (2017), weak professional identities may lead to increased turnover rates and employee dissatisfaction. Thus, a weakened professional identity may influence both the organisation and the individual employees' overall success (Haibo et al. 2017). Overall, these challenges and their consequences suggest that management must be aware of their employees' sense of professional identity, as it can result in undesirable situations for the company in several regards. On a practical level, literature suggest that this may be achieved by ensuring that the professional has a sense of possessing specialised knowledge and language, which may then grant them authority and allow them to act autonomously, among other aspects (Abbott 1988 ; Sarangi & Candlin 2011).

3.2 Lingua Franca

The term lingua franca originally referred to a shared language or means of communication between merchants during the Middle Ages (Brosch 2015). Since then, the term has developed, and recent definitions refer to is as a language that is shared between individuals from different linguistic backgrounds (Shenkar et al. 2014). This suggests that a language may be considered a lingua franca when it functions as a means of communication between people for whom it is not their native language (Samarin 1987). Today this understanding still applies, although it has become narrower, as a few languages, such as English, have obtained a permanent status of lingua franca due to their dominant presence across industries.

3.2.1 English as Lingua Franca and Corporate Lingua Franca

Within the past couple of decades, ELF has emerged as a significant field of research. However, this field is not clearly defined, as contrasting understandings appear throughout literature. On the one hand, some define it in accordance with the abovementioned definition of lingua franca by Samarin (1987), where none of the participants speak English as a first language. On the other hand, most scholars define the term as communications in which at least one participant does not speak English as a first language (Brosch 2015). This paper adheres to the definition of the latter, as the complexity of English today makes it difficult to clearly distinguish and classify users of the language. Furthermore, Mauranen (2018) argued that English today is utilised in various situations and with a number of differing participants, which may include individuals to whom English is a first language. In a likewise manner, it may not always be possible to identify participants' linguistic origins.

One may wonder how and why English came to be a lingua franca. According to Mauranen (2018, 7), English is a "non-local lingua franca, the means of communicating between people from anywhere in the world". This suggests that it is a language that stretches across the globe and industries, thereby making it a global lingua franca utilised in different areas such as business, politics, and amongst tourists (Mauranen 2018). The dominance across fields may in part be due to imperialism and the British Empire (Mastoi et al. 2018) through which the spread of English has taken place. Secondly, the U.S. has arguably had a significant impact on the spread of English, as Hollywood and several global companies as well as the majority of the tech industry derives from there (Phillipson 2008).

Although English is utilised on a global scale, there are varieties of the language, as it differs across local, national and international levels (Kirkpatrick 2014). Thus, there is no standardised English in terms of lingua franca. Kirkpatrick (2014, 36) wrote about English becoming "acculturated by local cultures and take on local flavours", which then may manifest itself through code-switching, as local slang, grammar, and syntax may occur. Furthermore, these varieties may become defined for each of the local areas, which is evident in the emergence of varieties such as 'Danglish' or 'Chinglish' corresponding to Danish English and Chinese English, respectively (Eaves 2011). These defined varieties or dialects may then further result in issues when utilising English as a shared language across borders, as differences between the two parties may occur. For instance, the use of a different syntax within English may create confusion between two parties, as it becomes difficult to interpret the meaning of sentences (Meierkord 2004). This may essentially affect a company's effectiveness, as communication is not streamlined (Sanden 2020).

As mentioned above, English is widely spoken across countries, as children today are often acquainted with it in the early years of their childhood. This may in part be due to English's presence in media, such as movies, social media platforms, schools teaching English at an early stage (Seidlhofer 2020 ; Shenkar et al. 2014). The wide familiarity with English may thus be the main reason for its status as a corporate language for many companies. It has become increasingly standardised to choose English as a means of communication in companies operating across borders, although it assumes that familiarity with English is similar across the company (Shenkar et al. 2014 ; O'Neill 2020). Although English has become a significant medium in international business, it does not, however, ensure that a company is operating efficiently or that communication is without difficulties (Seidlhofer 2020).

3.2.2 Challenges and Opportunities with English as Corporate Lingua Franca

Communicating in English across a company may contribute to breaking down linguistic barriers between employees thereby making cross-border cooperation possible. The implementation of a shared corporate language should therefore in theory result in seamless communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta 2012). Thus, communication flows may be increased and thereby the productivity of a company (Lønsmann 2011). Furthermore, it may increase access to a wider source of information, as non-native English employees may process information in their native language and share it in English with the company (Lønsmann 2011). English further allows for internationals to work at an office in a country where English is not the native language (O'Neill 2020). The inclusion of internationals will simultaneously increase a company's talent pool in terms of recruitment, thereby allowing the company to access highly qualified candidates. In continuation of this, scholars such as Bratton & Gold (2017) have shown that diverse workplaces may be more effective, as their interactions are influenced by different backgrounds and knowledge which in turn may result in new relevant solutions, further supported by Lønsmann (2011).

In addition to the access to a broader range of employees, scholars such as Björkman (2013) suggested that a shared corporate language may enhance equalisation if handled accordingly, as all levels of employees become accessible to some degree. Furthermore, English is becoming more widespread, and thus, English may be considered a language that will continue to function as a lingua franca, while familiarity continues to increase.

Aside from the advantages English may have on internal communication, it may further contribute to collaboration across a company's respective market. For instance, industries, such as IT, operate in English already, for which reason it becomes easier to communicate with IT suppliers or customers. Thus, English allows a company to access a broader market in its operations, as it is not limited to local stakeholders. One may therefore argue that the implementation of English as a corporate lingua franca does not only allow the internal communication to function smoothly, but it will simultaneously increase the accessibility of the company (Shenkar et al. 2014).

Although the above advantages of implementing English as a corporate language may seem appealing, there are, however, disadvantages. In a 2017 article, Lønsmann and Mellish describe how a corporate language may exclude some employees both socially and professionally, which was likewise the point made by Skjeggestad et al. Lønsmann and Mellish argued that employees may be judged based on their English proficiency rather than their professional abilities, thereby resulting in a power shift between employees, as the lingua franca is typically the language of the dominant group (O'Neill 2020). In contrast to Björkman's (2013) suggestion, O'Neill (2020) emphasises how a lingua franca may lead to inequality due to a power imbalance between those with a high level of familiarity with the shared language and those without. In continuation of this aspect, implementing English across a company may further result in recruitment bias, as language skills may outweigh professional or social skills, thus reinforcing inequality (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017 ; Lønsmann 2011).

In terms of the exclusions that may occur, this may manifest itself through the loss of spontaneity in conversations that occur in English rather than the native languages of the participants (Lønsmann 2011 ; Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). This may result in stiff and rehearsed conversations from employees who are not familiar or comfortable with English (Lønsmann 2011). It may likewise be difficult to engage in social interactions if they take place in English. Thus, employees may withdraw from conversations or engage in them in a manner that does not reflect their way of communicating (Lønsmann 2011). In turn, this can lead to job dissatisfaction or decreased efficiency and thereby an increased turnover rate (DiPietro et al. 2019).

It was mentioned that English may remove barriers between countries or departments, but it may simultaneously build and enforce another barrier between employees and management (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). The communication between these may be challenged by the choice of English. For instance, a company may choose to send an employee handbook in English to its different subsidiaries across national borders. The first challenge is then to ensure that the employees read it. Subsequently, the employees who read the document may not understand it, as it is not in their native language. Lastly, it may create tensions, as the employees wonder why the manual is in English rather than translated for each subsidiary, as it is a key document with essential information (Kastberg 2019). In a likewise manner, the employees may also feel inadequate if they are not able to understand the text (Kastberg 2019).

Following the example of key documents, another challenge may occur in terms of misunderstandings. According to House (2014), misunderstandings can lead to decrease in effectiveness, errors in one’s tasks or injuries (O’Neill 2020). Another instance of misunderstandings may occur as different cultural understandings or versions of English occur across the company (O’Neill 2020). For instance, employees at a Danish office may use syntax similar to their native language when constructing sentences or use words that do not exist in English. In these cases, the communication may be increasingly difficult for non-native English speakers, as the language may differ dependent on the participants (Kirkpatrick 2014).

It was previously mentioned that today many learn English at a young age. Nevertheless, this does not account for those who have not learned it early in life. Studies suggest that it becomes more difficult to learn a language as we grow older (Costandi 2014), which suggests that familiarity with English differs across generations, which then divides the workforce in regard to communication. Thus, employees who have built a professional identity through several decades may be challenged once English is introduced (O'Neill 2020).

From the above sections, it can be derived that there are advantages and challenges in terms of choosing English as a corporate language. Nevertheless, a significant number of companies continue to choose this model despite the challenges it may present. On the one hand, English may remove barriers between people with different native languages, but new ones may be constructed between management and employees in the form of tensions (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). Similarly, it has been emphasised that top-down communication in English may not be accessible to all employees or they may misinterpret it, which can result in ineffectiveness. In terms of the social aspect, a shared language can result in relations across nationalities, which may contribute to an increase in the knowledge output of the company. However, it may also result in exclusion for those not able to engage in English conversations. This exclusion may manifest itself as inequal opportunities and access to resources based on language skills (O'Neill 2020).

In terms of professional capabilities, it was suggested by Lønsmann and Mellish (2017) that employees may be judged based on their language skills, which may then present a relevant challenge for the company to be considered by management. However, from a corporate point of view, this may be outweighed by the access to a broader talent pool in which equally qualified substitutes for employees leaving may be found.

In summary, there appears to be several aspects to consider in terms of English as a corporate language. From a broad understanding, it will likely increase the degree of internationality as well as the overall effectiveness of a company, as communication is streamlined, although equal interpretations of the communication is not guaranteed (O'Neill 2020). From a financial perspective it will therefore be in the interest of the company. However, it appears that not all companies consider the consequences that occurs on an individual level, which may affect their bottom line to some degree (Popova-Nowak 2010). These situations may, however, be outweighed by the benefits English may provide, which is evident as the practice is continuously chosen. However, there may be nuances, as a shared language is not necessarily enforced at all times. For instance, some may choose to implement a corporate language, which takes effect when at least one participant is native in another language than the remaining participants. This would then allow for the native languages to be preserved to and encourage multilingualism (O'Neill 2020). Conversely, this model can potentially prevent the employees from developing their language skills, as they may not familiarise themselves with English but solely memorise the required professional discourse, as suggested by Lønsmann (2011). Thus, choosing English as a corporate language will depend on a company's overall structure, its vision and its priorities.

3.2.3 The Interplay between Corporate Lingua Franca and Professional Identity

Language plays a role both in terms of our self-perception and our effectiveness in a business context, thus suggesting an interdependence. According to O'Neill (2020), language is essential in the development of one's professional identity. However, people interpret their surroundings differently dependent on their native language, as it is rooted in events such as cultural understandings (O'Neill 2020).

It may be recalled that a professional identity is partly rooted in a decision-making authority, which may be challenged by a foreign language, if one misinterprets the communication and then either admit their uncertainty or go along, as they doubt their own abilities and do not wish to lose face (Skjeggestad et al. 2017). This may result in the employee doubting their own authority or competencies within their field and thereby affect their professional identity (Kasperiuniene & Zydziunaite 2019). Furthermore, O'Neill (2020) suggests that misinterpretations may lead to face loss or a decrease in trust in the individual's abilities. In this sense, the individual employee with less English familiarity may both perceive themselves as less of a professional and simultaneously their surroundings may have the same perception of their authority, if they then make mistakes due to the misinterpretation, as they are expected to know that they misinterpret the strategy based on their professional skills (Skjeggestad et al. 2017). Thus, an employee may be measured on their language proficiency rather than their professional skills, thereby influencing their perception of professional identity (O'Neill 2020, 14).

It was further suggested by Bothma et al. (2015) that social interactions are essential in the establishment of one's professional identity. This factor may similarly be challenged by the implementation of English as a corporate language, as argued by Lønsmann (2011), since the individual may choose to distance themselves from social interactions or not engage in dialogue in the same manner as if it was in their native language. This reaction may be caused by the individuals otherwise being perceived as 'unfriendly' or 'shortheaded', as emphasised by Skjeggestad, et al. (2017). Therefore, a corporate language in which not all employees are fluent may result in negative effects on some employees' perception of their own professional identities, as they may not be able to interact with their colleagues due to a lower degree of English proficiency. In addition, lower familiarity with English may prevent an employee from realizing themselves and their professional goal, as they are not able to carry themselves communicatively in their field, which then results in inequal opportunities across a company (O'Neill 2020).

It was previously emphasised that the exclusive language of a profession is partly constitutive of one's professional identity (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Furthermore, the technical terms connected to one's profession may have been taught in one's native language. Therefore, the exclusive language one was previously familiar with may disappear once English is implemented as a corporate language. This may then influence the perception of one's professional identity, as one feels inadequate despite not losing any professional knowledge (Abbott, Sarangi & Candlin 2011). The specialised knowledge that is directly connected to the profession may thus be inaccessible, when communication takes place in English. This influence on the professional identity may manifest itself through a decrease in participation or employee dissatisfaction (Popova-Nowak 2010). Similarly, Skjeggestad et al. (2017) argue that the status and knowledge of employees who are not fluent in the language of their surroundings possess less value to said surroundings. Thus, English may have a significant impact on a professional's sense of self as well as their professional identity in terms of access to professional exclusivity.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The aim of this paper was to examine how English as a corporate language may influence employees' sense of professional identity, when English is not their native language. Thus, the data had to derive from current employees at Roima int. and Roima DK. The participants from these departments would then be interviewed and the data analysed from a narrative perspective, as the focus is on their own perception and how they establish meaning through their narratives.

The philosophical understanding of this paper further favoured a qualitative approach. As a social constructivist perspective is the foundation, the belief that the reality of people is constructed through shared notions and interactions was considered (Berkeley n.d.). Nevertheless, a qualitative methodology does not come without challenges. Qualitative practices have been criticised of potential bias, as data is interpreted by the researcher. For instance, Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) mention that interviews have purposes determined by the researcher. Furthermore, they argued that interviews, as a qualitative method, presents an inequal power balance between the participant and the interviewer, which may result in biased results (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). Nevertheless, this paper attempted to decrease bias by rooting the interview guide in theory and solely deviate when elaboration was required.

In terms of ethics, it was considered important for this paper to allow anonymity for the participants, as their answers reflected their current employer. Thus, the names of the participants have been altered in the transcriptions to allow for a 'safe space' for the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018).

4.1.1 Empirical Data

As mentioned in the introduction, the data is comprised of interviews with current employees at Roima Int. and Roima DK. The interviews were conducted with three Finnish and three Danish employees. The participants are briefly presented below in Table I, as to give an overview of their backgrounds, as these may be influential on their experiences, as argued above in section 3.1 and 3.2.

