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Coding Scheme – individual interviews

Goals	First order concepts	Second level themes	Total number of references	Participants	Quotes
To identify the communication strategies in the MCT	<u>Company policy</u>	-	4	6	<i>“Yes... in the company they just really use their own languages if they are in an in-person setting and a very small group i.e. only when those who speak and understand the language are present. Every time there is at least one person that does not speak that language, everyone speaks English.”</i>
				1	<i>“It's not a hard policy as such, but it is expected to communicate in English, and there is a fairly strong emphasis on it to make sure that no one feels left out. So there is a pretty strong demand to speak in English.”</i>
				3	<i>“Every time we communicate each other in English. And we are very comfortable to communicate in each other in English.”</i>
				7	<i>“ (...) mainly in English, but when they have small talk or when within the company, but outside the corporate talk they use Dutch.”</i>
	<u>Easier to communicate within the same culture/ language</u>	Yes	5	1	<i>“ (...) most of us don't speak our first language with each other. (...) we're able to speak in English, but it's not our mother tongue, so sometimes we can't express exactly what we want to say in that other language, which makes it harder to express what we want and to make clear how we feel about things and how we want to fix issues. And, I think that's a difficult thing. And I also noticed from my Dutch colleagues that they're not very happy with that at times because they were before in a situation where they could just speak Dutch, their own language, which made things a lot easier. So I think on all sides, it's an extra demand a task that makes things a bit more difficult, I believe.”</i>

					<p><i>It'll go easier if I can talk with someone who understands what I'm saying and who can express themselves easier (...) that makes a big difference for me. It makes a difference in how efficient we would be able to be as a team and in our work. So yes, that definitely plays a big role.</i></p>
					<p><i>"let's say, there's two people you can potentially ask your question to: one speaks the same language as you, the other one is a different language speaker. Then you will naturally go towards the person who speaks the same language as you."</i></p>
				2	<p><i>"It's hard (...) you can have the communication in English, but trying to understand the way that the two parties, or the people understand each other because... for me specifically, we have the same understanding of each other in Turkey, in between the Turkish people, let me say. But, when you deal with another culture it is hard, but you try to make the things more specific and you try to explain the things in more detailed way so that you can manage the whole communication. And it takes more time."</i></p>
				8	<p><i>"So... I had to adapt. I had to adapt without a doubt. Because at first, when I arrived there I spoke as they said "the European African Portuguese" (...) I spoke and they didn't get me... didn't understand me. I had to start using their expressions, their words, when I asked for something I needed, I had to end the sentence with a "ya" so they would be able to understand that that was really the end of the sentence. After some time, we understood each other well. But in the beginning, yes, the first couple of months (...) it was a bit hard for me. And for them too, obviously. They also didn't always understand and then they started to understand what I said and even pick some patterns in my speech and the way I spoke."</i></p>
		No	2	3	<p><i>" (...) two girls fought because of some incident issues. I solved that. It was not related to multiculturalism. But multiculturalism was not involved there, because they both spoke the same"</i></p>

					<i>language, but they both were from different countries or regions. So that was the conflict.”</i>
				6	<i>“(…) my immediate answer would be that I do not believe it would make a difference [to speak in the same language] because this discussion method (…) works very well. Even because I already had experiences in the past of meetings that lasted for hours, and I hated them. Now even if they take a bit longer with questions or comments, it is not as tiring and exhausting to pay attention to the topic and participate in the discussion.”</i>
To identify and understand the implication of different factors in a MCT's efficiency	<u>Side conversations</u>	-	3	5	<i>“I think since everybody talks English at work or can talk English at work. So it would be the efficient part is that whatever you do, you, if you're looking for information, it's always available in English. The inefficient part is that you need to read it yourself instead of just calling it to someone and then socialize a little bit before getting some information (…) So I think that the... in the inefficient part is that you miss the social, uh, I think. Because you always stick to your question because you think that's... you know... you cannot really relate what's happening around, I would say, because the majority of people when they are not talking about work, they're talking about nothing special... or they're using Dutch, I would say (…) So I think that's the, that's the inefficient part.”</i>
				3	<i>“Before, I was working with some Dutch colleagues, so (…) I can say it was not clearly discrimination, but sometimes... (…) if you are in a gathering a group of four, five people where you meet three or four people as Dutch and when you are alone in English speaking... so they all start speaking Dutch in between them and you were just sitting there existing. You are understanding... or trying to understand (…) trying to capture some words. So yes, it was very difficult for me, but not now. This was the big of challenges I faced, but I cannot clearly call them discrimination because they never discriminate. I didn't feel like that was the discrimination because of the language.</i>

					<p><i>But yes, I think that would be a common aspect when if I was only sitting with four people English speaking or Hindi-speaking, so I would start speaking Hindi (...) I didn't feel I was discriminated, but it should've been taken care. At least, I personally think so.</i></p>	
				7	<p><i>"Dutch and Belgium people talk in their own language, but still they have different words."</i></p>	
<p>To identify situations in which conflict emerges and the role of language in them</p>	<p><u>Role of language in the emergence of conflict</u></p>	<p>Language does not play a facilitating role</p>	<p>3</p>	6	<p>Question: <u>Do you consider that the fact that people have different native languages works as a facilitator of conflicts or that it sometimes helps to alleviate them?</u></p> <p><i>"I think it helps alleviating them..."</i></p>	
				7	<p>Question: <u>If a conflict was to arise, what do you think the main reasons could be according to your experience? Do you think the language works as a conflict facilitator?</u></p> <p><i>"No, I don't think so because in a team everybody has almost perfect as English and they don't have language problems."</i></p>	
				8	<p><i>"No, in my case no. Obviously, there were times that I said "Do this in this way...ya" and then... they didn't but it was more because they didn't know how to do that in that certain way, so they would do it differently. Language conflict no, it never happened."</i></p>	
			<p>Cultural values do not play a role</p>	<p>2</p>	7	<p>Question: <u>Do you think the conflict could emerge from different cultural values?</u></p> <p><i>"I also don't think that's the case because in the team everybody is senior and they have rich experience and they only focus on a certain area (...) they have their own regions and also before that they have all experience in different countries. Like for example, my manager now, she's a Dutch, but she studied in Norway and stayed in Asia for like a year before. And also the team previous manager, she stayed in Africa and Asia for like seven or eight years in total, and they are very aware of the culture difference and they have a broad experience. So, I don't think that's a problem. And also they communicate a lot with a team over the world."</i></p>
					8	<p><i>"Not really, because obviously I was in an African country... I am white and I was in an African country... there is a lot of talk</i></p>

					<p><i>about racism (...) the disdain towards white people, specially those who were colonizers like the Portuguese... I didn't feel anyt of that. Quite the opposite, actually. So they knew, that I knew more than them about those topics, so they took advantage of that and really wanted for me to teach them some things. So, I don't remember ever feeling racism towards me or that they interpreted things differently than what I was trying to say... I really never felt that. I always tried to explain myself in the best possible way, or at least the best I could and play with them... make it chill. I never felt anything like that".</i></p>
		Neither language or cultural values play a role	1	3	<p><i>"I don't think so because... I'm working and inserted in the Dutch culture for the last three and a half years, so I don't think that this [different cultures and languages] could be a reason for the conflict because we all speak English. If you come to the corporate world, we all speak English (...) so I don't think that there would or there should be the reason for conflict. But yes, if somebody comes and pokes you because of language or discriminates you because of the language, that is a different thing. But for me, I never felt that. So, for me, it's not a reason to conflict because of the language or barriers."</i></p>
		Sometimes language plays a role	2	4	<p>Question: <u>If a conflict was to arise within the team, what do you think the main reason would be, according to your experience? Do you think the language would play a role in this?</u> <i>"Sometimes it does. Yes, I'd say so."</i></p>
				5	<p><i>"it depends on the level of English proficiency the person has. There are some cases wherein you receive emails or you communicate to someone that you don't... or I don't even know what does that mean for and even though that person that I'm talking with speaks English... but in my case, since English is my third language, I still really struggle to really absorb one by one what that person saying to me or telling to me. So, I would say it depends on the level of proficiency. But there are some people that use very complex language and there are some people that use very basic language, but I always prefer that it should be simple and understandable."</i></p>

		<p>Yes, language and cultural values play an equal role</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>2</p>	<p><i>“(…) at least in my language, we try to explain, for example, one variable, from different (..) from multiple ways. But this does not happen when you use a common language like English. Or maybe it can be about multiculturalism, let me say, because... maybe they are giving that much of an explanation or detail and leave the rest of the things to the other party to understand.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think language really, really plays a role here. Also, multiculturalism also plays a huge role in here because, as I mentioned before, the way that we understand each other is very different. Or the way that we grow up in our countries differs with each other so that we understand things in a different way or we understand the processes in different way.”</i></p> <p><i>“It's hard to have the communication (...) but of course, you can have the communication in English, but trying to understand the way that the two parties, or the people understand each other (...)”</i></p>
		<p>Yes, but cultural values play a bigger role than language</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>6</p> <p>1</p>	<p><i>“Culturally, people from Estonia are much more closed... the communication is very short... very succinct so it's not prone to conflicts. Normally, their communication is based on sharing facts, so it's very quick and easy to reach a conclusion because they do not digress in their speech, they are very straightforward and direct.”</i></p> <p>Question: <u>If a conflict was to arise, like a conflict of ideas, what do you think would the main reason be? Do you think that could come from the different languages background of the people?</u></p> <p><i>“Yeah, I do think so. In fact, (...) Dutch people are quite direct in their communication and that's something that I feel is very different from many other cultures. They're very different from Belgian culture, but especially very different from... the culture from the people in the Philippines, but also the people in Morocco who we work with... for them that direct language, is new. And so, what I've seen a few times is when the Dutch people talk to them that's taken a bit in a way as if it's a personal attack or if it's kind of a... too harsh communication compared to what</i></p>

					<p><i>they're used to. And that could lead to conflicts in the way that people don't like that and have problems with that. I think that would create more conflicts than the work itself or any other things like different opinions or different ideas about the work or how the work should be done. I think it's the language of communication... yeah... that can lead to these issues for sure."</i></p> <p><i>"Um, no... I don't think the language is really gonna cause a problem. It's more... it's more the different values."</i></p>
				3	<p><i>" (...) two girls fought because of some incident issues (...) But multiculturalism was not involved there, because they both spoke the same language, but they both were from the different countries or regions. So that was the conflict"</i></p>
		Yes, but language plays a bigger role than cultural values	2	4	<p>Question: <u>Do you think that different languages play a more prominent role as a conflict facilitator than the different cultural values?</u></p> <p><i>"Perhaps. Yes."</i></p>
				5	<p><i>"I will not say make a conflict. But it will raise questions, I would say. More clarification. (...) but there might be misunderstandings, or more further questions I would say."</i></p>
To identify and understand the role of language in conflict resolution	<u>Language barriers</u>	Job task	3	5	<p><i>" (...) If I send a simple instructions and if that instructions was not successfully captured correctly, what I normally do is that I call the person and say like "What was wrong on the instructions? Why was this not accomplished the way it should be?" (...) so those kinds of things. So, my strategy is really to investigate how other colleagues as well as sending instructions what words they use instead.(...) So, I think using words that are uniform and clear to others, will be a good strategy to use instead of making a new words, which also defines the same thing."</i></p>
				7	<p><i>"The problem to me is because this is a Dutch company and their customer are bakers and restaurants, and I'm doing marketing jobs, so I need to search a lot of like online advertisement and target on websites. However, many of them are only in Dutch because their target are Dutch people, and this is the hard part that I don't appreciate and also because I'm</i></p>

					<i>doing a global job and also when I search something like, for example, the trend and market and new product in Italy or France, and they're all in their own language on Instagram or Facebook. So, I need to use translator all the time for those."</i>
				8	<i>"there were times that I said "Do this in this way...ya" and then... they didn't but it was more because they didn't know how to do that in that certain way, so they would do it differently. Language conflict no, it never happened."</i>
		Relationships	2	5	<i>"you still have kind of like misunderstandings... or you absorb wordings or you understand wordings that might be offensive, but on their part it's just a normal. So this kind of thing is very, very interesting for me."</i>
				3	<i>" (...) to understand that... if we are working in a culture where the culture is multicultural, that means everybody is aware that we have to speak one... the same language, which is understandable for every... you know, for everyone. Or should be."</i>
To understand, based on the participant's personal experience in coping with conflict how solving conflicts deriving from language barriers is a priority in MCTs	<u>Example of a conflict resolution experienced</u>		3	1	<i>"But we had a case in a team of ours not so long time ago where there was an argument between someone from a local background, Dutch background and someone with a Middle Eastern background. And that conflict couldn't be resolved in the way that actually should've been resolved. And, that led to one person leaving the team. And the basis of that conflict was purely the way, how people were talking to each other, and how people took certain communication and that only proves that there's still work to be done and even in the current environment, where there is a lot of talk about toxic environments and protecting employees. In my opinion, (...) they didn't try to kind of resolve the issue and to find a solution for both."</i>
				3	<i>"The conflict itself I have not faced. (...) I have some experience in the HR field, so I solved a conflict once where two girls fought because of some incident issues. (...) It was not related to multiculturalism. (...) because they both spoke the same language, but they both were from different countries or regions."</i>

					<p><i>So that was the conflict. So I solved that by sitting with them, I talked to them, I told them not to sit with each other for some time, avoid each other. So we could see if that would work. And it did.”</i></p>
				5	<p><i>“Currently I’m working with a team that creates instructions and we have another team that executes those instructions (...) And sometimes on my part, I know that it is very simple and very direct, but when the person who executes the instructions probably absorbs the instructions in a different way. Then that’s the beginning of the conflict in my workplace wherein we need to step in and be like “Hey, (...) why did you do this?... But I instructed you to do this.”(...) I know when I write the instruction, it is clear to me what needs to be done, but for the person that received those instructions, it is possible that they absorb the instructions in a different way which can result in a conflict and more things to be done instead of just in a simple way.”</i></p>
<p>To assess the interviewee’s ability to effectively communicate in the context of their MCT while influenced by their cultural values</p>	<p><u>Accuracy & Precision vs. Cultural Sensitivity</u></p>	<p>Balance both</p>	<p>3</p>	1	<p><i>“That [the fact that different cultural backgrounds require some cultural sensitivity] is definitely true. I think for that you need the people to be okay with different proficiency in the language and I believe that’s what they’re trying at ING, what they’re trying to do a bit more. So they’re trying to make people aware of cultural differences, of different proficiency levels in the language, and they try to make people then accept these in advance before you get to the point where conflict resolution is needed. I believe that is necessary especially for the people who come from the Dutch background in our case, I think. I think that that’s something they try to do proactively at the moment itself. Like I said, you have these facilitators who try to balance that communication that the talking at that moment.”</i></p>
				2	<p><i>“(…) you start to try to explain the things in a more detailed way by giving more time on it. And, you know, there’s a stance, in between all the different cultures that you have to keep up with, to be polite and to keep that sensitivity or to respect that</i></p>

					<i>sensitivity. So, you need to be in that stance and you need to keep that balance not to be understood wrongly. You need to keep that stance and you need to invest more time to explain things in a better way, in a detailed way to the other person so that you can deal with some specific things on the whole process, let me say”</i>
				3	<i>“Yes, I think so [need to balance accuracy and precision with cultural sensitivity]. Yeah. Yeah.”</i>
		More focus on cultural sensitivity	4	1	<i>“(…) But first and foremost, they [the company] try to proactively make people aware of the differences and try to make people to keep that in mind during the conflict resolution time to make sure that you give ample time to other people to talk even if they're not as proficient as you. So especially in a proactive way, that's the main goal of ING.”</i>
				5	<i>“Yes, of course. In my situation now, coming from the Philippines, based on my experience, we don't normally speak straightforwardly. We are very polite. When we are writing our emails, we normally greet the person, ask the person how are, how is the day going... When I moved to Europe... they are more very straightforward, short and direct. So yes, I also changed a lot and I shape how I communicate based on the nationality that I'm, I'm talking with. “</i>
				5	<i>“Yeah. Well first... how do I balance it? Well, I am a person that is not very neutral, I would say. I don't like being dominated as well. So if there is, for example, suggestions that conflicts with what I believe, then I normally jump into the conversation and let my voice to be heard. In a way that I still communicate with them and the way I communicate is shaped based on their culture. So, it's still connected. So I don't need to sound arrogant, just because I don't believe to what they say, but still the way I talk to them is still based on, the culture, communication they do. So, I adapt on that as well.”</i>
				7	<i>“Before I started the internship, I immediately told them that this is my first time working in an international team. If I say</i>

					<i>something wrong or inappropriate, please bring that out and correct me. It would be really helpful for me and also my future. But now... the point is that I'm a Asian women working in a Dutch culture, so usually they are the ones being super careful with me when they talk to me. So I, it's, it's usually not my problem and I notice that my managers are like... when they talk something they're really care for or act like "Oh, don't take it personally", or "It's just a market thing".</i>
		More detailed conversations and more focus on accuracy	2	2	<i>"try to explain the things in more detailed way by giving more time on it. "</i>
					<i>"invest more time to explain things in a better way, in a detailed way to the other person"</i>
		No need to adapt the speech	1	3	<i>"I don't think so because if you already started working in multicultural things or with international people, and... if you have this in your mind that you need to focus on your culture or language, this is not good. Because you need to accept that you're going to start with the multicultural environment, so you need to be the to accept the culture or the language difference from others. If this was not my thinking... I should not go and work in a multicultural environment or a multicultural language world."</i>
		Something to learn more	2	4	<i>"That I want to learn way, way more. But because coming from Argentina, there's not that much cultural diversity really [...]. Whereas here, I encounter myself with people from different religions, different ethnicities, and of course I never want to say the wrong thing, so I'm trying to learn as much as I can, so I'm being respectful towards everybody so that I think I can still improve."</i>
				7	<i>"Before I started the internship, I immediately told them that this is my first time working in an international team. If I say something wrong or inappropriate, please bring that out and</i>

						correct me. It would be really helpful for me and also my future.”
		Yes, there is the need to adapt the speech		1	5	“Yes, of course. In my situation now, coming from the Philippines, based on my experience, we don't normally speak straightforward. We are very polite. When we are writing our emails, we normally greet the person, ask the person how are, how is the day going... When I moved to Europe... they are more very straightforward, short and direct. So yes, I also changed a lot and I shape how I communicate based on the nationality that I'm, I'm talking with. “
To identify strategies used to approach a conflict	<u>Conflict resolution</u>	Easier in remote work	Yes	1	6	“It is easier in this aspect, because when a person writes a message tries to be as succinct... as clear as possible... and even does a fact check before pressing send and send the message. When a person is talking in a meeting, usually the ideas flow rapidly and directly from their head to their mouth and you can see the reflection of this in their speech... it's easier for a person to make a mistake or not be seeing the whole picture. When we send a message, we have the possibility of re-reading it and re-reading what other people have said... something that in a videocall or a face-to-face conversation is not possible and there is no rewind button to go back to what it was said. There [in a text message] everything is already there... the facts are already displayed in a temporal, chronological way and it is easier, that is, you do not lose the thread to the skein... a person will not repeat arguments because there are already a message where those arguments were exposed. So I think... at least in my perception... that discussions end up ending very quickly and efficiently by using this method. But this method also works for companies that do not work remotely... they just have to realize how to apply this to their teams which I believe to be the hardest part (...) I really believe that it's way more difficult to be in a meeting discussing something than to discuss it in a couple text messages.”

