11. MNE strategy and organization
Competitive

Resistance dynamics and language standardization

Abstract

Organizational resistance to change has often been considered to be a linear response by workers to a transition proposed by the management. However, in recent years more complex theoretical models suggesting dialectical processes linking organizational change and resistance have started to emerge. Nonetheless, relatively few empirical studies exist employing this perspective. In this article we further explore the dialectics of change and resistance by studying an organizational change process influenced by contradictory institutional logics – the coexistence of a local orientation and an international orientation. More specifically, by using a qualitative longitudinal research method we follow the consequences of - and reactions to a language standardization policy implementation in a Danish IT company. Drawing on institutional theory and theories of organizational becoming the findings show that multi-directional resistance behavior proliferates out of the local departments. This can be connected to the balancing of contradictory institutional logics guiding the organization of communication and language use among different stakeholders.

Keywords

Resistance, change, language standardization, internationalization, institutional theory, contradictions

Resistance dynamics and language standardization

Introduction

In an increasingly dynamic business environment, the role of organizational change and how people react to change has become a more important theme than ever before (Bordia et al., 2011). While organizational change can originate from many types of development (e.g. technological, demographical, economical), the pressure from globalization is a central element in many organizational change processes these years (Kim et al., 2010). A large number of organizations that just a few years back were operating exclusively in a domestic setting are now to a growing extent involved with and influenced by international stakeholders (Evans, 1997; Gulrajani and Moloney, 2012). Hence, traditional ways of working may be challenged by new ideals and practices developed in a global business context. However, this does not necessarily lead to a complete shift from local orientation to international orientation as organizations should be viewed as constantly in the process of 'becoming', reshaping and revising existing ideals and practices (Weick, 1993; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). What has been termed contradictory institutional logics guiding decisions and behavior in organizations in different sometimes oppositional ways may thus develop (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Jarzabkowski et al., 2009).

One thing that has led to substantial and apparent changes in the daily lives of millions of workers is the increasing international standardization of organizational language use – most often introducing English as corporate language. Language standardization is a highly important change process because language is in all we do and all we think about (Chomsky, 1972; Chomsky, 1992). Hence, language has an organizing capacity but may itself also be object for reorganization and change efforts implemented by powerful change agents in states or organizations (Steyaert et al., 2011; Lane, 2009).

Many changes in systems or structures surrounding us (e.g. IT systems) can have profound implications for our daily routines. However, the change of language can be argued to be also an alteration of an imbedded system of signification, meaning creating, and communication which is central to the process of constructing social realities (Tietze et al., 2003; Brannen, 2004). As such, language standardization can be speculated to be a particularly radical type of change implementation. In this line of thinking, not only specific communicative skills in relation to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary influence individuals' willingness or resistance to use a foreign language (Lauring and Klitmøller, 2015; Yashima et al., 2004). Other structural mechanisms linked to language use such as social identification, categorization, and sense-making could also accelerate reluctance to adopt new linguistic standards (Bourdieu, 1991; Vaara et al., 2005; Weick, 1993). Moreover, language standardization generally includes specific top management initiated policies (Fredriksson et al., 2006). However, such language decisions may well be 'politically' charged in the way that they promote specific parts of the organization (e.g. headquarters), specific orientations (e.g. internationalization), or specific worker segments (e.g. white collar) (Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio, 2011). Hence, there is a chance that certain groups will feel disadvantaged by the implementation of an international standardizing language policy. Finally, it should be mentioned that recent research has documented the importance of the increased cognitive effort involved with communication using a second, learned language (Abutalebi, 2008; Volk et al., 2014). This means that using a second language will be more time demanding and tiresome even for those with a high proficiency level thus reducing individual work efficiency.

Hence, there could be several reasons for resistance to develop when organizations attempt to standardize language use by implementing an international common corporate language. Moreover,

language standardization may be connected to dialectical processes of activities shaped by the above mentioned contradictory institutional logics of international vs. local orientation. Accordingly, in order to understand resistance patterns connected to language standardization, there is a need for a theorizing of resistance that allows investigation of the dynamics of organizational becoming guided by multiple, contradictory institutional logics.

While such a perspective is not available in the mainstream organizational resistance literature, where resistance is a seen as a uni-directional opposition to general institutional interests (e.g. Giangreco and Peccei, 2005), a more dynamic perspective has begun to emerge (Contu et al., 2013; Carroll and Nicholson, 2014). This new perspective rejects the dominant conceptualization that depicts a linear, causal relation in the interaction between managers in control of change processes and workers resisting (Thomas and Hardy, 2011). According to Thomas, Sargent and Hardy (2011) conceptualizing change programs as the realization of a particular management plan is an unproductive way to understand reorganization processes. Rather such processes should be viewed as triggering a multiplicity of interpretations and sense-making as organizing based on different interests (Tsoukas, 2005; Weick et al., 2005).

In this line of thinking, the process of interpreting and renegotiating managerial change templates may not only be based on self-interest thereby obstructing sound organizational change initiatives but could also be seen as a sign of proactive behavior that is useful for successful reorganization (Petrou et al., 2012; Ford et al., 2008). Such productive and facilitating acts of resistance may create spaces of creativity and assist workers' identity building (Courpasson et al., forthcoming). By challenging suggestions proposed by the top management, resistance acts can lead to improved organizational changes (Van Dam et al., 2008). This may not least be carried out by middle

managers and other dominant employees with a more detailed ‘frontline’ view of organizational demands (Lüscher and Lewis, 2008). It is thus clear that organizational change processes such as language standardization can well be perceived as non-linear negotiated accomplishments involving multiple stakeholders holding different interests that are informed by competing rationalities. Accordingly, we formulate the following research question: *How do contradictory institutional logics influence the dialectics of organizational change and resistance in a language standardization process*?

This research is important and novel in several aspects. First, although scholars such as Mumby (2005) and Thomas, Sargent and Hardy (2011) have argued that change initiatives and resistance to change should be conceptualized as connected in a dialectical process, few empirical studies have set out to explore such dynamics in an organizational context. Moreover, most studies of resistance focus on blue collar workers (e.g. Bovey and Hede, 2001; Bain and Taylor, 2000). In this study we explore how highly skilled professionals deal with change initiatives. Secondly, by drawing on theories of organizational becoming (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and contradictory institutional logics (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009; Tsoukas, 2005), we endeavor to provide new knowledge on how potential ambiguity derived from competing logics concerning corporate language communication may affect the dialectics of change and resistance. Most research has focused on how the existence of contradictory logics affects the way a major institutional field (e.g. linked to an industry) is influencing organizations’ representation of themselves and their relations to each other (Haveman and Rao, 1997; Thornton, 2002). However, relatively little research has been devoted to how individual organizations internally experience and respond to contradictory logics specifically in various patterns of resistance (Greenwood et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2011; Mumby, 2005). Finally, while corporate policies leading to language standardization have received much attention in recent

years, this has mainly been from a conceptual point of view (e.g. Born and Peltokorpi, 2010; Piekkari and Tietze, 2011). Consequently, there is a need for detailed empirical accounts of how decisions to standardize language affect organizations and how local actors deal with it (cf. Tsoukas, 2005). New empirical knowledge in this area will help to further theory building also in relation to understanding language use in organizations.

In this study we focus on a large Danish IT company, KDK, which had until recently been a Danish publicly owned company catering primarily to Danish municipalities. During the time of investigation, we studied the company's strategy to implement English as the only language for written product documentation. This process was driven by three corporate decisions. To start with, a strategic decision was made to use SAP (software and solutions) as a standard template, middleware, on which all new software was to be based. This involved increased interaction with German SAP suppliers. Moreover, another decision was taken to outsource much of the programing to Indian sub-suppliers, and a number of Indians were relocated to the Danish organization. Finally, it was an expressed aim to refocus the company's orientation from mainly a supplier to the public sector to increasingly engaging with private businesses and thereby expanding also on an international scale. Those three decisions are representatives of the internationalization oriented institutional logic which the top management ascribed to.

