INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING

A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTANI WORKERS IN SELECTED SWEDISH MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

Amin, Asad (840914-5359)
Shahid, Muhammad Imran (790210-6496)

School of Business, Society and Engineering

Course: Master Thesis in Business Administration
Course code: EFO704
15 hp

Tutor: Konstantin Lampou
Examiner: Eva Maaninen-Olsson
Date: 2013-06-07
ABSTRACT

Seminar Date: 29th May, 2013.

Level: EFO704 Master Thesis in Business Administration (15 ECTs)

Authors: Amin, Asad
          Shahid, Muhammad Imran

Supervisor: Konstantin Lampou

Examiner: Eva Maaninen-Olsson

Title: Influence of Language on Knowledge Sharing: A Case Study of Pakistani workers in selected Swedish Multinational Companies.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the influence of language on knowledge sharing in five selected multinational companies located in Sweden. As well as, the focus is to approach the problems or opportunities which are created by multi-linguistic environment in these companies.

Method: The study was carried out using the qualitative data from employees’ interviews of five Swedish Multinational Companies.

Conclusion: Although, employees have different native languages in studied organizations, but still due to a common company language English, they are able to transmit their experiences and knowledge comfortably. It reflects that a common corporate language facilitate more knowledge sharing in an environment where a variety of individuals, who have different cultural backgrounds and native languages, work together.

Key words: Knowledge Sharing, Language, Transfer Medium, Teams, Trust
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, we are grateful to the Creator who opened the door of life whenever it seemed to be closed.

We convey our inmost gratitude and recognition to our course coordinator Eva Maaninen-Olsson and supervisor Konstantin Lampou for their guidance, superintendence and endowment. There were times when we felt like giving up but they stood by us, believed in us and boosted up our moral.

We would like to share our credit for the accomplishment of the thesis with the Muhammad Hamid Munir (Volvo CE), Muhammad Saad Bin Azhar and Omer Ikram ul Haq (ABB CRC), and some other anonymous informants, without their aid our journey would have been much longer and exhausting.

Nevertheless, we would like to thank our fellow course mates in Konstantin Lampou’s group who backed up the quality of our work by helping us with constructive and reformative criticism throughout the seminars that laid the foundation for the progress of our thesis. We also wish them success for their thesis and hope we could do the same for them as they did for us.

Last but not the least we would like to thankful to our families and friends without whose amazing love and support this thesis would not have succeeded.
# TABLE OF CONTENT

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1

1.1 Background ....................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Problem Discussion ........................................................................................................... 2

1.3 Research Question ............................................................................................................ 3

1.4 Strategic Question ............................................................................................................. 3

1.5 Purpose ............................................................................................................................. 3

1.6 Delimitation ....................................................................................................................... 4

1.7 Target Audience .............................................................................................................. 4

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ............................................................................................ 5

2.1 Knowledge ......................................................................................................................... 5

2.2 Knowledge Sharing .......................................................................................................... 6

2.3 Organizational Culture and Language ............................................................................. 7

2.4 Corporate Language, Communication and Knowledge Sharing .................................. 8

2.5 Basic Communication Model ........................................................................................... 9

2.6 Critical Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing (A Language Perspective) .................. 10

2.6.1 Transfer Medium ......................................................................................................... 10

2.6.2 Teams .......................................................................................................................... 11

2.6.3 Trust ............................................................................................................................. 12

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ............................................................................................ 14

4 METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................ 15

4.1 Choice of Topic .................................................................................................................. 15

4.2 Research Strategy and Technique ................................................................................... 15

4.3 Literature Review ............................................................................................................. 16

4.4 Information Access/ Sources .......................................................................................... 17

4.5 Case Study ......................................................................................................................... 17

4.6 Data Collection ................................................................................................................ 17

4.6.1 Secondary data ............................................................................................................ 18

4.6.2 Primary data ................................................................................................................ 18

4.6.3 Interviews ..................................................................................................................... 18
1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of our study presents background to the chosen topic and introduction to the problem area. In the introduction part we covered previous researches in the selected field and relevant literature used for it. To conduct this research we also outlined the purpose and objective clearly.

1.1 Background

In this modern era, organizations are growing faster with the migration of diverse workforce from different backgrounds that are cultural, ethnic, racial and linguistic etc. Thus, the internationalization phenomenon has encouraged the exchange of human resources across borders. A number of new aroused challenges need to be effectively managed in a multicultural workforce (Mabey et al., 1998:209). One of them is the international communication which is faced by not only top management but also at any level of organization. Employees speaking different mother languages in multicultural organizations have to interact with each other to share business information and knowledge. At the same time, thanks to the rapid growth in digital media, managers and workers in different parts of the world are communicating through information technologies frequently with each other and with their colleagues despite a variety of native languages (Janssens et al., 2004).

According to Dhir (2005:358), the use of a common and appropriate language in an organization is becoming critical to get a competitive advantage in a knowledge-based economic globalized scenario of business and trade. Nobody can deny the effects of language on the business abilities and activities of multinational companies in today’s global market. The author has mentioned three important trends which are creating challenges for corporate managers in managing language as a corporate asset. These are

1. Evolution of the knowledge economy;
2. Globalization of business and economy; and
3. Increasing diversity of workforce

All these trends indicate the importance of creating such an organizational environment which can ease “the creation and application of knowledge, free flow of organizational information, and empowerment of its constituent members” (ibid. p359).

In a knowledge-based, dynamic and competitive economy, knowledge is a vital organizational resource due to which organizations gain a sustainable competitive advantage. To have a competitive advantage, organizations need to develop such arrangements which will enable them to select or help employees who have special knowledge, competencies, abilities or skills. Organizations also need to focus on the transmission and sharing of expertise and knowledge from those who have it to other employees. “Knowledge sharing is the fundamental means through which employees can
contribute to knowledge application, innovation, and ultimately the competitive advantage of the organization” (Wang & Noe, 2010:115).

McDermott (1999:107) has described the concept of knowledge sharing as it “involves guiding someone through our thinking or using our insights to help them see their own situation better”. The author further mentioned that a person sharing and transferring knowledge should be aware of the knowledge use, purpose, needs and/or gaps of the other person receiving the knowledge. According to Riege (2005:23-24) one of over a dozen barriers to knowledge sharing is “differences in national culture or ethnic background; and values and beliefs associated with it (language is part of this)”. 

1.2 Problem Discussion

Previous research on language use regarding multinational companies mentions that multiculturalism leads to a difficult managerial situation with high implication for cross cultural communication (Tange & Lauring, 2009). According to Dhir & Gökè-Pariolá (2002) transmission of information takes place through social interaction with others and thus language is a primary source that facilitates the provision of such medium for communication. If knowledge sharing is not particularly observed, then the available well-known resources will remain underutilized (Argote, Cabrera as cited in Lauring & Selmer, 2011). Also the presence of language differences has negative effects on knowledge sharing (Welch & Welch, 2008). Most often it is challenging in multicultural organizations to cope with linguistic and cultural barriers (Lauring & Selmer, 2011).

In today's business, cross-cultural communications have been made complex due to the internationalization phenomenon. As such, multinational corporations have been strained into operating business in many languages. As a result problems that rose from internationalization in context of language are confusion, misunderstanding, huge amount of budget spending on translation and interpretation. Consequently, many businesses found a solution to the problem to adopt a common corporate language that is English for communication. The significance of English language can be realized due to the fast spreading background of English. There are about 400 million “mother tongue” English speakers all over the world in British Empire, but excluding that amount, there exist 500 million English speakers who use English as second language. In addition the logical reason why multinational corporations should choose English as their common communication language is based on the fact that a huge amount of professional management knowledge started off from USA in English (Swift & Wallace, 2011).

Different researchers have carried out a research on the topic of English as an international business language (Swift & Wallace, 2011). In spite of the current increasing interest the authors Dhir & Gökè-Pariolá (2002:241) have claimed that studies in the area were still lacking “in both the strategic management and communications literature”. Additionally “Only a few studies have been undertaken on the subject, linguistic differences are argued to make the use of knowledge and the sharing of knowledge a challenge in multicultural organizations” (Lauring & Selmer, 2011:324). These arguments are also supported by Kogut & Zander (1992) that in today's business environment knowledge sharing and knowledge creation are unavoidable challenges. Better coordination and
improved decision making are the key strategies in knowledge sharing to lead for better performances (Zarraga & Bonache, as cited in Lauring & Selmer, 2011).

Lauring (2007) has mentioned that many researchers have noticed that the role of language in the multinational companies is neglected and not recognized properly in the research work of international transfer and management. According to him one possible reason behind might be “the tendency to associate the concept of language in an international context with cross-cultural communication focusing solely on measurable parameters with regard to cultural distance” (p.256). To a certain limit, due to extensive research on cross-cultural communication, researchers had ignored “the studies of dynamic role of language in cross-cultural communication and focus more on the apparently static cultural traits” (p.256). Lauring & Selmer (2011:325) have also stated that “national culture and other demographic differences in heterogeneous organizations have received much attention, the role of language has largely been ignored”.

An increasing number of South-Asian employees in Swedish multinational companies have encouraged the authors of this research to investigate the influence of language on knowledge sharing in the context of communicational differences between Sweden and South Asia. In order to find the positive and negative influences of language, the authors have conducted interviews from six different employees. All these employees belong to five Swedish multinational companies i.e. Volvo CE, ABB CRC and three anonymous companies.

1.3 Research Question

How can a common language facilitate or prohibit knowledge sharing in the selected Swedish multinational companies?

1.4 Strategic Question

How should language be handled in multinational companies to facilitate knowledge sharing process?

1.5 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the influence of language on knowledge sharing in five selected multinational companies located in Sweden. As well as, the focus is to approach the problems or opportunities which are created by multi-linguistic environment in these companies.
1.6 Delimitation

The conceptual model adopted for this report from Welch & Welch (2008) includes seven most influencing factors. But the authors of this report have used just three factors from the model, while exempted the rest of. This study would have carried more weight if we could include all influencing factors and investigated each of them. Therefore authors of this report do not claim that the conducted research is sufficient inclusive and comprehensive to identify and analyze knowledge sharing and influence of language on it in the selected five companies.

