Stretching the boundaries of your linguistic comfort zone : an inclusive way to lead a multilingual team

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Stretching the boundaries of your linguistic comfort zone: an inclusive way to lead a multilingual team

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Negli spazi transnazionali, le attività valicano i confini nazionali e linguistici e problematizzano il plurilinguismo delle multinazionali. Un discorso frequente sulla gestione della diversità linguistica sul posto di lavoro sostiene che "il linguaggio è sempre una prima barriera". Una "barriera" che porta a differenziare decisioni, strategie e approcci seguendo schemi ideologici rispetto a "cosa", "perché", "come" "chi": quale lingua scegliere e perché, come utilizzarla, da chi, per chi e per quale scopo. Un dirigente assume spesso un ruolo determinante nel negoziare e potenziare le norme comunicative applicabili al gruppo di lavoro. La presente comunicazione porta su diverse tendenze di leadership in situazioni lavorative plurilingui, con particolare attenzione alle tipologie definibili attraverso i modi di comportamento comunicativo e alle zone di leadership. Emergono così due tipi di leadership identificati a seconda dei rispettivi comportamenti comunicativi: 1) la leadership crea un ambiente di inclusione linguistica in cui gli individui plurilingui comunicano le proprie idee con facilità, migliorando così le relazioni interpersonali e stabilendo un'atmosfera di lavoro positiva (follower-centred); 2) la leadership mantiene la propria zona di comodità linguistica al fine di perseguire gli obiettivi dell'organizzazione e ottenere risultati attraverso l'autorealizzazione e l'auto-proiezione del leader (leader-centred).

Parole-chiave:
Diversità e inclusione, squadra plurilingue, comunicazione della leadership, capacità della leadership, zona di disagio linguistico, inclusione linguistica, identità di gruppo, leadership inclusiva.

Keywords:
Diversity and inclusion, multilingual team, leadership communication, leadership capabilities, linguistic Dis-Comfort Zone, linguistic inclusiveness, 'Togetherness' identity, inclusive leadership.

1. Introduction

The globalisation of the economy is contributing to an increasing number of multicultural and multilingual workplaces and to the mobility of the workforce. These changes also pose several concrete challenges for workers, such as the need to be proficient in several languages to communicate with colleagues, clients and stakeholders across different countries or in diverse teams.

International leaders deal with multilingual[1] contexts, and they need to use language to craft everyday workplace interactions due to the central role of

[1] Whilst recognising the definition of the Common European Framework of Reference (2011), which makes the difference between multilingualism as a societal phenomenon and plurilingualism as an individual phenomenon, this paper opts for multilingual in English, which has the benefit of encompassing both individual and societal linguistic diversity (Weber & Horner, 2012).

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communication for group leading processes. A study of more than 1,000 companies on six continents by AMA Entreprise shows that there has been an increase in demand for multilingual skills among global leadership candidates (Fryer 2012). It reveals that global leadership development is changing and there is an emerging realisation that English may not be the exclusive business language in the future. This may explain partially why 14% of high-performance global companies hire only multilingual candidates for management positions, up from 10% in 2010, and the percentage of language training, provided by high-performing companies for all employees, increased from 10% in 2011 to 23% in 2012, following this study.

The aim of this paper is to explore the interrelationship between leadership models and capabilities (doing leadership), leadership communication styles (talking leadership) and leadership zones (thinking - developing leadership). Our particular focus is on communicative styles of leaders when interacting with their team members regarding language choice and language use. How important is it for multilingual leaders to take risks by stepping out of their linguistic comfort zone so as to better create an inclusive working atmosphere? In what way can plurilingual[2] speech (Lüdi & Py [4]2013) enhance team performance and other matters for the well-being of individuals?

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 Language use, communication and doing leadership

Encouraging and motivating subordinates as well as maintaining good relationships within the team are often associated with leadership performance (Yukl 2002). Chin (2015) defined leadership as "a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task". In this way, leadership requires the efforts of others to achieve a goal. A team leader is someone who brings everyone together and makes sure that everybody feels part of the process. In this sense, a good leader has to know how to a) influence, encourage and engage people, and b) organise and maximise their efforts.

Considering leadership as a process or an activity rather than as a position or a personal characteristic, Schnurr (2013) suggests that leadership behaviours can be distinguished into two types of activities: 1) achieving transactional objectives or 2) performing relationally oriented behaviours. The first type refers to activities aiming to get things done, solve problems and achieve set goals, whereas the second type focuses on ensuring group harmony and creating a productive

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2 Focusing on the individuals' repertoire where a person's languages (and cultures) are not strictly separated, but interrelate in the communication skills as a whole (Lüdi et al. 2016: 3).

working atmosphere. Both activities are integrated aspects of the leadership process (Ferch & Mitchell 2001).

