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Résumé of the Master thesis

Multilingualism in Multinational Study Programs on the example of a trinational master's program

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, the level of transnational cooperation in the field of education has been remarkably increasing over the last two decades. Besides the opportunity to study one or two semesters abroad, there is a strongly increasing tendency in the number of full multinational study programs in Germany. One of the main advantages of these multilingual study courses is the development of an understanding of not only technical terminology but also a general understanding of languages, which enhances the co-existence of a variety of languages throughout Europe.

The master program “Regional and European Project Management,” for example, is one of many European multinational study programs. This master is a collaboration of the following three universities: Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau (WHZ) in Zwickau, Germany; Université de Bretagne Sud in Lorient, France and the Jihočeská Univerzita v Českých Budějovicích in Budweis, Czech Republic. In 2015, this program started with the enrolment of only German and French students. In 2016, students of all three above mentioned nationalities were enrolled for the first time.

This thesis will allow an insight into the theory and practice of the language usage and the plurilingualism at university using the example of students of the tri-national master program stated above. The focus will be on the personal experiences and impressions of the students interviewed during the course of this thesis rather than on the analysis of the implementation of plurilingualism in the context of study regulations.

1 Introduction to the research project

In the first chapter of the thesis, the structure of the paper and the research question will be outlined. In a total of seven chapters, the importance of plurilingualism in multinational study programs will be illuminated.

During the first three chapters the theoretical foundation for this paper will be described. They cover the introduction to the topic, the research question and its theoretical groundwork. The three terms pluri-/multilingualism, foreign language and multiculturalism will be defined in order to create background knowledge for the following analysis. A description of the master's program "Regional and European Project Management" will then follow. Afterwards, the methodology and the interview used for this thesis as well as the analysis of the obtained data will be presented. The last chapters leave space for reflections, further proposals and the conclusion.

Being a student of the master's program myself and having read the project paper „Several languages, one student group? – The reciprocal influence language policy and relations among the students of the tri-national master have on each other from the perspective of three students" (2017), which was written by Marie Daviet, a student of the GPRE-master's program, I was inspired to analyse the plurilingualism and language usage of students studying in a multilingual environment.

My initial research project was to compare and analyse multilingualism in two different tri-national master programs. Due to lack of data which will be described later, I had to change the project from doing a comparative analysis of two master programs to comparing the program "Regional and European Project Management » to the theoretical statements made in the book "*In Mehreren Sprachen Studieren*" (Stoike-Sy, 2017) (Studying in several languages). The purpose of this paper is to grasp, analyse and compare the institutional multilingualism and the individual plurilingualism of the tri-national master program focusing on the personal impressions of the students and their meanings regarding their language usage.

The relevance of this research project will be made clear when we consider not only the growing internationalization of universities, but also the needs on the job market.

An increasing number of companies wishes to hire employees who can prove language competencies of two or more languages and a general understanding of cultural competencies, too. Applicants, who gained their professional and technical knowledge while learning several languages during the course of a multilingual study program, are therefore certainly the more popular choice when it comes to hiring. As this thesis covers multilingualism during the final stage of education, it might serve as an insight for other universities wishing to create multinational study programs.

As the current state of research in the field of linguistics offers different theories about language acquisition and multilingualism that were already discussed in a considerable number of academic papers throughout the last century, I decided to use Ms Daviet's paper among others as a foundation for the theoretical part of this thesis.

Ms Daviet used a total of seven questions during her interview to find out more about the influence of the university's language policy on the students. In summary, her questions lead her to identify three main aspects of plurilingualism in the GPRE-master's program.

Ms Daviet concludes that the usage of several languages in the master's program guides students to actively learn and use the languages, overcome language barriers and develop an understanding of one's counterpart's difficulties while communicating in a language which is not their mother tongue.

Apart from the mentioned above paper, the book "*In Mehreren Sprachen Studieren*" (Stoike-Sy, 2017) (Studying in several languages) is used as a foundation for the theoretical as well as practical part of this Master thesis. In her book, Stoike-Sy observed the language usage of five master's programs at the University of Luxemburg and discussed several aspects of multi- and plurilingualism.

