BELF in the workplace: a linguistic ethnographic study

An observation of English as a *lingua franca* used by employees at a Swedish company

Diana Frederiksen
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Abstract
This paper was aimed at researching the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in a business context by the use of linguistic ethnography (LE). Previous research has been primarily either survey- or interview-based or strictly qualitative in its investigation. Using shadowing observations of three employees at a Swedish multinational company and subsequently interviewing the participants about their use of Business English as a lingua franca (BELF), the present study set out to investigate for what kinds of functions and how often these employees use English on an everyday basis. English was shown to be the default language of the multinational company and the findings suggest that employees’ use of language is not only determined by the nature of their work and the business setting, but also by their personal backgrounds. Their education, upbringing, and social experiences since moving to Sweden have come to shape their language use at work and in everyday life. Moreover, there could be subsequent implications for them not only in work-related functions and activities at the company but also in their integration and immersion in Swedish society. Using LE to investigate language choice and use in a corporate setting allows for a more nuanced collection of data, providing a context to linguistic research.

Keywords
English as a lingua franca (ELF); Business English as a lingua franca (BELF); linguistic ethnography; social talk; international business communication.
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1. Introduction

“The dominance of English as a lingua franca in international business exchanges is commonly accepted as a fact” (Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006, p. 406). ELF, or English as a lingua franca, is largely regarded as the default language of international business and has thus become an increasingly prominent area of interest for researchers within business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2013), business communication (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Charles, 2007) and English for specific purposes (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Nickerson 2005). This field of research is referred to as BELF, or Business English as a lingua franca. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) however, use the term “English as a Business lingua franca”, which puts emphasis on the domain of use, not the English language.

What distinguishes ELF from EFL, or English as a foreign language, is that ELF is the use of a language appropriate for the communicative event with the purpose of getting “the job done” (Charles, 2007, p. 266) as opposed to emulating the linguistic competence of native speakers (see also: Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Björkman, 2009). In the corporate setting, the ability to use BELF has proven useful, and is characterized by (but not necessarily unique to) three features. First, it is used to conduct a specific task or to achieve a certain goal. Second, BELF can be understood as clear, explicit or the logical progression of speech (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Third, there is an element of BELF that has been described both as “politeness” (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 207) and as “making the recipient feel good” (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 397), which could include, for example, not correcting deviances in pronunciation or grammar or other face-saving strategies. This indicates that in BELF there is an awareness of social interaction affecting language use as well.

Rampton (2007) has not left the link between social processes and language go unnoticed, calling for the contexts of communication to be examined, as “meaning takes shape within specific social relations” (p. 585). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the use of BELF via both social and linguistic paradigms. There is little dispute to the fact that language is shaped by society and culture, and vice versa. Virkkula-Räisänen
(2010) emphasized the need to study language use “at the grassroots level of business operations” (p. 506). Hence, this present study was aimed at investigating the reasons behind using English in particular contexts, in line with recommendation to analyse “language use in its context, rather than in isolated texts or speech events” (Fredriksson et al., 2006, p. 407; see also Nickerson, 2005, p. 369).

Previous studies have focused on either the syntactic, discursive and/or semiotic elements of BELF speech or the developments of language policies and employee’s attitudes toward corporate language (see Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, 2012; Ehrenreich, 2010 and Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010 respectively). There is thus a need for more research on language use in context to gain insight into the ways business is conducted in a multinational company (henceforth MNC) setting. To achieve this, the present study drew on linguistic ethnography (LE) as a method of investigating the use of English at a Swedish workplace. By using data from shadowing observations and interviews, the study investigated to what extent and for which purposes employees use English and other languages in everyday practices at a multilingual workplace.

2. Background, Aim and Research Questions

2.1. Literature review

Research on BELF has been conducted in many areas varying from public relations, management education, curriculum design and international business communication (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2012; Ehrenreich, 2010, Ainsworth, 2013 and Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013 respectively). Charles (2007) proposed the idea that BELF is simultaneously owned by nobody and everybody, which is one of the reasons it is used as the “de facto lingua franca of international business” (Ehrenreich, 2010, p. 416). In Kachru’s (1985) model of inner, outer and expanding circles of English, speakers are regionally, historically and institutionally categorized. Conversely, users of BELF are non-native speakers (NNS) of English, and have other goals than obtaining native speaker (NS), or inner circle, proficiency and pronunciation. The business community is very much international and people within it are constantly moving and communicating with inner, outer and expanding circle speakers, sometimes
simultaneously, and even together with other languages (Nickerson 2005, pp. 376-377). A reason for its dominance in the international business domain is that since proficiency and linguistic correctness is not the issue and speakers’ fluency varies, the diverse nature of BELF allows it to be spoken by practically anyone from any linguistic background with varying degrees of proficiency in English. It is sometimes described as simplified English, without “complicated phraseology, idiomatic expressions or complex sentence structures” (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2012, p. 266).

Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009) defined BELF as neutral and shared, with the proviso that “BELF users are also NNS interacting both in terms of the cultural discourse strategies that are chosen and in the language that is used to realize them” (p. 182). To understand how such communication contributes to achieving goals set in international business, research into language choice has been called for, as focus needs to be put on the “interplay between two languages” (Fredriksson et al., 2006, p. 407).

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2012) stated: “it should not be concluded that only the use of English – or BELF – is the guarantee for successful international communication.” (p. 267). To find out what else is needed, the communicative effectiveness of English is what needs to be studied. That is, what other factors contribute to mutual intelligibility between business professionals besides the use of varieties of English. To conduct such a study, Ehrenreich (2010) adopted an ethnographic method, combining interviews and audio recordings over a 30-day period at a German MNC. Through the interviews, Ehrenreich found the reasons behind the emergence of English as a corporate language and what attitudes employees had toward it. This resulted in a more comprehensive view of to what extent English and the local language (German) were used in the workplace. The ethnographic method of investigating ELF in business settings was thus proven useful. Virkkula-Räisänen (2010) also found that simply studying language might not be enough, and that “in order to understand the complex nature of today’s business communication, it is useful to focus on individuals” (p. 527). Virkkula-Räisänen (2010) also called for further studies on ethnographic perspectives to derive important insights into whose language, what language, and how language is used.