We studied the company during three months from the first announcement of the new language policy in 2009. Then in a second round of data collection, we assessed the implementation process two and a half years later for three months in 2011-2012. The longitudinal design of the study allows us to better understand how dynamics and dialectics between contradictory logics concerning the implementation of language standardization play out.

Theory

In this section we first briefly describe how institutional theory can be used as a general theoretical foundation that allows us to understand the dynamics and dialectics of resistance patterns in change processes where contradictory logics are at stake. We then discuss recent developments in resistance research and add our insight from institutional theory thereby establishing the outset for the article's theoretical contribution. Finally, we demonstrate that language standardization in many situations includes an inherent contradiction between internationalization and local oriented institutional logics making an obvious theme for resistance scholars interested in the dynamics of organizational complexity.

Institutional logics

To understand policy-oriented and strategic changes in organizations on the verge to becoming internationalized, we call for theoretical underpinnings informed by institutional theory. In this line of theorizing, institutional logics can be understood as organizing guidelines derived from the larger institutional field of organizations (Friedland and Alford, 1991; van Gestel and Hillebrand, 2011).

It has been argued that institutional logics prescribe and proscribe the actions that are considered legitimate means to achieve a certain goal in a field of activity (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Friedland and Alford, 1991) and guide individuals on appropriate ways of constructing organizations (Friedland and Alford, 1991; van Gestel and Hillebrand, 2011). Moreover, institutional logics can be viewed as a form of 'tool kit' (Swidler, 1986) upon which individuals can develop strategic actions (Thornton et al., 2012) thus providing the formal and informal principles for organizational conduct (Boxenbaum, 2006).

Extant research in this area has focused on how upcoming logics replace older ones at the institutional field level (Haveman and Rao, 1997). Such dynamics have been found to have substantial effects upon prevailing organizational morphology (Thornton, 2002). Yet, single organizations are often immersed in multiple logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991) due to the relative incoherence of the larger institutional field (Dunn and Jones, 2010; Purdy and Gray, 2009; Seo and Creed, 2002; van Gestel and Hillebrand, 2011). The subjection of organizations to contradictory logics in a field has been argued to constitute competing organizing principles for organizational actions, thus calling for everyday 'balancing-work' to allow the co-existence of such logics (Kraatz and Block, 2008; Smets and Jarzabkowski, 2013; Pache and Santos, 2013; Bjerregaard and Jonasson, 2014).

While most studies have been devoted to top managers' strategic responses to contradictory institutional logics, resent studies have increasingly devoted attention to the role of multiple groups of individuals who advocate different logics and thereby generate unanticipated processes of organizational change (Kim et al., 2007; van Gestel and Hillebrand, 2011; Kellogg, 2011). Furthermore, scholars have argued that groups in organizational balancing activities can simultaneously engage in efforts of maintaining stability and infusing change in organizational practices (Hargrave and Van de Ven, 2009; Lawrence et al., 2010). In this regard it has been argued that institutional logics conform to immediate and changing practical purposes among various groups (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Such processes of more or less conformity are influenced by ambivalent strategies leading to opposite effects of held intentions (Lawrence et al., 2010).

To examine how groups of local managers and employees' balance contradictory institutional logics

of organizational stability and change, a conceptual perspective on organizational becoming could be applied (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). This conceptual grounding implies a notion of organizations as far from stable. Rather, change and chaos may be the more natural condition of an organisation calling for efforts of constant organizing of co-constructing new meaning and legitimacy of organizational practices (Weick et al., 2005; Tsoukas, 2005). Thus it requires efforts to ensure at least the appearance of stability in the organisation (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Hence, in this theorizing of organizational becoming, there should be attention to the constant and even the most mundane work of managers and employees at all levels with the particular logic formations that emerge in an organisation where contradictory institutional logics prevail. This means that both implementation of change initiatives and the resistance acts directed towards them will involve institutional 'work' performed by individuals and groups shaping the path of the organization's becoming. An outset taking departures in this view of organizational ideas and practices may be used to inform our understanding of the complex dialectics of change and resistance.

Dialectics of change and resistance

Although top managers hold a dominating position from where they can introduce new templates for the organizing of corporate practices, it can be argued that these templates will always to some extent be object for negotiation and renegotiation among different stakeholders (Maguire and Hardy, 2009; Buchanan and Dawson, 2007). As such, managerial control with change processes will never be absolute and thus employees will constantly find ways of evading or manipulating managerial direction at work (Mumby, 2005). Hence, managerial change programs will always face some type of resistance.

This resistance can take form verbally as direct or indict criticism or complaining or physically as inactivity, foot dragging, or even sabotage (Ford and Ford, 2010; Scott, 1987). Traditionally, resistance from a change perspective has been considered counter-productive and suggestions have been made as how to overcome, minimize or eliminate such resistance to change (e.g. Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Furst and Cable, 2008; Giangreco and Peccei, 2005). However, recent scholars have pushed forward an understanding of resistance as also holding constructive resources of re-interpretations and engaged debates of possible adjustments to the templates for change (Ford and Ford, 2010; Ford et al., 2008; Courpasson et al., forthcoming). In relation to this, empirical studies have documented that actions that were originally labeled resistance to change were eventually found to be supportive of reaching the organization's goals (Eccles et al., 1992; Young, 2000; Ford et al., 2008).

Recently, the understandings of resistance to change as either negative or positive and thus as uni-directional have been widened by a more generative and multi-directional theorizing. Here the focus is on how individuals make sense of the change decisions in a constant and simultaneous process involving continuous crossovers between interpretation and resistance (Thomas and Davies, 2005; Mumby, 2005; Thomas and Hardy, 2011a). Linked to this, Thomas, Sargent, and Hardy (2011) showed how, during a workshop about a culture change program, demands of change were negotiated in ways where facilitative resistance requiring novel accommodation to the suggested changes led to oppositional resistance to this adjustment. This finding thus relate to prior arguments of how a situation of resistance cannot be merely categorized as either supportive or counteractive to change (Mumby, 2005). Rather, managerial change initiatives and resistance to them should be seen as mutually constitutive through processes of negotiation and collaborative emergence developed over time (Thomas et al., 2011; Tsoukas, 2009). According to Mumby (2005), by seeing

resistance in this light, scholars can better conceptualize the complex dialectics by which managerial change templates and resistance to them influence each other. In particular, the ambivalence of both facilitative and oppositional resistance co-constitutively developed in specific situations among different groups of organizational members has recently been emphasized as important to examine (Thomas et al., 2011; Piderit, 2000).

In this vein of research on the dialectics of change and resistance, attention has been directed to the communicative practices and interactions among different groups of organizational members (e.g. Thomas et al., 2011). It is through such communicative practices that the different groups of organizational members continuously engage in sense-making and processes of organizational becoming (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Tsoukas, 2009; Weick et al., 2005). The focus on sense-making and communication in resistance dialectics becomes particularly important when dealing with organizations influenced by multiple logics. This is because there are several often contradictory ideals at play simultaneously (Lok and de Rond, 2013; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Hence, there will be alternative ways to make sense of change as well as of resistance to change conditioned by the different logics competing to guide actions in the ever ongoing organizational becoming. In other words, it can be expected that the complexity of change and resistance dialectics increase dramatically when we accept the existence of plural competing institutional logics being balanced by change agents and other individuals in organizations. A timely example of such contradictory institutional logics is related to the opposing logics of local vs. international orientation inherent in any international language standardization process.