Furthermore, the changing nature of leadership entails a move from charismatic leader-centred to collaborative cross-sector leadership. In other words, there is an expectation that more participative and empowering styles of leadership, in particular by sharing leadership responsibilities or establishing co-leadership or collective leadership (Schnurr 2013), are among the more appropriate ways forward. In addition, it is a bottom-up leadership rather than the traditional top-down to be promoted. Recognising that a team can gain new insights more effectively can also benefit from a collaborative model. Leadership through collaboration, or "stewardship" in the terms of Marchand and Margery (2009), is believed to be more effective because leadership tasks are shared among employees at all levels. Contrary to the notion of co-leadership described by Jackson and Parry (2008: 82) as "two leaders in vertically contiguous positions who share the responsibilities of leadership", O'Toole et al. (2002: 79) assert that sharing leadership "is not just an issue at the top of corporations". Each employee should be given the opportunity to exercise leadership activities conjointly in the leadership processes.

When leadership responsibilities are shared and distributed among team members (Schnurr & Chan 2011) and participation is encouraged in an open and inclusive environment, new ideas, initiatives, solutions and creativity are believed to emerge (Yanaprasart 2016b). Thomas (1993) proposes thinking about the process of creating and maintaining an inclusive environment that naturally enables all participants from diverse backgrounds to contribute their full potential in the pursuit of organisational objectives. To be an effective leader in a diverse team means acknowledging differences and making use of them in a creative way to reach the team's goals, by providing the opportunity for full development of diverse talents and potential. It is essential for a leader to build a team in which all members feel fully integrated and can work well together (Thomas & Fly 1996).

Therefore, language use has a central role in doing leadership, argues Schnurr (2013). For Vygotski (1997), language is an instrument of communication and also constitutes a tool for the expression of thought and of mediation. It functions as a principal system of "symbolic mediation" for thought. Berthoud (2016) mentions two functions of language use: a conceptual function to increase the instruments of conceptualisation (cognitive resources) and a communicative function to optimise communication while constructing and transferring knowledge (linguistic tools). Whereas cognitive advantages imply knowledge enhancement by means of concepts deepening, de-familiarising, networking, and widening access to concepts, communicative assets refers to the styles of communication, the manners in which speakers organise their interactions, the maximisation or minimisation of their participation, the development of

leadership, the process of negotiation, the resolution of problems, the control of the action and the decision making.

Generally, groups that work together often develop and use regularly a shared repertoire of linguistic, discursive, and interactional behaviours when interacting with each other or with other group members. These practices may refer to appropriate ways of enacting power, making decisions, getting things done or holding meetings, etc. They are normally reflected in the group leader's discourse. Whereas the models of acceptable and expected behaviours are constantly reinforced and shaped among the members, it is their leader who, due to his or her special status, plays a crucial role in the development and negotiation of the discursive standard that characterises the working group.

In light of this discussion, it seems relevant to explore the ways in which leaders act and talk about language use and practices between them and their team or among the members in a multilingual context.

2.2 Leadership in a multilingual context: what language choice?

More recently, the word 'multilingual' has been associated with leaders' practices and leadership in the business investment sector. Multilingual leadership is defined as the mastery of 'three' languages of 1) expertise, combining business speaking, 2) non-profit/philanthropy speaking and 3) public policy speaking (Clark, Emerson, & Thornley 2014). For others, it is about multilingual experiences – leadership that includes various individuals who speak the language of different components of leadership (Maretish 2013). "Multilingual" leaders, teams, and strategies (Thornley & Clark 2013) in this sense refers to "a multilingual orientation" comprising a leadership made up of highly multilingual individuals who can enter into the conversation with a deeper expertise in one or more silos and can play across divergent perspectives. 'Multilingual' is used to describe, in the framework of this paper, three dimensions: a) the context: languages at work, b) the knowledge: languages as a work, c) the means: languages for work.

