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**Effects of local language skills on the employability
of International graduates in Norway**

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Abstract

Many studies suggest that language is almost the essence of international business (Bondarouk, Ruël, & Looise, 2011). This study focuses on the role of local language skills on the employability of international graduates in Norway. Norwegian being the local language in question. Many authors agree that employability of a graduate is based on certain employability skills which include communication skills, emotional intelligence and social capital. This study argues that language skills influence the communication skills, emotional intelligence and social networking skills of international graduates.

Based on a qualitative study conducted with 11 participants, including 3 job-seekers, 5 skilled job workers and 3 employers from Norway and taking the key to employability model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) as a base to study international graduate's employability, this study forwards an argument that Norwegian language skills are influential in defining and measuring an international graduate's employability in Norway. This study extends the key to employability model to include a global perspective and argues that when the model includes a global perspective and evaluates an international graduate's employability, there are many additional factors that can affect a graduate's employability. This study considers local language skills to be one of such factors.

Based on the model, the effect of language skills on the generic skills, emotional intelligence and social capital in turn affects the reflection and evaluation of international graduates' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy, which goes on to affect their employability as a whole. This study also supports the view that language skills are influential only on certain kinds of fields and organization where language skills play a critical role in the job requirements. The types of fields have been categorized into two groups, social and technical. The study concludes that international graduates aiming for a career in the social field would require language skills more than one's aiming for technical fields. These findings have been supported from triangulation of two perspectives of employability; individual perspective and organizational perspective. Findings of the study also suggest that English language is influential in supporting the employability of international graduates and helping them overcome the language barrier in Norway.

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1 Introduction

We live in a global age. People are easily crossing borders and working in foreign states. International business has been a frequent word. More and more businesses today are operating in multiple countries. The growing business age has changed the workforce supply. Looking around us, we find people from different countries studying and working together, speaking different languages with different backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles.

There are many reasons to go for universities in a different country, naturally the first choice is the love of the subject to be studied but more so, it gives an opportunity to experience a different way of life. Cultural understanding is in the center of every activity of a foreign student graduating in countries with different first language. In such an environment, to what extent would local language skills be influential for an international graduate's employability? Being based in Norway, this study will try to analyze the effects of local language skill, being Norwegian, on the employability of the foreign graduates.

The first question is, what is employability? In fact many have agreed that employability is an extremely complex, and somewhat vague, concept that is both difficult to articulate and define (Andrews & Higson, 2008). They have also agreed that it is not constant. For one to be employable, they need to adapt to changing demands. This study is based on a model of employability forwarded by Darce Pool and Sewell (2007), which provided us with a simple model to explain employability. However, they have concluded that the issues within the model are likely to be revisited many times to ensure adaptability to the demands of a changing world and a better chance of occupational satisfaction and success (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Following this conclusion, this study forwards the hypothesis that in a different setting, such as an international graduate's point of view, these issues can furthermore be influenced by many other factors, one being local language skill.

It is evident that international graduates are increasing in Norway. One of the major factors contributing to that fact is the possibility of free education available in Norway. Hadia Tajik from the Labor party believes that Norway should remain an attractive study destination and that the international students will strengthen Norwegian employment should they choose to continue to stay in Norway (Ryland). As the number grows, the workforce available will also be diverse with international experience. Some argue that even in the most locally-based of

service jobs involving real time interactions, new sets of transnational connections are producing a globalized labor force (McDowell, Batnitzky, & Dyer, 2008).

This study aims to apply the model from the perspective of international graduates in Norway, thus looking at the factors that affect the employability of international graduates in Norway, who are trying to be employed here. Those who choose to stay will need to understand that getting employed requires a certain set of learning, experience and skills as explained by the model of graduate employability.

Among all the factors, this study focuses on the local language skills. For international graduates in Norway, being able to speak in Norwegian could be a major advantage. Also, being from a different cultural and social backgrounds, understanding and not understanding Norwegian can have a major impact on the factors that influence employability as a whole.

This paper seeks to redress the gap in the literature by exploring the perceptions of employers, academics and students with regard to the value of local language skills in terms of international graduate employability.

Over a couple of decades we have seen a major boost in internationalization and globalization (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). For this study, we take the idea of internationalization as a continuous process which strengthens the relationship between national cultures (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). This growing globalization requires more graduates to be able to operate in culturally diverse environments.

