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Managing superdiversity in multinational companies

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Introduction

Multinational companies (multinationals) are characterized by the fact that they have head-quarters in one country and branches in others (e.g. SAP, the German-based company special-izing in software manufacturing, has subsidiaries/offices in more than 130 countries). Some multinationals are such massive economic units that their assets exceed the GDP of entire countries (Collinson & Morgan 2009). Multinationals establish branches because it is eco-nomically advantageous to them: the given country may be an attractive market for the goods produced, or there is cheap labor in it, or both. Branches are typically set up and run by a small group of employees (e.g. several tens of people), called expatriates. They are sent from the com-pany headquarters and their main task, at least at the beginning, is to transfer the know-how necessary for successful company operations. The recipients of this know-how are employees recruited from among the local inhabitants or people from nearby regions (e.g. several hundred or even thousand people).

Expatriates are often not from the same ethnic group as local employees – they were social-ized in other countries with different cultural traditions, and their first language is usually a different one. The professional and communicative experiences of the expatriates are often gained from stints in several company branches located in different countries, and they are thus typical temporary migrants. They are highly qualified and usually hold managerial positions, as, among others, they organize contact with other branches and, above all, with the headquarters. They are "elite migrants" (Dong 2016). The status, professional, cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity in the branches of multinationals is essentially determined by the very existence of these two groups of people – expatriates and locals, though the membership in these two categories need not be absolutely fixed. Multinationals have significant prestige and power, manifested not only in the economic area, but also in the organizational, cultural and linguistic ones. Multinationals thus necessarily and relatively easily influence the social processes taking place within their branches and in their geographical surroundings, and can act as an important diversifying element.

Though it is quite difficult to gain access to multinationals and to conduct systematic research on them, sociolinguists have explored some aspects of multinationals in several European coun-tries, e.g. Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) dealt with companies situated in Croatia, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Sweden and the UK; Nekvapil and Sherman (2009b) in the Czech Republic and Hungary; Millar and Jensen (2009) in Denmark; and Lüdi, Höchle Meier and Yanaprasart (2016)

in Switzerland. In turn, Fairbrother (forthcoming) examined European-based multinationals in Japan. This article is devoted to companies which operate in the Czech Republic (hereafter Czechia) and manufacture automobile components.

According to Wallerstein (1979/1997:100) "most of eastern Europe", and thus apparently Czechia, is located on the semi-periphery of the world-system of the division of labor (McPhail 2014 also classifies Czechia as such). The core countries of this system are dominated by production processes characterized by high wages and high capital-intensity and skill level, while raw material production and low capital-intensity and skill level are characteristic for manufacturing processes in peripheral countries. The semiperiphery has some characteristics of the core and some of the periphery, for example the level of salaries and the character of production, and it maintains economic relations with both the core and the periphery. This, as a whole, corresponds to the fact that the great majority of multinationals operating in Czechia have headquarters abroad (predominantly in the core countries), but there are also emerging multinationals with headquarters in Czechia and branches elsewhere. Also key to the semi-peripheral character of Czechia is the fact that the multinationals go there to utilize its inexpensive yet highly qualified labor force, partially equipped with good language knowledge.

Superdiverse contexts

The initial context considered in the study of superdiversity has become the urban center (Vertovec 2007; Meissner & Vertovec 2015). This can be complemented by peri-urban and rural contexts (Blommaert 2015). Sloboda (2016) uses the context of an entire state, declaring that country X is more superdiversified than countries Y or Z. Building on Wallerstein (see above) and in line with Blommaert (2010), these countries might be contextualized as belonging to the core or periphery of the world system. However, various domains such as education can also be considered relevant contexts for superdiversity. Essential is that these contexts combine in relevant ways, e.g. the educational context can be embedded in the context of an urban center and an urban center in the context of a country, and this country in the context of the core or periphery of the world system. And if we look at the educational domain from the opposite perspective, even a specific school or class where teaching is taking place can become a relevant context for superdiversity. In addition to the spread and scale of superdiversity, it is also appropriate to consider the speed at which various contexts are superdiversified (Meissner & Vertovec 2015) and, in this way, to cover the historical dimension as well. Finally, for all contexts considered, it is possible to differentiate between their center and periphery, building upon concepts of structural linguistics or general systems theories (see texts as early as Vachek 1966; Wallerstein 2004; Vasiljev & Nekvapil 2012).