			No	1	5	<i>"I think the hard part is the remote, because most of the time you really understand everything by yourself. You absorb everything by yourself. Instead of just having a talk to your colleague at the office. So, yes, remotely creates more conflicts and misunderstanding, I would say. I've been on the company for quite a while... meaning to say I'm already familiar to what I'm doing in general, then I will be more confident in just chatting with person because that person might have less misunderstanding towards me. Since I just started to work, in January, I still prefer and I feel that remotely creates a misunderstanding if you are a newbie."</i>
		Focus on other communication styles	Give more examples/ details	2	2	<i>"(...) both people or the both parties give more detail, give more specific things, they give examples, they simulate things so that both parties can understand each other (...) you cannot sometimes find the specific word that you are thinking on your mind. But when you give the examples, one, two or three... like multiple examples, you can make the other person understand you, I think."</i>
			People need to get used to other communication styles	2	1	<i>"Well, I think that's a bit... again Dutch people sometimes create difficulties because they wanna be very direct in their communication and in their talking and... for people who have a different... come from a different culture and who have a different way of talking and communicating with people... that can be taken in a way that is more top down, I think. So they see it more as a sort of like direct and harsh language, one that is</i>

						<p><i>more demanding. And that's... I think that's sometimes hard to accept that while, because they're more used to being talked to in a friendlier way... in a way where you talk much more to get to a conclusion, rather than being in a few sentences... being direct with words... to express what they think about it. And I feel that that it's not always so easy need for conflict resolution...</i></p>
					8	<p><i>"Either we know very well and are fully aware of what we are saying and talking to them, or else, yes, there could be some kind of conflict. What often happened to me, was that there were always one or two people that worked with me who could speak the more local languages. And then, when I spoke to them, either in English or Portuguese, or whatever, they would "translate" it, let's say, into their local languages. Although they use English, they speak a lot of Afrikaans there, which has nothing to do with the languages I speak. They, by themselves... when one was not understanding, they translated that for him and managed that for me... because I didn't know how to speak their dialect. And it always worked very well."</i></p>
		<p><u>Success of using a talk as a resolution strategy</u></p>	<p>Effective</p>	<p>3</p>	4	<p><i>"I don't know... I think you can talk things out. I mean, as long as you share the same language, most likely English, you can end up talking things out and explaining your culture or your point of view or where you come from, and that sometimes... you know... with a little bit of patience, you can make things work out."</i></p>
					2	<p><i>"(...) since you use English as a common language to understand each other, both people or both parties give more detail, give more specific things, they give examples, they simulate things so that both parties can understand each other (...) cannot sometimes find the specific word that you are</i></p>

						<i>thinking on your mind. But when you give the examples, one, two or three... like multiple examples, you can make the other person understand you, I think.”</i>
			Ineffective	1	6	<i>“For instance, my manager is a person that is actually very different from people from the same culture [Estonia]... he is way more talkative, way more outgoing and he even tried to make our team more communicative and closer together even outside of the work setting...but all attempts turned out to have very little or no success at all”</i>
			Depends	1	8	<i>“Okay, so... it really depends. Because there are many times when the dialogue is not enough. You need to complement it with a practical example, you need to show objects, speak in a different way. Because that’s what this is really about... even when we think we are being clear and speaking fluently, but because even though they speak the same language as we do, with a different dialect, they feel like... and even I felt like something more than communication was missing and it was definitely needed. It is often necessary either to use drawings or other methods so that they can truly understand and we can all act accordingly to that conversation... perform tasks, build relationships within the team etcetera.”</i>
To establish a relation between the role of language in communication efficiency and power positions	Privileged position in debates	Yes, English native-level speakers have a privileged position		3	4	<i>“Not Dutch because I know that a lot of Dutch people sometimes don't feel maybe as comfortable with English or they sometimes struggle as well to find certain words, which is completely understandable being that English is also not their first language. For British people, yes, of course they will be in advantage. Maybe they won't struggle the way that we do.”</i>
					6	<i>“In my company, not in my project...but in my company I have people from the United States and that might happen with them...but they don't work in engineering, so we never have any type of communication with them...I can't really measure that because everyone with whom I have direct communication don't have English as a native language.”</i>

				2	<i>“If they have a more privileged position? Yes, they have. They have because, for example, we have a British person in there, in the finance department. He talks very correctly... and also because of the accent. Let me say, you cannot understand him... and you need to, you know, make him to say the things again and again so that you can understand. And, because of this, they act more dominant in communications because the common language is English... they are talking like faster with different words that you didn't hear before, so they act more dominant and it gets harder for you to understand and get familiar with the whole process or the discussion, let me say.”</i>
		Yes, both English native-level speakers and locals have a privileged position	1	3	<i>“For me, if I talk honestly in my workplace, I never feel that. But I think sometimes maybe some employees have faced that. So I cannot tell if that is... if this is personally my experience, but yes you can feel the superiority of the language because they know everything about this country and about it. So yes, it's the common human tendency. They can feel superior. I never felt that, but yes, it could be a reason for people to engage into conflict, because it is a very common human tendency if you know everything about a particular place or the language or everything, so you feel superior... it's the human tendency”</i>
		Yes, locals have a privileged position	3	1	<i>“I would say yes, but... yeah, they do. But that's not because of the language they speak, that's more because they have a more experienced background. But they definitely have a more prioritized position.”</i>
	5			<i>“I will be honest, yes, they are. Even though you don't want to be dominated by them... you know... still they have the final call in in many moments and that's something that I already accepted. Especially like in my team right now, I am the only Asian, so whatever I say might be dominated with small ideas, especially if that person suggested is Dutch. So yes, they dominate a lot.”</i>	
	8			Question: <u>Considering that you were working in a country that even though it's also yours you didn't grow up in there, in your</u>	

					<p><u>experience with a team composed essentially by locals, do you think that they had a privileged position when exposing and explaining ideas, when brainstorming that came from the fact that they were locals and knew better the country and the culture you were working in?</u></p> <p><i>“Oh yes, absolutely. Because I remember that it happened many times that they turned to me and said “Boss, this need to be more isolated because it will get too hot, ya”, or “Boss, put this equipment higher because this is a gazelle habitat and people come here to hunt them, ya” and even “When you go to that café or that restaurant, ask for this fruit as the flavor for the juice because the people of this village always mix up these 2 fruits, ya”. I was in an amazing position there, because it was their environment and I was a foreigner that was very well integrated. So, I have no doubt that those, their inputs helped a lot.”</i></p>
	No		1	7	<p><i>“No, no! Dutch people are really nice. When there's international, they usually just switch to English. And also I have a Dutch friend working there and when there are Dutch there, and if they cannot explain something in details, they just first tell me like “Hey, we have to speak in Dutch because we cannot talk this in English” and then after that, also explain the topic to me... Just one more thing, because I also stayed in Switzerland and also Germany... they do this way more than the Dutch people. They just don't even tell when they're speaking German.”</i></p>
	<u>Strategies that non-native speakers can adopt to fight this privilege</u>	Self-improvement	3	4	<p><i>“Practicing more. Just practice. You know, don't give up. Keep going, don't be embarrassed. If you cannot find a word, I'm sure people will help you out. And with patience, you can always help the other person understand what you're trying to say.”</i></p>
1				<p><i>“What I see more and more is that people within ING try to learn to speak Dutch, which is a weird way... thing to do, if you ask me. The issue is often that... I mean within the team, we communicate in English (...) The problem is really when we</i></p>	

					<p><i>start communicating with other teams. Sometimes the other teams we communicate with are not multicultural teams, and they would then send us emails or messages in Dutch, and then you get issues. I think these are very difficult to solve. I mean, for us as a team, difficult. It would have to come from higher up from ING. But what can people themselves do about it... I know that some of them speak out, sometimes when they hear Dutch, they really ask like "Could we... could you speak some English?" even if they're not talking to them. But if they're like a bystander or so to kind of feel more included and to make people aware of the fact that they're not speaking or that they're speaking a language and not everyone understands. It's difficult, I think."</i></p>
				5	<p><i>"What I learned is that... try to learn their language as well. You don't need to be perfect. You don't need to be so professional. Start with the basic and I would say that the way they appreciate you learning their language also increase your chances that they will not dominate you when it comes to brainstorming or giving ideas. I would say like that... so you kill the dominant part first by learning very basic. "</i></p>
		Socialize with the privileged	2	5	<p><i>"And be social, socialize with them first before the brainstorming moment comes, I think... so you can kind of... avoid the moment where you cannot or it's really difficult to share your ideas, to formulate what you need to say, especially if you're not very familiar with the language. So, I would say socialize first before the meeting or whatever it is and try to gain their confidence first, and then you strategize yourself when do you need to say those kind of ideas instead of just dumping them because they give ideas, but they are Dutch."</i></p>
				8	<p><i>"Besides ending every sentence with "ya"? Eat with them many times... have lunch and dinner with them, socialize not only during the work hours, but also after... have dinner with them and their families, talk to their kids. Try to talk to them in a more chill way than just talking about work."</i></p>

		Do not overreact	1	5	<i>“But at the same time, if you make conflict directly instead of just listening first... I think overreaction as well might cost a domination, in this case. It might be that your ideas will never be heard if you try to make conflict with them in an improper way”</i>
To comprehend the importance given to cultural intelligence in a work setting	<u>Recruitment preferences</u>	Cultural values more than language	2	4	<i>“I mean, if your English is terrible and you cannot write a full sentence, then yes it’s not looking awesome for you. (...) So as long as your English is not literally horrible, then it's fine.”</i>
				6	<i>“I think I would prefer to see if the person has in deed team spirit. I also work in the recruitment process specifically to my team and the English proficiency is not an impediment. I believe that we are facing an impediment if at a cultural level we think the person is not a good fit. But if the person is an introvert, that is not a reason for exclusion, obviously.”</i>
		Language preference	1	2	<i>“I would prefer the language skills because there are a lot of people in here and you have to communicate, but you cannot communicate effectively without going specifically into all the technicalities of the process. Communication is the most important part because you can get the other skills easily in a shorter time period. But the language proficiency or the ability to use the English language is much important. I think.”</i>
		Soft skills more than language and cultural values	5	4	<i>“(...)I think that's always a benefit, like getting different points of view and definitely putting emphasis on soft skills, because they are also pretty valuable. So as long as your English is not literally horrible, then it's fine.”</i>
				6	<i>“I think I would prefer to see if the person has in deed team spirit. I also work in the recruitment process specifically to my team and the English proficiency is not an impediment. (...)”</i>
				3	<i>“I will choose the team work, conflict management, time management, everything, because that makes a team better. So yes, I will not go with the language because we know that we are choosing people for the multicultural environment, so we should not go for the language, I guess.”</i>

					<p><i>"I think if we are working in a team of five members, and three or four members are good in English and maybe one person is not good enough, like for sure, I'm not going to select a person who is not... who doesn't even know English. Because I know English is must in our job, so definitely I will go for the English as well. But if, if I feel that, maybe he is in 60% English and 40% is some another language, then I will accept him and as a team, I will support him togrow and definitely learn the language for their own."</i></p>
				7	<p><i>"I think the language only needs to reach the standard line. It doesn't need to be perfect, like communication level is enough. I think it still depends on the job. If the position requires a lot of communication, paperwork or even goes online posts, it must be at a professional level. Otherwise, it's a communication level that is enough."</i></p>
	<p><u>Language proficiency strategies</u></p>	<p>Ask/ offer help</p>	<p>6</p>	4	<p><i>"Patience. Patience. Patience. Just trying to, you know, be understanding of the situation and just hear them out and be patient and try and help them out with questions like "Is this what you meant?" or "Can you please try to give me an example to clarify this?". Just letting them know that there's no rush and that you wait until they can tell you what they want to say."</i></p>
6				<p><i>"Yes, it has happened before [faced language barriers with another colleague]... it happened both when I was trying to express myself and with some colleagues too... and in these cases, sometimes it seems like there is something missing or a break in the explanation. But it's easily solvable... we make a break there...take a minute to gather thoughts, or someone tries to help complete a reasoning or an explanation, but always in English...even when it's someone of the same nationality."</i></p>	
5				<p><i>"What I normally do is that if I send a simple instructions and if that instructions was not successfully captured correctly, what I normally do is that I call the person and say like "What was wrong on the instructions? Why was this not accomplished the way it should be? Are there some wordings that perhaps I am</i></p>	

				<p><i>using from my previous company, which is not applicable to the current one?"... so those kinds of things. So, my strategy is really to investigate how other colleagues as well as sending instructions what words they use instead (...)"</i></p> <p><i>"People, especially in a professional world... I think it's very academic where in somebody will say to you like "Hey, your English is grammatically incorrect", I would say. But in a work environment, unless you are not working in legal, you're not working in marketing, and so on and so forth... if it's just internal, like emails together with your colleagues or another department that will never be published, we don't normally raise that kind of concerns. We normally try to understand or absorb that this person might have English as his or her fifth language. What is important to us is I think we raised the concern if the grammar or the instruction itself is not understandable itself, I would say, especially in my current work. You experience that because we have a lot of colleagues from different countries and like when you talk with them, even though for verbal communication, if you are... let's say a police language, you know... like you want everything to be perfect, then that kind of workplace is not good for you. Otherwise, it will just give you stress."</i></p> <p><i>"Either you are fluent in that language or else there could really be conflicts. Especially in places (...) with few or none communication with different cultures. Either we know very well and are fully aware of what we are saying and talking to them, or else, yes, there could be some kind of conflict. What often happened to me, was that there were always one or two people that worked with me who could speak the more local languages. And then, when I spoke to them, either in English or Portuguese, or whatever, they would "translate" it, let's say, into their local languages. Although they use English, they speak a lot of Afrikaans there, which has nothing to do with the languages I speak. They, by themselves... when one was not</i></p>
			8	

					<p><i>understanding , they translated that for him and managed that for me... because I didn't know how to speak their dialect. And it always worked very well."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) when the difference is very big not only in terms of language but also in culturally, try to find interlocutors who can be that bridge to complement the communication... to help to overcome that obstacle to reach them in an effective and cordial way. And of course, always be open to what they say, to what they ask and to how they react, and obviously take it as chill as we can, so they don't feel threatened and don't think we are really there to boss them around and for them to do what we don't want or don't know how to do, or that we don't care about them. They are very important and so are we"</i></p>
		More careful speech	6	6	<p><i>"Well...I think the speech is a bit more careful comparing to when a person is using their native language. I truly believe this is the main point... because... as we are using English and the English that we use on your daily basis is more related to the work-setting, you already know more or less what to do... you incorporate the appropriate language and the posture...therefore is harder for someone to disassociate from that in a level that could escalate to a conflict by speaking in a different tone for instance..."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) in my teams the communication is very succinct...very direct and I, who am in the minority nationality-speaking, also end up doing exactly the same thing. I am also more direct, succinct and clear...actually it's a funny thing to come to this realization"</i></p>
				5	<p><i>"So, first I would suggest that if you know that too much wordings can cause misunderstanding, I would say just be straightforward or just be direct to what you to what you need to say. Now, if you are gonna write that or you gonna email someone, make it short, and instead, if more explanation is needed, then I would suggest that you make a call instead, especially if you have a different nationality because it might</i></p>

					<p><i>cost misunderstanding. So, I think... because in my case, when you speak to a person, you can easily sense if you are on the same tone... or page. Meaning if you understand each other by just listening to the tone and when you do call instead of writing, it is easy as well to raise questions if there is words or clarification that the receiver needs, I would say. So, what I would suggest... there are a lot of ways to make things more... to avoid misunderstandings of course or conflict."</i></p> <p><i>"What I normally do is that if I send a simple instructions and if that instructions was not successfully captured correctly, what I normally do is that I call the person and say like "What was wrong on the instructions? Why was this not accomplished the way it should be? (...) So, my strategy is really to investigate how other colleagues as well as sending instructions what words they use instead. (...) So, I think using words that are uniform and clear to others, will be a good strategy to use instead of making a new words, which also defines the same thing."</i></p>
				3	<p><i>"I will talk slowly. I face this so many times (...) working with a Vietnam colleague, not in this company, but before... it happened that I had some clients from Vietnam, so I was working with them. I know their English is very pathetic, so how I managed to speak too slowly with them, they understand everything and if you go with them too fast, they will not understand. So what, what I used to do with them, I used to, you know, speak too slowly. So yes, they would understand clearly."</i></p>
				8	<p><i>"I had too adapt without a doubt. In the beginning, I spoke and they didn't get me... didn't understand me. I had to start using their expressions, their words, when I asked for something I needed, I had to end the sentence with a "ya" so they would be able to understand that that was really the end of the sentence. After some time, we understood each other well. (...) until I got used to it, it was a bit hard for me. And for them too, obviously. They also didn't always understand and then they started to</i></p>

					<i>understand what I said and even pick some patterns in my speech and the way I spoke.”</i>
		Match the speech to the level of proficiency of the other	7	6	<p><i>“Well...I think the speech is a bit more careful comparing to when a person is using their native language. I truly believe this is the main point... because... as we are using English and the English that we use on your daily basis is more related to the work-setting, you already know more or less what to do... you incorporate the appropriate language and the posture...therefore is harder for someone to disassociate from that in a level that could escalate to a conflict by speaking in a different tone for instance...”</i></p> <p><i>“In my teams the communication is very succinct...very direct and I, who am in the minority nationality-speaking, also end up doing exactly the same thing. I am also more direct, succinct and clear”</i></p>
				5	<p><i>“So, first I would suggest that if you know that too much wordings can cause misunderstanding, I would say just be straightforward or just be direct to what you to what you need to say. Now, if you are gonna write that or you gonna email someone, make it short, and instead, if more explanation is needed, then I would suggest that you make a call instead, especially if you have a different nationality because it might cost misunderstanding. So, I think... because in my case, when you speak to a person, you can easily sense if you are on the same tone... or page. Meaning if you understand each other by just listening to the tone and when you do call instead of writing, it is easy as well to raise questions if there is words or clarification that the receiver needs, I would say.”</i></p> <p><i>“What I normally do is that if I send a simple instructions and if that instructions was not successfully captured correctly, what I normally do is that I call the person and say like “What was wrong on the instructions? Why was this not accomplished the way it should be?” (...) so those kinds of things. So, my strategy is really to investigate how other colleagues as well as sending</i></p>

					<i>instructions what words they use instead. (...) So, I think using words that are uniform and clear to others, will be a good strategy to use instead of making a new words, which also defines the same thing."</i>
				3	<i>"I will talk slowly. (...) so how I managed to speak too slowly with them, they understand everything and if you go with them too fast, they will not understand. So what, what I used to do with them, I used to, you know, speak too slowly. So yes, they would understand clearly."</i>
				2	<i>"Depending on the level, you understand, of course the level of other people speaking a certain language... I mean like how he or she uses it, and so that you try to catch that level. Let me say, if someone is really talking like... perfectly, you are trying to get close to that level, but if the level is like lower, you try to get down to the lower level so that you try to make the whole thing more basic to be understood."</i>
				7	<i>"I think we utilize things quite basic in communication. Because most of them are native speakers (...) I think only the member in Singapore might have use English has a mother tongue. But the rest of them are not. But when we send email or send like official letters, we double check a lot before we send it because it goes to every country. But in normal, like daily life within the thing, we would just use quite basic words."</i>
		Patience	7	4	<i>"Patience. Patience. Patience. Just trying to, you know, be understanding of the situation and just hear them out and be patient and try and help them out with questions like "Is this what you meant?" or "Can you please try to give me an example to clarify this?". Just letting them know that there's no rush and that you wait until they can tell you what they want to say."</i>
				6	<i>"Yes, it has happened before [faced language barriers with another colleague]... it happened both when I was trying to express myself and with some colleagues too... and in these cases, sometimes it seems like there is something missing or a break in the explanation. But it's easily solvable... we make a</i>