The field of interest for the present study is the role language has in internal communication in multinational corporations. Building on research previously produced by Ehrenreich (2010) and Virkkula-Räisänen, (2010) where multinational corporations
were investigated and the subjects interviewed, this study aims to observe the use of BELF in a workplace in Sweden, using methods of linguistic ethnography (see Copland, 2011; Creese, 2008; Rampton, 2007 and Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010) to study individuals’ use of BELF as applied by employees at a Swedish MNC. The study will also use interviews to further investigate communicative practices and the relation to social and cultural processes.

2.2. Aim and Research Questions

Louhiala-Salminen, et al. (2005), Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) and Virkkula-Räisänen (2010) investigated BELF at Nordic companies to acquire knowledge about the company’s use of English as a lingua franca and the employees’ attitudes toward it, meanwhile discussing underlying language policy issues. While both useful in investigating BELF speaker’s attitudes and interesting in terms of the company’s ideologies behind language use, these studies need to be supported with research that investigates how BELF works in real-life and how the employees use it on a daily basis, in regards to which languages are spoken, what language choices are made and how language is used on an individual basis. The present study was aimed at investigating the authentic use of BELF in a workplace through a linguistic ethnographic study, involving observation of subjects during a full workday.

1. For what functions and how often do the employees use English in their everyday practices?

2. For what kind of functions and how often do the employees use other languages in everyday practices?

3. Data, Setting and Methodology

3.1. Participants and Setting

The observations were conducted at a multinational corporation in Sweden. As Sweden incorporates English to a great extent, both in its educational system as well as in trade and industry, English is a common medium used in large Swedish MNCs. The company used in the present study develops and manufactures analogue and digital equipment,
software and services in information technology (IT)/communications/graphics sector. The company’s international headquarters lie in Belgium. The Swedish branch employs technicians, engineers, sales representatives, customer service personnel and managers from all over the world to comprise a team of around 200 people. It should be mentioned that the company does not have a language policy for internal communication. English and Swedish have thus come to be the languages of choice for internal communication. The office building is located in a tech-hub area about 15 minutes outside Stockholm City, near to a large shopping mall with a food court.

The participants of the study were drawn from a convenience sample, volunteering for the shadowing observations. During a pilot study, which took place before the actual observations, demographic facts about each participant were gathered, and the nature of the study was explained to them. In total, three participants agreed to take part. Participant A is female, natively from Iran and has Persian as her first language. She is 28 years old and has lived in Sweden for four years. She has also recently switched jobs internally at the company, and has been working at her new position as a digital designer for three months. Participant B is male and natively from Palestine. Arabic is his first language. Participant B is 34 years old, has lived in Sweden for eight years and works as a transmissions developer. Participant C is female, natively from China and has Mandarin as her first language. Participant C is 50 years old and has lived in Sweden for 14 years. She works as a microwave engineer and informally acts as a liaison between the Swedish and Chinese branches of the company.

The office settings of the participants differed. Participant A worked in a small office on the 7th floor, shared with three other colleagues: all NNS of English whereby one was a native Swedish speaker. The 7th floor housed a common area, meeting rooms, and a large hallway with small offices on each side. Participant B worked on the 5th floor, and had to walk through several other departments to his office at the end of a long hallway. There were no closed office spaces, only a handful of meeting rooms, and everyone worked at desks opposite each other. It was a large office with about 10 other people of varying nationalities. One native Swedish speaker was accounted for. Participant C also worked on the 7th floor, in an office shared with one Swedish colleague. On each floor of the building, there are laboratories, which are used by the engineers. The labs were open areas with many desks and instruments, frequented by engineers and other employees.
3.2. Linguistic Ethnography

LE is a research method relatively new in its application to BELF studies. Yet it has proven useful in the sense that the data recorded have been detailed and LE not only considers linguistic but social processes as well (Copland, 2011). As a method, it builds on Linguistic Anthropology, Ethnography of Communication, Interactional Sociolinguistics and more specifically, the theoretical framework of Gumperz and Hymes (1972). It calls for a combination of ethnographical and linguistic methods, studying cultural, social and cognitive uses of language with linguistics as a tool to do so. These tools include conversation analysis, discourse analysis, observations, shadowing, interviews, and recordings. Ehrenreich (2010) writes that this approach captures the “multidimensional realities” (p. 413) of employees. Further, using a multi-method approach leads to a more comprehensive result. It provides linguistics with a context, and ethnography with a reliable way of analysing language use (Creese, 2008).

Rampton, Tusting, Maybin, Barwell, Creese and Lytra (2004) write that:

“Language and the social world are mutually shaping and /…/ analysis of situated language use can provide /…/ insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity.” (p. 2)

As the present study aims to investigate the functions of language in a business setting by people who are not native to the country they are operating in, this could be an example of the intersection of ethnography and linguistics. As Rampton (2007) stated, the combination of these disciplines is “particularly well-suited to understanding the intersection of communicative practice with social and cultural process” (p. 595).

As in all cases involving a researcher, the observer’s paradox must be taken into account. Blommaert and Dong (2010) named this the “observer’s effect” (p. 27) and avouched its omnipresence in ethnographic fieldwork. The effect implies that once a researcher enters a setting in order to study it, everyone in that setting adapts to the change – creating a new setting, so to speak, when the observer is present. This results in a paradox; the setting that the researcher came to observe is not the same setting it would be were the researcher not there. The authors also mentioned that the effect is “significant in the early stages of fieldwork and may diminish as fieldwork goes on” (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 28), which is why the present study attempted to include a full work day and a prior pilot observation on each of the subjects. Although the
present study did not have a longitudinal nature and was not strictly ethnographic, this pilot observation likely helped the subjects by giving them an idea of what the observation would entail. It also allowed time to solve practical things, which Blommaert and Dong (2010) include as a means of “observing everything” (p. 29). This involves a phase of orienting oneself with the structure of the office, finding seating, receiving access cards etc. which allows the observer to obtain an overall image of the environment in which the focal actions take place.