Table I: Danish and Finnish Interview Participants

Participant number	Age range	Nationality	Professional Field	Years working in field
Participant 1	46-55 years	Danish	Marketing	28 years
Participant 2	26-35 years	Danish	Communication	2 years
Participant 3	65+ years	Danish	Engineering	40 years
Participant 4	26-35 years	Finnish	Finance	6 years
Participant 5	56-65 years	Finnish	Business IT	33 years
Participant 6	26-35 years	Finnish	HR	6 years

4.1.1.1 Roima Intelligence and Roima Denmark

This paper departs in a case study of the Finnish IT software company Roima Intelligence and their Danish subsidiary Roima Denmark. The former of these was established in 2014 and has subsequently acquired companies across Finland and Sweden followed by the 2022 acquisition of their Danish office. As of March 2023, Roima Int. has approximately 400 employees divided across five offices in Finland, three in Sweden, one in Denmark and one in India (Roima 2023a). Roima Int.'s product range is rather broad, as the subsidiaries have their own unique products. Thus, Roima Int. owns products varying from an ERP-system to eCommerce solutions, product lifecycle management systems and warehouse management systems (Roima 2023b). In the following, some knowledge departs in inside knowledge from myself as a Roima employee since it is not possible to reference internal documents.

Roima Int. is divided into four different business areas based on the products: discrete manufacturing, process industries, logistics & retail and group. Common for these is that the three first areas all refer directly to the group function at which the overall power is centralised. The majority of the group function is located at the main office in Espoo, Finland, and thus the different locations across Finland, Sweden and Denmark do not possess much autonomy in terms of decision making. However, the local directors, who were the CEOs of the companies before they were acquired, are to some degree autonomous in terms of questions directly related to their business area or customer relations. Apart from those instances, all decisions are reverted to Finland. For instance, purchase invoices must be approved before payment, the line of approval starts at the local director, then the director of the business area, then the CFO and in cases of large amounts the CEO of Roima Int.

In terms of Roima DK, this subsidiary was acquired in March 2022. As with several of the subsidiaries, Roima DK had a long history, as it was established as Logimatic IDS in 1997. When the subsidiary joined Roima Int. in 2022, a significant amount of the employees had been with Logimatic since the beginning or had joined during the early 2000's. The office employs 34 employees of which all are Danish. Nevertheless, Roima Int. has implemented English as their corporate language, as their operations are spread across different countries with different languages. It is not mandatory for employees to utilise English when they solely engage with employees with whom they share a language. However, if one person in a conversation or call do not speak the local language, all must speak English. Similarly, all documents have to be produced in English including the local employee handbooks.

4.1.1.2 Selection Criteria

Brinkmann and Kvale argued that the number of participants required is equivalent to the number needed to answer the question asked. In this sense, the number is then defined by the purpose of the study. In this paper, the focus lies on the personal experiences of employees. The qualitative nature thus allowed for a relatively small data sample. Nevertheless, multiple participants were required, as it would otherwise solely be the experience of one employee. Therefore, it was estimated that an approximate number of 6-8 participants were required to give an indication of potential trends. This range was chosen based on the size of the company as well as a space limitation. Although this number may seem relatively low, it was considered sufficient, as the paper is interested in the personal experiences of the participants rather than generalisations. Nevertheless, this number may still present some tendencies across the datasets. In addition to this, it is not solely the similarities that are of interest, but likewise the differences between the participants. Furthermore, as the analysis will also examine the linguistics of the participants' stories, the number of participants had to allow for in depth analysis of the data. Thus, six participants were chosen as to allow for a deeper analysis while still allowing for tendencies to be identified (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018).

In terms of the selection criteria of the participants, they were selected based on Mirhosseini's (2020) notion of 'random and stratified sampling'. This entails that the participants were found through a random approach within pre-established groups, which will be described below. This approach assumes that each member of the groups can contribute equally. Nevertheless, one could have chosen 'maximal variation sampling', but the focus is not on a diversified result. In a likewise manner, a 'theoretical sampling' could have been chosen, but the theory presented does not categorise a certain type of participant that would be ideal (Mirhosseini 2020).

The participants for the interviews were selected based on certain considerations. For instance, it was established above in section 3.2.2 that age may present itself as a factor in terms of familiarity with English. Therefore, it was decided that a variation in ages would be desirable, as this could potentially broaden the findings. By way of example, if the participants were all within the same age range, for instance 20-25 years old, their experiences and familiarity with English could potentially be similar. However, it should be noted that the participants experiences would nevertheless differ from each other despite of age similarity, as their professional identities would all be based on their individual experiences (Venn 2020).

As mentioned in section 3.1, one's professional identity is related to one's profession, which may possess certain characteristics, discourses, and a decision-making authority (Popova-Nowak's 2010 ; Sarangi & Candlin 2011). This aspect was likewise considered in terms of the selection criteria, as different professions may be influenced differently by the utilisation of English as the medium for communication. For instance, some professions, such as IT mainly rely on English in their work, whereas other professions' discourses and technical terms may be based on the local languages. In a likewise manner, differences between professions may impact how the professionals' sense of identity is influences by the use of English if their practices are not dependent on communication. For example, manual workers' professional identity may not be significantly impacted by a change in corporate language, as their tasks are not solved through communicative means. Thus, the participants had to represent different profession to the degree allowed by the demographics. Furthermore, the participants' years of experience in their respective fields should differ, as theory suggests that professional identity is established and reaffirmed over time (section 3.1.1). Thus, the selection criteria of the participants are the following:

- The participants’ native language cannot be English.
- If possible, the participant must come from different professional fields, as some fields may have a technical vocabulary in English.
- The participants should represent different age groups, as there may be generational differences in English proficiency.
- The participants must have been in their professional field for more than one year.

4.1.1.2.1 Data Collection

The interviews were divided into two due to logistics: The Danish interviews were all conducted face to face at the office, whereas the Finnish interviews were mainly done online except for one. All interviews were recorded with the knowledge of the participants and subsequently transcribed.

The interviews were conducted in English with the Finnish employees and in Danish in Denmark. The rationale behind this decision lies within the focus of the thesis, as it is interested in how the employees’ perception is influenced by English. As mentioned above in section 3.2, the use of a lingua franca in which a person is not native or very familiar may result in them expressing themselves briefly or without much nuance in contrast to their communication in their native languages (Lønsmann 2011). Thus, it was decided that the Danish employees were to be interviewed in Danish, as it could potentially encourage them to express themselves more nuanced. As the Finnish interviews were conducted in English, this may result in differing narratives between the Danish and Finnish employees, which must be considered in the interpretation of them, as they may be less nuances (Lønsmann 2011). For instance, the Finnish employees may subconsciously express themselves in short, direct sentences. Nevertheless, the focus of the thesis is their perceptions rather than the difference between Denmark and Finland, for which reason the data does not have to be comparable.

4.1.1.3 Semi-structured Narrative Interviews

As mentioned, this paper departs in a semi-structured interview, which is defined by Brinkmann and Kvale (2018, 9) as “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena”. This means that an interview guide is established, but simultaneously allows for additional questions or elaborations not originally considered in the guide. According to Brinkmann and Kvale, there are seven stages when conducting an interview: thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying, and reporting. The first of these was achieved, as the purpose of the paper was determined. Subsequently, the interview guide was designed based on the theoretical frameworks presented in sections 3.1 and 3.2. The remaining will then be achieved throughout the remainder of this paper, as the interviews are conducted, then analysed and discussed below.

In addition to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, a narrative approach is simultaneously taken. According to Mirhosseini (2020), a narrative interview revolves around the experiences and stories of the participants. Thus, the interviewer is encouraged to take the role of an encouraging listener in order to allow the participants to tell their stories. This aspect should likewise be reflected in the interview guide, which should contain open questions that are not, however, too broad. Similarly, Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) describes narrative interviews to focus on the stories told, which are then structured by the researcher afterwards.

4.1.1.4 Interview Guide

The interview guide departs in the knowledge derived in the above literature reviews. The questions have been organised through themes with a corresponding research question, which then have subordinate interviews questions. The subordinate questions will be asked if they are not already answered previously by the participants. Furthermore, they can be used as a means to have the participant repeat themselves both to clarify and to ensure coherence (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). The Danish and English interview guides are found in Appendix A. This section will briefly describe the themes and research questions and the rationale behind them.

The first theme is ‘professional history’, which allows for the participant to ‘warm up’ before engaging in the essential parts of the interview as to encourage them to speak freely (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). The questions related to this theme attempts to uncover the professional background of the participant as well as their overall perception of themselves as a professional, regardless of language.

The second theme is ‘familiarity with English’, which was chosen to examine how the participants experience English as a communicative tool. The interview questions attempt to determine how the participants describes their own familiarity with English. In continuation of this, the third theme is ‘English and the social element of work’, which explore how the participants describe themselves socially both in the context of their own language and English, as theory suggests that the social aspects influence professional identity (Carr 2021).

Lastly, the theme ‘English and professional identity’ examines how the participants experience their workday when they utilise English. It wishes to explore how the participants narrate their professional identity when they have to work in English as well as how they describe their experiences with it. Furthermore, question 13 in the interview guide is a copy of question 2 with the addition of ‘English’ as a context. This was done to examine the participants’ initial notion of their professional identity prior to them reflecting on any potential difficulties with English, whereas the last question could perhaps include the considerations made throughout the interview to identify any differences between their perception of their professional identity when operating in their native language and in English.

4.1.1.5 Transcription and Translation of Interviews

As the narratives and perceptions of the participants are the focus of the data, it was decided to transcribe the interviews according to the verbatim approach where the interviews are transcribed word for word. The rationale behind this approach is to translate the data from one media to another as close to the original source as possible (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). This traditionally includes pauses, filler words as well as sounds, such as ‘um’. However, the focus of this paper is on the narratives, for which reason it was decided not to include the conversational transcription conventions such as the Jefferson Transcription System, developed by Gail Jefferson. This means that intonations, overlapping speech and so forth will not be indicated in the transcripts. Rather the interviews will be transcribed word for word with the exception of filler words, such as ‘um’ and pauses, which will both be indicated by the use of three dots ‘…’, as these are arguably not relevant for this specific study. The reason for using the ‘…’ interchangeably is that they mainly occur in continuation of each other, for which reason two indications would otherwise have to be made for a part of the data, which will not be examined. Furthermore, the words will be spelled as they would traditionally and not how the participants pronounce them.

It was mentioned above that names as well as other elements which may point to other employees within Roima will be changed as to ensure anonymity for both the participants and those included through the stories. These changes will be displayed in the transcripts in Appendix B through the use of cursive. In terms of the utilisation of excerpts from the interviews as part of the analysis, the Danish data will be translated in accordance with a verbatim approach as to keep the excerpts as close to the original as possible, although it may result in sentences appearing rather unidiomatic.

4.1.2 Methodological Considerations

In terms of the choices made throughout the process of selecting, collecting and analysing data, there are certain aspects, which must be considered, as they can potentially influence the validity and reliability of the study. In terms of the latter, the reliability may be decreased by the qualitative nature of the study, as it allows for interpretations. For instance, the stories told by the participants will be interpreted through the transcription and the analysis, which then presents my understanding of their stories and not necessarily what they intended to portray (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). In a likewise manner, the participants may unconsciously be subjects to ‘response bias’, as they would like their answers to suit the expectations of the interviewer. This may further be the case, as the interview guide was semi-structured, thereby guiding the participants in a certain direction. It was attempted to accommodate this by utilising a neutral language in the guide (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). Questions were asked from different perspectives as to allow the participants to provide nuanced answers. For instance, they were asked first about positive experiences and subsequently about challenges. Nevertheless, the interview guide still influenced the construction of the participants’ narratives through establishing frameworks (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018).

In terms of reliability, another consideration was made, as I work at the same company as the participants, which could likewise affect the reliability, as the participants could purposefully leave out information due to a concern of said information spreading throughout the office. In addition to this remark, the participants were further talking about their experiences with their current employer, which may similarly influence their answers. For instance, after the interview participant 3 mentioned that he had felt affected by the presence of the recorder and proceeded to elaborate on some of his concerns about the organisational implications the corporate language has had. These could, however, not be included in the data, for which reason the stories told by the participants may not be their actual perceptions, but rather what they want to display (Brinkmann 2017). Nevertheless, the reliability concern was considered by allowing the participants to remain anonymous, although this arguably did not ensure the reliability in terms of participant 3. Furthermore, anonymity may result in exaggerations on the count of the participants, as they will not be accountable for their statements (Lelkes et al. 2012). Nevertheless, as I am familiar with the participants, this was not considered a concern.

In continuation of the abovementioned bias from the participants, this may likewise affect the validity. This phenomenon is known as The Hawthorne Effect, when suggests that people may change their behaviour when they are observed (Paradis & Sutkin 2016). The data collection did not take the form of observations; however, the use of a recorder may have had the same effect, which we saw with participant 3. To accommodate for this, the participants were, in addition to being anonymous, encouraged to speak freely prior to the interview and further not interrupted during the interview. Additionally, participation on my part was solely engaged in to elaborate, which would then allow the participants to have their own flow. Additionally, it was attempted not to break any pauses or silent periods too soon, as participants tend to want to break any silence themselves (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018).

Further in regard to the validity of this paper, the interview guide departed in theory, which then controls one variable and decreases potential researcher bias, thereby increasing the chances of validity (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). Furthermore, the selection criteria ensured a relatively age and industry representative- and randomised group of participants, when then reduces sample bias.

In summary, several methodological considerations were made prior to this study. These were both in terms of reliability, validity and how to make a research design that would be in coherence with the research question. Overall, these considerations were included in the research design as to increase both the reliability and validity, although these will still be influenced by the qualitative and subjective nature of the study (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018).

5. Method of Analysis

5.1 Narrative Theory and Storytelling

The following outlines the framework of the field of narrative research. Overall, narrative theory is concerned with stories and how these are told as well as "how storytelling activities are (contextually) embedded, what they consist of, and how we can take their form, content, and context as cues toward an interpretation of what the particular story meant" (Bamberg 2012, 202). Researchers within this field are interested in exploring how people make sense of their realities through stories. Narrative theory assumes that storytelling and thus narratives are a fundamental form of human behaviour and interaction, as we utilise it to make sense of our surroundings and experiences. Narratives are therefore tools that can structure and organise our experiences (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008).

