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Intercultural communication at the work place
- An explorative study using a phenomenological approach

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Abstract

The aim of this explorative study using a phenomenological approach is to have a closer look at individual perceptions of the phenomenon of intercultural communication and how it is constituted within at a work place. Eventual communication difficulties based on different cultural origins, as well as forms of interaction and working conditions in the enterprises, will be analyzed as possible reasons for eventual communication difficulties. The paper has the further aim of looking for eventual benefits from multiculturalism, when it is seen as a resource rather than a possible reason for conflicts. The study examines and compares two different work places in southern Sweden, Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and Italia il Ristorante, from which 21 respondents participated in the study. Narratives were collected by self reports and analyzed with the software applications MCA Minerva and Le Sphinx Lexica. The outcomes indicate that cultural backgrounds seem to influence the constitution process and the different ways in how intercultural communication is perceived. Furthermore, a contextual influence is indicated about how intercultural communication is perceived and functions at a particular work place.

Keywords: intercultural communication, work place, culture, communication, phenomenology, MCA Minerva, Le Sphinx Lexica

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Introduction

I was 19 years old and working as a waitress in a restaurant. One night I was working alone in the restaurant with a foreign chef in the kitchen. It was a busy Friday and I had all the responsibility for the processes in the restaurant to run smoothly. A woman called and wanted food to take away, and ordered specifically *three* guacamole sauces to accompany the food, and *none* of the sour cream or salsa (the basic menu was one of each). I ran into the kitchen and explained the order to the non Swedish-speaking, barely English-speaking chef. As I was in a great hurry and with many customers waiting for me, I tried to make the order very clear to the chef by repeating it in both English and Swedish several times, using gestures, facial expressions and intonations – I did not have the time to get any orders wrong. When the chef had answered ‘yes’ several times and even got an irritated tone, I was sure my intended message had reached my colleague. When the woman came to pick up her food, I assured her that the requested order was in the boxes even though I had not looked myself (why would I have to, the chef clearly understood me before). She opened the boxes anyway, and found our basic sauce menu instead of the three guacamoles she wanted.

This personal experience is one of an uncountable number of situations where difficulties can be perceived in communication between people from different cultures. It is situations like this that evoked my interest for a closer investigation of intercultural communication and a future aim to work within this field. I do not believe I am the only one have experiences of communication difficulties at the work place. In accordance with the current trend of globalization, people are moving across national and cultural borders to an ever increasing extent. Consequently, we are nowadays confronting an increasingly diverse workforce, as stated by Varner and Beamer (2011). What strikes me is, if intercultural communicative misunderstandings are to be found in a small restaurant in Lund, Sweden, what are the consequences of these misunderstandings likely to be in, for example, intercultural political conferences where global decisions are supposed to be made? To me, the relevance of a deep-going study of the communication at the work place and how culture may influence this communication is obvious.

We may not always reflect over the impact of culture on our behaviors, since we are all humans it is easy to think that we are all the same and think alike. We expect others to understand our behaviors, acts and ways of communicate and react when misunderstandings

occur. However, culture do shapes us from our early phases in life and influences the way we behave, communicate and act as well as what we value, believe in and ascribe meaning to phenomenon (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). We become aware of the commonness of behaviors and actions in our own culture in the encounter with people who appears differently to us. A reference to another personal experience will illustrate how misunderstandings can occur even though the same language is spoken, due to our culturally influenced meaning constitutions;

Last semester I studied at a university in France. I speak quite good French, and one day I emailed my professor to ask if he had time to see me the upcoming week to discuss the paper I was currently writing. He answered that we would speak about it on Thursday after the class. To me, that undoubtedly meant that we were going to have about a half an hour long meeting at his office discussing my paper, and I was satisfied with the answer. Thus, I got very surprised after the class on Thursday morning when he asked me in front of many other French students, who were still in the classroom, what I wanted to talk with him about. He expected me to summarize my issues with the paper in French while other students were listening, because he had to be in another class in ten minutes.

Distorted and ambiguous interpretations of communicative messages may occur in many different contexts, not exclusively intercultural encounters. However, the focus of this study lays on the function and constitution process of intercultural communication within the work place, which is argued by Larsson (2010) to be important with the increased diversity of cultures at the work places today. A phenomenological approach which lays emphasis on the individual and the meaning ascribed to the phenomenon intercultural communication will be used (Willig, 2008). A further aim with the study is to look for indications of a contextual influence on the constitution process of intercultural communication. With rich and thick descriptions which become the outcomes of a qualitative study and of phenomenological works in particular, the format of this study may be unfamiliar to some readers. However, as argued by Giorgi (2009, referred to in Connolly & Craig, 2011); what has been made to a habit of a usual presentation format within quantitative approaches are not the best suited for qualitative research, and a comprehensive presentation of outcomes etcetera should therefore not be considered a deficit.

Thus, the aim of this study is to get a wider and deeper comprehension of the communication taking place between people with different cultural backgrounds, within the context of a work place. This explorative study is open minded to both problems and benefits

derived from the intercultural communication and that could serve as a basis when enhancing the work values. The study aims to look for indications of what seems to be important to different individuals. The background and a presentation of the phenomenological approach will form the basis of the method used with the ambition to reveal the complexity concerning culture, communication, individuals and the context.

Background

Work place and organization culture

When talking about work places in general, we all get an idea in our minds what a work place is like, most definitely in accordance with our former or present personal experiences. However, when we try to describe what a work place is the definitions might differ depending on who you ask. In both the British encyclopedia Merriam-Webster (www.merriam-webster.com) in the Britannica Company and Nationalencyklopedin (www.ne.se), the most comprehensive contemporary Swedish language encyclopedia, both loosely define “work place” as a room or a space where one or more workers perform their job tasks. Hence, a work place can obviously look very different dependent on the work needed to be done. To mention some of an uncountable number, the place where people can perform their jobs can be a home office, in a huge industrial hall, or in conference rooms. Therefore, when referring to workplace we might simultaneously and unconsciously think of the concept of *organization*. A description of an organization given by Abrahamsson and Andersen (2005, referred to in Larsson, 2010), refers to a systematic established union of people with the aim to reach pre-given goals. The universal characteristics of the organization are goal, people, structure, activity and culture.

As hinted at in the description above, a work place or an organization is considered to have a culture of their own. Alvesson (2002) depicts the concept of *organizational culture* as an umbrella concept starting out from a joint way of thinking, containing a cohesive system of socially shared meanings and collective symbolism. Alvesson (2002) means to say that organizations start out from a social structure and a culture, of which the cultural attributed meaning will guide the thinking, feeling and acts of the employees. The social structure refers to the behavioral patterns shaped within the interaction between the employees. Thus, with different cultures and social structures, organizations will in many cases be different from each other.

Within an organization, an important task of managers is to deal with the ideas and understandings of the employees as well as bring them together in positive and joint meanings concerning work issues. However, the meaning of a rule or a break may differ between different organizational cultures. The concept of organizational culture can be considered as a possibility to attain an understanding of the below-surface aspects of the organizational life. The incorporation of culture into organizations becomes salient, especially with the increased number of multicultural work places existing today (Alvesson, 2002).

Migration and globalization

Today, people are constantly moving across national and cultural borders and we are exposed to people from different cultures on a daily basis. The migration of people has increased since the World War II and people move due to many different reasons. Due to globalization, the reality we face today is one where multicultural work places are no longer uncommon. With today's multicultural workforces, we also face cultural and linguistic diversity in the limited physical space called work place (Varner & Beamer, 2011). Larsson (2010) means to say that today's multicultural work places are making great demands on the communication which is a condition for these intercultural corporations to function. To manage to work in these organizations in the time of globalization one has to be a successful communicator.

Due to globalization, people, goods, food, knowledge, products and experiences connected to a specific culture are to be found almost anywhere in the world. We eat sushi in Sweden, listen to American music in Kenya and visit China Town in New York. But do these features imply that we are heading towards a global community with a homogenous culture where we will all be the same? Making the assumption that we all think alike because of similar superficial appearances may cause misunderstanding in communication because people could still be different on a deeper level (Jandt, 2010). Although our world is constantly changing, this does not imply a similar speed of change for culture. Consequences of globalization might refer to a change in superficial symbols concerning, for example, fashion and consumption, but cultural values such as fundamental feelings about life and other people are argued not to be changing with the same rate, and thus remain solid (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2011). We share our cultural values and beliefs with several generations before us even though we eat sushi from Japan or celebrating the American feast Valentine's Day.

Moreover, Berry (2008) says that the process of globalization involves adverse reactions that make people protect their local and cultural heritage, instead of letting them be undermined by the advance of a global culture. Technologies that support globalization also facilitate the revival and maintaining of small, local cultures. Even though people today are crossing borders to an ever increasing extent, there seems to be an inclination to preserve one's cultural heritage, a statement that is also confirmed by Chua (2002, referred to in Jandt, 2010). This makes an interesting contribution to the acculturation process when people come in contact with another culture and to what extent they will hold on to their home culture.

Culture and development

We are not born *with* a culture, but *into* one. From the first day of our lives, we are influenced by the people and the context around us who will guide us in what matters, what is preferred, what to avoid, what is considered appropriate and valuable behavior, and so on. The values and priorities of a culture are passed on from generation to generation and is a collective agreement by a group of people about the meaning of things and why things are in a certain way. It is an agreement that we learn to take for granted about reality (Varner & Beamer, 2011).

To define culture is a difficult task, which can be concluded from the fact that a widely accepted definition does not yet exist. Culture is a wide, abstract and multifaceted concept that can refer to organizations as well as national belonging and many other things, and several authors formulate their own wording in order to define culture as precisely as possible. This will not be the case in this study. Since more or less similar characteristics of a culture are mentioned by many authors (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Jandt, 2010; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008; Varner & Beamer, 2011), this study will rather start out from a couple of concepts presented in most of the given references that are perceived significant to the author of this study. Thus, the concept of culture will, in this study, start out from the basic concepts; learned, shared, creator of meaning and ever ongoing.

The concept of culture can refer to many different communities, such as organizational cultures, faith-based cultures, gender-based culture or sexuality-based cultures. However, when we talk about culture, Piller (2012) asserts the commonness of understanding culture as nation and/or ethnicity in both daily life and several academic works. One talks about the Egyptians, the Swedes or the Americans as they were static groups of people with predetermined values and

behaviors, which we should be cautious not to do. Communities of people sharing the same ethnicity or nationality are cultures as well as many other communities, but should not, without any reflection, be considered as synonymous with these concepts.

The tenor of culture in this study refers to a work place with a composition of employees from different countries in order to investigate the intercultural communication. However, the author of this study does understand that even at a work place with only Swedes, intercultural communication is possible, depending on the definition and use of the concept of culture. This study defines intercultural communication as communication between people from different countries, although without the assumption that a certain nationality will behave in a certain way. The individual in the culture is the main focus in the study.

To learn and master a culture requires a long time and a lot of practice. The learning of culture taking place entirely within one's own culture is often described by the two related processes *enculturation* and *socialization*. Enculturation refers to the learning of the cultural manners and what the culture deems to be important. The knowledge is often unconsciously acquired without specific teaching, the child is influenced by the behavior of their parents, other adults and peers to be a competent individual in the culture. Through development and enculturation the person internalizes language, rituals, values, psychological aspects of the culture and so on. Socialization on the other hand, is a learning process imposed on people. It is a deliberated shaping process of the individual in which he internalizes the rules and patterns concerning societal norms, attitudes, values and belief systems constructed by the society. The two processes, in combination with each other, are considered to develop similar behaviors of people within a culture and behavioral differences between cultures. Some behaviors that may be appreciated and adaptive in some cultures might be maladaptive in others. By understanding the enculturation and socialization of a certain culture, we will get a greater understanding of the psychological characteristics and personalities we observe in adults, for example, at our work place (Berry et al., 1992; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

Enculturation is not to be confused with acculturation which refers to the process of learning another culture when one comes into contact with people from a different culture. This can be seen as a later form of enculturation that is possible to occur later on in life, and will be further described below (Berry et al., 1992; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

Contact with other cultures

Through globalization and thus increased migration, immigrants arriving in a new country will, in most cases, face a culture and a language very different from their own. In the new culture there are different values, norms, beliefs and behaviors that they need to adapt to. This cultural adjustment is called *acculturation* and refers to the process of people adapting to a new culture, which can be necessary if one is moving to a foreign culture to work and live there for a long time. Considering that culture is acquired, it is also learnable. However, the process of learning a new culture is not always easy (Jandt, 2010). As Berry (1997) puts it; people may enter the acculturation process voluntarily such as immigrants, whereas others experience contact with a new culture without having sought for it themselves, like refugees or the people living in the host country. Anyhow, they all take part in the mutual exchange of cultures and one's approach to the process will influence the communication with people from other cultures. Communication is the indispensable and inalienable part of the adaption to an unfamiliar culture. It is in and through communication that the individual interacts with his environment and the cross-cultural adaption cannot take place without this interaction (Kim, 2005).

