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Multinational Corporations as Cultural Translators: Interpreting Difference in Diversity and Inclusion

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Abstract: This article brings Translation Studies and Language-Sensitive International Business Studies into sustained and in-depth critical conversation through an investigation into how multinational corporations (MNCs) represent and culturally translate discourses of diversity and inclusion (D&I). Grounded in a discrete textual analytical investigation of MNC approaches to D&I, the authors use a skeptical interpretive perspective to examine D&I video content published on MNC group websites. The study points towards the imposition of a common corporate language as an act of mediation on the part of parent companies. D&I discourse remains ambiguous and attempts to reach multiple audiences simultaneously. While the primary audience appears to be job applicants, the use of language also demonstrates a sensitivity to the needs and expectations of business-facing audiences, including customers, investors, and shareholders. Interdisciplinary in character, this article employs the concept of cultural translation as a critical lens through which to demonstrate how positional power shapes the representation of D&I discourse published on MNC websites. By extending understandings of the role and value of cultural translation in an MNC setting, the authors demonstrate the value of continued expansion of the field through enhanced comparative analysis of MNC self-perception with regard to D&I, versus published representations of the same.

Keywords: Cultural translation, international business, diversity, inclusion, multinationals

1. Introduction

There is a growing recognition in the International Business (IB) literature of the transferable value of Translation Studies (TS) research as a rich source of illuminatory frameworks for the study of the micro-level and macro-level challenges of language and intercultural understanding in the multilingual multinational (Ciuk et al., 2019). Such interdisciplinary connections have led to an overtly *material* investigatory focus — on the concrete results of a given language strategy in operation in today's multinational corporations (MNCs) — rather than on the overarching cultural practices that shape language strategy in the first instance. This emphasis on the effects of translation, rather than on the cultural causes, assumptions, and politics that determine how companies respond to different languages (and the people who speak them), resonates with recent moves to challenge the longstanding decoupling of language and culture in IB (Brannen et al., 2014, p. 499).

The primary aim of this article is to bring TS and IB into the critical conversation and, in so doing, to challenge the notion of the separateness of language, culture, identity, and difference in international business. By taking a cultural approach to translation, that is, by conceiving of language

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strategy in the MNC as an *effect* of culture rather than a cause, this article is intended to advance the notion of *cultural translation* as a means for understanding the critical links between corporate policies on diversity and inclusion, MNC approaches to language, culture, identity, and difference, and asymmetries of power. As an analytical lens, cultural translation concerns the challenges of interpreting "other cultures" (Asad, 1986, pp. 141–164). Taking the translation of texts only as a starting point, a cultural translation approach looks beyond the material to how individuals and groups of people are affected by representation strategies enacted by institutions in a position of power which interpret them in a particular way. Such agents of power have certain communicative resources at their disposal to mediate how people are interpreted by others and influence the treatment they receive as a result. Therefore, cultural translation takes on importance when operationalized as a form of critique given the inequitable distribution of power in the geopolitical contexts in which MNCs operate. For those MNCs headquartered in Western economies, a cultural translation approach draws attention to corporate representations of language, culture, identity, and difference — gathered under the banner of 'diversity and inclusion' (D&I) — and overarching structural inequalities across their global footprint.

One of the primary vehicles for the public dissemination of D&I discourse is the MNC corporate group website. Rather than an exercise in image management, we conceive of the group website as the expression of a desire to be seen in particular ways by the audiences it addresses. This desire is enacted not only through the written texts published on the D&I sections of their respective websites but also in the *spoken* language that accompanies the use of video content to explain how D&I works within the company and to promote its approach to a range of audiences. In this way, the multimodal material that forms our study's basis is language in use and *language as social practice*. As a conceptual paper, this article is grounded in a discrete textual analytical investigation of MNC approaches to D&I. Based on three public-facing articulations of cultural translation in a global corporate context — in the shape of D&I video content published on group websites — we present a sceptical discursive reading of how language, culture, identity, and difference are interpreted and represented in the modern multilingual MNC.[1]

2. Literature review: Cultural translation and the challenge of representation

To study language "in its own right", the "language stream in IB" has disassociated itself deliberately from the cultural contexts in which language is enunciated in the MNC (Brannen et al., 2014, p. 499). Yet, language is only the means towards meaning; it does not mean itself. To study a language on its own —without consideration also of the use in "language in use" — is to ignore both the contexts in which language takes shape and the effects language has on *people* as users of the language. As a conduit, language remains empty until it is imbued with meaning by a speaker or author with something to say and a receiver with a meaning they construct out of the message they have received. Words do not mean; people do. If people and people use language are bearers of culture, then it is impossible to decouple the study of language from *the study of culture*.

A recent development in IB is a turn to translation (Ciuk et al., 2019; Brannen et al., 2014; Piekkari et al., 2013) as a means for understanding language diversity in MNCs. In the majority of examples, the TS scholarship referenced within these contexts is grounded in the translation of literary texts. For example, Lawrence Venuti, whose research has focused on the translation of literature and poetry within a context of Anglo-American literary publishing markets, is one of the most cited scholars in the language stream in IB (e.g., Janssens et al., 2004; Steyaert & Janssens, 2013; Ciuk & James, 2015; and Ciuk et al., 2019). We believe language-sensitive IB has now reached

a stage in its development to look beyond its literary underpinnings and take on new theoretical drivers, focusing not just on the textual consequences of translation decision-making within the MNC but also on the overarching translation behaviours within the culture of the MNC. Translation scholars stand to gain a better awareness of the ways in which knowledge is now transcending traditionally assumed boundaries between disciplines and helping to realize new knowledge in IB. By taking a cultural approach to translation, that is, by conceiving of language in the MNC as an *effect* of culture rather than a cause, we argue for the utility of the notion of cultural translation as a critical means for understanding how corporate policies on language, culture, identity, and difference intersect with questions of power and politics in the modern multilingual MNC.

The term *cultural translation* came to scholarly prominence through a critique of ethnographic publishing practice. Within this critique, it is not texts that are translated but *people*. As a cultural translator, the ethnographer translates experiences with other cultures, and her engagements with other modes of life are written up in line with the conventions imposed by her discipline and institutional life. These representational frameworks influence both the form and the content of the publications that result. As Ingold (1993) explains:

> Just as literary translation involves taking ideas expressed in one language and 'carrying them across' into the terms of another, so — it is said — anthropology involves the translation of the ideas and concepts of other cultures into terms comprehensible to a western readership (pp. 217–218).

Cultural translation is about making the so-called *foreign* familiar. Within this context, Asad (1986) argued that the process of cultural translation "is inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power — professional, national, international" (p. 163). "Power" enters the fray because the discourse of others "is enmeshed in particular ways of life" (Asad, 1995, p. 327), meaning that its translation can never be fully successful. When difference is encountered, the translator must

> present the alien knowledge in a form that will enable it to be assimilated into one or another of the ready-made categories existing for the purpose, which means ensuring that it is properly structured, that it makes use of the appropriate terminology and tropes — in short, couching it in the accepted discourse (Bennett, 2007, p. 154).