Language standardization

In this last part of the theory section, we discuss the progress of the scholarly field of organizational

language standardization and position it as a change process taking place among contradictory institutional logics depicting internationalization and localization.

Standardization has been described as based on explicitly formulated rules thus differing from more implicit socialization of norms. While often conceptualized as associated with stability, Brunsson, Rasche, and Seidl (2012) argue that organizational standardization is a dynamic phenomenon. This is not least related to standardization being a powerful rule based tool for challenging existing organizational practices and thus being instrumental in organizing change.

Although language standardization is inherently different from many other types of standardizing (e.g. technical), there are also important similarities in that using a language implies accommodating explicitly defined rules. However, language standardization is generally based on organization internal decisions although external factors linked to globalization, such as international recruitment, global expansion, supply change development etc., may also influence policy formulations. Beside instrumental concerns, institutional pressure may exist to conform to the general business trend of internationalization (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). As with technical standardization, the argument is that using multiple languages in the same organization or in a network of organizations is counterproductive. In this line of reasoning, changes involving language standardization is a way to improve internal efficiency and expand the reach of the organization internationally (Harzing and Feely, 2008).

Today, language standardization is often initiated in organizations that are using several languages (Luo and Shenkar, 2006; Born and Peltokorpi, 2010). More specifically, the ideal of language standardization is to harmonize internal and external communication through rules and policies

(Harzing et al., 2011). In general, this change process is driven by an internationalization oriented institutional logic with the assumption that one language fits all communication needs. This managerial view, however, has been speculated to be too simplified due to varying degrees of fluency in the selected common language among the involved internal and external stakeholders (Piekkari and Tietze, 2011). As such, language standardization also imprints a shift in institutional logics from a more local organizational reach, where customers, employees, and suppliers would be of one nationality thereby not necessitating any considerations as to standardizing several languages into one, towards institutional logics of more global organizational reach, where the corporate language fulfills all communicative needs.

The internationalization oriented institutional logic comprising corporate language standardization may face several challenges. Language standardization can be challenged by employees due to identification issues (Vaara et al., 2005; Piekkari et al., 2005), political positioning (Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio, 2011), and/or cognitive strain associated with the change (Volk et al., 2014). Moreover, the actual need for language standardization could be challenged with references to a localization oriented institutional logic combining the above arguments with external factors such as e.g. customer needs and public relations.

It has been argued that what lies at the heart of resistance is the raise of alternating voices contributing to novel meaning and alternative organizational creativity and modalities of work (Courpasson et al., forthcoming; Ford et al., 2008). In this regard, the standardizing practices of a language policy may reproduce or transform organizational and communicative practices in ways that potentially go against various alternating ‘non-standardized’ voices thereby adding further complexity to the dialectics of resistance and change. Therefore, the growing trend towards

organizational language standardization calls for attention to local responses to such a change. Studies focusing on this could contribute to the understanding of resistance behavior in organizational settings under the influence of multiple logics.

Methodology

In our study, we sought to explore the change processes associated with language standardization. We therefore chose to study a company where we could follow the implementation of a language policy requiring the transition to English as corporate language. The first contact in this project was initiated by a member of a designated language policy task force from KDK. This was done just before the new language standardization process was announced. Since members of the research group behind the current article were known to do research on language, they were invited to do a seminar on language management at KDK. It was agreed that in exchange for this seminar, the academics would be allowed to subsequently conduct independent research in the organization.

In order to be able to study the long-term implications of the language policy, we decided to design the project as a longitudinal study with two entries into the field. The methodology of longitudinal qualitative research is distinct from that employed in traditional single entry interviewing because it can include sequences of changes in contextual factors and subjective perceptions. Doing longitudinal qualitative research enables researchers to examine chronological timelines of events or changes in real-world organizational characteristics over time. It can therefore be argued to be a valuable approach to study change and resistance in organizations (cf. Street and Ward, 2012). In extant research the longitudinal qualitative methodology has been used for studying organizational processes such as organizational downsizing (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 2002), change management (van de Ven and Huber, 1990), and the influence of technology on organizational

change (Sabherwal et al., 2001; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001). This type of research is generally conducted with the same social setting over a time period sufficient to allow for the collection of data on specific conditions of change and the outcome of changes under such conditions. Based on prior practical experiences with language policy implementations, we estimated that at least two years were needed to assess the actual functioning of a corporate language policy. The first phase of the research lasted three months from Mai to August 2009. The second phase was initiated in November 2011 and finalized in late January the following year.

An aim of longitudinal qualitative research is to enable the identification and meaning of temporal development and the exploration of how people interpret and respond to such change. Here, focus can be on individuals, groups, and organizations (Hermanowicz, 2013). In this case we tried to understand how the organization of language practices was strategically developed as micro level (individual and group) responses to macro level (organizational and institutional) complexities of contradictory logics (Smets et al., 2012; Bourdieu, 1981). To achieve this goal, we used complementary data-collection approaches to study practices and interpretations that individuals in different departments made of their situations and experiences.

Data collection

After acquiring an overview of the organization, our strategy was to interview employees and managers within each of the four types of departments in KDK: 1) SAP Service section, 2) SAP Product section, 3) Non-SAP Service section, and 4) Non-SAP Product section. One department from each of the sections was selected for further studies. This was done in order to compare and contrast different individuals' interpretations of the language policy's implications. In addition, we asked each interviewee who else in their department we should talk to and for which reasons

(Snowballing) (cf. Bernard, 1995). We then if possible selected individuals with specific view points from each of the studied departments. This was done in order to include a multiplicity of voices.

All in all we carried out 36 interviews. Of those, 15 were repeat interviews and six individuals were interviewed only once. It was our initial aim to interview all informants twice, however, for the second phase three interviewees from the first round had left the organization. Beside one top manager and a member of the language policy task force, we interviewed four individuals from each studied department in each of the two data collection phases (see Appendix 1).

The interviews took place at the workplace in offices or meeting rooms and lasted approximately one hour. They were all conducted in Danish, audio-recorded, and fully transcribed. Detailed interview notes and notes on the researcher's overall impression were developed the same day as the interview. To increase the accuracy of their responses, each interviewee was assured anonymity.

In both phases we applied a semi-structured in-depth approach to interviewing. In the beginning of phase one a broader and more exploratory approach was used asking questions such as: How is the work organized, how would you describe the language policies of KDK, how are the relations between employees at different levels and between colleagues, what is your perception of the new initiatives concerning language/system changes/internationalization, do you have specifically positive/negative perceptions of KDK in relation to the recent strategies? Eventually, however, we started to focus on specific central themes connected to our interest in organizational change and language standardization (cf. Spradley, 1980). In practice, this meant that we were able to develop themes proposed by the interviewees (Alvesson, 2003) and thereby to combine their view with

systematized data generation (Fontana and Frey, 1994). As the interview guide took shape, a number of themes started to emerge such as for example language use in relation to different stakeholders (foreign sub-suppliers/Danish customers) and the use of different programming systems (see Appendix 2).

In phase two, following Hermanowicz (2013) we posed novel questions on the same themes as well as explored novel topics in order to examine changes in themes since the first interviews. We also asked interviewees to describe the long term development of the practices and ideals connected to language use in their department. When doing longitudinal qualitative research, it can be useful to try to identify turning points that guide a certain progression (cf. Street and Ward, 2012). In phase two, several types of turning points in subjective orientation were described by different interviewees that could be related to patterns of resistance. In this regard new themes such as the autonomy of different sections/departments of the organization and the oppositional relation between the top management and the department level management emerged. We urged the interviewees to provide concrete examples and anecdotes of events with great detail defining specific milestones in the development. At the end of each interview, interviewees were asked to share any additional information they felt was relevant. Here some further comments on the situation were often expressed.