Berry (1997) is considered by many to have the far most prevalent model of intercultural adaption today. He presents a model with strategies of the acculturation process, which first of all contains two important issues or questions. The first one, called *cultural maintenance*, asks to what extent the characteristics and identity markers of one's home culture are considered important and worth maintaining to the person entering a new culture. The second issue, *contact and participation*, refers to the extent one is motivated to be involved in the new culture or instead, remain with people from their own group. Depending on one's position concerning the two issues, the person will be considered using one of four following acculturation strategies.

People who value and want to maintain their home cultural identity and characteristics and do not want to be involved in the new culture, uses the strategy of *Separation*. These people remain in communities with people from their home culture who speak the same native language and have minimal contact with host-culture individuals. People who do not value their home cultural identity, but are motivated to make contact and participate in the new culture, will be called *Assimilators*. They try to totally assimilate into the new culture by rejecting their home culture, minimize the contact with their fellow-countrymen and seek daily interactions with people in the host-culture. A third strategy, *Intergration*, is defined by people valuing both the

characteristics of their home culture and also want to get involved into the new culture. These people are often multilingual and are able to go along with the cultural system they are in. Finally, if one values neither the home culture, nor the host culture, one is defined using the *Marginalization* strategy. These people are living on the fringe of both cultures without being able to enter either of them (Berry, 1997; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

Berry (2008) argues that acculturation is a mutual process, implying that changes might occur in all groups in contact, not only in the group arriving to a new culture. Furthermore, he claims that the different strategies of adaption to a new culture in the acculturation process indicate that we are not heading toward a homogenous culture through globalization. Since some people do value their home cultural characteristics higher than getting involved in the new culture (referring to the strategy of separation), a cultural diversity will be maintained despite the increased number of multicultural work places and migration of people across the world.

In relation to Berry's theory of acculturation strategies, a justified question is whether the psychological acculturation processes can possibly be the same to all people, whether they have the same cultural background or not. Is it possible to assume that two people from the same culture/country coming to Sweden will perceive the new culture in the same way, even if they are both considered to use the strategy of assimilation?

Bhatia and Ram (2001, referred to in Hermans, 2003) argue that treating either culture or the self as variables, which is common in mainstream psychological research, should be questioned. Treating them as variables undervalues the complexity immanent in different cultural groups, where individuals are different even though they may originate from the same cultural backgrounds. Even people within a cultural group will initially perceive the contact with a new culture differently in accordance with their individual former experiences. Therefore, another perspective is required to achieve comprehension of the complexity of contact with other cultures. The concept of the *Dialogical self* sheds light over a different aspect of what we, in general, refer to as "identity"; seeing the self as a dynamic multiplicity of voices. The concept developed by Hermans refers to the idea that the self consists of several relatively autonomous positions of I, corresponding to multiple voices, that will be adopted by the person in a given context and time. The different voices can be contradictory, in agreement or questioned within different contexts. Different contexts will engage different voices; voices that might have been

silenced in some contexts might become heard in others. As Roland (2001, referred to in Hermans, 2003) puts it;

Voices from the culture of origin do not simply disappear when people are involved in an acculturation process. Instead, the older or deeper voices are often established parts of the self, and they are challenged, evoked, repressed, or simply ignored when the person enters into a host culture populated by different and often dominating voices (Hermans, p.95).

Each of the voices of the self are derived from different intersubjective lifeworld experiences and have consequently different stances. An illustrative metaphor is the way different characters in a story interact with each other and exchange information in their respective voices, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self_(Hermans, 2003). In relation to the concept of the dialogical self, Piaget's theory of assimilation and accommodation allows us to have a good understanding of the varieties of different ways in which even individuals coming from the same culture can, and almost necessarily will, react and give meaning in different ways to the same looking situation.

With Hermans' (2003) concept in mind, a general theory of the acculturation process with pre-given outcomes can be perceived as incomplete. In the acculturation process, as in all other situations, our mind is intentionally directed towards something that is perceived differently by different people even though they are viewing the same phenomenon. A person's former experiences, his/her mental orientation such as judgments, wishes, emotions, aims and purposes as well as the context, are all factors that will intentionally direct his/her perception towards something. And, by that, they will be guided to the most suitable acculturation strategy for him/her. Therefore, the idea of the dialogical self as a complex constitution of multiple voices should be considered highly relevant when obtaining a more comprehensive and valid image of the outcomes of a contact with another culture.

Culture and communication

Communication is a wide concept that embraces the learning and acts of speaking, listening, interpreting, reading, and understanding verbal and non verbal expressions and messages. The close intertwining of communication and culture can be exemplified by the enculturation and socialization processes described above, and the fact that culture is passed on and perpetuated

from generation to generation. This *cultural transmission* from parent to offspring is realized through communication which, at the same time functions as a creator and maintainer of human cultures (Berry et al., 1992; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

Our language and ability to communicate is a fundamental psychological function of survival and adaptation to the environment. Via communication we are able to convey needs and motives, create solutions to problems and much more. Language is the tool for communication and allows us to create a common meaning about the world around us in terms of symbols. However, communication does not only refer to what words we are pronouncing verbally. Communication is possible even when quiet. Nonverbal expressions in face to face communication can even be considered a much better indicator of the real meaning than the actual words are. What the concept of nonverbal communication is comprised of varies between researchers, although some of the general elements are facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, pauses, intonation, tone of voice, silence, touching etc. However, people from different cultures do not attach the same meaning to nonverbal language, thus the interpretation by the receiver might not be the same as that which was intended by the sender (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008; Varner & Beamer, 2011).

Intercultural communication generally refers to (face-to-face) communication between people from different cultures. Cultural influences, ideas and codes of how to convey and translate a message to others are always brought into the communication. Therefore, communicating with people with another cultural background will differ from the communication we have with people from our own culture. A natural obstacle is the language, recollect the experience with the French professor in the introduction; not speaking the same language makes the communication more difficult even though a joint language is found. One's intention to send a message to another person will be packed within the first person's cultural codes, referring to the social values and cultural variables stressed in his/her culture. However, a receiver with a different cultural background might have trouble to open this package because his cultural codes might differ from the sender's, and the intended message can be misinterpreted (Jandt, 2010; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

To understand intercultural communication, Beamer (1992) emphasizes the role of decoding process and perception. Transmission of a message by itself is not communication; a conscious perception of the signals by the receiver is required for communication to take place.

Within the communication process, one is simultaneously sender and receiver of multiple messages. Perceiving a message starts with the recognition that signals have been sent out. Further, a selection is made by the receiver as to which signals he chooses to encounter and pay attention to. The signals are then structured into categories. This categorization is based on how we view the physical and social world, and that is influenced by our culture. In a final phase, meaning will be attributed to the perceptions which demonstrate the influence of culture even more. The meaning is culturally determined and will express the differences derived from our different life experiences and cultures. The different interpretations of signals, in accordance with the values and norms of one's own culture, may hinder the intercultural communication, and give a different meaning to the message than was intended. Matsumoto & Juang (2008) say that a misinterpretation can make the message unclear, distorted or ambiguous and might even lead to misunderstandings and implicit negative judgments about the other person. However, several authors (Beamer, 1992; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008; Varner & Beamer, 2011) state that acknowledgement and understanding of cultural values in other cultures as well as in one's own, is the answer to successful communication across cultures.

An extension of the concept is considered appropriate concerning intercultural communication in organizations and at the work place, where communication can be seen as the supporting structure. A recent study by Luring (2011) argues that additional factors need to be taken into account in this complex field of study. Barriers and misunderstandings in intercultural communication cannot be derived exclusively from cultural differences; intentions of individuals and groups in the social organization of relationships and power relations play a role as well. Luring argues that a more complex theory is needed to explain the dynamic process of intercultural communication than the common assumptions of a one-way link between general culture and communicative differences.

Luring (2011) writes that "Communication is a mechanism through which groups are created, maintained, and modified" (p.236). Moreover, communication is the basis of organizations and organizations cannot be understood independently of communication. In the organization, human actions and perceptions become structured through interaction processes, thus, the organization is created through communication. The perception of differences guides the employees in the interaction but are simultaneously developed and organized in the interaction. Therefore it is possible for eventual misunderstandings to be derived from the

organizational structure shaped through the communication. Consequently, in order to understand how cultural differences are categorized, used, and maintained in international corporations Luring (2011) argues that one has to take intentionality and organizational context into account. As well as emphasized with the concept of the dialogical self, the importance of factors such as context, various experiences and social relationships is inescapable in the study of humans, cultures and communication.

The work places of investigation

Recollecting the idea of Alvesson (2002) that each organization has their own culture and social structure, and the fact that communication is the indispensable factor in the creating of culture (Luring, 2011), a work place with its unique composition of employees will never be found somewhere else. This makes it interesting to investigate and compare any two (or more) work places to see how the experiences of intercultural communication might differ from each other. The two work places chosen for investigation in this thesis are fundamentally different since they work with different things. *Hyllie Park Folkhögskola* in Malmö is a school teaching SFI, Swedish for Immigrants, and *Italia il Ristorante* in Lund, is an Italian restaurant. Both work places are situated in south of Sweden and are multicultural, which was the only criterion for participation in the study. An interview guide made in advance was used when talking to the person in the responsible position at each work place, see appendix 1. The following descriptions are a summary of the conversations which have been proofread by the interviewed person before being published.

Hyllie Park Folkhögskola. Hyllie Park Folkhögskola has a branch situated at Kroksbäck, Malmö, where Swedish is taught to adult immigrants. The education, called SFI, Swedish for immigrants, is one of 5 external educations offered by the city of Malmö and the priority at Hyllie Park is given to people with short academic background and people who are illiterate. A Characteristic of Hyllie Park is that the first language is used to teach Swedish. This means that the teachers have different national backgrounds and speak different languages in order to satisfy the various communication needs. Teachers at Hyllie Park speak, besides Swedish: Albanian, Arabic, Dari, English, French, Chinese, Kurdish, Pashto, Somali, Thai and Urdu. Altogether, there are 17 teachers of different categories at SFI.

The employee's work includes educational activities and planning. The work emphasizes cooperation, and the teachers work in two teams who decide themselves how to schedule the classes and how to distribute the available resources. Among the staff, people who have been working there since the start of SFI in Hyllie Park 12 years ago are still in the team and the last to be employed was a Swede, hired one year ago. Thus, the work place does not have a high degree of employee turnover. According to the director of the folk high-school, hierarchies are most likely to be found among the staff at the work place, which is probably due to the economic situation. The educated SFI-teachers (that is the Swedish teachers) are, in general, better paid and have the authority to grade students, in contrast to teachers in mother tongue who have not reached the same academic level. This situation may of course form the ground of hierarchic relationships, but it is something the director is aware of and works with constantly. In general, the communication at the work place Hyllie Park Folkhögskola is seen upon from different perspectives; in pressed times there have been misunderstandings among the employees, but basically there is a will to understand each other since they are all aware of the need of communication at their work place. Among several good instances of communication, Hyllie Park Folkhögskola also wishes to be a concrete example to students that it is possible to work together even with different cultural backgrounds.