It is through a process of selection, editing, and analysis that the ethnographer "produces the 'reality' of the culture being studied" (Sturge, 2007, p. 8), within the terms of a powerful institution and retains copyright over the speech of others and rendering it into the textual form so that it can be understood by those who do share in the category of difference (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6). With TS, this "'textualist' stance" assumes that representations are not "innocent copies of external reality" (Sturge, 2007, p. 8) and are built instead out of the "requirements and presuppositions of the receiving discourse, just as recent thinking on translations sees these as constructs of the target language rather than as glass cases to display a sacred original" (Sturge, 2007, p. 8). There is arguably a parallel here with one of the key postulates of Descriptive Translation Studies, namely Toury's assertion that "[t]ranslations are facts of target cultures" (Toury, 1995, p. 29). Statements such as this have contributed to the reorientation of TS, "which until then had concentrated predominantly on the source text as the yardstick for an evaluative analysis of the target text as a mere reproduction thereof" (Rosa, 2010, p. 98). After Toury, one can view the context framing a translation as being that of the target culture. One must interpret the target text "as a result of the constraints and influences of such a target context, or as a cause for the introduction of changes into the target system" (Rosa, 2010, p. 98).) Similarly, cultural translation does not simply transfer its

source text into a different language "in the manner of the traditional translator" (Sturge, 2007, p. 6); it *constructs* the text that is transferred, and it does so in a process that is "strongly constrained by the context of institutional power" (Sturge, 2007, p. 6).

As a mediating mode, translation creates a grammar of *aporia*. The transparent window it purports to provide is an illusion concealing the sociocultural and geopolitical determinants that influence the translator's interpretive gaze. What translation gives is a third substance altogether: neither original, nor copy, but *representation*. In Sperber's triangular construction, representation "sets up a relationship between at least three terms: that which represents, that which is represented and the user of the representation" (Sperber, 1993, p. 162). The power to signify resides not with the passive *objects* of interpretation, about whom the representation is based, but with the active *subject* responsible for the representation itself. In turn, this responsibility is constrained by the needs and expectations of the intended audience. A representation is a *version,* we might say, of the phenomenon it represents; but it is a version that says more about the entity doing the representing than it does the reality of the phenomenon being represented. As a form of representation, cultural translation is thus both "a process of knowledge production" (Young, 2012, p. 159) in that it often includes new ways of conceiving of the world and "a discourse of power and appropriation that excludes the particularity of the cultures it translates" (Young, 2012, p. 160)

3. Imagining the multilingual multinational

Visualize an MNC with a large international footprint. Its headquarters are located in a global city known as much for the social, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of its residents as for its support for diverse ways of living and being—the city's languages number in the hundreds. The headquarters is a microcosm of the city; staff come from various socio-economic backgrounds, hold many passports, and speak many languages. The company's C-level executives (those who make strategic decisions that influence the whole business and whose job titles begin with *Chief,* e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc.) are proud of its diversity. The marketing copy on the corporate website, which is offered in multiple language versions, articulates the group's commitment to a diverse workplace that reflects the diversity of the customers it serves.

Now imagine that the chief executive wishes to communicate with workers across the global business. A town hall is scheduled. Perhaps the chief executive wishes to understand better the factors that drive employee attitudes and to build greater alignment around a particular operating model (Rucci et al., 1998) or to motivate and mobilize teams to capitalize more swiftly and efficiently on opportunities (Ricci & Vaquilar, 2014). An auditorium is prepared; those who work in the headquarters take their seats. Employees in subsidiary offices use the company intranet to watch a live video stream of the proceedings or access the audio by telephone. Key personnel might be invited to give reports. The town hall concludes with a Q&A session. A microphone is passed around the headquarters audience. Remote attendees enter their written questions through the live broadcast system, and the chief executive answers them on the fly.

Let us now assume that the company's preferred common language matches the *de facto* official language of its headquartered nation-state. Imagine also that in addition to the company being headquartered in one of the top global economies, the preferred common language of the company is, by every leading measure, one of the most spoken languages in the world. This language is also the language of a superpower and a former imperial centre. Given the company's expansive operations, *different* languages (whether *de facto* or *de jure*) are likely to be in use in the states around the world where the company's subsidiaries are located. What does it mean for the chief

executive's address to be given in the company's preferred common language? What is the effect of adopting a corporate lingua franca associated with global flows of soft and hard economic and political power? At its most basic, it means that employees who speak the language in question as their first acquired language (we will refer to these employees as *L1 speakers* of the company's preferred common language) can understand the chief executive's town hall message in a language they have acquired naturally from birth. For non-L1 speakers, the process is more complex. For these employees, the language of the town hall is, in a sense, a *foreign* language, as it is a second (or even third) language learned later in life. Such *L2 speakers* must participate in translation — first from their L2 into their L1 and, if they wish the chief executive to respond to their questions in the Q&A session, from their L1 into their L2 and back again.[2]

This situation bears a curious paradox for non-L1 employees working in the company's corporate headquarters. Ontologically, the parent-subsidiary hierarchy means that the existence of the corporate group's company offices around the world can only be defined *in subordinate relation* to the headquarters. With respect to its subsidiaries, the headquarters is central and primary; its subsidiaries are — in terms of organizational design/structure — peripheral and secondary. A company's global branches tend to *translate outwards* not only the organizational culture of the headquarters but also the very social construction of the nation-state in which the headquarters is sited. In this way, we might view the company subsidiaries as translations made in the image of the headquarters, which occupies the role of the source text.[3] From this hierarchical perspective, and given what we know of the geopolitical context in which the headquarters is sited (recall that the company lingua franca is also the language of a superpower and that of a former imperial centre), the preferred common language is a *majoritarian* language, in the sense that the same language is also the *de facto* official language of the nation-state in which the company is headquartered. It is here that the paradox unfolds. Despite the *spatial centrality* of non-L1 employees working at the company's global heart, the translational relation places them in a minority position. By advancing a message from the centre to the periphery in a language that bears associations with political, economic, and military hegemony, the town hall becomes an assertion of power that belies the multilingualism the company's website promotes.

The fictive MNC creates a distinction between those with unmediated access to the town hall and those who must engage with it in translation. The same MNC also asks its employees to participate in a linguistic ecology in which the *particular* — the language of the parent company; the *de facto* official language of the state in which it is headquartered — is promoted as a *universal:* one language, one staff body, across the whole organization. Yet, organizations do not communicate; *people* do. Corporate approaches to language cannot be disconnected from corporate approaches to people because language diversity is first and foremost *cultural diversity*. Corporate lingua francas do not operate in a linguistic vacuum divorced from the sociocultural and geopolitical realities of the societies in which they operate; the structural inequalities separating parent companies incorporated in the global North from their subsidiaries in the global South are not incidental but central to the gesture of power their corporate language policy underlies. If people are bearers of culture, then the chief executive's language in the fictive town hall scenario is not a transparent carrier of meaning but a way of looking at the world. By requiring non-L1 speakers to engage in translation with the company lingua franca, the parent company is not advancing a transparent reality but a *worldview*. The choice to hold the town hall in this language is neither neutral nor automatic; it is a performance. In other words, it is not something that simply happens; it is something the parent company *does*. While the cultural diversity of the fictive MNC's staff may reflect the cultural diversity of the company's customers, the multilingualism of such diversity entails risks of being

refused by the monolingualism of a global language policy in which the language of *some* masquerades as the language of *all*.[4]