Since people are required to work together, those with different languages need to find language behaviour norms that are appropriate for their professional communication (Lehmann & Van den Bergh 2004). A survey by Rosetta Stone Inc. found that 90% of organisations struggle with language barriers in their day-to-day work, whereas upper management often is unaware of this issue (Forbes insights 2011). Language barriers can hinder collaboration, productivity, customer retention, or market expansion, and their costs are consequently high (Feely & Harzing 2003). Language differences can be referred to as "cost and noise" (Luo & Shenkar 2006). To reduce language barriers, at least at the management level, a *common, shared, new, universal, ideal subjective* language or code, seen as a panacea for the internal communication of linguistically mixed groups, has been proposed (see Steiner 1975; Peters &

Waterman 1982; Large 1985; Senge 1990; Kogut & Zander 1992; Phene et al. 2005). Having a common language of management is viewed as the carrier of best practice and the informal language of know-how (Holden 2002), a source of symbols encoding attitudes and behaviours to be shared by employees (Hedlund 1999), allowing leaders to see the world's business challenges as opportunities, think with an international mindset, act with fresh global-centric leadership behaviours, and mobilise world-class companies (Hoecklin 1995).

More and more companies functioning in a multilingual working context opt for an official corporate language as one possible solution – although not a "fully effective" (Harzing et al. 2011: 285) or all the time functional (Heikkilä & Smale 2011) one. English, "a global *lingua franca*", is predominantly chosen as the official language in international business contexts (Abdullah & Chaduhary 2012).

Though there is a general understanding that "English-Only" facilitates transnational communication, this solution is not a panacea through which all language differences can be resolved (Angouri 2013; Berthoud et al. 2013; Lüdi et al. 2016). There are studies that highlight implications of the relative dominance and unreflective use of English as the academic and business *lingua franca* within the field of leadership (Schedlitzki et al. 2016) or explore the issue of language choice and the importance of other languages for work matters (Evans 2013; Zhu 2014).

Results have shown that if Business English as a *lingua franca* is a 'must', multilingual professionals do not hesitate to increase their linguistic repertoire in their professional communicative practices. For strategic reasons, their language resources are activated under various forms of language use (Ehrenreich 2009; Pullin & Stark, 2010), including the use of language mixtures, mixed speech, interpretation and translation, the use of the *lingua receptiva* or the use of the language of the interlocutor (Lüdi et al. 2013). Language choice and use result from a constant process of negotiation between the participants. Therefore, languages other than English can also serve as *lingue franche* (Angouri & Miglbauer 2014; Cogo & Yanaprasart forthcoming; Yanaprasart 2016a), and communication in the international workplace is much more diverse than it seems at first glance (Lüdi et ai. 2016).

To illustrate these practices, the following part will discuss a variety of language use models in the multilingual workplace as described by multilingual leaders.

3. Context, methodology and data overview

The data was collected in the framework of the Swiss National Science Foundation project[3] (SNSF n°100015_147315) entitled "Diversity Management Practices: Measures and Indicators". The focus of the project was twofold: 1) categorise different ways in which companies manage diversity at work as described by the field workers, and 2) identify the advantages and drawbacks of linguistic diversity in the Swiss context as a multilingual state.

As a first step, we collected official documents indicating the company philosophy, the concept of diversity and explicit management measures, as well as documents circulating in the companies and those presented to the public. As a second step, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the person in charge about the explicit and implicit management measures on their practices on diversity management.

Our interlocutors came from different groups: the industrial sector ("people in charge of diversity") (21 interviews), public institutions (offices of equal opportunity at universities/universities of applied science, or working for the Cantons or the Federal Swiss confederation) (17 interviews), scientific and academic teachers and researchers on this issue (14 interviews), as well as consultants, coaches and trainers of diversity management (10 interviews). It is to be noted that eight of 62 interviewees were men. On the geographical level, the study covered different linguistic areas. Interviews were conducted in English, French, German and Swiss-German. They were recorded and transcribed in these four languages.

In the framework of this article, the analysis will focus solely on the industrial sector[4]. English is the working language of the leaders interviewed as well as the language used in the interviews. Only some quotes were translated from French or Swiss-German into English.

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3 This investigation is both a continuation and the development and advancement with respect to an integrated project from the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme, Priority 7' Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society' (Berthoud et al. 2013 for an overview).

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Agro A	Agribusiness	Swiss-British international company based in Basel
Bk A	Banking	Swiss international company based in Zurich
Ins A	Insurance	Swiss international company headquartered in Zurich
Ins B	Insurance	Swiss company with headquarters in Winterthur
Ph A	Pharmaceutical	Swiss international company based in Basel
Ph B	Pharmaceutical	Swiss international company based in Basel
Ph C	Pharmaceutical	American international company based in Geneva
Ps A	Public service	Swiss national company headquartered in Bern
Ps B	Public service	Swiss national company headquartered in Bern
TCom A	Telecommunications	Swiss national company headquartered in Bern
TaB A	Tobacco industry	American international company based in Lausanne

4. Results

Leading a multilingual team beyond the linguistic comfort zone

Shoshan[5] gave an example of five top business leaders with multilingual talents: Mark Zuckerberg (English-Chinese), Michael Bloomberg (English-Spanish), Leo Apotheker (German-Dutch-French-English-Hebrew), Paul Bulcke (Dutch-French-English-Spanish-Portuguese-German), and Tidjane Thiam (French-German-English) and concluded that learning a foreign language may be just the key for leaders of today.