Italia il Ristorante. In the center of Lund, an Italian restaurant named Italia il Ristorante is to be found. With its 14 full-time employees and 6-8 part-time employees, it can be considered as a fairly large restaurant. The national diversity among the full-time workers contains 9 Swedes, 2 Italians, 1 Kurd, and 3 Indians sharing a full-time employment. Among these people such as the cooks and the employees with more responsibility within the waiting section, the staff turnover is considered low; the present staff has been there for 2 to 8 years. However, among the part-time employees and the younger people working as waiter/waitress the general time to stay at the restaurant is usually a maximum of one year. The staff in different parts of the restaurant can be said to follow more or less expressed directions. Concerning the cooks, there are not that many Swedes that are able to cook Italian food. However, Swedish cooks are in demand to handle the fish section, thus times when two cooks are needed normally consist of one Italian and one Swedish cook working. For the job as a pizza baker, not many Swedes are to be found, although

the work does not demand a certain nationality. For the waiter/waitresses a condition is to be able to speak understandable Swedish.

In the restaurant, the staff is working as a team. For example, the two cooks need to communicate to ensure different dishes are ready at the same time. Although the tasks are quite separate between the cooks, the wait staff and the dishwashers, the way of working is as a team. During the day there are many things that need to be done, however Italia il Ristorante do not provide a manual of daily routines for the work. There are no set rules, the employees learn on the job, as time passes. Nevertheless, difficulties may appear when it is not understood regular tasks are to be done. At the restaurant, the staff works hard during busy times and relaxes when there is less work to do.

Concerning hierarchies among the employees, they are considered, in general, to be non-existent at Italia il Ristorante. There are no titles applied to the staff, and the basic salary is said to be the same for everyone. However, the salary is also said to be dependent on one's age and former experience, thus it is consequently not the same for everyone. There are two owners of the restaurant who take care of the marketing, import Italian products etc. and are not working in the restaurant. In the responsible position is a restaurant manager, also with Italian background, and if he is absent someone else among the waiters/waitresses takes his role. This is seen as the only situation where an eventual hierarchy might occur. In general, the communication among the staff is considered very good, at least when the conversation concerns the work. When everything goes according to plan and people have clear instructions and know what to do, the communication runs smoothly. However, when situations deviate from the usual way work occurs, it takes longer time to explain to some people why the routines are changing. It can be small nuances in the chosen word that makes the difference. Therefore, body and sign language are useful to make the simple things easy to understand, for example, showing a spoon if one needs more spoons.

Phenomenology

The philosophic idea phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in the early twentieth century. Phenomenology aims to study the world as it is perceived by humans, in what way an individual ascribes a certain phenomenon meaning in a particular context and in a particular time. It is a philosophy striving to be foundational for science and one that seeks

knowledge in things “as they are”, their essence. The main focus in phenomenology is the consciousness and *how* phenomena appear to us in our consciousness (Willig, 2008).

Instead of looking for statistical facts, the phenomenological approach searches for the *meaning* of a phenomenon or an activity, to deepen the *understanding* of that phenomenon. The phenomenological researcher seeks to find out the meaning-structure of a phenomenon, to understand the way it is constituted (Karlsson, 1993). By understanding the individual meaning and interpretation of a person’s subjective life-world, one can get a greater comprehension of the life-world we are all sharing. Sages (2003) argues that meaning is a continuous process, a result of a process of constitution created by the individual in interaction with his/her context. The individual and his world are viewed as co-constituted and thus, as inseparable components of meaning. To get an understanding of the phenomenon of intercultural communication present in the employees daily life, one needs to understand the individual meaning given to the phenomenon. The ambiguity of different interpretations of the same phenomenon allows the researcher to find patterns, webs of meanings, between different life-world descriptions and thus a comprehension of the phenomenon of investigation.

Phenomenology is usually separated into descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology. Husserl, referred to as the founder of this philosophy, is considered an advocate of descriptive phenomenology. The goal within this branch is expressed by Wojnar and Swanson (2007) as obtaining an understanding of the essence of a phenomenon. Since Husserl considered consciousness to be a condition of all human experiences, one needs to study the meaning the individual attributes to the lived experience to attain the true essence of the phenomenon under investigation. This requires a direct interaction between the researcher and the objects of study as well as an ability to put aside one’s own prior understandings, which are considered to prevent the achievement of the state of pure consciousness, known as *Epoché*. This concept formulated by Husserl implies the ability to *bracket* all our assumptions, judgments, interpretations and presuppositions about the phenomenon. By doing that, it is possible for the researcher to understand the constitution process of a phenomenon and to get to its essence (Moustakas, 1994; Willig, 2008).

To understand what is in front of us as the phenomenon of investigation and let it enter our consciousness, Husserl presented some central ideas. He argued that everything around us appears to us as *something*, and how we perceive this something is dependent on our location,

context, angle of perception and most importantly the perceiver's mental orientation such as his desires, wishes, judgments, emotions, aims and purposes. This is referred to as *intentionality*, a fundamental phenomenological concept implying that different people do perceive and experience the same event or phenomenon in very different ways. When perceiving a phenomenon, an act or even communication, our perceptions are always intentional and not added to perception as an afterthought (Moustakas, 1994; Willig, 2008). For example, a message intended as a joke by the sender may be misinterpreted by the receiver as an insult if he does not get the ironic twist. A clarification by the sender may explain the aim of the joke and prevent irritation and a damaged relationship, although the intentional perception of the receiver was directed to pay attention to the pronounced words and not to the implicit message.

Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) argues that the mind which is intentionally directed towards an object is always comprised of a *noema* and *noesis*. Noema is the phenomenon of perception and the content of meaning, it is immanent in consciousness and thus individual. It is not *the* intercultural communication as if it could only be perceived in one way, but the appearance of intercultural communication which makes sense to individuals in different ways. The various ways of how people perceive a phenomenon is dependent on components such as angle of perception, former experiences, mental orientation etc. This enables a particular experience of the phenomenon to be individual. The way I perceive intercultural communication is unique to me. Although, our consciousness is constituted by the interaction of noema and noesis. Noesis is then the *act* of consciousness, to which noema is the object. Noesis is to what we direct our consciousness thorough for example thoughts, perceptions or actions. The act is always related to a meaning, the noema, and the meaning is the content of the act. The relationship between the two inseparable components and the origin of meaning are the essential functions of intentionality (Moustakas, 1994).

The other branch in phenomenology, hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, is a modified track of Husserl's approach, developed by among others Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. The fundamental difference between the two directions, is the fact that the hermeneutic phenomenology view humans as interpretive beings "capable of finding significance and meaning in their own lives" (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p.174). Whereas the context was minor to Husserl, it is vital in hermeneutic phenomenology. The basic thought within this discipline is that individuals cannot appear separated from their culture, social context or historical period in

which they live. Former experiences is connected to how one understands the world and influence how one interprets reality. This dialogical relationship is also present between the interpreter and the phenomenon of investigation, and implies an impossibility for the researcher to achieve a total state of bracketing as suggested by Husserl. The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is then to be aware of one's prior understandings of the phenomenon under investigation, and identify the respondent's meanings from the combination of the researcher's understanding, the respondent-generated information and eventual other relevant data (Willig, 2008; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Phenomenology and its use according to the author. The aim of phenomenology is to look for and start out from the individual meaning attributed to a phenomenon, although the way of get to this meaning is viewed differently by descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenologists. In this study, the author will not be consistent and follow one of the disciplines but attempt to use parts from both of them.

When studying culture and communication in the context of a work place, social, contextual and historical factors are seen by the author as inevitable influences on the way an individual perceive the intercultural communication at his/her work place. A perception can never be exactly the same for two people. Due to different former experiences and different cultural backgrounds, the constitution process of the meaning one attributes to intercultural communication today will be partly unique to this individual. Taking the aspect of the contextual influence into account is in agreement with the hermeneutic branch of phenomenology. However, during the research process the author has strived to bracket herself as much as possible as aimed to in the descriptive phenomenology. The provided outcomes will not serve as a confirmation of definite statement about *the* intercultural communication. They should be seen as indications to how intercultural communication intentionally possibly can be perceived differently, and be used as a foundation and a consideration in the work of enhance work values and relations among the employees at a work place.

Overview, objects and research questions

It has been argued that due to today's increased number of multicultural work places, knowledge of communication between people with different cultural backgrounds is required. To

communicate is one of the human fundamentals when adapting to the environment, however that is not to say that it could be investigated independent of other factors. As the phenomenological approach says, our consciousness is always directed towards something and the individual way we all ascribe meaning to this something will consequently create our unique perception of a phenomenon. Our meaning constitution has one of its bases in our cultural background which starts to form us from the first days of our lives. Moreover, at the work place, the interaction between employees shapes the organizational structure and culture simultaneously as it guides the communication among the workers. Thus, neither the contextual nor the individual aspects are possible to overlook in the study of intercultural communication.

With collected material from the two work places Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and Italia il Ristorante, this qualitative study about intercultural communication at the work place aim to shed light on the following research questions;

- To look for indications on how culture influences individual, and eventual different ways of constitute meaning about intercultural communication at the work place.
- To investigate if, and in that case how, the context of a particular work place influences the way one perceives intercultural communication.

Method

Qualitative method

To investigate the presented object and research questions, this explorative study used a qualitative method based on a phenomenological position. Some of the characteristics of a qualitative study are its explorative and descriptive focus, the use of an emergent design, the use of a purposive sample and a data collection of this sample in it's natural setting. In its initial stages a qualitative study has an open-ended perspective investigating what there is to be found, since one can never fully predict or predetermine the behavior of people in a given situation. Therefore, no formal hypotheses are formulated, on one hand since it narrows down the field of study and might cause loss of important information, on the other hand hypotheses always will be formulated by the researcher based on his/hers pre-comprehensions of the phenomenon (Karlsson, 1993; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

The aim of a qualitative research within the phenomenological approach is to capture the way an individual interprets the world, to achieve an understanding of their construction of an event or a phenomenon. Thus, the ontological position is to view reality as individual life-world perceptions. This understanding is best attained by words, since it is through words that most of us come to understand our situations. We create our world with words, and we do explain ourselves with words, thus, the collected data of a qualitative study is most often a text that indicates how the person interprets his world (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.18).

The phenomenological approach views the human as a complex whole, where every seemingly part is dependent on each other. For example, gender is a concept constructed in a context, dependent on this cultural context where it is created. It can be placed somewhere but not independently of the whole. One cannot be perceived as *only* a woman or a man, one is simultaneously a student or a parent or anything else, and, thus, many parts of a meaning taken together as a totality. Therefore, any outcome is also a product of its context and the patterns that will emerge from the data will describe the life world of a contextual person (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This is further emphasized by Karlsson (1993);

According to phenomenology, experience cannot be explained in terms of an external independent cause. Cause-and-effect relationships may be a suitable way of describing nature, but not human experiences (Karlsson, p.15).

The physical work place is partly shared by the employees in the study but their perception of it is individual and thus can be experienced differently. In order to understand how people with different cultural backgrounds perceive and experience the communication at their work place, and how they ascribe meaning to it, a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach is the most appropriate.

Respondents

The respondents in this study were employees at the two work places described above; Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and Italia il Ristorante. A project description available in both Swedish and English was presented and handed out to all the work places requested to participate in the study, along with a description of the researcher and her aim for the study, see appendix 2. The work places were chosen of practical reasons and were to be found within two separate domains which mean the work tasks were very different from each other. Also the composition of represented

nationalities was different between the investigated work places. The only criterion for the work places involved was to have a diversity of nationalities among the employees, which meant that any two work places could have been interesting to examine. The purpose of collecting narratives from different work places was to see whether, and eventually how, the experience of intercultural communication would be similar or different between them.

The two descriptions of the work places presented above were obtained by interviewing the person in a responsible position at each work place according to an interview guide (see appendix 1). This was done with the aim to create an idea of the context such as the construction of the work place and the organization, and composition of the employees. The work places were contacted and participated in the study in the spring 2012.

Procedure

To achieve the individual's unique life-world description and experiences of intercultural communication at their work place, a self report was constructed where the respondents were encouraged to write as freely as possible about the phenomenon 'intercultural communication'. The free writing gave an additional possibility to look for eventual contradictions within a person, related to the concept of multiple voices within the same person. In accordance with Sages and Lundsten (2004) the following instruction was given in the self reports;

I would be very thankful if you would like to write anything that comes into your mind when you think of the communication between people from different cultures at your working place. It can for example be your thoughts, feelings, ideas or experiences about intercultural communication...interactions with colleagues...anything else.... Feel free to write as much as you feel and want ... your contribution is very important to me.