In this article, we address superdiversity in multinationals, that is, the work domain. Our point of departure will be multinationals operating in Czechia, so we will begin with a presentation of Czechia as a superdiverse context.

Historical perspectives

The Czech Republic as a (super)diversified context

Sloboda (2016) presents multiple phenomena which testify to the advancing superdiversification of Czechia. He explains their existence above all as the result of tourism, immigration and the economy. These three factors are taking effect in the specific historical conditions of

Central or East-Central Europe. This region was significantly diversified in terms of ethnicity and culture up until the beginning of the Communist regimes following WWII which, in a number of social spheres, promoted homogeneity and restricted diversity. The fall of these regimes in 1989 led to the emergence of a "new" diversity layered on the "old" diversity. The formation of a new diversity in Czechia was a direct result of, or at least an accompanying phenomenon to, the socio-economic transformation of society, tied to an unprecedented mobility of people and capital. For example, Sloboda (2016) states that the number of foreigners legally residing in Czechia grew to 4.2 times in size (from 104,343 to 439,189 in absolute numbers) between 1994 and 2013. Not only did several groups (above all, citizens of Ukraine, Slovakia, Vietnam and Russia) increase in size, but essentially new, small groups appeared as well (e.g. citizens of Kazakhstan, Moldova, Turkey, Japan, South Korea or India). Numerous multinationals mushrooming after the fall of the regime in Czechia have contributed to the further diversification of the ethnic, cultural or linguistic diversity of the contexts in which they operated.

The political revolution in 1989 and the socio-economic transformation of Czechia were connected to the country's new orientation toward Western Europe, also manifested in the linguistic and communicative dimensions (for details, see Neustupný & Nekvapil 2003). Among the largest and most visible were changes in the use and teaching of "foreign languages". The mandatory teaching of Russian was discontinued and the principle of free choice of foreign language was established. However, this has not diversified the portfolio of languages used in the country much. In most cases, pupils or their parents selected only German or English. German, the language of neighboring countries, traditionally perceived as an international language in the Czech context, was taught more than English up until the 1997–1998 school year, when their ratio was reversed, and the share of English teaching has grown every year since. The share of other foreign languages (French, Russian, Spanish, Italian) has been almost negligible. Neustupný and Nekvapil (2003: 292) assessed the range of foreign languages taught during the 1990s as "extremely limited". This situation has essentially not changed, though other languages are taught at language schools and privately, including by foreign residents. It can generally be stated that as for foreign languages, inhabitants of Czechia, above all ethnic Czechs, count on their knowledge of English, believing in its "absolute instrumentality" (Nekvapil & Sherman 2013: 107), and many foreign residents acquire Czech, as "Czech holds the dominant position in nearly all spheres of social life, from official communication to everyday communication" (Nekvapil, Sloboda & Wagner 2009: 65). One consequence of this situation is that, in addition to English, Czech also functions as a lingua franca in Czechia.

Through the analysis of statistical data, but also using systematic ethnographic observation, Sloboda (2016:170) reached the conclusion that "on a general scale, Czechia is more super-diverse than the rest of East-Central Europe but less than Western Europe". As for the comparison with Western Europe, the differing level of superdiversity is caused by a number of factors, undoubtedly, for example, that Czechia's superdiversity is emerging in specific historical conditions (the communist past on the one hand and the non-colonial past on the other). Sloboda (2016), however, also points to resistance to the advancing superdiversification of social life which is extensive among the Czech majority, regardless of status or profession, including Czech politicians and state authorities, and it is observable in a number of phenomena (e.g. the Czechification of foreign names, an ongoing negative attitude toward foreigners, and most recently, resistance to accepting refugees from countries afflicted by war).

Core issues and topics

Superdiversity in multinational companies and its management

The superdiversity within the multinationals is fundamentally determined by the ethnic origin of their employees, the language competence connected to the given ethnicity and, finally, by the differentiation between local employees and expatriates. The fact that locals and expatriates often have different first languages presents multinationals with a basic task: to ensure the possibility of communication. Without it, the economic activities of the multinationals would essentially be impossible. This means that superdiversity in multinationals has to be managed somehow.