2 Theoretical Framework

During the analysis following later in this thesis certain terms will be used. For a better understanding of these terms the theoretical foundation will be outlined in chapter two.

The term multilingualism has two different ideas and meanings which are often mixed up and not clearly distinguished, and therefore people often simply use the term *multilingualism* for two different concepts. However, there is a difference between multilingualism and plurilingualism.

Multilingualism describes, as per the definition of Neuner, 2004, p. 173, the language situation inside a region, city or institution. It is the territorial context in which languages co-exist. Plurilingualism, however, describes the language competencies of an individual. It signifies the languages one person knows and can make use of during a linguistic exchange. Raasch (2004, p. 4) summarized that the multilingualism of a country depends on the plurilingualism of its citizens. Thus, the important aspect of multilingual language usage is the fact that the individual can communicate in at least two different languages – no matter the level of expertise or the process of acquisition.

Furthermore, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the word multiculturalism as the students of multinational study programs are confronted with it daily. The word describes the simultaneous co-existence of different cultures, which exist independently, do not melt with one another and are perceived and respected by the individuals.

The students questioned for this research project are part of the second semester of the tri-national master “Regional and European Project Management,” which was already mentioned briefly above. Students interested in this master program send in their applications in their home country and are subject to the application procedure in their country of origin. French applicants should demonstrate German language competencies of the level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, German applicants a French level of B2 and Czech applicants a level of French of B2 and German of A1. Furthermore, all applicants must prove an English

level of B2. The first semester of the GPRE-master's program starting in September will be held in Lorient, France followed by a semester in Zwickau, Germany and a third semester in České Budějovice, Czech Republic. The fourth and last semester is a practical semester, in which the students must do an internship for a duration of three months and write the master's thesis afterwards.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, the collection of data will be described as well as the interviewees and the method of analysis. Furthermore, it will be explained why the original research project with the comparative analysis of two different master's programs was not realizable as planned.

The data for receiving the results for the research project was collected by interviewing four students of the GPRE-master's program. All interviews were conducted on June 5th, 2018 on the grounds of the University of Applied Sciences "Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau." I chose to do a problem-centred interview as I have already done this type of interview during the course of my studies and I found that it would be the most suitable solution for my research project. This type of interview allows for the interviewer to prepare a guideline and leaves enough room for flexibility and structure at the same time. It also enables the interviewees to prepare for the interview beforehand, which is especially welcomed if the candidate has not taken part in many interviews before. The problem-centred interview allows for flexibility as questions can be altered during the interview and remarks can be added to receive a satisfying result. Another advantage of this flexible type of interview is the possibility for the interviewer to add background knowledge and personal experiences to the answers. Considering the intent of my research project, I think I chose the best type of interview as it gave me the opportunity to alternate the questions throughout the conversation and follow up on questions if the answers of the interviewees were not completely clear. Additionally, I found it very helpful that I myself am a student of the master's program as it allowed me to be familiar with the topic, which made the creation of the guideline easier.

As mentioned before, my original intent for the research project was to do a comparative analysis of two multinational master programs focusing on the multilingualism. For this approach, I did research on the various multinational study programs in Germany and quickly concluded that it would be most suitable to focus on tri-national programs as they would allow for a better comparability to GPRE. Only within another tri-national study program I would have the prerequisite as in the GPRE: finding students from three different countries and hence with three different mother tongues, and all possessing the same level of foreign languages to some extent. This preselection cut the list of possible master programs down to two.

The program „Medien – Kommunikation – Kultur“ (MKK) (Media, Communication-Culture) is, like the GPRE, part of the integrated study programs of the Franco-German University (DFH). It is a cooperation of the Europa Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), the French Université de Nice Sophia Antipolis in Nice and the Bulgarian University St. Kliment Ohridski in Sofia. One advantage of using this master's program for the comparative analysis would have been the similarity regarding the languages. The MKK as well as the GPRE require students to take classes in French and German throughout the respective semester in the country plus one additional Eastern European language – Czech (GPRE) or Bulgarian (MKK).