Recruiters tended to see graduates with foreign language skills as “interesting candidates” and therefore more likely to be noticed in the initial recruitment process (Teichler & Jahr, 2001). Authors have also acknowledged that there is a growing need of a common language along with the growing globalization. Also, English has become the business lingua franca of the current globalized business community (Chan & Dimmock, 2008). This explains the fact why most students choose to study and forward their career in countries with English as the first language (Davis, Olsen, & Milne, 1999).

One of the main benefits of international experience includes additional language acquisition (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). It is also argued that universities would do well to encourage a greater up-take on international exchange programs, particularly to non-English speaking countries where both language acquisition and cultural experience can provide valuable additions to a graduate’s portfolio of employability skills (Crossman & Clarke, 2010).

The JRC report on languages and employability by Luísa Araújo, Costa and Calvo in 2015 (Luísa Araújo, 2015) offers empirical study of the positive relation between knowing foreign languages and employment status in European Union. The report also shows that knowing a second language at a proficient level is regarded as an advantage in terms of employment for some individuals.

A study which relates employability of graduates with communication was forwarded by Jane Andrews & Helen Higson (Andrews & Higson, 2008) where they explained employability in terms of Business Specific Issues (Hard business-related knowledge and skills), Interpersonal Competencies (Soft business-related skills) and Work Experience and Work-Based Learning. In their study, they have identified key transferable soft skills which includes

1. The capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking
2. Good written and verbal communication skills;

Our study, implicitly, also argues that these soft skills are influenced by local language skills which in turn affects employability. In order to be able to communicate and interact with others, a common language, oral or symbolic, is required for understanding. And the common language might not always be the most comfortable language for both the parties resulting in misunderstandings. In simple terms, speaking a second language might be beneficial, or necessary, to be employable in certain career prospects. Good written and verbal communication skills tend to be influenced by language skills in question.

Here arises a question of why language skills are to be considered when we talk about employability. This is what the study aims to look into.

1.1 Study background

There has been some quite notable studies regarding graduate employability. One model we discussed was forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) where they have tried to develop a practical model of employability that will allow the concept to be explained easily and that can be used as a framework for working with students to develop their employability. Their model has clearly set out what defines a graduate employability and how each elements in their model reacts with one another. Another study that has simplified the concept of

employability is the study by Andrews and Higson (2008) who talk about employability in terms of a group of skills which have been categorized as soft skills and hard skills. There are quite a few studies related to employability, competencies related with employability and industry wise study of employability. There are very few studies that focus on the employability of a graduate and almost no study that focuses on the employability of a foreign student i.e. an international graduate. Thus, this study will support researchers that are interested in studying about employability factors that affect an international graduate.

From the graph, we can estimate the growth rate of international students around the world. (ICEF, 2015). Growth in international students will result in growth in international graduates and eventually, culturally diverse workforce supply. Among many factors that affects an international graduate’s employability, this study is aimed to analyze the cultural aspect, focusing on the effects of language skills. Growing globalization introduces various challenges not only in business operations but also on a graduate’s employability. Crossing national and cultural boundaries brings in additional communication challenges for individuals (Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 2014).

In Norway, as for several other OECD countries, there has been an increase in foreign enrolments by more than 50 per cent since 1999/2000. In Norway, and for the other Nordic countries, this trend may be explained as no tuition fees are charged for domestic and international students in public tertiary institutions.(Statistics-Norway, 2007)

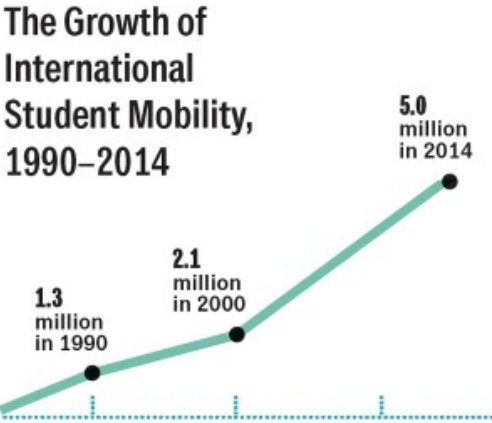
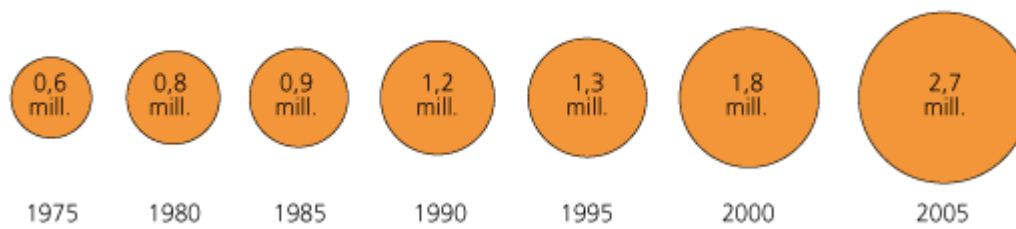