Speaking several languages seems to have value for top management in the Swiss context as well. Two of these five global business leaders lead Swiss international companies: Tidjane Thiam (Credit Suisse) and Paul Bulcke, who is quoted on Nestlé's website, "Being multilingual creates a stronger connection with peers, employees, and consumers, which is critical for a business like ours."

Likewise, none of the leaders we interviewed is monolingual.

The Regional Head of D&I for Switzerland (<Bank A>) speaks German and English and understands French and Swiss German.	The Diversity manager at <Public service B> also mastered three languages: German, Swiss German and English.
The Person in charge of a Swiss mandate with a global role (<Ins A>) mastered English, Welsh, Italian, and German and understands French and Spanish.	The Vice president in charge of diversity management is fluent in French, German, English and Spanish and understands Italian. Her D&I manager can speak French, English and German. <Tab A>
The linguistic repertoire of the Head of Diversity and Family Care at <Ins B> consists of Swiss German, German, English and French.	The Head of Diversity at TCom A works in German, English and Swiss German and also speaks Dutch, "a little bit of Hebrew and a tiny bit of French".
The Head of D&I at <Pharma B> has a mastery of Arab, English, French and German.	The Project manager at Pharma A is proficient in English and Chinese.
The Person in charge of D&I at <Public service A> has German as a mother tongue. English and Swiss German are her working languages.	

The advantages of being bi/multilingual are widely recognised, from being better at multi-tasking to sharper reasoning to gaining multiple perspectives

5 On the website Entrepreneur coaching: https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/249924 (retrieved on 27.09.2016).

(Bialystock et al. 2012; Furlong 2009). Knowing a second language improves the brain's executive function (Carlson & Meltzoff 2008); speaking two or more languages increases a heightened ability to monitor the environment, which can help bi/multilingual people stay focused and quickly switch between tasks (Costa et al. 2009).

In the age of global business, monolinguals face serious one-language limitations. The capacity of going outside one's language capability – developing language competence beyond one's native comfort zone – has been increasingly highlighted. In the scope of our study, the term 'comfort zone' has been mentioned in relation to language use.

This leader explains that she is always ready to mobilise her repertoire to make her interlocutor feel comfortable, even if this requires going beyond the boundaries of her linguistic 'comfort zone':

(1) As a managing director, in general I try to speak the language of the majority, High German, Swiss German or French even if it's not really my comfort language. I try to make people sitting on the other side comfortable even though sometimes I was getting out of my comfort zone in doing that (Managing director, <Tab A>).

While "staying within one's language 'comfort zone' helps reduce psychic distance" (Piekkari et al. 2015: 14), successful leaders know that when stepping out of his or her 'comfort zone', they take a risk - a critical element of leadership (O'Brien 2006), learn to develop leadership skills (Ambler 2015), and show proof of flexibility and openness. By accepting to speak a foreign language imperfectly, a leader takes a risk and might feel uncomfortable, but will probably gain a follower's trust and will be better able to empathise with others.

(2) When you speak different languages, you have a kind of flexibility in your head which makes you very basically in terms of leadership a bit broader. You realize also the feeling of being uncomfortable. You can better feel what the other people feel, when you recruit people, when you work with people, when you lead people so you can realize what these people have to perform when it's not their mother tongue. It's very common in the business surroundings. You have to manage risks, you have to take risks, and this is basically uncomfortable. [...] And when you do that by talking different languages, you can realize that I can do that. I can perform even if I am not in a comfortable zone (Executive Board Member, <Public service B>).

This statement not only points out how important it is for leaders to be multilingual, but also to act as such if they want to relate to followers. Taking the risk to speak even imperfectly the language of the followers might help them improve as leaders.

To give another illustration, "Talent Management Guide for Leaders" (2009) and "Living our Leadership Capabilities" (2008), published by <Agro A>, show that among eight behavioural leadership capabilities, "Steps beyond comfort zones" is one of these "core stones".