What do we mean by "managed"? In this article, we utilize Language Management Theory (LMT), which builds upon the seminal work of Jiří V. Neustupný and Björn H. Jernudd (see texts as early as Jernudd & Neustupný 1987; summaries can be found in e.g. Nekvapil & Sherman 2015; Nekvapil 2016). In this theory, management is generally understood as the attention and activities devoted to language and its use, in other words, behavior toward language. This behavior can be observed in concrete interactions, for example when an individual notes a feature of language (e.g. a word) in his or her own speech or in the speech of a communication partner, evaluates it negatively ("doesn't like it"), thinks about how to replace it and ends up using another word; Engelhardt (2011: 122) describes a repair sequence from a meeting in a branch of Siemens in Prague, during which a speaker used a German term within a turn in Slovak, and then immediately replaced it with a Slovak one. Another example is when an expatriate, during a conversation with a local, notes that his communicative partner does not understand him well, and switches from his regular communicative style to so-called foreigner talk (Ferguson 1981), that is, to the use of means such as slower speech tempo and simplified grammar in order to better enable comprehension by an interlocutor perceived to be a non-native speaker. However, attention is devoted to language and its use not only by individuals, but also by organizations ranging in complexity. This management is no longer *simple* but *organized*. An example of this is the decision made by a state to protect a certain language through the Charter of Regional or Minority Languages or the decision of a German-based multinational that English will be the official corporate language. LMT presumes that simple and organized management are related, and deems uncovering the character of these relations as fundamental for empirical research (e.g. we can assume that the management of translanguaging in company meetings will somehow correspond to the character of the teaching of foreign languages). As LMT suggests, linguistic phenomena are interconnected with communicative and socio-cultural phenomena (including socio-economic ones) to such a degree that the management in one dimension is related to the management in the others. For example, the arrival of Korean multinationals in Czechia (the socio-economic dimension) created an advantageous situation for Korean speakers of Czech and Czech speakers of Korean (communicative dimension) and communication in the work dimension stimulated the standardization of Czech and Korean terminological equivalents in the area of manufacturing (linguistic dimension). Finally, the sensitivity of individuals and institutions to language, communicative and socio-cultural phenomena is fundamentally dependent on (language) ideologies. Ideologies influence what individuals or institutions note, what and how they evaluate, what adjustments are designed or even implemented; in other words, what will be managed (or not). For example, the ideology of the absolute instrumentality of English (in the sense of "you can get by anywhere with English") leads to the reduction in the teaching of German at state schools,

even in regions on the border with Germany and Austria, despite the fact that German-based multinationals are looking for new employees there and evaluate German knowledge as an added bonus.

Multinational companies as multilingual spaces and the problem of standardization

Manufacturing processes are highly standardized, all the more so in the automobile industry, where cars are put together on an assembly line. A great degree of standardization is also necessary, because for some activities, robots have replaced humans. The standardization of the manufacturing process is accompanied by the standardization of procedures and practices in the social area (cf. Piekkari, Welch & Welch 2014: 141 on the role of HR departments in companies). In multilingual companies, standardization is also applied to communication. The general aim of this kind of standardization is the minimization of linguistic and communicative (super)diversity.

Linn, Sanden and Piekkari (forthcoming) analyze connections between the traditional sociolinguistic topic of standardization of (national) languages and the standardization taking place in international business. Their study confirms that despite contemporary ideological distaste for standardization, "standardization spans across all spheres of life and is a key activity in managing societies". They draw attention to the fact that standardization is manifested in international business both in status planning (multinationals implement a common corporate language) and in corpus planning (multinationals standardize aspects of language such as vocabulary, above all terminology, but also prosody, e.g. the Nokia company requires appropriate intonation).

Superdiversity in multinationals is, however, also managed through language (most typically corporate language) requirements implemented in the hiring of new employees. Corporate language knowledge is typically a condition of employment in certain positions, and the level of this knowledge is often tested by holding the job interview in the corporate language. In some cases, an employee's technical or other professional competence is more decisive for the hire than language competence. For this reason, multinationals also organize language courses in which employees can or even have to improve their language knowledge. In the second half of the 1990s, during research in one subsidiary of the German-based multinational Volkswagen operating close to Prague, we captured the substantiated opinion that the subsidiary was "the biggest language school in Czechia" (for more on interaction between multinationals and language schools, see Sherman et al. 2010). Though multinationals aim for the standardization of their employees' linguistic repertoires, in some situations, the linguistic diversity of multinationals is managed through translating and interpreting. This management can take the form of hiring professional translators or interpreters, but very often, company employees themselves are used as interpreters. Multinationals also attempt to manage socio-cultural diversity in the branches, which is most visible in the organization of intercultural training. In Czechia, we have observed such training both in Korean-based and in German-based multinationals.