Figure 1-1 The state of student mobility in 2015 (ICEF, 2015)

Long term growth in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship, 1975 to 2005



Source: Education at a Glance 2007, OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2007>).

Figure 1-2 Long term growth in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship, 1975 to 2005 (Statistics-Norway, 2007)

Looking at the current workforce in Norway, 15 percent of the employment is occupied by immigrants (Statistics-Norway, 2016). There is limited data regarding proportion of immigrants in skilled job market and if this is growing. However, the growing number of international graduate suggests that there are more people willing to study and work in Norway.

When we talk about the employability of international graduates, the first questions that comes to mind are, what employability is and what makes a person employable for a certain organization. When we talk about an international graduate, it is obvious for an international graduate to learn, experience and respect a culture that is different than their own. When we talk about cultural differences, there are a wide range of factors that is included under cultural differences, one being the language.

Why would language play such a vital role when one is getting employed? Communication is at the heart of every activity. Company jargons, social conversations, cross-cultural gatherings, mass meetings or simply a report that is in Norwegian can affect the communication and social skills of international graduates. When an employee is not skilled in a language, simple information flow can be disrupted. Be it professional or everyday activity communication and language is involved in every activity. A common ground for communication is essential to understand and to be understood. Verbal communication is only possible if the parties involved share a common language. In cases where they do not share a common language, misunderstanding and confusions are bound to arise. In professional cases, such problems may lead to decreased productivity of the individuals and ultimately affect the efficiency of the overall organization.

Language, of course, is a key aspect of culture, it is inherent in a specific culture and also an embodiment of it (Piekkari et al., 2014). If language influences the way we behave and how we perceive things, it means that culture is also inherent in the language itself (Claes, 1995). Still, language is taken for granted and there is limited research on language as a standalone factor (Piekkari & Welch, 2010). Some authors argue that language has an importance above and beyond “embeddedness-in-culture” perspective (Welch & Welch, 2008). Rather than trying to underrate the importance of cultural understanding, this statement enforces the need to deal with language as a separate element in order to better understand the importance and role of language in international business (Piekkari et al., 2014).

Cultural issues have gained a lot of importance in the field of international business. Cross-cultural communication and cultural understanding is at the heart of any international business activity. Cultural factors have become a sensitive issue when it comes to multinational organizations. Cross-cultural communication studies have included language as an influential factor, but is it really an issue when it comes to getting employed? When we connect all these dots, we can accept that being fluent in the local language could give a lot of advantages. One could be better at communication, better at understanding the implicit and explicit information in every communication and be a better candidate for an organization when compared to one that does not have the fluency in the language in question.

Any factor that could affect the productivity of an individual or the whole organization will be considered by the responsible managers. Looking from an employer’s perspective, they are bound to consider such productivity barriers when hiring. Considering from the graduates perspective, if a student is willing to graduate and work in a foreign country with different language, they might accept that it is better to learn the language. It seems highly likely that language fluency increases the chance of employment, but it is unclear to what extent this influences an international graduate’s career path. Thus, the research question

Research Question

To what extent does the local language skills affect an international graduate’s employability?

1.2 Study approach

Studying the effects of language on a career path of a student is not a well-defined area. It is unsure if the language does have an effect and what is the extent to which it might be

influential. The aim of this study is not to quantify the extent but rather to explain how different individuals have perceived the influences and if there is a common ground to explain the affects.