In light of the previous discussion, we argue that it is possible to read the D&I practices of MNCs as cultural translations, suffused with the potential for similar acts of subjectivity and representational lacunae. With Bachmann-Medick, we argue that when operationalized in a context of global business, translation becomes both a condition for "relations of exchange" and a medium "especially liable to reveal cultural differences, power imbalances and the scope for action" (Bachmann-Medick, 2012, p. 23). As "institutions", to employ Asad's term (1986, pp. 141–164), MNCs hold power to determine the definition of the *diversity and inclusion* term itself and how to measure the success of D&I efforts. From the perspective of an MNC located in a Western economy, the linguistic *other* — in this case, non-L1-speaking employees, whether working in the company's global headquarters or its subsidiaries — is refracted through the modes of understanding and representation available in the same Western centres where the MNC may be headquartered. This "headquartering effect" concerning corporate social responsibility is defined by Barkemeyer and Figge (2014, p. 125) as the increasing confinement of strategic decision-making to companies' headquarters, "while the scope of action within the subsidiaries and the supply chain of MNCs become increasingly restricted over time" (Barkemeyer & Figge, p. 125). As a result, the headquartering effect "reinforces the positive discrimination of an MNC's primary (typically Northern) stakeholders" (Barkemeyer & Figge, p. 125), leading to greater deployment of globally centralized approaches, "focussing on global integration and consistency rather than local responsiveness" (Barkemeyer & Figge, p. 125). Taking this as an exemplar for the present study, the *cultural embeddedness that distinguishes one company's D&I strategy from another is promoted internationally* to company subsidiaries as a global *universal*. While the notion of separate cultures is now collapsed, and with it a "simplistic source/target dichotomy" (Sturge, 2007, p. 10), it may be that through the hierarchical construction of headquarters-subsidiary relations, this binary is extended. Therefore, an awareness of cultural translation represents an important step in redressing imbalances of this nature by providing a means to uncover how such asymmetries are constructed and extended. By viewing the MNC as a locus of global cultural encounter, it is to this effort that the remainder of this article is addressed.

4. Materials and methods

We have conducted a discrete textual analytical investigation of three public-facing articulations of cultural translation in a global corporate context. Focusing on D&I video content published on MNC group websites, we present a sceptical discursive reading of how language, culture, identity, and difference are represented. Our sample was drawn from the top one hundred publicly traded companies with the most diverse and inclusive workplaces, as listed in the *Refinitiv Global Diversity & Inclusion Index* (Refinitiv, 2019). Taking a purposive criterion-based sampling approach (Palys, 2008, pp. 697–698), this research universe was filtered through the imagined scenario of the MNC headquartered in a large global economy and former imperial centre, resulting in the United Kingdom (UK) as our key selection criterion. Recalling that the imagined MNC scenario delineates a company located in a multilingual, multicultural city where the *de facto* official language is also one of the most spoken languages in the world (and where the language of the city also reflects that of a superpower), eight MNCs were found to be headquartered (or co-headquartered) in London, specifically (Refinitiv, 2019). With a focus on these eight, and in place of traditional methods of qualitative data collection, we employed virtual research methods (Saumure & Given, 2008, pp.

927–929) to identify the Internet-based D&I video content that forms the basis of our investigation. By emphasising MNC group websites in general and D&I video content in particular, we take the Internet as an object of study in itself (Markham, 2008, pp. 2–3) and view the MNC group as a space of cultural encounter. Our corpus for analysis was drawn from the dedicated D&I sections of the eight respective group websites. Of the eight, we found that three MNCs — Diageo PLC, Vodafone PLC, and WPP PLC — had published videos on their group websites as part of their identified D&I content. Using cultural translation as a category of investigation, content analysis was supported by interpretive human-coded discourse analysis approaches.

Our study is driven by a combined method for interpretive human-coded discourse analysis of spoken discourse in the three D&I videos and their framing narratives. A *language reality model for discourse analysis* was constructed (Table 1) using Gee's seven "building tasks of language" (Gee, 2011, p. 17) by which speakers construct seven "areas of 'reality'" (Gee, 2011, p. 17) when speaking or writing. Through these building tasks, a discourse analyst "can ask seven different questions about any piece of language-in-use" (Gee, 2011, p. 17). This provided our first critical lens through which to examine the D&I videos in our corpus. Second, and modelled on Gee's seven "building tasks of language" by which speakers construct seven "areas of 'reality'" when speaking or writing (Gee, 2011, pp. 16–26), a complementary *cultural translation reality model for discourse analysis* was developed, drawing on Asad (1986, 1995), Bachmann-Medick (2012), Bennett (2007), Sperber (1993), Sturge (2007), and Young (2012), and yielding an analytical framework through which to consider what we describe — after Gee (2011) — as the five *representation tasks of cultural translation* reflected in each D&I video, the five areas of *cultural translation reality* evident within them, and the five questions for cultural translation analysis to which they give rise (Table 2). To support analysis, spoken discourse in the videos was transcribed into written text.

Table 1.   Language reality model for discourse analysis, from Gee (2011, pp. 16–26)

A. "Building task of language" (p. 17)	B. "Area of 'reality'" within language (p. 17)	C. Discourse analysis questions
1. "Significance" (p. 17)	We use language to add to or lessen the significance of things and signal this to others through markers of attitude or feeling (p. 17).	What aspects are given greater or lesser significance? (p. 17) How are attitudes or feelings marked? (p. 17)
2. "Practices (Activities)" (p. 17)	Through language, we signal our participation in certain practices/activities. We use different discourses to refer to different activities, and our practices influence our language. The discourses we employ are as much a cause as an effect of human activity (pp. 17–18).	What practice or practices are "enacted"? (pp. 17–18).
3. "Identities" (p. 18)	We use language to be recognized as the bearer of "a certain identity or role" (p. 18). Different identities can be "enacted" through different language use at different times and contexts. Through language, different identities can also be attributed to others (p. 18).	What identity or identities are "enacted" (p. 18)? What identity or identities are attributed to others, and how?
4. "Relationships" (p. 18)	Through language, we build social relationships. We use language to influence the tenor of interaction within these relationships (pp. 18–19).	What is the nature of the relationship or relationships that are built or influenced? (p. 19)
5. "Politics (the distribution of social goods)" (p. 19)	We make judgements about what we believe people want/value through language — to "build a perspective on social goods" (p. 19). Our use of language is a function of our subject position vis-à-vis such social goods and has implications for how they are shared in society (p. 19).	What social goods are constructed? What are subject positions taken? What are "perspectives" (p. 19) in evidence?
6. "Connections" (p. 19)	We use language to make certain things "connected or relevant to others" by establishing causal links, even when such links do not exist inherently (p. 19).	How are things made relevant/irrelevant? What are causal connections "built" (p. 19)?
7. "Sign Systems and	We use language within sign systems to make claims about "knowledge and belief" (p. 20); one "way of knowing" can be "privileged" over another (p. 19–20).	What "ways of knowing"/believing are "privileged" (p. 20) or deprivileged?

Knowledge" (p. 19)		

Table 2.   Cultural translation realities model, after Gee (2011) and Asad (1986, 1995) et al.