While semi-structured interviews were the dominant source of data, we also used analysis of multiple documentary sources, including product documentation reports, meeting memorandums, yearly reports, and strategy plans. Moreover, we reviewed relevant newspaper/magazine articles and web pages about the corporation. This data source provided useful information on corporate ideals in the form of top management statements and policies as well as on organizational practices

in the form of the actual written language in product documentation reports as well as numbers describing revenue, financial, and employee turnover.

In addition, some observations that were noted while being present in the four different departments has also been included as part of the data collection. Based on ethnographic principles, these observations were carried out examining the broader social and work practices related to the demanded changes (Barley, 2008). Besides being stationed in a centrally located office, researchers also took frequent strolls through the setting. Moreover, we participated in a number of other activities such as meetings, presentations, and lunch gatherings. In many cases, the interviews helped illuminate, clarify, and modify some of the noted observations, while in other situations our assessment of a particular event or comment was confirmed or challenged in interviews (cf. Flick, 2007). Registered small talk also gave us a much broader range of data collection than the individuals selected for formal interviews. Finally, some informal comments provided ideas to refocus our interviewing. For example, jokes and negative comments presented outside the formal interview context directed our attention to resistance patterns among different groups of employees. All in all, the researchers were present in the organization for 127 hours. This prolonged engagement in the field also helped us to identify and familiarize us with key informants enhancing the quality of subsequent data collection (cf. Miles and Huberman, 1994) (For an overview of the data collection tools see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

Data analysis

Early on in the project we applied an iterative analytic approach that Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer

to as constant comparison. In this approach, a researcher simultaneously collects and analyzes data, discovering similarities and differences in social categories. Here, the researcher follows emergent themes and begins to unveil basic social processes that take place in the setting. These central themes and processes are elaborated on and modified inductively for theory generation through further data collection and analysis thereby refining abstract conceptual categories (Eisenhardt, 1989; Hermanowicz, 2013). This part of the analysis took part when we were still collecting data.

After leaving the field, we applied a traditional theme analysis following the steps suggested by Spradley (1980) and Braun and Clark (2006). A number of main codes and sub-codes were developed for data collected in phase one and phase two (see Appendix 2). Some main codes such as e.g. 'Barriers to the language policy' or 'Internationalization' were used to organize data from both phases. However, other codes were only applied for one phase of the data collection. For example 'System change' was only used in analyzing data from the phase one and 'Diversity of stakeholders' was only used for phase two data. The two authors were both involved in coding the data and discussed discrepancies between labeling the data piece if such existed. In line with Spradley's (1980) suggestion, we developed a taxonomy tree from which the case narrative presented in this article was developed. We only used data that were substantiated by more than one data source and/or different data collection techniques. As such, the applied analytical process rested on 'reflexive triangulation' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) in which different sorts of data (Flick, 2007) were continuously added to the same themes to develop 'thick descriptions' of the changes in ideals and practices related to the language standardization process.

Results: Dynamics in ideals and practices amid contradictory institutional logics

KDK is one of Denmark's leading IT companies and has for many years provided IT solutions to

the Danish public sector. The starting point of the organizational transformation in KDK towards a more global reach happened around the millennium. This first moderation to the existing practices was a sharp division of employees into 'Specifyers' working in what came to be known as the 'Service section' and 'Executers' working in the 'Product section'. This was done in order to provide better customer service. As one mentioned: "*The problem before was that people became a bit too much engineers. They found it exciting to tinker with some code instead of finding out if this was something the customer actually needed*" (Non-SAP Specifyer). The Specifyers have direct contact to customers and note the requirements for the software. After that the Executers develop the product to meet the mentioned needs. Often there are several contact points between Specifyers and the customers with information being passed on to Executers.

The division of labor between the 'Service section' and the 'Product section' led to a substantive need for what has been termed 'product documentation'. Product documentation is defined by interviewees as descriptions of a system or process that allows others to continue the programming in line with the original product decisions. Without documentation it would be difficult to know what had been agreed on with the customers going e.g. three years back. Moreover, with good product documentation the subsequent coding was also mentioned to be easier. The more problems that were sketched in the documentation, the easier it was to construct the programs. The specialization of 'Specifyers' and 'Executers' was felt as a dramatic transformation. However, the organization would soon experience far more substantial alterations.

New ownership and new systems: From local to international orientation KDK had a 30 year history as a publicly owned company. However, in the beginning of 2009 KDK was sold to two private foundations. The process of going from being a publicly protected company to being a

private operation was mentioned by a number of employees to be a serious personal and organizational challenge. One of the first changes after the new owners took over was the decision to abandon developing all programs from scratch. Instead, the new policy was to base all programming on the internationally known SAP software templates and then do the adjustments locally since this was less time demanding. However, the change to using SAP took more time than first anticipated because it was difficult to immediately recruit enough new Danish programmers that could work with SAP. Instead, KDK had to employ a large number of Danish external SAP consultants to three times the cost of regular KDK employees. Eventually, it was decided to temporarily make a second division across the Service section and the Product section between SAP departments and non-SAP departments. Then gradually non-SAP projects were to be phased out over a three year period.

The implementation of SAP, however, also had a second advantage. When using SAP, large parts of the more trivial programing could be outsourced. An agreement was made with an Indian company where labor costs were one third of normal KDK employees and almost a tenth of Danish SAP consultants. This was well in line with the general thinking of the new private owners. As a strategy KDK began to focus on the international market and describe itself as a Danish IT company with international ambitions. These international aspirations were reflected in the use of a number of Indian consultants, increasing collaboration with SAP suppliers in Germany, and the establishment of the subsidiary KDK international (see Table 2). This was meant to pave the way for further international business engagement.

Insert Table 2 about here

The KDK company strategy, which had been characterized by a local oriented logic in accordance with the company catering mainly to Danish public organization, was overall being adjusted to more global oriented internationalization logics involving ambitions of reaching international customers and outsourcing of central assignments. These institutional logics were also guiding organizational changes in the company's language policies, which became important for the employees' internal and external communication.

Internationalization and the language standardization policy There was a serious obstacle to the internationalization strategy. Since all customers had up till then been Danish, all product documentation was in this language. In addition, the non-SAP programs were based on Danish templates and process description, toolboxes etc. were all in Danish. Accordingly, the first of May 2009 it was bluntly announced by the top management that all documentation from now on was to be done in English becoming the standard corporate language. In most departments the announcement was followed up by a meeting with the local middle manager explaining the decision and the reasons behind it. As described by an employee: "*We had a meeting with our boss where he said that now everything should be in English. And he also pointed out at the time that we all should not get stressed about it, it did not need to be perfect*". (non-SAP Executer).

A language policy task force was formed consisting of employees from the communication department and assigned to the task of implementing the change in product documentation language. They made different tools available, and a number of training opportunities during work hours were presented.

To explain the internationalization strategy, the top management argued that since the cost of

Danish SAP consultants was so high, KDK would lose market shares if they did not react fast and begin to outsource some of the SAP consultancy assignments. For many employees, it made sense to exchange the very expensive Danish external SAP consultants with cheaper Indian consultants for routine tasks.

According to almost all of our informants, the reception of the internationalization strategy was generally positive as most people at that time could agree with the argumentation from the top management. Hence, many employees saw the change to English as documentation language as timely and necessary as expressed by different informants: *"It is about time we change to English. You cannot be a serious IT company and think that everything should be in Danish"* (SAP Executer) or "*I don't think anyone questions the needs to document in English when we want to become an international company*" (Non-SAP Specifyer).