1.7 Target Audience

The main target audiences of this thesis are fellow business students and other students who have an interest in knowledge management especially from language perspective. The authors also hope that it will be helpful to the employees and managers of Swedish multinational companies as well as others to realize the importance of language in knowledge sharing.
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section consists on the theories that were collected and compiled from different literature sources on the bases of language and knowledge sharing discussion. The authors of this report also present a conceptual framework that is adopted from theories consist of critical factors influencing knowledge sharing through a language perspective.

2.1 Knowledge

Knowledge is defined by (Awad & Ghaziri, 2004:35) as “understanding gained through experience or study; familiarity with the way to do something to perform a task; an accumulation of facts, procedural rules, or heuristics”. Stewart (2002:302) has described knowledge as a sum of everything which every person knows in an organization to give it a competitive advantage over its competitors in the market. Knowledge is dynamic in nature as it is created in result of social interactions among the individuals and organizations (Nonaka et al., 2002).

According to Wang & Noe (2010), there is no common agreement among researchers about the distinction between knowledge and information. Some researchers believe information just as a flow of messages whereas knowledge is information-based and justified by one’s belief. On the other hand, some researchers think that “all information is considered knowledge but knowledge is more than just information, i.e., knowledge includes information and know-how” (p.117).

Types of Knowledge

There are two well-known types of knowledge: tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is non-codified, relies on individuals, and is achieved through personal experiences or actions (Andersson, 2003:11). It is hard to formalize, more personal and difficult to communicate to others. It is more related to action, commitment, values, emotions, routines, and procedures (Nonaka et al., 2002:43). Tacit knowledge is embedded in individual’s mind through jobs and experience. It is “difficult to share across space and time” (Awad & Ghaziri, 2004:47). This type of knowledge is “used to create explicit knowledge and is best communicated personally through dialogue and scenarios, with use of metaphors” (p.47).

On the other hand, explicit knowledge refers to be codified, found in documentation, shared, expressed in words, and printed (Nonaka & Penrose as cited in Andersson, 2003). It can be expressed in formal ways and systematic language and possible to share in the form of scientific formulae, specifications, data and manuals. It is easy to deliver, process, store and transmit (Nonaka et al., 2002). It is easier to retrieve, convey and transmit explicit knowledge than tacit knowledge because tacit knowledge is gained by an individual directly from his or her experience (Awad & Ghaziri, 2004).
2.2 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge in organization is created through interaction, collaboration, and education when established teams and taskforces arrange and encourage face-to-face communication between individuals in each department through practices (Galbraith as cited in Andersson, 2003:11). By nature knowledge creation is concerned with teams or individuals explorations to new ideas and concepts combined with the existing knowledge about the products or services (Kumar & Ganesh, 2009).

Both types of knowledge i.e. tacit and explicit are important to knowledge creation because without tacit insight, explicit knowledge loses its meanings and instead of tacit or explicit knowledge alone, knowledge is created through the interactions between both types (Nonaka et al., 2002).

Lin & Lee (2006:75) have described knowledge sharing as “the activities of how to help communities of people work together, facilitating the exchange of their knowledge, enabling learning oriented, and increasing their ability to achieve individual and organizational goals”. According to Mueller (2012:436), knowledge sharing is not just transferring information, it is more than that and instead it can be defined as “the provision or receipt of task information, know-how, and feedback regarding a product or procedure” (Cummings, 2004:352). McDermott & O’Dell (2001:79) considered knowledge share “as a practical way to solve business problems”.

On the other hand, knowledge transfer is “a process of exchange of explicit or tacit knowledge between two agents, during which one agent purposefully receives and uses the knowledge provided by another” where agent may be “an individual, a team, an organizational unit, the organization itself or a cluster of organizations” (Kumar & Ganesh, 2009:163) and “enables the exploitation and application of existing knowledge for organization’s purposes (p.161).

After studying a lot of articles and papers on an online database from 1996 to 2007 at the end of each year, Kumar & Ganesh (2009) have summed up that knowledge transfer, knowledge flow and knowledge sharing have a common feature – ‘an exchange of knowledge’. Here it is important to note that “knowledge is given by one or more entities and received by others” (p.163).

Riege (2005:18) has pointed out that “better and purposeful sharing of knowledge translates into accelerated individual and organizational learning and innovation through the development of better products that are brought faster to a target market, thus enhancing market performance”. He further mentioned, although there is an increasing awareness of benefits and advantages of knowledge sharing but still accessibility of knowledge is limited. The reason is that the most knowledge resides either in the heads of individuals (tacit knowledge) or in documents and repositories (explicit knowledge) which are not always accessible to others.

In connection to the cultural differences, Riege (2005:19) has highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge by quoting Nonaka & Takeuchi as, sharing “tacit knowledge among multiple individuals with difference backgrounds, perspectives, and motivations becomes a critical step for organizational knowledge creation to take place”. Quintas (2002) has stated that it is very important to identify that there are always significant differences in the way of perceiving knowledge in different cultures and countries.
2.3 Organizational Culture and Language

Laroche (2003:2) has mentioned the points retrieved from most definitions of culture as, culture is a distinctly human feature. It differentiates one society or group of people from another. It is something which some people have in common but not with others. It consists of specific feelings, reactions, thoughts, attitudes and behaviours, and interpretation of things which are supposed to accept in specific situations.

While talking about an organizational culture, Aghazadeh (2004:522) has mentioned that it comes out from shared valued, behavior, beliefs, and background of the members of organization. Members from different ethnic backgrounds have different values, attitudes, norms and ways of thinking.

In global multinational companies the cultural diversity is commonly observed, as Barinaga (2002:9-10) has stated that the production units and the markets of large multinational companies are spread throughout the world. Therefore it is a common thing that managers of a company, which operates in different parts of the world, meet together to make some decisions for the benefits of company that is the global marketing strategies. The author further mentioned that the multinational companies have employees and labourers from both, the home country of companies and from the country of operations. The regions or the companies which have advanced production systems, they are increasing attracting the talent and skilled labor from whole part of world e.g. the Silicon Valley, a well-known IT leading region can only keep its pace to innovation by hiring thousands of engineers and scientists from the other parts of world like China, India, Korea, Taiwan and Eastern Europe etc.

Welch & Welch (2008) has described that language is an important aspect of culture. It is always inherent in a certain culture. He referred Claes, “If language influences the way we behave and how we perceive things, it means that culture is also inherent in the language itself” (p.341). Even with these obvious relationships, he emphasized that language has enough importance in itself and has right to deserve a more focused treatment. The workers in multicultural companies are supposed to operate in the company language, normally English. As it is not their mother tongue, so as a result of this act there will be some disconnection from their national cultural background.

In a case-based article, Hammond & Kleiner (1993:6-8) observed that a big problem, which is faced by the workers in the observed company having 26 ethnic groups from all over the world, was the language issue. They illustrated language barrier through an example that in some cultures saying ‘no’ is considered discourteous. Instead they give signal of ‘yes’ and in this specific situation they generally mean ‘I hear you, I understand what you are saying’. A native of American culture would conceive this as a strong response of understanding. Mostly foreign-born employees say yes even though they don’t understand completely the other’s meanings to avoid an embarrassing situation.
2.4 Corporate Language, Communication and Knowledge Sharing

According to Roos & Krogh (2002:257), “It is obvious that without language, knowledge could not flow from person to person within a company. It is equally obvious that if people speak different languages, then communication is stifled”.

Piekkari (2006) has pointed out that a common corporate language is not only an issue of efficiency but it is more concerned about corporate control. Therefore it is seen to function as an integrative mechanism among multilingual employees. English is frequently selected as the ‘lingua franca’ – “an idiom that non-native speakers use with other non-native speakers, rendering it a foreign language for all parties concerned” (p.536).

The significant role of language in knowledge sharing process is described by Husted & Michailova (2002) as the importance of language becomes even more vital when difference in native languages of the partner or employees increases the ambiguity substantially. The lack of fluency in the corporate language may create a possible big obstacle even in well codified knowledge to be accessible and also affects the behavioral transparency which reduces the limits of understanding of each other behaviors. It leads to misunderstandings and communication problems in multicultural settings and affects the knowledge sharing, transfer and learning processes heavily.

Corporate language is observed to provide a common base for internal communication between different units of an organization which are normally embedded in different language environments. Due to common corporate language, efficiency of individuals and also organization is increased by overcoming misunderstandings, avoiding time-consuming translations, reducing costs and creating a sense of cooperation within the organization (Fredriksson et al., 2006).

Cross-cultural communication problems may come in different forms and sizes but all these results in the fact that the message did not get across. Sometimes in such situations the recipient did not understand the meaning of message but the worst situation is that when the recipients have understood the meanings of message totally different from the actual ones (Laroche, 2003:17).

Piekkari (2006:544) has pointed out that “research on knowledge sharing and transfer in MNCs has largely been silent about the role of individuals and language in this process.” According to him, by considering language as a precise, separate and specific variable, its influence on knowledge and information flows and on different ways of communication can be more readily recognized.

Al-Alawi et al., (2007) have stated that communication among employees of an organization plays an important role for knowledge sharing. It depends on the opportunities and frequencies of face-to-face meetings. The communication within an organization may flow horizontally or vertically and encourage the workers to share information and knowledge. It depends on the structure of the organization. In a hierarchical structure, there are impaired flows of communication and knowledge is being shared on the basis of need to know (Riege, 2005). On the other hand, in organizations having flat structure, there is much collaboration and cooperation among the employees. It develops...
a conductive environment to knowledge sharing. A less hierarchical company has tendency of positive influence on flow of knowledge sharing as there are less reasons to withheld knowledge and information with them from their colleagues (Wang & Noe 2010).

According to Riege (2005) many researchers have noted that the ability of individuals to share their knowledge depends heavily on their communication skills. For effective knowledge sharing, effective verbal and written communications are necessary. Verbal communication is the most common carrier of sharing of tacit knowledge.