While there are a number of different ways of going about measuring data within LE, for these purposes non-participant observation was used. Groom and Littlemore (2011) defined it as quietly observing a situation, without being involved in the situation itself. However, full immersion into the workplace was not possible in the present investigation due to time constraints. Rampton (2007) pointed out methods using varying degrees of ethnography, emphasizing that it is more pronounced in some studies than others. As long as the approach “treats the interface between language/ text and situation/ context as a central problem” (p. 589) it is still part of the methodology pursued within linguistic ethnography. Blommaert and Dong (2010) use ethnography as a method with which to collect data. It is used to describe an event in its context, separated from talk. While linguistics is applied to the study of talk, ethnography is used to study context. Ethnography is in the present study used for descriptive purposes; accounting for the facts and experiences found in the setting where interaction takes place.

To begin with, an observation schedule was used (see Appendix A) to quickly note down data points. Handwritten field notes then complemented the observation schedule where more detailed comments were annotated. The following were the variables used to categorize the participants’ language use during their working day:

- **Interaction** – An interaction was defined as a speech event, which, as Yule (1996) puts it, is “an activity in which participants interact via language in some conventional way to arrive at some outcome” (p. 57). An intuitive approach was taken to separate one interaction from another indicated by a clear pause or clear change in topic combined with a pause.
- **Participants** – The people involved in an interaction.
- **Same first language/ Different first language** - The linguistic backgrounds of each participant was noted down beforehand, during the pilot study. In the instances where
the L1 background was unknown, the participant was asked after the working day, when it was deemed fit and non-intrusive to the observation.

- **Spoken language/s** – The language/s being spoken in the interaction by the participants; these turned out to be “English”, the participants’ “First Language”, “Swedish” or “Swedish and English”. If the interlocutors switched from Swedish to English or vice versa, their interaction was regarded as one instance of “Swedish and English”.

- **Length of interaction** – As a timer would be cumbersome, and could exacerbate the observer’s effect and provide excessive detail; a watch was used to keep track of time, measuring the length of interactions in hours, minutes and seconds. The length of each interaction was rounded up to the nearest minute or 5-second mark. In the results section, the length of time is presented as hh:mm:ss

- **Location** – The place where the interaction was held.

- **Work/ Social Talk** – An indicator of topic/main point of the interaction. Work talk is here defined based on Holmes’ (2000) continuum model of interactional talk. Core business talk (specific, focused, context-bound) and work talk (which is more general) are here both categorized as work talk. Social talk is defined as “a discourse strategy to manage social interactions” (Pullin, 2010, p. 458), i.e. talk that nurtures the relationship between co-workers. Social talk also included examples of “phatic communication” (Holmes, 2000, p. 38); utterances including little content and greetings. In the case an interaction started with social talk and then became work-related or vice versa, providing other variables such as spoken language and participants remained constant, it was categorized according to what the main point of the interaction was, (information regarding which can be found in the field notes). In the instance that participants switched both language and topic within one interaction, “Swedish and English” was used as the spoken language and the topic was as categorized according to what the main point of the interaction was\(^1\).

- **Topic** – A short description of what the participants talked about, e.g. “help with work”, “lunch plans” etc. This, together with the field notes, provided a better understanding of whether or not the interaction was work-related or social talk.

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\(^1\) For example, as can be seen in Appendices B and C, Participant A’s second interaction, with her manager, began as social talk in Swedish, but ultimately ended with work-related talk in English. In this case, ”Swedish and English” was used as the spoken languages of the interaction, and the topic was categorized as work-related.
3.3. Interviews

Interviews were used to add another dimension to the methodology, for purposes of triangulation. Triangulation aims to research the same issue using differing techniques, “each of which shows it in a different light and complements the findings obtained by the other approaches” (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, p. 78). Blommaert and Dong (2010) stated that interviews are not of greater importance than the other kinds of materials that have been collected, but are meant to complement findings (p. 43). The structure of the interviews thus aimed to move the interaction from basic demographic information, to background information and subsequently to attitudes and experiences of using English as a lingua franca in the workplace. In some instances, the questions drew on stimulated recall, which allowed the participant to reflect on their actions with promptings from the interviewer, relating questions to the observations. This technique produced introspective data from the subjects, as they were asked to look back at their own actions and consider their thought processes during a particular event, referred to by Groom and Littlemore (2011) as “retrospective recall” (p. 66).

The interviews were carried out in English and were of a semi-structured nature. As they were held post-observation, time was allowed for analysis and relevant question design. The interviews were also recorded, which was explained to the subjects beforehand: during the pilot study, after the shadowing observations and once more before the interview took place. The consent forms were gone over twice; once before the shadowing and once more before the interviews, so the participants could see that the researcher was complying with the described tasks (and in some instances, allowed translation of the consent form to occur, as it was written in Swedish\(^2\)).

Blommaert and Dong’s (2010) recommendations were followed, which advised the interviewer to engage in conversational expectations, such as responding with surprise, interest, amusement etc. and to carry on the conversation. The interviewer should provide their own reflections and “emphasize topics” (p. 46), not questions, with the aim of making the subjects feel as comfortable as possible.

A Smartphone (iPhone 4S) was used to record the interviews due to its familiarity. The interviews were recorded using the application “Voice Memo”, and subsequently

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\(^2\) As the linguistic backgrounds of the participants were not known before the pilot study took place, the consent form was written in Swedish. It was translated verbally, on site, so as to avoid delaying the study.
uploaded to a computer. The recordings were transcribed using iTunes as the sound player and Microsoft Word for transcription, not having been edited in any way. However, Groom and Littlemore (2011) advise to only transcribe aspects of the interview most strongly related to the research question, meaning that some parts of the data were not transcribed³, such as most pauses, turn-takings and interjections.

4. Results

4.1 Observations

By using the observation schedule, a summary of each participant’s language use was made (see Appendix B). The days began in the offices of the participants, and events such as meetings, lab work, and greetings from colleagues occurred throughout. Lunch took place in the office lunchroom or at the food court in the nearby shopping mall. The observer sat on a chair in the office of the participant, and kept distance when the participants were outside of the office, following them with pen and paper. The observation schedule proved, after the first day, to be insufficient. Instead of categorizing the interactions according to topic, a chronological format better suited the observations and allowed for comparisons with field notes, which were also chronologically ordered, to take place. This order was followed during the subsequent days of observation.

Table 1 shows language frequency for each of the three subjects divided by function, i.e. work-related or social talk, as well as the aggregate amount of time spent speaking each language, also divided by function. Three languages were used in the observations: English, Swedish and the participants’ first language. A combination of Swedish and English was also used, for instances that involved code switching or mixing. Each interaction was clearly separated by a pause or a change of topic.