There were both personal and organizational reasons to welcome the change of product documentation language. Many interviewees were happy with the personal development the language training provided. As one mentioned, "*Personally I think it is cool to being forced to write English again. That will allow me to work more internationally in the future*" (SAP Specifyer) or as another mentioned it: "*We have to recognize that the IT business is becoming more global and being part of a more internationalized company should improve your CV and career opportunities*" (non-SAP Executer). Hence, personal career motives had a positive effect on people's willingness to improve English writing skills. Especially since this was done collectively and during work hours. In relation to the positive attitudes it could be observed that employees would speak English to each other for fun to use the training they had received.

Regarding the organization's gain, interviewees mentioned that they could see the points presented by the top management. As one mentioned: "*When we are already working more and more with Indians or Germans then no one questions the decision to start developing our language skills*" (SAP Executer). Or as conveyed by another: "*Because you can see a purpose of it then you become motivated*" (SAP Specifyer). The interviewed middle managers and employees thus expressed acceptance of the transition since this change seemed to make good sense in relation to the anticipated corresponding changes in work assignments concerning more international customer relations and outsourcing leaving a local orientation in the company behind.

While our interviewees were all relatively positive about the use of English, not everyone in the organization was equally enthusiastic. For example, jokes referring to the decision as silly could be overheard in the canteen. Moreover, in an informal conversation with an above middle age employee from the Service section it was mentioned: "*Now let's see what happens. I have not really done anything yet*". Thus, at the same time as a positive approach to the changes towards language standardization was formed among some employees, other employees would in daily conversations express some resistance to the changes thus questioning the seriousness and reality of the top management decision. A complete support or challenge of the novel changes was therefore not to be found throughout the company (c.f. Thomas et al., 2011).

Contradictory logics of local and international orientation: Change and resistance dynamics

When we returned to the organization in November 2011, there had been a dramatic development in the attitudes towards the language policy. Especially the Specifyers had developed a rather negative perception of English as documentation language. Also, some people in the non-SAP part of the Product section were skeptical toward the decision taken 2 years before.

In interviews it became clear that during the past years, an opposition towards the new language policy had started to develop. This had led the language policy task force to formulate a document to the top management describing some of the critical points:

> At the current time we are starting to see some challenges to the decision of using only English as a documentation language. The Product section does not only experience internal challenges in living up to the off shoring strategy. Also the connection to the Service section is creating problems as the need for English there is non-existent due to the fact that 99 % of the customers are Danish. (Document to the top management)

According to the interviewees, the resistance to using English as documentation language grew steadily in large parts of the organization. One of the reasons for the growing negative attitudes was the fact that the company had not changed in the way that the top management had predicted. Or at least the changes to become an international corporation had been much slower than anticipated in large parts of KDK (see Table 2). As one interviewee described it, "*The argument was - now we are going to outsource. Well that has not happened in my department*" (Non-SAP Service, Middle manager). Another employee explained:

> It was a board decision, and I can see from the outside it made perfectly sense. To a great extent many of us were intrigued by the idea that internationalization would provide opportunities for new acquisitions, new products, and new countries. So you could say it completely made sense if they were thinking of outsourcing. It was certainly the reasons that were mentioned when they spoke about why. But now it is

> clear that this has not really happened in many places of the organization. (SAP Specifyer)

Another thing was that the phasing out of non-SAP products was much slower than planned. As a middle manager in the SAP product section described it:

> There are large parts of this organization that are still not involved in SAP. I know this will not happen in two days. But there is a transition plan and it is not being followed. In the Product section there are those who live in the SAP world and those who live in the 'business as usual' world. They have not realized that we are supposed to change. And I cannot accept that there are parts of our organization that are allowed to just sit and say - we will just wait till it passes. (SAP Executer)

Obviously, in the non-SAP departments, employees were not eager to change the system. One argued that their computers were not fit to handle SAP while other just stated that it was not the right way to go. Yet another employee in a non-SAP department mentioned informally: "*Most people in this department are not interested in SAP. I don't really understand it. The train has already started moving and they are still discussing whether they ought to go down to the platform or not*" (Non-SAP Executer).

The formulated critique of the change processes was thereby multi-directional concerning both local departments' resistance to the demanded changes and the top management's inconsistency in following-up on the decision. As an example of this, the perception was that the top management launched the internationalization strategy but did little to ensure an effective implementation. As it

was argued informally, "*A decision was made and then it was expected that the rest would solve itself*". Another employee put it thus in an ironic critique of the management communication: "*The top management decision came out heavily to everybody and then silence*. *So you can say that they have been wonderfully consistent in their communication*". (Non-SAP product, Middle manager).

The informants agreed that the top management had not handled the implementation process optimally. In particular, the top management did not envision situations in which the use of a standard corporate language was inappropriate due to local Danish customers or the use of locally developed non-SAP programming systems. In other words, the co-existence of contradictory logics of local and international orientation affected the anticipated changes in ways, where the language strategy became incompatible with the local situation in some of the departments. Hence, the different conditions of the four different types of departments and related use of programming systems and work tasks in KDK gave rise to further differentiation in multi-directional relations of change and resistance. This is described in the below section.

Location of multi-directional and ambivalent resistance outcomes

SAP Product section: support of a standardized corporate language It was mentioned that using English as documentation was less of a problem for Executers because as one said: "*The closer we are to the programming and technical development, the easier it is to work with the English language because as long as it works it is good enough*" (SAP Executer). Therefore, especially in the SAP Product section the choice of English language had seemed natural due to the increasing collaboration with Indians and Germans. Several interviewees mentioned that they had been waiting for the decision and encouraged it already before the formal announcement.

The general attitude among the SAP Executers was that the internationalization strategy had been a good and necessary idea. It was also mentioned that the transition to using English in written communication had been less problematic than anticipated. An Executer described it:

> I think it's gone amazingly well for us to change. It has been easier than I had thought. Just a few years ago it seemed unthinkable that we should write in English. Until then we had only worked in Danish. Now it has become a natural part of everyday life. (SAP Executer)

Hence, internally in the SAP product section there was a relatively high degree of agreement concerning the language choice. As one put it: "*We have moved beyond all nonsense of whether or not and of where we should use English or Danish. Now it is just English*" (SAP Executer).

While there was a great degree of internal consensus concerning language use, the SAP Executers complained about the inconsistent language practice that had developed in other parts of the organization. As one said: "*There has developed this personal autonomy that means that some people can just write in Danish and it has no consequences*". (SAP Executer). Another SAP programmer made a similar observation:

> I think there is no longer any real control of when it is a requirement to write in English and when it is not. One sees, for example really much in status reporting where the template is in English, and then people fills it out in Danish. (SAP Executer).

The inconsistence in language use led to increasing aggravation in the SAP Product section. As one expressed it: "*I get damn annoyed when I get a document and I see that someone just decided to write it in Danish. Then I get a lot of extra work*". (SAP Executer). The SAP programmers to some extent blamed the top management for not enforcing the decision regarding the new language policy. As it was mentioned:

> The top management is just la-la – now we say that is how it has to be…and then not really anyway. Because somewhere down the organization there is one who says – you don't have to. It does not come from above. It is foolish that you put a lot of time and you spend a lot of money, and then suddenly no more. (SAP product Middle manager)

The critique of the top management's inability to maintain control of the change process materialized in upwards pressure to get the change process back on track. As one said: "*We have told our managers that they need to tell them up there* [the top management] *that if you start up a huge project like this you need to follow through*" (SAP Executer). This way the SAP programmers resisted the increasing derailing of the internalization process and tried to put pressure on the top management.