					<p><i>break there...take a minute to gather thoughts, or someone tries to help complete a reasoning or an explanation, but always in English...even when it's someone of the same nationality."</i></p> <p><i>"The person is not that comfortable with the English language, we give him or her space to talk... try not to interrupt. If the person asks any question or has any doubt, we try to help but what I have been noticing is that there are people, even from other teams with whom we have weekly presentations, with a very elementary level of English... you can spot that difference... and in this presentations everybody keeps a level of respect and professionalism to keep them going."</i></p>
				1	<p><i>"They try to proactively make people aware of the differences and try to make people to keep that in mind during the conflict resolution time to make sure that you give ample time to other people to talk even if they're not as proficient as you. So especially in a proactive way, that's the main goal of ING."</i></p>
				5	<p><i>"(...) In a work environment, unless you are not working in legal, you're not working in marketing, and so on and so forth... if it's just internal, like emails together with your colleagues or another department that will never be published, we don't normally raise that kind of concerns. We normally try to understand or absorb that this person might have English as his or her fifth language. What is important to us is I think we raised the concern if the grammar or the instruction itself is not understandable itself, I would say, especially in my current work. You experience that because we have a lot of colleagues from different countries and like when you talk with them, even though for verbal communication, if you are... let's say a police language, you know... like you want everything to be perfect, then that kind of workplace is not good for you. Otherwise, it will just give you stress."</i></p>
				3	<p><i>"I will talk slowly. (...) so how I managed to speak too slowly with them, they understand everything and if you go with them too fast, they will not understand. So what, what I used to do</i></p>

					<i>with them, I used to, you know, speak too slowly. So yes, they would understand clearly.”</i>
				2	<i>“(…) I think a person needs to be patient about this because if I can criticize myself, I'm not that patient. So, I get angry when someone cannot understand me. But, I learned that I need to be patient... with myself, I mean.”</i>
		Questions to guide the other person	1	4	<i>“(…) Just hear them out and be patient and try and help them out with questions like “Is this what you meant?” or “Can you please try to give me an example to clarify this?”. Just letting them know that there's no rush and that you wait until they can tell you what they want to say.”</i>
	Seek to improve and learn it	2	5	<i>“Can I just say like “learn it”? That's the... yes... I think that's the best way. I mean, of course in a diverse environment, being perfect is not so important.”</i>	
			8	<i>“when the language barriers is very big... when the difference is very big not only in terms of language but also in culturally, try to find interlocutors who can be that bridge to complement the communication... to help to overcome that obstacle to reach them in an effective and cordial way. And of course, always be open to what they say, to what they ask and to how they react, and obviously take it as chill as we can, so they don't feel threatened and don't think we are really there to boss them around and for them to do what we don't want or don't know how to do, or that we don't care about them. They are very important and so are we”</i>	
<u>Language as a tool</u>	Build relationships	2	2	<i>I mean language definitely plays a crucial role (...) within a team with many nationalities...multicultural, let's say. You either embrace that it is a powerful tool to have effective communication and build relationships with empathy, or you will have a conflict. There is a need to integrate language proficiency and cultural awareness like I already said, into conflict resolution training. With this, you can be more effective in resolving conflicts in multicultural teams. For example, you can have language training programs (...) [to] have a better</i>	

					<i>understanding among team members. The cultural awareness that I talked about before is more to understand the communication styles through have an open mind to the others' background in the country they are from and this also helps in a conflict situation. (...) You need to listen other ideas and perspectives with an open mind and if you don't understand something also understand that and address that in a friendly way with the other person."</i>
				5	<i>"The inefficient part is that you need to read it yourself instead of just calling it to someone and then socialize a little bit before getting some information. I would say. So I think that the... in the inefficient part is that you miss the social (...)"</i>
		Communication	3	4	<i>"Well, sometimes it's the only way that you have to communicate. You can encounter different problems or issues and teamwork as well as talking things out is always the solution. Always, always, always, always."</i>
				5	<i>"It's a main factor and one factor of that is to be able to understand your colleague... knowing the fact that person is speaking the other language or trying to understand you in a language that he or she might not be familiar a hundred percent. So, I think in, in my company now, they are very into that kind of thing that when they send information, there is always a substitute English translation for that, or there's a English translation so that everybody aside, if you are non-Dutch speakers, they can also understand what's going on, not only with your department, but also what's happening to the company. And at the same time it creates engagement, opportunity, (...) awareness and at the same time, it makes the company as well... they are not only caring about one segmented part, which is the Dutch people, but also the other employees."</i>
				2	<i>"You either embrace that it is a powerful tool to have effective communication and build relationships with empathy, or you will have a conflict."</i>

					<p><i>“I have to say within ING, they focus very much on cultural differences. (...) What they try to do is they try to facilitate meetings and moments of conflict resolution by having people to facilitate the meetings and to make sure that everyone gets a chance to express what they want, even if they're not proficient. Or so very proficient in English.”</i></p>
					<p><i>“Within ING there is a lot of emphasis on multicultural teams and we get a lot of training, these are like training modules. We have online training modules with videos and questionnaires and texts on different multicultural teams, on different cultures, language, inclusion, all these topics.”</i></p>
		Conflict resolution training	6	1	<p><i>“For me, I think the actual training is more useful, more helpful. It makes you think more about the topic itself, and it makes you realize when there is conflict resolution needed, it makes you think back at these actual trainings and the things you read about, you practiced, you heard about. For me, that really works. It really makes you think and realize that moment, “Okay, I should behave in a different... or I should talk in a different way, or I should listen in a different way”. To me, that helps more than the soft way of training... this is my idea. And I have to say that the training that we have at ING, it's not really focused on conflict resolution as such. So there's still kind of a gap, I believe in that. We do learn a lot about cultural differences. We learn about cultural differences on the work floor, on different ways of communication, but the aspect of conflict resolution is barely touched upon. So in that respect, I think there's still some way to go.”</i></p>
				3	<p><i>“We should definitely do that [integrate conflict resolution training] if we are working in a multicultural team, definitely the training is the most important part. (...) I will conduct some meetings, maybe weekly, or twice a week, for the training of the language, for the training of the culture, for the training of how</i></p>

					<i>to handle people with this culture or with this language. If I know I can transfer to others, I will do the same. So, you know, just talking to them and doing meeting with them, so.”</i>
				2	<i>“I mean language definitely plays a crucial role when you need to understand cultural differences and you are researching how to promote conflict resolution within a team with many nationalities...multicultural, let’s say. You either embrace that it is a powerful tool to have effective communication and build relationships with empathy, or you will have a conflict. There is a need to integrate language proficiency and cultural awareness like I already said, into conflict resolution training. With this, you can be more effective in resolving conflicts in multicultural teams. (...) The cultural awareness that I talked about before is more to understand the communication styles through have an open mind to the others’ background in the country they are from and this also helps in a conflict situation. But then you need to apply what you learned and that is an individual like a responsibility of each person. You need to listen other ideas and perspectives with an open mind and if you don’t understand something also understand that and address that in a friendly way with the other person.”</i>
				7	<i>“(...) some trainings or like for the senior manager, they have training to be taught when you have an international team. Like what you need to do, what might happen and how do you solve it. They just need to aware of those instead of like... when they hit the program and they solve it by themself, by their own experience. That might be like a bit different to different teams.”</i>
		Language training programs	9	6	<i>“What also happens is that the managers of each team try to promote... like give feedback so those people can, for example, take courses to improve that aspect. Yeah...but that is a bit of a more specific strategy of each manager of each team and it’s not something that other employees of the company can intervene or give feedback, but odds are that that is something</i>

					<i>that is already being worked on with someone within that specific team.”</i>
				1	<p><i>“I feel that there's not a lot of attention going to the language aspect. Not as much as there is for cultural backgrounds in all honesty. So that is something that could improve, I believe, at ING.”</i></p> <p><i>“Within ING there is a lot of emphasis on multicultural teams and we get a lot of training (...) I think that feels the right way to go. What I see in my own company where we don't have these sort of like trainings, the only thing that I see there that I would say this helps is that you have some extra work activities (...) “You have the chance to talk more outside of work. You get to know more cultures through people from different cultures and different habits. That helps with more understanding. I think these are two different ways to go about. For me, I think the actual training is more useful, more helpful. (...) To me, that helps more than the soft way of training... this is my idea. And I have to say that the training that we have at ING, it's not really focused on conflict resolution (...) We do learn a lot about cultural differences. We learn about cultural differences on the work floor, on different ways of communication, but the aspect of conflict resolution is barely touched upon. So in that respect, I think there's still some way to go.”</i></p>
				5	<p><i>“(...) if one of my team that needs really attentions with deficiency of the language that the company is using, I believe that the company should also be responsible to give to that person some type of learning opportunity or trainings, there's a lot of platform that can be helpful to what that person needs.”</i></p> <p><i>“Of course it needs to be integrated [language training programs], especially nowadays that people are talking about diversity and inclusion. It's a main factor and one factor of that is to be able to understand your colleague... knowing the fact that person is speaking the other language or trying to understand you in a language that he or she might not be</i></p>

					<i>familiar a hundred percent. So, I think in, in my company now, they are very into that kind of thing that when they send information, there is always a substitute English translation for that, or there's a English translation so that everybody aside, if you are non-Dutch speakers, they can also understand what's going on, not only with your department, but also what's happening to the company (...) they are not only caring about one segmented part, which is the Dutch people, but also the other employees."</i>
				3	<i>"We should definitely do [language training programs]]that if we are working in a multicultural team, definitely the training is the most important part. (...) I will conduct some meetings, maybe weekly, or twice a week, for the training of the language, for the training of the culture, for the training of how to handle people with this culture or with this language."</i>
				2	<i>"For example, you can have language training programs that fit the team's needs because with language proficiency, you can better express your ideas and emotions, and with that, you have a better understanding among team members. The cultural awareness that I talked about before is more to understand the communication styles through have an open mind to the others' background in the country they are from and this also helps in a conflict situation."</i>
				7	<i>"Some trainings or like for the senior manager, they have training to be taught when you have an international team. Like what you need to do, what might happen and how do you solve it. They just need to aware of those instead of like... when they hit the program and they solve it by themself, by their own experience. That might be like a bit different to different teams."</i>
		Understand cultural differences	7	1	<i>"I have to say within ING, they focus very much on cultural differences. More, much more, in my opinion, than they focus on language differences and language skills. What they try to do</i>

					<p><i>is they try to facilitate meetings and moments of conflict resolution by having people to facilitate the meetings and to make sure that everyone gets a chance to express what they want, even if they're not proficient. Or so very proficient in English.”</i></p>
					<p><i>“... they're trying to make people aware of cultural differences, of different proficiency levels in the language, and they try to make people then accept these in advance before you get to the point where conflict resolution is needed. I believe that is necessary especially for the people who come from the Dutch background in our case, I think.”</i></p>
					<p><i>“Within ING there is a lot of emphasis on multicultural teams and we get a lot of training, these are like, like, like, uh, training modules. We have online training modules with videos and questionnaires and texts on different multicultural teams, on different cultures, language, inclusion, all these topics.”</i></p>
					<p><i>“You get to know more cultures through people from different cultures and different habits. That helps with more understanding. I think these are two different ways to go about. (...) And I have to say that the training that we have at ING, it's not really focused on conflict resolution as such. So there's still kind of a gap, I believe in that. We do learn a lot about cultural differences. We learn about cultural differences on the work floor, on different ways of communication, but the aspect of conflict resolution is barely touched upon.”</i></p>
				5	<p><i>“(…) especially nowadays that people are talking about diversity and inclusion. It's a main factor and one factor of that is to be able to understand your colleague... knowing the fact that person is speaking the other language or trying to understand you in a language that he or she might not be familiar a hundred percent. (...), it creates awareness and at the same time, it, it makes the company as well... they are not only</i></p>

					<i>caring about one segmented part, which is the Dutch people, but also the other employees.”</i>
				3	<i>“We should definitely do that if we are working in a multicultural team, definitely the training is the most important part. The question is how I will introduce that. So definitely I will conduct some meetings, maybe weekly, or twice a week, for the training of the language, for the training of the culture, for the training of how to handle people with this culture or with this language. If I know I can transfer to others, I will do the same. So, you know, just talking to them and doing meeting with them, so.”</i>
				2	<i>“I mean language definitely plays a crucial role when you need to understand cultural differences and you are researching how to promote conflict resolution within a team with many nationalities...multicultural, let’s say. You either embrace that it is a powerful tool to have effective communication and build relationships with empathy, or you will have a conflict. There is a need to integrate language proficiency and cultural awareness like I already said, into conflict resolution training. (...) The cultural awareness that I talked about before is more to understand the communication styles through have an open mind to the others’ background in the country they are from and this also helps in a conflict situation. But then you need to apply what you learned and that is an individual like a responsibility of each person. You need to listen other ideas and perspectives with an open mind and if you don’t understand something also understand that and address that in a friendly way with the other person.”</i>
To identify and understand the importance participants give to	<u>Influence of non-verbal communication</u>	Equally important	2	5	<i>“Yeah, indeed [nonverbal communication plays a role]. Sometimes you absorb more the message if expressions are available, like hands movement, looking into the eyes or stuff like that. You absorb more and you pay attention more to the details than just, you know, reading the chat. And sometimes the way you read it might be in different way than the person who</i>

nonverbal communication					<i>sent it wants you to receive. (...). I cannot say if remote or in person creates more misunderstanding, because it has multiple variables (...)</i>
				8	Question: <u>So you think that non-verbal communication is also needed as a way of complementing the speech?</u> “Yes, absolutely”
		Less important than verbal	1	4	<i>“It definitely influences, I don't know if more than words, but it depends... sometimes non-verbal communication can tell a lot of... maybe... for example, if I'm trying to read someone out and they're not responding, or I don't know them, the non-verbal part tells me their level of interest and... interest and commitment, I would say. So, this tells me, maybe they are not being responsive because something was going on. So, I think verbal is a little bit more important, but nonverbal still plays a role. One hundred percent. Always.”</i>
		Importance of written official communication	2	6	<i>Based on my experience, when it was in person, face-to-face, those discussions of ideas took longer... it was more difficult to reach a conclusion because it seemed that everything went into some sort of a very cyclical mode. In my specific team, we usually try to deal with these conflicts via text messages (...) which reflects on the number of meetings... we have very few (...) If it's something that involves more time or more discussion (...) these channels are public because they also serve to share ideas... other people from other teams may have an opinion on that matter and may have something to contribute to the debate. For example, if we are in a meeting and there is one or two people missing... this because it is not mandatory for us to attend any meetings... so if someone is not there it is possible that they are missing an opportunity or an important point. That is why the written communication in Slack is used.”</i>
				5	<i>“Now, if you are gonna write that or you gonna email someone, make it short, and instead, if more explanation is needed, then I would suggest that you make a call instead, especially if you have a different nationality because it might cost</i>

misunderstanding. So, I think... because in my case, when you speak to a person, you can easily sense if you are on the same tone... or page. Meaning if you understand each other by just listening to the tone and when you do call instead of writing, it is easy as well to raise questions if there is words or clarification that the receiver needs, I would say (...) there are a lot of ways (...) to avoid misunderstandings of course or conflict."

Coding Scheme – Focus Group A

Focus Group A		First order concept	Second level themes
Participant 1	Participant 7		
<i>"In ING, they try to work a bit proactive on these things (...) like a whole lot of trainings that you need to do and some of these trainings are about cultural sensitivity and communication. So they try to kind of prepare you for these type of situations, but it's difficult. It's not the same as when it actually happens (...) the way how you will actually change your behavior or act in the right way, it needs to come via real life situations."</i>	<i>"Now I think it also depends on the situation because, like in different conversations or in different situations, people might act differently. And also, how they felt in that moment. So if sometimes it's a bit tense and then people will be indiscreet, but it's a really, like... chill or not, it doesn't matter that much. So, I think it also depends now."</i>	Accuracy & Precision vs. Cultural Sensitivity	<u>Depends on the contexts, you figure it out in the moment</u>
<i>"(...) we had some mandatory trainings in the company to change that a bit and to make people aware of the fact that (...) there's a lot of side conversations in Dutch. It's not really nice (...), because they might feel a bit like left out. (...) And that's also like something important to kind of build a team's atmosphere. And we've had some trainings on that that I think it helped a bit."</i>		Company policy	<u>Training</u>
<i>"they have put special attention on explaining to the Dutch people to be aware of these cultural differences and act upon these</i>	Question: <u>From your perspective, would you also say that it would be easier to do the same with someone who speaks Mandarin?</u>		<u>Side conversations</u>

<p>differences and be careful in how you talk to people. Don't be as direct as you would be towards a Dutch person, for example"</p>	<p>"In my case, I will agree with that because (...) when we have a controversial episode, let's say like this, among Chinese colleagues, we have to explain in Chinese, because there are a lot of things from our culture that you can't find in other languages."</p>		
<p>"the focus is more on cultural sensitivity than it is on conflict resolution (...) There is not much focus on conflict resolution, honestly. It's mainly on avoiding problematic situations, which is a good point actually (...) It's all on proactively and then thinking that "oh, we're gonna avoid the problems", but of course that's not how things go. Conflicts will arise and then you don't have any training background to solve that." And "I think it should be a part of the training, which I'm not really sure why it is not right now (...) I think it's a bit of a gap in the training (...)"</p>	<p>"I would agree that most of the companies would try to avoid those problems instead of giving a solution after the problems happened. So, it also happened the same in my last experience in China (...) all the training we had was to avoid problem instead of solving the problem."</p>		<p><u>Cultural sensitivity and not conflict resolution</u></p>
<p>"(...) you can always say, "oh, it's because I, because you couldn't see me, you didn't see my, my body language." So, it was just text... I mean that has happened in our team quite often. I mean, if it's related to the fact that you are not face-to-face, then it's usually fairly easy to solve, I feel... if that is the real reason."</p>	<p>"when I work remotely is rare but I'm more free and have less conflict with people. So, for example, when there's like an argument going on online, I can always take a moment and sit down like, "okay, I don't want to look at it now", and I will reply later on. So if I see the person sometimes it gets so intense and it might turn to be like a fighter argument. And that's one thing that happened in my previous job as well (...) like, "okay, I'm not replying to her for three hours" and then later on "okay, it's not a big deal". Or even say that they will send a voice message or have a call later on. We have like a moment or a break, after the thing happened."</p>	<p>Conflict resolution</p>	<p><u>Easier in remote work</u></p>
<p>"(...) what I see in ING is that people will try (...) the Dutch people, if they have a problem, they will first try to talk in Dutch and then they will</p>	<p>"In my case, I will agree with that (...) when we have a controversial episode, let's say like this, among Chinese colleagues, we have to explain in</p>	<p>Easier to communicate within the same language/ culture</p>	