My first approach to contact the students of this master's program was to get in touch with a person of contact of the Europa Universität Viadrina via e-mail. This person, however, told me that she was not the right person of contact and that the program was not existent anymore. After more research and contacting a different person at the university, I was told that the program still exists, but that the program is being offered in a different variation since 2016. The fact that for the past two years only German students are enrolled in the program, made it obvious that the students would not be the ideal candidates for the interview as multilingualism does not play an important role within the student group as all the students possess the same mother tongue and are not confronted with multiculturalism either. The next idea was to contact alumni of the year 2017 via an employee of the alumni network. The questionnaire and a cover letter were sent to 23 students of the above-mentioned

alumni group, but despite the promise of a lottery with an Amazon voucher I did not receive any feedback.

Right after the first setback, I tried get in touch with the second potential master's program suitable for the comparative analysis. In the course of the *European Studies* program, students study one semester at the Uniwersytet Opole in Poland, one semester at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz in Germany and a third semester at the Université de Bourgogne in Dijon, France. Like in the GPRE, the students must do an internship and write the master's thesis during the fourth semester. This study program would have been another ideal candidate for my research project, but as all my e-mails and phone calls were left unanswered, I had to change plans again. Once more, I focused again on the MKK study program as I had at least managed to get in touch with employees of the university. I was able to have a meeting with one person in charge of the respective master's program and throughout our conversation I received all information needed to create a questionnaire. After changing the deadline for the submission of the questionnaire twice and still not having received any kind of feedback, I realized that I did not get any further with the comparative analysis if I was not given the chance to contact any students or alumni of either university. Therefore, I had to change the focus of my research project and focus on the results that I had already gained during my interview with the students of the master's program "Regional and European Project Management."

The next part of the thesis describes the interview partners I chose for the research project. As I am enrolled in the master "Regional and European Project Management" myself, I decided from the start to use this program for my research project. My year's group consists of 15 students in total – seven Czech, five French and three German students. As I wanted to avoid being biased and possibly influence the results of my interviews, I decided to interview students of the first year rather than of my own class.

As first step, my first corrector contacted the nine students of the first year via e-mail to ask whether anybody would be willing to take part in the interview in the context of the master's thesis. Unfortunately, none of the students replied which prompted

me to act more proactively by searching for the students' contact information via a closed Facebook group for the GPRE. This gave me the opportunity to contact the students directly in a second step and ask them for their help by participating in my interview. The class of 2017/18 consists of nine students of all three nationalities. For the interview, it was important to me to have at least one student of each nationality present. In the end, I found two Czech, one French and one German volunteer for my interview.

The interview took place on June 5th between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on the grounds of the University of Applied Sciences "Westfälische Hochschule Zwickau". The lengths of the interviews varied between 16 and 37 minutes. The reason for the variations in length is presumably explainable by the languages the interviews were held in. The interview taken in German by two German natives was the shortest as it was probably easier for the interviewer and the interviewee to think and respond in their mother tongue. The other interviews were taken in French and therefore took more time. Also, good preparation and very detailed responses contribute to the extended length of the other interviews.

4 Interview and questionnaire

The next chapter focuses on the different language levels and their definition. As languages become an ever more vital part of our everyday life due to globalization, the comparability of people's competencies has become an important responsibility for institutions on a national and European level. For giving an overview of the currently most common language levels, UNICert as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) will be described in the following.

UNICert is a reference system for certifying foreign language classes at university level, which is used for providing a steady and equal quality assurance. UNICert was founded in 1992 by a working group of language centres and counts 50 accredited universities and Universities of Applied Sciences in Germany and respectively one institution in France, Austria, Georgia and Slovakia/Czech Republic as members up to today.

UNICert offers a total of four language training levels which were described by Barth and Huschka in 1998. These competency levels can be applied to the four stages of communication: listening, reading, oral and written comprehension. Level one describes the basic and expandable lexical and grammatical knowledge of the student. It enables an elementary level of communication. With the second level, the student possesses a solid knowledge of the basic vocabulary and is capable of using simple grammatical structures in everyday communication. The student should work on his progress independently by focusing on relevant information regarding the language and the country. A student has level three competencies if he/she is able to communicate whilst being abroad in an adequate and confident manner. Furthermore, the student has a solid knowledge of country-specific characteristics. The competencies of level four allow a student to communicate in general as well as subject-specific situations while using the language fluently and correctly. A trouble-free linguistic exchange with native speakers distinguishes the competencies of a level-4-student.