In a traditional perspective, narrative theory was centred around a canonical understanding of stories as consisting of a beginning, a middle and an end (Barkhuizen 2015). According to Hyvärinen (2008), a story is a sequence of events, which will always be in chronological order, as the subsequent events are always dependent on the previous event. Therefore, a narrative in this sense would entail a structure "consisting of (…) spatially-located and chronologically-ordered action sequences with problem-solving dimensions" (Slembrouck 2015, 251). However, this traditional canonical perspective has been contested and another understanding of narratives has emerged, which allows for fragmented pieces of stories to constitute narratives in themselves. The reasoning behind this is that challenges have been identified with the traditional perspectives, as one can rarely talk of a grand narrative, but rather small stories appearing throughout a story (Georgakopoulou 2006). This further suggests that where a grand narrative does exist, smaller narratives will exist simultaneously either contesting or affirming it. In terms of the confrontation of a grander narrative, this falls under the category of 'counternarratives', which challenges the more powerful narratives, whether these are indeed more powerful or solely perceived as such (Lueg et al. 2020). From an organisational or managerial perspective for instance, a company may choose to compose a narrative describing their employer brand, but within this narrative, smaller narratives will be constructed by others, as they position themselves in terms of the grand narrative.

Among the scholars advocating for this approach and distancing themselves from the canonical perspective one finds Georgakopoulou (2015), who has argued that narratives may be told in any order and further include other narratives. For instance, references to the past relevant for the understanding of the current story can be made during a narrative, thereby making it unchronological, as it does not have to restrict itself to the beginning-middle-end structure of a story (Barkhuizen 2015). Thus, narratives do not have to be linear either, but can be non-linear and portray multiple storylines simultaneously, which is often seen in movies, where the audience follows the stories of multiple characters.

Bamberg (2012) defines narratives as being about people, who act within time and space. These acts will often be in the form of a series of events. He further states that narratives are the structure which ties the events together to a cohesive story. Operating with the term 'small stories', Bamberg orients himself towards a conversational aspect of narratives. In a 2008 paper, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou described how focus has changed from the narrative form of beginning, middle and end taking place in the past to one that allows for these small stories. In addition, Georgakopoulou (2015) described how the traditional narratives were characterised by coherence and strategic presentation of selves, whereas small stories from an interactionist approach highlighted inconsistencies as well as unpolished identities.

Small stories can be characterised as being short and relatively unstructured. Their justification for functioning as a narrative lies in one of two possibilities, according to Bamberg and Georgakopoulou: either their form fulfils some of the traditional criteria or they are presented as stories. In contrast to traditional narratives, small stories can be recent and mundane events, such as describing one's morning (Georgakopoulou 2006). Therefore, these small stories may contribute to the construction of a sense of self, whereas the traditional narrative research may help analyse how stories are strategic representations of the world (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008). Furthermore, small stories can occur through conversations thereby allowing for co-construction of stories between the audience and the narrator (Georgakopoulou 2015). Thus, small stories are purposefully designed to be interactional and may be about anything or anyone (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008).

In addition, it should be noted that narratives do not have to accurately reflect the actual events. A narrator can choose to leave out information for various reasons, such as relevance or attempts to influence others' perceptions of the series of events or choose to narrate events that have not happened (Bamberg 2011 ; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008). Additionally, this may influence the social constructions surrounding the narrative, as narratives contribute to social, cultural and political understandings (Hyvärinen 2008). This means that deferrals or refusals to tell may be as important as the story itself, as it may indicate how the participant positions themselves (Georgakopoulou 2006). Thus, narrative analysis covers a dual layer of interpretation, as it is concerned with the narrator's interpretation of their own experiences through narratives and the researcher's interpretation of the narratives (Hunter 2010).

According to Bamberg (2011), memories help constitute one's sense of self and thereby one's identity. However, he further noted that not all memories are considered relevant for the narrator, for which reason some may be left out. Thus, stories are narrated strategically. This means that it is not the story itself that is of interest, but rather what it means in the context of other stories (Bamberg 2011). Bamberg is thus connecting identity construction to narratives, arguing that one cannot separate the narrator from the reflected character in the story in order to direct the character in the direction desired. This once more emphasises that narratives are not accurate portraits of actual events, but rather purposeful variations of them. This argument is to some degree in accordance with De Fina (2015), who argued that narratives can be considered as ideal for communicating identities, which is arguably the case although the narrative may not reflect the actual stories, but still one's perception of self within said story. According to Bamberg (2011) identity is constructed through interactions, arguing that a story's content is dependent on its conversational or interactive context.

The aspect of identity through stories can further be found in positioning theory. In Bamberg's understanding of small stories through interactions, positioning is occurring constantly, as we position ourselves and others within our stories. As some of the elements highlighted within that field are utilised in the chosen method of analysis, a brief account of the field will be given below as to set in in relation to small stories and narratives.

5.1.1 Positioning Theory

Positioning theory is concerned with interactions between individuals or groups and how actors position themselves in terms of each other and their surroundings (Davies & Harré 1990). Positioning in this sense is the assignment of roles, which one can either assign to oneself, to others or be assigned, thus emphasising the dynamic nature of interactions (Deppermann 2015). According to Davies and Harré (1990), the assignment of roles entails that we ascribe rights to others followed by duties and obligations while claiming our own rights. The purpose of the field is to understand how these assigned rights and obligations contribute to the construction of social structures while being constructed by said structures (Kayı-Aydar 2019).

In continuation of narratives and small stories, positioning theory argue that stories may indicate how an individual makes sense of their surroundings and how they act accordingly (Clifton 2014). This is due to the assumption that people's identities are constructed and re-constructed through interactions. Therefore, positioning oneself shows that one must see the world from a certain perspective, which is then what one is positioned in relation to (Davies & Harré 1990). Thus, one's identity is constructed through the discursive interactions one participates in. These interactions, however, are not necessarily streamlined, but may be of a contradictory nature, which suggests that individuals reposition themselves according to their context (Davies & Harré 1990 ; De Fina 2006).

In addition to identity and positioning theory, one can examine the construction of these through narratives. According to Bamberg (1997), there are three levels of positioning. The first of these is concerned with how characters within a story are positioned by the narrator. This position is both in terms of each other as well as in relation to the events occurring (Bamberg 2020). This level is, from an analytical perspective, where the characters can be identified. This level includes linguistics means, such as "expressive or non-verbal behaviour" (Bamberg 2020, 251) which navigates the characters through three identity contrasts: "sameness/difference, agency/passivity and continuity/change" (Bamberg 2020, 251). The second level relates to how the narrator positions themselves in relation to their interlocutors or audience. This level may be analysed by examining the linguistics and paralinguistics of the narrator to determine why the story occurred (Bamberg 2020). Lastly, the third level is concerned with how the narrator position themselves in relation to dominant storylines, narratives or the audience, thereby making it possible to identify how they portray their identities and thus make sense of themselves.

As mentioned, positioning theory constitutes part of the analytical approach utilised in this paper. This theory presents a triangle which is comprised of three interdependent corners: positions, storylines and speech act (Kayı-Aydar 2019). Nevertheless, the term 'speech acts' has been challenged, as it limits the scope of the approach, and thus several scholars have suggested the term 'communications acts', as it broadens the understanding of the theory (Kayı-Aydar 2019). This paper adheres to the term 'communication acts', which entails that all types of communication take an action rather than simply state something. As mentioned, these three elements are interdependent, which means that a slight change in one will necessarily change them all (Kayı-Aydar 2019). Therefore, if one's position changes, the storyline as well as the communication acts will change.

The first element, position, contributes to determining what an individual is authorised to do. According to Harré et al. (2009), a position can reflect different characteristics, status or abilities, among others. The communication acts element is the actual communication (Hirvonen 2016). Lastly, the storyline of the triangle is the "contexts of acts and positions" (Slocum & Van Langenhove 2003, 225). According to Kayı-Aydar (2019, 9), these elements are interconnected, and "the positions people assign to themselves and others are impacted by a previous story line(s) or the story line developing in the conversation. When people take up new positions, certain acts and actions will emerge, and a new story line will develop. The sequence of statements and displays of personhood will create a new story line(s)". Thus, the positioning triangle may contribute to the following analysis by providing an understanding of how communication and actions can be examined (McVee et al. 2018).

5.2 Positioning Analysis

Storytelling and small stories as a part of narrative theory draws on several fields, such as psychology, sociology, and narratology. Conversation analysis has in particular contributed to the concept, which suggests that stories are constructed in interaction (Georgakopoulou 2017). The broad range of contributing fields further means that the method of analysis should draw on different fields in order to examine the participants' perceptions of their own professional identities. Thus, the method presented below will draw on different fields, such as Bamberg's notion of positioning analysis and an inclusion of tools applied within the field of discourse analysis.

As mentioned above in section 5.1.1, Bamberg operates with three levels in terms of analysing small stories. These levels as an analytical tool fall under the field of positioning analysis. The first of these levels allows one to identify the characters occurring in the story. At the second level, one is able to begin analysing, as the characters relations to each other is identified. In terms of relations, this entails examining how they are positioned in relation to each other, which then allows one to study what the narrator attempts to achieve in their relation between themselves and their audience. Lastly, the third level combines the first two levels to see which macro assumptions or greater narratives are at play within the story (Bamberg 2020).

Embedded in the three levels are simultaneously three dilemmas that may serve as an analytical tool, as they may contribute to examining not only the contents of the narratives, but further the performative aspects of them. This means that these dilemmas may be included to identify how the participants navigate them within their stories. The dilemmas presented by (Bamberg 2020) are agency versus passivity, sameness versus difference and constancy versus change. The first of these is concerned with how the narrator positions themselves in terms of being an agent of the story or an undergoer of events. The way in which the participants navigate this in their stories may indicate whether they portray themselves as responsible or rather as an object of circumstances. In terms of the second pair, one will here examine if positioning occurs on the basis of differences or similarities, or group formations. Lastly, constancy versus change may be apparent when the characters are positioned in regard to who they have previously been. These dilemmas are not interdependent and do not all have to occur within the same story (Bamberg 2020).

In terms of the structure of the analysis, the following approach will be taken; selected stories from each participant will be identified in terms the focus of each participant, as some factors may appear more significant to some participants than others. These stories will be analysed according to Bamberg's three levels. Thus, the characters of the stories will be identified, followed by an account of how they are positioned in terms of each other as well as any grand narratives. To achieve this determination of positions, the analysis will draw on tools from the field of critical discourse analysis. The inclusion of discursive analytical tools is due to a limitation embedded in positioning theory, as it does not allow one to examine the linguistic elements that contribute to the positioning of characters. More specifically, instances of transitivity and modality, vocabulary, metaphors, presuppositions, and pronouns may be included when relevant to help determine and understand how the participants position themselves in relation to others or other narratives (Benwell & Stokoe 2006).

Bamberg's three dilemmas will be included when relevant to help interpret how the participant perceives themselves and their rights or how they portray themselves through their narratives. Therefore, instances of agency or passivity, mentions of groups such as nationality or age as well as indicators of differences or similarities within the narratives will be considered, as these may further indicate how the participant perceives themselves or wishes to be perceived (Bamberg 1997 ; Bamberg 2011). In terms of the discursive elements included in the analysis, these may contribute to identifying how the participants navigate the dilemmas. For instance, agency versus passivity can be connected to transitivity, pronouns and modality, as these may indicate how the participant position themselves. To exemplify this, transitivity may indicate whether the participant portrays themselves as active by the choice of verbs in their stories (Isti'anah 2014 ; Benwell & Stokoe 2006). Similarly, modality may indicate whether the participant takes ownership over their actions.

In terms of vocabulary, this element can be included to identify terms that are used differently between the participants, as they may have different meanings, dependent on the background of the participants. Therefore, the vocabularies may become relevant in regard to the sameness versus difference dilemma, as it can identify positions through the words used to describe different characters or groups (Benwell & Stokoe 2006). For instance, one participant may refer to their co-workers in Finland as 'those in Finland' while another may use the phrase 'our colleagues in Finland' to describe the same people. This may then indicate whether the participant distinguishes themselves from the other characters. Vocabulary may further come into play in relation to agency and passivity, as phrasings may suggest whether the participant perceives others as agents exposing the participant to something, thereby making them undergo certain events.

The argument that vocabularies can relate to the sameness versus difference dilemma may likewise apply to metaphors, which can indicate how the participant perceive themselves in terms of the others in the stories, as it can enhance differences or similarities. For instance, Benwell & Stokoe (2006) exemplifies this by emphasizing how disease metaphors may highlight problems and increase the seriousness of them. Metaphors may likewise be used to identify the agency versus passivity and constancy versus change dilemma, depending on the context of the metaphor.

Presuppositions indicate presumed knowledge, which may then help identify potential bias in the participants' narratives (Benwell & Stokoe 2006). In terms of the narrative framework presented by Bamberg, this aspect may then be included to indicate similarities or differences between characters or highlight the constancy versus change dilemma. For instance, stating that 'like everyone else in the company' assumes that everyone shares a similarity.

Lastly, an examination of pronouns may be utilised to determine how the characters in the stories are positioned in regard to each other, which may then once more relate to the sameness versus difference dilemma. This is in part due to pronouns being able to indicate the relations between the characters. For instance, the use of an inclusive 'we' may indicate an identification with a certain group. In a likewise manner, utilising 'they' may distance the participant from the other characters (Benwell & Stokoe 2006).

As highlighted by Bamberg (2011) the focus is not on distinguishing the story from the narrative and thereby determining whether the participant is truthful, but rather the focus will be on examining how the participants frame themselves through their narratives. Since narratives in the presented perspectives of Bamberg and Georgakopoulou indicate how people perceive themselves through their stories, the data for this paper may not necessarily show what the participants' identities are or how others perceive them, but rather how the participants perceive their professional identities in a given context. This aligns with this paper's focus on self-perception of professional identity in the context of English as a corporate language.

6. Analysis

As mentioned, the aim of this paper is to determine how employees at Roima Int. and Roima DK perceive their own professional identities when they perform their jobs in the context of English as a corporate language as opposed to their native languages. The following analysis focus on the narratives and positioning strategies constructed by the participants.

6.1 Narrative Analysis

6.1.1 Professional Identities within the Small Stories

The following sections examines the participants' interviews, as their narratives are analysed through a positioning analysis as well as elements of critical discourse analysis, as mentioned above. The six participants will be examined individually, as the focus is on their perceptions of own professional identity. Subsequently, the findings will be summarised in a separate section.