A. Representation task	B. Area of cultural translation reality	C. Cultural translation analysis questions
1. Power	The process of cultural translation "is inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power — professional, national, international" (Asad, 1986, p. 163). As an act of cultural construction influenced by "relations of exchange", it can "reveal cultural differences, power imbalances […]" (Bachmann-Medick, 2012, p. 23).	What conditions of power, exchange relations and cultural differences are in evidence?
2. Audience-orientation	As a form of representation, cultural translation sets up a triangular relationship between the representing institution, the intended audience that receives the representation, and those the representation represents (after Sperber, 1993, p. 162). Representation is shaped according to the exigencies and assumptions of the receiving discourse (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6).	Who represents, who is represented, and to whom (after Sperber, 1993, p. 162)? What are the needs and expectations of the audience of the representation (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6)?
3. Knowledge production	The translator's job is to present "alien knowledge" in a shape that is "acceptable" (Bennett, 2007, p. 154), enabling it to be "assimilated into one or another of the ready-made categories existing for the purpose" (p. 154). Such knowledge is constructed through the "terminology and tropes" deemed the most appropriate, "couching it in the accepted discourse" (p. 154).	What are forms of "alien knowledge" (p. 154) represented? What are the ready-made categories and accepted discourses that produce knowledge about them?
4. Exclusion and appropriation	Cultural translation reproduces exclusionary "discourse of power and appropriation that excludes the particularity of the cultures it translates" (Young, 2012, p. 160).	Who/what is appropriated? What constitutes "particularity" (p. 160), and how is it excluded?
5. Framing and text-making	Through cultural translation, others' speech undergoes selection/editing/analysis processes that transform people with heterogeneous relationships to culture, identity, and difference into "textual form" (Sturge, 2007, p. 8) — by conceptualizing them as texts-for-translation. The cultural translator determines how words are framed within the terms of a powerful institution and retain copyright over what is said (pp. 1–6). Translation's non-neutral processes of "discrimination, interpretation, appraisal and selection" mean that the translator is never a detached party to the representation (Asad, 1995, p. 326).	What selection, editing, and analysis processes are evident (Sturge, 2007, p. 8)? What groups are framed in text, and who retains copyright over such textualizing acts? (Sturge, 2007, p. 8) What processes of "discrimination, interpretation, appraisal and selection" (Asad, 1995, p. 326) are in evidence?

5. Results

5.1. Diageo

According to the group website (Diageo, n.d.-a), Diageo employs over 27,000 people and has a presence in over 180 countries. D&I content is housed within the "Careers" section on a page entitled "Inclusion and diversity". At the time of our study, this page contained two videos: one in which the chief executive describes the company's commitment to gender equality; and one entitled "What Does Inclusion & Diversity Mean for You? | Diageo" (Diageo, 2019), in which ten individuals share their thoughts in response to the titular question. Published immediately below the title of the "Inclusion and diversity" page and hosted on YouTube (Diageo, 2019), this video represents the first content object a page visitor at the time would encounter.[5] A static image thumbnail for the video shows a man sitting on a chair in a colourful and modern-looking office space; in the bottom left-hand corner, the words "INCLUSIVITY IS ALL ABOUT APPRECIATING THE DIFFERENCES IN PEOPLE." have been overlaid in uppercase. After the 'play' icon is clicked, the screen goes black and a text object at the centre of the space — again in uppercase — reads: "WHAT DOES INCLUSION & DIVERSITY MEAN TO YOU?" Soon, the office reappears, and the employees proceed to speak. As part of the post-production process commissioned by the company, the

employees' spoken utterances have been transcribed into written text overlaid on-screen. These written texts take the form of two- or three-line titles presented in uppercase and superimposed over the action (Table 3). Timed to coincide with natural pauses in the speakers' utterances, each title remains on-screen for a few moments before being replaced by the next rendering.

Table 3.   Transcription of spoken discourse in:
"What Does Inclusion & Diversity Mean for You? | Diageo" (Diageo, 2019)

Speaker	Transcription
1	I truly believe in diversity of thought. To me, gender is a way of bringing that in.
2	If you make everybody feel included, supported, and you have a diverse set of individuals included in every conversation, that's when you really get big transformational difference.
3	When you get inclusivity right, then you're creating a culture for people from wherever they're from, whatever background, to thrive in your company.
4	It's a sense of belonging, and not feeling that there is this club which exists here, and you're just coming in from outside.
5	Making sure that anyone, irrespective of what makes them unique feels welcomed, valued, appreciated, and included.
6	Inclusivity is all about appreciating the differences in people, and most of the time what's different about you is what's best about you.
7	Inclusivity to me is understanding what everybody brings to the whole and making one plus one equal three.
8	For me, inclusive starts with listening and trusting and respect.
9	When you add together great thinking styles, male and female insights, when you add that together you get something special.
10	It isn't about just women and men; it's about how we work together in order to get a better outcome.

Immediately below the video, under the subheading "Inclusion and diversity", is a short narrative text of 127 words and two paragraphs (Diageo, n.d.-b). Gender emerges as a highly significant (Gee, 2011, p. 17, in Table 1.1) concern in the speakers' interventions. The gender topic also bookends the video, with the first and last speakers focusing on this aspect. Indeed, of the ten, a total of eight speakers are female. Given the speakers' relative lack of detail on any forms of group identity other than that of gender, the prominence of this latter facet of identity construction is further underlined (Gee, 2011, p. 18, in Table 1.3). While the written micronarrative that succeeds the video refers to "our Asian and African heritage groups and LGBT networks" (Diageo, n.d.-b), the speakers themselves make only oblique references to different groups (Sturge 2007, p. 8, in Table 2.5), alluding to people who are "diverse" or "from wherever they're from, whatever background" (Table 3). There is a high frequency of terms associated with the practices of management and reporting on D&I inclusion processes (Gee, 2011, pp. 17–18, in Table 1.2). Speakers refer to "diversity of thought" and "getting inclusivity right" (Table 3). The succeeding text (Diageo, n.d.-b), with its references to a "diverse workforce" and tapping into "multiple perspectives", privileges the business and management sign system (Gee, 2011, pp.19–20, in Table 1.7) in particular.

The topic of inclusion emerges as a social good (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.5), corresponding to a clear belief among these employees that this is a desirable outcome of corporate D&I policy. Half of the speakers place a high degree of relevance on the connection (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.6) between values of "respect" and "tolerance" (Table 3), while others construct a causal connection (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.6) between feeling welcomed and valued, on the one hand, and the ability to better "thrive" as humans (Table 3), on the other. The succeeding micronarrative (Diageo, n.d.-b), however, stands in contrast with the speakers and places greater relevance on the needs of the business: "We benefit in many ways from having a diverse workforce. Not only does it give us access to the widest possible talent pool, it also means we can tap into multiple perspectives that help us better understand our customers […]" (Diageo, n.d.-b). This is a text in which the topic of diversity is privileged as significant (Gee, 2011, p. 17, in Table 1.1) and as a gateway to growth.

Relevant connections (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.) are established between the diversity of the "workforce" and the company's access to the "widest possible talent pool"; by tapping into "multiple perspectives", the company can "better understand our customers" and drive "innovation" (Diageo, n.d.-b). Here, an asymmetrical relation of exchange (Bachmann-Medick, 2012, p. 23, in Table 2.1) is opened by the co-presence of two representations: on the one hand, the utterances spoken by the employees in the video, and, on the other, the micronarrative authored by the company. This asymmetry is evident in the predominance of the personal pronouns *I* and *we* in the video (Table 3.), which contrasts with the possessive pronoun *our* in the micronarrative (Diageo, n.d.-b). The intended audience (Sperber, 1993, p. 162, in Table 2.2) of the video is presumably that of prospective employees in general and women particularly, while the micronarrative appears to address the needs and expectations (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6, in Table 2.2) of a more commercially interested audience of shareholders and investors. Whereas in the video, the employees represent themselves (Sperber, 1993, p. 162, in Table 2.2), in the micronarrative, the company writes about the employees in their stead and in such a way as to promote maximum relevance to a shareholder/investor audience (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6, in Table 2.2). An interesting resistance to reproducing "the accepted discourse" (Bennett, 2007, p. 154, in Table 2.3) of diversity and inclusion arises from the company's choice of the page title, "Inclusion and diversity", which inverts the expected configuration.