³ The guiding interview questions can be found in Appendix D and a transcript in Appendix E.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1 Language Frequency, Length and Function for Participant A</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English First</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Swedish and</td>
<td>Total Number of Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>1:28:10</td>
<td></td>
<td>0:00:40</td>
<td>1:28:50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>0:13:10</td>
<td>0:30:00</td>
<td>0:04:00</td>
<td>0:47:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interactions</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Length</td>
<td>1:41:20</td>
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<td>0:04:40</td>
<td>2:16:00</td>
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<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Swedish and</td>
<td>Total Number of Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0:20:30</td>
<td>1:32:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>1:05:11</td>
<td>0:13:10</td>
<td>0:00:01</td>
<td>1:18:22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Interactions</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Length</td>
<td>2:16:59</td>
<td>0:13:10</td>
<td>0:20:30</td>
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<table>
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<th>Table 1.3 Language Frequency, Length and Function for Participant C</th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English First</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Swedish and</td>
<td>Total Number of Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>0:08:25</td>
<td>0:19:15</td>
<td>0:01:25</td>
<td>0:30:05</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>0:04:26</td>
<td>0:50:05</td>
<td>0:03:02</td>
<td>0:57:33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Interactions</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Length</td>
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<td>1:09:20</td>
<td>0:04:27</td>
<td>1:27:38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 1.1-1.3 shows that the participants engaged in around 25-35 spoken interactions during the course of a full workday. English was used to a great extent, being the most frequently used language in both work- and social-related functions. For participants A and B it was by far the most used language in terms of spoken time. Participant C, however, used her first language for the greatest length of time; though this may be slightly skewed due to the fact that Participant C had a 45-minute long lunch with a colleague who shared her first language. In terms of frequency, however, Participant C’s distribution is more even than the others’, the most uneven being Participant B, who had 28 conversations in English and 7 in other languages. He spoke for approximately 2 hours and 16 minutes in English – four times more than his first language, Swedish and Swedish and English combined, which adds up to approximately 34 minutes. Table 2 offers a closer look at the participants’ frequency of language.

Table 2. Language Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>Swedish and English</th>
<th>Total Number of Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant A</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant B</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant C</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be deduced from Table 2, English was used most frequently, used in 66% of the total interactions. The subjects’ first language was second-most frequent, having been used 13% of the time, with Swedish, and Swedish and English being used in almost the same capacity, at 10% and 11%, respectively. However, this varied from person to person, asParticipant C used Swedish to a much greater extent than a combination of Swedish and English, while Participant A did not use any Swedish at all. To understand why this might occur, Table 3 illustrates the total distribution of language functions. If an interaction shifted from work-related to social talk and vice versa, its categorization depended on the main point of the interaction.
From Table 3 it can be deduced that English is the most commonly used language for work-related interactions. The second most common language used for work is a combination of Swedish and English. While English is also the most frequently used language for social interactions, the second most common is the participants’ first language. Thus the participants preferred using English or Swedish and English for work talk and English or their first language for social talk.

It is worth mentioning that nine telephone interactions had by Participant C were omitted from the data. Due to the other interlocutor being on the phone, the identity and/or L1 of that person could not be established, nor could proper categorization of the topic take place. While phone interactions are examples of spoken business discourse, all other interactions took place face to face, and therefore it was deemed appropriate to leave out these interactions to avoid skewing the data.

4.1.1. Language Choice in Work-Related Functions

The interaction topics in work-related talk varied in degree ranging from core business talk, with highly specified terms, to simple matters such as when the next meeting would be. Table 3 shows how language use was distributed. Work-related talk was most frequently spoken in English, followed by a combination on Swedish and English. According to the field notes, most of the interactions that were work-related took place in the office (65%) and some took place in a meeting room, hallway or lab (5-8% each).

Most interactions in English took place between and among people with different first languages. Participant B, in two instances, was the only one who spoke English to people whom he shared his L1 with. In the first instance, Participant B and two of his colleagues conversed using English. In the second interaction, Participant B and his colleague who also speaks Arabic were the only ones participating. Neither Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Function</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>Swedish and English</th>
<th>Total Number of Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A nor Participant B used their first language for work. They both spoke English exclusively in work-related topics. Participant C used her first language (Mandarin Chinese) for work in 4 out of 13 work-related interactions.

Out of the 7 work-related interactions in Swedish and English, the subjects contributed in English only. These interactions were mainly in the form of question-reply speech acts, where questions were asked in Swedish, and the subjects replied in English. While they all had basic understanding of Swedish, English seemed to be the default language of communication in work-related topics.

4.1.2 Language Choice in Social Functions

Social talk, regarded as any kind of talk that nurtures personal relationships among colleagues, could extend from simple “good morning” greetings to travels, weddings and pension plans. These interactions were also most frequently spoken in English, followed by the participants’ first language. Social talk most commonly occurred in the office (59%); the second most common place to host social talk was the lunchroom (12.5%), followed by the common room and a separate coffee room (9.4% each). One social interaction took place in the elevator, and one took place at the local food court where Participant B had lunch.

Participants A and C spoke in their first language during lunch, as they had lunch with same L1 speakers. Participant B had lunch with a different L1 speaker in English. The subjects used English for social talk with colleagues who did not share the same L1. If they ever spoke socially to someone with the same L1, the subjects spoke in their first languages. All subjects used their first language for social talk. Participant A used Persian once during lunch. Participant B used Arabic three times; in the office, lunchroom and lab. Participant C used Mandarin three times as well; in the office, lunchroom and common room.

On the day Participant C was shadowed, the department had its weekly “fika” 4 hour in the afternoon, which is absent in the other observations. This should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

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4 “Fika” is the act of having a coffee break, or something to drink and eat, usually in the middle of the day; a social event in Sweden.
4.2. Interviews

In the subsequent sections, exact quotes are used when discussing the backgrounds of the participants and their views on their use of language. The quotes are as they were, when transcribed from the recorded interviews.