In knowledge management process the communication plays a fundamental role. If organization wants to manage knowledge then it needs to improve understanding of communications, process of learning and knowledge sharing within the organization (Quintas, 2002).

### 2.5 Basic Communication Model

To better understand the influence of language in knowledge sharing, it will be meaningful to begin with basic communication model. This communication model gives an idea that how knowledge is encoded by using language and transmitted in the form of message by the sender (Individuals, Group or Organization) through communication channel. At the other end receiver (Individuals, Group,
Organization) decode the message after receiving to understand as it was intended. The same process is repeated at the receiver end to give a feedback for the message. Face-to-face communication (verbal interaction, telephone calls, printed materials) are considered the most preferred mode for communication due to the reason that it allows Sender and Receiver to check for meaningful sharing. Furthermore, the Fig.1 demonstrates that how language affects both sender and receiver in sharing process (Welch & Welch 2008).

2.6 Critical Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing (A Language Perspective)

In today’s world, knowledge is considered a valuable resource for the company in strategic point of view (Nahapiet & Ghoshal as cited in Hoof & Ridder, 2004). Also knowledge sharing between departments and individuals is considered a crucial process (Osterloh & Frey, 2000). But on the other side effective knowledge management is the most challenging issue for organizations in the present era (Hansen et al., 1999). Therefore it is an important area for research to determine which ones are most critical factors that encourage or resist knowledge sharing within departments and groups (Hoof & Ridder, 2004).

In order to deeply understand and get fully conscious about the value and broader impact of language on knowledge sharing the authors have selected a range of three factors (Transfer Medium, Teams and Trust) from Welch & Welch (2008) model. Other factors in their model (cost, staff movements, motivation and networks) have their own importance in knowledge sharing. But it has been decided by the authors of this paper to select only three critical factors on the basis to cover the scope of this paper where the focus is on the relationship of language and knowledge sharing from employees’ perspective. Furthermore, the separate examination of each factor makes it easy to realize the extent to which the language may facilitate or behave like a barrier in effective knowledge sharing.

2.6.1 Transfer Medium

A number of researchers have mentioned that transfer medium is a critical factor for knowledge sharing. These days various channels or mediums (letters, reports, meetings, conference calls, online forums/blogs, electronic mail, voice mail, proposals, memos, Fax, telephonic calls etc.) could be found for knowledge sharing across/within organizations (Browaeys & Price, 2011), but the focus here is on face-to-face interaction and increasing trend of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) like internet and intranet.

Face-to-Face Interaction

In today’s modern business world the exchange of knowledge and certain business transactions have been made possible electronically. But face-to-face communication remains a primitive medium of communication (Stahl & Björkman, 2006). De Meyer’s (as cited in Welch & Welch, 2008) studies of research and development centers of 14 big multinational companies show that socialization
mechanism (training, assignments, traveling) were most important tools used to improve inter-units communication. Multinational companies are diverting their focuses to gather employees in formats such as meetings, trainings programs under the dependability of a common language to share knowledge effectively. In managers perspective the lack of face-to-face interaction with key managers in domestic organization negatively impact on motivation and performance (Stahl & Björkman, 2006).

Armstong & Cole (as cited in Stahl & Björkman, 2006:351) emphasize that “lack of face-to-face contact among team members in different locations is likely to lead to an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ tendency to forget about members in other locations that hinders knowledge sharing and communication”. Browaeys & Price (2011) state that even in case the relationship between individuals has been developed, but still requires the maintenance, particularly when a variety of conversation styles are used. Face-to-face communication in the case of Lotus and Boing, brought global teams to better establish relationship and trust (Stahl & Björkman, 2006). It is obvious that the differentiation among individuals in terms of face-to-face language communication style have several implications. Companies who judge properly such differentiation may reap the rewards of successfully aptitudes in achieving different, more or less goals (Gannon & Newman, 2002).

Information and Communication Technology

Nowadays the role of information and communication technology (ICT) has increased in the knowledge sharing process in multinational companies. The knowledge sharing process includes “from knowledge creation through to its storage, retrieval and application” (Welch & Welch, 2008:348). Intranets in multinational companies give opportunity to their employees to explore and more access of online organizational information and “support individual learning (conversion of explicit knowledge to personal tacit knowledge) through provision of capabilities such as computer simulation (to support learning-by-doing) and smart software tutors” (Alavi & Leidner as cited in Welch & Welch, 2008:348). No doubt, due to improved ICT the process of knowledge sharing and information transfer is rapidly enhanced. It has also a direct impact on international interactions at all levels of multinational companies. At the same time, the cultural aspects regarding ICT are also important. If there is centralization of such knowledge which is codified into a company language, then there is always a danger of disconnection of those employees who have lack of requisite language competency (Welch & Welch, 2008).

It is obvious that although ICT enhances and facilitates the contacts but still it cannot replace the need for face-to-face communication and direct contact, especially in context of their “richness, variety and scope, [which] cannot yet be fully reproduced by ICTs” (Roberts as cited in Welch & Welch, 2008:349). They further mentioned that “whether face-to-face or electronic, the need of a shared language in communication is self-evident” (ibid: 349).

2.6.2 Teams

Browaeys & Price (2011) simply defined team as a group of people working together for the purpose to accomplish a task. Welch & Welch (2008) stated that, within multinational companies the significance of teams can never be neglected and global teams overcome the limitations on
organizational knowledge sharing. In support of the above, diverse team members approach in a varied and highly focused manner towards problem solutions and knowledge transfer mechanisms through diverse networks and languages. According to Tung & Chang (2011), well specialized and build up teams speed up work with accuracy of actions and share knowledge with creativity. Knowledge sharing cannot be measured but its results can be observed and attributed to all group members working in the team (Konno as cited in Osterloh & Frey, 2000).

The language diversity has received less attention in researches on cross-cultural teams in multinational companies and importance of language factor is normally overlooked. In many researches, “actual process of interpersonal interaction taking place through language is generally left unexamined. Cross-cultural teams, however, are composed of individuals who speak a variety of mother tongues and belong to different language communities” (Henderson as cited in Piekkari, 2006:542). The author further explained that language diversity is created “as team members not only speak several languages but also they hear in a variety of different ways; that is, they use different interpretive mechanisms” (p.542).

In accordance, Piekkari (2006) stated that diversity is a possible source of new ideas and studies on cross-cultural teams have pointed out diversity as an affecting factor on teams’ dynamics and performance. On the other hand, it is possible that due to extreme diversity and language differences, communication may be slow down among team members and function as an obstacle in interactions and ultimately a negative effect on team performance. According to Welch & Welch (2008:349), “language diversity can inhibit effective team performance.” In a study about communication within international teams working in MNCs in France, it is found that although teams have a common language (English) but still “language diversity affected interpretations and socialization processes. These were “hidden obstacles” in team performance and knowledge sharing” (p.349).

### 2.6.3 Trust

Trust has been stressed as an important factor in knowledge sharing focused on relationships and networks (Welch & Welch, 2008). According to Andrews & Delahaye (2000), trust is one of the key parts for the existence of knowledge sharing. The mutual trust between individuals shows whether knowledge is shared or not. Levin et al., (2003) named benevolence trust as individuals trust that each party intends goodwill, whereas competence trust have been referred as the recipient of knowledge about the provider of knowledge. Both types of trusts are based on provider and recipient sharing common language. According to Brewster (as cited in Stahl & Björkman, 2006:71) “Low trust inherent in attitude monitoring, appraisal systems and so on are culturally inappropriate”. However there are a majority of opinion that the ability, to develop and maintain trust and the relationships based on it, is highly critical for organizational performance (Clases, et al., as cited in Stahl & Björkman, 2006). Trust settle and strengthen about how knowledge is to be used and also promote disclosure and sharing of knowledge (Zaheer as cited in Welch & Welch, 2008). But knowledge sharing occurs on trust basis when receiver is considered trustworthy and sender is confident that the recipient will not deliberately misdirect the provided knowledge. So precisely it is required to have trust on behalf of recipient (Andrews & Delahaye, 2000).
In an organization, individuals think knowledge as a power and have fear to lose this power and a certain position in case they share their specific knowledge with others (Wang & Noe, 2010). Such type of observation is also noted by Szulanski (1996) that individuals may be reluctant or even show hostility to share their knowledge because they think it as losing an ownership or some favorable position/status in organization if they have transferred their knowledge.

In process of building trust, Robert (as cited in Welch & Welch, 2008) emphasized on face-to-face interaction and socialization in context of communication’s difficulties which arise due to different cultures and languages. Trust is a relationship based phenomenon which has a vital role in tacit knowledge sharing, therefore, “language becomes one of the keys that unlocks the potential contribution of trust. It is very difficult to establish a trusting relationship without an adequate basis of communication” (p.350).

Welch & Welch (2008) mentioned that a trusty environment enhances the teamwork but this is directly related to the level of face-to-face communication and interaction over time. However, all these are linked to a shared language as a strong base for effective communication among different units which improves knowledge sharing and flow of information. In their general opinion “individuals are more prepared to share knowledge with known and trusted counterparts who also share a language” (p.353).
3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework is derived from Welch and Welch (2008) model on the basis of literature which is described in previous chapter. By using this model the authors are enabled to demonstrate the influence of three factors i.e. transfer medium, teams and trust on knowledge sharing through a language prism (as shown in Fig.2).

The conceptual model is composed of three entities that are knowledge sharing, language and the influential factors. To operationalize this model each influencing factor was examined with the help of language prism to check whether language is facilitator or act as a barrier in effective knowledge sharing. Such exploration of language impact is significant “step towards conceptualizing the role of language”. (Welch & Welch, 2008:346)

In the analysis part it will be observed that how knowledge sharing keeps dependability on individual’s language competence. For the specified factors finally we will come up with a conclusion to which extent language facilitate or act as barrier in effective knowledge sharing.
4 METHODOLOGY

This section of thesis provides an insight to the process in which this research work was carried out. The process includes the techniques how to find out the theories and, how the empirical findings are collected to analyze both of them to come out for a conclusion.