On the one hand, multinationals act as a natural diversifying factor through their "multinationality", but on the other hand, given the interest in perfect production and the corresponding economic profit, they programmatically limit this diversification. We will now demonstrate the management of language, communicative and socio-cultural processes in detail using examples from German-based and Korean-based multinationals in Czechia.

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New research and debates

German-based companies

German-based companies are very important for the Czech economy, as German capital has had a significant share of the FDI for a longer period of time. German-based multinationals, like other multinationals, began operating on the territory of Czechia at the beginning of the 1990s, i.e., after the fall of the Communist regime. Many inhabitants of Czechia, however, accepted the quick and massive entrance of German companies with mixed feelings, as the collective memory of the Czech nation includes a series of negative experiences with Germany or with Germans, including the occupation of the Czech lands by Hitler's Germany. German companies arrived in Czechia not only because it was economically advantageous for them, e.g. given the inexpensive, yet qualified labor force, but also because they could count on the rather extensive knowledge of German among the Czech population. This potential competition between German and English was one of the main stimuli for research on linguistic behavior in the German-based multinationals in Czechia. Research in the branches of companies such as Volkswagen, Siemens or Continental began in 1994 and has continued up to the present (see e.g. Höhne & Nekula 1997; Nekula, Nekvapil & Šichová 2005; Nekvapil & Nekula 2006a, 2006b; Nekula, Marx & Šichová 2009; Nekvapil & Sherman 2013). Based on these studies, we will now deal briefly with the discourse management of ethnic superdiversity and the organized and simple management of linguistic (super)diversity.

The discourse management of ethnic superdiversity

We will now describe the situation which was valid around the mid-1990s, that is, during the period of Czechia's socioeconomic transformation, and which was observed during the research on the largest multinational company at that time in Czechia, Škoda–Volkswagen (Nekvapil 1997).

The transformation of the Czech automobile company (with approximately 16,000 employees) was undertaken by approximately 100 expatriates sent from Volkswagen (based on an agreement with the Czech government from 1991). They were usually ethnic Germans, but about 10% of them were employees of other ethnicities: experts from Sweden, Spain, France, Brazil, Canada and elsewhere. But for the Czech public, who were very interested in what was happening in the company at the time, and also for some local employees, they were "Germans"; this category was sufficient for communication. We thus have a case in which both the media and everyday actors present "new" diversity (superdiversity) as "old" diversity, evoking (perhaps even intentionally) historically sensitive Czech-German relationships or ethnic stereotypes (see below). It is worth mentioning that the non-German expatriates themselves contributed to the "invisibility" of other ethnicities – a Swedish employee stated in an interview: "I am playing the German here".

The research, however, also revealed that many employees were aware of this associative potential of ethnic categories, which is why they managed their use in some situations in a specific way. In recorded conversations, both Czech and German Škoda–Volkswagen employees tried to avoid *simple ethnic categories* such as "Germans" or "Czechs". If group differentiation in conversation was necessary, they employed *ethnically modified non-ethnic categories* of the type "German colleagues" or "Czech colleagues". Instead of "Germans', they also used other categories such as "expatriates", "experts" or "delegates". The use of *simple ethnic categories* was

dispreferred in the sense of Conversation Analysis, as is obvious from this extract from an interview with a Czech manager:

M: takže já už jsem vlastně tu funkci dělal, (.) před (..) příchodem Něm–(.)ců, (.) Volkswágnu, …
M: so in fact I did that job, (.) before (..) the Ger–(.)mans (.) Volkswagen came, … (translated from Czech).

Here we can see that speaker M uttered a simple ethnic category (but had difficulties even in doing that), corrected himself after a short pause and then uttered a non-ethnic category. The use of the ethnic category itself is noteworthy: the speaker cut off his speech after the first syllable ("Ger-") and uttered the second syllable only after a short pause ("(.) mans").

Nekvapil (1997) found that the dispreferred status of simple ethnic categories was motivated by the effort not to evoke national/ethnic stereotypes, and, in general, historically sensitive and problematic Czech-German relationships. Thus, both Czech and German Škoda-Volkswagen employees often displayed their common association with the enterprise, that is, their corporate identity, rather than their varying ethnic identity. See the following extract from an interview with a German expatriate:

E: (.) wir müssen uns hüten, (.) hier die deutschen hier die tschechen zu sehen. wir sind alle škoda-mitarbeiter. … wir sind alles kollegen, wir müssen diese marke am leben erhalten, …
E: (.) we must be wary, (.) of seeing the Germans here and the Czechs there. we all are Škoda employees. … we all are colleagues, we must keep this mark alive, … (translated from German).