Furthermore, a short text followed emphasizing that what was being looked for was a description in one's own words and expressions, and that grammar, structure and spelling would not be stressed at all. An ethical consideration was taken since the self report also informed that one's anonymity was guaranteed and that one was not obliged to participate or could cancel their participation at any time. The participants then wrote individually as much as they wanted about their approach to intercultural communication. No other information such as demographic

variables was collected about the participants, which was a part of the guarantee of anonymity. But also, this decision was made in order to make the respondents write as freely as possible and not be inhibited by giving information about their nationalities, sex or age. Moreover, since the analysis aims to look at patterns of similarities and differences within and between the work places, none of this information was considered necessary to collect.

In the original version of the self report, the instructions were in English although a Swedish version was made since many of the respondents did not speak English. Among the 16 narratives collected from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola of a total of 17, everyone was written in Swedish, whereas the 5 narratives collected from Italia il Ristorante of a total of approximately 20, were in both English and Swedish. The narratives were written by hand or using a computer by the respondents, and then transferred into a separate computer by the author. The analyses of the narratives were made in the same language as the narrative was written in, and then, if necessary, translated into English when presented in the outcome part of this paper. Four randomly chosen narratives have been analyzed with the software MCA Minerva; two from Hyllie Park and two from Italia il Ristorante. The analysis process started before all the narratives were handed in.

Method of analysis

The narratives were analyzed by the two software applications *MCA (Meaning Constitution Analysis) Minerva* and *Le Sphinx Lexica*. The two software applications will in combination with each other support the process of getting at the essence and the meaning in the narratives, which is strived for in phenomenology, hence they were appropriate methods of analysis in this study. MCA Minerva provides a depth in the narratives whereas Le Sphinx Lexica simply counts the frequency of words used in the narratives. Le Sphinx Lexica can show *what* the narratives are talking about, whereas MCA Minerva gives an indication of *how* they are talking about it.

A phenomenological analysis with MCA Minerva. MCA Minerva, from now on referred to as Minerva, is a tool used to analyze text into life-world constitutions. It allows the researcher to have the possibility of reaching to the pure realm of meaning by putting aside one's pre-comprehensions and expectations of a phenomenon, in other words to get as far away from "I" as possible (Sages & Lundsten, 2004). The narratives were broadly speaking torn apart and cut

down into meaning units and put back together with the purpose of understanding the person's life-world and what was really being intended. This process will be described as follows.

When analyzing the narratives in Minerva, four steps were gone through. The first step was to divide the sentences into *meaning units*. A meaning unit is the smallest piece of a text expressing a thought, feeling, experience or intent. Therefore, the meaning units were in general relatively short which means less room for uncontrolled interpretation by the researcher. By dividing the text into the smallest parts possible without any changes in the content, the possibilities to validate the analysis increases as well since another researcher can follow each step of the process and identify eventual differences in an analysis of their own (Sages & Lundsten, 2004).

When all sentences in the narrative were broke up into meaning units, the second step was to create *Modalities*. The modalities are derived from the phenomenological theory and indicate how the individuals experience their live-world, in this study how the employees perceive the intercultural communication at their work place. Originally in Minerva, there are seven modalities labeled *Belief, Function, Time, Affects, Will, Property* and *Subject*. Each meaning unit was sorted into one of the subcategories of each modality, presented in Table 1. By categorizing the meaning units into one of the subcategories of each modality, one will get an understanding of the form of experiencing a certain phenomenon, *how* the respondent approached the phenomenon. The modalities help to comprehend, for example, if the respondent is sure of what they are talking about, if he/she talks in the past, present or in the future etc. Thus, this phenomenological method of analysis made it possible to get an indication not only of “what” appears but also on its “how” of apparition (Sages & Lundsten, 2004).

Table 1. The modalities and their subcategories.

Modality	Subcategory
Belief	Doxa-affirmation, Doxa-negation, Probability, Possibility, Question
Function	Perspective, Signitive, Imaginative
Time	Past, Present, Future, Always-recurrent, Empty
Affects	Neutral, Positive-prospective, Positive-retrospective, Negative-prospective, Negative-retrospective
Will	Wish-positive, Wish-negative, Engagement, Aspiration, Unengagement, None

Continuation of Table 1. The Modalities and their subcategories.

Property	My, his/her/its, Our, Your, Their, Not stated
Subject	I, We, One-all, Unspecified

An explanation of the signification of some of the subcategories that guided the author in the categorization of the meaning units follows. The subcategory of the modality Belief, *doxa-affirmation*, signifies that one knows what he is talking about, no hesitation is expressed. In contrast, *doxa-negation* is chosen when there is an uncertainty in the expression. The significations of the modality Function are the following; *perspective* was chosen when concrete and detailed information was given in the meaning unit, the subcategory *signitive* referred to when the meaning unit was more general and did not express something concrete, and finally *imaginative* was chosen as a function when the meaning unit expressed the narrator's perception of a concept, for example in a symbolic way. The subcategory *always-recurrent* within the modality Time, refers to expressions where something was constantly in progress and where the subcategory *present* was not considered as the most appropriate.

In the third step, each meaning unit was further divided into *Partial Intentions*. These partial intentions refers to the different intentions that are to be found in each meaning unit and which will, taken together, lead to the constituted meaning. The partial intentions were obtained by the Epoché, the aim to get as far from "I" as possible, and are presented in all possible general and individual aspects (Sages & Lundsten, 2004). An example follows to illustrate the division from a meaning unit into partial intentions;

Meaning unit: *I am personally satisfied working*

Partial intentions:

I exist

I can be satisfied

I can work

I can be satisfied working

I can personally be satisfied working

Work exist

Work can make me satisfied

The fourth step was then to sort out the *Entities* and *Predicates* in the partial intentions. The entities are what appear as something that exists for the experiencing individual. The predicates are one or several expressions of the entities, the intentional noema, and highlight the meaning structure as experienced by the respondents (Sages & Lundsten, 2004). To clarify by example;

Entities	Predicates
<i>I</i>	<i>Who exist</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Who can be satisfied</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Who can work</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Who can be satisfied working</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Who can be personally satisfied working</i>
<i>Work</i>	<i>Which exists</i>
<i>Work</i>	<i>Which can make me satisfied</i>

As one can see from the given example, a greater number of different predicates indicate the importance of an entity for the respondent. Consequently, from this example, the entity “I” should be considered more important to the respondent since “I” apparently can do and be several things whereas “work” is just something that exists and that ‘can make me satisfied’.

The analysis of a narrative as presented above was the process where the unworked narrative has been torn apart and it serves as a basis for the interpretation where the parts will be put back together again as an understanding of the respondents life-world, and how he/she perceive and ascribe meaning to intercultural communication in the context of his/her work place. The four interpretations are made by the author and will be presented in Part 1 in the ‘Outcomes’ section’.

Analysis with Le Sphinx Lexica. The second software application which has been used, Le Sphinx Lexica, from now on referred to as Sphinx, is an assistance in counting the frequency of the words most used in the narratives. It provides a lexical analysis and does oneself most justice with a great corpus of text since it has a great ability of discrimination.

When the Sphinx was used, all narratives were put together in one document although possible to separate from each other. Sphinx provides a list of the frequency of the words used in the narratives. From that list, the author could see which words were used most times and within which narrative. Since many words can be considered synonymous or belong to the same field, words can be grouped together and labeled. This was done according to the groups presented in Table 2. The groups were created on a basis which that could possibly shed light over the research questions. Since the Minerva analyses were made before the analysis in Sphinx, entities frequently that occurred in these analyses formed groups as well.

Table 2. The groups constructed by the author, some examples of words in each group, and their frequency

Group	Frequency	Examples of words in each group
Work	63	Work, work place, working, colleagues, team, work team, job, the job, staff
Communication	138	Communicate, understand, discuss, word, speak, talk, language, conversation, interpretation, listen, linguistic
Verbal communication	40	Words, question, say, talk, speak, argue, verbal, fight, scream, tell
Non verbal communication	40	Gestures, eye contact, feelings, clothing, behavior, dialect, intonation, nod, body language
Culture	63	Culture, multicultural, intercultural, monocultural, background
Difficulties	39	Barrier, communication problem, conflict, misunderstanding, misinterpretation, difficult, culture clash
Mutual exchange	45	Shared, common, relations, together, mutual, agreement, cooperation, group, groups, similarities, between humans
Differences	72	Different, unlike, differences, others
I	153	I, me, mine, my
We	89	We, our, ours

After the groups were made, a first analysis was done in order to see what each individual talked about in their narratives. A second analysis was made to see whether there were differences or similarities to be found between the work places, and if certain words were used to

a greater extent at a particular work place. This second analysis was made possible by the ability to divide the narratives into two groups accordant with which work place they belonged to.

Outcomes

The outcomes will be presented as follows. Part 1 will first present the outcomes of Sphinx in order to provide an overview of the narratives and their distance to the constructed groups of words, that is to see what each narrative is talking about. The outcomes from Minerva will follow, four interpretations of the narratives which have been analyzed with the purpose to emphasize the individual's perspective. This deep interpretation of the individual's own stories will provide an in-depth understanding of how intercultural communication is perceived differently by different individuals. New narratives will be created by the author from the original un-worked narratives written by the respondents.

Part 2 will present the outcomes within a contextual framework, in order to compare the work places with each other and investigate whether there is a difference in the experience of intercultural communication at the work place, which can be derived from the context of a particular work place. In this part, the presented outcomes from Sphinx have grouped the 21 narratives into two groups; Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and Italia il Ristorante to make an easy and clear comparison between the two work places. The four narratives interpreted from the Minerva analyses, two from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and two from Italia il Ristorante, will form the basis for the exploration of the eventual similar and/or different ways the workers are approaching intercultural communication at their work place.

Whether or not the reader agrees with the following interpretations made by the author, the ecological validity presented in Figure 1 is high in the collected material, implying they contain information worth investigating.

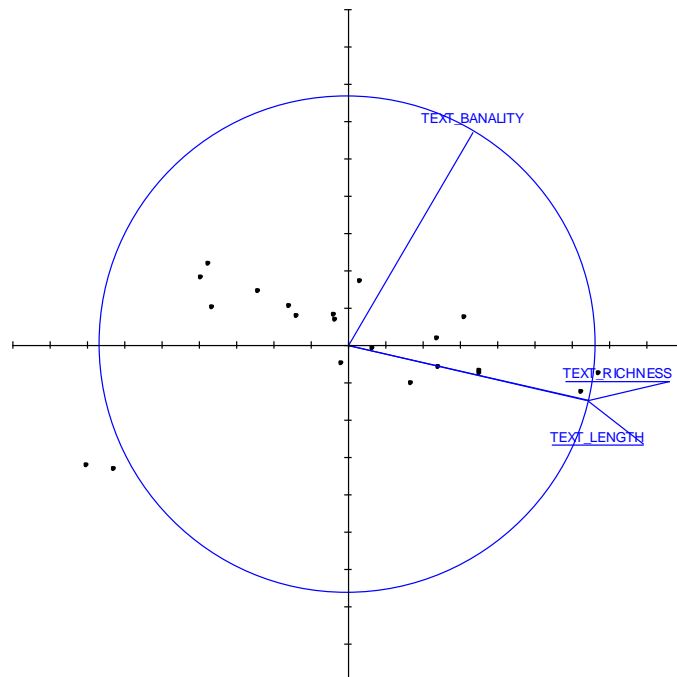


Figure 1. The graph indicates high ecological validity in the material analyzed in the study since the line 'Text Lengths' is much closer to 'Text Richness' than 'Text Banality'.

The graph above shows that the material has a high degree of ecological validity, which refers to the study of a purposive sample in their natural setting. The two lines 'Text Lengths' and 'Text Richness' overlap each other which signifies that the material contains something interesting for investigation. A degree of Text richness that is close to Text length indicates that the 21 respondents talk about intercultural communication in many different ways. The respondents have used many different words in their narratives about intercultural communication at the work place, and according to the ecological validity they found it important and have thus written about what was important to them. Therefore, in order to understand different meanings to intercultural communication in the context of a work place, the material in this study provides many interesting approaches to investigate.