<p><i>see if they can solve the problem. And only then when they realize (...) they will switch to English (...) they're more confident in their own language, so they want to try that at first (...) But it's also a bit natural, right? That you're more comfortable in your own language if you have people who speak your language. Sometimes it's easier to explain your problem or the questions you have."</i></p>	<p><i>Chinese, because there are a lot of things from our culture that you can't find in other languages."</i></p>		
<p><i>"We all write in English of course, or we try to write as much as we can in English. It still happens sometimes that it's in Dutch but we're supposed to write to each other in English. I'm trying to think if that's a positive thing or a negative thing in fact, because it kind of takes away the body language... I'm going towards a negative side actually. I think it would be better if you have the body language, besides your words, what you're trying to say... I think that would be a healthier situation than when it's purely words on the screen."</i></p>	<p><i>"when there's like an argument going on online, I can always take a moment and sit down like, "okay, I don't want to look at it now", and I will reply later on. So if I see the person sometimes it gets so intense and it might turn to be like a fighter argument. And that's one thing that happened in my previous job as well."</i></p>	<p>Influence of non-verbal communication</p>	
	<p><i>"I'm not sure because like some position, they don't even need to talk much with people. So I don't think the language will be a big problem if they can just speak standard or make the average and that communication level. But of course, some positions really need a lot of conversation and also read and write emails in like perfect email and also maybe post something online. This is how I feel."</i></p>	<p>Recruitment preferences</p>	<p><u>Language at an elementary level is enough</u></p>
<p><i>"No, I think that's indeed more how I interpreted the question. And when I look at my team, if you're in daily contact with customers,</i></p>			<p><u>Soft skills more than language</u></p>

<p><i>for example, it's often more important that you have very good language skills. And in that case, I would say that's an important factor... the language skills. But if that is less important for the work itself, then I think other soft skills would definitely be at the same level. I think we're in a fairly middle ground here."</i></p>			
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*“Personality and culture are of course... two things that are a bit related. It's a bit of a difficult line there, I think, between personality and culture, but I think in the end, it's always more personal, I guess. A rude person will be rude, whether that's in English or whether that's in Dutch, I guess. And the direct person will be more direct than a person who is less direct. I guess language will be a bit of a filter though, because if someone is not as confident in another language than their own language, maybe they will be a little bit less direct or a little bit less rude or whatever. But personality always comes out... right? It's very hard to contain that and another language is not gonna stop a person from talking in a certain way. So I think it serves a bit as a filter but personality will always come out” **And** “in my team, I often feel that they also present themselves like that and they are very fast speaking in English and they think that they can express themselves in the same way in Dutch as in English. And sometimes they're a bit too direct even in English. And they sometimes then use words, which they think is right, but they are not. And it comes across even more rude because they are using truly wrong words.”*

Role of language in the emergence of conflicts

Communication styles play a bigger role

<p><i>“Personality and culture are of course... two things that are a bit related. It's a bit of a difficult line there, I think, between personality and culture, but I think in the end it's always more personal, I guess. A rude person will be rude, whether that's in English or whether that's in Dutch, I guess (...) I guess language will be a bit of a filter though, because if someone is not as confident in another language than their own language, maybe they will be a little bit less direct or a little bit less rude or whatever. But personality always comes out... right? (...)”</i></p>	<p><i>“No, I don't think languages play a role in this. (...) after a while then people get familiar with each other, they know what kind of a person...that each other is. And then around that time, then we just never had a problem. And what the people do and what kind of person might cause be problem or just their behavior and what they think. But I don't think it's a big issue, especially after a while”</i></p>		<p><u>Personality and personal values</u></p>
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Coding Scheme – Focus Group B

Focus Group B		First order concept	Second level themes
Participant 2	Participant 6	<p><i>Strategies that non-native speakers can adopt to fight being unprivileged in debates and discussions due to the language</i></p>	<p><u><i>Do not overreact</i></u></p>
	<p><i>“(...) the first thing I think the person that is not a native speaker he must be confident and motivated.”</i></p>		<p><u><i>Self improvement</i></u></p>
	<p><i>“He must try to get better; trying to be on the next level and on the other side, I think companies shouldn't put this, the pressure for this to happen and allow, like to have a base minimal... like of good communication between the company, but try not to judge by it. So I think that's it.”</i></p>		<p><u><i>Simpler and more effective communication</i></u></p>
<p><i>“I think they can at least try to tell the things in a very fundamental way... you know... in a very fundamental layer, very directly, very... how can I say? Like... smooth and fast, not very...not making things complicated. Yeah. Just trying to tell the basic things and what is needed to be</i></p>			

<p>done. And that's all, I think. I think that could be that, that can be a strategy in this part."</p>			
<p>"(...) it depends on the situation because sometimes you can avoid the conflict if you're working remotely because you don't have to communicate like face-to-face or you are not physically in there so you can like... pretend not seeing the message or not seeing the conflict... but at least you can have time (...) And after that you can provide a more efficient answer or more efficient response to the situation that can help solve it faster (...) but at the same time, I think other side.. I mean, this could make the things to be solved in a longer span of time, I think. So it needs some kind of a balanced sense, you know, it depends on the person also, I think."</p>	<p>Yeah, I think like last time I said that it's more easy to not be engaged in conflict with remote communication. Because every communication or like most communication that we received are like via message... meetings don't escalate that much. So, yeah, I would say like there's no conflict over chat.</p>		<p><u>Easier in remote work</u></p>
	<p>"I will try like to speak with the person. I have some situations that I have been in the past when I was really uncomfortable with something or some situation (...) I ask for like a one-to-one conversation with that person in private to speak what that made me feel and just like for that person to be aware, not to be like "you are guilty of that". More like "I had this perspective, I felt like this way and I wanted to share to you how I felt with this situation". Just like, just share the situation from my point of view, not blaming the person (...) try to engage in a nonviolent communication and try to always be on the other's person shoes (...) Otherwise, I wasn't gonna do anything. I was just ignoring so it would like pass by without any fuss."</p>	<p>Conflict resolution</p>	<p><u>Success of using talk as a resolution strategy</u></p>
	<p>Question: What are the skills that, in your opinion, you believe are important and can't be learned in a short period of time?</p>	<p>Recruitment preferences</p>	<p><u>Conflict resolution skills</u></p>

	<p><i>"Conflict resolution skills maybe... I truly can't think of another one."</i></p>		
	<p><i>"I'm also engaged in the hiring process for my team in the company. So I know what the company looks for (...) like patterns and guidelines to hire is the cultural fit... is not like the language level. So language level should be the very minimal to be able to do his or her job but also be able to communicate with other team members because when we have multiple cultural values this is what will determine how people will react in a scenario of conflict?. Not much how the person's English level or other language level. I agree that it's important to have to be able to have a good communication in a workplace (...) But I think it's more important to know how cultural affects a person and not like the regions of the world where they are from. It's more culturally from the sense what we learn from our experiences in companies and working with different people that that's like an earned competence. That's why I think like cultural values are much more important than the concept of language, but I'm not like removing the importance of the language, but it's much of higher importance to, to people to be able to work with multiple cultures also. I think that's more important because language... I think that's like easier to learn and to improve."</i></p>		<p><u><i>Cultural values more than language</i></u></p>
<p><i>"I think, yes, because I still think that English... language proficiency is still more important for me because I think when you hire someone from a very different culture, he or she has to adjust himself or herself into that atmosphere. You know... if you have a good atmosphere in the company, in an organization... you know, those borders can be seen. What can you do, how can</i></p>			

<p><i>you react, how can you respond to anything that can be seen or can be felt by the person so that it can be adjustable for the person. But if the person does not some specific level of proficiency in the language, it's very hard to communicate, and it's very hard to understand how all the processes are going or what is going on in the company. I'm not saying that proficiency needs to be an advanced level or something like that, but I will prioritize it."</i></p>			
<p><i>"I think here I need to criticize myself; I think he is right because it's not the main issue that we have the different communication. I mean, like... we are coming from different language backgrounds, language-related... let me say cultures. But it depends on the situation, I think, because, if you're trying to deal with someone who does not have much confidence in English, let me say, or that specific language, okay, that's a problem for you to communicate. But also as he said, It depends on the culture too. Like it depends on the communication styles too, I think. I think so... So I think those two parts are the main contributors of this thing"</i></p>	<p><i>"I agree with the opposite. I think when a company has like more diverse people, language speakers, I think it's more easy to have a culture of respect and it's less likely to have engaging conflict. I think... like from my experience when I was working in a fully Portuguese company, conflict was much easier because of the native language. I think native languages bring us problems and in English we restrain for saying like bad things, I think, and it's easier to prevent conflict."</i></p>	<p>Role of language in the emergence of conflict</p>	<p><u>Communication styles</u></p>
<p><i>"I think it's about multiculturalism. Like, let me, I think it's more focused on the cultural related things because when you have the debate with someone, you can easily see that they're, how can I say, they're trying to prioritize some things (...) the most valuable things, uh, for their culture."</i></p>	<p><i>"I can also agree that the cultural differences could make like the speech, the different opinions or like the conflict more engaging or not. Because like I said in the example with the Estonians and the Russians, they are like really straight to the point. So it's very hard to engage in conflict with them. But other cultures might be easier just because they are like more proponent to have like more not a factual like speech or have a more opinionated or are more comfortable... discussing. So I think</i></p>	<p>What influences communication styles</p>	<p><u>Multiculturalism</u></p>

	<i>cultural values for sure are what could engage in more differences."</i>		
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Transcript P1

Joana Madeira (**JM**): May you briefly present yourself?

Participant 1 (**P1**): Myname is [P1]. I'm from Belgium, from the Dutch speaking part, and I'm currently working for Tessellate Belgium. And Tessellate Belgium is a company that provides services to mainly financial institutions related to IT issues these companies might have, or operational issues. So, at this moment, I'm working on a project at I N G Amsterdam.

JM: How long have you been working in multicultural teams?

P1: I've been working as far as I know my whole life, even before this role, I worked in multicultural teams. I worked abroad, since when I started working full-time. And now that I work for Tessellate, that's the first company in my home country that I work for. And even there, we have people from different cultures. So I've never really worked in a, in a solely Belgian environment, as such

JM: In your current team, what cultures are represented in there?

P1: Depends on what team you wanna focus on, ING or Tessellate. I work more with my team in ING on a daily basis. So, in my team there are people from, of course, people from the Netherlands... for me that's different culture being Belgian... There are people from Morocco in the team, from Portugal too. There are... let me think... Also, someone from the Philippines and South Africa. And then, on a more remote basis, we work with more people who work in the Philippines who are located over there. Yeah, so these are the people on a daily basis I work with.

JM: How do you communicate and coordinate the tasks within the group?

P1: So most of our work happens online. So most of us work from home at the moment. So we discuss usually via teams, whether it's video calls or calls like this, or either via chat function. And with our colleagues in Manila, in the Philippines, we usually communicate via email. And the team itself, the team I work with in Amsterdam, I see once per six weeks, eight weeks roughly. We meet up in the office and the rest of the time everything happens remotely.

JM: Does the company have a policy that you only use English language?

P1: Um, yes. It's not a hard policy as such, but it is expected to communicate in English, and there is a fairly strong emphasis on it to make sure that no one feels left out. So there is a pretty strong demand to speak in English. Yeah.

JM: If a conflict was to arise, like a conflict of ideas, what do you think would the main reason be? Do you think that could come from the different languages background of the people?

P1: Yeah, I do think so. In fact, the... I mean, Dutch people are quite direct in their communication and that's something that I feel is very different from many other cultures. They're very different from Belgian culture, but especially very different from... the culture from the people in the Philippines, but also the people in Morocco who we work with... for them that direct language, is new. And so, what I've seen a few times is when the Dutch people talk to them it's taken a bit in a way as if it's a personal attack or if it's kind of a... too harsh communication compared to what they're used to. And that could lead to conflicts in the way that people don't like that and have problems with that. I think that would create more conflicts than the work itself or any other things like different opinions or different ideas about the work or how the work should be done. I think it's the language of communication... yeah... that can lead to these issues for sure.

JM: But regarding the differences of the cultures, do you think it's more about the languages or the different cultural values?

P1: Um, no... I don't think the language is really gonna cause a problem. It's more... it's more the different values.

JM: How do you believe language impacts the conflict resolution in a multicultural team?

P1: Well, I think that's a bit... again Dutch people sometimes create difficulties because they wanna be very direct in their communication and in their, in their talking and... for people who have a different... come from a different culture and who have a different way of talking and communicating with people... that can be taken in a way that is more top down, I think. So they see it more as a sort of like direct and harsh language, one that is more demanding. And that's... I think that's sometimes hard to accept that while, because they're more used to being talked to in a friendlier way... in a way where you talk much more to get to a conclusion, rather than being in a few sentences... being direct with words... to express what they think about it. And I feel that that it's not always so easy need for conflict resolution... What is also very difficult in that matter is that most of us don't speak our first language with each other. So, we all... I mean we're able to speak in English, but it's not our mother tongue, so sometimes we can't express exactly what we want to say in that other language, which makes it harder to express what we want and to make clear how we feel about things and how we want to fix issues. And, I think that's a difficult thing. And I also noticed from my Dutch colleagues that they're not very happy with that at times because they were before in a situation where they could just speak Dutch, their own language, which made things a lot easier. So I think on all sides, it's an extra demand a task that makes things a bit more difficult, I believe.

JM: So what strategies would you recommend to address these language barriers within a multicultural team during a conflict resolution process?

P1: Well, they... I have to say within ING, they focus very much on cultural differences. More, much more, in my opinion, than they focus on language differences and language skills. What they try to do is they try to facilitate meetings and moments of conflict resolution by having people to facilitate the meetings and to make sure that everyone gets a chance to express what they want, even if they're not proficient. Or so very proficient in English. But it's... I feel that there's not a lot of attention going to the language aspect. Not as much as there is for cultural backgrounds in all honesty. So that is something that could improve, I believe, at ING.

JM: In a multicultural thing, many people have different levels of language proficiency, in this case, the English language. How do you balance the need for accuracy and precision in a language with the need? Because we come from different cultural backgrounds so there is a need of a certain cultural sensitivity during a conflict resolution...

P1: That is definitely true. I think for that you need the people to be okay with different proficiency in the language and I believe that's what they're trying at ING, what they're trying to do a bit more. So they're trying to make people aware of cultural differences, of different proficiency levels in the language, and they try to make people then accept these in advance before you get to the point where conflict resolution is needed. I believe that is necessary especially for the people who come from the Dutch background in our case, I think. I think that that's something they try to do proactively at the moment itself. Like I said, you have these facilitators who try to balance that communication that the talking at that moment. But first and foremost, they try to proactively make people aware of the differences and try to make people to keep that in mind during the conflict resolution time to make sure that you give ample time to other people to talk even if they're not as proficient as you. So especially in a proactive way, that's the main goal of ING.

JM: If you had the chance to choose the participants in your multicultural team, would the language be a determining factor to prioritize in the selection process?

P1: That's a good question... I would say yes. I think ING is trying very hard to change that and to not make that a deciding factor. But if you are honest to yourself, at the end of the day, if I need to talk to someone proficient in English or someone who is not so proficient in English... it's about doing your work, like we work in an operations environment where we have work that needs to be done by the end of the day. It'll go easier if I can talk with someone who understands what I'm saying and who can express themselves easier. So, yeah. And honestly, yes, that makes a big difference for me. It makes a difference in how efficient we would be able to be as a team and in our work. So yes, that definitely plays a big role.

JM: You mentioned when you said that initially, the Dutch people communicated in Dutch before the team became more international... In your experience, do native or native level, speakers of the languages for communication, either Dutch or English, have a privileged position in debates or discussions?

P1: I would say yes, but... yeah, they do. But that's not because of the language they speak, that's more because they have a more experienced background. But they definitely have a more prioritized position.

JM: Do you think there's a strategy that non-native speakers could engage to solve these problems?

P1: What I see more and more is that people within ING try to learn to speak Dutch, which is a weird way... thing to do, if you ask me. The issue is often that... I mean within the team, we communicate in English, um, except for a *goedemorgen*, from time to time, everything is in English. The problem is really when we start communicating with other teams. Sometimes the other teams we communicate with are not multicultural teams, and they would then send us emails or messages in Dutch, and then you get issues. I think these are very difficult to solve. I mean, for us as a team, difficult. It would have to come from higher up from ING. But what can people themselves do about it... I know that some of them speak out, sometimes when they hear Dutch, they really ask like "Could we... could you speak some English?" even if they're not talking to them. But if they're like a bystander or so to kind of feel more included and to make people aware of the fact that they're not speaking or that they're speaking a language and not everyone understands. It's difficult, I think.

JM: Do you think this is something that comes with time and experience?

P1: I think so, especially experience. I mean it's a bit like when people see that you have experience and skills, they'll be easier to talk to you because of that, not necessarily because of the language. I think experience and skills come first and then when, let's say, there's two people you can potentially ask your question to: one speaks the same language as you, the other one is a different language speaker. Then

you will naturally go towards the person who speaks the same language as you. But I think that, yeah, it's, it's very difficult. I think it's a difficult situation.

JM: In your opinion, how can language proficiency and cultural awareness be integrated into conflict resolution training in multicultural teams?

P1: Within ING there is a lot of emphasis on multicultural teams and we get a lot of training, these are like, like, like, uh, training modules. We have online training modules with videos and questionnaires and texts on different multicultural teams, on different cultures, language, inclusion, all these topics. When I look at my own company at Tessellate, we have nothing of that sort. What ING is trying to achieve there is very smart, and is very well organized. And I think that feels the right way to go. What I see in my own company where we don't have these sort of like trainings, the only thing that I see there that I would say this helps is that you have some extra work activities... outdoor activities where you go for drinks together or you go for an outing where you get to know each other better. You have the chance to talk more outside of work. You get to know more cultures through people from different cultures and different habits. That helps with more understanding. I think these are two different ways to go about. For me, I think the actual training is more useful, more helpful. It makes you think more about the topic itself, and it makes you realize when there is conflict resolution needed, it makes you think back at these actual trainings and the things you read about, you practiced, you heard about. For me, that really works. It really makes you think and realize that moment, "Okay, I should behave in a different... or I should talk in a different way, or I should listen in a different way". To me, that helps more than the soft way of training... this is my idea. And I have to say that the training that we have at ING, it's not really focused on conflict resolution as such. So there's still kind of a gap, I believe in that. We do learn a lot about cultural differences. We learn about cultural differences on the work floor, on different ways of communication, but the aspect of conflict resolution is barely touched upon. So in that respect, I think there's still some way to go.

JM: Before we officially started the interview, you shared an episode, an experience in a previous team. Do you mind repeating it, please?