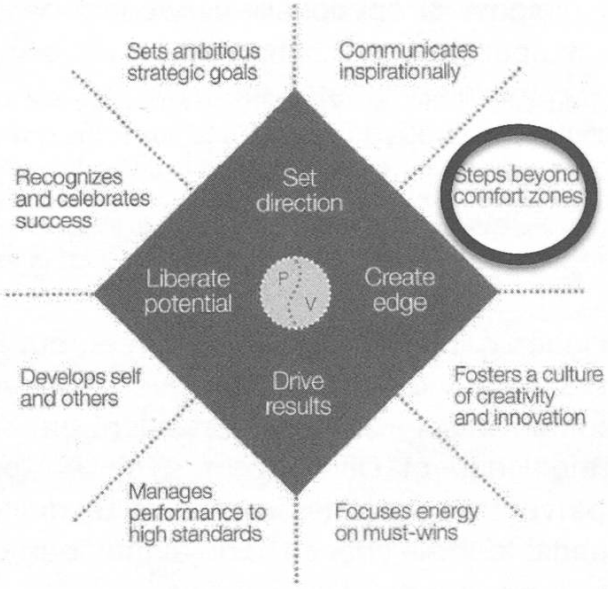

Figure 1: Leadership Capabilities Model (Living Our Leadership Capabilities 2008: 10)

"Helping others to leave their 'comfort zone'" is recommended[6] to the company's leaders. It gives two definitions of what it means to step out of one's comfort zone: 1) enables individuals and teams to work at their creative edge, 2) helps individuals manage uncertainty and risk with confidence. Therefore, leaders are requested to coach and support people to work at their edge and release their creative energy, as well as to demonstrate integrity and create an environment of trust.

The presence of "many languages" is described as "both a barrier and an asset", when leading a multilingual team (Head of Diversity of <TCom A>). Also, it is not only about managing language(s), but also about managing people who carry this powerful resource. The role of leaders is to be aware of the inability of followers to perform in the corporate language, which may generate resentment, emotion, inhibition, frustration and withdrawal.

(3) And maybe your level of English is ok so it's not that you don't know English at all. But it's not at the level where you can have a proficient business conversation and feel good about how you are sharing your ideas. This is an emotional element then. [...] And this becomes the frustrating part for people, I think. And the role of managers is then becoming so important to go beyond that (Head D&I, <Pharma B>).

More importantly, "it is not only the languages that communicators speak, but also the language fluency of such communicators that matters", said Babcock and Du-Babcock (2001: 376). The insufficient awareness of leaders at different

6 "Taking personal risks, encouraging people to work at their creative edge, challenging team members and colleagues to achieve a balance between standardized and customized solutions, identifying and pursuing new opportunities by broadening the perspective and reframing the situation", (<Agro A>, Guide-book 2009: 14).

levels of proficiency of some professionally very competent followers may risk putting their important input in danger of being lost.

(4) We know from research that if somebody talks to you with an accent and somebody does not talk to you with an accent, you will pay more attention to the one without the accent; even if they are giving equal value statements. And that becomes really important then to manage these differences that that person is given enough time to think, that person is given enough time to express themselves and you really listen to what they are saying beyond the accent or the bad words (laughs). So it's really not an easy solution (Head D&I, <Pharma B>).

A successful leader does not believe in giving orders, but leading by example and becoming a role model for other colleagues and subordinates. Being remarkably multilingual herself, the vice-president in charge of diversity management and the Head of Diversity at <Tab A> both recognise that language mixing is part of their practices in general. By doing this, nobody feels left behind, but instead is given a chance to be at the heart of the interaction, to participate and share their views and knowledge.

(5) Sometimes I'm mixing. In meetings or presentations, people have terminologies which are not easy to translate (in this Swiss market) and knowing that the audience they all understand usually the other languages, they might use some terminologies which are just describing the concepts so well so they don't want to translate. So sometimes, they are a mix of languages (Vice-president, <Tab A>).

(6) I was listening to a conversation in Polish yesterday on the phone with someone from Poland and she is really mixing English and Polish depending on what she was talking. It was crazy and amazing to hear. Using some words related to business in English and for the rest she was speaking in Polish (Head D&I, <Tab A>).

Encouraging personal involvement through language use may allow the creation of trust among team members. Trust is critical to make people feel comfortable opening up so as to uncover their skills. By means of 'plurilingual speech' – varying from code-switching, code-mixing to code-crossing (Rampton 1995) – this multilingual leader sets a climate for her team and gives space for individuals to experiment, to make them familiar with the workplace culture and to feel comfortable striking out on their own. Multilingual employees are provided the flexibility to put their efforts into making things happen.