Part 1. Individual level

Outcomes from Le Sphinx Lexica. As described in the method, groups of words were constructed in order to facilitate the view of what the respondents were talking about in the narratives. The ten groups of words were then analyzed with the 21 narratives from both Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and Italia il Ristorante. Person 1-16 works at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and person 17-21 work at Italia il Ristorante. The outcome is presented in figure 2.

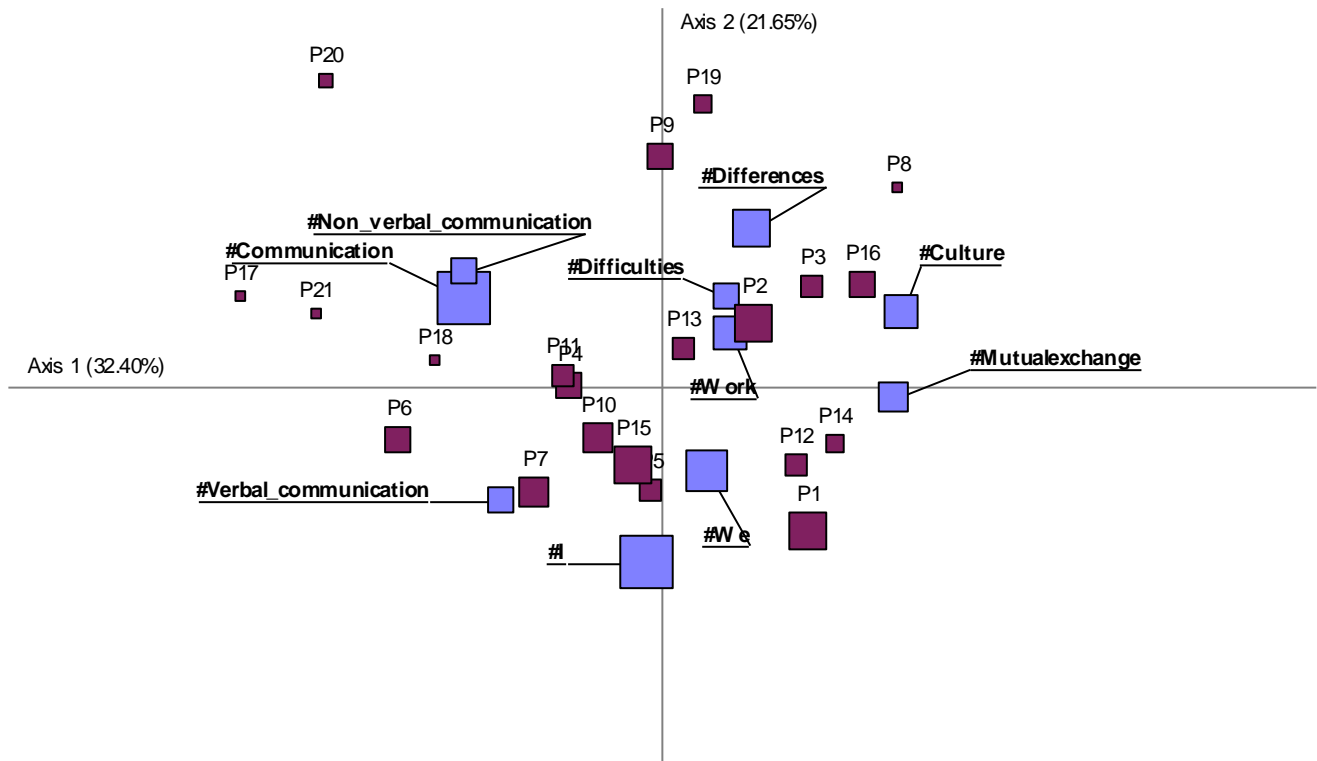


Figure 2. Each individual and the constructed groups of words are presented

The squares with a “name” are the groups of words and the ones labeled P and a number are the 21 narratives. The size of the squares indicates more or less content, in terms of words. For example, among the blue squares are the groups labeled “Communication” and “I” the ones containing most words (for a precise number of words in each group, see Table 2). Further, a bigger purple square indicates a longer narrative. The placing of the Person-squares and their specific distance to grouped word-squares indicates whether a respondent uses many or few words from a certain group.

Four narratives have been analyzed with Minerva and refer to person 3, 11, 19 and 21 in Figure 2. As indicated from their location, Person 3 is mainly talking about Culture, Differences and Work, whereas Person 11 mostly talks about Communication in both verbal and

non verbal terms. Person 19 is situated a bit further away and is closest to the group of Differences. Besides he/she is nowhere near the group I. Person 21 is to be found in the upper left area and closest to the groups of Communication and Non verbal communication and nowhere near Mutual exchanges or Culture.

Outcomes from Minerva, interpretation Person 3. The narrative from Person 3 is in 75% expressed in doxa-affirmation which implies that the respondent knows what he/she is talking about, there are no hesitations in the content. In addition, 70% of the meaning units are expressed in a perceptive way, signifying that concrete and detailed information is given. The sole meaning unit expressed in the belief probability and additionally the only meaning unit expressed with a negative affect is “it can create problems”, referring to an absence of a democratic spirit.

30% of the narrative is expressed with a positive affect which in the majority of times are found when the respondent talks about or refers to him/herself.

Concerning the subjects in the narrative, **I** is expressed as the subject in 25% of the narrative, **One-all** is expressed in 15% and **We** is expressed in 10%.

I and **One** are the most frequent entities, appearing 25 respectively 28 times in the analysis. Predicates attached to **I** are mainly expressed with a positive affect, whereas predicates attached to **One** are mostly expressed in a neutral affect.

In the narrative, **I** is someone who can have my own culture, who rarely experiences misunderstandings or culture clashes, who likes to experience and who develops and progresses in the communication with people from different cultures. The expression that **I** can have my own culture indicates that other people also can have a culture although a different one. **One** is someone who can talk and communicate with different people, who can work together, who can have different values and who can sometimes misunderstand each other.

The respondent expresses the importance of **communication** when people have different cultures. This type of communication is more important today than decades before, since we no longer live in an isolated world. This expression indicates an experience of another “world”, a more isolated one, where communication was not as important and perhaps not as necessary as today.

The **work place** which is expressed as a property to the respondent, **my** work place, consists of people from ten different countries who work together every day. This constitution of people may indicate the opposite to the isolated world we lived in some decades ago.

Misunderstandings are something that both can and cannot occur at the work place, according to the respondent. **I** do not experience it very often, but there is a possibility for it to occur since **One** can sometimes misunderstand. This creates possibilities for problems to occur. The expressed solution is a democratic spirit, which according to the respondent makes it possible to work together despite different cultures, different countries, different values, culture clashes and the misunderstandings which sometimes occur.

Thus, what has been opened up by this narrative is that communication that exists between people with different cultures seems to be considered more important today than some years ago.

The most interesting outcome of this narrative is the occurrence of **I** and **One** in different contexts. **I** is the most frequent subject that occur within the narrative and is, in the majority of instances expressed with a positive affect and when optimistic experiences are mentioned. Meaning units where the subject is **One** are mainly expressed with a natural affect. **One** is also used when mentioning the occurrence of negative things, such as misunderstandings and problems. Thus, the narrative seems to indicate that the respondent is present in terms of **I** when positive experiences are expressed in relation to intercultural communication, whereas a distance in terms of using the subject **One** is indicated when negative things such as misunderstandings and problems are expressed.

Outcomes from Minerva, interpretation Person 11. The narrative written by Person 11 reports a positive affect in 11,76% of the meaning units. Two meaning units are expressed in a negative affect, corresponding to 5,88%, and are both times expressed in the same context as the entity **We**.

88,24% of the narrative is expressed in doxa-affirmation.

Remarkably 32,35% in the narrative express the subject is **We**. In addition, **We** is the entity with most predicates attached to it (33), which indicates that **We** is an important entity to the respondent.

With a closer look at the subject **We**, it seems like the subject can refer to the **team of teachers** who are people born in Sweden and outside Sweden. **We** in this community can have difficulties to understand, **We** can discuss, and there can be difficulties in understanding each other among those of us who are Swedish and non Swedish teachers. This is the only context with a meaning unit expressed in a negative-prospective affect, one of the two negative meaning units. The negative affect is expressed in relation to difficulties present to **We** as Swedish born and not Swedish born teachers

. **We** also seems to refer to those who are **not born in Sweden**. **We** can come from different countries, “like Asia and southern Europe”. **We** can take fast decisions, be flexible, careful, and easily take in new things. **We** can also come straight to the point, even to a greater extent than Swedes. Furthermore, **We** are more open, social and can joke about anything, indicating that Swedes do not have these traits, or at least not to the same extent. These meaning units are expressed with a positive-prospective affect, indicating a preference of these traits.

We (not Swedish born teachers) are also people who can do things in the same way with a Swedish teacher as **We** do with people from another country. Although *if* we do it in the same way, there is an expressed possibility that **misunderstandings** and **conflicts** can be created. This is the second meaning unit expressed within a negative affect, however with a retrospective direction, indicating that former experiences might have taught the consequences of this and that behavior. Therefore, this community of **We** in this context is more careful when speaking to Swedish teachers. More predicates attached to the second community of **We** may indicate a greater importance, or perhaps a greater feeling of belonging, to this group of people than to the team of all teachers.

We was also expressed by the respondent in a context that made it difficult to define to which communities described above it related. In this context, **knowledge** is mentioned as something that can be about **language**, and a lack of knowledge about the language is expressed in the narrative. An incomplete meaning unit “Sometimes there can be communication” is interpreted by the author as if there is an absence of the word “problem”. Communication problem is then followed by the meaning unit “concerning the language”, exemplified by a lack of knowledge about the language. This eventual communication problem is further exemplified by how **We** talk, what body language **We** use, and the sound level. Thus, whether this

community of **We** refer to the team of teachers or to **We** as not Swedish born teachers is hard to define.

The subject **I** is present in only 5,88% of the narrative. **I** is someone who can think in the present tense, who can work, and who can work as a teacher for 12 years. Thus, the high rate of doxa-affirmation seem to correspond to the fact that the respondent has worked as a teacher for 12 years and hence knows what he/she is talking about.

The sole meaning unit expressed in an imaginative function is “Feelings or experiences”, not followed by something clarifying what these concepts refer to, they are left to the interpreter to think of their meaning. The preceding meaning units are the ones which are hard to connect with one of the communities of **We**, and the following ones refer to **We** as not Swedish born teachers. Thus, “feelings or experiences” probably refer to something **We** have, whether they are common for people not born in Sweden or as additional factors explaining eventual communication problems.

Perceptive expressions constitute 73, 53% of the narrative. The detailed examples of eventual outcomes of a certain behavior, what language consists of, how **We** can refer to different groups in different contexts all indicates that the respondent knows what he/se is talking about and express very little hesitation and ambiguity, which is confirmed by the high percentages of doxa-affirmation.

So, the most notable in this narrative is the indicated importance of **We**.

We can refer to at least two communities at the work place, **We** as a **team of teachers** and **We** as **non Swedish born** teachers. Non Swedish born teachers can come from Asia or southern Europe. The respondent expresses a belonging to both communities.

When talking about **We** as teachers, problems such as difficulties to understand each other are mentioned and a negative affect is expressed. When talking about **We** as not Swedish born teachers, positive traits are used as characteristics of the group.

The **language** is something someone can have **knowledge** about, followed by an indication that language consist of how we speak, body language, sound level and eventually even “feelings or experiences”. With a lack of knowledge about the language, eventual communication problems can be created.

What can sometimes lead to **misunderstandings** and **conflicts** is when **We**, referring to non Swedish born teachers, do things in the same way with a Swedish teacher, i.e. joke about

anything or being open and social. Therefore, with this knowledge, **We** are more careful when talking and communicating with Swedes than with someone from another country.