P1: Sure! I've been working my whole life in different teams. I worked for a while in China for four years... It always depends a bit on the position as well but I mean... now I'm in a team where everyone has been at the same level. Before I used to work as the head of a group of 40 people. I mean, then you have a different way of dealing with people. It depends a bit on the role you have, of course, on how you communicate with people, and how you seek conflict resolution. But we had a case in a team of ours not so long time ago where there was an argument between someone from a local background, Dutch background and someone with a Middle Eastern background. And that conflict couldn't be resolved in the way that that that actually should've been resolved. And, that led to one person leaving the team. And the basis of that conflict was purely the way, how people were talking to each other, and how people took certain communication and that only proves that there's still work to be done and even in the current environment, where there is a lot of talk about toxic environments and protecting employees. In my opinion, the person who left the team was kind of easily dismissed so there was not really a lot of... they didn't try to kind of resolve the issue and to find a solution for both. So yeah, it's not always that easy. And I forgot to mention COVID-19 during this interview. The woman from South Africa, she joined during the Covid period and after a couple of months in the team, she openly said like "I'm having very much difficulties to adjust being in this team, because you guys are all so much used to working from home and I have the need for some chats and some chatting, human interaction indeed, besides just talking about transactions". And she was very open about that and very clear. So, indeed I think these situations are not so easy and there are quite some people who are suffering from that. I have to say at ING, people enjoy working from home. They're not really the asking party to go to the office. So, the people who do want to go to the office, they are a bit suffering from that. And, uh, and, and yeah, less, less human interaction means also, Um, more difficulty to, to, to, to build a relationship. I think especially if you come from a different background, different culture that's harder. It's harder to do that online.

Transcript P2

Participant 2 (**P2**): My name is [P2], and I am working in a marketing related company, uh, called MediaMonks BV, I work especially in the Treasury Department as a treasury analyst but also in the data department as a data visualization specialist.

Joana Madeira (**JM**): How long have you been working in a multicultural team?

P2: Six months, six or five months.

JM: What cultures are represented in your team? You can talk about the team that you work more closely with, or both departments.

P2: So, specifically for my department, it's really multicultural, I think, because, there are people working from different countries. So they have different cultures, and we are having sometimes problems about communication or understanding each other. But it's not a big problem because everyone is on a specific level. But nationalities... there are two Turkish people and, one Brazilian, one Spanish, and one Chinese, that's all.

JM: How do you communicate and coordinate within the group? Like with the English language, how do you manage?

P2: It's hard, by the way. It's hard to have the communication... not the communication... but of course you can have the communication in English, but trying to understand the way that the two parties, or the people understand each other because... for me specifically, we have the same understanding of each other in Turkey, in between the Turkish people, let me say. But, when you deal with another culture it is hard, but you try to make the things more specific and you try to explain the things in more detailed way so that you can manage the whole communication. And it takes more time.

JM: Is this the first time you are working in a multicultural organization?

P2: Yes. Yes. It's the first time.

JM: If a conflict was to arise, what do you think the main reasons would be? According to your experience, do you think the language plays a role here?

P2: I think language really, really plays a role here. And also, the multiculturalism also plays a huge role in here because as I mentioned before, the way that we understand each other is very different. Or the way that we grow up in our countries, differs with each other so that we understand the things in different way or we understand the processes in different way. For example, at least for me, I need to check some things in the whole process, but for different cultures... let me say... some of the people are not checking the process or checking the things, like the way they done, they just go all the way. This is just an example. And when you have the discussion or the problem, specifically language plays a role in there because you cannot communicate very effectively and in a fast way.

JM: You also said the cultural values play a role here. How do you balance the need for accuracy and precision in the English language with the need for cultural sensitivity during the communication within the team?

P2: As I mentioned before, you start to try to explain the things in more detailed way by giving more time on it. And, you know, there's a stance, in between all the different cultures that you have to keep up with, to be polite and to keep that sensitivity or to respect that sensitivity. So, you need to be in that stance and or you need to keep that balance not to be understood wrongly. You need to keep that stance and you need to invest more time to explain things in a better way, in a detailed way to the other person so that you can deal with some specific things on the whole process, let me say.

JM: Up to here, we've been talking about how conflict arises. Let's talk now about conflict resolution. How do you believe that language has an impact, if you believe it has, on the resolution of the conflict? Even if it was because of the language in the beginning.

P2: I think I will give you the same answer because, since you use English as a common language to understand each other, both people or the both parties give more detail, give more specific things, they give examples, they simulate things so that both parties can understand each other. Now, it's not like giving the directed the words because you cannot sometimes find the specific word that you are thinking on your mind. But when you give the examples, one, two or three... like multiple examples, you can make the other person understand you, I think.

JM: So what strategies would you recommend to address these language barriers in a multicultural team?

P2: Not the strategies, but I think a person needs to be patient about this because if I can criticize myself, I'm not that patient. So, I get angry when someone cannot understand me. But, I learned that I need to be patient... with myself, I mean. I need to give examples. I need to try to understand like how the other person understands me or which parts I was not as clear... if she or he misses some details about the things that I tell him or her. And yeah, that's it. The examples, patience, and more detailed, explanations, as strategies.

JM: Can you provide an example of a successful conflict resolution outcome?

P2: For example, today, in the data department, I had a task that I needed to create a dashboard, like in interactive dashboard for the finance department about some specific date. For me to be able to create that dashboard, I needed to understand the whole data, like what comes from where or which, variable indicates what, something like that. But I need to really understand that. And, when I was talking with my colleague from the finance department, he was trying to explain me the whole situation, but, he thought I was understanding everything like perfectly with the way that he tried to explain, but in fact, this does not happen. And at least in my language, we try to explain, for example, one variable, from different parts like trying to explain it from here, from here and from maybe direct, but from multiple ways. But this does not happen when you use a common language like English. Or maybe it can be about multiculturalism, let me say, because... maybe they are giving that much of an explanation or detail and leave the rest of the things to the other party to

understand. I don't know. The conflict was this, and I asked a lot of questions, and, in fact, I demanded some patience from the other person to explain to me more with the examples. I mean, the example could be like...just imagine a, a Excel sheet with a lot of data in it, and there are variables of the columns you don't understand. For example, I just wanted him to explain me just one row with the columns so that I will understand like what is going on in all of the rows. Just like this, like as I mentioned before, examples and the main thing is patience. Towards the others and yourself.

JM: In your experience, do you feel like native English speakers or native-level English speakers have a privileged position in debates and discussions?

P2: For example, so that if there are two Spanish people, they're talking in Spanish. If there are, there are two Turkish people, they're talking in Turkish. There's not any obligational regulation about this, but the common language is English. If they have a more privileged position? Yes, they have. They have because, for example, we have a British person in there, in the finance department. He talks very correctly... and also because of the accent. Let me say, you cannot understand him... and you need to, you know, make him to say the things again and again so that you can understand. And, because of this, they act more dominant in communications because the common language is English... they are talking like faster with different words that you didn't hear before, so they act more dominant and it gets harder for you to understand and get familiar with the whole process or the discussion, let me say.

JM: How do you approach communication with team members who are varying levels of language proficiency?

P2: Depending on the level, you understand, of course the level of other people speaking a certain language... I mean like how he or she uses it, and so that you try to catch that level. Let me say, if someone is really talking like... perfectly, you are trying to get close to that level, but if the level is like lower, you try to get down to the lower level so that you try to make the whole thing more basic to be understood.

JM: If you had a chance, of choosing the participants in your, in your multicultural team, would you prioritize the language skills or the soft and hard skills?

P2: I would prefer the language skills because there are a lot of people in here and you have to communicate, but you cannot communicate effectively without going specifically into all the technicalities of the process. Communication is the most important part because you can get the other skills easily in a shorter time period. But the language proficiency or the ability to use the English language is much important. I think.

JM: How can language be used as a tool for understanding cultural differences and promoting conflict resolution? And I'll narrow down the question a bit, saying like, in your opinion, how can language proficiency and cultural awareness be integrated in conflict resolution training?

P2: I mean language definitely plays a crucial role when you need to understand cultural differences and you are researching how to promote conflict resolution within a team with many nationalities...multicultural, let's say. You either embrace that it is a powerful tool to have effective communication and build relationships with empathy, or you will have a conflict. There is a need to integrate language proficiency and cultural awareness like I already said, into conflict resolution training. With this, you can be more effective in resolving conflicts in multicultural teams. For example, you can have language training programs that fit the team's needs because with language proficiency, you can better express your ideas and emotions, and with that, you have a better understanding among team members. The cultural awareness that I talked about before is more to understand the communication styles through have an open mind to the others' background in the country they are from and this also helps in a conflict situation. But then you need to apply what you learned and that is an individual like a responsibility of each person. You need to listen other ideas and perspectives with an open mind and if you don't understand something also understand that and address that in a friendly way with the other person.

Transcript P3

Participant 3 (**P3**): My name is [P3]. I am from India. So I'm currently residing in Netherlands from last three years. It's been three and a half years.

Joana Madeira (**JM**): How long have you been working in a multicultural team?

P3: It's been three years. It's been three years working in a multicultural team with multicultural or diversified people, diverse languages, and diversified cultures.

JM: Have you always worked in the same multicultural team?

P3: It was different for one and a half years and last one and a half years. It's different.

JM: How many cultures are represented in your team?

P3: Three, I guess three to four. Dutch, Indian... I also present myself as a culture... one from Italy and one from Portugal.

JM: How is the communication within the team?

P3: Every time we communicate each other in English. And we are very comfortable to communicate in each other in English.

JM: Is there any aspect that distinguishes the team you work now in the aspect of communication comparing to your previous one?

P3: Yes. Before, I was working with some Dutch colleagues, so... I've... it was not... I can say it was not clearly discrimination, but sometimes... you know, if you are in a gathering a group of four, five people where you meet three or four people as Dutch and when

you are alone in English speaking... so they all started, you know, speaking Dutch in between them and you were just sitting there existing. You are understanding... or trying to understand what word, trying to capture some words. So yes, it was very difficult for me, but not now. This was the big of challenges I faced, but I cannot clearly call them discrimination because they never discriminate. I didn't feel like that was the discrimination because of the language. But yes, I think that would be a common aspect when if I was only sitting with four people English speaking or Hindi-speaking, so I would start speaking Hindi. It was the same. So, I don't... I didn't feel I was discriminated, but it should've been taken care. At least, I personally think so.

JM: If you were around Indian people, do you think it would be more practical to communicate with them in Hindi, even if you're like working in a multicultural environment? Would you find it easier and more practical to speak Hindi in one-to-one work conversations?

P3: Yes, it's very common. If you sit with four people who speak the same language, you start speaking the same language. Maybe sometimes you don't do it intentionally. It just comes from you because... from childhood, you are speaking the same language and you see someone is starting to speak the same language. You start to like them or connect with them. So, it comes from within. I guess. It's not something that a person does intentionally, I guess.

JM: If a conflict was to arise in your team, do you think that the language difference would be one of the reasons why they would arise?

P3: I don't think so because... I'm working and inserted in the Dutch culture for the last three and a half years, so I don't think that this could be a reason for the conflict because we all speak English. If you come to the corporate world, we all speak English. Definitely. We are in a world where if you go into the corporate or anywhere you need to speak English. So, where I'm working, everybody speaks English, so I don't think that there would or there should be the reason for conflict. But yes, if somebody comes and pokes you because of language or discriminates you because of the language, that is a different thing. But for me, I never felt that. So, for me, it's not a reason to conflict because of the language or barriers.

JM: In case of a conflict, do you think that language would work as a barrier to conflict solving or conflict coping?

P3: Yes, I think so. I think so because if you have a conflict, like for me alone with two people that speak the same language, it could be a reason for the conflict because sometimes they just speak and you don't understand, and you feel like “Oh, why they are speaking in this language as we are working in a bank and the language of the bank is English!?”, so they should speak in English. Right? So that's it. That could be a reason for the conflict. I didn't feel that, but I cannot assure that other person did not feel the same. It could be a reason for the conflict. For sure.

JM: So, regarding that, what strategies would you recommend to address those language barriers in the team during conflict resolution?

P3: Yes, the strategies that, according to me, would work... is to understand that... if we are working in a culture where the culture is multicultural, that means everybody is aware that we have to speak one... the same language, which is understandable for every... you know, for everyone. Or should be. So, everybody should not repeat the same thing again and again and speak English. That would be my strategy. Just be on the same one page. Don't speak other languages and just speak English. That would be my strategy.

JM: Can you provide an example of a successful conflict resolution that you experience in either one or the other multicultural team that you've been?

P3: The conflict itself I have not faced. But yes, I have some experience in the HR field, so I solved a conflict once where two girls fought because of some incident issues. I solved that. It was not related to multiculturalism. But multiculturalism was not involved there, because they both spoke the same language, but they both were from the different countries or regions. So that was the conflict. So I solved that by sitting with them, I talked to them, I told them not to sit with each other for some time, avoid each other. So we could see if that would work. And it did.

JM: Do you think that when working in, teams with different nationalities you need to have more cultural sensitivity in your speech?

P3: I don't think so because if you already started working in multicultural things or with international people, and... if you have this in your mind that you need to focus on your culture or language, this is not good. Because you need to accept that you're going to start with the multicultural environment, so you need to be the to accept the culture or the language difference from others. If this was not my thinking... I should not go and work in a multicultural environment or a multicultural language world.

JM: Not only regarding the language, do you try to be more clear in order not to be misinterpreted? Regarding some cultural values, for instance, some cultures are more close than others. Do you feel like you need to balance accuracy of the language with that sensitivity?

P3: Yes, I think so. Yeah. Yeah.

JM: Considering the Dutch people you work with, do you feel like the fact that they are in their country and they speak the native language of this country, puts them in a privileged position in debates and discussions?

P3: For me, if I talk honestly in my workplace, I never feel that. But I think sometimes maybe some employees have faced that. So I cannot tell if that is... if this is personally my experience, but yes you can feel the superiority of the language because they know everything about this country and about it. So yes, it's the common human tendency. They can feel superior. I never felt that, but yes, it could be a reason for people to engage into conflict, because it is a very common human tendency if you know everything about a particular place or the language or everything, so you feel superior... it's the human but again for me, I never felt that because I work in a bank. So, definitely for me it's a plus point because the language of the bank is English, so everybody has to speak in English. So maybe that is the reason I have never faced it. But yeah, if I go and work with some other company or some other environment, maybe I will feel this, because this is very common human tendency.

JM: How do you approach communication with team members who have varying levels of language proficiency?

P3: I will talk slowly. I face this so many times because I work with French colleagues, but they were good in English. I had some experience with working with a Vietnam colleague, not in this company, but before... it happened that I had some clients from Vietnam, so I was working with them. I know their English is very pathetic, so how I managed to speak too slowly with them, they understand everything and if you go with them too fast, they will not understand. So what, what I used to do with them, I used to, you know, speak too slowly. So yes, they would understand clearly. I can tell you if you go to Vietnam their English is pathetic.

JM: If you had a chance to choose a participant in your own multicultural team, would you prioritize language skills or other skills like teamwork, conflict resolution, time management, et cetera?

P3: I will choose the teamwork, conflict management, time management, everything, because that makes a team better. So yes, I will not go with the language because we know that we are choosing people for the multicultural environment, so we should not go for the language, I guess.

JM: But do you think like the fact that someone is not that proficient in a language would affect the teamwork?

P3: Someone who is not experienced in English. I think if we are working in a team of five members, and three or four members are good in English and maybe one person is not good enough, like for sure, I'm not going to select a person who is not... who doesn't even know English. Because I know English is must in our job, so definitely I will go for the English as well. But if, if I feel that, maybe he is in 60% English and 40% is some another language, then I will accept him and as a team, I will support him to grow and definitely learn the language for their own.

JM: How would you integrate language proficiency and cultural and awareness training in the multicultural teams you're managing?

P3: We should definitely do that if we are working in a multicultural team, definitely the training is the most important part. The question is how I will introduce that. So definitely I will conduct some meetings, maybe weekly, or twice a week, for the training of the language, for the training of the culture, for the training of how to handle people with this culture or with this language. If I know I can transfer to others, I will do the same. So, you know, just talking to them and doing meeting with them, so.

Transcript P4

Participant 4 (**P4**): Hello, my name is [P4]. I'm from Argentina, and I'm studying full-time International Business at Hogeschool Utrecht. And I am also working part-time at a small company where we sell supplements called Cerebra.

Joana Madeira (**JM**): How long have you been working in a multicultural team?

P4: Ever since, I started the university, where it's filled with international people and we have many group projects, so ever since. And then, in the company that I work at is also a little bit international.

JM: How many international people do you have in the team you are inserted?

P4: Four... three without me, four with me. But in the company in general there are more.

JM: What are the nationalities of the people you work more with?

P4: Dutch, Italian, British, and me Argentinian.

JM: How do you communicate and coordinate the group? Like the language that you get assigned tasks? Do you use more written communication or verbal communication?

P4: We do both written and verbal. But the only issue that I have is that sometimes they speak Dutch in between themselves, because there are more Dutch people than there are international. So they speak in English to me, but if not, they speak in Dutch with each other, which... even when I am there. It's not very nice.

JM: Is this the first time you're working in multicultural teams, or have you worked in one before?

P4: It's the first time.

JM: If a conflict was to arise within the team, What do you think the main reason would be, according to your experience? Do you think the language would play a role in this?

P4: Sometimes it does. Yes, I'd say so.

JM: Do you think that different languages play a more prominent role as a conflict facilitator than the different cultural values?

P4: Perhaps. Yes.

JM: How do you believe the language impacts the resolution of the conflict after it emerges?

P4: I don't know... I think you can talk things out. I mean, as long as you share the same language, most likely English, you can end up talking things out and explaining your culture or your point of view or where you come from, and that sometimes... you know... with a little bit of patience, you can make things work out.

JM: What are the strategies that you recommend for addressing language barriers in a multicultural team during this conflict resolution?

P4: I would say just a lot of patience and that it doesn't matter. And don't, don't be biased and try to keep an open mind.

JM: Since Spanish is your first language, how do you balance the need for accuracy and precision in the language that you need to communicate in, English in this case, with cultural sensitivity when communicating with people from other countries?

P4: That I want to learn way, way more. But because coming from Argentina, there's not that much cultural diversity really. I mean, yes, we do have immigrants, but they're mostly from Venezuela or Colombia or Peru, which have a pretty similar culture, or they speak Spanish, we understand each other a little bit more. Whereas here, I encounter myself with people from different religions, different ethnicities, and of course I never want to say the wrong thing, so I'm trying to learn as much as I can, so I'm being respectful towards everybody so that I think I can still improve.

JM: In your experience, do native or native level speakers, in this case either of Dutch or English, of the language used for communication in the team have a privileged position in debates or discussions?

P4: Not Dutch because I know that a lot of Dutch people sometimes don't feel maybe as comfortable with English or they sometimes struggle as well to find certain words, which is completely understandable being that English is also not their first language. For British people, yes, of course they will be in advantage. Maybe they won't struggle the way that we do.

JM: But do you feel that other people give them that advantage or that advantage exists and it's just there?

P4: I think it's just there. It comes with the language. I don't know if people... well, depends with who... but yes, I think it's just there. I don't think it's a big difference.

JM: And how do you think that non-native speakers can solve this problem or this situation?

P4: Practicing more. Just practice. You know, don't give up. Keep going, don't be embarrassed. If you cannot find a word, I'm sure people will help you out. And with patience, you can always help the other person understand what you're trying to say.

JM: How do you approach communication with team members who have the varying levels of language proficiency?

P4: Patience. Patience. Patience. Just trying to, you know, be understanding of the situation and just hear them out and be patient and try and help them out with questions like “Is this what you meant?” or “Can you please try to give me an example to clarify this?”. Just letting them know that there's no rush and that you wait until they can tell you what they want to say.

JM: If you had the chance of choosing new participants for your team, would you prioritize the language skills instead of certain soft skills?