6.1.1.1 Participant 1

In terms of participant 1, she portrays a narrative in which she has undergone a development in her career since becoming a part of Roima and thus using English as a corporate language. The developments are primarily from before Roima Int. acquired Logimatic and up until the present. One of the areas in which a development has occurred is the participant's perception of own professionalism, authority and competencies. For instance, the two quotes below presents her responses to how she will describe herself within her field in terms of Danish and English, respectively:

> I will describe myself as someone that … keeps myself updated on sort of the newest things, and who takes a great responsibility … I have actually worked with most of the things alone, can you say, in most years and have had responsibility of the marketing of different products […] I have taken a great responsibility and also that I drive it and develop it (Appendix B, 20-25, 02:16-02:52).

> Well … not quite as prof as I am on the Danish […] I will, however, say that now here a year after, I have really started, well it begins to help with it. But … it is going in the right direction (Appendix B, 205-207, 23:59-24:18).

In both excerpts, the narrator herself is the sole character presented. However, she may position herself differently across these two narratives. In the former, it can be argued that she presents herself as one with responsibility, which then indicates duties and rights in because of her profession. This may be supported, if one examines the agency in the first of these quotes. He utilises different active verbs, such as 'take' and 'drive', which suggests a material process in terms of transitivity (Isti'anah 2014). These verbs are simultaneously linked to the 'I' or 'you' in the narrative, thus suggesting that she is the agent, who assigns herself with certain responsibilities and therefore rights because of her role. In contrast, the second quote's verbs are related to 'it', here understood as the practice of speaking English as part of her job. Therefore, the main agent in this appears to be the pronoun 'it' rather than the narrator, which may suggest that she is more passive in this regard (Bamberg 2020).

In continuation of Bamberg's (2020) agency versus passivity dilemma, one can further identify constancy versus change between these two quotes. According to Bamberg (2020), change is measured against a backdrop of constancy. Therefore, one can argue that the constant in this sense is her perception of herself as a Danish-speaking professional, whereas the change occurs, when she switches to English. If one than looks at the contents of these two quotes and therefore perceptions, it appears that she favours her Danish-speaking identity, as it is attributed with responsibilities and duties, whereas the English-speaking one is 'not quite as prof'. This then suggests that she perceives her Danish-speaking identity as more professional, thereby becoming less professional when she makes the daily changes to English. This in turn may affect her overall sense of professional identity, as the less favourable one becomes more emphasised as English is becoming more integrated. However, the opposite may further occur, as participant 1 further describes how her English skills are improving though the integration process. This will be examined later on. Nevertheless, if one examines the words used to describe herself as a professional, when working in English throughout the interview, a relatively negative pattern emerges, which supports the argument that the change may overshadow her initial professional identity. For instance, she describes herself using words such as “amateur” and “incompetent” (Appendix B, 105-109). These attributes as well as others throughout are related to the pronouns “I” or “you”, both referring to the narrator herself, which indicates a negative perception of the English-speaking professional identity.

In continuation of the development in her professional identity, one can further examine her perception of authority, as this may have changed in accordance with the identity. Below are two excerpts related to authority, the former is her perception regardless of language, whereas the latter relates to authority in the context of English as a corporate language.

> Yes, I think well both external and internal right […] I have a certain … impact, right. Or people listen to what one’s … my opinions are to things and my ideas and such yes. And fight also often, I want to have my ideas put through, right. Yes, well then you have to work on it. Must have some good arguments (Appendix B, 29-33, 03:05-03:34).

> Well, I think that I have authority in the sense that they have, they can see what we have done. Before we became a part of them. And can you say, everything we have made here in Denmark […] I have been in charge of … that they are really impressed about. In that sense, I do have an authority […] so they in that way have an impression that I am not as stupid as I sound […] more or less everything we have made in terms of marketing in our company, they are head over heels about, because they think it is brilliant […] In that sense, I do have an authority (Appendix B, 259-268, 24:35-25:28).

It appears that there is a contrast between the two, as it appears that she used to feel that she could make an impact both externally and internally, whereas now her authority derives from what she made before the acquisition. In terms Bamberg’s (1997) first level, the characters in the first excerpt are the narrator and the stakeholders over whom she may have authority. She primarily uses the pronoun ‘I’ followed by actions of said pronoun, which suggest agency. It should be noted that the participant corrects herself during her narrative, as she changes ‘one’s’ to ‘my’, when describing how people listen to her opinions. This may once more suggest that she ascribes herself certain rights and responsibilities. If one looks at the second level (Bamberg 1997), she positions herself as one that has rights in terms of the stakeholders, whom she is able to impact through her arguments that are justified by her professional role.

Similar to the rights ascribed in the first excerpt, the second story likewise ascribe these rights. However, they appear to refer to the character presented in the first excerpt, if one distinguishes between her Danish-speaking and English-speaking identity. In this context, her authority does not derive from her opinions or arguments, but rather from her portfolio, which was created prior to Roima Int.’s acquisition of Logimatic. Thus, this may highlight the constancy versus change dilemma (Bamberg 2020). Nevertheless, the participant may still have these opinions and arguments, but not be able to communicate them, as suggested by herself “oh, I have some explanation, but then you can’t … can’t quite find the words […] and then you say perhaps not as much” (Appendix B, 67-69, 06:50-06:59).

An interesting thing that should be noted in the second excerpt is in terms of Bamberg’s (2020), sameness versus difference dilemma. She presents two groups of characters: ‘them’ and ‘us’. For instance, she mentions how ‘they can see what we have done’ as well as describes how ‘we became a part of them’. The ‘they’ that occurs throughout this narrative is not specified, but rather a faceless entity, which can comprise both Roima Int. as well as the marketing team, which she is a part of. One can argue that both are present, as the marketing processes she had developed are impressing ‘them’, which must then refer to her team, whereas ‘a part of them’ suggests that it is the entire company, thus Roima Int. Therefore, different groups are constructed resulting in a ‘them versus us’ notion, which may be more emphasised in the following:

> we also want to have our things […] that it stays like we want it or at least which is good for us here in Denmark […] and there, well I fight really all that I can to ensure that we can can continue to do the things that makes sense for us […] we have extremely many discussions also, and them I enter into, well also because it is super annoying to see, and we will not just say ‘oh, if you think that, then we will do it’ (Appendix B, 157-164, 15:35-16:15).

In this excerpt the difference between the two groups is emphasised compared to the previous excerpt. Here it becomes evident that there are tensions between the two, as the participant positions herself and the Danish as opposed to the other. An element which highlights this is the first sentence, as she wants ‘our things’ to ‘stay like we want’, which is then ‘good for us’. This statement contains a presupposition, as it assumes that the Finnish way will not be in the best interest of Danish employees (Benwell & Stokoe 2006). Similarly, she uses the word ‘fight’, which may construct ‘them’ as bad. Conversely, this narrative positions the narrator or the ‘I’ as the protagonist who defends her group. Therefore, one may argue that the differences between the groups in this perception decreases effectiveness, as dialogues turn into discussions. However, whether this is dependent on English being the corporate language or the geographical divide is not apparent from the above. Rather, this may be indicated in lines 247-251, where she describes how misunderstandings between them may cause tensions. Nevertheless, it may likewise be a combination of utilising English and the change of processes in her work for the participant.

If one moves on to language, participant 1 appears to present a narrative in which she has improved her English skills, which she takes pride in when she compares her current self to her past self. This narrative of a personal change in terms of English is apparent throughout the interview. For instance, the change is apparent in these two narratives:

> I was not particularly good at English in school and have always kind of avoided English. I have been more fond of German … so it has always been a barrier for me … well, you can say just if there was a +44 number calling my phone, then I just thought ‘no, you will have to call someone else.’ […] it has been hard to make contact, because, well I was limited in the linguistics (Appendix B, 35-43, 03:43-04:04:40).

> but I think … well I think actually that it is a bit cool – I am glad that I have broken this barrier, and that I now am going and and using it and becoming better at it, and now it

> is not that hard. Well, now it is not hard in the same way for me (Appendix B, 175-178, 17:18-17:37).

In both of these narratives only one character is presented, which is the participant herself. If one first examines the agency versus passivity in Bamberg's (2020) terms, then there appears to be a change between the two narratives. In the former, she appears to take a more passive role, as she 'avoids' English and it is a 'barrier' for her. Thus, it seems that English is portrayed as a figurative agent that subjects the narrator to unpleasant things. In contrast, the latter quote uses another terminology, as the participant has now 'broken this barrier' and 'using it and becoming better at it', which then suggests that she takes responsibility for her achievements and do not tribute it to others. Furthermore, she repeats the word 'barrier' across both narratives, first as an obstacle and secondly as something she has broken down. In both cases she uses a metaphor, which may then emphasise the sense of achievement, she feels and further emphasise the change in agency. The pride in her own achievement is likewise visible on lines 197-200, as she describes that she considers it 'cool' to tell her friends that she has meetings in English and is happy about her own progress.

In terms of Bamberg's (2020) constancy versus change, this is further evident across these two narratives. One can argue that her original state was a Danish-speaking professional in Logimatic, who have then changed into an English-speaking employee at Roima Int., in which she takes pride. However, in alignment with the argument that her current perception of own professional identity is not equivalent the one prior to the company acquisition, this change is not necessarily finished. This is because the change has occurred in two aspects simultaneously; on the one hand, she has improved her English skills, but on the other hand, her professional skills are perceived as decreased. Thus, this change is not necessarily for the better, although constructed that way solely in terms of linguistic skills.

If one examines the verbs utilised in both narratives, these will once more differ. In the former she mainly uses different forms of 'to be', whereas the latter uses more dynamic words, such as 'going', 'using', and 'becoming'. This may once more highlight the change versus constancy dilemma as well as the agency versus passivity in terms of transitivity, as it changes from a more existential to a material process and thus from a constant state to an active role (Isti'anah 2014). Overall, if one examines her vocabulary as well as the inclusion of the 'barrier' metaphor, it appears that the first story constructs a narrative in which the participant was 'limited' and found her situation 'hard', whereas the second story is then liberating her from her restrictions, as she then connects these words with other deemphasising words to highlight her change.

In spite of the apparent change in terms of participant 1's English competencies, it can be argued that English as a corporate language may still limit her professionally, which then results in her becoming more passive. Furthermore, one can identify instances in which she reverts to Danish or utilises translation software, such as Google Translate or DeepL (Appendix B, 229), which then decrease her effectiveness as it takes more resources from her. One can argue that with participant 1, the influence English has on her sense of professional identity does not come from a lack of technical terms or exclusive language related to her field, but rather an overall uncertainty with the language. Thus, it appears the English is restricting her in terms of performing her job, which then may influence her position in her narratives in terms of rights as well as the authority to make decisions within her field (Sarangi & Candlin 2011):

> It was insanely transgressive to have to sit there and present oneself, while one's colleagues could hear how how completely on an elementary school level you were in English, right. That was, it was completely on show, I think. And sort of degrading on some level, right, or very embarrassing (Appendix B, 58-62, 06:02-19).

In this quote, one can derive that English as a corporate language may have been a significant challenge to participant 1 following the acquisition. For instance, she uses negatively charged words such as 'transgressive', 'degrading' and 'embarrassing' in terms of her experience with speaking English to her new colleagues. Here she positions herself as a passive subject in regard to her new colleagues. This is then in contrast to the identity outside of the context of English, she presented above, thereby supporting the statement that there is a change when she speaks English compared to Danish. In terms of her rights, these arguably disappear in this narrative compared to previously, as she constructs herself as unqualified for her role through the chosen vocabulary (Wu et al. 2015). This renunciation of rights may likewise be apparent in the following:

> or else I try to explain it in some awkward way perhaps, and then I always end with 'I hope you understand what I mean' […] but I try often to explain it in some kind of more banal-ish way […] but that can also become a mess (Appendix B, 115-121, 11:19-11:48).

In this quote, it is interesting how she adds the 'I hope you understand', as this may display uncertainty as well as lack of confidence in oneself when utilised in conversation. Simultaneously, it may decrease her authority due to this. Thereby, the rights assigned to her profession and experience may be limited due to how she positions herself when interacting with her colleagues, as she then constructs a new identity. Thus, it appears in an overall perspective that the main challenge for participant 1 is not the implementation of a corporate language, but rather that it is English, as she is uncertain in that field.

6.1.1.2 Participant 2

As with participant 1, the primary theme in participant 2's interview manifests itself significantly through the access to the exclusive language, which is often narrated by means of referring to lack of experience within the field:

> Well then … I feel myself sometimes a bit as such a … a beginner, can you say … but I consider myself also still as relatively new in what I do, so I have also a lot to learn, that I know … but I can also really a lot, but I … feel myself as such a beginner, when I have to formulate things in English, and especially if it is such intricate things in English … and very technical and very nerdy and yes, then I feel myself a bit as a beginner (Appendix B, 442-447, 16:46-17:19).

With this it should be noted that the participant has been in her position for approximately a year and a half and is educated within the field, which should then provide her with some experience. Nevertheless, it appears that this is not how participant 2 perceive herself professionally. If one examines this small story from Bamberg's (1997) perspective of levels, the central character of this story is the narrator herself. If one examines the pronouns, she primarily uses 'I' rather than using indefinite pronouns, such as 'you'. This may then suggest that she takes responsibility for her role, as she perceives herself as an active actor in developing her professional identity thereby increasing her agency (Bamberg 2020). Furthermore, in this regard, it appears that she assigns herself attributes through the use of verbs. However, it is interesting that she does not use forms of 'to be', but rather uses the word 'feel', which is otherwise a part of the perception process (Isti'anah 2014). Thus, this may indicate that this is the perception she experiences as well as a self-reflection in her narrative.

In terms of Bamberg's second level, participant 2 only mentions herself in the story, which may indicate that she feels isolated to some degree. However, it may be argued that she positions her perception of her professional identity to an ideal identity which she wishes to identify as, thereby indirectly comparing the two. This may then present a struggle between constancy versus change, as she compares her English-speaking identity to her constant

Danish-speaking identity (Bamberg 2020). This argument may be supported, if one examines her response to the question of whether she feels the same when working in the context of Danish to which she answers no (Appendix B, 366). This perception appears to repeat itself across stories where communication is in English and in Danish, which may then suggest that this perception is not necessarily dependent on the corporate language but rather other factors. Nevertheless, it should be noted that she does emphasise that she does know a lot (Appendix B, 445), but then continues to describe how issues arise for her, when her tasks are then in English specifically, which may indicate a slight difference between her perceptions of professional identity in different linguistic contexts.