4.1 Choice of Topic

The topic of this research work is believed to be quite interesting because today’s businesses are merging into more culturally diverse workforce and multinational companies have increasing number of such employees whose native languages are different from each other. Also knowledge sharing process within multinational companies faces complexity and varies from small to medium organization. After a thorough review of literature for the current mentioned problem, authors came with brainstorming session and took a decision to investigate in business management field with a focus on language and knowledge sharing.

Due to diversity, a number of barriers (misunderstanding, confusions, and misinterpretations) arise that make it hard for knowledge management to obtain the goals and give a positive respond on investment (Riege, 2005). So in business perspective our selected topic carries more importance on account of raising challenges in the business field due to language diversity. Previous researches shows that culture diversity have an impact on knowledge sharing. But language topic has been less explored that is critical as a separate influencing factor in knowledge sharing. According to Fisher (2007:31) choosing a topic is highly critical stage that needs systematic approach of thinking. If a researcher makes poor choice in topic selection then there will be risk to complete the project in time.

Moreover, the authors believe that chosen topic is exciting and interesting for the business researchers and readers. This means that motivation and commitment are remained constant till the end of the project. Fisher (2007:31-33) states that the topic should be interesting and relevant in which researcher can find motivation and commitment as well as it should be kept in mind that the audience has some interest.

4.2 Research Strategy and Technique

The authors of this research have examined the experiences of non-native English speakers in the light of existing theories regarding knowledge sharing. So we have selected the qualitative method approach to reach the problems or opportunities created due to non-native language speakers.
Bryman & Bell (2007:28) referred qualitative research as emphasis on social reality and generation of theories rather than testing and verifying. The qualitative approach is more subjective that includes examining and reflecting of observations in order to know the social and human activities (Hussey & Hussey 1997:12).

Authors approached subjective nature (qualitative research) to conduct the research by examining and reflecting on the existing perceptions. The main purpose of such research is to better understand the influence of language in knowledge sharing environment of multinational companies.

Our expected response from informants included personnel experiences, opinion, practices, and some extent of explanations according to their knowledge. Thus we have prepared a semi-structured interview questionnaire to conduct interviews that drew forth more explicit and deep responses from informants which helped to better understand the current phenomenon. Supporting these arguments by Bryman & Bell (2007) that sketch of semi-structured questionnaire enable informants, feel free to answer independently not just by “Yes/No” to the questions and interviewer get responses in different directions. The questionnaire prepared for our research is structured in such way that informants answered according to our requirements and can further add from their experiences being exempted from bounding to the structured questions.

4.3 Literature Review

At the beginning of project articles were gathered about language diversity. Later it was found in the articles that language sometimes acts as barrier in knowledge sharing. So in the second phase of search our focus was on knowledge sharing/flow/transfer with connection of language.

Similarly our efforts in literature review guided us from the beginning to know about the research area, the concepts and theories relevant to this area, research methods and strategies been employed earlier, significant controversies, inconsistencies in findings, and un answered research questions in the area. Finally deep literature review process enabled the authors to build and support a view point and formulated a research question .The concept of literature review is considered first step in research project so considering that important, a variety of means have been used to support our thesis work. For this purpose, authors accessed Mälardalen University’s Library data base to find the relevant published articles and journals through Emerald. Google Scholar was also used. The key words used for searching useful information were as follows:

Knowledge, knowledge management, knowledge sharing/flow/transfer, language influence, corporate language, influencing factors in knowledge sharing

Bryman & Bell (2007:95) directs that “your literature review is where you demonstrate that you are able to engage in scholarly review based on your reading and understanding of the work of others in the same field as you”. Previous literature review into the relevant topic will obviously save enough time for researcher and with a refine technique it can partly answer to the research question (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). In fact researchers become confident to interpret other scholars’ theories and opinions by using their own ideas (Bryman & Bell, 2007).
4.4 Information Access/ Sources

Basically two approaches have been used during the study for databases access that are reference databases and full text databases whereas reference databases just provided us best sum ups access to references and full text databases give access to complete articles and journals. Major data bases stores that are used from Mälardalen University website includes DiVA, EMERALD, SciencDirect, ABI/Inform Global (ProQuest), Google Scholar mainly. Relevant literature books from Mälardalen University library, regarding language, communication, knowledge sharing and management were brought in use for the research.

4.5 Case Study

This research work is based on a case study of Pakistani employees in different Swedish multinational companies namely; Volvo CE, ABB CRC, and including three anonymous multinational companies as well. All of these companies have been chosen due to their operations different countries, and the fact that they have employees from different parts of the world, specifically from Pakistan. The selection of multinational companies was also made on the basis that these are multinational and located in Sweden, and authors have access to their employees.

According to Yin (2009:4) the case study approach permits the researchers “to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” like individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, behavior and attitude of a small group, neighborhood change, international relations etc. While Fisher (2007:59) states that case studies give a holistic approach to research, particularly focusing on the mutual relationships between groups, technology, personnel and policies.

In this thesis, authors have approached only Pakistani workers in different Swedish multinational companies. Therefore, this thesis should be considered from employees’ perspectives rather than managerial perspective as primary data, through interview, is not collected from managers or other person in management in any organization. Winstanley (2009:162) describes that “the case study is about one person or one particular issue that has wider implications for a particular section of society”. With this connection Bryman & Bell (2007) have differentiated case study from other research methods because the focus in case study is on a limited area or system.

4.6 Data Collection

Data collected for this report consist of both primary data as well as secondary data which is discussed and analyzed to come up with a conclusion to find out the answer of the research question. Hussey & Hussey (1997:139-140) refer that ‘Methodology’ is concerned with the whole research process whereas ‘Research Methods’ are only related to data collection part of that process. Single or many research methods for data collection can be used such as questionnaires, diaries, interviews, observations, protocol analysis, focus groups and critical incident technique.
4.6.1 Secondary data

Regarding this report, data has been collected from online databases, website materials, articles, magazines, or journals and literature books from university library that were focusing on language’s perspective in knowledge sharing. Also previous researches on our topic and company reports have been used.

Referring to Fisher (2007:45) data collection can be done by accessing existing databases, by conducting fieldwork, by distributing questionnaires among people or by setting case studies. Hussey and Hussey (1997:86) describe secondary data as pre-existing data whereas the purpose of literature search is to identify many items of secondary data which are foremost for research topic. Examples of secondary data are books, articles in journals, magazines and newspapers, conference papers, reports, archives, published statistics, companies’ annual reports and accounts, internal records of an organization, films, videos and broadcasts, electronic databases, and internet etc.

4.6.2 Primary data

Primary data for this thesis is consisted on findings of interviews conducted from six employees of five Swedish multinational companies through guidelines and follow up questions. Hussey and Hussey (1997:149) defined primary data as original data which is collected at source. Whereas according to Winstanley (2009: 86), data collected by means of questionnaires, observations, interviews, diaries, measurements and recordings, reflecting journals and personal participation in event or ceremonies are considered main sources of primary data.

4.6.3 Interviews

It was not an easy task for the authors to conduct interviews from employees working in multinational companies due to their busy schedule and burden of work. The first strategy we applied to reach the employees for interviews was face-to-face meeting. For this purpose we contacted about 12 personals in 6 different companies but unfortunately 3 persons get ready for face-to-face interviews whereas three were agree to be interviewed through email and telephone. The rest of contacted persons excused the authors and some of them did not replied to the email. In one of the three face-to-face interviews, one informer did not allowed us to record his interview as it was against his company law. Therefore the answers during interview were sent by him through an email to be a proof in the company data base.

Three face-to-face interviews lasted for about 45, 65, and 40 minutes were recorded with the permission of informants in order to reduce the misinterpretations and secure it for further re-use. To acquire a deep understanding of the research subject, interviews are important because the research subject mainly deals with the knowledge, behavior and human perceptions. The advantage of interview is the flexibility to researcher in directing the dialogue according to any un-anticipated necessary information which might come up in between the interview process (Winstanley, 2009:145).
Primary data have been collected through semi-structured interviews from six different informants with prepared guidelines (appendix 1) and follow-up questions. Informants were accessed by face-to-face, telephone calls, e-mails, or sometime a combination of these. A summary of demographic information of interviewees is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic information of interviewees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Work Experience In Sweden</th>
<th>Type of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Muhammad Hamid Munir</td>
<td>Volvo CE</td>
<td>Requirement Analyst</td>
<td>MSc (Computer, Electrical Engineering)</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Face-to-Face, Telephone &amp; e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Omer Ikram ul Haq</td>
<td>ABB CRC</td>
<td>Scientist (in Power Electronics)</td>
<td>Master’s in Electrical Power Engineering</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>Telephone &amp; e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Muhammad Saad Bin Azhar</td>
<td>ABB CRC</td>
<td>Scientist and Project Manager</td>
<td>Masters/ Post-Graduate</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Telephone &amp; e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Anonymous (A)</td>
<td>Anonymous (X)</td>
<td>Software Consultant</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Anonymous (B)</td>
<td>Anonymous (Y)</td>
<td>Metallurgist</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Face-To-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Anonymous (C)</td>
<td>Anonymous (Z)</td>
<td>IT Site Lead (Help Desk)</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>Face-To-Face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.7 Limitations**

Even though careful development of this research has been considered but some limitations are identified to overcome. The insufficient sample size of informants consisting of six employees and the selection of individuals from single ethnic background might be the limitations for this report work. It would have been more interesting to further investigate the companies by making regular visits, observations within organizations and interviewing more individuals, just to have a wider perspective on how language influence knowledge sharing. This study would have carried more weight if we could get views of other different nationalities and managers, but due to limited time allocation to this study, it was difficult for us to get their views.
4.8 Validity

To attain internal validity for this research, the authors connected the empirical findings with theories. The guidelines for interviews were formulated to address all the theories used in this research. Validity has a deep relationship with the conclusions that the research must integrate the findings with concluded results of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). According to Lundahl & Skärvad (1999), validity is divided into two main areas of discussion, i.e. internal and external validity. Internal validity refers that to what extend the theories are related with the topic chosen for the research, which means that the outcome of the primary research must provide the required information defined in theoretical framework. On the other hand, external validity is related with authenticity of results and their usefulness for other researchers.

