Babel in Business
An experimental approach to studying the impact of foreign language use on thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in the workplace

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Overview

• Whirlwind tour through my research interests in this field, for details see the original papers (references all included in this presentation) or my inaugural lecture

• Research on the role of language in International Business (HQ-subsidiary relationships) 2000-2017

• Research on language and cross-national research methods (2000-2012):
  • Language and questionnaire response
  • Language and response styles

• Recent quasi-experimental research:
  • Language and competitive behaviour
  • Language and negotiation (ESCP Berlin)

• Future research plans:
  • Foreign Language use and competitive behaviour
  • Foreign Language use and innovation
  • Foreign Language use and business ideologies
Language Management in Multinational Companies

Babel in business: The language barrier and its solutions in the HQ-subsidiary relationship

Language competencies, policies and practices in multinational corporations: A comprehensive review and comparison of Anglophone, Asian, Continental European and Nordic MNCs

Hablas vielleicht un peu la mia language? A comprehensive overview of the role of language differences in headquarters–subsidiary communication

The impact of language barriers on trust formation in multinational teams

Why and how does shared language affect subsidiary knowledge inflows? A social identity perspective

From dilemmatic struggle to legitimized indifference: Expatriates' host country language learning and its impact on the expatriate-HCE relationship

Language in IB (1)
• Focuses mostly on the HQ-subsidiary relationship in multinational companies
• Studies topics such as corporate language policies, as well as the impact of language choice on power balance, trust, and knowledge transfer
• Level of analysis: mainly company level
• Research methods
  • Interview data (Harzing, Koester & Magner, 2011; Tenzer, Pudelko & Harzing, 2014; Zhang & Harzing, 2016)

Language in IB (3)
The Interaction Between Language and Culture: A Test of the Cultural Accommodation Hypothesis in Seven Countries

Response Styles in Cross-national Survey Research
A 26-country Study

Does the Use of English-language Questionnaires in Cross-national Research Obscure National Differences?
Rating versus ranking: What is the best way to reduce response and language bias in cross-national research?


Response Style Differences in Cross-National Research
Dispositional and Situational Determinants

Language, questionnaire response & response styles (1)
• How does language influence the **content** of responses to questionnaires, e.g. cultural value questions

• How does language influence response **styles** (ERS, MRS, ARS) and usefulness of rating vs. ranking

• Level of analysis: individual, country (25+ countries)

• Research methods
  • Quasi-experimental
  • Data collection in class
  • Class split into two language treatments

**Language, questionnaire response & response styles (2)**


Language, questionnaire response & response styles (3)

To access papers, see: [http://www.harzing.com/publications/by-type](http://www.harzing.com/publications/by-type) and [http://www.harzing.com/publications/online-papers](http://www.harzing.com/publications/online-papers)
Recent research: language and negotiation

- ESCP Berlin (with Hannah Nagler, Robert Wilken)
  - Tri-lingual German and French students negotiating in one of three languages: German, French, English
    - How does the language of negotiation influence negotiation outcomes and satisfaction with the process?
    - Do negotiations using a bridge language (English) differ from negotiations in which one party uses their mother tongue?
  - Data collection with dyads in business-to-business negotiation ongoing; coding of negotiation scripts
Recent research: Language & competition

• Choice between collaboration and competition between two firms in a prisoner’s dilemma setting
• Dutch students behave more competitively when playing in English
  • But only if they had lived in an Anglophone country for at least three months

• FWO funding application with academics from University of Antwerp and Tilburg University

• Foreign Language use and competition
  • Extending our prior research to include: Belgium, Netherlands, France, Finland, China, UK
  • In-class data collection through prisoner’s dilemma game + pre- and post-survey

• Foreign Language use and creativity
  • Belgium, Netherlands, France, Finland, China, UK
  • In-class/lab data collection: Alternate uses task, Remote associations task + pre- and post-survey

Future research (1)
• Leverhulme research grant application
  • Foreign language use and key business concepts and their underlying ideologies
• Data collection in 15+ countries through online surveys with targeted audience (MBA students)
• English vs native + Spanish/Chinese/Japanese vs native (USA/UK)
• Three stages:
  • exploratory associations
  • negative/positive feelings & implicit association task
  • business scenarios

Future research (2)
Example words (based on HBR analysis)
Interdisciplinary Conceptual framework
The End!

Any questions or comments?