We will now move from the socio-cultural dimension to the language and communicative ones.

The organized and simple management of linguistic (super)diversity

As indicated above, German-based multinationals operating in Czechia could, in the coordination of their economic activities, count on the use of German, English and, of course, the local language, Czech. Our research, however, has shown that these languages were often used for various aims and in a complementary manner. Above all, it was necessary to find a common means of communication and Czech was essentially never considered for this function (the expatriates having acquired it only minimally). This implies that Czech, unlike German or English, could never be the exclusive corporate language. On the other hand, it could become a medium with a secretive function, helping to protect national social networks (Nekvapil & Sherman 2009a). Let us note that German could not have this function in German-based multinationals, granted that many locals spoke or understood it. Another issue is that in the Central European conditions, both Czech and German index national identities associated with Czech-German conflicts and the changing position of the dominating and the dominated over the course of history (see above). Moreover, German as the language of the parent company indexes the economic power of the foreign owners. How does English function in this constellation? It has been presumed as a common means of communication in addition to German since the beginning of the 1990s (as early as in the Škoda-Volkswagen joint venture). Its position, however, was gradually strengthened to the detriment of German. There were two combined

factors at play here. The first was that many German-based multinationals had internationalized or globalized such that they had established English as a corporate language in their branches. Not all German expatriates welcomed this. On the Czech side, however, the reception was positive. For example, around 2005, the Czech CEO of one branch told us that he viewed the establishment of English as a corporate language as a symbol of the growing power of local employees, as "liberation from German". In the ideal case, the use of English in German-based multinationals creates no advantage for any group of employees and does not index national identity, rather, it creates "neutral territory". The position of German, however, has remained strong in the branches, as it was used for communication with the customers, who were mostly based in Germany.

The differing distribution of linguistic means, however, is also conditioned by functions less general in character than those indicated above. Nekvapil and Sherman (2009a: 130ff.) analyze a recording of a meeting taking place in the corporate language, English, but in which Czech and German were also used. About twenty employees of the branch (one German and one Austrian senior manager, the rest Czechs) and two managers at the headquarters in Germany (connected by phone and computer, but not together in the same room) were present. The results of this analysis are summarized as follows:

> English is used for official, 'on-record' or 'topical' meeting content, including PowerPoint presentation content. German and Czech are used for 'side-sequence' or 'off-record' content, often of a practical/technical nature concerning the production of the meeting (phone connection information) or commentary on a minor aspect of the meeting, exclusively between native speakers of the given language, usually between two speakers and not addressed to the whole group.
>
> *(Nekvapil and Sherman 2009a: 132–133)*

This fragment from the meeting is also characterized by the fact that the mixed use of English and German expressions, which could be called translanguaging (García and Wei 2014), did not occur among the Czech employees, but in the talk between the German managers at the headquarters, and it was not motivated by playfulness, but by efforts to solve a technical problem in communication (loss of the connection to the computer screen).

Not all German-based multinationals have managed the linguistic (super)diversity of their branches, as demonstrated above. Engelhardt (2009, 2011) analyzed the spontaneous effect of the language policy of a Czech CEO, who in 2007 implemented the following rules for communication in meetings: (1) the meeting should take place in the language of the majority of participants, and (2) the participants in the minority who do not speak the L1 of the majority should use an interpreter. Engelhardt recorded a meeting at which there was no interpreter, so he could observe how people behave in a "crisis" situation of this sort. There were twelve participants, two of whom were German expatriates (speaking only German), one was Slovak (he spoke Slovak and German) and the rest were Czechs (speaking only Czech, both Czech and German, or not speaking at all). According to Engelhardt's count, in spite of the policy described above, German, the language of the minority, was used for the same amount of time over the course of the meeting as Czech, the language of the majority. Though he deemed the course of the meeting "quite chaotic", he concluded that the participants were able to communicate "in accordance with their needs" (Engelhardt 2011: 123), which might indicate a certain level of receptive multilingualism in the social milieu. There are two more noteworthy phenomena in Engelhardt's material: (1) the meeting participants did not try to speak English at all, and (2) even though the speakers switched codes frequently, they did not do so within a single turn, but

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rather, when taking a new turn; in other words, the speakers were oriented toward the use of a single language at a time, and they also preserved the monolingual character of speech through repair sequences.