4.9 Reliability

The selection of informants for our research was based on acquaintance, nationality, accessibility, and organizational cultural environment. Such criteria of selection enhanced the credibility of our findings to create trust with informants and they provide accurate information as were required for the research. Furthermore the freedom of anonymity encouraged them to provide honest views through their answers. In a conscious way the interviews were undertaken to assure that there is full protection to the data provided and therefore no unpleasant effect on conformability occurred. According to Bryman & Bell, (2007) the reliability of a qualitative research can be measured by three means. Those are credibility, trustworthiness, transferability, and dependability.

4.10 Research Ethics

While conducting primary research the authors ensured that the collected data should not be given to any unauthorized person, the data was not biased there was no preconceived notion for data collection. The authors tried their best to utilize all the data collected during interviews and no data is disregarded on the bases that it contradicts or not matches with the theories. The researchers ensure that information is presented in an honest way as the authors collected data from the people of different nationalities and did their best efforts to treat all the data was with equal respect without any racism and discrimination. To avoid biased view in the writing both authors decided to write on different parts and afterwards both authors proofread each other’s texts. Therefore it is ensured that all the work presented in this research is the outcome of combined efforts of the both researchers and both authors took responsibility in case of violation of any ethical norms.

The followed ethics for our research have been supported with the theories that it is necessary for any research to focus on ethical issues along with reliability, validity and limitations (Fisher, 2007). To conduct research for this academic paper the authors conducted interviews with employees of different companies and collected useful data required for this research. The authors also collected secondary information from other authors’ scientific journals and research papers hence combining
the primary and secondary research. The authors are committed to conduct this research in an ethical manner and strictly followed the principals to keep confidentiality. The references are cited to give the credits to original researchers and authors remained committed to openness throughout research process as suggested by Davis (2005). In this study, three informants did not allow to show their identity and also identity of their companies. So to follow the principals to keep confidentially, these informants (A, B & C) and their companies (X, Y & Z) were treated anonymously throughout the paper.

### 4.11 Operationalization of Conceptual Model

As explained in the theoretical framework, the conceptual model of this work describe the language influence on main factors of knowledge sharing which are transfer media, teams, and trust.

It is important that the theories and conceptual model must be operationalized which means that it should be measurable. Before deriving the guidelines and questions, we make it sure that there is a strong relationship between the questions build from chosen theories and the conceptual model to answer the research question. For this purpose the formations of questions have completely been based on theoretical framework as shown below (Table 2) that fulfill the purpose of our studies how to answer to the research question.

**Table 2: Operationalization of Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Question No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Sharing</td>
<td>Types of Knowledge, Learning and Importance of knowledge sharing</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>Benefits of Multicultural Environment, Language competency, Common Language</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Medium</td>
<td>Face-to-face Interaction, ICT</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams importance in knowledge sharing, Influences of language on teams</td>
<td>8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Role of trust in Knowledge sharing, Language influence on trust</td>
<td>11-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For operationalization purpose of theories and in order to make a strong connection with theories and empirical findings, an interview guide has structured and in result relevant semi-structures questions are formulated to get the required information. To make sure a relationship among research question, purpose, theories and conceptual model of this thesis, it is tried to examine the attitudes, experiences, and feelings of informants by categorizing the questionnaire under the headings transfer media, teams, trust and motivation that have been adopted from the conceptual model. Considering relative headings from theoretical framework, knowledge sharing, and the relationship between culture and language have been added in the questionnaire to help the researchers to achieve the relevant data from informants to answer the research question. The following areas are covered to formulate the questions in order to acquire the sufficient relevant information from the interviewees. (For guidelines and questions see Appendix 1).

Knowledge sharing: Questions from 1-2 prepared in this part have a deep relationship to make it easy to understand the phenomenon of knowledge sharing. A focus has been put under this heading to generate questions from the theories with key words that emphasized:

- Ways of Knowledge sharing
- Reasons why knowledge learning and exchange are important
- Facing challenges in knowledge sharing

Organizational Culture and Language: A well-focused concepts have been shaped into questions 3-5 that are related to:

- Reasons for multicultural environment
- Common communication language and its easiness for non-native users
- Language competency level among employees
- Opinion about how common languages increase/decrease misunderstandings and confusions? As stated in the problem statement.

Transfer Media: It is the main factor, adopted from conceptual model. To fulfill the purpose of our research, questions 6-7 have been formed in order to find:

- How a common language affects access to data storage in central location?
- Which channel is used to access company data?

Teams: Certain key words from the theories regarding teams have been used in the questions 8-10 to find out:

- Team management and diverse team significance
- Arising language problems in teams

Trust: The questions developed from 11-15 are about trust factor that were taken from the conceptual theories in order to find:

- How trust affects knowledge sharing?
- Who is more trustworthy?
- How does a common language create trust?

An answer to earlier mentioned key words follows a continuity to justify the research question based on influencing factors.
5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section presents the empirical findings that were drawn from the interviews conducted in English and Urdu from different employees. We have formulated a comprehensive summary of the conducted interviews from our personal meetings and some direct quotations from the interviewee. Results collected were categorized under the following aspects, knowledge sharing, language & culture, transfer media, teams, and trust to provide more specific and clear picture to the reader.

5.1 Chosen Companies’ Introduction

Here a short introduction of chosen companies is presented.

Volvo CE

Volvo CE is part of the Volvo Group AB. It is a global company which has origin in Eskilstuna, Sweden. The company has a background of several mergers and acquisitions and it has gone through about forty different name changes. Volvo Group views corporate culture as a unique asset, since it is difficult for competitors to copy. By applying and enhancing the knowledge and culture that they have built up over the years though using the superior knowledge of competent employees all across the world of different cultural backgrounds in such a way that they can achieve our vision. (Volvo Group, 2013).

Volvo CE was started in 1832 by producing simple lathes, grinders and iron chests. During 1850s the company started to produce its own steam engines and first Swedish steam locomotive was produced by the company in 1853 followed by steam roller in 1906 and Swedish farm tractor in 1913. This laid the foundation for other construction equipment like motor graders, wheel loaders, backhoe loaders etc. (Volvo CE, 2013).

ABB

In August, 1987 Asea and the Swiss BBC Brown Boveri companies merged under the name Asea’s Brown Boveri –ABB Ltd. The history of Asea stretches back to 1883 and Brown Boveri BBC was founded in 1891. ABB is a global company which deals in power and automation technologies. It is a Swiss company that has head office in Zurich Switzerland. ABB as a large group, began operations on Jan, 1988, and received 100 billion in sales and employed 160,000 personals worldwide. The business operations of the company are comprised into five global divisions which are: power products, power systems, discrete automation and Motion, low voltage products, and process automation. (ABB History, 2013 & ABB Business, 2013).

ABB CRC (Corporate Research Center)

ABB Corporate Research Centre is located in Västerås, about 100 kilometers west of Stockholm (Sweden). Mutually with other colleagues in R & D centers ABB CRC develop technologies for future products and services. Technology plays a key role for ABB therefore the company have seven research centers, 8,000 scientists and 70 university collaborations across the world, all working to
develop unique technologies that make the customers more competitive, while minimizing environmental impact. The core businesses are as below:

- Automation control and optimization
- Software architecture and processes
- Mechatronics and robot automation
- Automation networks and wireless technologies
- Electrical machines and power electronics
- Power systems and apparatus
- Nanotechnology and advanced materials technologies
- Chemistry and environmental technologies. (ABB CRC, 2013).

Anonymous Company (X)

Company (X) was formed in 1995 which aimed to expand operations with a focus on telecommunications. In recent time it is providing consultancy services in communications, software development and business-critical IT within four countries. It is working closely with customers in high-technology industries. The company has been listed on the OMX Mid Cap stock exchange for over 10 years. Currently the company has more than 1, 300 employees in 11 offices across four countries. The company focuses on its priorities which are quality, profitability and growth. So growth with innovation and simplicity are the key challenges in day to day activities for the company. Company (X) creates services and products that improve and simplify people's lives right in the midst of the adventure that is called IT. The strategic expertise through extensive experience with in seven mentioned below areas are provided by company (X), i.e. telecom, mobility, simulation technology, business-critical systems, media, gaming and platforms, securities trading, and IT for vehicles.

Anonymous Company (Y)

Company (Y) was founded in 1922 and it is a sub-contracting foundry that through a long experience built up extensive expertise in mold and die casting. It works with everything from castings to finished products where machining, finishing and assembly are the main areas of operations. In 1948, company (Y) installed the first die casting machine. A total number of 220 employees are recently working in the company in two countries. The company has about SEK 220 million turnovers each year and spread over an area of 18000 m² which melts 2800 tons of aluminum per year. The vision of this company is to become the leading aluminum foundry in Sweden individually in die casting as chill casting. It also concentrates on long term relationships with their customers.

Anonymous Company (Z)

Company (Z) was founded by two cousins in 1849 and since from that time the company has remained dedicated in discovering and developing new and better ways to prevent and treat diseases and improve health and well-being for people around the world, The company focuses to meet the world's diverse health needs that includes medicines and vaccines as well as many of the world's best-known consumer health care products. This company has more than 100000 employees across 150 countries of the world. As a leading company in its field, the firm not only ensures the
availability of effective drugs and knowledge of medicines and diseases but also to help and develop the future of health care around the world.

5.2 Knowledge Sharing

After summarizing different views from informants, the authors of this report found that knowledge sharing occurs within each organization through different means of interaction either in coded or non-coded form. That includes face-to-face, monthly based or direct personal meetings, quarterly reports, memos, private intranet, documents reading, competence network, emails exchange, multiple choice questions (MCQs), table discussions, brainstorming, training courses, simulation software, telephonic calls, and internet messengers.

An informant Saad at ABB CRC mentioned that we have “open culture for knowledge sharing, we ask when it is need, share when it could be useful for others”. Meetings, coffee and table discussions, brainstorming, and training courses are widely used in our company.