4.2.1 Backgrounds

Participant A was educated in Iran, instructed in Persian both in elementary school and university. English was used at ages 5 to 18 during private lessons. Immediately after completing her Bachelor’s degree, she continued on to pursue her Master’s, with the medium of instruction in English at a university in Stockholm, Sweden. While Participant A never spoke English at home in Iran, she would read English books as part of her schoolwork. When in Sweden, Participant A had the opportunity to study Swedish in a summer course offered by the university. However, she did not complete the course due to the amount of work that built up at school. She was prompted to take Swedish classes because of her desire to not only to facilitate social integration, but also to find a stable job. Since her Master’s thesis has already paved her entry for the job in the company, Participant A never actually needed to learn Swedish to find work.

Participant B grew up in Palestine, where English is used as medium of instruction in both elementary and university education. He did his Bachelor’s in Lithuania and his Master’s in London, England and Gävle, Sweden. The Master’s program was offered in English. During his school years, Participant B spoke English and Arabic at home and watched English-language cartoons, films and TV-shows. During his Master’s program, he took the equivalent of A1 and A2 courses in Swedish but eventually stopped after a couple of months due to both pressures of school and late hours. Participant B, having lived in Sweden for eight years found the Swedish lessons useful. In his own words: “you could understand outside a little and how to order something or you buy something /…/ it’s not logic that a person living here eight years he doesn’t speak [Swedish] while I learn German⁵ in six months only”.

⁵ An initial conversation had with Person B during the pilot study showed that he had spent some time in Germany after his Bachelor’s in Lithuania, before his Master’s in Sweden, as he has family who live there.
Participant C is natively from China and had no schooling in English, except two years of study that began when she was 18. In 2000, she followed her husband who was accepted for a Master’s program in Sweden, eventually enrolling for a Master’s degree herself. She was previously employed in antenna design for a space station in China. Her university education in China had so far only been in Chinese (Mandarin). Upon coming to Sweden, Participant C enrolled in SFI (Swedish for Immigrants) classes. Participant C said that she completed the first level in 6 months and was able to advance to the second level known as SAS (“Svenska som Andraspråk”). Due partly to health reasons and the course being involved in cultural studies her interest in completing the course waned. As quoted: “I need just the talk and to hear”.

4.2.2. Language use in contexts

4.2.2.1. Language at Work

All three participants stated they used English for work purposes. Participant A emphasized: “for my work it’s only English”. Participant B even went so far as to call it “perfect”. He claims that “English is international” and the language of all his studies and the scientific vocabulary for physics, electronics, and mathematics is all in English.

“For example “frequency” is “frekvens” eh, “gain” is “gain”, I mean in electronics...”return losses” are “return losses”.

He further stated that having learned words in English, it was difficult to learn them in another language.

Participant C showed a practical approach to language, emphasizing a need to make each other understand. If English was needed for technical terms, she would use English; sometimes she would use Swedish, and sometimes, when the language barriers are too thick, “we use Google translate”. Participant C also has some Chinese colleagues, with whom she speaks Chinese occasionally.

“Sometimes we talk English. It depends on other Chinese. If everybody understand Swedish we talk Swedish but if not cannot understand Swedish we must talk English.”

Participant C also mentioned that she would actually prefer to use Chinese for work, even though technical terms are in English, simply because it is her mother tongue.

6 Translation: “Swedish as a second language”
They are also all aware of the coexistence of Swedish and English at the workplace. Participant A said: “I understand some people when they talk in Swedish but I just respond in English”. When asked about this, she replied:

“Talking in Swedish you spend a lot of energy and you need to think before you want to say something so just English comes out so easy.”

She also observed instances where people who were speaking Swedish did not adapt to new participants who do not know the language, and instead kept on speaking Swedish.

“Some Swedish people don’t switch to English. I’ve been in the situation where everyone is Swedish and I am the only person who doesn’t know it but they keep going Swedish. So they don’t pay attention that you are not understanding.”

Participant B says he speaks only English at work, but like Participant A, is aware that he sometimes engages in interactions in Swedish as well.

“Mostly I always speak here in English. Sometimes they speak with me in Swedish but I replied automatic in English”.

Participant C said she uses both English and Swedish at work, but that they have different uses: “We talk some technique we use English. Just gossip is Swedish.” She also mentioned that if someone asks her a question in Swedish, she would reply in English, as Participant A also mentioned. Participant C prefers English for work-related interactions,

“Because a lot of technique word is come from English. So it’s easier understand /…/ a lot of the document must use the English”.

4.2.2.2. Language Outside of Work

Outside of work, Participant A speaks English with people who do not share her first language, a commonality for all three participants. However, when speaking to same L1 speakers, all participants switched to their first language though this only holds true of talk that is not work-related. At lunch, and with people who speak Persian, Participant A was very aware that she speaks the same language as her friends.

“And we take it in Persian because we’re all Persian”.

Participant B was also aware of the fact that he speaks in his L1 (Arabic) with people who have the same L1, except when it is related to work. He has a colleague, a native Arabic speaker, with whom he always speaks in Arabic. Participant B said: “but related
to job, we speak in English”. However, in the occasions that they have lunch together, Arabic is used. It is not used for work purposes.

Conversely, Participant C said she uses Swedish as opposed to Mandarin in her everyday life. She declared herself equally comfortable with both languages in social settings. When asked if she has lunch with Swedish speakers, she replied with a “yes”. When asked what language they speak, Participant C answered: “Both English and Swedish”.

If there were other people in the interaction who do not share the participants’ L1, they would speak English, for purposes of inclusion. This courtesy is not reflected by Swedish speakers, as Participant A feels that there is a risk of Swedish-speakers choosing their mother tongue over English, even when there are non-native speakers of Swedish in the conversation.

“When you are talking with Swedish people you know then maybe someone comes and then the conversation changes to Swedish again, you don’t feel like stable Swedish”

4.2.2.3. Native Speaker Contact

A common trait for all three participants was interaction with NS of English in both work and social settings. They were also all aware of their own lacking proficiency. Participant A claimed she had an accent and makes grammatical mistakes. Participant B describes wanting to speak in a more respectful and professional way, indicating that he lacks those skills at present. Participant C said that it is easier to understand those who are from English speaking countries as they “can choose easier word talking with me”. When asked about this, Participant C replied with an anecdote:

So they choose easier words when talking to you? “Yeah. So before I meet a woman, she come from America. /.../ I said my English is very poor. Said: No it’s not your problem it’s their problem she must try to you understand. She must choice the easier word.”