Diversity in German-based multinationals is deepened by the fact that inexpensive labor from Czech sources is no longer sufficient, hence the companies have been resorting to the organized hiring of workers from Poland and Slovakia, in particular. The linguistic and cultural distance of Poles and Slovaks from Czechs is not great, so the management of their difference is essentially not a problem for the Czech branches. For example, in communication between Czechs and Slovaks (and partially with Poles), it is possible to depend on receptive bilingualism, which was even supported by state institutions in the former Czechoslovakia (up until 1993). It is also common for employees from Slavic countries to eventually acquire Czech. Among other ethnicities, the situation is different. In one branch we have researched for many years, the labor force resources from Poland and Slovakia had already been exhausted, so the branch managers decided to "test out" employing a group of workers from Vietnam. The experimental character of these actions was explained to us by a Czech HR employee through the claim that Czech and Vietnamese cultures are different and "the language is completely different" (Nekvapil & Sherman 2013: 99). The ideology of the completely different language has several potential functions here – it provides an argument for the Czech employees regarding why they would not even try to learn the other language, i.e., Vietnamese (an argument also used by German expatriates in relation to Czech) or why they would prefer employing Czechs rather than Vietnamese. The Vietnamese group had to be completely dependent on interpreters in their work communication and despite the fact that, in general, the managers were satisfied with this "trial", with the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, the Vietnamese workers were the first to lose their jobs.

Korean-based multinationals

While the entrance of the German-based multinationals into the Czech economic space may have seemed like something logical and natural (the geographical closeness of the countries, German taught widely in Czechia as a foreign language), the arrival of Korean-based companies seemed to many Czech inhabitants (but also to many visitors from abroad) like something unexpected, something which cannot go unnoticed. Representatives of these companies began appearing in Czechia prior to its EU accession, i.e., at the beginning of the 21st century. Their motivation was to gain the opportunity to do business in the EU under very advantageous economic conditions – with the help of a country which was not yet in the EU but would, with certainty, soon become one (this happened in 2004). At present, several tens of Korean companies are operating just in the northeast part of Czechia, where we have been conducting systematic research since 2011. Hyundai, SungWoo Hitech and other companies have set up branches here, some employing up to several thousand people, and more are currently being established – recently, for example, the subsidiary of the company Nexen Tire. Many visitors to Prague will likely be surprised to find, at the Prague international airport, signs giving information not only in English, Czech and Russian, but also Korean (see Figure 23.1), as Korean Air gained a significant share in the company operating the airport and established a regular direct flight between Prague and Seoul.

In the headquarters we visited in Korea (Samsung, Hyundai), there is the tendency to present the companies as global, not Korean. The discourse of globalization and its practical consequences can be identified not only in the interviews, but also in the linguistic

Figure 23.1   A sign at Prague's international airport (photo courtesy of Marián Sloboda).

landscape of the headquarters (ideological slogans in English) or in the organization of space (establishment of English-language centers or zones, e.g. *Y.E.S./Your English Square* at the Hyundai headquarters). It is, however, evident that this discourse is not universally accepted and may be one of the factors dividing the younger and older generations of Korean managers. This is obvious, then, in the functioning of the branches of these and other multinationals around the world, including Czechia, which particularly concerns the differing degree of knowledge and use of English.

Management in the socio-cultural dimension

As a point of departure, we offer the official statistics of the branch of the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech (hereafter HMMC), which listed (valid as of December 11, 2014) that its employees (3,227 in total) were citizens of the following countries: 3,112 or 96% (Czechia), 69 (Slovakia), 21 (Poland), 16 (Republic of Korea), 2 (Egypt) and a single employee each from Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, UK, Hungary, Romania and Russia (the remaining 9 were listed as Other). The number of Koreans was (and is) higher than the 16 listed, though, as this number does not include employees with limited-term contracts and employees coming only for several weeks to set up new projects. Overall, however, the number of Korean employees is not much higher than the number of Slovaks. More important is the fact that a rather small number of Koreans run the entire company and communicate with the headquarters in Seoul. It is also fundamentally important that the ethnicity of the Slovaks, Poles and other non-Czech employees is "invisible" for many Czechs (including the media and the public), like in the case of Škoda-Volkswagen mentioned above. As a result, the main object of management is Czech-Korean relations. The default assumption, formulated in a number of interviews with both Czech and Korean employees, is that Czech and Korean cultures are different. For this reason, new Czech and Korean employees, when they enter the company, receive basic information about the other culture, and the HR department organizes intercultural workshops and sends many non-Korean employees for short-term stays in Korea. The interviewees often explain the communication problems in the company as being due to cultural differences. Of course, this being so, the cultural differences do not disappear, but rather are reproduced (cf. Mácha and Drobík 2010).