P4: No. I mean, if your English is terrible and you cannot write a full sentence, then yes it's not looking awesome for you. But I think the most important part is having different cultures. I think that's always a benefit, like getting different points of view and definitely putting emphasis on soft skills, because they are also pretty valuable. So as long as your English is not literally horrible, then it's fine.

JM: In your opinion, how can language be used as a tool for understanding cultural differences and promoting conflict resolution within a team?

P4: Well, sometimes it's the only way that you have to communicate. You can encounter different problems or issues and teamwork as well as talking things out is always the solution. Always, always, always, always.

JM: Do you think that nonverbal communication influences more, less, or the same, or doesn't influence at all conflict resolution.

P4: It definitely influences, I don't know if more than words, but it depends... sometimes non-verbal communication can tell a lot of... maybe... for example, if I'm trying to read someone out and they're not responding, or I don't know them, the non-verbal part tells me their level of interest and... interest and commitment, I would say. So, this tells me, maybe they are not being responsive because something was going on. So, I think verbal is a little bit more important, but nonverbal still plays a role. One hundred percent. Always.

Transcript P5

Participant 5 (**P5**): Before we start, let me say... I would say I am very interested about the topic... I would say like I've been on that process, because I'm originally from the Philippines and I can only speak Tagalog or Filipino and then English, and then I moved to Sweden. I was in an environment... it's almost just Swedish. This topic is very interesting. So this kind of topic is very interesting to me because I feel like I've been on that kind of situation where... first moving to a European country like Sweden knowing only the languages English and Filipino... it was a struggle in the beginning to really communicate or send messages to my colleagues in Sweden. And currently I am in Amsterdam. Knowing the fact that Dutch is not kind like a requirement at work, but still... you still have kind of like misunderstandings... or you absorb wordings or you understand wordings that might be offensive, but on their part it's just a normal. So this kind of thing is very, very interesting for me.

Joana Madeira (**JM**): How long have you been working in multicultural teams?

P5: Seven years

JM: In multicultural team that you're, now, what cultures are represented in there?

P5: Basically we... In my current work now we are dominated with Dutch people, so Dutch language.

JM: But do you communicate in English?

P5: We do communicate in English, yes. Or I would say after they hired me or during the interview or when the time I applied for the job... they only know that I only speak English, so yes.

JM: Because you worked more than one multicultural team, what is the aspect that you think distinguishes the more efficient ones you worked and the less efficient ones?

P5: That's a difficult one, I would say. I think the efficient one is that since we have, or if I understand the question correctly, I think when you say efficient one, I think since everybody talks English at work or can talk English at work. So it would be the efficient part is that whatever you do, you, if you're looking for information, it's always available in English. The inefficient part is that you need to read it yourself instead of just calling it to someone and then socialize a little bit before getting some information. I would say. So I think that the... in the inefficient part is that you miss the social, uh, I think. Because you always stick to your question because you think that's... you know... you cannot really relate what's happening around, I would say, because the majority of people when they are not talking about work, they're talking about nothing special... or they're using Dutch, I would say. So you cannot really make a joke over the phone or physically. So I think that's the, that's the inefficient part.

JM: If a conflict or even like divergencies in the workplace were to arise, do you think that the different native languages play a role of a conflict facilitator?

P5: I will not say make a conflict. But it will raise questions, I would say. More clarification. In my workplace right now, knowing the fact that everybody speaks English during an interview or email communication. But I did not really experience a conflict, but there might be misunderstandings, or more further questions I would say.

JM: In that case, let's picture a scenario of a conflict or a misunderstanding. How do you believe that the different perceptions of the English language impacts the conflict resolution?

P5: I would say that... well... it depends on the level of English proficiency the person has. There are some cases wherein you receive emails or you communicate to someone that you don't... or I don't even know what does that mean for and even though that person that I'm talking with speaks English... but in my case, since English is my third language, I still really struggle to really absorb one by one what that person saying to me or telling to me. So, I would say it depends on the level of proficiency. But there are some people that use

very complex language and there are some people that use very basic language, but I always prefer that it should be simple and understandable.

JM: So if so, to make it easier, uh, simple and understandable, what are the strategies that you would recommend to address these language barriers?

P5: So, first I would suggest that if you know that too much wordings can cause misunderstanding, I would say just be straightforward or just be direct to what you to what you need to say. Now, if you are gonna write that or you gonna email someone, make it short, and instead, if more explanation is needed, then I would suggest that you make a call instead, especially if you have a different nationality because it might cost misunderstanding. So, I think... because in my case, when you speak to a person, you can easily sense if you are on the same tone... or page. Meaning if you understand each other by just listening to the tone and when you do call instead of writing, it is easy as well to raise questions if there is words or clarification that the receiver needs, I would say. So, what I would suggest... there are a lot of ways to make things more... to avoid misunderstandings of course or conflict. Like, but in my scenario, I would propose that way... those strategies essentially.

JM: So you already recognized and mentioned that you adapt your speech and the way you communicate according to different levels of proficiency. Do you also think that the fact that you work with different cultural backgrounds, cultural values, in some way, makes you shape your speech in order to be more cultural sensitive? Do you change the way you communicate depending on a culture?

P5: Yes, of course. In my situation now, coming from the Philippines, based on my experience, we don't normally speak straightforward. We are very polite. When we are writing our emails, we normally greet the person, ask the person how are, how is the day going... When I moved to Europe... they are more very straightforward, short and direct. So yes, I also changed a lot and I shape how I communicate based on the nationality that I'm, I'm talking with.

JM: And how do you balance the need for accuracy and precision in the language with cultural sensitivity, especially in case of a conflict was to emerge.

P5: Yeah. Well first... how do I balance it? Well, I am a person that is not very neutral, I would say. I don't like being dominated as well. So if there is, for example, suggestions that conflicts with what I believe, then I normally jump into the conversation and let my voice to be heard. In a way that I still communicate with them and the way I communicate is shaped based on their culture. So, it's still connected. So I don't need to sound arrogant, just because I don't believe to what they say, but still the way I talk to them is still based on, the culture, communication they do. So, I adapt on that as well.

JM: Have you ever been exposed to a conflict, involved or experience within your team, where it was due to a language barrier?

P5: Yeah. It happens I would say a lot. Currently I'm working with a team that creates instructions and we have another team that executes that instructions that we give to them. And sometimes on my part, I know that it is very simple and very direct, but when the person who executes the instructions probably absorbs the instructions in a different way. Then that's the beginning of the conflict in my workplace wherein we need to step in and be like "Hey, how did you... why did you do this?... But I instructed you to do this.". It's just simple I would say like maybe on my side... I know when I write the instruction, it is clear to me what needs to be done, but for the person that received those instructions, it is possible that they absorb the instructions in a different way which can result in a conflict and more things to be done instead of just in a simple way.

JM: How do you seek to minimize those misinterpretations then? Do you have any strategy that you use to avoid these misinterpretations and conflicts?

P5: Yeah. Every time I have a... for example, I know since I've been working for different cultural environments, I would say very diverse ones and in a very inclusive company, I normally... because I've been doing this job for quite a while... creating instructions I

mean... What I normally do is that if I send a simple instructions and if that instructions was not successfully captured correctly, what I normally do is that I call the person and say like “What was wrong on the instructions? Why was this not accomplished the way it should be? Are there some wordings that perhaps I am using from my previous company, which is not applicable to the current one?”... so those kinds of things. So, my strategy is really to investigate how other colleagues as well as sending instructions what words they use instead. For example, instead of using words, like “profit”, maybe I can just use the word “increase” because that's what most likely the companies or my colleagues or other team are using. So, I think using words that are uniform and clear to others, will be a good strategy to use instead of making a new words, which also defines the same thing.

JM: You told me you work with Dutch people. Since they are in their own country, do you feel that because they are native speakers of the language of the country where the company is inserted, do you think they have a privileged position in debates or discussions?

P5: I will be honest, yes, they are. Even though you don't want to be dominated by them... you know... still they have the final call in in many moments and that's something that I already accepted. Especially like in my team right now, I am the only Asian, so whatever I say might be dominated with small ideas, especially if that person suggested is Dutch. So yes, they dominate a lot.

JM: So what strategies would you say that non-native speakers should engage or could engage into to help solve this problem?

P5: What I learned is that... try to learn their language as well. You don't need to be perfect. You don't need to be so professional. Start with basic and I would say that the way they appreciate you learning their language also increase your chances that they will not dominate you when it comes to brainstorming or giving ideas. I would say like that... so you kill the dominant part first by learning very basic. And be social, socialize with them first before the brainstorming moment comes, I think... so you can kind of... avoid the moment where you cannot or it's really difficult to share your ideas, to formulate what you need to say, especially if you're not very familiar with the language. So, I would say socialize first before the meeting or whatever it is and try to gain their confidence first, and then you strategize yourself when do you need to say those kind of ideas instead of just dumping them because they give ideas, but they are Dutch. But at

the same time, if you make conflict directly instead of just listening first... I think overreaction as well might cost a domination, in this case. It might be that your ideas will never be heard if you try to make conflict with them in an improper way

JM: How do you approach communication with team members that have different levels of proficiency of the English language?

P5: Can I just say like “learn it”? That's the... yes... I think that's the best way. I mean, of course in a diverse environment, being perfect is not so important. People, especially in a professional world... I think it's very academic where in somebody will say to you like “Hey, your English is grammatically incorrect”, I would say. But in a work environment, unless you are not working in legal, you're not working in marketing, and so on and so forth... if it's just internal, like emails together with your colleagues or another department that will never be published, we don't normally raise that kind of concerns. We normally try to understand or absorb that this person might have English as his or her fifth language. What is important to us is I think we raised the concern if the grammar or the instruction itself is not understandable itself, I would say, especially in my current work. You experience that because we have a lot of colleagues from different countries and like when you talk with them, even though for verbal communication, if you are... let's say a police language, you know... like you want everything to be perfect, then that kind of workplace is not good for you. Otherwise, it will just give you stress. But if that's the case, if one of my team that needs really attentions with deficiency of the language that the company is using, I believe that the company should also be responsible to give to that person some type of learning opportunity or trainings, there's a lot of platform that can be helpful to what that person needs.

JM: How do you think that the language proficiency and cultural awareness training could be integrated in the training of a team or the teamwork?

P5: Of course it needs to be integrated, especially nowadays that people are talking about diversity and inclusion. It's a main factor and one factor of that is to be able to understand your colleague... knowing the fact that person is speaking the other language or trying to understand you in a language that he or she might not be familiar a hundred percent. So, I think in, in my company now, they are very

into that kind of thing that when they send information, there is always a substitute English translation for that, or there's a English translation so that everybody aside, if you are non-Dutch speakers, they can also understand what's going on, not only with your department, but also what's happening to the company. And at the same time it creates engagement, opportunity, especially if there are concerns about, for example, about their health, their work-life balance thing. So, it creates awareness and at the same time, it, it makes the company as well... they are not only caring about one segmented part, which is the Dutch people, but also the other employees.

JM: Do you work remotely, hybrid, or only in person?

P5: I work hybrid.

JM: What do you think that is likely to lead to more miscommunications a fully remote job or working in person having discussions in person?

P5: I think the hard part is the remote, because most of the time you really understand everything by yourself. You absorb everything by yourself. Instead of just having a talk to your colleague at the office. So, yes, remotely creates more conflicts and misunderstanding, I would say. I've been on the company for quite a while... meaning to say I'm already familiar to what I'm doing in general, then I will be more confident in just chatting with person because that person might have less misunderstanding towards me. Since I just started to work, in January, I still prefer and I feel that remotely creates a misunderstanding if you are a newbie. '

JM: Do you think that is also related to the nonverbal part of the communication? Like the body posture, the use of the hands, the facial expressions...?

P5: Yeah, indeed. Sometimes you absorb more the message if expressions are available, like hands movement, looking into the eyes or stuff like that. You absorb more and you pay attention more to the details than just, you know, reading the chat. And sometimes the way

you read it might be in different way than the person who sent it wants you to receive. So... that question is very tricky. I cannot say if remote or in person creates more misunderstanding, because it has multiple variables so I would leave it like this.

Transcript P6

Joana Madeira (**JM**): How long have you been working in a multicultural team?

Participant 6 (**P6**): One year and seven, eight months...something around that

JM: How many nationalities do you have in your team?

P6: In my project team, there aren't many actually... I have people from Estonia, Portugal, Croatia, Russia and I guess that's it.

JM: How long has this team been working together? Were you integrated in it from the beginning or did you join after?

P6: When I joined the team, there were only Russians and Estonians. Now, very recently, another Portuguese joined and a Croatian like a month ago. Meaning that when this project team was created, there were just Russians, Estonians and me, proudly Portuguese

JM: How do you communicate within the team and how do you coordinate tasks and projects?

P6: Normally, we have a team leader and a project manager and they are the ones who normally have meetings with other groups from other teams to organize the priorities. Usually we have the intervention power in the sense of helping to prioritize or give some ideas or insights about what the team needs. However, we are not involved in the planning part, this is the team doesn't totally plan... that is made more externally.

JM: Do you always use the English language, even when you are communicating with someone who has the same native language?

P6: Yes... in the company they just really use their own languages if they are in an in-person setting and a very small group i.e. only when those who speak and understand the language are present. Every time there is at least one person that does not speak that language, everyone speaks English.

JM: Is this the first multicultural team you work with?

P6: Yes

JM: If a conflict was to arise, what do you think the main reasons could be according to your experience? Did that ever happen?

P6: No, we never had any conflicts. Culturally, people from Estonia are much more closed... the communication is very short... very succinct so it's not prone to conflicts. Normally, their communication is based on sharing facts so it's very quick and easy to reach a conclusion because they do not digress in their speech, they are very straightforward and direct.

JM: Do you consider that the fact that people have different native languages works as a facilitator of conflicts or that it sometimes helps to alleviate them?

P6: I think it helps alleviating them...

JM: Because you have a more open mind or because you think that people seek to express themselves better and in a more clear way? Having an open mind in the sense that sometimes you might think that you consider that you misinterpreted something due to the fact that you are not communicating in your native languages?

P6: Well...I think the speech is a bit more careful comparing to when a person is using their native language. I truly believe this is the main point... because... as we are using English and the English that we use on your daily basis is more related to the work-setting, you already know more or less what to do... you incorporate the appropriate language and the posture...therefore is harder for someone to

disassociate from that in a level that could escalate to a conflict by speaking in a different tone for instance... I think that's it...I've never really had one. I have worked in fully Portuguese teams before and I've had times when a person escalated the speech or the tone, sometimes because of silly discussions work-related... but here I don't really see that even though I see a lot of communication differences. That's basically it, in my teams the communication is very succinct...very direct and I, who am in the minority nationality-speaking, also end up doing exactly the same thing. I am also more direct, succinct and clear...actually it's a funny thing to come to this realization.

JM: Do you think there has ever been a situation where you faced language barriers with another person, a colleague with a native language different than yours and other than English?

P6: Yes, it has happened before... it happened both when I was trying to express myself and with some colleagues too... and in these cases, sometimes it seems like there is something missing or a break in the explanation. But it's easily solvable... we make a break there...take a minute to gather thoughts, or someone tries to help complete a reasoning or an explanation, but always in English...even when it's someone of the same nationality.

JM: What would be the strategies to adopt that you would use to address the language barriers in the team during the resolution of a conflict?

P6: Hmm... I don't know. As I have never experienced a conflict of that type I don't know how to answer that question.

JM: But do you think that promoting a dialogue is a good approach or it depends what cultures you are dealing with?

P6: For instance, my manager is a person that is actually very different from people from the same culture [Estonia]... he is way more talkative, way more outgoing and he even tried to make our team more communicative and closer together even outside of the work setting...but all attempts turned out to have very little or no success at all

JM: Do you think people whose native language is English or a language from a specific country, where you are developing a project for instance, have a privileged position in meetings due to their communication style and to the fact that they might communicate better than others?

P6: In my company, not in my project...but in my company I have people from the United States and that might happen with them...but they don't work in engineering, so we never have any type of communication with them...I can't really measure that because everyone with whom I have direct communication don't have English as a native language.

JM: But would you say that in your team there are different levels of English proficiency?

P6: Yes, for sure.

JM: And how do you manage that within the team?

P6: I don't know... they try not to differentiate much. If the person is not that comfortable with the English language, we give him or her space to talk... try not to interrupt. If the person asks any question or has any doubt, we try to help but what I have been noticing is that there are people, even from other teams with whom we have weekly presentations, with a very elementary level of English... you can spot that difference... and in this presentations everybody keeps a level of respect and professionalism to keep them going. What also happens is that the managers of each team try to promote... like give feedback so those people can, for example, take courses to improve that aspect. Yeah...but that is a bit of a more specific strategy of each manager of each team and it's not something that other employees of the company can intervene or give feedback, but odds are that that is something that is already being worked on with someone within that specific team.

JM: If you had the chance of choosing the team member who would integrate your team, what would the qualities or skills that you would prioritize? Would you give preference to communication skills, team work or other soft skills over a higher level of language proficiency?

P6: I think I would prefer to see if the person has in deed team spirit. I also work in the recruitment process specifically to my team and the English proficiency is not an impediment. I believe that we are facing an impediment if at a cultural level we think the person is not a good fit. But if the person is an introvert, that is not a reason for exclusion obviously.

JM: And at a cultural level, if you consider that the person is not a good fit, what reasons can lead to an exclusion of a candidate?

P6: Normally, when he or she recognizes that he [or she] can't work in a team or when we can't actually figure out if the person has experience in working with other people... it can also happen that the person lets slip a let's "happy comment" or a controversial one... I actually never came across with one of these, but it can happen. We actually have a guideline that we follow and the cultural component of it is to try to figure out... to understand if the person is perseverant, likes and is ready to embrace challenges... because liking a challenge is different than being able to face it... but in general that's it... ah and if a person actually likes to work on the type of tasks they are going to be assigned to and will be up for the challenge. In the same guidelines, in the communication part... in a professional setting I mean... if the person has any doubt if they will be able to ask questions or ask for help, if they can communicate findings and results in a solid way and also clearly... that's what the company values. Then, we seek to analyze, by asking questions about previous jobs, situations where the person faced any type of conflict, how they dealt with it... we try to understand the strategy or actions they used... if they went to the manager for help, if they tried to involve more people... if the conflict escalated... and also the reason that is leading them to look for a new job. If they are mad at the previous company or if he was "invited to exit" and try to explore that. Basically, try to understand the problem, how they tried to solve the problem... like we try to see if the person has a good self-knowledge and self-resolution skills... ask for help instead of just interiorizing the problems and accumulating them.

JM: Is there any specific cultural pattern or from a certain country that you find it harder to integrate in a team?

P6: Yes. I think that the people from Estonia and Russia who I work with are way more difficult to create a connection with... even at a professional level. Not that they are bad professionals because they are not.. they are amazing professionals, very good professional communication... but just at a professional level. Creating human connections... heart to heart and mind to mind like we use to say in Portuguese... is difficult. I feel like they have their walls very tall. It is very difficult to create connections, friendships, for example, with people from these nationalities. There is also the part that I only work remotely. I think this is also a big thing. Normally, I go to Estonia every 3 months... stay there for a week and during that period I spend time with my team members... but yes, that can make it harder ou to take longer to create some type of connection, but even when I am in the office, there are people from other nationalities, like from Mexico, Greece... and there you can clearly see that those people talk more between themselves in the office... have more spontaneous conversations. But local people and Russian people are very similar culturally. They are more quiet, have few conversations between themselves, do not talk loud at all, they are more reserved... it's different... in that aspect I find a big cultural difference.