Interestingly, Participant A felt more comfortable when speaking English with NS.

“They were so perfect in English and you feel that they really also like to speak in English because it was their language. I think it felt more natural to speak with them in English.”

With NS of English, Participant B noticed that he adopts their fluency. When someone is professional, Participant B said, his English improves even more. However, the opposite is true when he meets someone with poorer English than his.
“When someone has a poor English and speaking to me – everything is corrupted, even the grammar /…/ I start to speak like the person is to go to his level to understand me and this is the terrible situation. I feel like I’m really an idiot in English.”

4.2.2.5. Learning Swedish

The reasons behind wanting to learn Swedish vary between the participants. Participant A believed that learning Swedish would make life easier in terms of practicality, as well as integration and assimilation into the Swedish society.

“I think yeah you can be more integrated with the Swedish people or the Swedish society because when I was buying a house, then everything was in Swedish, the contract, so it was a little bit hard to just translate everything in Google translate… so maybe it makes life easier”

Participant A also explained that when she was taking a Swedish course at university, she seemed to have a better understanding of society.

“When I’m watching the…the walls in the street or like some newspaper or something in the metro then at least I understand like, what they saying, not to be so stranger in the society.”

Participant C’s approach to language is practical, her reason for learning Swedish being:

“Living in Sweden we must know more detail so we need study Swedish”.

Participant C said that speaking Swedish is hard, but this was apparently more part of her personal aptitude and not due to the difficulty of the language itself. Participant B shares the view that Swedish is a difficult language, but not for the same reasons. He compared learning German and Swedish. In Germany he would socialize with people every day. However, in Sweden: “when I start ‘hey hello’, they said ‘ah no, sorry’”. He discovered that not having people to speak Swedish with is one of the reasons he has not learned the language. He attributed this to Swedish people being shy, or presumed they are intimidated when he speaks in English or because he looks foreign. When asked if he has contact with Swedish speakers outside of work, Participant B replied:

“No actually they don’t like. I’m like originally not from Sweden. They are a little isolated”

Participant B is open to taking part in interactions in Swedish, as shown by his attitude about having lunch with Swedish speakers. He said he prefers people speaking in Swedish, because it allows Swedish speakers to relax around him; a view shared by Participant A. While Participant B does speak occasional Swedish with Swedish colleagues, he admitted that this was largely due to pressure from colleagues who are “pushing” him to speak Swedish.
5. Discussion

English and Swedish have “emerged” (Fredriksson et al., 2006, p. 419) as the two main company languages, with English as the dominant language of international business and Swedish as the local language. It is typical for employees to use two languages in their work: their mother tongue and English (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, 2012), which concords with the findings of the present study. Ehrenreich (2010) supported this statement as she wrote:

“Languages other than English are involved in different roles and, indeed, put to use as a valuable resource in a range of contexts. In some instances, the parallel use of several languages is situationally motivated” (p. 423).

Implicitly, English may be said to be the best language in business communication. As Participant B stated during interview, English is the “perfect” language, since all standard technical vocabulary and other business terminology are set in English; as well, Participant C said in agreement that many documents are written in English. Ehrenreich (2010) received the same response when interviewing an employee who indicated: “There is simply no better solution” than English (p. 420). The subjects were definite about English being the most frequent language used, accounting for 66% of the total interactions, as well as being the dominating language for work purposes. As the employees all took Master’s courses in English, where technical terms are learned and used, it makes sense to think that the language they use for work in this area would continue to be English. Participants A and B are also not particularly well-rounded Swedish speakers; both of them claimed to be lacking Swedish skills in their interviews, hence, for them English is perhaps the only language available.

What language the subjects used depended somewhat on the context in which they were speaking, which includes the main topic of the interaction, the setting in which it took place, and with whom the participants spoke. The results show that in work-related topics, the participants were more likely to use English or Swedish and English. For social talk, English and their first languages were more commonly used. They are also more likely to speak socially in the office, but another noteworthy place is the office building’s lunchroom. The setting is open and equal; several floors down from the offices which allows a greater space to exchange informal information and nurture
social relationships (Negretti & Garcia-Yeste, 2014). Work-related interactions took place in the office, lab, or meeting room, which is to be expected, as that is where most of the working time is spent. When the participants interacted with Swedish speakers, their language choice varied. Participant A replied solely in English, never having a conversation in Swedish. Participant B had a very brief social interaction in Swedish, opting more frequently for English almost regardless of topic, setting or participant. Participant C, however, would more frequently use Swedish with Swedish interlocutors, instead of replying in English, unlike the other participants.

Participant A spoke English consistently throughout the day, only speaking her L1 during lunch despite having contact with speakers with the same L1 at work. The relationships she builds at lunch are seemingly not the same relationships she has with her colleagues. During lunch with Swedish colleagues, Participant A found that “they used to speak Swedish by themselves /…/ to relax” while she attempted to communicate in English. Perhaps that is why she seeks out fellow Persian speakers during lunch, so that she too can relax. Participant A was clearly seen to be using her language for social interactions, which is a key factor in her ability to “engage in informal talk” (Negretti & Garcia-Yeste, 2014, p. 17).

Participant B claimed he feels comfortable engaging in interactions in Swedish, even going so far as to encourage Swedish speakers during lunch. Perhaps this is because, as mentioned earlier, Participant B has had difficulty finding Swedish speakers to talk to and does not have many Swedish-speaking friends. Pullin (2010) explained that small talk could create solidarity and good working relationships between employees of different cultures. By “avoiding English” at lunch (Negretti & Garcia-Yeste, 2014), Participant B might be able to create a better relationship with the Swedish co-workers, as they sometimes deter from speaking English to him.

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2012) found that their informants used their partner’s language in small talk. This is reflected in Participant C, who uses English for work-related talk, Swedish for “gossip” and “sometimes” Mandarin for work. Participant C has the longest Swedish education out of the three participants, and has also been in the country the longest which is perhaps why she is more prone to speaking Swedish. However, she finds it difficult to speak Swedish and said that if she is asked something in Swedish “I want to answer in Swedish but sometimes it’s very difficult to
explain so we change”. This could be attributed to her claim that she applies English for work and Swedish for other uses. Markedly, having to speak Swedish for work might be too difficult a process. She admitted a seemingly negative attitude and difficulty toward learning languages, unlike physics and mathematics, which came easier to her. The difficult part in learning a language, for Participant C, is not the grammar or structure of a language, but speaking and listening. Correspondingly, she encountered this difficulty with Swedish, although she still speaks and listens in Swedish more than any of the other subjects. The employees thus use English, or a combination of Swedish and English for work-related topics and either English or their first language for social talk.

Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) noted that their subjects would simplify or speak a more fluent English, depending on their interlocutor’s level. If their partner’s proficiency were weak, the participants would use “simpler structures and words, thus making a special effort to guarantee understanding” (p. 390). This was mirrored in the interviews, as the participants mentioned feeling comfortable speaking to NS of English. They also claimed to unconsciously emulate speakers with poorer English skills.

BELF, according to Ehrenreich (2010), is “characterized by a high degree of diversity in terms of regional linguacultural variation and levels of proficiency” (p. 414). Native speaker’s skills are not expected, as the goal of using BELF is to accomplish a professional goal (i.e. “get the job done”) and not to emulate NS competence. The participants of this study had varying degrees of proficiency, affecting the participants’ confidence, as Participants A and B stated that they are confident, fluent, and not hesitant in using English in the workplace, while Participant C said she found both Swedish and English equally difficult.

While the participants were aware of making grammatical mistakes and having NNS accents, this should not cause a hindrance to BELF communication. Björkman (2008) found that ELF speakers showed several irregular usages of English, yet this caused only little disturbance. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) supported these findings, as they encountered grammatical inaccuracies in their informants, yet these were not reported to cause misunderstandings. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen also found that while English proficiency was needed for work purposes, the understanding that
their subjects had of proficiency was pragmatic; “they considered knowledge of grammar clearly less important than knowledge of particular genres of their own business area” (p. 207). While the participants of this study each held varying degrees of proficiency of English, this did not seem to disrupt their communicative skills. They also had differing levels of Swedish, which likely contributed to the extent of its use.

Having a common language is vital to “promote cohesion, trust and /…/ shared visions” (Fredriksson et al. 2006, p. 419). Ainsworth (2013), in agreement, found that “languages [develop] an awareness of cultural diversity, which is important for managing today’s multilingual workplace” (p. 36). While the subjects claimed to be quite happy in speaking English at the workplace (in most cases very happy), there were some issues with not being able to speak Swedish that caused problems in communication and integration. Participant A would like to speak more Swedish at work: “If I know Swedish yeah I would like to speak in Swedish”, and would ideally use a mix of Swedish and English, as English includes technical terminology. Participant B reported not having very many Swedish friends to practice his Swedish with and Participant C would ideally like to use Chinese for work purposes, but did not have a preference between English and Swedish.

Speaking only English at work can have its benefits. First of all, the level of proficiency and specified vocabulary is sure to be high, providing an easy transfer from whatever education they may have to a professional international work setting. Ainsworth (2013) found that most international business students believe that speaking several languages could lead to cultural awareness, thus, minimizing the risks of misunderstanding. Fredriksson et al. (2006) also discussed a certain “tension” that exists between a company and its employees of different language backgrounds, causing problems regarding “corporate cohesion and integration” (p. 419). English has therefore in the case of Participants A and B hindered their assimilation into the Swedish society, as its usefulness at work and their social lives have faced no competition from any other languages. The subjects have all managed without extensive Swedish skills, although it was only Participant C who had slightly more lessons, who did not report any difficulty in integrating into the society.

Their use of English as a lingua franca in a business setting, i.e., BELF, has integrated the participants well into the workplace and they have easily been able to work in
different departments with varied tasks and still have managed to perform well. It is the lack of knowledge of Swedish, however, that has hindered them from assimilating into the Swedish society, despite having worked and lived in Sweden for an extensive period of time. Evidently, these results on the background of the subjects indicate how often and in what contexts they would use English and other languages (their L1, Swedish, and a combination of Swedish and English). Having an extensive education in English would lead to a higher level of confidence during interactions in English, whereas a limited English education could lead to less use of the language. Correspondingly, the participant with the longest Swedish education would speak Swedish to the greatest extent, and conversely, the subject with the shortest length of Swedish classes would speak Swedish the least. The subjects would also move toward speaking English in social contexts, such as small talk, but speak their first language if social talk were to be held with a person of the same first language background. All interactions, as shown, mainly took place in offices, but the lunchroom presented itself as a “neutral” space, where first language interactions were occasionally held. Through the interviews, the study also found out the attitudes that NNS of English (and Swedish) had with regards to speaking English (and Swedish) at work. In most cases, English was seen as the language that the subjects would like to use for work, considering that it was the same language they were educated in. However, ideally, they would like to be able to use Swedish more, as they would feel more integrated into the corporate culture and into the Swedish society, and thereby, making interactions with colleagues much easier.

6. Conclusion

By using a linguistic ethnographic method to observe employees’ usage of English and other languages at a workplace, reviewing field notes from that observation and interviews to gain more data and aim for triangulation, the present study found that the subjects use English comprehensively for both work and social functions. They are however likely to also use Swedish and English to communicate in work-related talk, and their first language for social talk. The use of language is largely determined by the context in which it is used, but also to a great extent, the linguistic background of the speaker. Their education, upbringing, and social experiences since moving to Sweden
have come to shape their language use at work and in everyday life. By focusing on individuals, the study has contributed to a research gap, which called for more focus to be put on the social processes that are in place. Also, an ethnographic study implies that the data collected is authentic and based on real-life observations. The multidisciplinary method of linguistic ethnography has provided a more nuanced result, meaning that the results of the study will be relevant in to the field of English for specific purposes, language education, business communication and BELF practices, as well as integration practices.