The research and findings of this study are based on in-depth interview of participants from different fields or work and study. The participants have been selected on the basis of common characteristics required for the study. The study follows a triangulation study method where the research is conducted from more than one perspective to validate the findings. The first group of participants that have been selected for this study are international graduates working on or seeking a graduate level job in Norway. By international graduates, we mean international students who have completed a Norwegian graduate degree here in Norway. Participants are working on a job that reflects their graduate degree or are seeking one. In simple words, they would not have got the job if they had not been graduates. The main area of information collection revolves around their journey from graduation to employment. Their preparations and motivations for their career development in Norway could provide a valuable insight on what might be particularly necessary for an international graduate to land a skilled job here in Norway. Another group of participants include employers working in different organizations in Norway. The study methods and approaches have been discussed in detail in the Methodology section.

Literature Review

2 What is Employability?

The concept of employability came into use around 1955 (Versloot, Glaudé, & Thijssen, 1998). It is only since the late 1990s that employability has been empirically studied. Employability has been studied from different angles and distinct levels (individual, organizational, and industrial) across a wide range of academic disciplines, such as business and management studies, human resource management, human resource development, psychology, educational science, and career theory. (Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006). Employability is an extremely complex, and somewhat vague concept that is both difficult to articulate and define (Andrews & Higson, 2008)

When talking about employability, it is necessary to distinguish between employment and employability, as they differ in scope as well as idea. Employment is seen as a graduate outcome that may be measured and used within the information published by universities, whereas employability relates to the teaching and learning of a wide range of knowledge, skills and attributes to support continued learning and career development (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, & Lawton, 2012).

The studies and concepts of employability can be categorized into three major perspectives: economic-social, organization and individual (Dam, Heijden, & Schyns, 2006). The economic-social perspective reflects the different categories of workforce, where one has the ability to gain and maintain employment and the other does not (Nauta, Vianen, Heijden, Dam, & Willemsen, 2009). Government interventions to encourage the unemployed to enter the labor market is a common example under this perspective.

The organizational perspective relates employability with organization's functional flexibility (Nauta et al., 2009). Growing internationalization, globalization and various changes require organizations to adapt to the dynamic environment to survive and sustain. Accordingly, their demands for employability skills change. From this point of view, employability meant the functional flexibility of staff. Employability was no longer approached as a labor market instrument, but rather as an HR instrument to optimize the deployment of staff within companies (Forrier & Sels, 2003).

The individual perspective shifts the attention from the underprivileged workforce to the entire labor force. Employability concepts under individual perspective emphasize career

aspects such as adaptability, mobility, career development, occupational expertise and personal development and lifelong learning (Nauta et al., 2009). The literature on employability now focuses primarily on the individual's ability to maintain a job in the internal or external labor market (Forrier & Sels, 2003).

2.1 Defining Employability

Definitions of employability vary greatly from a focus on graduate's abilities to adapt and use personal and academic skills (Knight & Yorke, 2004) to more tangible educational outcome measures that associate graduate employability with employment under the auspices of the UK's first destination statistics (Smith, McKnight, & Naylor, 2000). The background theory that always related to employability skills development is the human capital theory, which states 'employability' is not only about shaping talent, techniques, and experience for an individual to get a job, but more toward the ability to do the work (Rasul, Rauf, Mansor, Yasin, & Mahamod, 2013).

One of the simplest definitions to start with was forwarded by Hinchcliffe (2001, p. 8);

Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful.

This definition was articulated to include the aspect of personal satisfaction. Another definition worth mentioning was forwarded ESECT based on Yorke (2006, p. 8);

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

There are other notable definitions about employability, one being forwarded by Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. 2)

Employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment.

The UKCES report 'The Employability Challenge' (2009a) has drawn on the most commonly used definitions of employability:

We take employability skills to be the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They are the skills that must be present to enable an individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills that their particular workplaces will require.

The term employability has been criticized for being fragmented and fuzzy (Forrier, Verbruggen, & De Cuyper, 2015). A study by Forrier and Sels (2003) forwards an integration for all the different notions of employability. They have defined employability as “an individual’s chance of a job in the internal and/or external labor market” (Forrier & Sels, 2003, p. 106). Their notions of employability include job transition, movement capital and perceived employability. They believe that these different notions of employability tie together in a dynamic chain where job transition affects movement capital, movement capital affects perceived employability and perceived employability affects job transition (Forrier et al., 2015).

In the competence based study of employability by Heijde and Van Der Heijden (2006), they define employability as “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences.” They have presented a valid and reliable tool to measure employability which is based on a five-dimensional conceptualization of employability, in which occupational expertise is complemented with generic competences (Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006).