In contrast to this reference system, there is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2001 and has 47 member states. The main difference from the CEFR to the UNICert is that the CEFR is a tool that serves for (self-)evaluation whereas the UNICert is an official certification for language levels on an educational level. Initially, the first description of the CEFR was made in 1994 and it consisted of ten different language levels, which varied from “tourist” to “mastery”. The first stage, which is defined by the name already, described the language level of a tourist, who can use some simple and basic words of a language. “Mastery” was described as the stage, in which a person can distinguish subtle differences in meanings using different stylistic tools. A dictionary is required very rarely for language users of this level. Throughout the ten different levels, the person gains more confidence communicating in a language, increases the reading and talking pace, speaks more fluently and is eventually capable of having sophisticated conversations and discussions.

Nowadays, the CEFR consist of three fundamental levels which are each distinguished by two sub-stages. The level A describes the basic user of a language and distinguishes between complete beginners (A1) and users with basic competencies (A2). B is used for people who can speak in a language independently. They either have intermediate competencies (B1) or use the language on an upper intermediate level (B2). Level C describes proficient users of a language who have either an advanced knowledge (C1) of a language or speak it on a level close to native (C2).

The CEFR offers many advantages, such as a common basis for creating syllabi or exams in institutions, or the transparency for language tutors to encourage a more independent learning process, which breaks down educational barriers throughout Europe. Furthermore, it encourages language users to be more independent and self-evaluate their competencies while learning a language. Also, the CEFR sets the focus on the communication itself, evaluating the listening, written and oral competencies.

The next part of the thesis deals with the interview in a more detailed manner. The interview guideline I prepared was structured the same way as the one I used during the seminary earlier during my studies. As I already had some background information, I could propose certain ideas for the interview questions. With the help of a sequence analysis I then developed hypotheses, which were to be proven or rejected with the aid of the answers to my interview. It was important to draft the questions as open and neutral as possible to not let them influence the interviewees' answers. To guarantee that this neutrality was given, I asked two fellow students to revise my questionnaire. One of them is enrolled in GPRE as well and the other one is an external student. During the revision, they were asked to check that the questions were precise and clear and at the same time left enough space for the interviewees' answer, without making them answer to two questions at the same time. The following nine questions were asked:

- 1) How would you describe the language usage in Lorient and Zwickau?

- 1.1) In your opinion, which is the biggest similarity/difference (e. g. language in class = everyday language).

- 2) Do you experience advantages/disadvantages compared to your fellow students, when the language used in class is not your mother tongue?
- 3) Did you notice a change in your or your fellow students' language usage?
 - 3.1) If yes, for which reasons? (Connection to the change of languages during classes and the change of country, development of new friendships?)
- 4) To which extent, do you think, will the semester at the university in the Czech Republic influence your language usage? (All classes in English)
- 5) Do you believe that the different mother tongues of the students affect the relations amongst the students (building friendships, preferences when it comes to team work)?
 - 5.1) If yes, to which extent (Please give an example)
- 6) Which value do the four languages of the master's program (German, English, French, Czech) have for you and how do you determine their order of importance?
 - 6.1) Do you think it is the same for you fellow students with the same nationality?
- 7) Theoretically, all four main modules in Zwickau will be taught in French, English and German in equal parts. To which extent does reality match or differ the theory?
- 8) Were foreign language classes (French in Lorient, Czech in Zwickau etc.) offered by native speakers?
 - 8.1) Which would be your preference? (Native speaker because they don't make mistakes or non-native speaker because they understand the difficulties you are facing while learning a language)
- 9) Do you think that multilingual studies build the foundation for your future career?

I chose a more objective question for the introduction to make the interviewees feel less exposed and give them room to warm up. Even if the topic of language usage is a relatively objective matter, it is still connected to subjective impressions and sensations. Question number nine (multilingual studies as foundation for future career) was the most abstract one and therefore asked at last as it gave much room for personal perspectives.