JM: You said you work remotely. What do you think is the main difference in how you deal with a conflict compared to if you were in person?

P6: Based on my experience, when it was in person, face-to-face, those discussions of ideas took longer... it was more difficult to reach a conclusion because it seemed that everything went into some sort of a very cyclical mode. In my specific team, we usually try to deal with these conflicts via text messages, in chat... we usually use Slack, which reflects on the number of meetings... we have very few meetings. We have a stand-up meeting in the morning that usually lasts between 15 to 20 minutes. Normally, in these there can be some discussion of ideas, but something very brief and that does not take longer. If it's something that involves more time or more discussion, usually what we do is the process that it kind of stipulated which is to put that question in our own team channel on Slack which is a public canal for the whole company and the question or the idea should be discussed there by the other team members. And this, why?

To give visibility to everyone in the team, because it is a distributed company, there are a lot of people... there are 2 offices in Estonia but there are a lot of people all over Europe working in the engineering team... it also has in the U.S. but it's not engineering. So these channels are public because they also serve to share ideas... other people from other teams may have an opinion on that matter and may have something to contribute to the debate. For example, if we are in a meeting and there is one or two people missing... this because it is not mandatory for us to attend any meetings... so if someone is not there it is possible that they are missing an opportunity or an important point. That is why the written communication in Slack is used.

JM: So you feel that by working remotely is easier to solve conflicts than to engage in a face-to-face communication?

P6: It is easier in this aspect, because when a person writes a message tries to be as succinct... as clear as possible... and even does a fact check before pressing send and send the message. When a person is talking in a meeting, usually the ideas flow rapidly and directly from their head to their mouth and you can see the reflection of this in their speech... it's easier for a person to make a mistake or not be seeing the whole picture. When we send a message, we have the possibility of re-reading it and re-reading what other people have said... something that in a videocall or a face-to-face conversation is not possible and there is no rewind button to go back to what it was said. There [in a text message] everything is already there... the facts are already displayed in a temporal, chronological way and it is easier, that is, you do not lose the thread to the skein... a person will not repeat arguments because there are already a message where those arguments were exposed. So I think... at least in my perception... that discussions end up ending very quickly and efficiently by using this method. But this method also works for companies that do not work remotely... they just have to realize how to apply this to their teams which I believe to be the hardest part. Basically, that is it... I really believe that it's way more difficult to be in a meeting discussing something than to discuss it in a couple text messages.

JM: If you were inserted in a team where the corporate language was your native language... in this case Portuguese, do you think your answer to the previous question would be the same?

P6: Hmm... I don't know... that is a really good question that I will definitely meditate later on the topic... but I would say... I don't know... After what I learned in this company I think it would be a funny experience... even entertaining to experience. But my immediate answer would be that I do not believe it would make a difference, because this discussion method... let's call it like this... works very well. Even because I already had experiences in the past of meetings that lasted for hours and I hated them. Now even if they take a bit longer with questions or comments, it is not as tiring and exhausting to pay attention to the topic and participate in the discussion. With this method, I am always updated on the relevant topics, discussions, ideas even if I do not attend the meeting.

Transcript P7

Joana Madeira (JM): Please, start like by saying your name, the company, and your function in the company.

Participant 7 (**P7**): So I'm [**P7**], I am from China and I'm currently, um, have an internship in FrieslandCampina in the professional category, and also their marketing team. And our team has, um, six members plus me as an intern. And then three of them are Dutch based in of cross amersfort for, uh, near to Utrecht, and three of them based in Belgium. I don't remember the location. And also one is based in Singapore. So, um, usually when we have meeting, we have it online and I only see my three dutch colleagues.

JM: How long have you been working in this team?

P7: Since the beginning of April, so, so far, two months.

JM: So you said you have Dutch people in Belgium and from Singapore?

P7: Yeah.

JM: And you're six in total?

P7: Yeah. Six plus me as an intern, so seven.

JM: How do you communicate and coordinate in your team? Like the language, how do you give tasks to each other? Do you receive tasks?

P7: In English for sure, because, we have the member in Singapore and she's from local there. And also... sometimes the Dutch and Belgium people talk in their own language, but still they have different words. So, mainly in English, but when they have small talk or when within the company, but outside the corporate talk they use Dutch.

JM: Is this your first time working in a multicultural team?

P7: Yeah.

JM: If a conflict was to arise, what do you think the main reasons could be according to your experience? Do you think the language works as a conflict facilitator?

P7: No, I don't think so because in a team everybody has almost perfect as English and they don't have language problems.

JM: Do you think then the conflict could emerge from different cultural values?

P7: I also don't think that's the case because in the team everybody is senior and they have rich experience and they only focus on a certain area. Or like... for example, one member focus on the European market and other in Europe plus Africa, other cares for China, and other regions. So they have their own regions and also before that they have all experience in different countries. Like for example, my manager now, she's a Dutch, but she studied in Norway and stayed in Asia for like a year before. And also the team previous manager, she stayed in Africa and Asia for like seven or eight years in total, and they are very aware of the culture difference and they have a broad experience. So, I don't think that's a problem. And also they communicate a lot with a team over the world.

JM: Have you ever experienced a time where you felt like a language barrier was an obstacle to you in the internship?

P7: Yeah, like the problem to me is because this is a Dutch company and their customer are bakers and also restaurants, and I'm doing marketing jobs, so I need to search a lot of like online advertisement and target on websites. However, many of them are only in Dutch because their target are Dutch people, and this is the hard part that I don't appreciate and also because I'm doing a global job and also when I search something like, for example, the trend and market and new product in Italy or France, and they're all in their own language on Instagram or Facebook. So, I need to use translator all the time for those.

JM: How do you balance the need for accuracy and precision in the English language with the need for cultural sensitivity?

P7: Before I start internship, I immediately told them that this is my first time working in an international team. If I say something wrong or inappropriate, please bring that out and correct me. It would be really helpful for me and also my future. But now... the point is that I'm a Asian women working in a Dutch culture, so usually they are the ones being super careful with me when they talk to me. So I, it's, it's usually not my problem and I notice that my managers are like... when they talk something they're really care for or act like “Oh, don't take it personally”, or “It's just a market thing”.

JM: In your experience, do native Dutch speakers, have a privileged position in debates and discussions?

P7: No, no! Dutch people are really nice. When there's international, they usually just switch to English. And also I have a Dutch friend working there and when there are Dutch there, and if they cannot explain something in details, they just first tell me like “Hey, we have to speak in Dutch because we cannot talk this in English” and then after that, also explain the topic to me... Just one more thing, because I also stayed in Switzerland and also Germany... they do this way more than the Dutch people. They just don't even tell when they're speaking German.

JM: How do you approach communication with team members who have varying levels of language proficiency?

P7: I think we utilize things quite basic in communication. Because most of them are native speakers... like, Dutch or Belgian or French are their first language. And I think only the member in Singapore might have use English as a mother tongue. But the rest of them are not. But when we send email or send like official letters, we double check a lot before we send it because it goes to every country. But in normal, like daily life within the thing, we would just use quite basic words.

JM: So if you were in HR and you had the opportunity of choosing the next member of your team, what qualities or features would you prioritize in selecting them? Soft skills or language skills?

P7: I think the language only needs to reach the standard line. It doesn't need to be perfect, like communication level is enough. I think it still depends on the job. If the position requires a lot of communication, paperwork or even goes online posts, it must be at a professional level. Otherwise, it's a communication level that is enough.

JM: In your opinion, do you think that language proficiency and cultural awareness should be better integrated by the companies in conflict resolution?

P7: Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

JM: In what way?

P7: Like some trainings or like for the senior manager, they have training to be taught when you have an international team. Like what you need to do, what might happen and how do you solve it. They just need to be aware of those instead of like... when they hit the program and they solve it by themselves, by their own experience. That might be like a bit different to different teams.

JM: Can you discuss a bit of the impact of non-verbal communication and cultural differences in your team? How do you think the non-verbal it affects differently than the verbal one?

P7: Yes. I think we mean communicate mostly online or like verbal communication. Even when I go to the office, everybody's usually so busy that we only like hang out during lunchtime.

Transcript P8

Participant 8 (P8): I am [P8], I am 37, and I have the Angolan citizenship as well as the Portuguese... because I was born there and my dad is both Angolan and Portuguese. My mother is Portuguese and... despite the fact that I am white I embrace the Angolan culture, my Angolan side, let's say more than I embrace the Portuguese... even in the language... when you do the translation of this to English won't be possible to spot it, but I am going to say it so it is on record... I speak Portuguese but the... the African variation, not the dialect, more like some words and the accent let's say. I was born in Cabinda, Angola and came to Portugal when I was around 2 and then later in life... like 10 years ago, I went back to Angola to work there. Currently I work as an automation and control engineer. In Angola, I was responsible for all the electrical work in a construction company that built electrical facilities in places with very difficult access. That's basically it... mainly on borders, remote places very far from the big cities,... one of the places where I worked required a 10 minute car drive there. Did I say then name of the company? It was Ducap & C^a, Lda.. it is not very well-known, it was a company of Portuguese people that had its operations there.

Joana Madeira (JM): How long did you work in that multicultural environment and team? And what nationalities did you have on your team?

P8: I worked with them for 2 and a half years. I worked with Angolans and Namibians

JM: How were the tasks and project organized and coordinated within the team?

P8: Basically, I coordinated the electricians and asked them for what needed to be done. And then the electricians also had their own helpers... that basically were their assistants. But many times, I coordinated both at the same time.

JM: Everything in Portuguese? Because in Namibia they don't speak Portuguese, do they?

P8: No, no... in Namibia, they speak English, but the majority of them understood Portuguese and if something... in some cases, they communicated in English. But to be fully honest, this were just some rare cases, some exceptions.

JM: So, considering that the language of the team was essentially Portuguese, even though different dialects, do you think you faced some type of language barrier?

P8: So... I had to adapt. I had to adapt without a doubt. Because at first, when I arrived there I spoke as they said "the European African Portuguese". In the beginning, I spoke and they didn't get me... didn't understand me. I had to start using their expressions, their words, when I asked for something I needed, I had to end the sentence with a "ya" so they would be able to understand that that was really the end of the sentence. After some time, we understood each other well. But in the beginning, yes, the first couple of months... like 2 months, until I got used to it, it was a bit hard for me. And for them too, obviously. They also didn't always understand and then they started to understand what I said and even pick some patterns in my speech and the way I spoke.

JM: Has this language barrier ever resulted in some kind of miscommunication conflict?

P8: No, in my case no. Obviously, there were times that I said "Do this in this way...ya" and then... they didn't but it was more because they didn't know how to do that in that certain way, so they would do it differently. Language conflict no, it never happened.

JM: And regarding cultural values, do you believe or feel that there was any type of conflict? Something that was interpreted by them in a way that it was not the one you wanted it to be perceived, or the other way around?

P8: Not really, because obviously I was in an African country... I am white and I was in an African country... there is a lot of talk about racism, what now the media calls inverted racism and the disdain towards white people, specially those who were colonizers like the Portuguese... I didn't feel any of that. Quite the opposite, actually. So they knew, that I knew more than them about those topics, so they took advantage of that and really wanted for me to teach them some things. So, I don't remember ever feeling racism towards me or that they interpreted things differently than what I was trying to say... I really never felt that. I always tried to explain myself in the best possible way, or at least the best I could and play with them... make it chill. I never felt anything like that.

JM: How do you think is the role of language, in resolving conflicts in a team with more than one nationality? In this question, you can think outside of that team in specific, you can put yourself in a position where you were working in a team with more than one language.

P8: So, obviously it's very important. Either you are fluent in that language or else there could really be conflicts. Especially in places where people didn't had the same inputs as we did, that is... didn't grow and evolve as a country or as a culture the same way as we did... with few or none communication with different cultures. Either we know very well and are fully aware of what we are saying and talking to them, or else, yes, there could be some kind of conflict. What often happened to me, was that there were always one or two

people that worked with me who could speak the more local languages. And then, when I spoke to them, either in English or Portuguese, or whatever, they would “translate” it, let’s say, into their local languages. Although they use English, they speak a lot of Afrikaans there, which has nothing to do with the languages I speak. They, by themselves... when one was not understanding, they translated that for him and managed that for me... because I didn’t know how to speak their dialect. And it always worked very well. I really enjoyed the experience. I wouldn’t go back there to Angola and repeat the experience, because life has changed in the meanwhile, but I really liked it there and enjoyed it a lot.

JM: So you would say that the strategy that you would recommend to address those language barriers when in a situation of conflict solving would be to ask for help and be open to new ideas?

P8: Yes, absolutely. And, once again, try. And when the language barriers is very big... when the difference is very big not only in terms of language but also in culturally, try to find interlocutors who can be that bridge to complement the communication... to help to overcome that obstacle to reach them in an effective and cordial way. And of course, always be open to what they say, to what they ask and to how they react, and obviously take it as chill as we can, so they don’t feel threatened and don’t think we are really there to boss them around and for them to do what we don’t want or don’t know how to do, or that we don’t care about them. They are very important and so are we.

JM: At the level of a team, and not only only at the level of conflict resolution but even at the level of testing new strategies whether they are technical or at a team relationship level, do you think that dialogue is always a good approach or it depends on the cultures you are dealing with?

P8: Okay, so... it really depends. Because there are many times when the dialogue is not enough. You need to complement it with a practical example, you need to show objects, speak in a different way. Because that’s what this is really about... even when we think we are being clear and speaking fluently, but because even though they speak the same language as we do, with a different dialect, they feel like... and even I felt like something more than communication was missing and it was definitely needed. It is often necessary either to use drawings or other methods so that they can truly understand and we can all act accordingly to that conversation... perform tasks, build relationships within the team etcetera.

JM: So you think that non-verbal communication is also needed as a way of complementing the speech?

P8: Yes, absolutely.

JM: Considering that you were working in a country that even though it's also yours you didn't grow up in there, in your experience with a team composed essentially by locals, do you think that they had a privileged position when exposing and explaining ideas, when brainstorming that came from the fact that they were locals and knew better the country and the culture you were working in?

P8: Oh yes, absolutely. Because I remember that it happened many times that they turned to me and said "Boss, this need to be more isolated because it will get too hot, ya", or "Boss, put this equipment higher because this is a gazelle habitat and people come here to hunt them, ya" and even "When you go to that café or that restaurant, ask for this fruit as the flavor for the juice because the people of this village always mix up these 2 fruits, ya". I was in an amazing position there, because it was their environment and I was a foreigner that was very well integrated. So, I have no doubt that those, their inputs helped a lot.

JM: What were the strategies that you adopted to try to put yourself at the level of that privilege?

P8: Besides ending every sentence with "ya"? Eat with them many times... have lunch and dinner with them, socialize not only during the work hours, but also after... have dinner with them and their families, talk to their kids. Try to talk to them in a more chill way than just talking about work.

Transcript FGA

JM: When it was asked how is the work coordinated in your team / company, both of you mentioned the English language. However, P7 pointed out that there are a lot of side conversations happening in Dutch. Also touching this point, P1 pointed out that when some question pops up or you need some type of help it's easier or more convenient to ask to someone who has the same language skills as you. Can you guys discuss a bit about this? Like, P7 from your perspective, would you also say that it would be easier to do the same with someone who speaks Mandarin? You have around 5 minutes to discuss this

P7: In my case, I will agree with that because, I'm from a very like indirect and controversial cultural background. So when we have a controversial episode, let's say like this, among Chinese colleagues, we have to explain in Chinese, because there are a lot of things from our culture that you can't find in other languages. So for example, when we have a conflict in my country or when people speak Chinese,

we avoid to talk about the conflict. But when it's an international, in an international context everybody speaks so directly, especially in Netherlands and people were just pointing out that problem so in my opinion, when it's an international group, it's even easier.

P1: I recognize that... I mean what I see in ING is that people will try... well, the local people, the Dutch people, if they have a problem, they will first try to talk in Dutch and then they will see if they can solve the problem. And only then when they realize like, “oh yeah, there's also people who don't speak the language”, and then they will switch to English. But it's like always this sort of like trying... they're more confident in their own language, so they want to try that at first. We have had some... actually we had some mandatory trainings in the company to change that a bit and to make people aware of the fact that's a bit like... what was mentioned before...there's a lot of side conversations in Dutch. It's not really nice towards the people who don't speak Dutch, because they might feel a bit like left out. Especially because many of these side conversations are not about either work or social life. And that's also like something important to kind of build a team's atmosphere. And we've had some trainings on that that I think it helped a bit. But it's also a bit natural, right? That you're more comfortable in in your own language if you have people who speak your language. Sometimes it's easier to explain your problem or the questions you have. So, yeah, I recognize that in my company, it's very similar as what P7 said, really.

P7: I agree with what P1 said. In my company, also Dutch speaking people will try to speak Dutch for sure, but I notice that the Asian people avoid to speak in their own language when together in the company, because it just gets so complicated.

JM: When asked about the role of language in the emergence of conflict, neither of you pointed out language proficiency as a factor for conflict. However, P1 said that the way people express themselves in English, with communication styles similar to their native language can result in conflict. P7, do you agree with P1 or would you still say that language has plays no role in this situation?

P7: No, I don't think languages play a role in this because in my last experience I also lived with all exchange students in the same building, in 2019. And everybody was from different countries. And at the beginning, of course, like... we had a misunderstanding to each other, because the way like Chinese people there, some speak English and others they seem that they do, but they truly don't. And

after a while then people get familiar with each other, they know what kind of a person...that each other is. And then around that time, then we just never had a problem. And what the people do and what kind of person might cause be problem or just their behavior and what they think. But I don't think it's a big issue, especially after a while

P1: No, I think you're right. It's the personality of the person that is definitely the biggest factor of conflict. That's very clear. I think the only thing that might indeed cause conflict relating from language is like what we said earlier, the Dutch people are sometimes very direct... and I feel Dutch people in general are quite confident with their English skills that are usually quite okay. And in my team, I often feel that they also present themselves like that and they are very fast speaking in English and they think that they can express themselves in the same way in Dutch as in English. And sometimes they're a bit too direct even in English. And they sometimes then use words, which they think is right, but they are not. And it comes across even more rude because they are using truly wrong words. But it's often down to personality. I completely agree. I mean a person who is very very direct in Dutch will be very, very direct in English. And someone who is more hesitant in Dutch will be more hesitant in English. In that respect, yeah, I think we're on the same page there.

JM: So you would say that the communication style is really influenced by the personality more than the culture.

P1: Uh...yes. Personality and culture are of course... two things that are a bit related. It's a bit of a difficult line there, I think, between personality and culture, but I think in the end it's always more personal, I guess. A rude person will be rude, whether that's in English or whether that's in Dutch, I guess. And the direct person will be more direct than a person who is less direct. I guess language will be a bit of a filter though, because if someone is not as confident in another language than their own language, maybe they will be a little bit less direct or a little bit less rude or whatever. But personality always comes out... right? It's very hard to contain that and another language is not gonna stop a person from talking in a certain way. So I think it serves a bit as a filter but personality will always come out

JM: Once again, regarding the emergence of conflict, P1 emphasized the role of communication styles in this case the ones that reflect cultural values while P7 says that cultural values do not play a role whatsoever. P1, what is your perspective about this? P7 also pointed

out that people are more careful when talking to her due to the fact that she is an Asian woman. P1, do you think this is part of cultural sensitivity regarding for instance how dutch people know they are perceived by others?