To further investigate the use of language in BELF settings, a larger and more comprehensive study is called for. Studies could include native speakers of Swedish as well, to investigate the use of English at a workplace when the employees have the choice between two languages, not three or more as in this case, and perhaps include more (specific) variables.
References


# Appendix A

**Observation Schedule: Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: (Replaced by a code, e.g. Participant A/ B/C)</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Sex: M/F</th>
<th>Nationality:</th>
<th>First Language:</th>
<th>Second language/s:</th>
<th>Home language/s:</th>
<th>Position at company:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conv.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spoken language/s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Same first language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Different first language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work/ Social</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation in person, work-related <strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation in person, work-related other lang.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation in person, not work-related <strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation in person, not work-related other lang.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation via phone <strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversation via phone other lang.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Other <strong>English</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation other other lang.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Observation Schedule: Participant A example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Spoken language/s</th>
<th>Same first language</th>
<th>Different first language</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Work / Social Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A. Reception</td>
<td>0:00:14</td>
<td>Swedish, English</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>Greek - Persian</td>
<td>Front desk</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A. C</td>
<td>0:00:20</td>
<td>Swedish, English</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>Swedish - Persian</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
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**Total time spoken:** 3:46:00
Appendix C

Field Notes: Participant A example

8.30 – Work began at reception. Receptionist (around 50 yrs old, nationality Greek, speaks Greek, English and Swedish fluently) spoke in Swedish to Participant A at check-in. Participant A answered in English. (R: “Ska se… är det ditt förnamn där på kortet?” A: “Yes, it is my first name”)

8.40 – Colleague and supervisor C (around 60 years old, nationality Swedish, speaks Swedish and English fluently) starts speaking Swedish to A, then realizes whom he is speaking to and changes to English. Asked if she knew that her card can be used twice to open the doors as in case of fire you should be able to let people out. Participant A replies yes in English then C leaves. The office is a small rectangular room with four desks and four chairs. Two computers on each desk. There are four people who work in this room; Persons A, P, K and S. P and K sit again by the window; S and Participant A sit facing the hallway.

9.02 – P arrives at work (around 37 years old, nationality Swedish, speaks Swedish and English fluently) greets Participant A in English and asks if she has any meetings today. Participant A replies yes. P then swears in Swedish to himself and has to run to a meeting in another building. They say quick goodbyes.

9.35 – S (around 35 years old nationality Lebanese, speaks Arabic, French, Swedish, and English fluently) arrives at work, does not say much except good morning, seems to keep to himself a lot. Speaks solely English to Participant A.

9.38 – K arrives (around 30 years old, nationality Palestinian, speaks Hebrew, Arabic, English, and Swedish fluently) is very friendly in greeting Participant A, asks how Participant A is. Participant A replies feeling a bit sick still he says too bad. K goes out gets coffee and I can hear him speaking Swedish to colleagues in the hallway. Participant A comments that she thinks K is so much better in Swedish than she is.

9.40 - K asks Participant A a question about a program. It is a short conversation that started in English. K could not find a file, Participant A says it is because he needs to become a member, she will ask C if he can make K a member and thus access the file. I see Participant A writing an email in English to C. Participant A speaks in short sentences and seems a bit timid in her responses. K is very direct. (K: Participant A, why can I not access these files?" Participant A: ”Oh…really? I don’t know, let me see…”).

9.57 – K asks Participant A about feedback from the results. Participant A asks “why did you enter it as feedback” K answers back. Short interaction.

10.02 – A new colleague visits the office (NC1) and asks Participant A in English how she feels. She says still a bit sick. He says drink tea but do not ask him to put his finger in it because it will be too sweet. K, Participant A and S laugh. NC1 asks about P, Participant A replies that he will be at a meeting for the rest of the morning. NC1 jokes about P’s desk as it has some bread on it. (Participant A: “He’s in a meeting all day.

10.25 – S has to leave the office to go to Migrationsverket to get a picture taken. Participant A asks if she can ask a quick question, S dismisses it, explaining how he is in a hurry, but as he leaves he asks what it is about. They talk for a while about limits and inputs and S agrees that there is a problem. S leaves abruptly without saying goodbye.
Appendix D

Interview questions

Demographic and personal background

• What work do you do here?
• What is your education?
• How long have you been in Sweden?
• What was your reason for coming here?
• Did you take any lessons in Swedish? Why/why not? Reasons?
• What other languages do you use for everyday operations in the company?
• Have you had any extended stays in an English-speaking country?
• Do you ever use English at home?
• Do you have lunch with Swedes?
• Do you come into contact with native speakers of English?

Attitude

• How do you feel about using English at work?
• Would you rather use another language at work?
• Do you ever use your first language for work purposes? Why/why not?

Proficiency and Accents

• What level of English would you say you speak?
• Have you ever felt like you have had problems with English?
Appendix E

Interview: Participant A example

What is your position at the company? Designer

What education do you have? I have a master of science in electrical engineering, which is more focused on wireless systems.

Where did you get your master’s degree? From Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan. So here in Sweden? Yeah. Did you study somewhere else before that or in Sweden too? I did my bachelor in my home country which is Iran but then I came here for my Master of Science degree. So I think I have studied in Iran and here. Did you work in Iran or just study? Just study.

After you got your master’s you sated in Sweden? I got my master degree then I found a thesis in the same company, while I was almost finished then I got a job so I continued here. So yeah.

What was your main reason for coming to Sweden? Actually, I was applying to many different countries. I was not only focused on Sweden to come for studying. But then I got accepted to the university and I was asking my classmates who were coming to Sweden before me that “How was the school?” And how is the university and is it a good one what is the job opportunities after work and they told me it is a good university and they are happy with it so I just chose to come here. But it was not….I got accepted and I came.

When you came here did you take any lessons in Swedish? Actually in the first year of my studying or in the first year of being in Sweden I think there were some Swedish courses in summer in KTH. Then I went…eh…spent my summer holidays, about, mm, one month to study Swedish. After that because of the loads of the studying materials and the work then I didn’t actually continue with the course, the Swedish course. So I was just…yeah. So I didn’t continue learning Swedish I would say.

Do you wish you had? Me? Yeah. If I had time and if I had like gone to the Swedish course maybe I was better in Swedish by now. But yeah. But I’m planning to go to some Swedish course like in November.

Did you feel like you needed to take the Swedish courses or did you feel like they might prove useful maybe in the future? Or were you forced to take the course? You mean before or now? Before, when you came. Before when I came I heard from people that if you know Swedish they will talk to you more or you can be integrated in the society better so if I want to find a job it will be easier for me at least to know a little bit Swedish. So that was actually the motivation I had in the beginning. So, I had the time ‘cause in the first year of studying it was not, you know the pressure of studying was not that much.