Participant 2's background is brought up in relation to several questions, such as on lines 379-381 "I can actually be a little nervous to speak English, although I have taken a five year education". This is rather interesting in terms of her consistent use of the word 'beginner', since her education and close familiarity with English is emphasised. Naturally, she may perceive herself as a beginner in terms of her professional identity, but she highlights how English has always come natural to her, but when she talks of her profession this appears to have become an obstacle. Thus, this may support the suggestion that her perception is not solely dependent on English, but rather a general sense, which is then emphasised in communicative situations which may be slightly more advanced. This then indicates that the recuring mention of background is an attempt to defend her right to operate within her profession.

In relation to the argument that participant 2 may not perceive herself as a professional regardless of language, at least to some degree, one can argue that she presents a narrative in which she may not have been able to develop her competencies because of the corporate language being English.

> in my team we have meetings every Monday morning from nine to ten, where we are us in Denmark, my boss in Sweden and a colleague in Finland and one from India […] quite often after those meetings, I am quite bombed in the head … and sometimes also kind of a bit frustrated, because you do not feel that the points you have made and is comfortable enough to communicate that they come out, because you have spent the time on 'what did he say, and what do I understand by that, and that's not how she

> understood it, okay, then I have misunderstood it' […] so I can sometimes be very … very bombed afterwards and exhausted, but I try, and I talk a lot with *name of manager* about it […] and then we try afterwards to move it into some boxes (Appendix B, 394-415, 12:27-14:33).

In this excerpt, there are a few more characters presented in terms of Bamberg's (1997) first level. On the one hand, there is the participant and her Danish manager, and on the other hand is the boss in Sweden, and the colleagues in Finland and India. If one examines the pronouns, it is interesting that she begins utilising 'you' here and further in the following stories, as this has not been that prominent previously. With the inclusion of the word 'us' in terms to her and her colleague in Denmark, this may suggest a distinction between 'us' in Denmark and 'them' in the team outside of Denmark or outside of a Danish speaking group. This may then display both of the dilemmas in Bamberg's similarities versus difference, as she identifies with her Danish manager, but distinguishes herself from the remaining team. Since she uses 'you', this suggests that it may refer not solely to herself, but perhaps also her Danish manager, as she further states that they afterwards attempt to make sense of the meeting in cooperation. On the other hand, the other characters in the excerpt are her *boss*, a *colleague* and *one*. The *one* refers to her Indian colleague, which she has previously distanced herself from, such as in Appendix B, 357-362 "I think he is really hard to understand, so sometimes I actually intentionally choose not to answer the question he asks." Similarly, the choice of using *boss* may indicate some negatively associations, as this word is sometimes used to describe an authoritative figure to whom one cannot speak freely. Lastly, the Finnish team member is referred to as a *colleague*, which is typically a positively charged word. Nevertheless, it suggests that there are two groups which may be distinguished by country, as these are actively mentioned. Therefore, one can argue in terms of agency versus passivity that the participant is being subjected to the actions of the others. This may be supported by her use of 'bombed', which has a more significant meaning, as it suggests that others are inflicting this feeling on her. Thus, the responsibility is laid upon the other group in terms of the meetings not being effective.

In continuation of the above argument that English may influence participant 2's development of her professional identity, it can be argued that she may feel that she does not improve, if she does not get anything constructive from their team meetings, which is then decreasing the professional development. Furthermore, her story indicates that the meetings taking place in English are draining her, which she describes as ‘’bombed’, which may then affect the effectiveness of her job, thereby once more influencing her self-perception due to potential low outputs (Lønsmann 2011). Thus, English is not directly affecting her perception of professional identity, but rather her competencies are limited indirectly by it. Additionally, this may be supported by her vocabulary, as ‘bombed’ and exhausted are negatively charged words. The former of these is quite significant, as it also serves as a metaphor, which emphasises the contrast in agency versus passivity, as she feels ‘bombed’ by the other group in these meetings. These considerations may, as mentioned, explain why her background is often mentioned, as it can serve as a defense of her position and right to be there, although she may experience a degree of impostor syndrome (Wu et al. 2015).

Regarding the social aspect, she goes from describing herself in a Danish context as "…very social. It comes naturally … to me … enjoy it a lot" (Appendix B, 329-330) to:

> I still consider myself as social, when a conversation takes place in English. But it is not … it is not on the same level[1], as if a conversation takes place in Danish […] if I feel that a conversation becomes a little too … becomes a little too technical or a little too complex for me to reach the point, I actually want to get to … if I know that I cannot without stumbling over the words or saying all kinds of stupid, then I will actually rather not say anything at all (Appendix B, 332-337, 05:55-06:27).

With this story, participant 2 is once more the only character present in terms of Bamberg's first level, although one might argue that she has a dual role, as two versions of herself is presented across the above excerpt and the quote on lines 329-330. This will then display the constancy versus change dilemma in Bamberg's perspective, as she compares her English-speaking self to her constant Danish-speaking self, which may then emphasise the degree to which she feels that English influences her professional identity. This may be evident if one

[1] The participant originally utilised the word ‘’kaliber’ in Danish. However, as this does not translate figuratively to English, another wording with a similar meaning was chosen instead to encompass this.

compares her narrative above to the following “I really like to talk … so yes, I think I am very … very social in many different areas” (Appendix B, 330-331), whereas her English version is described as more hesitant in terms of speaking, as she ‘will actually rather not say anything at all’ in some cases. This contrast may further be evident between her statement on line 340, where she mentions her humoristic side, whereas lines 347-348 mentions that she does not joke in English, as it may fall flat, which then signals some degree of uncertainty with participant 2. The contrast between the two versions of her professional identity may further be highlighted by the vocabulary. With her English-speaking self, she utilises words such as ‘stupid’ and ‘stumbling’, whereas these or any similar do not occur in the context of Danish. Furthermore, ‘stumbling over the words’ presents a metaphor, which may further emphasise the contrast.

If one examines the agency of this narrative, it appears that she takes a passive role, whereas ‘the conversation’ or ‘English’ becomes too difficult or complex, when then assigns the communicative situation certain possessive attributes through which it arguably receives a degree of agency. Thereby, she is being influenced by the situation, which may then indicate that she feels that English influences her identity.

Overall, it appears that English limits participant 2 in some regards, which she further states herself. For instance, she mentions that she feels as an unprofessional, when she does not get the words correct (lines 382-384). As suggested by Sarangi & Candlin (2011), exclusive language contributes to the sense of professional identity, but overall, it appears that participant 2 perceives her own professional identity as a beginner despite her familiarity with English and the professional field. Her familiarity is further mentioned several times throughout the interview, which may serve as a defence of her right to be in her role. It does, nevertheless, appear throughout her narratives that she is not confident in her role, which she further states herself “so sometimes then I feel … well, that I do not suffice. Well I … no I feel … yes, it is difficult.” (Appendix B, 374). Two versions of her professional identity are presented both with insecurities and references to a beginner level, although the Danish-speaking role does appear to be more active in conversations, whereas the English-speaking version is described as more passive. Thus, English may to some degree influence her perception of own professional identity in a negative manner, but some may further derive from her personal identity as well as the communication occurring across borders rather than physically, which is emphasised on lines 426-440.

6.1.1.3 Participant 3

With participant 3, he repeats the extent of his English vocabulary throughout the interview. In this context, it further appears that he distinguishes between two sets of vocabularies: one that relates to his profession as a civil engineer, which he has not worked with since 1997, and one that refers to his position as a director in Roima DK. This distinction appears to occur in terms of technical terms and the exclusive language related to his respective fields.

> I think I, I think I am a bit rusty. Well, it, there comes … there are many words. It is probably primarily the vocabulary, which … which can lag behind a bit, when we now have to speak with … can you say in finance things and ERP system things in English. There are some words, which I don’t … or which I lack, but where if it now was completely technical, then I think it would go much much better. So it is a question of acquiring a new vocabulary, and that … that is a process (Appendix B, 493-498, 04:19-04:53)

If one departs in Bamberg’s (1997) levels, one can identify the narrator himself as well as a collective ‘we’, as he refers to the Danish office who now has to speak English as a part of their job. In terms of agency versus passivity, one can argue that the narrator takes responsibility for his perceived lacking skills thereby displaying a degree of agency, as he consistently uses the pronoun ‘I’ and further in the context of stative terms such as ‘I lack’ and ‘I am a bit rusty’, thereby purposefully assigning attributes to himself (Bamberg 2020 ; Isti’anah 2014).

In relation to the distinction, he makes in terms of his vocabularies, one can see that he expresses uncertainty in terms of his English in the context of his role as a director, whereas he displays confidence in his technical language in his engineering profession. This can be seen, as he initially says that his vocabulary ‘can lag behind’, but later emphasises that it would be ‘much better if it was completely technical’. Thus, one can argue that there are two identities at play, as with the previous two participants. In this case, his engineer background would establish his constant professional identity from which the director profession differs. This may further display a difference between his English-speaking and Danish-speaking selves, as his role as a civil engineer does not occur in meetings with his colleagues in Finland or Sweden, as these meetings are attended as a director. Therefore, this profession is not influenced by the use of English, although the technical terms related to it may indeed already be English. Rather he emphasises how he may be unfamiliar with terms outside of his original profession, as he highlights vocabularies within ERP systems and finance as areas in which he feels insufficient. Thus, it appears that he compares his two professions in terms of his familiarity with their respective vocabularies and perceives his engineering background as sufficient, but not necessarily with his role as director, which is further evident in the following, where he contrasts his English abilities within his two professions or identities: "I am technically competent, but … well again, when we talk about the technical […] the engineering, then I think I actually also can […] manage fine in English. It is, as earlier stated […] the other things which have showed up […] that are difficult" (Appendix B, 550-553).

In continuation of participant 3's perception of own professional identity, he states that it does not change when the language does. However, he appears to refer to his engineering identity in this regard rather than his role as director, which he does not address "Well in … within engineering there I will say that there am I – or storage and logistics, which is our … industry, there I think I can easily manage in English" (Appendix B, 587-588). Here one can see that he focuses solely on his original identity and omit his other professional identity. This may on the one hand indicate that he identifies with the former the most or on the other hand that he does not perceive the latter as sufficient. Another aspect to consider in terms of engineering and his perception of sufficiency, as he will 'manage' is that he may not assign much relevance to the exclusive language in terms of the formation of a professional identity, as his perception may depart in his 42 years of experience within that field. It is, however, interesting that he consistently distinguishes between the two professions, as his primary role since 1997 has been as director. This may be explained by the educational background, as he may identify the most with 'what he studied to become' (Hoyer 2020).

In continuation of his sense of professional identity, it is interesting to examine how he describes himself as a professional in general and in the context of English. Although he states that he still perceives himself as a professional, his response to the general question is much more extensive and nuanced, whereas the latter is the most recent quote above. At the general level he says:

> I consider myself as the entrepreneur … the architect … the one that understands how to convert … technology and software into something that can be used for something for our customers (Appendix B, 467-469, 01:56-02:11).

In the following two sets of characters are portrayed: the narrator himself and the customers. With the narrator, he assigns himself agency, as he is the 'entrepreneur' and 'architect' that produces something useful for his customers. In this regard on can further identify a sense of responsibility or duty towards the customers, as he wishes to produce something beneficiary. The two words, he uses to describe himself are particularly interesting, as they encompass someone who initiates and creates something from nothing, thereby emphasising his competencies in terms of the engineering profession, as it is in the context of 'technology and software' rather than business. This may suggest that he indeed considers the background in engineering as his primary professional identity, as mentioned above. In terms of the general perception of professionalism, he likewise focuses on his background in engineering, as one can see above. Here, however, he does not use the same words, but rather focus on the fact that he can 'manage'. This contrast in the structure and nature of the narratives may indicate that English does to some degree influence his perception of professional identity, as it is described with less nuance. Furthermore, as he stated that he 'manage' this may suggest some degree of struggle, as it suggests that something has to 'be taken care of' and thus presumes that there is an issue. This is further evident in the following, as he portrays English as a challenge, which has to be dealt with: "we get through it […] I would have preferred the other, but of course we get through it. I don't think … there are not any challenges, we cannot – or I cannot deal with in English (Appendix B, 576-578).

In regard to the term 'manage', this is used several times throughout the interview, which, alongside his perspective on English as corporate language in general, indicates an overall negative attitude towards English. This may then be a direct counternarrative to the dominant idea that English is the optimal solution for a company operating across borders (Lueg et al. 2020).

> Well so far, we have run everything in Danish in Logimatic, and I think that it is liberating when you can use your vocabulary from the native language to communicate

> nuanced. When you have to communicate in English it becomes far less nuanced and it … and there becomes also understanding breaches, because … both because my English maybe not is sufficient, but also because that those colleagues we now speak with in Finland certainly are not good at English either … some few are, but … the majority are not, and therefore you have to sort of figure out 'what words are they actually using precisely for this term, which may not even be the correct one, but it … it is then what you use in Finland', so I think it is a difficult balance. I think the communication become poorer (Appendix B, 502-511, 05:10-06:00).

From above, one can identify two groups in terms of Bamberg's (1997) levels. On the one hand is once more the narrator and the Danish colleagues represented by a collective 'we' and on the other hand are the Finnish colleagues. One can argue that two narratives are playing out in the excerpt, as the first section focuses on participant 3's attitude towards English as a corporate language, whereas the last part relates to how communication works between him and the Finnish employees. In terms of the attitude towards English as a corporate language, the chosen vocabulary is interesting, as he describes Danish with positive terms such as 'liberating' and 'nuanced' in which it is presupposed that English is then the opposite. English is further described with negatively associated words such as 'breaches' and 'poorer'. Overall, this suggests a counternarrative to the dominant perception that English is ideal as a corporate language (Lueg et al. 2020).

In terms of the second narrative regarding the Finnish employees portrayed in this excerpt, one can see that the narrator distinguishes between 'we' in Denmark and 'those colleagues […] in Finland', which then suggests difference in the perspective of Bamberg (2020). One can further argue that participant 3 distances himself from the Finnish group through his narrative. For instance, he refers to them as 'those' rather than for example 'our colleagues'. Additionally, he assigns the majority of them with one common trait: that they are not good at English. This then generalises them and reaffirms the group formation. Furthermore, it appears that participant 3 suggests that the Finnish employees use English incorrectly, as he describes how the terms they use are not 'the correct one'. This then indicates that the participant perceives himself as correct in terms of English, although this may not be the actual case, thereby distancing himself from the Finnish. Nevertheless, it is interesting that he emphasises the linguistic competencies of his Finnish colleagues, as he likewise describes his vocabulary as lacking, as shown above. This may then be an attempt to position the Finnish as the cause of the communicational challenges, which in turn decreases effectiveness (lines 582-584), as it was implemented, when Logimatic "was sold to Roima" (line 464) rather than, for instance, 'joined Roima'.