Outcomes from Minerva, interpretation Person 19. In this narrative, almost 40% is expressed within a positive affect; 27,78% in positive-prospective and 11,11% in positive-retrospective. Meaning units expressed in positive-prospective, implying a positive affect directed towards the future, are "speaks good English", "overall, its like good experience", "there is good communication between persons", "and hence there is no language barrier". Thus, **English** can be spoken well, persons can communicate and, communication can be good between persons, hence language is not a **barrier**, giving good experiences overall. The used word **overall** correspond well to the 40% of the narrative expressed in a positive affect.

Positive-retrospective is a positive affect directed towards the past and is comprised of meaning units such as "I personally satisfied working" and "even, I didn't feel problem with the language". Referring to the time **I** have been working, **I** am personally satisfied working and although problems with the language may occur, **I** did not feel them.

The 11,11% of the expressions which are in negative-retrospective are also referred to **I** who can feel guilty for not learning the language.

Furthermore, **I** is the most frequently used subject, one third of the narrative is expressed with **I** as the subject whereas the rest (66,67%) is an unspecified subject. **I** am someone who can be working, who can be satisfied by working, who can have experiences, and an origin country. **I** cannot feel problems with the language, although there is an awareness of its existence. **I** can feel guilty and **I** can have stayed for three years.

The repeated reference to oneself is further confirmed by the property **My** where one can get **My** experiences, **My** work, **My** culture, **My** origin country.

The majority of the text, 88,89 % is expressed within doxa-affirmation.

The respondent expresses that he/she has stayed here for three years and that it is **overall** a good experience to work with different people from different cultures. **Here** is completely different from the working culture in **my** origin country and that **here** is good. All expressions follows the initial expression "With my 25 years of experience" indicating that the person tells his/her story with an sureness derived from his/her own life and starts out from his/her own

experiences. This is reinforced twice in the narrative where “**I personally**” and “**I personally feel myself**” is used, emphasizing that one is talking to a great extent from oneself.

Possibility is only expressed in the meaning unit “even, in the group parties also”. This is also the sole meaning unit expressed within the Function imaginative, indicating that it is unclear and left to the reader to wonder what group parties refers to.

83,33% of the meaning units are expressed with a perceptive function, giving new and detailed information. As indicated above, most of this perceptive information is given clearly from the respondent him/herself.

The respondent talks about **working culture** which can be different between countries and even completely different **here** compared to the respondent’s origin country. This may indicate that **Different cultures** can refer to different working cultures as well as different nationalities. However, a certain working culture seems to be possible to exist in one country but not another one (here vs. origin country).

To sum up what has been derived from this narrative, **I** is mainly in focus and very emphasized in different ways throughout the narrative. The high percentage of doxa-affirmation is backed up by the expression that the respondent talks from a perspective initially referring to his/her 25 years of experience. The narrative indicates that no others are involved in the expressed opinions since general entities such as **One** or **We** are not used at all.

English is spoken well by the people at the work place leading to good communication. The language consequently is not a **barrier**, however this expression simultaneously indicates an awareness of the possibility for misunderstandings to occur.

The narrative is to one third expressed in a positive affect where the majority of the meaning units expresses an optimistic glance towards the future. When something is expressed with a negative affect, it is in relation with **I**, for example **I feel personally guilty** for not learning the language.

The respondent refers to a **working culture** and a difference between **here** and his/her origin country, connected with a valuation of good and not as good.

Outcomes from Minerva, interpretation Person 21. The narrative is expressed in a negative-retrospective affect in 30% and in a positive affect in 30%. Of the meaning units expressed with a positive affect, 20% are directed towards the past and refer to **I** who can realize the importance

of physical language. **Language** can be **physical** and important and the realization of that was expressed in an optimistic way.

A second meaning unit expressed in positive-prospective refers to the subject **We** who can be patient, even up to 110% more patient. **We** refers in this case to **Swedes**, and are considered to be 110% more patient than non Swedes. The sole meaning unit expressed in positive-prospective “and can be kind and listen for ever” also refers to **We** as **Swedes**. The three meaning units expressed in negative-retrospective refer to **They** who can stop listening, and a necessity to “talk with the hands” (otherwise **They** will stop listening) and an adjustment that can be big. In the second meaning unit, **Italians** are introduced and later on referred to as **They**. Thus, the **Italians** will stop listening if one do not talk with the hands, indicating that this is not something **Swedes** do.

The whole narrative is expressed in doxa-affirmation. There is no ambiguity concerning what the respondent talks about. Throughout the narrative, there is no property stated. 80% of the meaning units are expressed in a perceptive Function, giving new and detailed information to the reader.

The respondent refers in a past tense to a big adjustment referring to the ability to keep oneself concise and intense when speaking to the **Italians**.

Concerning the subjects, **I**, **We** and **One**, they are represented in one meaning unit each. **I** is someone who can work and who can realize something important. This something can be language, which can be both physical and important. **I** can realize this. **We** are people, referring to Swedes, who can be up to 110% more patient than **Italians**.

One is someone who can talk with the hands, keep oneself concise, keep oneself intense, who can work and talk with **Swedes**, be listening kindly and be listening forever. When **One** is someone who can talk with the hands, keep oneself concise and intense, and talk and work with **Swedes**, **One** seems to be referring to a singular person, **I**. When **One** is someone who can be listening kindly and forever, it is a more general term referring to a group of people, which is **We** as **Swedes**.

The big **Adjustment** in the narrative refers to the experienced difference of talking to **Italians** in comparison to **Swedes** and is exemplified with traits characteristic for each nationality.

Engagement is expressed in 90% of the meaning units. The remaining 10% are categorized as unengagement and refers to when **They** stops listening. It indicates that engagement is demanded to keep their attention, that is the **Italian's** attention.

Consequently, the narrative is written with a high certainty of what one is talking about since it is expressed in 100% doxa-affirmation, given mostly detailed information.

The importance of **Physical language** such as talking with the hands is emphasized. This is an engagement necessary to prevent **They**, referring to **Italians**, from stopping listening to you. The encounter with **Italians** within a context of a work place made the respondent realize that **Swedes** and **Italians** talks differently and adjust oneself to the context.

The meaning units are expressed with a positive affect when talking about **I** or **We** as **Swedes**. A negative affect is expressed when talking about **They**, referring to **Italians**, or an adjustment existing as a consequence of starting to work with **Italians**.

Summary of outcomes in Part 1

All 21 narratives have been analyzed in Sphinx to see what the employees at Italia il Ristorante and Hyllie Park Folkhögskola are talking about. The outcome is presented in Figure 2. To see in what way people talks differently about the phenomenon, four narratives written by Person 3, 11, 19 and 21 have been analyzed in Minerva. Both Sphinx and Minerva indicates that the respondents do talk about different things and also in different ways concerning intercultural communication at the work place.

According to Figure 2, Person 3 is mainly talking about Culture, Differences, Difficulties and Work. This is further indicated in the interpretation where the respondent expresses the increased importance of intercultural communication since the world has changed the last decades and we are not longer living in an isolated world. Misunderstandings are mentioned and are possible to occur in the communication at the work place, although the respondent him/herself does rarely experience them. In general are expressions related to **I** expressed with a positive affect and a neutral affect is mainly expressed when word belonging to the group Difficulties are mentioned.

The location of Person 11 indicates that the respondent mostly talks about Communication in both verbal and non verbal terms. From the interpretation it is indicated that the sole meaning unit expressed with a negative affect, is when **We** is mentioned with a

reference to **We** as teachers. **We** is further the most common entity in the narrative and a distinction can be made when the respondent is referring to **We** as teachers or **We** as not Swedish born teachers. For the first community, difficulties to understand each other are expressed, whereas the second community is characterized by traits, mostly expressed in a positive affect.

Person 19 and 21 express in the interpretations positive affects to a higher extent than the two other narratives; 40% in each text. However, the percentage of negative affects are higher in the narrative by Person 21 than in the one by Person 19, 30% respectively 11%. Person 19 refers the only meaning unit expressed negatively in reference to his/herself, whereas Person 21 expresses a negative affect when talking about **They** as the **Italians**. Person 19 talks about the verbal communication where no language barriers are present since everybody speaks good **English** at the work place. The reference to **I** is central in this narrative. Figure 2 indicates that Person 19 who is situated a bit further away is closest to the group of Differences and besides nowhere near the group I. These contradictory indications by Sphinx and Minerva concerning Person 19's approach to intercultural communication should be noticed. However, this should be seen as a support for the use of Minerva, since one only gets an idea of *what* the respondents are talking about in Sphinx whereas Minerva gives indication of *how* one is talking about it. Person 19 express words related to the differences in work cultures between countries which may be the explanation to a closer location to the group Differences than to the group I. Anyhow, this contradiction should be seen as a proof of the strength in combining the two methods of analysis.

Finally, Person 21, working at the same work place, emphasizes the non verbal language and expresses its necessity to be able to understand each other. This could also be indicated by Figure 2 where Person 21 is to be found in the upper left area and thus closest to the groups of Communication and Non verbal communication, and nowhere near Mutual exchanges or Culture. All four narratives reports a high degree of doxa-affirmation, none of them goes below 75%. They also express more than 70% of their narratives in a perceptive function, giving detailed information that leaves no room for further questions.

Part 2; Contextual influences

Outcomes from Sphinx. To get an idea of the contextual influence, whether or not people from the different work places perceive intercultural communication in the same way, narrative 1-16 were grouped together and labeled Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and narrative 17-21 were grouped together and called Italia il Ristorante. These two groups were then analyzed with the ten groups of words. The outcome from Sphinx is presented in Figure 3.

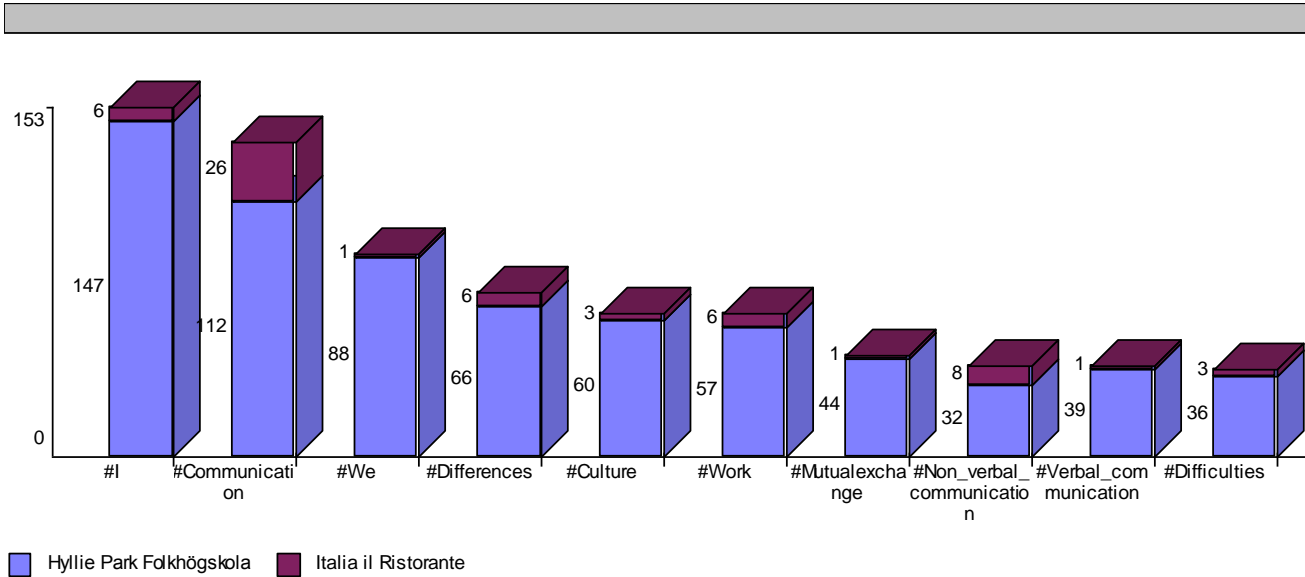


Figure 3. The narratives from the two work places and their use of the words in the constructed groups.

Thus, the blue parts of the bars comprise narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola whereas the purple parts refer to narrative collected at Italia il Ristorante. The salient difference between the work places can be explained by a larger amount of text produced by the respondents at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, and therefore this work place outweighs Italia il Ristorante in all categories of words used most within each group of words.