A combined view of informants directs that knowledge sharing is extensively important and they described the reason that colleagues can better understand each other synchronizing their information, skills, experiences, performances, and expertise with individuals. According to Hamid at Volvo CE, “Knowledge sharing is very important activity through which we can share information, skills, or expertise with colleagues working within a project and outside a project”.

Some informants think that due to synchronization, the project development tasks at different sites run identical that results error reduction. Knowledge sharing indirectly saves fellow colleagues’ time by avoiding re-inventing solutions for the similar problem. Other benefit can be seen when an individual leaves the company, still knowledge remains in the company. Some informants refer knowledge sharing as the combine activities of people that increase individual’s ability to achieve organizational goals. As mentioned by Saad from ABB CRC, “colleagues can better understand the challenges and work towards a common goal and make a good use of input received from others”. While for some informants knowledge sharing is important for the purpose to solve their business problems. One informant (B) stressed that it becomes extremely important to interact with colleagues when there arises problem in manufactured product and my job is to fix that problem. Still no one can neglect the importance of knowledge sharing in production line from raw material till final production. An informant declared that knowledge exchange is a valuable intangible asset in our organization that helps to improve integrity and confidence which results to create a competitive and sustainable position in the market.

5.3 Organizational Culture and Language

The authors of this report found in their research that each selected company has employees from distinct cultural backgrounds who vary from each other in norms, beliefs, behaviors, values and tongues. Besides such diverse organization culture they share a non-native common language for
communication and sometimes supporting local language (Swedish) as well. Organizations get benefit from multicultural environment as stated by Saad from ABB CRC, “Diversity in cultures brings together different experiences as well approaches to solve problems. In support of earlier statement, another informant from the same company stated that, to keep a pace in innovation, our company is tapping brains from different parts of the world.

An informant (C) justifies that multicultural environment within our company enables us to get familiar with different people, behavior and their respond. As a result it becomes easier for us to visit any office located abroad and provide our services. Hamid from Volvo CE considers that multiculturalism creates a positive competition within employees from diverse cultures and it helps to promote the overall performance of our organization.

Majority of informants consider language as an important aspect of culture that influences their day-to-day knowledge exchange. An informant Omer mentioned that language skills in written and verbal form carry great importance in ABB CRC due to the fact that language is the only means of knowledge sharing. Therefore the employed persons performing job in our company have excellent or at least good communication skills. Saad from ABB CRC interprets that, “Language competency ranges from good to excellent”.

In most situations, it is found that employees’ language competency level varies to extent from good to excellent. Therefore messages throughout the departments are easily conveyed and understood. In contrast to this, an answer from informant (B) exemplifies, that top level managers are absolutely excellent in written and verbal communication. Comparatively junior managers are good and some of them are satisfactory in English language skills. Sometimes, he faced misunderstanding problems in language communication when interacting with junior managers because they prefer to talk in local language. It can be judged from this statement of his head manager delivered to him today “you really need to improve your language (Swedish) skills” to communicate better with junior staff as the Swedish and English are company shared languages.

Another view from informant (C) shows that, language competency depends upon the nature of a company. If it is a local Swedish company then it have different language environment. But globally existing companies keep those employees who have full control on both local (Swedish) and global (English) language. Connecting this fact to our pharmaceutical company, less than 25% have language inefficiency due to the reason that they communicate less with others. The rest of 75% have full control on both local and global languages. Communication through a common language plays fundamental role to reduce misunderstandings. Saad from ABB CRC states that “most of the communication is in English. And English as a common language does not create any misunderstandings in our company”.

One informant (A) thinks Sweden as a country where almost everyone understands English very well. But sometime assent barrier comes across and as a result misinterpretation occurs among individuals in a multicultural organizational environment. Accurate pronunciation is necessary for understanding each other properly. Therefore in his company focuses on global pronunciation standards. A case has been observed in his company when employee in Stockholm was fired from job due to the language
In certain situations, if he does not understand the message from any other person within the organization then he asks again because it is very common in Sweden.

Hamid at Volvo CE states that a common company language might increase or decrease misunderstandings among employees having different native languages. It depends on their language (English) proficiency. If they are relatively good in English then it reduces misunderstandings in communication and if they have deficiency in English then it is very hard to understand each other and it can create misunderstandings. However, he thinks that employees at his company are fluent in English, so they did not face language misunderstandings.

In some companies it was found that employees from other cultures were more encouraged to learn local language (Swedish). An informant (C) shares that in our company local language (Swedish) is also considered important. When new employees are hired in the company then it is assumed that they can communicate well in the local language. Instead of global system our company has prioritized the importance of local language by establishing a head office in Dublin which provides help to their customers in different native languages. An informant (A) considers, “I do not think that English has any negative effects when it is used as a common language for knowledge sharing. In our competence network people post their questions in English”.

### 5.4 Transfer Medium

The findings related to transfer medium are written in two parts – Face-to-Face Interactions and Information and Communication Technologies.

**Face-to-Face Interactions**

It is found that in every organization face-to-face communication is considered better for the purpose of knowledge sharing. Mostly, employees are aware of the importance of face-to-face communication because they think it as a natural and easier way to convey your thoughts to other party. One informant Saad (ABB CRC) comments as, “Nothing beats face-to-face communication.”

The informants get quick and immediate response. They recognized that effective communication is much important for fluent flow of knowledge in an organization. Therefore, they emphasized on face-to-face communication which is more effective. According to them, it is easy to share your knowledge more efficiently while you meet each other as compared to a person who is not present physically. As our informant has Hamid (Volvo CE) has described it as, “You can easily judge either that person understood what you are talking about or not. It will motivate you and give you confidence in yourself”.

Another important advantage of face-to-face interactions in knowledge sharing, described by the informants, is the use of non-verbal communication such as body language. As informants (C) have explained that in case the other person did not understand your point, gestures help to clarify the complications. This was also supported by another informant AI, as he often uses gestures to explain
something, for example how they can solve a certain problem, to his juniors who do not have good English competency level.

**Information and Communication Technologies**

The use of technologies to share knowledge among employees is common in the multinational companies. Informants have stated that it helps to connect the employees, who are not at the same place, for completion of projects and sharing the solutions of a problem. Individuals share their problems and experiences which are available on companies’ intranet system and databases. As one informant (A) told, “if I want to ask for the solution of my problem, I use the competence group on our intranet where I have access to all people who have knowledge and experience in the same domain. It helps to get their feedbacks about my problem”.

The informants further added that a fluent and positive flow of useful business information throughout the organization is very important to achieve the organizational goals and, the use of internet and intranet make it possible to share the experience rapidly and connect the employees throughout the globe. As mentioned by Hamid (Volvo CE), “Technology based communication fills the gabs when you are not on the same location. It is very useful especially when you are working in a global organization having a multiple offices in multiple countries. It helps to manage people and projects globally”.

All informants were agreed that good competency level of company language makes it easier to get the benefits of expertise available on company’s intranet. As they all have high qualifications and had studied in English language, so their English competency level is excellent. They don’t face difficulties to get access to the right material and information available on database and they can use the information comfortably. Sometimes information is available in local language, as in company (Y), but informant Al told that there is also option of English language, so there is no problem for him to understand the information.

In organizations, both ways of communications are used frequently. Although both of them have their pros and cons depending on the role of the person involving, but informants emphasized more on face-to-face meeting due to its versatile effectiveness. One of the informants Saad (ABB CRC) mentioned that “technology based communication always poses a barrier to which we have to adapt our communication style. Hence, it is not natural and not as effective”. He ranked different ways of communication in order of effectiveness and thus preference (although it may vary from case to case, according to him) as, face-to-face – video conference – telephone – email.

### 5.5 Teams

It is observed that almost in all studied companies, the work is also done in teams. Informants work in different teams according to the requirements of different projects. The project managers report to their seniors. Regarding sharing knowledge, although all informants are agreed upon the fact that the diverse teams help to improve different kind of knowledge, however, according to one
informant, Saad (ABB CRC), knowledge sharing “is probably more dependent on individuals and company culture”.

On the base of experiences of working in different teams, informants believe that there are more opportunities to complete the task or project more effectively. They have different ways of solution for the same problem and they collect all different ideas to come with a better solution. It is also helpful to create a positive competition within the company which boosts the overall performance.

Mostly, company language English is used among the team members to convey their thoughts and ideas to other members of the team. But sometimes, informants and Swedish team members also use Swedish, local language for communication. According to one informant (A), “Swedes prefer to communicate in their native language”. This creates problems for other non-Swedes. If all members of a team do not use the same language, either common language (English) or local language, they cannot get any progress and they are not to share knowledge. This creates uncertainty among team members which leads to mistakes and ultimately to blockage of the project. At the same time, there is a possibility of misunderstandings due to different competency levels in common language but it is often not the case.

Contribution to knowledge sharing depends on the language competency level of each member of the team. Normally, they do not have problems of communication within teams as they have good to excellent language competency levels and additionally, all team members are at certain qualification level or above. However, according to one informant (A), “it is very important to choose the language that everyone can communicate effectively. It helps to understand the problem, to express your ideas and knowledge”.

While working in a team consisting of members from different countries, informants have experienced difficulties in understandings because members from different countries have different accents to pronounce the same words. This is explained by one informant Hamid (Volvo CE) as,

“Sometimes it is little bit difficult to understand the words e.g. it can easily be confused the word command and comment while you are talking to a Korean/ Chinese guy which leads towards misunderstanding specially communicating on internet”. Another informant (C) has got the solution to avoid the misunderstandings by requesting the other person to write down any specific unclear word.

5.6 Trust

All the informants are agreed upon the role of trust in the exchange of knowledge within their organizations. They consider it as a very important factor in knowledge sharing process. Saad (ABB CRC) highlighted the role of mutual trust among employees as, “More knowledge is shared if there is mutual trust among employees. In our company we trust colleagues, employee as well as subordinates with all knowledge”.
Informants told that if someone does not trust his or her colleagues, he or she will not share anything with others and as a result knowledge sharing environment is affected negatively. According to Hamid (Volvo CE), “Trust is very important factor in knowledge sharing process. If a person does not have trust on other person then in that case he cannot share anything with him”.