The questionnaire, which was originally intended for the students and alumni of the MKK master's program of the Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt, was designed with the help of the interview guideline described above and the answers of the interviewees. After having received feedback from the students of the GPRE, I could modify the guideline accordingly to match it with the requirements and conditions of the MKK. As I did not receive any feedback for my questionnaire, it will only be presented briefly in the following but not referred to in the analysis. The

complete questionnaire can be found in the attachment (no. 7), the questions were the following:

- 1) How would you describe the language usage within the master's program? (e. g. which language were mostly used for the communication amongst students, do you have some kind of "lingua franca"?)
- 2) Did your and your fellow students' language usage change throughout the studies, e. g. while changing countries or the language in classes, or while developing new friendships etc.?
- 3) Do you believe that the different mother tongues influence the students' relations towards one another, e. g. in group work or while developing new friendships?
- 4) Which value do the four different languages (French, German, English, Bulgarian) have for you (personally and in the scope of the master's program)?
- 5) To what extent did your expectations regarding multilingualism during the master's program meet reality? (Please explain your expectations and reality in detail, e. g. which languages the classes were taught in and whether this was compliant to the module manual)
- 6) How did you feel about the fact that the language in class was not your mother tongue? (Did you experience advantages/disadvantages towards your fellow students?)
- 7) Were foreign language classes offered by native speakers?
 - 7.1) Which would be your preference? (Native speaker because they don't make mistakes and have a natural feeling for the language or non-native speaker because they understand the difficulties you are facing while learning a language)
- 8) Do you believe that multilingual and multicultural studies build the foundation for your professional career? (Please comment on both)
- 9) Did the multilingual master's program help you enter working life?

5 Analysis

In this chapter the hypotheses will be listed and afterwards my findings will be described and discussed.

The hypotheses described in the following were proposed against the background of my own prior knowledge about multilingualism as well as the current state of research mentioned above. The hypotheses used in these works were altered and

adapted to derive new hypotheses. The following assumptions are to be confirmed or disproven with the aid of the interview and the questionnaire.

- The change of countries influences and/or changes the language usage amongst the students.
- The students experience advantages when the language used in class is their mother tongue or disadvantages when the language is not their mother tongue.
- The language usage amongst the students changes throughout the course of the studies. This is not only due to the change of countries but also due to the development of new friendships.
- The change of the languages used in class influences and/or changes the language usage amongst the students.
- Mother tongues influence the relations amongst the students.
- Each language used during the master's program has its own level of importance for each student.
- Students with the same mother tongue set the same or similar priorities for the different languages.
- The distribution of languages established in the module menu for classes in Zwickau was not adhered to.
- Students prefer foreign language classes taught by a native speaker.
- Multilingual and multicultural studies facilitate the entry into working life.
- Against the background of internationalization and globalization, multilingual and multicultural studies become ever more important for the professional career.
- The expectations regarding multilingualism during the master's program do often not correspond with the actual multilingualism that occurs.

Additional hypotheses can be proposed in accordance with current technical literature and the statements made in "In mehreren Sprachen studieren" (Stoike-Sy, 2017), which are:

- The language level and language usage of an instructor influences the language usage of the students.
- An emotional reference to languages can be found.
- Students sometimes feel uncomfortable with one language and thus avoid it.

In the following paragraph, the hypotheses will be squared with the statements of the interviewees and the central messages will be summarized, interpreted and discussed.

The transcription of the interviews was streamlined for an improved readability and comprehension. This step was preferential as the content of the interviews should be the main point of focus rather than the way the interviewees were speaking.

Starting with hypothesis number one (The change of countries influences and/or changes the language usage amongst the students) it becomes clear that French was and still is the main language used by all students. Even though all four interviewees have the same perception of French being the lingua franca, they do not share the same euphoria about this fact. Interviewee 1, for example, states her French fellow students admit that classes are easier for them because they are taught in French. This becomes especially evident when the interviewees were asked to express their feelings (advantages/disadvantages) about the classes being (not) taught in their own mother tongue. It becomes apparent that particularly the Czech students must make greater efforts as they are always compelled to talk in a language which is not their mother tongue.