Overall, there appears to be a certain 'annoyance' with the Finnish colleagues and the fact that English was implemented as a corporate language after the acquisition, which he, however, 'manages'. In addition, it appears that English is utilised as an argument to emphasise the differences rather than sameness (Bamberg 2020) between the two groups, which then distances them and further decreases effectiveness. In terms of identity, one can argue that English affects the participant more than he expresses directly, as he utilises different vocabularies to describe himself in the two linguistic contexts. Additionally, he omits his primary role from his narratives and rather focus on his background in engineering, which he has not extensively worked with since 1997. Thus, this professional identity may not be as affected by English as a corporate language, as his role as director, as it relies more on experience than communication. Lastly, the participant does express that he lacks technical terms in several instances throughout the interview, which then suggests that he is not a part of the exclusive language relating to his primary role as director. This may then explain why he relies on engineering as a foundation for professional identity, as it leaves him with the most attributes and competencies (Hoyer 2020).

6.1.1.4 Participant 4

With participant 4, he previously worked in a company where the corporate language was English, for which reason he may have grown accustomed to utilising it (lines 604-607). Nevertheless, it appears that English may still influence his perception of professional identity. One can argue that it may be relevant to examine his descriptions of his sense of identity when he worked at his previous employer, as this was when English was introduced as part of his role and thus potentially began to influence him.

> Yeah … it's more natural day by day, I would say … in the beginning when I started using it more in my work it was … didn't come so naturally, because all the … sort of definitions and terms. You had to sort of think in a new way and maybe think more before you open your mouth. But … nowadays … more natural, but … I would like to be more natural and sort of … easy, so that I wouldn't have to think first in Finnish and then rethink it in English (Appendix B, 632-636, 05:26-06:17).

In the excerpt, the participant portrays himself as a character in terms of Bemberg's (1997) first level. He primarily utilises the pronoun 'I', which may indicate agency, as the 'I' take action rather than being subjected to external forces in this story. In addition, one can argue that he takes responsibility, as he states that 'when I started using it […] didn't come natural', which suggests that his initial challenges with English came from himself rather than for instance blaming the concept of English as a corporate language itself (Bamberg 2020).

In terms of the participant's perception of his English skills in the context of his work today, one can identify a presupposition, as he states that he 'would like to be more natural' and continues to state that he currently thinks in Finnish and then rethinks in English, which suggests decreased effectiveness. Within the presupposition, it is embedded that he does not yet consider English as natural for him. In continuation of this, one may argue that the constancy versus change dilemma may be identified (Bamberg 2020). In this excerpt, the participant's professional identity in the beginning of his English-speaking career is the constant from which he may develop or change. It appears that he does not identify with the original identity anymore, as 'it's more natural day by day'. Furthermore, he distances himself from the point of departure, as he 'would like to me more natural', suggesting that it is a favourable trait which he would like to acquire.

It is interesting that the participant uses the words 'terms and definitions', as this may suggest that English in itself was not necessarily a challenge, but rather the technical aspects related to his field. This would then indicate that he unfamiliarity with the terms, supported by his account of his higher education being in Finnish (lines 622-625), that he did not feel as part of the exclusive language related to his profession, which then influences his sense of professional identity in a negative manner (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Therefore, English may have had a negative impact on his professional role at some point in his career.

In continuation of participant 4's perception of own English skills in a business context, it appears that his narrative is rather negative, although he emphasises his improvement throughout the interview, which is for instance seen in the excerpt above. Nevertheless, his stories indicate that his identity perception does change, when the language does, as his is not as active in English conversations, among others.

> like professionally … I think … intermediate plus. Maybe. Or like … I would like to be better in using English as the like professional language like that it … like I said that it would come more naturally in like … every aspect of of the work, but … yeah, maybe well maybe I I tend to also think that I'm worse than I am actually, but … yeah maybe if I say that I'm good but I'd like to get better (Appendix B, 655-659, 08:45-09:30).

From the excerpt, one can identify an instance of agency in Bamberg's (2020) perspective, as the pronoun 'I' is associated with attributes and is further the actor in the small story. In this regard, it is further noticeable that the narrator assigns the 'I' with certain responsibilities, as it is the duty of the 'I' to improve in English. However, it should be noted that he further states that he tends to consider himself worse than he may actually be, thereby indicating a contrast between his self-perception and others' perception of his skills. Nevertheless, he does use a vocabulary throughout the interview, which indicates a negative narrative in relation to his professional English skills. For instance, a repetition of wanting to become more 'natural' contains a presupposition that his current level of English is not natural to him. In addition, he states on lines 740-741 that it has been difficult for him to express himself in English "was maybe harder to … express myself in like verbally also", which suggests that he at some point has considered English as a corporate language a challenge in terms of fulfilling his responsibilities and thus may have affected his professional identity (Sarangi & Candlin 2011).

The effect on the professional identity may come from a sense of being excluded from the exclusive language (Abbott 1988 ; Sarangi & Candlin 2011) as well as decreased effectiveness, as it requires more resources to perform at the same level as in Finnish: "… it happens more often that I would … then I would like it to happen that I have to for example check up some kind of term or … yeah, or verify through some source. A person or … Google, basically" (Appendix B, 673-675**)**. From this it becomes apparent that participant 4 may not utilise his resources in the manner preferred by him, as 'it happens more often that I would […] like' suggests that he is not yet confident in professional English despite presenting. In addition, he states that he does not participate as actively in English conversations as Finnish (lines 639-641**)**, which may then decrease the output of specialised knowledge as this is constructed through interactions, typically of a social character (Carr 2021).

In terms of the aforementioned constancy versus change dilemma (Bamberg 2020), another story in which one may be able to identify participant 4 distancing himself from a former version of his professional identity is in the following:

> Well it at first when it started … in my work life it was … heavier. Sort of … it maybe took more energy from me, I guess. When it was and I tried to also in the beginning maybe avoid it, still when I was in PWC or … I was a bit maybe also irritated that all of a sudden, I had to use English all the time also. But nowadays, I think it's just a positive thing, and … maybe I see it in a different way that it's sort of improving my skills also (Appendix B, 711-715, 15:22-16:11).

In the above, one can identify the narrator himself as the sole character at the first level (Bamberg 1997). In terms of agency versus passivity, it can be argued that passivity is utilised here, as the narrator is subjected to the consequences of English as a corporate language in the beginning of the story, since the responsibility is shifted towards that rather than himself. This may be derived from statements such as 'it maybe took more energy from me' as well as him attempting to 'avoid it'. Throughout the first half of this small story, negatively associated words, such as 'heavier', 'irritated' and 'avoid' are utilised, which suggests on the one hand that English as a corporate language is a negative external force to which he is subjected, and on the other hand that he is portraying a counternarrative to the grand narrative of English being the ideal for international business communication (Lueg et al. 2020). The corporate language is here associated with an entity which deprives people of energy and thus may influence how individuals' professional identities are maintained, developed and perceived. Thus, it may take away resources from self-development because of one having to focus one's attention on the language rather than the tasks within one's role, which in turn may decrease the sense of professionalism in addition to his job satisfaction (Sarangi & Candlin ; Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). Furthermore, as studies suggest, one may feel less authoritative within their field, if they are not able to comfortably communicate (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Nevertheless, the last half of this story indicates that there has been a shift in the narrative from his time at PWC to his current role at Roima, as he has worked in English for a few years. Thus, the counternarrative may have decreased, as English as a corporate language at present is rather described as an opportunity in which he is able to improve his linguistic skills. Thus, the constancy versus change dilemma (Bamberg 2020) occurs, as he depicts a change from his former identity to his current one, in which English is narrated as an opportunity rather than a challenge.

If one examines participant 4's perception of his own professional identity, he states that his professionalism remains the same regardless of language, although his confidence appears to be decreased when speaking English compared to when he communicates in Finnish, which may in turn influence his outputs as well as effectiveness.

> I don't know if it's just in my head, but I feel that I can present myself in a more professional way, when I talk in Finnish, yeah. Or at least I feel maybe also more confident, and maybe then the … output is also … affected by it (Appendix B, 720-722, 17:09-17:35).

In the excerpt, the character presented at the first level is once more the narrator himself (Bamberg 1997). In terms of Bamberg's (2020) agency versus passivity dilemma, one can argue that this excerpt displays agency through the use of the pronoun 'I' followed by actions taken. Similarly, it appears that the narrator takes responsibility for his actions, as he directs his decreased professionalism in English to his own level of competencies, thereby assigning himself with the responsibility to improve it and thus with agency (Bamberg 1997).

This excerpt further displays Bamberg's (2020) constancy versus change dilemma, as he compares his English-speaking professional self to his Finnish-speaking one. As with participant 1 and 2, one can argue that the Finnish-speaking professional identity is a constant, as this is his professional identity regardless of language. His English-speaking identity is therefore measured against this and represents a change in professional identity when shifting to this. This then supports the previous argument that he does not feel content with his English-speaking self, as there is a contrast between the two, since the Finnish-speaking professional identity is at a level where he is confident and does not lack technical terms (lines 720-721).

If one examines the verbs utilised in this story, he uses words such as 'feel', which indicates a mental process, which departs in self-reflection in terms of his own capabilities (Isti'anah 2014). This may be explained by his perceived lack of confidence when working in English, as he may be great at his job, but not perceive this himself due to a sense of inadequacy and high standards. Thus, English may in this sense influence his confidence, as he perceives himself as not sufficient. This notion recurs throughout the interview:

> experiences where I have felt less confident maybe […] if I have to … sort of explain things for example a couple of times to get the message through, because … I might not find the … the most simple and … most easy easy way to understand thing in the first try or something like that (Appendix B, 726-731, 18:01-18:49).

Here the narrative is elaborated on, as his confidence is described as being influenced by a notion of not being able to professionally explain what he means, but rather end up constructing complex sentences, which his colleagues may not be able to understand. This is further expanded in the following:

> If it's very specific, like … and I feel that I don't want to take everyone's time just to sort of form … long explanation for simple thing that I can just quickly … say to someone … and she or he can verify and then I can continue, and if it's not like … considering every person that is … taking part in a meeting maybe then it's … sometimes the way to go, but that's just … verify some term or things like that in in Finnish quickly, but then just … to switch back or or … or close fast (Appendix B, 644-649, 07:10-08:06)

Here participant 4 expands his narrative, as he describes how he does not want to take up others' time, when he does not know the technical terms. This once more emphasises that his professional confidence may be influenced by a lack of access to the technical terms related to his field and thereby the exclusive language, which in turn may affect his perception of own decision-making authority and therethrough his sense of professional identity.

In an overall perspective, participant 4's small stories present a narrative which indicate a counternarrative to the concept of English being the ideal choice for international business (Lueg et al. 2020). In addition to this, his narratives have changed from challenge to perceiving English as an opportunity to improve his skills. Nevertheless, a notion of inadequacy is given throughout his stories, as he appears to perceive his English as still not sufficient at professional level thereby excluding him from the exclusive language in finance. Lastly, his stories suggest that he does not have absolute confidence in his professional skills, when operating in English, which then indicates that English does indeed influence his perception of professional identity.

6.1.1.5 Participant 5

In contract to the previous participants, the narratives of participant 5 differs to some degree, as she does not construct English as a struggle in her career. Furthermore, her answers in the interview are relatively brief, which suggests that the narratives are constructed across the many small stories presented. Her short answers are further explained by herself on lines 824-825 "Not so long, they are shorter. I would like to be fluent in that too, but … at the moment it's not happening". If one departs in her perception of authority, she constructs this as the same level regardless of which language, she operates in:

> I think yes. Because we have been working with … most of my colleagues for … more than ten years, so so they know me as a … colleague. They don't … perhaps know so much about my background, but that doesn't matter (Appendix B, 791-793, 02:57-03:16).

From above, one can determine two groups of characters in terms of Bamberg's (1997) first level: the narrator herself and her colleagues. However, she does not distinguish between them or present elements of similarity or difference, although one can argue that the use of the word 'colleagues' on two accounts indicate that she considers them as part of the same group. In this quote she states that her authority derives from her colleagues' familiarity with her competencies through many years of collaboration. One can argue that this contains a presupposition, as she assumes that they consider her authoritative in her profession. If one compares her response to her later answer to the same question in the context of English, she replies that "That doesn't change either" (Appendix B, 906), which suggests that she does not perceive her professional authority as dependent on her language. Thereby the rights she may ascribe to herself in terms of her profession do not change. In this regard, English does therefore not influence her perception of own professional identity.

In terms of her perception of own professionalism, this does not appear to change dependent on language either, as she states that:

> I can do everything I need to do in English too. Some of my my customers might also be Finnish speaking originally and when they ... need to attend this kind of meeting or happening, they also are in foreign field (Appendix B, 868-870, 11:08-11:26).

> What could I say? … my profession doesn’t change when I speak English or Finnish, or even Swedish, which is not my best language. I always try (Appendix B, 899-900, 14:14-14:27).

In both of these excerpts one can identify Bamberg’s (2020) constancy versus change dilemma, as she positions herself as constant regardless of changes occurring around her. This may then indicate that she is settled in her position, as she does not distance herself from other versions of her, but rather adhere to the same. In addition to this, the explanation may further lie in her background, as she works within IT. Thus, the industry language is already English, for which reason she remains included in the exclusive language related to her profession. Rather the challenge, she presents herself is in terms of understanding, but not related to technical terms. Instead, she describes how it is “more difficult, for example if if the person speaking is native in English, sometimes I don't. I cannot … kind of … not hear, but. All the all the words, so I don't. I cannot understand all what was said. Some parts may be a little bit hazy” (Appendix B, 884-887). Therefore, she constructs a narrative in which she does come across both technical and other words, she does not understand (line 828), but this is not influential on her sense of professional identity.

In an overall perspective, one can argue that participant 5’s professional identity is perceived through the nature of her profession rather than her sense of belonging in said profession: “Yes, of course, because that doesn't change even if I cannot express myself that well compared to Finnish” (Appendix B, 902-903). It thus appears that her professional identity is well-established through decades of experience and therefore not easily influenced by change. Nevertheless, she may have struggled with English in the past, as this is her current perceptions, for which reason we cannot know how she perceived her identity several years ago.

6.1.1.6 Participant 6

With participant 6, there appears to be a focus on a change of her attitude towards English as a corporate language across her interview. This manifests itself through her stories of English being challenging for her in the beginning of her career, but later an opportunity.