(7) Everybody has the possibility to express themselves in the language that they feel the most comfortable in. Sometimes, it happened that we started in one language and finished in a different language because you don't find the right word right away. [...] Sometimes we have a presentation written in English but delivered in French or written in French but delivered in English. For people, they feel more comfortable because first of all you mix the languages that you can express yourself, understand exactly what you meant with the richness of your vocabulary. Your potential of vocabulary is much bigger and richer. So it's a mixture (Vice-president, <Tab A>).

"So, it's a mixture" (<Tab A>) - this communicative strategy may help to foster a culture of creativity and innovation as one of the behavioural cores of "Leadership Capabilities" (Guide for Leadership, <Agro A>), which is to seek out and make use of diverse perspectives, skills and experiences as well as to use emotional engagement to generate creative energy and new insights. Members are given a sense of contributing to success.

In the light of thorough reflection, a leader of <Pharma A> is convinced of the effectiveness of 'plurilingual speech strategy'.

(8) ich ha jez z'erscht Mal es Meeting müesse leite mit ere komplett neue Jury zäh komplett neu Lütt oder se Mal zämme bringt de findet mene Sprach und eh isch e Mischig zwüsche Basel-Hochdütsch-Änglisch [oder s'isch igend] üses Esperanto [wo mr do] jez gfunde hei (Senior manager, <Pharma A>) (Lüdi 2010: 16).

Now for the first time I had to run a meeting with a completely new group, ten completely new people, so you bring them together and find a language, and it's a mixture of Basel dialect, standard German and English, and if you like this was the Esperanto we worked out between us.

In a certain manner, this leader seized opportunities to stimulate cross-linguistic interactions when trying to explore the potential his team members had and to cultivate an atmosphere where innovation and new value creation could be driven through novel approaches. He encouraged members to think and act strategically, to step into the unknown and find new ways forward through thoughtful, meaningful ways of dialoguing and working together. This mix of languages challenged conventional thinking, then generated new ideas and drove superior solutions: "creative processes got going".

Another testimony from <Pharma A> gathered in the framework of an EU project (Lüdi et al. 2013, 2016) discusses the pressure on employees to speak English. With his multilingual skills in Arabic, French, Dutch, English, Spanish and German, Jamal, Head of Lab B, explains that he is ready to mobilise his limited German if necessary despite the dominance of English at work, strongly emphasised.

(9) Mara ne comprend pas assez l'anglais et je sais que Marianne s'exprime mieux en allemand qu'en anglais. [...] Elle doit comprendre le message dans le temps le plus court possible. Ça ne sert à rien de parler en anglais et puis je dois réexpliquer, redire (ou attendre quelqu'un à traduire), donc j'essaie de faire traducteur en même temps. Donc là, c'est vraiment pour faciliter, pour que tout le monde se sente à l'aise, tout le monde sur le même niveau, et puis voilà, efficacité ça veut dire vraiment immédiatement lorsqu'on a fini la réunion tout le monde connaît déjà le message (Head of Lab B <Pharma A> (Yanaprasart 2010: 147).

Mara does not understand English well enough and I know that Marianne speaks better German than English. [...] She must understand the message in the shortest time possible. It is useless to speak English and then I have to explain again, and repeat (or wait for someone to translate), so I try to be at the same time a translator. So, this is to facilitate, in order that everyone feels comfortable, everyone understands everyone on the same level, and then here, it means efficiency really immediately when meeting is finished, everyone already knows the message.

For him, "successful" communication is conditioned by the active participation of all participants. His ultimate willingness is to respect the heterogeneity of preferences and/or actual staff language competences. In this way, Jamal creates "an inclusive space" (Yanaprasart 2016b) for participation and fairness. Furthermore, to ensure the effectiveness of his leadership and his linguistic comfort in the meantime, "I use my language skills and if I cannot find the words in one language, I jump in another one", concluded Jamal. Hermann, head of

Labs A and B at <Pharma A>, describes his communication strategies with his multilingual colleagues as such:

(10) With French speaking collaborators, I normally speak English, but if I feel that they have a problem to express themselves, I offer them to say it in French, or they know a word in French which they don't know in German or English, then I help them; sometimes we switch in French, but usually I address myself to them in English or even German, because I know they know it (Head of Labs A & B, <Pharma A>) (Yanaprasart 2010: 149).

As the Head of D&I at <Bank A> says, "What prevails in multilingual business settings is not 'perfect' language knowledge, but a 'pragmatic' language use when attempting to find local solutions to practical problems". That is to say, "We have a lot of freedom to do things in German, or Italian or Japanese or Portuguese or whatever." With this way of managing, <Bank A> uses linguistic diversity to better value polyglot employees, recognise their achievements and strengthen their unique profile for collective goals (Yanaprasart 2016b). Likewise, at <Pharma A>, "letting people speak any language they want whatever language they feel comfortable in is important", says the project manager. This seems to be true for everyone at any level of hierarchy in this company.