5.2. Vodafone

According to its website, Vodafone manages its business "across 21 operating countries" (Vodafone, n.d., a). The company's D&I video, "Belong at Vodafone" (Vodafone, 2017), which is hosted on YouTube, was published at the time of our study under the "Careers" section, on a page entitled "Be yourself and belong".[6] As with Diageo, the video represents the first element the page visitor (Vodafone, n.d.-b) at the time would encounter. Five image badges published immediately below the video depict the company's D&I awards and certifications. This has the effect of increasing the authority of Vodafone's approach to D&I through explicit reference to the valorization of authoritative others. Further down the page a series of introductions are given to related pages entitled "Inclusive Culture", "Gender", "LGBT+", "Accessibility", and "Fair pay principles". Both the Vodafone video and the Diageo video are hosted on and distributed through the video-sharing platform YouTube, expanding their respective potential audiences beyond the group website. While in both cases a range of putative employees present their reflections on the topic of D&I, the Vodafone video (Vodafone, 2017) does not involve interventions direct to camera. Instead, we hear the voices of employees off-screen, while a series of live action moving images, presumably of the speakers themselves, are presented. As with Diageo, a range of accents, ages, and ethnicities are evidenced, and the video opens and closes with the images and voices of women. At the end, the eight voices come together to utter a number of one-word interventions simultaneously. The final utterance is the only occasion on which an employee speaks direct to camera.

Table 4. Transcription of spoken discourse in: "Belong at Vodafone" (Vodafone, 2017)

Speaker	Transcription
1	I am a determined person and I feel that people celebrate and respect that. We cultivate an environment where people feel empowered when they are true to themselves.
2	Belonging means being part of a group of people that makes the world a better place.
3	Belonging means not being conscious of yourself; just being, being happy.
4	I feel very free to be who I am and that helps me accept other people.
5	Vodafone is a place where everyone can be themselves and everyone can be different. I keep my uniqueness but I'm part of a bigger scene.
6	Belonging means something bigger than myself. To be part of a cause larger than me.
7	We have a very [good] strong community of friends and we all pull together.

8	For me, Vodafone is […]
Multiple	[…] diverse/culture/approachable/friendly/loving/unique/open/respect/all in one.

The term "belonging" is used three times, suggesting its information salience for the speakers (Gee, 2011, p. 17, in Table 1.1). Related concepts of celebration, openness and respect emerge as social goods (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.5), linked to the notion of a wider "community" that is "bigger" (Table 4) than the needs and concerns of the individual. This latter dimension is further embedded through four references to "people" (as opposed to the individual). As with Diageo, a high degree of relevance connects (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.6) the company's productive combination of respect for an individual's difference with the opportunity to contribute positively to the notion of a collective whole. However, in contrast with the Diageo video (Diageo, 2019), the Vodafone case evidences a larger number of *I* constructions — "I feel", "I am", "I keep", etc. — and *we/me* constructions — "we cultivate", "we have", "helps me", "for me", etc. (Table 4) — as well as a preponderance of both the affect verb *to feel* and the existence verb *to be*, which, as the transcription of spoken utterances shows (Table 4), collocate often with various forms of self-expression — "I feel very free to be who I am", "people feel empowered when they are true to [be] themselves", etc. These ideals are linked inextricably to the connected notion (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.6) that "empowerment" (Table 4) comes not just from living and acting in accordance with one's beliefs about oneself and one's identity (Gee, 2011, p. 18, in Table 1.3) but also from being valued for the very qualities that make one person different from another. In the video, it is both the freedom to express this identity difference (Gee, 2011, p. 18, in Table 1.3) and its expression in one's day-to-day work that releases an individual to "be happy" (Table 4). Together, these factors suggest a strong information salience (Gee, 2011, p. 17, in Table 1.1) for the freedom to self-identify and to realize this opportunity to express one's authentic sense of self at work. The needs of the individual employee are privileged as significant (Gee, 2011, p. 17, in Table 1.1) through the predominance mentioned above of *I/me* statements, while the *we/us* statements instantiate an acknowledgement of the relevance (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.6) of the wider workforce that such individuals comprise.

In the video's framing micronarrative (Vodafone, n.d.-b), entitled "Inclusive Culture", a sense of inclusivity arises from the amicable reference to the people working in the company — "We empower our colleagues to challenge for change" (Vodafone, 2017) — and which contrasts with the more appropriative (Young, 2012, pp. 159–160, in Table 3.4.) reference to "our people" in the Diageo example (Diageo, n.d.-b). It is notable that the collective personal pronoun *we* is used three times in the Vodafone framing narrative (Vodafone, n.d.-b). Together with the presence of the plural possessive plural *our*, this use of language suggests that the narrative is shaped by the needs and expectations (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6, in Table 2.2) of its intended audience of potential job applicants, rather than, as is implied in the Diageo text (Diageo, n.d.-b), that of investors or shareholders. As in the Diageo video (Diageo, 2019), other identities are enacted only obliquely (Gee, 2011, p. 18, in Table 1.3); speakers in the Vodafone video (Vodafone, 2017) make reference to having "uniqueness", for example, but it is not clear what parameters of cultural particularity (Young, 2012, pp. 159–160, in Table 3.4.) apply. However, and recalling that the video is distributed through YouTube, implicit and explicit references to "other people" (Table 4) and other identities within the company can be found in the brief textual description published immediately below the video (Vodafone, 2017). This description reproduces the "appropriate terminology and tropes" (Bennett, 2007, p. 154, in Table 2.3) associated with the discourse of equality policy, with explicit reference to eight of the nine characteristics protected from discrimination by law in the countries of the United Kingdom and covered, for example, in the Equality Act 2010. The adoption of equality discourse

suggests the extent to which government-led protections for groups at risk of discrimination have been assimilated (Bennett, 2007, p. 154, in Table 2.3) within corporate policy.

5.3. WPP

WPP has 100,000 staff in 110 countries (WPP, n.d.-b). The company's D&I content is currently located on a page entitled "Belonging", which is accessed via a tab on the homepage navigation menu entitled "People" (WPP, n.d.-c). At the time of our study, WPP's written and video-based D&I content was published on a page entitled "Our people" (WPP, n.d.-a), and could be reached through three menu tabs: "Careers", "About", and "Sustainability", suggesting a desire to reach multiple audiences (Sturge, 2007, pp. 1–6, in Table 2.2) through material linked to D&I.[7] As in the other two cases, the "Our people" page combined written text with a live action video. Unlike Diageo and Vodafone, WPP was the only company in our corpus to frame the page visitor's reception of the video through the use of a narrative preceding the video: "At WPP, it's our people that make the company and what we do extraordinary" (WPP, n.d.-a). Via an imperative — "Hear from the talented people who work for WPP and our world-leading agencies" (WPP, n.d., a) — WPP was also the only company to make clear in the associated textual micronarrative that the people represented in the video are company employees. By framing the video in this way, a certain relationship with the site visitor is built (Gee, 2011, pp. 18–19, in Table 1.4), making a direct appeal to witness a slice of employee life. What further stands out is the causal connection (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.6) between the "extraordinariness" of the work itself and the people who do the work. Unlike the text that succeeds the Diageo video in our corpus, in which employees are referred to impersonally through the use of the noun phrase "talent pool", WPP's workforce is described in the narrative that precedes the WPP video through the use of an adjective – "talented people" (WPP, n.d.-a) — creating a feeling of reciprocity and equitable relation (Bachmann-Medick, 2012, p. 23, in Table 2.1) and removing a *them/us* distinction between the employer, as the representing institution (Sperber, 1993, p. 162, in Table 2.2) on the one side, and the employed, on the other.