P1: Yeah, I can see the points. It's probably also has a bit to do the company and how they emphasize this aspect. So I can imagine that maybe at Freeland Campina they have put special attention on explaining to the Dutch people to be aware of these cultural differences and act upon these differences and be careful in how you talk to people. Don't be as direct as you would be towards a Dutch person, for example. I see that in ING, they are also trying to do that, but it goes a bit slow and probably they're not as far as other companies are, because they're trying to give some trainings now and then they try to focus on that difference between intention and impact to show like you might not have a bad intention, but the impact on the other person is much harder than what you wanted to achieve precisely because of the cultural differences. So it's something that I do understand the point, and I think it's something where it's probably on a scale some companies are already a bit further than others, and I think if I hear what you say, my guess is that within Freestone Campina, they're probably already a few steps further.

P7: I think the people being careful when they talk to me is how I feel in general, because I also stayed in Finland and Switzerland, but the Dutch people are the most careful ones. And whenever they talk about the case or cultural or whatever about China, they're just being careful not to say the wrong thing or they always ask me if it's true or not, but just don't feel of offense. This is what I know I can feel heard in this topic.

JM: So you say that the Dutch communication style is... even though it's more direct and straightforward, is more cultural sensitive.

P7: Yeah. Yeah. Cultural sensitive. When they say it... maybe when they put it in words, it seems to be less direct, but maybe it's cultural sensitive.

JM: Would you say the same P1, because you're from a country that's neighbor with the Netherlands, would you say the same?

P1: Yeah. I didn't think about that before because I often thought being direct will also cancel out the cultural sensitivity. But it's actually true what you say. Even towards me being Belgian, they sometimes talk in a careful way and in a way that I think there's no need to treat me like that. But it's a good point. In fact, I think Netherlands is a very multicultural country compared to Switzerland or Finland, they're the less foreigners there. So, I guess from the fact that Dutch deal with foreigners more often and they're more used to being in a working environment with foreigners, it probably made them more sensitive in that way. Yeah, that's a very fair point.

JM: Regarding the balance between accuracy and precision and cultural sensitivity, you had sort of similar opinions. P7 said there is no need to have that balance and P1 said it's something you need to figure out proactively in the moment and situation you are in. P7, what do you think about this perspective?

P7: Now I think it also depends on the situation because, like in different conversations or in different situations, people might, might act differently. And also how they felt in that moment. So if sometimes it's a bit tense and then people will be indiscreet, but it's a really, like... chill or not, it doesn't matter that much. So I, I think it also depends now.

JM: P1, do you wanna add something?

P1: Yeah, I understand indeed. In ING, they try to work a bit proactive on these things. They... even when you're onboarded, you have like a whole lot of trainings that you need to do and some of these trainings are about cultural sensitivity and communication. So they try to kind of prepare you for these type of situations, but it's difficult. It's not the same as when it actually happens. You can prepare with texts and videos and questions, but it's not the same as when you're actually on the field with people. So in that respect, indeed, the way how you will actually change your behavior or act in the right way, it needs to come via real life situations. So, yeah. I agree there.

JM: When questioned about the possibility of native English speaker or Dutch speakers to have a certain type of privilege in debates or discussions, both of you pointed out experience as the reason of that privilege. P7, as an intern and almost master graduate how do you think you could fight lets say this privilege?

P7: I noticed one thing in the company because in my company especially in the headquarter, most of the colleagues are Dutch So when they talk about something even in English, it's something I don't know nothing about. That's because like they translate directly from Dutch and they just think this is the mainstream and this is the trend everywhere and this is what we do in more chill moments in the office. Not even in English... I don't know what they are talking about. So I feel a bit left out when they're even talking those things in English. Like for example, the local soccer games lately, and I'm just like, "what?". So they were like, "oh, you should know" and "you should see that" and "you need to try something". But it's always there telling me I need to do more. So this is how I feel.

JM: So you'd say like, the strategy would be to work more like a self-improvement, learn the language?

P7: I don't completely agree that I'm the one that need to change completely or follow their change because when I was interviewed with the company, they also say, "Hey, please, bring up something from your culture to our team or something." But I just find it really hard, especially when I have a meeting with seven Dutch people and I'm talking something... later, there's just so many questions. I'm actually not sure how to handle this, but I'm trying to catch up with them so far.

P1: P1, you have more experience, like you are inserted in two teams. I understand. In our team, it's less like that. I think it's probably because in the team I'm currently in we don't have such a big majority of Dutch people. So I think there are in total two Dutch people and then there is someone from Portugal, there's someone from the Philippines, someone from Belgium, someone from South Africa... So it's really more of a mixture. And then, there less common topics for these few Dutch people to talk about, to share with the other people because the other people are like you. So they don't, for example, let's say they start talking about football, the other five or six people have no idea what they're talking about. So that makes that these two people will be less likely to start talking about football. I

think that's probably a big aspect of it. It's a difficult situation, right? They shouldn't expect from you to kind of catch up on all these topics, right? They can't expect you to catch up on like all football related stuff or something like that. I mean, it's similar as you would have six men and one woman and they all start talking about man stuff...it's a similar way. It's not how it should be. They can't expect you to suddenly start discussing the men stuff and similar with like cultural, things. So, I can understand. It's difficult for you to kind of find your way in that. In my opinion, it should come from their side...that they should be a bit more easier going and maybe sensitive to that, because it would be kind of hard for you to know what they're gonna talk about next time anyway, but I understand it's difficult position for you.

JM: During both of your individual interviews, you pointed out the existence of language and cultural awareness trainings in your companies either if it's for everybody or just for managers. So my question now would be, how do you think this topic is or should be approached in a way that its also focused on conflict resolution and not only the avoidance of conflict?

P1: In ING, the focus is more on cultural sensitivity than it is on conflict resolution. The training is company-wide, so that means it's for senior management and all other employees. There is not much focus on conflict resolution, honestly. It's mainly on avoiding problematic situations, which is a good point actually. Your question touches the right point. It's all on proactively and then thinking that "oh, we're gonna avoid the problems", but of course that's not how things go. Conflicts will arise and then you don't have any training background to solve that. So, for ING, I think there is a bit of a gap there, in training materials, I believe.

JM:How would you fill this gap?

P1: I think that conflict resolution would be more important for managers, for senior management. More than for the operations teams or the people under the managers. I think so. I guess the focus should lie there. These days, if I see how the teams are organized, we should organize ourselves in all honesty. Then... conflict resolution is also important for the other teams... I think it should be a part of the training, which I'm not really sure why it is not right now. I don't really have the answer there. I think it's a bit of a gap in the training.

I think it's the idea of maybe... it's a Dutch idea, I don't know... We can avoid it, so we don't need a solution afterwards. Maybe that's the issue. I'm not too sure.

P7: I'm not so sure what training ___ have for the senior managers, and like so far I don't get those training. I only have the knowledge training for the position. But I would agree that most of the companies would try to avoid those problems instead of giving a solution after the problems happened. So, it also happened the same in my last experience in China. Of course, that's not an international thing, but all the training we had was to avoid problem instead of solving the problem.

JM: Would you also agree that maybe the conflict resolution training to problems resolution should be more directed to managers than to operations, for instance?

P7: I think it should be everyone, because sometimes if the group has a problem and for the team members usually just talk about it to each other and they have this thing when they're just not happy with their managers. Or even the managers do not have the solution. Like sometimes it's a little bit too late. I think it should be like a general training for everyone.

JM: Do you wanna add something, P1?

P1: Yeah, just one point which is a bit unrelated maybe to this, but something that I certainly thought about is that at ING, we focus on conflict resolution when it comes to conflict resolution as a result of, for example, toxic management or situations that arise between men and women, unacceptable behavior, harassment and that sort of things, but not on cultural difference, that is not part of these conflict resolution trainings. And I think that shows a bit that there's not enough attention to that because that could be a reason for a conflict as much as an unacceptable behavior between a man towards a woman, for example. So, I guess it shows a bit the fact that there is still a little bit of a gap. There's still some improvement possible.

JM: P1, you work essentially remote. How would you say that non-verbal communication is approached in that situation since you don't have the component of body language, etc? just written communication.

P1: Well... difficult. We all write in English of course, or we try to write as much as we can in English. It still happens sometimes that it's in Dutch but we're supposed to write to each other in English. I'm trying to think if that's a positive thing or a negative thing in fact, because it kind of takes away the the body language... I'm going towards a negative side actually. I think it would be better if you have the body language, besides your words, what you're trying to say... I think that would be a healthier situation than when it's purely words on the screen.

JM: So would you say that the nonverbal communication have an impact in the conflict?

P1: Yes. I do think so. I think that if words are only on your screen, it could come across quite harsh. You could take it in a negative way while it's maybe not intended to be in that way. And when you are face to face with someone, there's the possibility that the other person notices things like, "oh, he doesn't mean it in that way", or "he means it in a different way". It's more in that way I believe. And that you don't have that in written communication, I think there is more chance of conflicts, I think.

JM: But would you say it would be easier or harder to then solve that conflict?

P1: Well, you can always say, "oh, it's because I, because you couldn't see me, you didn't see my, my body language." So it was just text...I mean that has happened in our team quite often. I mean, if it's related to the fact that you are not face-to-face, then it's usually fairly easy to solve, I feel... if that is the real reason. Yeah, it has happened quite a lot.

JM: P7, in one of your answers your claimed it had an impact. If you were working remotely like P1 how would you balance it out?

P7: Like in my case, because I'm from like a totally different country background, and I would say when I work remotely is rare but I'm more free and have less conflict with people. So, for example, when there's like an argument going on online, I can always take a moment and sit down like, "okay, I don't want to look at it now", and I will reply later on. So if I see the person sometimes it gets so intense and it might turn to be like a fighter argument. And that's one thing that happened in my previous job as well. And so, not me, but my colleagues, they were in the same group, always has so many problems in at office and every time it became like a flight or something, but when we had the work remote, they're like, "okay, I'm not replying to her for three hours" and then later on "okay, it's not a big deal". Or even say that they will send a voice message or have a call later on. We have like a moment or a break, after the thing happened.

P1: It's funny. And our team is the opposite, actually. Like they don't have fights when they see each other, but online they have fights in meetings, then it gets intense. It's funny the other way around.

JM: You were asked to put yourself in a scenario where you were responsible for picking your team members and in that case if you would prioritize language skills over other soft skills. Here there was a point of divergence of opinions. P1 said that he would treat language as a priority while P7 claimed that a basic level of the language, at a standard line, depending on the position would be enough. I would like to listen to both of you elaborating on this.

P7: I'm not sure because like some position, they don't even need to talk much with people. So I don't think the language won't be a big problem if they can just speak standard or make the average and that communication level. But of course, like some positions really need a lot of conversation and also read and write emails in like perfect email and also maybe post something online. This is how I feel.

P1: Yeah. No, I think, I think that's indeed more how I interpreted the question. And when I look at my team, if you're in daily contact with customers, for example, it's often more important that you have very good language skills. And in that case, I would say that's an important factor... the language skills. But if that is less important for the work itself, then I think other soft skills would definitely be at the same level. I think we're in a fairly middle ground here.

Transcript FGB

JM: When asked if you felt native English speakers had a privileged position in debates and discussions, both of you said yes. P2 gave an example of a British colleague and P6, the americans that work in the company. My question now would be how can non-native speakers fight this privilege and put themselves at the same level?

P6: Like the first thing I think the person that is not a native speaker he must be confident and motivated. He must try to get better, trying to be on the next level and on the other side, I think companies shouldn't put this, the pressure for this to happen and allow, like to have a base minimal... like of good communication between the company, but try not to judge by it. So I think that's it.

P2: I think they can at least try to tell the things in a very fundamental way... you know... in a very fundamental layer, very directly, very... how can I say? Like... smooth and fast, not very...not making things complicated. Yeah. Just trying to tell the basic things and what is needed to be done. And that's all, I think. I think that could be that, that can be a strategy in this part.

JM: When questioned about the role of language in the emergence of conflict, P6 said it was not so much about the language, but more about the communication styles. And you gave the example of the Estonians and the Russians that have a really different communication styles from other cultures. On the other hand, P2 said that language associated with multiculturalism is a main factor for conflict. P6 added that that different native languages helps to alleviate conflicts. P2, I would like to listen to your opinion about this. How do you think it could help alleviate conflict? P6, I would also like your input for this question

P2: I think here I need to criticize myself; I think he is right because it's not the main issue that we have the different communication. I mean, like... we are coming from different language backgrounds, language-related... let me say cultures. But it depends on the situation, I think, because, if you're trying to deal with someone who does not have much confidence in English, let me say, or that specific language, okay, that's a problem for you to communicate. But also as he said, It depends on the culture too. Like it depends on the communication styles too, I think. I think so... So I think those two parts are the main contributors of this thing, I think.

JM: And how do you think that can alleviate the conflict?

P2: I need to think about this. I don't know, like... I need to spend some time to give you an example or I don't know.

JM: Do you want to say the reason that led you to, to answer this P6?

P6: I don't know, because like I said, I agree with the opposite. I think when a company has like more diverse people, language speakers, I think it's more easy to have a culture of respect and it's less likely to have engaging conflict. I think... like from my experience when I

was working in a fully Portuguese company, conflict was much easier because of the native language. I think native languages bring us problems and in English we restrain for saying like bad things, I think, and it's easier to prevent conflict.

JM: P2, do you wanna say something?

P2: Yeah, I fully agree with him. I think, yeah, I all agree.

JM: Still, regarding the last question, P6 what do you think influences more the different communication styles that can result in conflict? Language or multiculturalism? Or even other factor?

P6: I don't know. P2, I think maybe this time you'll go, go first.

P2: I think it's about multiculturalism. Like, let me, I think it's more focused on the cultural related things because when, when you have the debate with someone, you can easily see that they're, how can I say, they're trying to, um, prioritize some things. Uh, first, but those, some things are the, the most valuable things, uh, for their culture. I think if you want example, I can go, but that's my, okay. Uh, for example, uh, we were having, uh, some kind of a conflict today. About just one invoice and about the payment of it. And one of us is guilty about the situation and we are trying to solve this. And, uh, the other guy is like trying to get into conversation from the, from the point that we forget something. So this is something I, uh, related to the responsibility, but in fact it is not like that we are waiting for some confirmation from another department. And then that's it. You know that Yeah. That, that can, um, show, show what I said. I think so. Okay.

P6: Yeah, I can, I can also agree that the cultural differences could make like the speech, the different opinions or like the conflict more engaging or not. Because like I said in the example with the Estonians and the Russians, they are like really straight to the point. So it's very hard to engage in conflict with them. But other cultures might be easier just because they are like more proponent to have like more not a factual like speech or have a more opinionated or are more comfortable... discussing. So I think cultural values for sure are what could engage in more differences.

JM: During his individual interview, P2 gave an example of a conflict deriving from miscommunication. He was being asked something from a colleague that assumed he was being clear towards P2 when truly wasn't. Since you work remotely, P6, and you said that this is an advantage when a conflict emerged, I would like to listen to strategies that people in this situation could engage in order to approach this type of conflict.

P6: I would need more pieces of context, but like in a default way. Yeah. But it depends how severe it was. Like the situation, the level of pressure, but I will say, like... I will try like to speak with the person. I have some situations that I have been in the past when I was really uncomfortable with something or some situation then like a few days later, or even in the same day later, I ask for like a one-to-one conversation with that person in private to speak what that made me feel and just like for that person to be aware, not to be like "you are guilty of that". More like "I had this perspective, I felt like this way and I wanted to share to you how I felt with this situation". Just like, just share the situation from my point of view, not blaming the person... that was something like in my previous company we learned like to do it,... we had some like workshops to try to engage in a nonviolent communication and try to always be on the other's person shoes, like being. Like being, there's, there's a name for it, but not a lot of language. But yeah, like, if the case was more serious or more touching to me, I will do that. Otherwise, I wasn't gonna do anything. I was just ignoring so it would like pass by without any fuss.

JM: P2, do you want to add something?

P2: No, it was all clear, I think. Okay. It was all good.

JM: P2, do you think that working remotely would work as a facilitator for conflict or a tool to avoid or solve them more effectively?

P2: I think as he said, it depends on the situation because sometimes you can avoid the conflict if you're working remotely because you don't have to communicate like face-to-face or you are not physically in there so you can like... pretend not seeing the message or not seeing the conflict... but at least you can have time, for example, you can have 10 minutes to think about it and after that call again and say "sorry, I didn't see your message". And after that you can provide a more efficient answer or more efficient response to the situation that can help solve it faster. You know... this can be a good perspective of it, but at the same time, I think other side.. I mean, this could make the things to be solved in a longer span of time, I think. So it needs some kind of a balanced sense, you know, it depends on the person also, I think.

P6: Yeah, I think like last time I said that it's more easy to not be engaged in conflict with remote communication. Because levery communication or like most communication that we received are like via message... meetings don't escalate that much. So, yeah, I would say like there's no conflict over chat.

JM: Another interesting input that I got from both of your interviews was the divergence of opinions if you could pick the member that were part of your team. P6 claimed that English proficiency was not an impediment but if at a cultural level a person is not a good fit then that would be a problem. In contrast to this, P2 gave preference to language skills and I quote "because you can get the other skills

easily in a shorter time period". P2, would you say that language proficiency weights more lets say like this than certain cultural skills that P6 talked about?

P2: I think, yes, because I still think that English... language proficiency is still more important for me because I think when you hire someone from a very different culture, he or she has to adjust himself or herself into that atmosphere. You know... if you have a good atmosphere in the company, in an organization... you know, those borders can be seen. What can you do, how can you react, how can you respond to anything that can be seen or can be felt by the person so that it can be adjustable for the person. But if the person does not some specific level of proficiency in the language, it's very hard to communicate, and it's very hard to understand how all the processes are going or what is going on in the company. I'm not saying that proficiency needs to be an advanced level or something like that, but I will prioritize it.

JM: P6, do you wanna reply to P2 or do you want me to ask?

P6: I would like to reply. I'm also engaged in the hiring process for my team in the company. So I know what the company looks for when people are joining and one thing that the company has is like patterns and guidelines to hire is is like the cultural fit... is not like the language level. So language level should be the very minimal to be able to do his or her job but also be able to communicate with other team members because when we have multiple cultural values this is what will determine how people will react in a scenario of conflict? Not much how the person's English level or other language level. I agree that it's important to have to be able to have a good communication in a workplace, but must be like a communication where the people should be able to tell about their job or their feelings and normal situations... not like a technical level of talking about diseases and anatomy, bones and muscles in our body. But I think it's more important to know how cultural affects a person and not like the regions of the world where they are from. It's more culturally from the sense what we learn from our experiences in companies and working with different people that that's like an earned competence. That's why I think like cultural values are much more important than the concept of language, but I'm not like removing the importance of the language, but it's much of higher importance to, to people to be able to work with multiple cultures also. I think that's more important because language... I think that's like easier to learn and to improve. Especially if you start working day to day with a different language, then you get better every day.

JM: What are the skills that, in your opinion, you believe are important and can't be learned in a short period of time?

P6: Conflict resolution skills maybe... I truly can't think of another one.