Non-SAP Service section: resistance to standard corporate language In the Service section, Danish was used more frequently in product documentation because, as one said, we are "*more dependent on nuances in the language when dealing directly with the customers".* (Non-SAP Specifyer) Many technical words from the Danish public sector were difficult to translate so that

they would be understood the same way by all customers. It was also a problem that different individuals translated the same term to different English words. For example going through the documentation we could see that the Danish word 'Bistandshjælp', which is a specific type of financial aid paid to unemployed individuals with little prior connection to the labor marked, was translated to '*cash pay*', '*welfare money*' and other variants referring to the same Danish concept. Such practices were, of course, highly confusing for both customers and KDK employees. Another reason why the Specifyers were reluctant to switch to English was the specific character of the all dominating customer, namely the Danish public sector. As one put it:

> We mainly deal with the municipalities. You can probably find many other places where it would be less problematic to do it in English than in municipalities. The IT director and such people are not a problem. But when you have to present this to Gerda who is a 53-year-old caseworker in a rural area, then English does not always come natural. (Non-SAP Specifyer)

Another problematic area in regard to the changes towards English was that the Service section had continued the strategy from when the two sections were split up, i.e. to become more customer oriented and provide documentation of high quality. Accordingly, it was preferred to present well written Danish documents rather than less prefect English documentation to customers who found it difficult to understand the translated terms. The difficulties experienced in connection to the new language policy led to great resistance. As it was described:

> I have only experienced challenges with using English. It was something that was decided from above to simplify things. But it has not exactly been simpler. There has

> been great resistance. As far as I know, all project managers here prepared a proposal to go back to Danish again. But it was rejected by the top. (Non-SAP Specifyer)

A middle manager described this confrontation with the top management.

> I said I did not believe in the decision and I just wanted an exemption for all my people so they would not have to worry about it. I said - now some of us [at KDK] have changed but must we all change? I will say, it seems to work quite brilliantly that only some of us have changed. (Non-SAP Service Middle manager)

Although the top management did not formally give in to the demands of the Specifyers, most middle managers in the Service department started to discard the language policy in the beginning of 2010. During the next six months, practically all non-SAP Specifyers went back to using Danish as documentation language. In their minds, this was the only sensible reaction to the language policy decision.

> We started to wonder why everything had to be in English also in the departments where you probably only want to work in Danish and where it only makes sense to work in Danish. At least the next several years. (Non-SAP Specifyer)

Hence, similar to the SAP Executers, the non-SAP Specifyers were in relative agreement. However, contrary to the SAP programmers, this group of Specifyers showed great resistance to the top management decision. In fact, the non-SAP Specifyers stopped using English as documentation language against the top management's clear direction. Not all sections, however, were internally in

agreement about the language policy.

Non-SAP Product section: ambivalence related to limited outsourcing In the non-SAP part of the Product section, the use of English was after two and a half years still inconsistent, and Danish and English language was used depending on the individual programmer or on the recipients. It was also mentioned that when you build your own system, documentation wasn't really so important: "*Because you are just a small group siting together. You don't live far away from the others. You just go straight over and talk to them*". (Non-SAP product Middle manager) Some Indian consultants were connected also to the non-SAP departments although to a much smaller extend than in the SAP departments. This was for two reasons. First, in order to use Indians in the non-SAP departments, Danish programmers had to explain everything because many parts of the programs were in Danish and involved Danish technical words and phrases used in the public sector. Secondly, it was relatively easier to find employees in KDK that were qualified to work in the self-developed systems compared to SAP. In this part of the organization, employees had started out with using English relatively consistently. However, many had switched back to using Danish simply to save time when writing the documentation. One middle manager had documented his staff used 15 percent more time on documentation when doing it in English. This resulted in English language documentation being 'on pause' many places in the non-SAP Product section departments. *"It is more or less up to you now*", as one argued. (Non-SAP Executer F).

The majority of programmers that were not working with SAP products argued that although the decision to switch to English might have been correct, it had been implemented far too early. They based this argument on the fact that almost half of the KDK employees were still working on projects that didn't involve SAP. As one said: "*They do not yet have the volume in SAP to justify the*

change". (Non-SAP product Middle manager). Another conveyed a similar opinion:

> Yes, I think at some point we will need it. But it will probably be at least 10 years. We begin to have foreign subsidiaries but very few work there. It is probably not reason enough. Now the outsourcing thing was supposed to hit us all like a gigantic wave and that was to be in about a nanosecond. It has not done so yet. (Non-SAP Executer)

But there were also some Executers in the non-SAP departments that did not agree totally with opposition towards the language policy. Those individuals were involved in outsourcing although they did not use SAP. In those situations they would face a lot of problems due to the inconsistency in documentation language. One Executer explained it:

> I worked in a process that goes through many stages, and we were in the last team before the Indians. And we would get a lot of material in Danish and then we had to do all the translation because it was us who had to pass it on. (Non-SAP Executer)

In such teams it was argued that they simply could not exist if they did not write in English. Hence, there were multiple resistance patterns even within the non-SAP product section. Some employees thought it were too early to change the documentation language and that the cost of spending time documenting in English was too great. They thus resisted the attempt by the top management to implement a standardized language. Others who were more involved with outsourcing activities acknowledged the need for English and were therefore opposed to the general insubordination of certain persons in the Non-SAP departments.

SAP Service section: concerns about work quality Similar to the non-SAP Executers, both English and Danish was used depending on who the documentation was intended for in the part of the Service section, which used SAP. As one employee in that part of the organization mentioned: "*I always see how long I can keep the information from the customers in Danish before I have to translate. In the other end I try to keep it in English as long as I can so we don't have to translate it too many times*" (SAP Specifyer).

Although many had initially thought that after a while it would not be a problem to document in English, it turned out that the quality did not get to the same level as when it was in Danish. This was substantiated by the researchers going through the product documentation reports. When documenting was in English, the text was only about 50 percent of the length compared to Danish documentation. As one said: "*In English we are just not as sharp as we are in Danish and you lose a lot of details*" (SAP Specifyer).

Hence, similar to the Non-SAP service section, the local middle management several places had informed the SAP Specifyers that the 2009 language policy did not have to be followed in detail. "*We have been informed we can wait till it makes sense. We should not write in English for the sake of writing in English*." (SAP Specifyer). Accordingly, some of the SAP specifyers would often 'forget' to document in English as it was said. One described the status of his department: "*Compared to two years ago just after we said that now we must all be ready to switch to English, you can say that it has actually gone backwards since then*". (SAP Service, Middle manager)

A main concern in the SAP service section was the quality of the documentation – "*because this is something we are measured on here*" (SAP Specifyer). The SAP Specifyers sometimes had to

document in English because some of the work would be outsourced. However, it was a concern that they would appear incompetent. As on argued:

> I have found that there were great worries about everything having to be in English, there are some who does not feel good about it. Because as trained professionals, they are afraid that it will affect their reputation as skilled employees that their English is not correct. (SAP Specifyer)

Hence, although much of the work had to be done in English due to outsourcing, the close contact to customers and the urge to seem professional made some employees return to Danish. This led to some confusion because the two languages were both used. Those most proficient in English would document in this language while other would predominantly write in Danish. Also the nature of the assignment, the outsourcing prospect, and the customers would determine the language use. As one explained:

> I think there is a lack of consistency in terms of what a person does here. It can be in English or Danish. It also depends sometimes on what people actually are used to. Because we are in service it can be a challenge sometimes to find out if it makes the most sense that it is in Danish or English. So it is often a negotiation. Who is it that needs it the most? (SAP Specifyer)

Although the use of SAP and related outsourcing in this department of service did encourage a support of English, the employees often delimited their use of English as much as possible. Compared to the SAP production department, the service department had a greater responsibility in

translating and back-translating documents which was not an easy process. Thus language proficiency became an obstacle which made the balancing of contradictory logics of local and internationally standardized language even more difficult thereby creating resistance to the demands of language flexibility.