Another notable model of employability was forwarded by Yorke and Knight where they explained employability through the USEM model which stand for understanding, skills, efficacy beliefs and metacognition (Knight & Yorke, 2004). A simple model explaining employability is the DOTS model which argues that employability is based on decision making skills, opportunity awareness, transition learning and self-awareness (Law & Watts, 2003). However, this model was criticized for missing out on social and political contexts (McCash, 2006).

2.2 Graduate employability

When talking about a graduate’s employability. We need to first define what a graduate is. For our study, we consider any student with a Norwegian degree capable for seeking, applying and working on a graduate level skilled job, a graduate The concept and definition of employability of employability has been discussed for a number of years but there has been a

growing interest in graduate employability over the last decade (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011).

There are notable studies regarding a graduate's employability, one being Andrews and Higson's (Andrews & Higson, 2008) study where they have explained a graduate's employability by focusing on different essential components, namely; Business Specific Issues (Hard business-related knowledge and skills); Interpersonal Competencies (Soft business-related skills); Work Experience and Work-Based Learning.

Similar to Andrews and Higson's study, another study focusing on a graduate's employability skills in the manufacturing industry was forwarded by Rasul, Rauf, Mansr, Tasin and Mahamod. Their study focuses on the importance of employability skills as perceived by employers from manufacturing industries. They have concluded that employers place great importance to communication skills, problem solving skills, team work skills and personal qualities. However, graduates also need to emphasize on leadership skill, entrepreneur skill, technology skill and informational skills (Rasul et al., 2013).

A study which explains graduate on the basis of professional competencies was forwarded by Teijeiro, Rungo and Freire. They argue that professional competencies are the dominant factors that measure a graduate's employability. Individuals who have best developed the competencies which firms feel to be most important are more likely to be in a position to obtain a job (Teijeiro, Rungo, & Freire, 2013). They have included the concept of the proximity between the relative levels of both importance and attainments i.e. the match between the competencies that employers feel are important and the competencies attained by the graduate.

The model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) explains employability with certain essential components required for a graduate, where every component must be present and any missing element will decrease a graduate's employability. The following visual figure shows the model and how each component interacts with one another. The abbreviation "CareerEDGE" has been suggested to remember the components in the model. They have termed their model as "The key to employability". The metaphorical model below explains why the name, the key to employability.

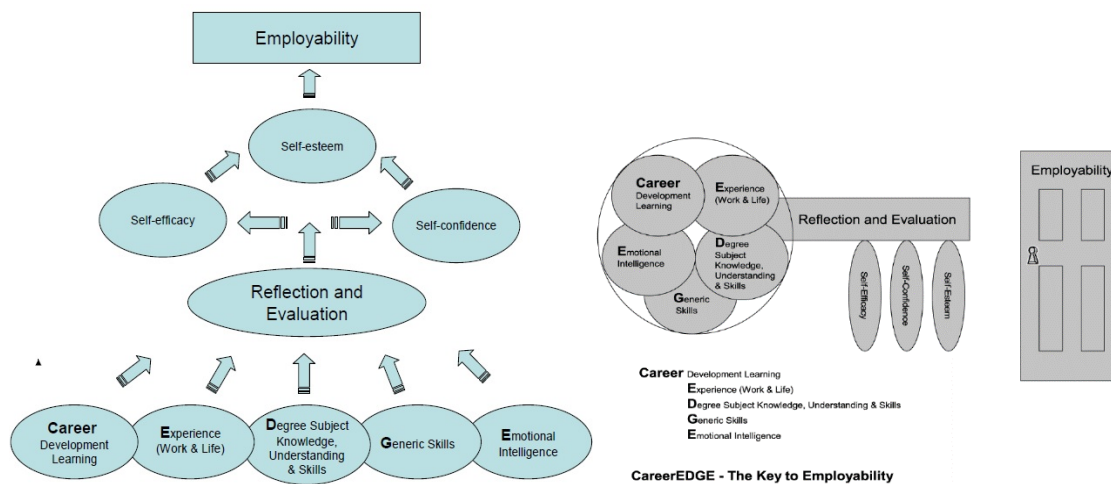


Figure 2-1 The graduate employability model and the metaphorical «key to employability” (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007)

Looking at the model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), we see that they have depicted the critical components and their interaction in the figure. When students are given the opportunity to develop the lower tier and reflect and evaluate on these experiences, they can develop higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem which are the critical links to employability.