> Well, first, I was terrified. …I think was my second or first … day when I have, like, meetings with our leadership team from Sweden. And and it was, I think it was … terrifying for me to start speaking English with them, even though I speak Swedish, I wouldn't speak Swedish with them. So English was the the, the choice of language between us … but at first, yeah, it was it was terrified and and when we have the. For example, the monthly meetings I think I was in a company like two weeks, and my supervisor is just throw me in the … camera and say, go ahead and introduce yourself and introduce all the other Roimians that had joined. And … first it was hard in English. I have done that in Finnish in many other com… companies for the monthly meetings and and introducing employees to 100 people. But in English it was first first really hard. Now I think it's come maybe easier. I'm not that that … that worried anymore. I'm, I remember the first day I used to like write all the words down and what I would say and what could be the possible like … sentence that I would say in the in the meetings, but now they it's just comes more natural than it came that day (Appendix B, 1005-1017, 10:58-12:18).

In the excerpt, one can identify three groups of characters on Bamberg's (1997) first level. The first of these is the narrator herself, the second is the members of the Swedish leadership team, and lastly her supervisor is presented. In terms of the second level, there is a degree of Bamberg's (2020) understanding of sameness versus difference present, as the narrator identifies a similarity between the Swedish leadership team and herself, since both speak Swedish. Nevertheless, she continues to say that she would not speak Swedish with them, but rather English. This is quite interesting, if they indeed share a common language in which part of the group is fluent. Nevertheless, it may just be explained by that fluency, as it would shift the balance between the actors in terms of linguistics, as the narrator is not native in Swedish. This may then explain the choice of a third language (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). However, she describes the situation of speaking English with them as ‘terrifying’, which then emphasises her discomfort with English in the beginning of her career.

In terms of agency versus passivity (Bamberg 2020) this changes throughout the story. During the first half of the excerpt the participant utilises terms such as ‘my supervisor is just throw me in’, which suggests that she is being subjected to the will of the supervisor. Simultaneously, this suggests that the narrator does not assign any rights to her own character, as ‘throw’ indicates little to no possibility to object. Furthermore, in terms of the Swedish leadership team being associated with ‘terrifying’, one can argue that they are positioned as ‘above’ her and thus with more rights. Therefore, it appears that the beginning of the excerpt positions the narrator herself as passive and subjected to the will of her superiors. This, however, changes towards the end, as the narrative shifts to how she copes with English and how she feels, further relying significantly on the pronoun ‘I’, which supports the argument of agency. Nevertheless, ‘I’ was also utilised in the beginning, but it was frequently followed by actions subjected to the ‘I’, such as with the ‘I’ being thrown in front of a camera by her supervisor (line 1010). Lastly, in terms of agency, the narrator further assigns herself with rights, as she now perceives herself as more natural and therefore not as worried in her job, thereby allowing her a ‘right to speak English in her profession’.

If one looks at constancy versus change (Bamberg 2020) in this excerpt, it can be identified in her personal and therefore professional development. This can, in particular, be derived from the vocabulary utilised to describe the two versions of herself. For instance, the 'original' self is associated with 'terrifying', whereas the self that is described towards the end is associated with 'not worried' and 'more natural', which in turn contains a presupposition that this was not the case with the 'original'. Another example of constancy versus change is in terms of her Finnish- and English-speaking professional identities, as she states that it was harder for her to introduce new employees in English than in Finnish. Therefore, it may be argued that English affects her perception of own professional identity, as there is a difference between the two (Walsh & Gordon 2008).

Lastly, in terms of this excerpt there appears to be a shift in her narrative in terms of the attitude towards English. In the beginning it can arguably be considered a counternarrative to the concept of English as a corporate language, as the participant struggled with English and found it to be 'hard', whereas this shifts towards the end, which may then indicate a support of the concept. This is further emphasised throughout the interview, as the participant identifies opportunities with English as a corporate language, such as "I don't prefer using Finnish if we have an English conversation … even that there is some of can speak Finnish I use to. I like to use English, try to find the way … explaining what I'm trying to say if I don't know the words, so I try not to use Finnish in that point" (Appendix B, 959-962, 06:13-06:34). Here it is apparent that a change has occurred, as English is now preferred over Finnish even in cases where one would quickly ask a colleague to clarify a word in Finnish during a meeting. This is further in alignment with the company policy that English is utilised whenever someone from another country is participating. Thus, this indicates a support of the grander narrative of English being ideal as a corporate language.

Although it appears that participant 6 adheres to the belief that English is the best option when working across borders, it simultaneously seems that she experiences certain challenges with English, which may ultimately affect her sense of own professional identity, as she may not feel that she is a part of an exclusive language (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Nevertheless, the challenges she faces does not appear to affect her at a significant degree in her everyday work life, but they can still influence her self-perception (O'Neill 2020).

> In many situations. Yeah, it's. Yeah. In daily basis, I think I still lack some of the English word and sometimes it's hard to explain myself in English. …but I tried not to think that too much and tries just to speak and and try to find the way of saying things differently if people don't understand me in my words (Appendix B, 1027-1030, 13:05-13:30).

In the above excerpt, the narrator herself is the sole character in terms of Bamberg's (1997) first level. It can be noted that she utilises the pronoun 'I' and simultaneously assign herself with responsibilities, as it is 'I' who lacks and further the 'I' that tries to find a way. Therefore, it may be argued that agency can be identified in this excerpt, as the narrator assigns responsibility for her skill level to herself (Bamberg 2020). From the excerpt one can see that the participant perceives herself as not adequate in terms of utilising professional English, which makes it 'hard' for her. Nevertheless, she does not appear affected by it, as she attempts to explain herself in other terms. However, since she still considers this process 'hard', one can argue that English may indeed influence her self-perception in terms of professional identity, as her professional appearance is challenged (Skjeggestad et al. 2017), Furthermore, the following small story indicates that she is further lacking words, which may in turn exclude her from the exclusive language related to her field.

> No, I don't think I'm not that active. I think I'm … sometimes missing the words that I would like to use … and normally they come easier in Finnish. And and also writing in Finnish, I think I'm more … or use lot of … different kind of words synonyms for each other and for English it's what simple word wording for me then then in Finnish (Appendix B, 951-954, 05:30-05:55).

As with the previous excerpt, the narrator positions herself with a degree of responsibility, as the ‘lack’ is attributable to herself and her own degree of English proficiency. Furthermore, this excerpt once more presents the contrast between her two professional selves: the English-speaking and the Finnish-speaking identities. This is evident from her comparison to Finnish, such as ‘normally they come easier in Finnish’, where Finnish is then set in relation to English. In addition, she describes how she knows more synonyms in Finnish, whereas English communication becomes more ‘simple’, which contains a presupposition that she can communicate with more complexity in Finnish. Thus, Bamberg’s (2020) constancy versus change can be identified. In this sense, she compares her English-speaking professional identity in a negative manner to the Finnish one, which suggests that she prefers the latter. Therefore, her perception of an inadequate proficiency may affect her overall self-perception through the exclusion from the exclusive language as well as her professionalism being challenged (Lønsmann 2011 ; Lønsmann & Mellish 2017).

In continuation of the above, one may further argue that the participant’s ability to perform her work responsibilities at a satisfactory level is likewise challenged by English.

> Yeah, definitely … For example, when I'm doing headhunting calls … for example, for Sweden or sales … position for Sweden … it was sometimes hard as they been talking a lot about technicalities, and I'm not sure what they are meaning or or what the words are, what they are using. So it's not that easy in English when you are lacking words (Appendix B, 973-976, 07:33-07:55).

From the above, the participant presents a story in which she describes one of her tasks: headhunting outside of Finland. In this context, she mentions that it is 'hard' as well her not always understanding what they mean, when it comes to technical terms. In this regard, one can assume that it is a typical task for someone working in HR to recruit across countries, which then often entails English. Nevertheless, recruitments may further take place across different industries, for which reason the recruiter cannot be fluent in all the technical languages. However, it may be argued that it would be simpler, if these recruitments took place in Finnish, as the participant would then perhaps easier be able to interpret the meanings of the technical terms rather than in a language in which one does not consider themselves fluent (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). This understanding may likewise be apparent in the excerpt, as the participant describes how the technical terms are difficult, when she recruits in Sweden and thus speaks English. A presupposition that this is not as difficult in Finnish is therefore embedded into this story.

Lastly, in regard to participant 6, one can identify a direct depiction of whether English influences her perception of own professional identity, if one compares her answers to question 2 and 13 in the interview guide.

> Well I like to think that I am professional with my … with my field, and I I think I'm a … an … loyal and trustful employee (Appendix B, 916-918, 01:25-01:35).

> I think I'm more professional skilled in in, in Finnish than in in English because I've been using Finnish in HR job so many years more than in English. Ah, but also for HR it's sometimes … the topics may concern only in in Finnish languages so so it's some some topics are, could you know in in Finnish, but I think it's I'm not that good in both languages with my personality (Appendix B, 1020-1024, 12:27-12:56).

From the two above excerpts, one can once more identify the narrator as the character at the first level (Bamberg 1997). As it has been consistent throughout the interview, she uses the pronoun ‘I’, which suggests agency. This may be supported by the attributes she assigns to herself as well as a sense of responsibility, as previously seen. In terms of the verbs in these two excerpts, she relies significantly on forms of ‘to be’, which indicates a relation process which assigns attributes to the ‘I’ (Isti’anah 2014). If one then goes on to compare the two excerpts, it is noticeable that she uses different vocabularies. In the first, she positions herself as ‘professional’, ‘loyal’, and ‘trustful’, which are all positively associated. In contrast, the words associated with the ‘I’ in the second quote are ‘not that good’ as well as a presupposition that she is less professional in English. The same type of vocabulary can further be seen throughout the interview, such as “I’m not that professional in English that I’m in Finnish” (Appendix B, 1058) and “perhaps not in every time using English I’m that professional” (Appendix B, 1065). Thus, the aforementioned contrast between her English- and Finnish-speaking selves is once more apparent in terms of Bamberg’s (2020) perspective.

In terms of her mentioning that she has less experience with HR in English, this is interesting in regard to determining why her identity is influenced by English. As mentioned previously, English may influence her, as she lacks words, which excludes her from an exclusive language connected to her profession. This lack of words can then derive either from her overall familiarity with English or her experience with English as a professional language. In both cases, her technical vocabulary may be limited, but as her experience grows, so will the access to the exclusive language, arguably. This is likewise mirrored in the first story presented in relation to participant 6, as that narrative describes how she improved and become more comfortable. Thus, English may still affect her professional identity, but perhaps this is not a constant state (Carr 2021).

6.2.2 A Summary of the Narratives of Roima Intelligence's Employees

To summarise the findings presented in the above analysis, it can be derived that the narratives between the six participants differ to a significant degree, as their professional identities appear to be influenced by different factors. Furthermore, in the cases where English is a direct influence on their self-perceptions, the manner in which it affects their professional identities also differ.

In terms of participant 1, her main narratives appear to present a 'them versus us' notion between Denmark and Finland, which is then not necessarily rooted in English, but rather the processes utilised in the different countries. However, this contrast between the two groups appears to be enhanced because of English, as it generates frustrations and misunderstandings for the participant. In this regard, her professional identity is presented as one that has been exposed to pressure, as she has felt 'degraded', although she states that this has improved with time. In her case, it further appears that she has a split identity on a professional level, as her Danish-speaking and English-speaking professional selves are narrated differently and with different vocabularies. Lasty, her narratives suggest that this participant has been limited to a significant extent by English, which in turn as affected her professional identity.

With participant 2, the two identities are likewise apparent, although both are described as a 'beginner'. However, with her Danish-speaking professional self, she describes it with less negative associated words. In her case, the narratives suggest that English as a corporate language may not be directly influencing her professional identity, but rather indirectly, as it requires more resources from her to understand and navigate in an English context, which then takes away resources from her professional development.

In regard to participant 3, he likewise presents two identities, although these are not necessarily rooted in language, but rather in professions, as he is educated within one field, but works within another. Thus, he perceived his educational professional identity as unaffected by English, although his actual profession may indeed lack access to the exclusive language as well as specialised knowledge. Furthermore, his narratives draw a significant distinction between 'them' in Finland and 'us' in Denmark as well as a general reluctance to a corporate language, thus constituting a counternarrative. English in his case may then affect his professional identity in terms of the role of director, although not directly stated, as well as emphasising the differences between 'them and us', which then affects the business overall.

With participant 4, a change in attitude towards English as a corporate language can be identified, as he shifted from avoiding English to perceiving it as an advantage. His narratives describe how he perceives himself as lacking confidence when communicating in English compared to Finnish, although he simultaneously described how he has improved. The initial attitude towards English further suggests a counternarrative to Roima's grand narrative of English being ideal, although this then appears to have decreased over time. Nevertheless, it appears that he continues to perceive his English skills as inadequate to some degree, thereby excluding him from the exclusive language of his profession and thus influencing his perception of professional identity.

In terms of participant 5, her narrative is relatively unaffected by English, which may be explained by her profession as well as experience. As she works in IT, the technical terms related to her field is already in English, for which reason it did not change when the corporate language did. In addition, she has a relatively high seniority in her current role and have worked with the same colleagues for several years, for which reason her sense of professional identity may come from her experience and further have been established and reaffirmed throughout a long career.

Lastly, with participant 6 her narrative is one that has changed from being a counternarrative to adhering to the grander narrative concurrently with her attitude towards and confidence with speaking English. Participant 6 further portrays two different narratives in terms of describing herself in a Finnish and an English context, as the latter is often negative compared to the former. Lastly, English appears to influence her ability to perform her tasks and further also to affect her sense of own professional identity. Thus, her narrative is one that supports English as a corporate language, although her professional identity is simultaneously affected by it in a negative manner.

7. Discussion

The following is divided into two different sections. The first section will discuss the research question presented in the introduction with a departure in the findings from the analysis. Subsequently, a broader perspective on the process of implementing a corporate language will be reflected upon in terms of management and which aspects they can consider based on the findings presented in this paper. Nevertheless, these will not be general guidelines, as the findings here are based on personal stories and experiences. However, they may still indicate areas in which management can focus their attention during an implementation process.

7.1 English as a Corporate Language's Impact on Professional Identities

As suggested by theory, several factors may influence the development of one's professional identity as well as one's perception of it (section 3.1). Among these, one can find social context, perception of capabilities, values, legitimacy or authority, specialised knowledge and exclusive language, among others (section 3.1). Some of these factors are likewise reflected in the interviews of the six participants and will be discussed below to determine how their professional identities are impacted by them and to what extent.