Informants believe that a common language helps to develop trust among employees because it makes easy to share the information and expertise with each other. They can share problems and remove misunderstanding. It brings people closer with each other. Saad (ABB CRC) has pointed out that, “a common language gives a means to communicate, brings down barriers of communication and thus indirectly builds trust among employees”.

In contrast to above, informants were found to trust their colleagues for sharing their experience and knowledge regardless of the fact that both parties do not share a native tongue. Omer (ABB CRC) has expressed his thoughts as, “I feel more comfortable in sharing my knowledge with a person who understands it easily, it does not matter he speaks my native language or we share a different common language”. However, Hamid (Volvo CE) has also another aspect. He mentioned that if knowledge is related to the company then sharing same language does not matter. The only thing is how much information you need to share.

Another factor which helps in building trust, highlighted by the informants, was the face-to-face communication which is easy to follow and understand. According to them, both parties get quick response and, non-verbal communication is also more visible which helps to understand the real meanings of communication which leads to building trust or relying on the information received. The chances of confusions and errors are also less as if somebody is not clear about something, he or she can ask directly to avoid the confusion. Thus, the shared information can be trusted.

One Informant (C) thinks that by sharing a specific knowledge, there is chance to lose specific position in the company. He added that you might suffer your job also. Other informants trust their colleagues and were not afraid to lose any power or any kind of a specific position in the company by sharing their experience and knowledge or any specific skill with them. Talking about fear to lose any favorable position by sharing a specific knowledge, Hamid (Volvo CE) said I don’t have any fear because “it only happened where there is a very strong competition among the colleagues but while working in a global organization like Volvo have not such kind of things”.

6 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In this part the authors have discussed and analyzed the data collected from literature and empirical finding to come up with a conclusion.

6.1 Knowledge Sharing

Both kind of knowledge is found in all five organizations i.e. tacit and explicit. According to our literature (Andersson, Nonaka et al., and Awas & Ghaziri), tacit knowledge is non-codified which is achieved and embedded in individual’s mind through job and personal experience. In these five organizations, individuals share their experience through different means of interaction like meetings, table discussions, dialogues, brainstorming and telephonic calls etc. reports and memos are produces to convert this knowledge into coded form which is explicit knowledge. Other resources such as documents, intranet, competence network, email exchange, simulation software and training courses etc are also used for exchange of knowledge in these organizations which are different forms of explicit knowledge as described by Nonaka & Penrose and Awad & Ghaziri that explicit knowledge is referred to be in coded form, found in documentation, easy to process, store, deliver and transmit.

As explained by Galraith that knowledge in organization is created through interaction, collaboration, and education when established teams and taskforces arrange and encourage face-to-face communication between individuals in each department through practices. In these organizations different means of direct interaction meetings and brainstorming are used to discuss the results.

Lin & Lee, in literature, have described knowledge sharing as the activities of how to help people working together, facilitating the exchange of their knowledge, enabling learning oriented, and increasing their ability to achieve individual and organizational goals. These important aspects of knowledge sharing are observed in these organizations when employees synchronize their information, skills, experiences and performances with each other. They ask questions when they need and share their knowledge when other need. They think knowledge sharing as combine activities of people that increase individual’s ability to achieve organizational goals.

McDermott & O’Dell considered knowledge sharing “as a practical way to solve business problems”. It is noticed in these organizations that mostly employees don’t hesitate to share their experience with others to come up to a target successfully. As state by Kumar & Genesh that knowledge is created by individuals or teams explorations to new ideas and concepts. For example one informant emphasized that it becomes extremely important to interact with colleagues when there arises problem in manufacturing a product and his job is to fix that problem. First, he discusses the reasons for that specific problem, with his colleagues and juniors and gets their opinions, then solution. This supports Mueller and Cummings’ point of view about knowledge sharing that it is not just
transferring information; it is provision or receipt of task information, feedback and know-how regarding a product or procedure.

Reige has pointed out that a better and purposeful knowledge sharing accelerates individual and organizational learning through the development of better products which are introduced faster to a market, thus enhancing market position of company. This is shown in the findings as employees think knowledge exchange as a valuable intangible asset in their organizations that helps to improve integrity and confidence which results to create a competitive and sustainable position in the market.

6.2 Corporate Language and Knowledge Sharing

Laroche has mentioned that culture is a distinctly human feature. It differentiates one society or group of people from another. It consists of specific feelings, reactions, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors, and interpretation of things which are supposed to accept in specific situations. All five organizations are multinational and they have their business activities in different countries. They hired employees from all around the world who have distinct cultural background and vary in norms, believes behaviors, values and tongues. So we can say that these companies have multicultural organizational environment as Aghazadeh has mentioned that organizational cultural comes out from shared valued, behavior, beliefs, and background of the members of organization. Members from different ethnic backgrounds have different values, attitudes, norms and ways of thinking.

In global companies, like these five, the cultural diversity is commonly observed and they also have their offices and businesses in different parts of the world, as Barinaga has stated that the production units and the markets of large multinational companies are spread throughout the world. Therefore it is a common thing that managers and employees of a company, which operates in different parts of the world, meet together to make some decisions for the benefits of company that is the global marketing strategies. This theory can be applied on the multicultural environment within all five companies which enables their employees to get familiar with different people. As a result it becomes easier for them to visit any office located abroad and provide their services. It is also found that multiculturalism in these organizations creates a positive competition within employees from diverse cultures and it helps to promote the overall performance.

Big organizations get benefit from multicultural environment as seen in our findings that diversity in cultures brought together different experiences as well approaches to solve problems. Hiring of intellectuals in all chosen companies from all over the world shows that they want to tap brains from different parts of the world to keep a pace in innovation. In support to this, Barinaga mentioned that multinational companies are attracting the talent and skilled labor from whole part of world like Silicon Valley is able to keep its pace of innovation by hiring the engineers and scientists from different countries.

In all five organizations, the employees have a common company language English, however local language Swedish is also used by local employees in some companies. Of course, they also speak English while interacting with a foreign employee. It means they that organizations share a non-native common language English for communication which is in accordance with Welch & Welch who
stated that workers in multicultural companies are supposed to operate in the company language, normally English.

The concept developed from theoretical framework reveals that the ability of an individual to share knowledge highly depends on their communication skills. For efficient knowledge sharing, good verbal and written communications are essential. It is found that language is considered as an important aspect that influences day-to-day knowledge exchange in these companies and views of Riege about the ability of individuals in verbal and written communication for sharing knowledge are support these findings. It is found that, normally, the employees of all five companies have excellent or at least good English language competency. They can receive and convey their thoughts to others comfortably. Their organizations pay much attention on the language competencies which can be recognizes from firing an employee of a company (Z) due to deficiency in company language. This can be connected to Quintas’s views that if organization wants to manage knowledge then it needs to improve understanding of communications, process of learning and knowledge sharing within the organization.

In most situations, it is found that employees’ language competency level varies to extent from good to excellent. Therefore, messages throughout the departments are easily conveyed and understood. However, in some cases there might create misunderstandings especially interacting with local employees or lower staff that are not good enough with English language and preferred to communicate in local language. Therefore there is need to adapt a common language as referred by Husted & Michailova that the importance of language becomes even more vital when difference in native languages of employees increases the ambiguity substantially. The lack of fluency in the corporate language may create a possible big obstacle even in well codified knowledge to be accessible and also affects the behavioral transparency. It leads to misunderstandings and communication problems in multicultural settings and affects the knowledge sharing, transfer and learning processes heavily.

An interesting thing is observed that although all five organizations have English as a common language but still most of them encourage their foreign employees to learn local language Swedish to minimize the communicational obstacles while interacting to such individuals who are not fluent in English or who preferred to talk in Swedish within or without organization.

Communication through a common language plays fundamental role to reduce misunderstandings which help in effective sharing of knowledge in an organization. Therefore, in all these companies, most of the communication is in English especially when individuals contact with other departments or productions units located within or outside the same country for better coordination. Fredriksson et al., are also in agreement that corporate language is observed to provide a common base for internal communication between different units of an organization which are normally embedded in different language environments. Due to common corporate language, efficiency of individuals and also organization is increased by overcoming misunderstandings, avoiding time-consuming translations, reducing costs and creating a sense of cooperation within the organization.

It is noted in findings that Sweden is considered a country where almost everyone understands English very well. But, sometime, assent barrier comes across and as a result misinterpretation might
occur among individuals having different native tongues. This can be connected to Laroche’s view that cross-cultural communication problems may come in different forms and sizes but important thing is the correct flow of message with actual meanings.

6.3 Transfer Medium

Face-to-Face Interactions

It is found that in all five organizations face-to-face interaction is considered more effective for knowledge sharing. They think it as a natural and easier way to convey your thoughts to other party. According to them, it is easy to share your knowledge more efficiently while you meet each other as compared to a person who is not present physically. This practice supports the Armstrong & Cole’s theory that lack of face-to-face interaction among team members in different places might lead to an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ tendency to forget about individuals in other places that obstructs knowledge sharing and communication.

Another important advantage of face-to-face interactions in knowledge sharing, observed in findings was the use of non-verbal communication such as body language and gestures. It helps them to explain their thoughts to other partners who might belong to a different culture and have different communication styles which can be connected to Browaeys & Price’s statement that even in case the relationship between individuals has been developed, but still requires the maintenance, particularly when a variety of conversation styles are used. Also Gannon & Newman have stated that differentiation among individuals in terms of face-to-face language communication styles have several implications and those companies who pay attention properly on such differentiation might achieve goals successfully.

So it is obvious that a common language is much needed for exchange of thoughts in face-to-face interactions such meetings, seminars and trainings sessions, which is observed in these multinational companies. As De Meyer described that to share knowledge effectively multinational companies are diverting their focuses to gather their employees in formats such as meetings and training programs under the dependability of a common language.