To sum up, the four sections of SAP Service, SAP Production, Non-SAP Service and Non-SAP production developed various local patterns of supportive of or resistant to the top management's language policy. Moreover, by time, resistance to the local forms of resistance was also developed thereby adding to the ambivalence of resistance in the four sections. An important reason for this multi-directedness in resistance (cf. Thomas et al., 2011) was the complex dialectics of change and resistance, where the local departments' diverse work tasks and relations to stakeholders were guided by the coexisting contradictory logics of local orientation and international orientation. Thus, the multi-directedness of resistance developed over time in various ways in various local contexts as part of the middle managers and employees' difficulties with balancing contradictory institutional logics. In this process, a novel hybrid way of resisting the language standardization policy was to flexibly shift or translate between English and Danish when considered appropriate. This, however, caused new obstacles in terms of difficulties with language proficiency needed to translate and back-translate the product documentation.

Discussion

Main findings

The current study describes a situation where the top management of a locally oriented company reformulated the organization's strategic aim informed by an institutional logic promoting internationalization. The new strategy included the increased collaboration with German SAP

suppliers and Indian programmers. It also involved the establishment of the subsidiary KDK International and most importantly the radical change to standardize the written language of the central product documentation to only English. In many ways the reorientation of KDK was a necessity in order to remain competitive in an increasingly globalized IT sector. This argument was also generally accepted by employees that were well prepared for the new situation by substantial investments in language training and support. As the proficiency in the English language is generally very high among university educated Danish employees resistance after the announcement was therefore relatively soft and mostly expressed implicitly in joking behavior or passivity in relation to announced changes. Hence, to begin with most employees took interest in the personal development encompassed in language training.

This ‘honey moon’ approach to the change process for some parts of the organization lasted only till the employees experienced the practical problems involved with writing in English. Among those problems were reduced product documentation quality, reduced customer service, and increased time consumption. In other parts of the organization, however, the attitude to the new strategy remained positive. This could be related to the benefits of increased earning and competitiveness, outsourcing of the trivial parts of the job, improved collaboration with international stakeholders, and reduced time consumption in relation to international task transfer. Accordingly, the organization became stuck in an inherent dilemma between two contradictory institutional logics; that of international orientation and that of local orientation.

However, as indicated above the two institutional logics did not evoke the same response in all departments. Depending on the different departments’ specific needs and requirements individuals demonstrated varying resistance patterns to the change process. Employees in departments

influenced extensively by the local orientation logic directly opposed the top management. Moreover, although the top management unambiguously rejected a proposed moderation of the language policy certain individuals and whole departments begun to apply practices counter to the formal ideal. This gradually accelerated as the top management although consistent in their ideal did not intervene against changes in applied product documentation language. This fostered a different wave of resistant behavior exercised by individuals and departments with practices that were well in line with the ideals of the internationalization oriented institutional logic. They confronted the top management demanding that they put a stop to the insubordination to the rules of the language policy. This was done because the resistance behavior of the locally oriented individuals and departments complicated their work and increased costs. The internationally oriented individuals thus resisted the top management practices of not reacting against the ignoring of a formal policy thereby letting the ambivalence of language use grow in the company. Adding to this complex situation was the co-existence of both local and international orientation logics prevailing in particularly two of the departments. These two departments found it necessary to shift between Danish and English when needed thereby resisting the formal policies by creating a flexible language approach to the balancing of local orientation and internationalization logics. Yet for some this added further challenges of language proficiency and concerns of work quality.

Theoretical debates and contribution

The findings of this study can provide novel insights informing on debates in organization studies dealing with resistance, institutional logics, and language use. In the following we apply the findings of the current study to engage in these debates and demonstrate important linkages between them as well the study's contribution to the different areas.

With regard to resistance research, our research support recent studies (Thomas and Hardy, 2011b; Thomas et al., 2011; Mumby, 2005) arguing that organizational resistance does not always play out as a linear worker reaction against managerial imperatives nor as a direct and oppositional response to change agents' initiatives. The findings emphasize that employee resistance was not only directed towards the management demanding changes of standard language use. Rather, the dynamics of making sense of the demanded changes and various forms of resistance among the employees in various departments resulted in employees resisting the resistance behavior by other employees thus supporting theorization of the multi-directedness and dialectics of change and resistance (Thomas et al., 2011; Mumby, 2005; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009). In further exploration of Piderit (2000), Thomas, Sargent and Hardy (2011) and Tsoukas and Chia's (2002) theorizing, we found that resistance was developed as part of the organizational becoming in ambivalent ways, where some organization members actually changed their mind about the change initiative. In our case certain employees went from being positive to being negative towards the changes after the consequences to daily work activities were experienced. This finding was made possible by our qualitative longitudinal research design (cf. Hermanowicz, 2013) that allowed us to access perceptions of the implemented policy at different points in time. Finally, contrary to mainstream research arguing that resistance behavior is generally based on worker self-interest (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005) our study showed that employees actually first started to resist when the new policy went from influencing them personally (imposed language training) to influencing their contribution to the organization's effectiveness (customer satisfaction, quality, cost, and time consumption). This finding may relate to the fact that we studied highly educated programmers and engineers rather than blue collar workers as has been done by other similar studies (e.g. Bovey and Hede, 2001; Bain and Taylor, 2000). Hence, in response to prior studies defining resistance as being either negative (e.g. Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Furst and Cable, 2008; Giangreco and Peccei, 2005) or positive

(Ford and Ford, 2010; Ford et al., 2008; Courpasson et al., forthcoming) for improving an organization, it is difficult to say if resistance behavior in this case was either or in relation to overall organizational goals. This is because the evaluation of the resistance has to be seen in the light of contradictory institutional logics that may both have actual value for organizational performance.

The present study further adds to the theories of multi-directional dialectics of resistance being developed over time (Thomas et al., 2011; Mumby, 2005). By drawing on theories of plural contradictory institutional logics (Schneiberg and Clemens, 2006; Seo and Creed, 2002; van Gestel and Hillebrand, 2011; Dunn and Jones, 2010; Friedland and Alford, 1991), the study shows that various forms of resistance to change and resistance to resistance were not only developed over time but as part of diverse communicative practices situated within different organization sections, where the employees and managers strived to make sense of and balance the contradictory institutional logics of local orientation and internationalization. The findings show that, in some sections, the novel logics of internationalization and the top managements' anticipated changes involving outsourcing, growth in international business partners, and related language standardization were challenged by the co-existing contradictory logics of local orientation and a continuance in mainly Danish customers and related Danish documentation needs. Thus, the contradictory logics in these departments had to be continuously balanced in close correspondence with the varying local tasks and as an integrated part of the local sense-making and communicative practices. For example, some employees resisted the top management's language policy because it hampered their daily work in a part of the organization that was not influenced by internationalization to the extent that was predicted. Hence, this could be interpreted as a sound reaction based on customer requirements as well as the quality and speed of work. On the other

hand, this local decision created problems for other parts of the organization and impeded the internationalization process subsequently leading to resistance from other groups of employees.

Our study also contributes to institutional research on organizational becoming (Greenwood et al., 2011; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) by providing information on the organization internal 'work', which employees undertake to deal with logics originated from larger institutional fields. The study shows that resistance acting as local configurations of the top managers' expectations of a clear-cut change towards a global corporation and a standard corporate language led to the organizing of continuous situational adjustment of language use, where employees were shifting between Danish and English when needed. Thus a novel hybrid of both local and global orientation was developed. It is therefore suggested that local sense-making and resistance may challenge the existing contradictory logics by identifying the need for novel guiding logics of organizational becoming in a specific institutional field. Further research of the organizational and institutional consequences of such local configurations is however needed.