Nevertheless, interviewee 1 stated that she liked the challenge and felt it was an advantage because it made her improve her French language skills. At the same time, a French interviewee mentioned that for her it felt like a disadvantage to have that many classes in French for the opposite reason as just mentioned. In conclusion, it is obvious, even from the French perspective, that the German and Czech students are disadvantaged due to the extra time they must invest for the foreign language and that French students feel that their foreign language skills are worsening due to lack of practice.

Furthermore, it is criticized that the usage of the French language during group projects and discussions gives disadvantages to all those, whose mother tongue is not French. This fact, however, does not seem to affect the choice of group partners during projects. It was mentioned that one instructor decided that one Czech student had to be in each group, but apart from that, group partners were chosen for personal and characteristic reasons.

Several statements confirm that the change of languages in class impacts the language usage of the students; however, the usage of other languages does not replace the main language.

This fact refutes the hypothesis that the language usage amongst the students changes throughout the course of the studies. Even though the change countries, they stay in the same friendships and thus do not change their language partners.

The relations to other students outside GPRE seem to be another influential factor as the tendency of switching into English grows once the students spend more time with other students of the ERASMUS network. To find out more about the interviewees' expectations towards a possible change in languages, they were asked to give their assessment whether the language usage will change during the third semester in Czech Republic, where all classes are going to be taught in English. Even though they all accepted the French language being the *lingua franca*, they still were optimistic about a change into the English language.

Being asked about the influence of the students' mother tongues on their relationships amongst each other, I received different feedbacks. One Czech student, for example, said that she first met other Czech students and they used the French language to talk to other German students as they felt they had the same language level. She talks about a phenomenon which is known to everyone, who speaks more than one language. If in one's self-estimation the foreign language skills are not good enough to have a faultless and relatively free conversation, people tend to avoid speaking to natives and talk to people with the same language level, who make mistakes just like oneself.

Some statements demonstrate that the interviewees' expectations towards multilingualism did not correspond with the actual multilingualism. Some criticized that especially in France, the English, German and Czech language were not present enough.

One of the last hypotheses was that the language usage and proficiency of the instructors influenced the language usage of the students. This hypothesis was confirmed as one student, for example, asked the instructor to talk in a different

language. Consequently, the change of the instructor's language usage lead to a change for all students as well. If different instructors exchange their teaching methods, this could have an enormous influence on the students' language usage.

Prior to the interviews, it was assumed that each of the languages had its own priority for the students. This assumption was then confirmed as the interviewees stated predominantly that French ranked first and Czech last place. The second interview partner, however, felt that French and English were on the same rank and that English was more important for her personally.

The hypothesis, that students with the same mother tongue rank the importance of languages on the same level, cannot be clarified completely as there is only one German student in the entire year and as the French student says that her opinion probably varies from the ones of her fellow French students. It might have been more helpful to form the questions more precisely to find out the importance of the different languages for the interviewees personally as well as in the academic/institutional context.

All interviewees agree strongly to the hypothesis that the distribution of language usage throughout classes in Zwickau was not adhered to. It becomes evident that the distribution (German, English, French to one third each) was not applied practically. This is due to the insufficient German knowledge of the Czech students as well as the language usage of the instructors. The practical application of languages seems to depend largely on the instructor's but also students' preferences, as it is handled autonomously in every class.

All interviewees agree that multilingual (and multicultural) studies are important for their future professional career, as they believe that the uniqueness of the program benefits them in their home country when it comes to applying to possible future employers.

The hypothesis that students prefer foreign classes taught by native speakers was confirmed for the most part as well. Only the first interviewee differentiated between different language levels and evaluated preferences accordingly. Everyone else feels that classes by natives bring advantages for the students.

Throughout the interviews, it became evident that students can feel more comfortable in one language than in another and that it could lead to the avoidance of a language. Stoike-Sy describes that during her analysis of students in Luxembourg, students tended to avoid one language or another and therefore preferentially used a different language. She remarks that it is easier for students to talk about negative emotions towards a language than positive ones (Stoike-Sy, 2017, p. 170-171).