In the video, employees share the "[w]ords that come to mind" when they think of WPP (Table 5). Contrasting with the other two cases, four out of twenty-three interventions in the WPP video are made in languages other than English, with translations provided via subtitles (Table 5). As such, the WPP case is the only video to make explicit the multilingual, multicultural reality associated with the global nature of company operations. Common to all three videos is a representation strategy by which workforce representatives are positioned as "local informants" (Westwood, 2006, p. 107) attesting to working conditions within the company and its commitment to D&I.

Table 5. Transcription of spoken discourse in: "Our people" (WPP, n.d.-a)

Speaker	Transcription
1	Words that come to mind when I think of WPP […]
2	Vision.
3	Curiosity.
4	Ambitious.
5	Togetherness.
6	Excitement.
7	Ideas, ideas, ideas.
8 [Subtitled]	The quality of the work [Rendered on-screen without punctuation]
9 [Subtitled]	The work is optimistic [Rendered on-screen without punctuation]
10	They encourage authenticity.
11	It's so open. It's just like working for a family.
12	Different cultures, different ideas.
13	You've got this fusion of data science, human creativity, digital technology.

14	Our people are bright, driven, ambitious, curious, caring. Every day I come to work, and I'm reminded of that.
15	You want to go into the biggest and the best and that's WPP.
16 [Subtitled]	From China to Brazil all around the world, it's incredible. [Rendered on-screen with punctuation]
17	I've really been able to lead on some great minds and receive some great advice from people all over the world.
18 [Subtitled]	Very big, but fast and agile and always leading the industry. [Rendered on-screen with punctuation]
19	We convene the greatest creative and strategic minds across the globe.
20	It's all coming together to transform how we communicate with people.
21	It really feels like a place where anything is possible.

As with Diageo, spoken discourse in the WPP video has been rendered in textual form on-screen (Sturge, 2007, p. 8, in Table 2.5) — in this case through four instances of non-English-language utterance, which have been translated into English. While interlingual translation here promotes accessibility and understanding, it is also a selective process that transforms the words of others into texts-for translation (Sturge, 2007, p. 8, in Table 2.5) since, from the perspective of a site visitor who does not understand the languages being spoken in these four instances, it is technically not the employee who speaks but the English-language translator who speaks in their stead and who holds the power first to interpret and then to determine the meaning of what has been uttered (Asad, 1995, p. 326, in Table 2.5). Importantly, however, while it may appear that the heterogeneity of human difference evident in the multilingualism in the video has been excluded (Young, 2012, pp. 159–160, in Table 2. 4) in favor of monolingual English-language subtitling texts, by *showing* linguistic diversity in action, that is, by supporting company employees to speak to camera in their respective languages, rather than by merely *telling* the spectator about the multilingualism of the staff, the subtitles serve to *model* the very diversity and inclusion the company describes.

The notion of "authenticity" is mentioned in the WPP video (Table 5), which is reminiscent of the role of affect and the linked concern for self-expression in the Vodafone case. There is a balance of grammatical *I/we* constructions, as with the Vodafone video, which reinforces the degree of significance (Gee, 2011, p. 17, in Table 1.1) attached to the notion of freedom to realize one's authentic self within a context of wider group identity (Gee, 2011, p. 18, in Table 1.3). One speaker draws attention to the notion of difference — "Different cultures, different ideas" (Table 5) — and multiple uses are made of the terms "globe" and "world", which collocate with references to "people", suggesting not only how internationalized WPP's global footprint is, but also the value the speakers place on the diversity of their working culture as a social good (Gee, 2011, p. 19, in Table 1.5). Life at WPP emerges in the video as a thoroughly global affair, alluded to on five separate occasions (Table 5). Unlike with the other two videos in the corpus, there is a relative absence of the accepted discourse (Bennett, 2007, p. 154, in Table 2.3) of D&I, suggesting that less of an attitudinal emphasis is placed on jargon, terminology, or terms that could possibly fall out of popular use, in favor of the interrelated qualities of "togetherness", "working for a family" and "caring" (Table 5).

6. Discussion

As the "great Original" (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 4) in MNC translational relations, it is the parent company *qua* cultural translator that enjoys the power both to signify — that is, from the perspective of those with executive control in the company, to define what diversity and inclusion *means* — and to set the global corporate agenda that should be implemented in response.[8] The headquartering effect means that the direction of travel for company approaches to diversity and inclusion extends across the company's global footprint from the centre outwards, with

institutionally driven articulations of diversity and inclusion setting the scene for what initiatives should be embedded and how their effectiveness should be measured. The self-other binary elucidated in the imagined scenario of the town hall, in which L2-speaking employees were required to displace their respective L1 languages to the margins in favour of the company lingua franca, can also be seen in the D&I videos examined as part of our corpus. Beyond a purely *linguistic* transfer, cultural translation points towards the imposition of a common corporate language as an act of mediation on the part of the parent company. The diversity and inclusion content examined as part of this study demonstrates the prevalence of English as the common corporate language in the videos. The term *translation*, as Maitland (2017, pp. 21–22) observes, has long been associated with the movement of peoples and has only relatively recently been applied to movements of a textual and interlingual nature. *Language* diversity, in this sense, is synonymous with *cultural* diversity; given the large size of an MNC's global operations, companies could consider referencing the number of languages spoken across the organisational footprint alongside the more commonly published data on the number of staff employed and number of countries covered.

Viewed through the prism of cultural translation, MNC approaches to language, culture, identity, and difference in the study are embedded in diversity and inclusion discourse that remains ambiguous. The areas of cultural diversity and gender balance, for example, appear to be embraced under the wider umbrella of diversity and inclusion without a clear delineation of the different needs of each. The results of our study suggest a desire on the part of companies to reach multiple audiences. While the primary audience appears to be one of potential job applicants, the use of language also demonstrates a sensitivity to the needs and expectations of business-facing audiences, including customers, investors, and shareholders. It would be relevant in further study to consider to what extent different results might depend on both the location of the MNC in question and the geopolitical and historical associations of its chosen corporate lingua franca. While employees who participate in D&I videos have a speech platform on company websites, that platform is mediated ultimately by the company as publishing institution (Asad, 1986, pp. 141–164). Decisions over which employees are selected for inclusion (Sturge, 2007, p. 8, in Table 2.5), which order they should speak, and what speech may be included or excluded (Young, 2012, pp. 159–160, in Table 2.4), must dovetail with wider company imperatives. Where interlingual translation takes place, it is likewise worth considering the conditions that influence the choice and make-up of any translations that are published; as a form of often *behind-the-scenes* knowledge production (Bennett, 2007, p. 154, in Table 2.3), their underlying processes — and decision-making with regard to selection and editing — would not necessarily be available to the site visitor for scrutiny. In future study, the inclusion of qualitative research methods such as interviews would create opportunities to explore whether translation agencies are routinely commissioned to support cases of interlingual translation on company websites, or whether they are provided by employees. While the WPP video featured in the study builds a somewhat different communicative interaction with its intended external and internal audiences than the other two, all three videos in the corpus display manifestations of would-be spontaneous expressions of *being* in the respective MNCs.

