Multilingual Environment Antecedents of Team Cohesion: The Mediating Role of Language-Based Exclusion in International Teams

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Abstract

1 HIGHLIGHTS
This paper will present a conceptual model looking at specific mechanisms of how the multilingual environment influences team cohesiveness through language-based exclusion as a mediator with a series of corresponding individual- and team-level moderators in the context of international work teams. The first theoretical contribution of our research lies in a two-level approach focus on individual- and team-level antecedents, mediators and moderators of team cohesiveness in international teams. The second theoretical contribution lies in addressing the so-called “mechanism” role of language-based exclusion on team cohesiveness.

2 BACKGROUND
Recent interdisciplinary research has treated language not just as an element of organizational diversity (Bartel-Radic & Church-Morel, 2016), but more fundamentally “as a mechanism for social exclusion” (Kulkarni & Sommer, 2015, p. 647).
Existing literature on language-based exclusion in MNCs explores the issues of language diversity contributing to the creation of so-called “fault lines” within organizational teams (Kulkarni, 2015) and corporate language-based communication avoidance (Lauring & Klitmøller, 2015). Even though language constitutes one of the most obvious socio-demographic organizational variables, we have found no research that explicitly explains how linguistic diversity affects team cohesion in international work teams.

3 METHOD
Our study will present a conceptual model, where we will look at the “mechanism role” of language-based exclusion as a determinant of team cohesion in international work teams. The model will be based on a state-of-the art literature review, which will be interdisciplinary (linguistics, organizational behavior and international business), as well as evolutionary in nature. It will also be based on a two-level research approach, addressing both individual- and team-level aspects of the studied phenomena.
4 RESULTS
Kulkarni and Sommer (2015) explain how language-based exclusion impacts prosocial behaviors through perceptions of procedural justice, social identity and workplace mood. Our study adds to their conceptual work, but focuses on a more managerially relevant aspect of team dynamics related to team cohesion. In-line with the conceptual nature of our research, the end results will be a series of concrete research propositions, grounded in literature, and used in subsequent empirical testing.

5 CONCLUSIONS
In the article we will present a conceptual model which will serve as starting point for our research on the antecedents, determinants and effects of language-based exclusion, as well as possible moderators. This work follows not only to answer the growing research trend on the role of language in international business and international organizational settings, but will also be subsequently tested with Structural Equation Modeling in future research.