Information and Communication Technologies

The use of technologies to share knowledge among employees is common in the multinational companies. It is seen, all these five organizations are using technologies to connect different individuals to solve a problem or complete a project. In case of a problem an employee can get online help and also solution by posting its problem on company intranet. Individuals share their problems and experiences which are available on company intranet systems and databases. This can be related to what Alavi & Leidner suggest that intranets in multinational companies give opportunity to their employees to explore and more access of online organizational information and support individual learning through provision of capabilities such as computer simulation and smart software tutors.
One important benefit of use of ICT which is found in practice of these companies is rapid, fluent and positive flow of useful business information and exchange of experience throughout the organization. It also connects employees throughout the globe. This theory is in agreement with Welch & Welch who point out that due to improved ICT the process of knowledge sharing and information transfer is rapidly enhanced. It has also a direct impact on international interactions at all levels of multinational companies.

Although there are several benefits of ICT in organizations to share knowledge and connect people but due to multicultural organizational environment, Welch & Welch have highlighted the danger of disconnection of those employees, who have lack of requisite language competency, to such centralized knowledge which is codified into a company language. However, in empirical findings it was obvious that employees have good competency level of company language (English) and they did not have difficulty to access the right material and information available on company databases and they used them comfortably. In case the information was in local language then facility to opt English was also available. As our informants were highly qualified so lack of requisite language competency might be a problem of those who are not much qualified.

If we compare both ways of communication on the basis of our findings then it is seen that both ways are used frequently. It depends on need bases which is better. ICT fills the gaps of different locations to connect employees and share knowledge while face-to-face is preferred mostly in these five organizations because of its versatile effectiveness which is in accordance with Roberts as he said that although ICT enhances and facilitates the contacts but still it cannot replace the need for face-to-face communication and direct contact, especially in context of their richness, scope and variety. At the same time, need of a shared language in both ways of communication is self-evident (Welch & Welch) and importance of verbal and non-verbal communication was shown in priority order by one informant at ABB as; face-to-face – video conference – telephone – email.

6.4 Teams

In our empirical findings, it is found that in studied organizations work is done in teams as well as at individual level. Teams are formed to accomplish different project which is in accordance to Browaeys & Price, who has defined team as a group of people working together for the purpose to accomplish a task. Welch & Welch also stated the significance of teams in multinational companies as global teams overcome the limitations on organizational knowledge sharing. As well as, diverse team members approach in a varied and highly focused manner towards problem solution. The same thing was observed in these organizations, that the diverse teams help to improve different kind of knowledge. There are more opportunities to complete the task or project more effectively. They have different ways of solution for the same problem and they collect different ideas altogether to come up with a better solution. It is also helpful to create a positive competition within the company which boosts the overall performance. Tung & Chang as well as Konno have described that teams speed up work with accuracy and creativity, and results in knowledge sharing can be observed and attributed to all group members working in the team. Piekkari has also pointed out that diversity is a
possible source of new ideas and studies on cross-cultural teams have pointed out diversity as an affecting factor on teams’ dynamics and performance.

Although the five multinational companies have a common language English and their employees have good language competencies as well as they are highly qualified but still sometimes in some organizations local language Swedish is also used which create problems for non-Swedes. At the same time members of cross-cultural teams belong to different countries and have different communication styles such as different accents. All these things create misunderstandings which affect team work. This can be connected to Henderson’s views where he stated that team members not only speak different languages but they also hear in several ways.

Due to language diversity in teams, sometimes it is difficult to differentiate simple words such as ‘command’ and ‘comment’ while talking to a Korean or Chinese individual, one example given by one informant. While another informant practices to ask other person to write down the any unclear word to avoid any misunderstanding. These things affect communication process among team members negatively. These observations are in agreement with Henderson’s views of speaking and hearing in different ways as stated above as well as Piekkari’s views when he stated that it is possible that due to extreme diversity and language differences, communication may be slow down among team members and function as an obstacle in interactions and ultimately a negative effect on team performance.

It is seen in our findings that if all team members are not using the same language and they have different native languages, then it is hard to get any progress in their projects and they are not able to share their experience and knowledge properly. This creates misunderstandings which leads to mistakes and ultimately to failure of project. This is in line with Welch & Welch, that “language diversity can inhibit effective team performance” and in case of MNCs in France where it was found that although teams have a common language (English) but still language diversity had affected interpretations.

6.5 Trust

In literature, Welch & Welch have described trust as an important factor in knowledge sharing focused on relationships and networks which is also confirmed by the informants of all five organizations. They consider it as a very important factor in knowledge sharing process. Empirical findings also showed the role of mutual trust among employees as more knowledge is shared in case of mutual trust among employees. The employees trust their colleagues as well as subordinates in sharing all kind of knowledge. This is in accordance with the theory of Andrews & Delahaye where they stated that trust is one of the key parts for the existence of knowledge sharing and mutual trust between individuals shows whether knowledge is being shared or not.

It is found that employees need to trust each other for the positive knowledge sharing; if they lack trust among themselves, they will not share anything. As a result knowledge sharing environment is affected. This can be related to study of Andrews & Delahaye, that knowledge sharing occurs on trust basis when receiver is considered trustworthy and sender is confident that the recipient will not
deliberately misdirect the provided knowledge. So precisely it is required to have trust on behalf of recipient.

As Szulanski as well as Wang & Noe described that in an organization, individuals think knowledge as a power and have fear to lose this power and a certain position, in case they share their specific knowledge with colleagues. They might be reluctant or even show hostility to share their knowledge because they think it as losing an ownership. But it was interesting to observe something different in practice as all of the employees, (except one who also added that one can suffer its job) had no fear to lose a power or any favorable position in the company by sharing their knowledge. One informant argued that he does not has any fear to lose a favorable position because it happened only in very strong competitive environment but while working in a global organization like Volvo have not such kind of things.

The employees thought that face-to-face communication helps to build trust among them because they are able to understand each other in a better way in their multinational companies. They get quick response within no time and non-verbal communication is also more visible. If they have any doubt or are not clear about something, then they can ask directly to avoid any confusion which might be created in multicultural organizational environment. Thus, the shared information can be trusted. This is in accordance with Robert’s thoughts who emphasized on face-to-face interaction and socialization in context of communication’s difficulties which arise due to different cultures and languages. Trust is a relationship-based phenomenon which has a vital role in tacit knowledge sharing. It is very difficult to build a trusting relationship without an adequate basis of communication.

Our empirical findings also showed that employees were still ready to share their knowledge to other colleagues although they don’t share a common native language. It was clear from their thoughts that they can trust to share knowledge with other employees from other countries speaking a different language, which did not match with Welch & Welch assumption that employees are more prepared to share their knowledge with known and trusted colleagues who also share a language. On the other hand, it is found that a common company language was considered enough from employees to share knowledge.
7 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to describe the influence of language on knowledge sharing and critical factors i.e. transfer medium, teams and trust which affect knowledge sharing. From the above analysis and discussion, it is concluded that a common company language makes it possible to exchange the knowledge in multinational companies. The five companies hire talented employees from all over the world and they have their business activities in different countries which brought diversity in their organizational environment. These employees are, not only, highly qualified but are also fluent in English so chances of misunderstanding or misinterpreting are also minimized and they don’t face big obstacles in communication with each other.

Although, employees have different native languages in studied organizations, but still due to a common company language English, they are able to transmit their experience and knowledge comfortably. It reflects that a common corporate language facilitate more knowledge sharing in an environment where a variety of individuals, who have different cultural backgrounds and native languages, work together.

This study reveals the impact of discussed factors i.e. transfer medium, teams and trust on knowledge sharing, as well as it shows how language influence these factor in knowledge sharing process. In case of transfer medium, some obstacles in communication were observed in this study such as differences in assent which might have slow down the communication process that indirectly affects knowledge sharing. Such type of problems were also seen when employees from different cultures work together in teams in studied multinational companies. Verbal and non-verbal communication in a corporate language English makes it comfortable for them to learn and share their different ideas and experience.

This study shows that in sharing knowledge, trust among employees plays important role. A common corporate language helps them to build trust. However, unlike theory mentioned in literature that individuals are more willing to share their knowledge with known and trusted colleagues who also share a language, in the studied organizations employees were always ready to share their knowledge regardless of their colleagues’ native language. They trust their colleagues and don’t have any fear to lose their job if they share their knowledge. This shows a positive trend towards knowledge sharing process in a company common language.
Recommendations

Although, the organizations have a common language English for communication and transmission of knowledge but still, up to some extent, it is observed that local language Swedish is also used. Therefore, it can be recommended for international employees to learn local language Swedish to fill the cultural gap, as their companies also encourage them to do so.

This research is done on the basis of employees’ views of a specific ethnic group. So, for further research in the topic the authors of this report would like to suggest that the views of other ethnic groups and managers of different Swedish multinational companies should also be examined. This would help to see other aspects regarding influence of language on knowledge sharing. In this study the interviewed employees have high qualification, good positions in the companies and good English competency level, which might hide the negative impact of language on knowledge sharing. So, it is also recommended to examine views of employees who are not highly qualified and not good enough in English competency level.
REFERENCES


Web Sources


APPENDIX 1

Guidelines for Interviews

1. How do you learn and share knowledge with each other in your company?
2. Do you think knowledge sharing is important within the organization, if yes then why?
3. What are the benefits for multicultural environment within organization?
4. How do you evaluate (English) language competency of yourself, your colleagues and managers in written and verbal communications?
5. How does the use of a common language (English) reduce/increase misunderstandings among individuals in your company?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face and technology-based communications in your company? Which way is preferred mostly and why?
7. How does the English language competency level affect the access to company database?
8. How are teams organized in your company?
9. Do you think that teams consist of different nationalities have significant and better contribution to knowledge sharing in your company? How?
10. What are the problems arise in knowledge sharing when you are working in a team having different accents?
11. How does trust among employees influence the knowledge sharing process in your company?
12. To whom you trust more for knowledge sharing in your company and why?
   • A person with similar native language as you have or
   • A person having different native language
13. Do you feel any fear to lose a favorable position by sharing a specific knowledge? Explain it.
14. How does a common language build trust among employees in your company?
15. How do face-to-face interactions build trust in your company?

Demographic Questions

• What is your education level and what was the medium of education?
• What is your native language?
• What is your work experience in Sweden?
• How long have you been working in the current company?
• What is your designation in this company?
• What is your company’s official language?