However, one should be cautious not to interpret Figure 3 in a misleading way. Due to the different amount of text, the graph presented in Figure 3 may be a little bit confusing. The frequency of words used by Italia il Ristorante within a certain group cannot be compared directly with the frequency of words used in the narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola in the same group; a greater corpus of text has a larger probability of representing a greater amount of words in a certain group. Therefore, to be able to compare what the respondents at Hyllie Park

and Italia are talking about, a comparison calculated as a percentage is more appropriate. The percentage is a calculation of the words used within a certain group in relation to the whole amount of words collected from that work place. This equation consequently allows us to compare the work places with each other. The comparison is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. A calculation in percentages of the occurrence of words within the groups in relation to all words collected from each work place.

Groups of words	Hyllie Park Folkhögskola	Italia il Ristorante
I	4,1%	1,9%
Communication	3,1%	8,3%
We	2,5%	0,3%
Differences	1,9%	1,9%
Culture	1,7%	1%
Work	1,6%	1,9%
Mutual Exchanges	1,2%	0,3%
Non verbal communication	0,9%	2,5%
Verbal communication	1,1%	0,3%
Difficulties	1%	1%
Percentage of text corpus*	19,1%	19,4%

* The percentage of words categorized into groups in relation to the whole text corpus from each work place

From Table 3 the followed can be derived. First of all, it shows that the percentage of used words that are to be found within the groups constructed by the author are almost the same for Hyllie Park and Italia il Ristorante, 19,1% respectively 19,4%.

In a comparison between the work places, one can further state that respondents from Italia il Ristorante express general words about communication in their narratives to a greater extent than do respondents from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola. To relate intercultural communication with words as “communication”, “talk”, “speak” and “converse” is apparently more common in the restaurant than in the school. Likewise, words about non verbal communication occur more frequently at Italia il Ristorante than at Hyllie Park. However, it is

more common to talk about verbal communication at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola than at Italia il Ristorante. The groups I and We are both more frequently used in the narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola than at Italia il Ristorante. Words related to Differences are expressed equally at the two work places, 1,9%, as are Difficulties, 1%. However, Mutual Exchanges are expressed to a greater extent at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola. Words about Culture are mentioned more times at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, whereas Work is more common to talk about at Italia il Ristorante.

Outcomes from Minerva. Consequently, some differences in what one talks about are found between the work places. From the interpretations of the Minerva analyses, the following can be derived in relation to each work place.

At Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, the two narratives (Person 3 and Person 11) express distinct subjects which constitute interesting interpretations of both narratives. Person 3 expresses his/herself mainly in terms of **I** whereas Person 11 uses a clear majority of the subject **We**.

Difficulties such as misunderstandings, conflicts, problems, and culture clashes are expressed in both narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, indicating a presence or an awareness of a presence of these difficulties. However, they differ in their way of relating oneself to these difficulties; Person 3 seems to create a distance to these negative occurrences by expressing them in a neutral affect and by using the subject **One**. Person 11 on the other hand involves him/herself in the difficulties experienced by talking about **We** as a team of teachers who sometimes have difficulties in understanding each other. Both narratives provides a solution or an alternative way of behaving in order to prevent these difficulties from occurring; a democratic spirit or to be more careful when talking to Swedes.

A kind of time perspective is presented in both narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola. An expression of a world existing today which is less isolated than decades ago, where people with different cultures are living together is provided in the narrative by Person 3. Person 11 starts out from a more personal position that his/her 12 years as a teacher have made it possible to meet colleagues and students from different countries. These expressions back up the high percentage of doxa-affirmation reported in both narratives, 75% respectively 82%, which indicates that the respondents knows what they are talking about.

The two narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola reports approximately the same percentages in negative affects expressed in the texts, that is 5% and 5,88% respectively. In all

cases the two respondents from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola refer to difficulties that may occur in a negative affect. The percentage of positive affects differ between the narratives; Person 3 expresses 30% of the meaning units in a positive affect where the majority of them refers to what benefits **I** get from intercultural communication. Person 11 expresses a positive affect in about 11% and they are exclusively expressed in relation to **We** as not Swedish born teachers and what traits people in this community have. Since the respondent seems to consider oneself belonging to this group, both narratives seems to indicate that a positive affect is mainly expressed when one is talking about something directly related to oneself.

Also at Italia il Ristorante, the two analyzed narratives (Person 19 and Person 21) reports a high percentage of doxa-affirmation implying they are sure about what they are talking about.

The most common subject in both narratives from Italia il Ristorante is **I**, especially in the one written by Person 19. In this narrative, no belonging to a community at the work place is expressed, the respondent gives his/her opinion only from his/herself. The subject **We** occurring one time in Person 21 and refers to Swedes, thus a belonging to Swedes is indicated.

As in the narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, former experiences are referred to when talking about intercultural communication. An adjustment is clearly expressed in one of the narratives from Italia il Ristorante as a necessity in the encounter with people from another country, such as **Italians**. Person 19 refers to the experience of three years as staying here and also to his/her 25 years of experience, referring to life experience. These experiences have taught Person 19 how to communicate with Italians in a successful way, whereas Person 21 is satisfied working with people from different cultures and does not express any difficulties related to intercultural communication.

Both verbal and non verbal communication is expressed in the narratives from Italia il Ristorante. The verbal language, by Person 19 referred to as English, is expressed with a positive affect and does not seem to cause any language barrier since every body at the work place speaks good English. Person 21 refers to verbal language as containing the ability to be short and concise. The non verbal communication is only expressed by Person 21 and referred to as physical language such as talking with the hands. The expressions concerning verbal and non verbal language in this narrative are connected to the adjustment of starting to work with Italians, and are thus expressed in a negative affect.

Positive affects are expressed to an extent of 40% in both narratives from Italia il Ristorante. However, the positive affect is mainly directed to the communication which seems to be perceived as function well by Person 19, whereas Person 21 express most meaning units with a positive affect in relation to his/herself. A negative affect is present to 11% respectively 30% at Italia il Ristorante. The negative affects are indicated to concern **I** or **They**, i.e. **Italians**.

Summary of outcomes in Part 2

In the analyzed narratives, difficulties are mentioned, and thus indicated to be present, at both work places although they are only spoken about to 1% at each work place. The respondents at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola exemplify difficulties that are possible, such as misunderstandings, problems, and culture clashes, whereas the narratives from Italia il Ristorante talks in terms of a big adjustment and an absence of a language barrier.

The respondents at both Italia il Ristorante and Hyllie Park Folkhögskola reports high percentages of doxa-affirmation, indicating that they all knows what they are talking about. This can further be indicated by the several examples given about intercultural communication and the fact that both Person 11 (Hyllie Park Folkhögskola) and Person 19 (Italia il Ristorante) mentions their years of experience of life and intercultural communication as an implicit insurance that they knows what they are talking about.

A distinction between Swedes and non Swedes is made in narratives from both work places, mainly expressed with the subject **We** and with the respondent expressing a belonging to one of the communities. This is further indicated in the outcomes from Sphinx where both Italia il Ristorante and Hyllie Park Folkhögskola talks about differences to 1,9%.

The subjects **I** and **We** are used to different extents at the work places. As Table 3 indicates, **I** is expressed in 4,1% at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola whereas respondent from Italia il Ristorante express **I** to 1,9%. **We** is less frequent at both work places; 2,5% at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and 0,3% at Italia il Ristorante. The outcomes from Minerva indicates that **I** is mainly used in the two narratives from Italia il Ristorante whereas one narrative from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola clearly focuses on **We** and the other one on **I**. **We** can refer to People who are Swedish born and not Swedish born, or to Swedes and Italians. Thus, a more or less salient division of people according to nationality seems to be present at both work places.

Verbal and non verbal communication is expressed in the narratives from both work places. Table 3 however indicates a difference in the frequency of talking about intercultural communication in words related to verbal or non verbal communication. Italia il Ristorante express words about non verbal communication in 2,5% of the collected material whereas Hyllie Park Folkhögskola only talks about on verbal communication 0,9%. Contrary, Hyllie Park Folkhögskola reports a higher percentage of words connected to verbal communication, 1,1%, compared to 0,3% at Italia il Ristorante.

Italia il Ristorante seems to express a positive affect to a greater extent than Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, whereas the narrative from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola indicates a lower degree of meaning units expressed in a negative affect.

Discussion

This study has examined and compared two multicultural work places in southern Sweden, Hyllie Park Folkhögskola and Italia il Ristorante, with the aim to look for indications of ways how intercultural communication may be constituted. Employees have been given the possibility to freely express their thoughts, feelings etcetera concerning intercultural communication. Four randomly chosen narratives have been analyzed with the phenomenological software MCA Minerva and all 21 narratives have been analyzed in Le Sphinx Lexica, which provides the frequency of words used. The combination of the two software applications made it possible to get indications of both *what* the respondents were talking about and *how* they were talking about it. An explorative study with a phenomenological approach has formed the basis of the study. The aim has been to look for indications of what seems to be important to different individuals, as well as indications of contextual influences in the constitution process of intercultural communication at the work places.

Intercultural communication, simply referred to as face-to-face communication between people with different cultural backgrounds (Jandt, 2010), should perhaps from now on be assigned a more complex definition. The outcomes of this study indicate that intercultural communication is a wide phenomenon possible to approach and constitute in several ways. There is no *the* intercultural communication, but several appearances of the phenomenon which will be discussed in Part 1. The outcomes also indicate a contextual influence on the constitution process of intercultural communication, which will be discussed in Part 2. According to the outcomes, it

seems that both positive and negative affects are expressed in relation to the phenomenon, which indicates that both benefits and difficulties can occur at a multicultural work place. The indication what different people value as positive or negative opens up for possibilities to enhance the work standards.

Part 1; Individual level

The outcomes in Part 1 provides an indication of what seems to be important to the respondents in this study concerning intercultural communication. It has been indicated in Figure 2 that the respondents choose different approaches when discussing the phenomenon; some are talking more about communication in general, some in connection to the work and others in relation to culture. Some of the respondents focus on the difficulties with intercultural communication and some on the mutual exchanges which are referring to similarities in the way of thinking, cooperation and agreement. The interpretations from the analyses in Minerva reinforce the indications from Sphinx by providing descriptions of the different ways in which one can talk about intercultural communication. At the two investigated multicultural work places it seems like culture have an influence on the constitution of meaning for different individuals.

Beamer (1992) asserts that different signals are interpreted differently dependent on and in accordance with our cultural language. In an intercultural encounter the intended message may not be the same as the interpreted one. Person 11 expresses the language, the body language and the sound level as some examples of what may differ among people from different cultures. A different use of these types of communication might form the basis of misunderstanding if they are interpreted in the wrong way, which is not uncommon according to Beamer (1992). To prevent misunderstandings and achieve a functional communication, an adjustment may be necessary as expressed by Person 21, and exemplified by Person 11; “we are more careful when talking with a Swedish teacher”.

These required adjustments when encountering people from different cultures refer to Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation. The contact between cultures requires a mutual change and has an influence on both people arriving to the new culture and people living in the culture. An adjustment to other cultures way of communicate can also be viewed from Herman's (2003) perspective of the self comprising multiple voices. Both Person 11 and person 21 express a need for repressing some voices in certain contexts. They do not let the same voices be heard when

talking to people with another cultural at the work place as they seem to do with people with the same national background as themselves. Former experiences have taught them that difficulties in the communication may occur if they let wrong voice be heard on the wrong occasion; “they stop listening” and “misunderstandings can be created”. The concept of dialogical self is also present in the narrative by Person 3, who talks about encounters with people from other cultures in a positive way when the subject **I** is mentioned, but more generally speaking uses the subject **one** when admitting that misunderstandings and culture clashes may occur at the work place. The indication of referring to oneself as **I** when something is positive but as **one** in the group when talking about negative things and difficulties, seems to be different voices of the self which are preferable in different contexts.