Running throughout our study is a concern for issues of representation. Representation entails an imagined relationship between an audience and an institution wishing to be seen in a particular way. In this regard, decisions about how an MNC represents its approach to diversity and inclusivity are expressive of a desire to be perceived in a particular way. Through in-depth analysis, it becomes possible to interrogate such decisions not only in terms of *what* is represented but also in terms of what is *not* represented or glossed over. Relatively little attention has been paid in the scholarship, for example, to the tensions that may exist between the broad areas of diversity and inclusion. The

extent to which language diversity is included as a lived, visible, and significant reality in the MNC also appears to vary. In the main, the monolingual status quo is not queried in the representational strategies developed by the MNCs. In focusing on the representational strategies of the MNC, it becomes possible to detect a deep-seated desire to be seen as appealing places to work in, work with, and buy from — that is, a desire to be *chosen* by its respective internal and external stakeholders through attractive self-presentation. Cultural translation provides a critical perspective from which to interrogate how such attractiveness is achieved; the absence or presence of languages or the absence or presence of translation provide important clues not only to representational strategies but also to what informs the preferences that underpin them.

7. Conclusions and a look ahead: Japanese MNCs as a locus for comparative research

At the heart of our study was an interest in uncovering how MNCs construct themselves with regard to diversity and inclusion. By conceptualising the genre of the diversity and inclusion video as a public-facing emanation of cultural translation within the MNC, we have attempted to draw greater critical attention to the scope for comparative analysis between how a company views *itself* in relation to diversity and inclusion and its published *representations* of the same. We view our study as a first step in such an enterprise. What is needed now is extended empirical research into the work of cultural translation within the modern multilingual MNC. This research would explore in depth and from a multidisciplinary perspective not only how MNCs have benefitted from translation in its interlingual emanation (what is translated; who does the translating; what represents a translation failure or a translation success) but also the extent to which companies value employees' L2 (and even L3) translation skills and the extent to which such language abilities are reflected in job advertisements and subsequent pay and reward schemes.

The discrete analysis presented in this article suggests the utility of cultural translation as a critical lens through which to examine in more depth how company statements on diversity and inclusion compare to the realities of language, culture, identity, and difference in action within company operations. There is considerable scope to expand the arena of investigation not just to encompass a larger sample of companies and a greater range of public-facing materials (such as press releases, published executive interviews, annual reports, and codes of ethical conduct) but also to consider from the perspective of cultural translation how MNCs present themselves inwards through internal communications with employees. An expanded arena of investigation might encompass MNCs that are headquartered in regions where the dynamics of cultural translation differ from those highlighted in the present study. One potential locus for investigation is MNCs that are headquartered in Japan — a country that, while being a global economy and a former colonial power in the global North, has an official language (Japanese) that is not one of the most spoken languages in the world. Might we discover a preponderance of parallels with the UK-headquartered MNCs in our corpus (with the Japanese language playing a role comparable to the role played by the English language among the MNCs in our study)? Or, by contrast, might we discover a preponderance of corporate policies whereby L1-Japanese-speaking executives use their L2 or L3 (for instance, English) to communicate with employees in the employees' first languages?

One logical starting point in any such investigation would be the trend among Japanese MNCs to adopt English (albeit for varying ranges of purposes) as an official corporate language despite the fact that they are headquartered in Japan — a "highly monolingual" (Smakman, 2018, p. 74) Japanese-speaking country where English proficiency reportedly lags, at least by some measures, behind that in most other countries.[9] Indeed, Japanese MNCs' adoption of English as an official

corporate language is sparking debate in Japan between its proponents and its opponents. One recent, publicly accessible forum for such debate was the 21 March 2022 edition of the business-oriented Japanese-language online discussion show *2 Sides* (2 Sides, 2022). We wish to highlight this broadcast as it provides a succinct (albeit perhaps not exhaustive) summary of arguments on both sides. In this broadcast, arguments in favour of Japanese MNCs' adoption of English as an official corporate language were advanced by Shogo Okada, who heads Progrit, Inc., a Tokyo-headquartered English-language education corporation with schools in the Tokyo area. Arguments against such a policy (and essentially in favour of allowing native-Japanese-speaking employees to use English as and when necessary and to use their L1, Japanese, at other times) were advanced by Hiroshi Ohara, a business researcher, consultant, author, and former banker. The discussion was structured around three key questions, which we have outlined below alongside the main arguments advanced. We believe it is worth examining this discussion in some detail.

Q1. Should Japanese MNCs promote the use of English as an official corporate language?

Point(s) made in favor:

a. Japan's share of global GDP is shrinking, and the proportion of sales that Japanese corporations make in Japan has shrunk to such an extent that Japanese corporations now make the lion's share of their sales overseas. For Japanese corporations to grow, therefore, they need to treat overseas expansion as a pillar of their business. If they adopt English as a corporate official language and have all employees able to speak it such that any employee can function abroad, they are at an advantage, in terms of ability to grow their overseas business, with respect to firms where only certain employees can carry out their role in English.

b. Making English a corporate official language facilitates hiring of international talent in Japan. Notably, there is a shortage of engineers in the information technology (IT) industry in Japan as the supply (e.g., graduates from computer-science courses at Japanese universities) cannot meet surging demand. Japanese corporations cannot secure as many engineers as they need, no matter the remuneration offered. They need to look abroad for talent, but their use of the Japanese language in the workplace represents an insurmountable hurdle from the perspective of potential foreign workers. If they adopt English as a corporate official language, their pool of candidates grows to include people outside Japan.

c. Adopting English as a corporate official language can preclude situations where some employees understand Japanese, some do *not* understand Japanese, and those who do not understand Japanese feel excluded. Even if adoption is limited to certain tasks or settings (rather than applied to *all* tasks and settings), it can promote inclusion. Such limited adoption of English could take the form of holding meetings in English (rather than Japanese) whenever any participant (even one) is not able to take part in Japanese, and using English for company-wide written announcements if any employees (even a minority) are not able to read Japanese.

Point(s) made in opposition

d. Adopting English as a corporate official language in a corporation where most are native Japanese speakers creates a barrier for the majority and may be unnecessary in the first place.

e. In terms of access to overseas business opportunities, focusing on the use of English (as opposed to other languages) may have limited utility. Much of Japanese corporations' overseas growth has come in China, where proficiency in Chinese (as opposed to English) is beneficial. There are also other regions (such as the European Union) where the ability to function in languages

other than English brings strategic advantages. In short, having a workforce that can function flexibly in a mixture of foreign languages (not just English) is valuable.

f.   Adopting English as a corporate official language entails cost in terms of money and effort. This cost is increased when we consider that incoming employees would-be adult (learners).[10] Those resources would be better aimed at other endeavours such as research and development.

Q2. Does the adoption of English as a corporate official language promote globalization of the corporation?