Since what was said and through my observations, I could see this phenomenon with interview partner 2, who obviously felt uncomfortable speaking in French as she had difficulties explaining herself and therefore tried to avoid the language as much as possible in her student life. Also, the other students commented on this phenomenon without having been asked as they stated that they think that interviewee 2 feels not as part of the group due to insufficient French competencies.

6 Criticism

This chapter captures points of criticism that arose in the scope of the thesis. They reach from the general foundation of this thesis to the development and the interviews.

The first important point to mention is, that it was intended to do a comparative analysis of two multinational study programs to receive more insight into multilingualism. It is still incomprehensible why it was impossible to receive any feedback to my questionnaire of the MKK alumni even though I used a very common approach as incentive (Amazon voucher). Furthermore, the questions were mostly of a personal nature, therefore no scientific knowledge was needed and the length of the questionnaire was held at the shortest to enable a comparability to the interview which was previously done with the students of the GPRE.

Due to the changes in the starting situation, it was necessary to change the focus of the paper on the theoretical part and align it with practical examples. As the information exchange with the university staff advanced very slowly, I had already conducted the interviews with the GPRE students and needed to find a solution to

replace the missing feedback of another group of interviewees by hypotheses developed based on technical literature to allow for a comparison and analysis of some sort.

Even though I explained to the interviewees beforehand, that they can choose the interview language freely and switch throughout the interview, I should have made this point clearer. In accordance with the audio material it is evident that one of the interview partners felt uncomfortable with the language and experienced difficulties speaking in this language. I would have liked to draw the interviewee's attention to the possible language change throughout the interview, but waived the idea to avoid further confusion. Especially, when I worked on the transcriptions it became apparent that it should have been my responsibility to offer the continuation of the interview in English to avoid further omissions.

In summary, I am pleased with the result of this paper, especially given the limited time frame and the occurring difficulties.

Another interesting approach would have been to analyse and compare the different multinational years of the same master's program. Unfortunately, this was no option in this case as the very first year consisted only of German and French students, which would have influenced the conditions from the beginning. As I am part of the second year, I could not use students of this class either, as a lack of objectivity could have altered the results.

7 Conclusions

Concluding, the project paper was about the analysis of multilingualism in multinational study programs by the example of the tri-national master's program "Regional and European Project Management." For this purpose, interviews were conducted and empirical data was collected and evaluated. Regarding the research project, the multilingualism of students was analysed and compared to the fundamental statements and practical examples of the book "In mehreren Sprachen studieren" (Stoike-Sy, 2017). It becomes evident that many of the theories and

concepts of multilingualism in multilingual study programs are applicable to the GPRE as well.

The analysis shows that the students found the French language as a common language for communication amongst one another, and which stayed their constant means of communication even though the country of living and consequently the language in classes changed. However, the attempt of two students trying to change the priority of the French language to the advantage of the English language, shows that a change in the language usage was wished for by some students. If one or several certain language(s) are prioritised above others, it brings the danger that the students don't consider their tri-national, multilingual master as such.

Other obtained data shows, that the environment outside the study program (e. g. other students from the ERASMUS network) have an influence in the language usage of the students as well. Furthermore, a new dimension of language avoidance became evident through the example of a student who seems to be excluded from the group due to her insufficient language skills. As both observations were not part of Stoike-Sy's theories, they might offer room for further research projects.

Against the background of the growing internationalization of universities and the resulting relevance of further research, it might be helpful to use the observations of this thesis for the conception of other multilingual study programs.

Lastly, it is to mention that this thesis is not a complete and extensive analysis of multilingualism in multinational study programs as this extensive topic contains numerous aspects, of which only a small proportion was worked with in the scope of this paper. Furthermore, no claim about the representativeness of this thesis can be made as it contains results of four out of nine students, who answered to the questions from a personal point of view and with the aid of experiences. Even though many answers correspond with one another, it cannot be ruled out, that the results of the interviews would have been different if other students would have been interviewed.

For any further information, please have a look at the original Master thesis “Plurilingualism in multinational study programs on the example of a trinational master’s program” written in German.