Figure 23.2   Meal ticket jar. On it it is written "meal ticket" and "meal ticket jar" in Czech and Korean, respectively.

In some companies, Korean food is on offer for all employees (see Figure 23.2). Czech employees evaluate this offer positively and occasionally utilize it, but the two groups – Koreans and Czechs – typically eat in the same room, but at separate tables.

Management in the linguistic and communicative dimensions

Communication in Czech-Korean companies has a fundamentally different character than that in branches of the German-based multinationals. Both the Czech and Korean employees presume the ideology of the other's language as being difficult (Nekvapil & Sherman 2013: 93). As a result, the Czechs' knowledge of Korean and the Koreans' knowledge of Czech are typically minimal, limited to greetings and similar expressions used phatically. Despite this, companies (e.g. HMMC) do organize Czech courses for Koreans and Korean courses for Czechs. Nevertheless, the point of these courses is viewed more as socio-cultural management – as a means for "getting to know the other culture".

In this constellation, English is assigned a fundamental role. It is essentially the only common element in the linguistic repertoires of the Czechs and Koreans and as such it becomes the most important object of linguistic or communicative management. Supported by the discourse of globalization spread from the Korean headquarters, English is the official corporate language and it is meant to operate in the branches "for all employees" as a lingua franca. However, it is apparent that not everyone in the branches knows English, that their competence is limited or that they use various varieties of English, including local ones (Czech and Korean varieties). Many Korean managers, including those in top positions (particularly members of the older generation), do not speak English to a sufficient degree. It is common practice for Czech managers to write progress reports about production tasks in English and for the Korean coordinators to translate these reports into Korean and send them to their Korean superiors in the branch or to the headquarters in Korea. The Korean managers' English is evaluated negatively both in the headquarters and in the branches. For example, at a regular review meeting, the Korean president of HMMC recommended that the Korean managers "improve their knowledge of English and thus contribute to the improvement of communication with and understanding of their Czech colleagues in the workplace" (*HMMC News*, issue 36, 2011/2014, p. 4). In an interview, one Czech group leader described the management of communication between Czech and Korean employees in production:

GP: aj třeba na lince mám slovník angličtiny když něco nevím nebo když zme nevěděli a potřebovali zme jim to nějak dát najevo, tak zme to ukázali z knížky, oni měli překladače v telefonech vesměs takže si to zase oni z angličtiny přeložili, jo, kteří neuměli moc anglicky tak si to zas přeložili do korejštiny

GP: for example even on the assembly line I have an English dictionary when I don't know something or when we didn't know and we needed to make it clear to them, so we showed them in the book, they had translators in their phones mostly so they translated it from English, yeah, those who didn't know much English they translated it into Korean (translated from Czech).

The Czech employees note characteristic features of the English used by the Koreans, and have even given it a name: "Kor-English". According to a British employee, the English of the Korean employees is characterized above all by the tendency to insert syllables (e.g. instead of *which* they say *whichy*, instead of *months* they say *monthes*). On the other hand, numerous Korean employees with good English knowledge point to specific features of the Czechs' English, which is very far removed from the American accent to which they are accustomed. Overall, the varieties of English used in the branches are so different that in some situations, employees may have trouble understanding one another. The adjustment design in this case can be observed above all in the attendance or even the organization of English courses and – at least on the Czech side – in the tightening of conditions for hiring new employees.

English is most visible in the linguistic landscape, which is permeated with English-Czech signs tied to the corporate philosophy. The English versions are usually written in larger type than the Czech ones (e.g. *Do It Right the First Time/Správně hned napoprvé*). Only signs containing banal information like the price list for laundry services or the label on the meal ticket jar in the canteen (see Figure 23.2) are in Czech and Korean (without English).