Finally, our research contributes to the now rapidly growing body of literature dealing with organizational language use. Especially, there has been a need for empirical knowledge related to implications of language policies where extant publications has mainly been of a conceptual character (e.g. Born and Peltokorpi, 2010). The current study explicates the dynamics involved in a language standardization process and resistance as well as accommodation behavior could be registered. This demonstrates the local rationalizing of language use being connected to overall institutional logics promoting international or local orientation. In this regard, a number of studies have mentioned identity implications and political negotiations as an important element of resistances to language standardization (e.g. Vaara et al., 2005; Piekkari et al., 2005). Contrary to

this view on resistance to language standardization, in our study we did not find that resistance was related to group or individual identification issues. Rather individuals to start with embraced the idea of becoming internationalized, up-to-date as individuals and organization. In line with the argumentation of Volk et al. (2014) it was the cognitive effort and the instrumental problems in solving the work task that eventually triggered resistance behavior among those individuals committed to local orientation as institutional logic. Hence, in our case the language policy was not interpreted up front as a political instrument but due to its effect on work it became object for political negotiations further down the line. Those negotiations did not merely evolve based on groupings characterized by having sufficient linguistic skills or not, but between those guided by specific organizational task needs and subsequently being guided by different institutional logics. This should be related to the fact that the communicative capacity that was influenced by the standardizing language policy was impeded mainly when providing service to the customers. In other words, the use of English in this case did not cut off any employees from the internal, verbal communication in the organization but reduced the quality of work of external, written communication and the contact to essential stakeholders for particular groups of employees. This specific finding may reflect the difference in language policies dealing with written language as opposed to those including merely verbal language (cf. Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Lauring and Klitmøller, 2015). As few previous studies have engaged with language policies and differences in efficiency in written and verbal language within and external to the organization this finding is novel to the field.

Practical implications

Our findings have several implications that could inform the development of practical guidelines in organizations. Results showed that very complex patterns of resistance may develop over time and

that employees who apparently are positive towards a transition may change their mind. Therefore the management should plan how to respond to resistance from several angles such as resistance from different groups of employees, resistances towards different elements of the change, resistance to other's resistance, and resistance at different stages of the implementations. This requires a far more nuanced approach than just assuming that after a launch of a change template a unitary group of workers will potentially oppose it.

The findings also have implications for language management. First, results show that language standardization including only written communication may not function the same way as combined verbal and written language standardization. In the first case our results point to cognitive rather identity related barriers being central to resistance behavior. This means that the management should focus less on group relations and more on easing task related activities. Secondly, our findings suggest that the ideal of promoting monolingualism in organizations on the verge to internationalization may be a too simplified approach. Contradictory institutional logics and instrumental requirements could lead to the need for a dual language strategy that can be adjusted as needs changes.

Limitations and further research

Although our research is conducted using an extensive qualitative longitudinal approach there are still limitations to our findings that need to be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, our study only contained direct observations to a limited extent. More observation could have provided additional knowledge about actual resistance practices in the organization. Second, our study was done in a single organization in one single country and thus not all empirical findings may be generalizable to other settings. As part of the Nordic countries, Danes are generally known

to have a high English language proficiency which could lead to different resistance patterns towards a language standardization process than what would have been the case in countries with different types of language use patterns. This could be countries where the native language has a broad and more dominating position worldwide such as China, Spain, France, or Germany.

Finally, the current study raises issues that could provide the foundation for further research concerning organizational resistance to change. Since very few studies have empirically examined resistance patterns in relation to language standardization and communication more could be done in this area. In this project we focused primarily on politics of written language standardization. However, more studies assessing the resistance behavior associated also with policies of verbal language standardization are needed. Moreover, in the current study we have focused on how resistance developed in a change situation involving international and local orientation as institutional logics. Resistance, however, could also be studied in organizations influenced by other types of competing institutional logics such as e.g. performance vs. people orientation.

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Table 1 Main data sources

Interviews		
First phase		**No. interviews**
	SAP	
	Service section	4
	Product section	4
	Non-SAP	
	Service section	4
	Product section	4
	Top manager	1
	Language policy task force member	1
	Total first phase	**18**
Second phase		
	SAP	
	Service section	4
	Product section	4
	Non-SAP	
	Service section	4
	Product section	4
	Top manager	1
	Language policy task force member	1
	Total second phase	**18**
In total 36 interviews with 21 Interviewees		
Other data sources Public documents (e.g. press releases, corporate documents) Private documents (presentations, minutes of meetings, product documentation reports) Observations: Office life, meetings, corridor talk, canteen talk Observations in total 127 hours: Mai-August 2009 (41 h) November 2011-January 2012 (86 h)		

Table 2 Corporate data

KDK information	**2009**	**2011**
Turnover	550 million Euros	600 million Euros
Revenue after tax	16 million Euros	46 million Euros
Turnover in the private sector	15 %	17 %
Number of full time employees	3300	3100
Turnover KDK international (subsidiary)	15,000 Euros (Only from activities in Denmark)	83,000 Euros (primarily from activities in Denmark)
Revenue after tax KDK international	0	-31,000 Euros
Number of full time employees in KDK international	0	8

Table 3 Departmental product documentation language use

Language practice in 2011	**Service section**	**Product section**
SAP	*Danish/English language* -Experiences confusion -Worried about professional appearance	*English language* -Questioning the current language practice
Non-SAP	*Danish language* -Questioning the current language ideal	*Danish/English language* -Experiences increased work load

Appendix 1 Table of interviewees

Interviewee	**Times interviewed**	**Section**	**Position**	**Gender**
1	2	Central	Top manager	M
2	2	Central	Comm. mng.	F
3a	1	SAP Service	Middle mng	F
3b	1	SAP Service	Middle mng	F
4	2	SAP Service	Specifyer	M
5	2	SAP Service	Specifyer	F
6	2	SAP Service	Specifyer	M
7a	1	SAP Product	Middle mng	M
7b	1	SAP Product	Middle mng	M
8	2	SAP Product	Executer	M
9	2	SAP Product	Executer	M
10	2	SAP Product	Executer	M
11	2	Non-SAP Serv	Middle mng	M
12	2	Non-SAP Serv	Specifyer	M
13	2	Non-SAP Serv	Specifyer	F
14	2	Non-SAP Serv	Specifyer	F
15	2	Non-SAP Prod	Middle mng	M
16a	1	Non-SAP Prod	Executer	M
16b	1	Non-SAP Prod	Executer	F
17	2	Non-SAP Prod	Executer	M
18	2	Non-SAP Prod	Executer	M

Appendix 2 Simplified version of field code list

Phase 1:

Internationalization

Outsourcing

German suppliers

International business customers

System change

SAP

Non-SAP

Specifyers

Executers

Language policy

Top management

Processes

Needs

Costs

Communication

Product documentation

Language initiatives

Task force

Training

Translation

Other initiatives

Resistance

Adjustment

Barriers to the language policy

Proficiency

Customers

Translation

Phase 2:

Internationalization

Outsourcing

German suppliers

International business customers

Local orientation

Danish systems

Danish customers

Language consistency

Consequences of language policy

Top management follow-up

Local middle manager reactions

Local autonomy

Diversity of stakeholders

Employees

Suppliers

Customers

Resistance

SAP Executer

SAP Specifyers

Non-SAP Executer

Non-SAP Specifyers

Middle managers

Departmental insubordination

Departmental conflicts

Middle managers

Barriers to the language policy

Proficiency and professionalism

Cost

Time

Location

Corporate culture

Mistakes

Nuances