Point(s) made in favor:

a.   Attracting global talent (by removing the need to be able to carry out one's role in Japanese) is vital for international success. Many admire Japan (in light of, for example, its food, climate, and relatively high public safety) and would like to work at Japanese corporations.

b.   Making English an official corporate language would have the effect of raising the level of English ability among staff and would act as a powerful incentive for employees to upskill English themselves with respect to their English language capabilities.

c.   The case for making English a corporate official language is stronger in the IT industry than it is in manufacturing, for example, as Japanese IT firms are struggling to attract talented engineers. In industries such as manufacturing, a valid approach may be to direct resources to language education for staff *who need it* without having an all-staff-must-use-English policy.

Point(s) made in opposition

d.   Non-Japanese people who really want to work in Japan should be given opportunities to learn the Japanese language, while native Japanese speakers in the workplace should also accommodate foreign workers who are learning Japanese as a second or third language and who thus may be struggling with their Japanese-language capabilities.

Q3. Will the adoption of English as a corporate official language change Japan's business scene?[11]

Point(s) made in favor:

a.   When a corporation has adopted English as an official language, it will incorporate English study time into working hours, thereby giving employees a great opportunity for personal development.

b.   The market value of English ability in Japan is quite high.[12]

c.   The case of Rakuten (an electronic commerce and online retail giant that was among the first Japanese corporations to adopt English as a corporate official language) suggests that the cost of having workers begin to use English as a corporate official language is outweighed by the benefits in terms of international business growth.

d.   A key issue is the level of English ability that corporations aim to achieve among their employees. Rakuten's adoption of English as a corporate official language is not an attempt to make all staff completely fluent in English but rather an attempt to raise their English ability to a certain level even if their English language capabilities remain below those of a fluent speaker.

e.   Automatic translation and interpreting tools (e.g., those that use artificial intelligence) can be a tool/enabler for English as a corporate official language. DeepL can be used to machine translate

written language. Grammarly can be used to correct the grammar in English writing. The speaker acknowledges that dependence on such tools can slow communication down.

Point(s) made in opposition

f.   The speaker gives the example of Drucker (presumably a reference to the management consultant, educator, and author Peter Drucker), who said that businesses succeed by building on their strengths, not by trying to turn their weaknesses into strengths (presumably, in other words, not by trying to fix their weaknesses). For Japanese corporations, English can thus be seen as a weakness. We can presume here that the speaker was suggesting that the resources of Japanese corporations would be better directed at capitalising on their strengths rather than at trying to enable the workforce to carry out their roles in English.

The moderator in the *2 Sides* discussion brought the broadcast to a close by commenting that the question of whether Japanese corporations should adopt English as a corporate official language is not black or white, that there is a significant grey area between the two poles, and that the range of gradations is presently too great for the issue to be debated in terms of rights and wrongs. We concur that the discussion ended without a clear conclusion. Certainly, neither speaker presented conclusive empirical evidence to support his position. Nevertheless, we can arguably see the points made on both sides as coalescing around issues of corporate sales and profits and — perhaps more relevant to the earlier sections of this article — issues of inclusion. Of course, these issues are interrelated in that, for instance, a corporate language policy that is inclusive of workers who do not understand the Japanese language can presumably help to attract talented non-Japanese workers whose efforts, in turn, can boost sales and profits. Of particular interest in relation to inclusion is the suggestion that automatic translation and interpreting tools can be a tool/enabler for Japanese MNCs' adoption of English as a corporate official language. The speaker acknowledged that a dependence on such tools can slow communication down. He also did not address the risks (such as the risk that erroneous machine-generated translations might cause misunderstandings and even damage relationships) that might be attached. It remains the case, however, that the suggestion to use automatic translation and interpreting tools to essentially level the playing field for communication within Japanese MNCs suggests a relatively instrumental and practical approach to inclusion.[13]

A number of Japan-based MNCs have indeed adopted English as an official in-house language, with high-profile examples including the cosmetics giant Shiseido (Steger, 2019); the automotive giant Honda Motor (Kubota, 2015); the retail holding company Fast Retailing (Katsumura, 2011), which operates the apparel chain Uniqlo; and the aforementioned electronic commerce and online retail giant Rakuten Group (Katsumura, 2011). It is noteworthy that such MNCs appear to differ in terms of the range of purposes for which they set out to adopt English as an official corporate language. Whereas the Honda Motor Company adopted a policy of using English for *international* communications within the company (Nikkei Asia, 2015), for instance, Rakuten Group set out to have employees use English in all *internal* presentations, documents, memos and in all internal meetings, training sessions, and emails (Wakabayashi, 2012). The scope for further research is considerable. We hope to have suggested the conceptual utility of the cultural translation paradigm, and to have delineated some valuable pathways forward for future investigation.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

[1] MNCs are "a ubiquitous feature of the modern economy" (Collis et al., 2012, p. 1), and, as of May 2018, accounted "for half of global exports, almost one-third of world GDP and about one-fourth of employment" (OECD, 2018). They are also increasingly important to economic activity (Collis et al., 2012, p. 1).

[2] This discussion focuses strictly on adult-learner linguists who have acquired second or third language skills later in life, as opposed to employees who developed skills in multiple languages from infancy.

[3] From the perspective of postcolonial Translation Studies, Europe has been conceptualised as the "great Original" on which the translational copies of empire were based (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 4).

[4] We recognise, of course, that a corporate lingua franca is, for an MNC, unavoidable on a practical level. Arguably, it goes without saying that an institution whose staff have many first languages could hardly function unless all staff (or at least all relevant staff in a given business unit/subsidiary), either by management decree or by general, informal consent, used a common language in their work. The third author's experience of working in the Tokyo headquarters of Japanese MNCs suggests that, in the absence of a formal language policy, a group of colleagues will tend to settle into their own consensus, usually using the language in which the majority of members of the group are most proficient and/or comfortable.

[5] While the page is no longer 'live' on the website, it has been archived (Diageo, n.d.-b) as part of the Wayback Machine project of the Internet Archive (Wayback Machine, n.d.) and is hosted on YouTube (Diageo, 2019).

[6] While the page is no longer 'live' on the website, it has been archived (Vodafone, n.d.-b) as part of the Wayback Machine project (Wayback Machine, n.d.) and is hosted on YouTube (Vodafone, 2017).

[7] While the page is no longer 'live' on the website, it has been archived (WPP, n.d.-a) as part of the Wayback Machine project (Wayback Machine, n.d.). The video itself is no longer accessible.

[8] In Bassnett and Trivedi's critique (1999), it is the Europe of Empire that views itself as the "great Original", with its colonies as second-order reproductions (p. 4) "of an original located elsewhere on the map" (p. 5).

[9] McNeill (2022), for example, reports that "Japan polls 78th in English proficiency out of 112 countries, according to EF, Education First, a Swiss education company" and that "[f]or years, Japan has lagged in standard TOEFL tests, below far poorer countries such as Cambodia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan" (2022).

[10] The suggestion here is that learning English as an L2 is harder for adults than for younger people.

[11] The use of "business scene" appears to denote the working environment at firms in Japan.

[12] The suggestion here is that this makes a worker more desirable and thus able to command higher pay.

[13] Ohara wrote a follow-up online magazine article (Ohara, 2022) where he asserted, inter alia, that Japanese corporations' adoption of English as a corporate official language amounts to coercion and that a failure to recognize such a policy as coercion is characteristic of a society, i.e., Japan, where peer pressure is rife.