Multinationals as agents of superdiversification of their surroundings

Frýdek-Místek (population approx. 60,000) is the closest town to HMMC (about 10 km away). The establishment of the large factory stimulated the opening of 5–10 Korean restaurants (some eventually closed) in the town, some on the main square; a special Korean grocery store; and various accommodation facilities for Korean clientele. These establishments contribute to the diversification of various aspects of the social life of the town (for example, Koreans working in towns in the region that are further away stop and spend the night there). They also diversify the town's linguistic landscape, as manifested in bilingual Czech-Korean or English-Korean signs, or just Korean signs (e.g. handwritten notices on the doors of establishments).

However, it appears that the town has also been impacted by the presence of HMMC in an even deeper sense. An advertising stand in front of one restaurant regularly visited by the Korean managers of HMMC, including their president, offered "A selection of Central European and Korean dishes", written in Czech (see Figure 23.3).

This sign evidently targets Czech inhabitants to tempt them with Korean food, aiming to diversify their eating habits. But how can we interpret the phrase "Central European dishes"? In an interview with a waitress, we found out that the restaurant serves Korean and Czech food (employing a Korean and a Czech chef). Obviously, Czech dishes in the new context of multinationals in the region become "Central European". Thus the sign might serve as evidence that Frýdek-Místek, a town on the periphery of Czechia, is moving from the local or national scale

Figure 23.3 Sign with the Czech inscription "A selection of Central-European and Korean dishes".

to the supranational or global scale. Its close neighbor – a large Korean-based multinational – has played a major role in this transition.

Translanguaging

A striking feature of our research is that it did not reveal significant translanguaging, a characteristic feature of sociolinguistic superdiversity (see e.g. Creese & Blackledge 2010; Cogo 2012). This might be explained by the dominant research metholodogy (CA-based approaches might reveal more translanguaging than interviewing) or by the setting examined (more translanguaging might occur in an informal conversation in R&D or on the shop floor than in a meeting). However, three factors undoubtedly limit translanguaging here. The first is the emphasis on the standardization of social processes in multinationals, resulting in the strong functional distribution of linguistic resources. The relevant functions can vary in generality, from establishing a corporate language, to specifying domains or genres in which a language is mandatory, to maintaining only one language per turn in interaction. The second is the character of language teaching in national contexts. Translanguaging in Czechia is constrained by the monolingual bias of second language acquisition, permeated by standard language ideology. The last factor, correlated with the degree of translanguaging, consists in the interlocutors' linguistic repertoires. Lüdi, Höchle Meier and Yanaprasart (2016) studied multinationals in Switzerland and showed how their employees creatively oscillated between French, German and English. The intersection of employees' linguistic repertoires in Czechia is much smaller. There are so few common

elements in the linguistic repertoires of the Czech and Korean employees that translanguaging practices are almost impossible, and the situation in the German-based multinationals is not much different.

Conclusion

In this article, we have concentrated on multinationals as specific superdiversified contexts. Our theoretical framework, LMT, helped us stay sensitive both to the micro and macro processes taking place in socio-cultural, communicative and linguistic dimensions and be aware of their interconnections. We have pointed to features and processes through which superdiversity is manifested, but also to factors which suppress superdiversity. We have signalized a relatively low level of superdiversification of some of the social aspects under review by placing the prefix "super" in the word "superdiversity" in parentheses. We have shown that the limitations on superdiversity in multinationals are due, above all, to two factors.

First, multinationals, with branches in multiple countries, extensively standardize their production and manufacturing procedures, and along with them, the relevant social processes, including linguistic, communicative and socio-cultural ones. In a more general perspective, this relationship between superdiversity and standardization can be viewed as an expression of tension between two basic tendencies in post-modern societies (cf. Neustupný 2006) – on the one hand, the deepening diversification and growing variability of linguistic, communicative and socio-cultural phenomena, and on the other hand, the rationalization tendencies leading to their homogenization or unification.

Second, the national context in which multinationals operate is relevant. Czechia represents a context that is superdiversified to a certain degree, but simultaneously one in which national interests, traditions and (language) ideologies are manifested significantly, and these limit the superdiversification of lower-order contexts, including branches of multinationals.

Acknowledgements

Further reading

Language Management website: http://languagemanagement.ff.cuni.cz.
A basic resource for studies using Language Management Theory.

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An extensive collection of studies exploring linguistic (super)diversity in eight countries and seven regions, from Brandenburg, Germany in the West to Sakhalin, Russia, in the East.

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