The high percentages of doxa-affirmation reported in the four analyzed narratives indicate that all of these respondents are sure of what they want to say. Their knowledge and life-world which have given meaning to their constitutions of intercultural communication are taken for granted and expressed with certainty. They know what they are talking about because they have all learnt how to communicate in an appropriate way through the enculturation and the socialization process (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008) in their home cultures. When they mention differences and difficulties, these are indications of experiences of encounters with other people who have gone through different enculturation and socialization processes and thus have learned to behave and communicate in a different way. The given examples of how to adjust when talking with people from other cultures, and expressed traits characterizing one’s own culture but absent in other people, all indicates that culture has a strong influence on the ways we communicate. What is taken for granted and most common in one’s own culture becomes most salient in the encounter with people who from other cultures who appears differently to us.

Part 2; Contextual influence

Part 2 in the outcomes serve to give indications to whether or not the context of a particular work place influences the way one perceives intercultural communication. Luring (2011) asserts that communication simultaneously creates and is the creator of an organizational culture. How the communication at a specific work place is constituted does further guide the employees in their way of communicate. This assumption is also related to the hermeneutic phenomenology that considers humans impossible to study separated from their context. Thus, a contextual

comparison was made with the aim to look for indications of influences of the work place in the constitution of intercultural communication.

Table 3 shows the percentages of what the workers employed at Italia il Ristorante and Hyllie Park Folkhögskola are talking about, which indicates some differences and some similarities between the work places. Recollecting the information about the work places given in the background, that body language is emphasized at Italia il Ristorante. When one needs a spoon it is sometimes easier to show a spoon than to try to express the need in words. In Table 3 it is indicated that words connected to non verbal communication is used to a greater extent in the collected material from Italia il Ristorante than in the narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola. Does this indications mean to say that non verbal communication is preferable in restaurants rather than in contexts of education? Or can it perhaps depend on the way of working and different work tasks at the work places? At Italia il Ristorante, one works hard during busy times and relaxes when there is less to do, maybe the type of situation when non verbal communication is preferred is during busy times? At Hyllie Park Folkhögskola the teachers work in two teams and have to decide how to schedule the classes and how to distribute the resources. In these conversations verbal communication may be more useful. This is also indicated in Table 3 where words related to verbal communication are more common in the narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola compared to the narratives from Italia il Ristorante.

Moreover, Table 3 indicates that both work places are talking about differences to an equal extent. At both work places the outcomes from Minerva indicate that differences are sometimes related to different nationalities, such as Swedes and Italians or Swedish born and not Swedish born teachers. These distinctions are mainly expressed in negative affects. As said by Piller (2012), culture is often considered synonymous with nationality and/or ethnicity, even though Piller (2012) argues that this should not be the case. Alvesson (2002) talks about organizational cultures which exemplifies that the concept of culture could be used in several contexts. Person 19 mentions the concept working culture and thereby indicates its presence at Italia il Ristorante, and further add that the working culture here is completely different and better than the one in his/her origin country.

But could the use of I or We perhaps also be an indicator of an existing organizational culture? May the time that a group of people have worked together influence whether or not one refer to I or We when approaching intercultural communication at the work place? At Hyllie

Park Folkhögskola a low degree of employee turnover is said to occur. Several of the works have been working there since the start 12 years ago. At Italia il Ristorante, workers among the cooks and employees with more responsibility within the waiting section have been working there for up to eight years. However, the younger people working as waiter/waitress usually stay in general maximum a year. In the two analyzed narratives from Hyllie Park Folkhögskola, one of the respondents refers to We to a large extent whereas the other mainly refers to I. The narratives from Italia il Ristorante both clearly refer to I. Although, in Table 3 both I and We are used more frequent at Hyllie Park Folkhögskola than at Italia il Ristorante. To sum up, to some degree contextual influence seem to influence the constitution of intercultural communication at the work place.

Conclusion

In this explorative study with a phenomenological approach in human science, the focus is on the individual. Therefore, generalizations are not of interest in this type of study. The study aimed to look for indications of what seems to be important for different individuals, which has been able to obtain with the use of a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. The outcomes are not provided as definitive idea of how people in general perceive intercultural communication, but rather as indications of what may differ and what may be the same when different individuals at two different work places are given the opportunity to talk freely about intercultural communication.

The indications derived from this study are that individuals perceive intercultural communication differently and that their cultural backgrounds become obvious to them in the constitution process of intercultural communication. The contextual influence of a work place seems to have an effect on the way intercultural communication is perceived and functions in that particular context. The comparison between the work places further indicates that there is no single way of talking about intercultural communication, not even within the same work place. Intercultural communication is important and should be further emphasized and investigated since, as expressed in one narrative, we no longer living in an isolated world as decades ago.

Validity and quality appraisal

The concept of validity is often related to hypothesis-testing procedures where one expects to justify elusive psychological characteristics in a process of causal correlations. However, justifiable knowledge is possible to achieve through other research methods.

The realm of meaning is central to human existence (Polkinghorne, 2002). Within phenomenology and within this study, there is an aim to understand the constitution of meaning and the meaning ascribed to a phenomenon, in this case intercultural communication. However, since meaning is not something directly observable, and since humans lives in a dynamic reality and thus are constantly changing it is possible that their meaning attributions to phenomenon are also changing, Polkinghorne (2002) argues that one cannot use mathematical relations to claim this type of knowledge as valid. Validity should thus not be considered as a general theory, but as a local question rather than a global one (Sages, 2001).

In order to validate research in science that looks for meaning according to individuals, Lindén (2002) argues that validity should be treated as a process and should not take only the “end product” of the research process into consideration. In the dynamic development of humans and their reality arise no standard model that guides us to the most valid way of interpreting the meaning attributed to a phenomenon. Internal coherence is a criterion of validity (Sages, 2001), thus, the detailed documentation of the process allows the reader to follow each step of interpretation throughout the research process, this study should be considered valid and justified from this perspective.

Furthermore, since the study focuses on the individual’s life-worlds, each experience should be considered as the single source of valid knowledge and thus be treated equally (Sages, 2001). This has been done in every step of the research; the same opportunity to write as freely as possible about one’s experience of intercultural communication at the work place was given to everybody, and the analysis in MCA Minerva has followed the same steps guided by the same guide of categories of meaning units into modalities. Objectivity is to realize that we always start out from ourselves, even so called objective hypotheses are formulated from the basis of one’s own pre-comprehensions about the studied phenomenon. Hence, subjectivity is the foundation of objectivity and the most objective way to conduct objective science is to realize from what perspective I as a researcher view a phenomenon. In order to understand the unknown, one needs as a researcher to get in contact with the world, not one’s pre-comprehensions of the world.

However, even if a total bracketing of one's own knowledge and pre-comprehensions is the aim within phenomenology, the outcomes will always be influenced by the researcher (Sages, 2001). But by not putting up any hypotheses marked by the researchers pre-comprehensions of the outcome, by being given the opportunity to write whatever comes into the respondent's mind concerning the phenomenon intercultural communication at the self report, along with the Minerva analysis that divides the narrative into meaning units makes an interpretation from the researcher even more difficult. Furthermore, the detailed documentation of the process is also attempts to get as far as possible from "I" as a researcher and get to the life-world of the respondents.

By studying the way individuals give meaning to a phenomenon, a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach does not aim to generalize outcomes to a greater population in the first place. However, by conducting deep-studies of some objects, the differences we will observe indicate that there also exist similarities (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). By focusing on the individual, a study concentrating on one case will at some point lead to a typicality that is to be found in other cases too. It is when one has reached the very essence of a phenomenon that it is possible to generalize an expectation to other cases of the same type (Sages, 2001). To exemplify with a metaphor of an onion; by peel off layer after layer we will at last be able to find a layer that can also be found in another onion even though they are red, yellow or white on the outside.

Finally, a justification of reliability of this qualitative and explorative study is not relevant since the aim of the study is to seek the individual's perception of intercultural communication at their workplace and to describe their life-world. Even though someone uses the same sample as in this study, the answers should not be the same since people are ever changing and depending on many factors, will answer differently and thus generate different outcomes than this study.

Strengths and limitations

A limitation related to the analyses is that the software application Le Sphinx Lexica does itself most justice when analyzing a great text corpus since its discriminatory ability will be more detailed as more text is analyzed. From this aspect, a greater corpus of text than the collected amount would thus have been preferable. However, a comparison easier to grasp between the

work places was possible to do due to the transformation into percentages the number of word occurred in relation to the number of words collected.

Another limitation is the few narratives collected from Italia il Ristorante. If the author would have got more than five narratives out of approximately 20 possible, a more realistic indication of the contextual influence on intercultural communication could have been made about the restaurant. However, this should not be confused as misinterpret the collected narrative as untrustworthy. In this explorative study, the focus is on the individual and the way he/she perceive the phenomenon of investigation. Besides, Figure 1 demonstrates that ecological validity is obtained by the collected material and indicates that the lengths or amount of text is not of prior interest when the text provides interesting material worth have a closer look at anyway.

When using a qualitative research, an option could be to look at only one work place in the study of intercultural communication and do an indepth study of the constitution process by the individuals of intercultural communication in this context. However, one strength of this study that two totally different work places have been investigated and compared, makes the indications of how intercultural communication is constituted even more interesting and useful.

Indications to future research

As this study demonstrates, the phenomenon of intercultural communication is not easily grasped. Each individual perceives it according to the meaning they ascribe to it and the context of a work places also influences its constitution process. Therefore, to broaden the comprehension about intercultural communication, further research could focus on how intercultural communication is constituted and perceived in other work places. Investigations of work places within the same domains as the ones presented in this study could be interesting in order to see whether or not the constitution process differs or is similar between, for example, different schools. But also qualitative studies investigating completely different work places could be interesting to see if the core of intercultural communication could be generalized to more contexts. Studies like these would all contribute to the knowledge needed in the current increasing number of multicultural work places over the world.

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Appendix 1. Interview guide

Work place:

What kind of work place?

Way of working? Separate or in group?

Work tasks?

Number of employees?

Relations or eventual hierarchies among the staff? Number and levels of managers etc.

Employee turnover? How long have today's employees been working here?

Any reasons to why the constitution of employees looks at it does?

Nationalities represented?

A general perception of how the communication works at the work place?

Appendix 2. Project description

Project description

My name is Maria Lindqvist and I am currently studying Behavioral Sciences at Lund University with Psychology as my specialty. It is an interdisciplinary education where I have learned psychology, sociology and pedagogy and I have taken courses in social psychology, conversation and interview techniques (psychology), and courses concerning equality in gender, class and ethnicity among others. During my study time, my interest for communication has grown and during my exchange semester in Lyon, France 2011, I developed a particular interest for intercultural communication. During my current and last semester of my education program, I am therefore writing my Bachelor Essay with university lector Roger Sages within intercultural communication, with a particular focus on intercultural communication at the work place. My aim is to investigate how the communication works at a multicultural work place, which is the reason why your work place indeed interests me.

Today is the occurrence of cooperation across national and cultural borders and a cultural variety at the work place nothing unusual. Our cultural origins form the basis of our valuations and behaviors and have an influence on our ways of how we perceive and view the world. In intercultural working groups one emphasizes the importance of a functional communication. The aim with my study is to deepen the comprehension of how workers at a multicultural work place perceive the communication at the work place. With a phenomenological approach, my purpose is to conduct an explorative study where I look for the individual's subjective life-world description concerning communication. This will be done with the aim to look for the underlying causes to eventual misunderstandings or benefits that can be derived from the intercultural communication, which hopefully in the longer run will develop and improve the working environment for the workers.

The realization of the study will be as follows; all the employees at the department or in the working team will be asked for their participation in the study. The participants will be requested to, in writing (in English), describe their thoughts, feelings, ideas and experiences concerning the communication at the work place. What I look for is each individual's experience of the phenomenon, a description with one's own words and expressions. Grammar, structure and spelling will not be stressed at all; what I am looking for is the subjective experience in the exact words each individual chose to express it. The answers will further be analyzed in the software program Minerva Meaning Constitution Analysis in order to obtain the individual life-world descriptions of the communication at the work place. All participants will be anonymous in the study. If anyone has questions concerning the study or wishes to know the outcome of the study, one is very welcome to contact me or my instructor Roger Sages, see contact information below.

I am hoping this will lead to a fruitful cooperation and I am looking forward to hear from you!

Best Regards,
Maria Lindqvist