From the perspective of Head HR of <Agro A>, language can become "a major instrument to move people, to socialize an idea, the idea of a leadership brand": "Whatever we do needs to be accessible, whenever we publish something, we have to publish it in so many languages and make it accessible in its deepest sense, in the way that language can stir us deep down inside". Baider & Cislaru (2014) address a close relation between language – use or choice – and emotions. For leaders, communicating inspirationally in the language of the other can create passion and excitement. For workers, speaking in their own language makes them feel comfortable (dimension of equity), but also allows them to convey nuances of ideas more clearly and precisely (dimension of effectiveness). Using the language of the followers is not only a sign of respect, but also ensures the in-depth reception of the messages transmitted. Following these reflections, leaders have to be evocative enough on the level of emotional connection to allow people to liberate their full potential. As suggested by Kansanen & Vohlonen (2010), when followers are emotionally engaged, feel motivated and interested, and if they consider the task personally relevant to themselves (Isen 1993), creative energy and new insights are generated, resulting in enhanced teamwork, thus stimulating innovation and problem solving (Milliken, Bartel & Kurtzberg 2003).

5. Discussion

On the whole, leadership is the ongoing process of choosing between safety and risk. On the one hand, leaders are expected to 'stretch themselves', to play an active role in providing their subordinates with a comfortable environment so they do not feel any anxiety, pressure or stress. This is believed to drive

performance, set and embody high standards, and secure high-quality results. On the other hand, leaders are asked to 'stretch their team' to push the boundaries and achieve the best of the members' collective strengths and capabilities. Leaders need to inspire and lead people in a way that they gain confidence, trust and courage to step beyond their comfort zones, habits and current capabilities. Staying for long periods of time in one's comfort zone might be bad for the development of the team and its performance (Ambler 2015).

(11) Because we are sitting in our comfort zone; you know we are successful, why should I change? It's a big question. Why should anybody who is successful and has a good life now change? It's all related to risk. Going out from the comfort zone, additional work, so this is a big question why. (Head D&I, <BK A>)

This view can explain why not only leaders but also their teams should learn to trust each other, take risks and step out of their zone of routine, considered a place where nothing particularly challenging happens, into a place of productive discomfort, where new skills can be learnt – called a learning zone. In light of collaborative leadership, a common new comfort zone can be created as a result of the learning process where A and B agree to leave their comfortable place to step into an in-between, collaborative contact space, which, however, also represents an area of friction where risks, difficulties, tension, anxiety, power struggle and resistance to change are obvious. The following graphic shows that a new linguistic comfort zone can be built, this by passing through linguistic discomfort qualified as the learning zone.

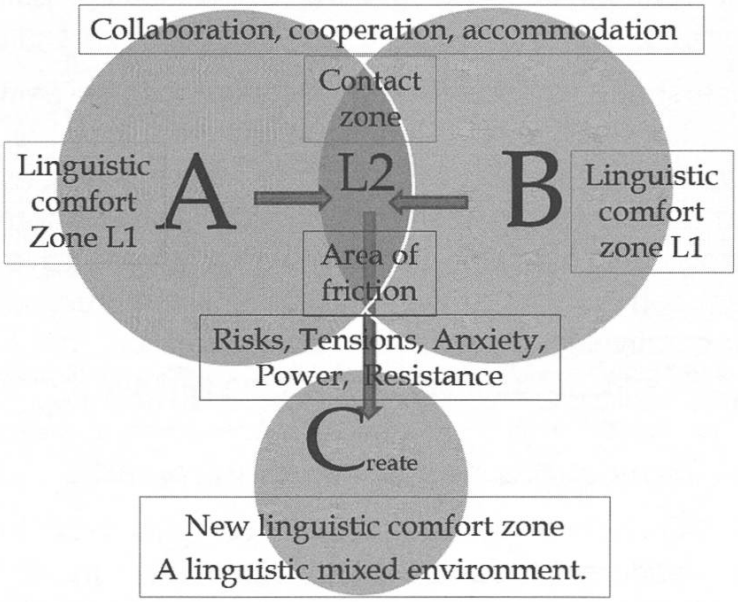

Figure 2: Zones of Contact - Zones of Comfort

More precisely, the borders of the three zones can be understood as being situated at "fuzzy boundaries" (Lakoff 1987). Zone A+B emerges from the meeting point between A and B, where it is no longer clear where exactly the

language border runs. It becomes a "third space" or "in-between space" (Bhabha 1994) – an overlapping space where languages come into contact, where a new system may take place, making boundaries between 'the own self' and 'the other foreign' disappear, hence a high potential for change and innovation – where speakers can feel free to use languages the way they want. This intermediate area, which is sometime even autonomous, is described by Erfurt (2003: 6) as "new spaces of multilingualism" ("neue Räume der Mehrsprachigkeit") or by Gugenberger (2005: 358) as a "third space of language" ("der dritte Raum der Sprache") to cross the language borders (see Zinkhahn Rhobodes 2016 for further details).