One of the tendencies across the participants' interviews, with the exception of participant 5, is that their narratives display two different professional identities dependent on which language, they communicate in. In continuation of this, they further appear to favour the identity in the context of their own language over their English-speaking professional identity, which in turn is associated with negative characteristics and described as less professional. This then suggests that there first of all is a difference, which then indicates that English indeed does influence their perceptions of own professional identity, since a parallel one with less perceived competencies is established. It is, however, interesting that these negatively associated identities are presented by the participants, as Hoyer (2020) suggested a tendency for professionals to include favoured characteristics with themselves across their personal narratives and identities, which does not seem to be the case with these participants. This then supports the argument that English does indeed influence the participants to a degree in which it can alter their professional identities. If one looks at the implications the establishment of two parallel professional identities may have, it can be argued in the perspective of Haibo et al. (2017) that a 'weakened' professional identity may result in employee dissatisfaction, which in turn may lead to an increased turnover rate and therethrough affect the bottom line. Thus, both the employee and the company will ultimately be affected if English is a challenge to some employees (Haibo et al. 2017). Therefore, it can be argued that since five of the six participants display negative associations with their English-speaking identities, although these are improving in some cases, they are at an increased risk of becoming dissatisfied in their roles, as they do not deem their English-speaking selves adequate for the expectations, they have to themselves. This can, in particular, be seen when they compare their capability of communicating their knowledge and thus competencies in English to the same abilities in their native languages. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the data is limited in this regard, as not all participants express their attitudes towards English as a corporate language or how they feel that it impacts their engagement level. However, if one departs in the theory presented by Haibo et al (2017) and Walsh and Gordon 2008, it is a plausible outcome, if the participants continue to distinguish their professional identities.

Another tendency, one can identify is that most of the participants tend to rely on software programmes, such as Google Translate in their everyday work. This is especially the case with the Danish participants, who have not had English as their corporate language for as long as the Finnish employees. As the employees have to translate English words, both technical terms and everyday terms, into their native language, they are arguably excluded from the exclusive languages related to their respective fields (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). In the cases where the employees may not be directly excluded, they may still perceive that they are, since they may perceive their abilities to communicate their specialised knowledge in accordance with their own expectations (Popova-Nowak 2010). If the employees then feel that they are not performing according to their own expectations in their everyday tasks, because they have to translate many words, this in turn may have some implications for the individual. As stated in section 3.1, Abbott (1988) stated that legitimacy is derived from the specialised knowledge related to one's field. If one is then not able to access this knowledge or communicate it, when they have to use another language, then this may affect their sense of authority, when operating in an English context. However, they may not be affected, when their tasks take place in their native language, provided that they are familiar with the knowledge related to their role. In a similar manner, Sarangi and Candlin (2011) argued that the exclusive language, one achieves through specialised knowledge may directly influence one's professional identity. In this regard, they argued that the identity may be weakened, if one is not fluent in the profession's language (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Thus, as several of the participants have to rely on translating software, this indicates that they are not a part of the exclusive language, when working in English. Therefore, their professional identities may be negatively affected by English. Furthermore, if one examines this from the company's perspective, the effectiveness of the employees will likewise be affected, as also mentioned by participant 4, who first thinks in Finnish and then subsequently in English. In this sense, the employees may to some degree have to perform their tasks twice, as they will first execute them in their native language and then translate it to English (Lønsmann 2011).

In addition to the above observations, some tendencies can be identified between Finland and Denmark. However, once more it should be noted that due to the qualitative nature, these cannot be translated to general statements about the effects English as a corporate language may have, but rather indicate how it may affect the participants in this study or perhaps across Roima. Among the differences in narratives between Finland and Denmark, one can see that the Danish participants imply a them versus us narrative within their stories. This, on the other hand does not appear with the Finnish participants. Nevertheless, this perspective may not solely derive from English being the corporate language, although it may be a part of it or what is utilised by the participants as an explanation. For instance, participant 3 mentions how the Finnish employees do not use terms correctly, which may then be how he justifies the them versus us distinction, although it may have other root causes. Furthermore, in this case, it may also be a defence mechanism to 'save face' in terms of his own English proficiency (O'Neill 2020 ; Skjeggestad et al. 2017). In this sense, English as a corporate language may result in or enhance a divide between the parent company in Finland and the Danish subsidiary, which in turn can influence the professional identities, if the Danish employees feels isolated from the headquarters and thus where the decisions are made (Lønsmann 2011). In continuation of this, the divide may likewise lie in a difference between values, which in turn may result in person-organisation misfit and therefore dissatisfaction and increased turnover rates (Popova-Nowak 2010). This is, for instance, seen with participant 3, who emphasises the importance and benefits of Danish or Scandinavian languages as well as the negatives of English, which suggests that he values the linguistic traditions from his personal background. Therefore, English may challenge his values and thus challenge his professional identity (Venn 2020 ; Hoyer 2020).

In a similar manner to the them versus us implications, it further appears that the Danish participants experience more challenges in their everyday work lives, such as participant 2, who appears to be limited in her professional development because of English and an increased exclusion from the exclusive language (Sarangi & Candlin 2011). In that case, it was noted that she felt that her competencies were inadequate, both in Danish and English, although to a significantly higher degree with the latter. However, it further appeared that English was not the direct cause for this self-perception, but rather an obstacle to improving her competencies, as her resources were primarily allocated to understanding her colleagues (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). The same tendency was, although at a lesser degree, identified with the two other Danish participants, which then suggests that English may limit how they develop themselves professionally, as this is dependent on the perception of one's own skills (Popova-Nowak 2010). Nevertheless, the challenges with professional development may likewise have occurred with the Finnish employees, although it is not included in their stories. The Finnish participants have been working in English for a longer period than the Danes, which may suggest that they have overcome these challenges and thus that it is a temporary situation. Nevertheless, they may still experience challenges, such as participant 6, who may not fully be able to perform her duties as a recruiter, when working in English, as her language becomes limited when communicating with candidates working in other fields. Thus, English may result in challenges in several manners, such as a limitation in development or in the ability to perform one's tasks (Lønsmann 2011).

The argument that the Finnish employees may have overcome their initial challenges with English as a corporate language may further be identified from their narratives. In particular participant 4 and 6 describes how they have improved their skills and wish to continue this development. This then suggests that they may have experienced the same challenges as the Danish participants, when they were originally introduced to English as a part of their work. In this regard, it may be argued that English as a corporate language is a process, in which at least some employees may improve their linguistic skills and thus reaffirm their legitimacy through a new access to their profession specific exclusive languages and thus capability to communicate their specialised knowledge (Abbott 1988 ; Sarangi & Candlin 2011).

One interesting finding in the datasets is that the participants do not appear to be heavily influenced by English in terms of their social work lives. Some, such as participant 3, do mention that their conversations in English may be less deep, but otherwise they consider themselves similar independent of language. This may, however, be explained by the organisational structure of Roima, as the participants may primarily interact with colleagues from their own office and thus colleagues with whom they share a language. With online meetings across the countries, there will typically be an agenda, for which reason the social conversations may be limited to small talk rather than establishing deeper relations with one's colleagues in Finland or Sweden. Thus, one may argue that the employees can develop themselves professionally, when they engage in technical conversations in their own language and simultaneously construct new knowledge, when they interact in their own language (Kastberg 2019). This may then limit some of the negative implications, such as decrease of authority, decrease in specialised knowledge or employee dissatisfaction, presented above (Sarangi & Candlin 2011).

Another difference between the narratives in Denmark and Finland is the overall attitude towards English as a corporate language. In Denmark this appears to be rather negative, whereas it has more positive associations in Finland. This is, among others, apparent from the presence or absence of counternarratives among the participants. In Denmark a counternarrative towards the notion that English is the ideal for Roima is expressed by the participants, as they express negative attitudes towards English. In contrast, with participant 4 and 6 these occur at the beginning of their narrative, which refers to the beginning of their English-speaking careers, whereas these have changed towards the end of the narratives, which take place at present day. Nevertheless, the Finnish participants still express challenges with English, but it appears that they construct English as an opportunity to improve their skills, rather than a challenge to their jobs. This then suggests that the narratives may change over time. However, one cannot know if this is due to a change in attitude towards English or if it is due to conditioning, as the grander narrative and its discourse may often be repeated and reaffirmed (Lueg et al. 2020).

In addition to the arguments that have been made in regard to how English as a corporate language may influence one's perception of professional identity, it should be noted that not all aspects of the participants' professional identities were affected. In a likewise manner, it was also not all, who were affected, as seen with participant 5. Therefore, one may argue that English does not necessarily affect one's professional identity. In this case, her profession's language is already English, which may in part explain her narrative. Furthermore, her professional identity appears to rely on her many years of experience. Thus, if one's perception of competencies or access to an exclusive language, and therethrough specialised knowledge and authority, is not connected to English or are already in English, they may not be influenced (Sarangi & Candlin 2011).

In an overall perspective, one may argue that the attitudes towards English as a corporate language change over times, as well as the initial challenges, one may experience upon the implementation process. In addition to this, one may wonder if and for how long employees may be influenced by a sense of weakened professional identity as a result of English, as participant 4, for instance, still think of himself as inadequate in English after several years of working with it. Therefore, the challenges met by employees as a result of English as a corporate language may affect them for many years, although they have gained full access to the language and knowledge related to their fields (Abbott 1988 ; Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Furthermore, the differences between Finland and Denmark may be explained by several factors and not solely the fact that English is utilised. Two of the explanations may be that the Finnish employees have been using English for a longer time, or the differences may lie in the distinction between parent company and subsidiary, as the former sets the procedures, which can then be met with reluctance by the subsidiaries. Thus, the more negative attitudes in Denmark may be rooted in English or in the transfer of autonomy to Finland.

7.2 Strategic Considerations to Implementing a Corporate Language

As it can be derived from the above discussion, implementing English as a corporate language may result in certain challenges and consequences for both the employees and the company. Therefore, there are certain aspects management can consider prior to implementing a corporate language. The following will therefore present some suggestions that may streamline the process and make the transition straightforward for the employees. These suggestions are based on the challenges derived in the analysis and thus do not depart in literature, although some scholars are brought in to support statements or arguments.

One of the potential challenges, the management of a company should be aware of is the increased risk of employee dissatisfaction as well as decreased sense of professional legitimacy. Therefore, it may be essential to acknowledge that the employees may not grow accustomed to the transition instantly and may further be negatively affected by it. Thus, one could establish a work environment in which it is acceptable to not be fluent in English and thus foster a notion that one is not measured based on their proficiency. This may be achieved by not forcing English upon the employees, as was seen with participant 1, who felt humiliated when she had to present herself in English.

In addition to the work environment, one can further consider some more tangible factors. For instance, it could be considered to maintain essential documents, such as employment contracts and employee handbooks, in their native languages or perhaps have both English and the native language of the employee in these documents. This can then ensure that the employees are aware of what they agree to and thereby support the inclusive work environment in which English does not encompass every aspect of the workplace (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017). In this regard, one can further consider tracking the progress of employees, both in terms of engagement surveys and also through one-on-one discussions with their direct manager to ensure that the employees who are experiencing challenges with English may receive support and thus be able to develop themselves rather than spend their resources on understanding what is being said (Lønsmann & Mellish 2017).

Lastly, a company that is implementing English as a corporate language may consider treating the process as an investment rather than solely implementing it. If the company chooses to invest in the process and offer support to their employees, they may accommodate the potential risks of increased employee dissatisfaction and decreased engagement, which in turn may lead to ineffectiveness and increased turnover rates and thus an impact on the bottom line. In addition, an investment in the employees may have a positive impact on the employer brand of the company, thereby having a long-term impact (Arasanmi & Krishna 2019). One such investment could be to ensure that the employees have access to quality software, such as translation software or online dictionaries, which may help them in their everyday tasks, when these take place in English. This may be achieved both through purchase of software or by providing an overview of where to find these.

Another example of investing in the employees could be to provide English lessons or courses, which may then entice the employees to improve their skills, which then ultimately increases the human capital (Putnam 2000) of the company as well as accommodate the potential risks of implementing English, as presented above. These lessons could both be access to physical courses or classes or online courses, which will further provide the employee with a degree of flexibility. A consideration to be made in this regard could then be to provide these lessons during available worktime, which could then increase the possibility that the employees participate in them.

In summary, there are certain considerations a company can make prior to implementing English as a corporate language to perhaps accommodate some of the challenges found in this study. Therefore, a proactive approach may result in less impact on the professional identities of one’s employees, which is then a benefit for both parties.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to determine if English as a corporate language can influence the perception of one's own professional identity, when one is not native in English. Furthermore, the research question contained a distinction between parent companies and their subsidiaries, which has further been discussed.

Based on the analysis, it can be derived that English as a corporate language may result in employees establishing a parallel professional identity to their original one. In this regard it was found that the participants from Roima tend to ascribe their native-speaking professional identity with more positive attributes and further describe it as more professional than their English-speaking professional selves. This then suggests that English have a negative impact on some employees. This impact, it was derived, can manifest itself through or result in a decrease in engagement and employee satisfaction, which in turn can increase the turnover rate of Roima on a long-term basis.

Another aspect which can be influenced by English functioning as the corporate language was found to be a tendency to perform tasks twice, as some participants perform their tasks first in their native language and subsequently translate it into an English context, which in turn was found to decrease the effectiveness of the employee. Furthermore, the use of translating software suggests that the employees are excluded from the exclusive language related to their professions, which in turn may have a significant impact on their professional identities, as they may not be able to communicate their specialised knowledge and thus lose their authority.

In continuation of the tendency to performs tasks twice, it was found that English may further have indirect impacts, as it may result in the mental resources of employees to be focused on understanding the conversations rather than them developing their professional competencies and thereby professional identities.

In relation to the indirect impacts of English as a corporate language, it was further derived that English may enhance and reaffirm pre-established contrasts between departments or parent companies and their subsidiaries. This was found to be the case both in terms of values, as language may be embedded in these, as well as a means to justify the contrasts. Thus, it can be concluded in this regard that English may indirectly impact cooperation across departments. This is despite of English being considered a means to overcome barriers.

In contrast to the challenges that was found, it was further derived that English does not always have an impact on professional identity, as some professions may already be in English, or some employees may base their professional identities on their competencies and experiences rather than their ability to communicate these.

Lastly, this study found that narratives and, in this regard, counternarratives may change over time, which suggest that implementing English as a corporate language is a process rather than a static framework. Therefore, it can be derived that the challenges it may initially present can be accommodated over time.

In summary, it can be concluded that although English may be beneficial in some aspects of international business, such as streamlining communication, it may simultaneously have negative impacts on the employees who are not accustomed to working in English. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the impacts or challenges may have long-term consequences on the employees' perceptions of their own professional identities, although their attitudes toward utilising it improves alongside their proficiency. Thus, English as a corporate language may not be without challenges for both the employees and the company.

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