By developing a transition area Zone C, leaders equalise language power and create force, with respect to interlingual synergies. This new, enlarged *Togetherness-Linguistic-Comfort Zone* allows for including everyone in an inner circle. The findings revealed the attitudes of dynamic, polyglot leaders who prefer considering language choice and use in terms of various combinations, thanks to the shared-linguistic-resources dynamic of the team's members. Interacting in 'fluid' spaces (Montgomery 2011), speakers feel free to use their available resources to accomplish a task collectively to ensure local achievement. In this sense, what was perceived, believed, or considered at the beginning a problem has been identified, problematised and negotiated. If the concept of border implies conflict, trouble and uncertainty at the risk of reinforcing barriers, the effort of transcending boundaries and bridging gaps represents a particularly challenging zone of dialoguing, collaborating and establishing relations.

As this study has shown, the fact that multilingual leaders decide to prioritise one or another pattern of speaking (communicative function) or thinking/acting (conceptual function) appears to be less important than undertaking interventions aimed at arousing passages from one to another model of access to information (revealing function), this in a way that interactive confrontations between different conceptions of the world (intensifying function) will not only bring forth collaborative leadership, but also foster thickness of knowledge construction in consequence of mutual understanding enrichment.

6. Limitations, implications and concluding remarks

In sum, this article has explored a particularly complex aspect of professional communication: leadership performance and communication behaviours regarding language choice and language use by multilingual leaders. Specific interest was directed towards the roles they could play to bridge language boundaries. Its aim was to provide a more general understanding of the conditions under which the linguistic capabilities of polyglot leaders are of significant value to the team's communications in multilingual contexts.

"What is said" by leaders has also demonstrated that there are numerous ways of performing leadership in a multilingual professional context. In some circumstances, it is a leader-centred leadership style that seems the most suitable. To achieve objectives, leaders assure that the rule is respected, such as speaking the corporate language exclusively so as to advance rapidly within the ongoing activity (*a principle of progressivity*, Schegloff 2017; Heritage 2007; Kuroshima 2010).

In others, expanding, instead of minimising, the collective existing linguistic resources, in order to meet the demands of a team's members and ensure mutual comprehension, seems to be more important (*a principle of inter-subjectivity*, Schegloff 1992). To assure their self-engagement and to leverage their performance, activities are performed within the procedure of relationally oriented behaviour. Cunliffe & Eriksson (2011) highlight the importance of dialogue and suggest the recognition of divergent voices. In light of our study, relational leaders do not only share, distribute and do leadership in a follower-centred leadership style, but also recognise the importance of leading people by example and building trust. This *All-Languages-Together* approach is inspired by inclusiveness practices: to promote the satisfaction of the belongingness needs of each individual's uniqueness and foster a multilingual togetherness identity in an inclusive climate characterised by fairness, equality and unity in diversity.

Despite the local character of the study, the findings have provided new perspectives and insights into an intricately interwoven relationship between leadership capabilities and professional communications in multilingual settings. We have argued that the capacity of a leader to stretch the boundary of his or her linguistic comfort zone can leverage inclusiveness in the working environment and also inspire his or her followers to step into a trans-lingual learning discomfort zone, creating a new "togetherness-linguistic-comfort zone" in a modern perspective of inclusive leadership. Yet, our data are mainly based on leaders from multilingual backgrounds. In addition, we recognise the limitations of basing our claims on the points of views and practices of senior leaders, largely female (who might be better at learning languages or more sensitive to relationship quality), feeling at ease in their Swiss quadrilingual and multicultural working environments. An on-going fieldwork focusing on challenges leaders from monolingual backgrounds, at lower levels of the hierarchy and in other industries, face in relation to creating linguistically fluid interacting zones for more or less monolingual organisational members is being conducted (Yanaprasart forthcoming). The aim is to show under what conditions monolingual leaders can also assume the role of 'language brokers', 'language nodes', 'bridge builders', 'borders transcenders' and 'boundary spanners'.

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