The UK Commission for Employability and Skills (UKCES) is a social partnership of large and small employers, trades unions and the voluntary sector which is concerned with fostering economic growth and creating jobs. They have forwarded a model of employability skills which integrates personal skills and functional skills as part of a framework for learning and teaching. (Scales & Kelly, 2012; UKCES, 2009)

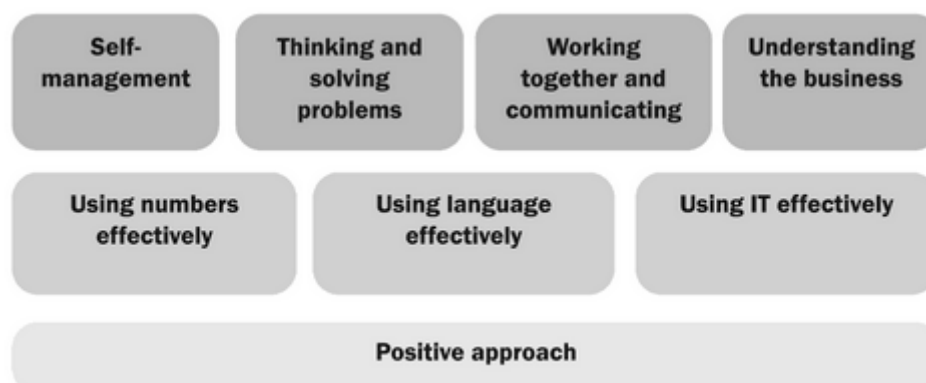


Figure 2-2 UKCES model of employability skills (Scales & Kelly, 2012; UKCES, 2009)

They have categorized the skills into three layers which includes a foundation of positive approach which means one should be ready to participate and accept new ideas which would support the three functional skills of using numbers effectively, using language effectively and using IT effectively. These functional skills are exercised in the context of four personal skills namely; self-management, thinking and solving problems, working together and communication and understanding the business.

2.3 Generic skills for employability

Harvey (2001) claimed that most definitions of employability elaborate on five characteristics: the job type; the timing; the attributes on recruitment; further learning and; employability skills. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes, and job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior-most position (Robinson, 2000). Generic skills were previously known as the ‘core skills’, ‘key competencies’, ‘underpinning skills’ or ‘capabilities’ (Committee, 1992). Recently, ‘personal attributes’ have also been included under this term (Sanguinetti, 2004). A simple and widely accepted definition of generic skills was forwarded by Kearns which states that generic skills are “those transferable skills which are essential for employability at some level for most” (Kearns, 2001). A similar definition was forwarded by Bennett, Dunne and Carré (Bennett, Dunne, & Carré, 1999) where they have mentioned that generic skills represent the skills which can support study in any discipline, and which can potentially be transferred to a range of contexts, in higher education or the workplace. The studies on generic skills are growing as an initiative to develop human capital to meet the needs of the new knowledge economy (Sanguinetti, 2004).

But what kinds of skills does “generic skills” refer to? Different authors have forwarded different studies with their own set of skills and competences (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Cbi/nus, 2011; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Lapiņa & Ščeuļovs, 2014; Pegg et al., 2012; Sanguinetti, 2004; Teijeiro et al., 2013) that influence employability of a graduate and there has been considerable debate regarding the term “generic skills” (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Some refer to these skills as business related hard-skills and soft-skills (Andrews & Higson, 2008) while some call it professional competencies (Lapiņa & Ščeuļovs, 2014; Teijeiro et al., 2013). However, the industry’s preferred term is employability skills (Group, 2006).

Employability skills denote characters that may make an individual attractive to potential employers (Bridgstock, 2009). Employability skills include communication, teamwork, problem solving, selfmanagement, planning and organizing, technology, life-long learning, and enterprise skills. They are also known by several other names, including key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, generic skills, 21st century skills, necessary skills, and transferable skills (DeGuzman, Allan B Choi, & Ok, 2013).

Employability skills, as simply defined by Robinson (2000), refer to those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job (Robinson, 2000).

In one of the earliest study about employability skills, Hillage and Pollard (Hillage & Pollard, 1998) have categorized the various employability skills into four groups. They suggested four main components of employability:

- Employability assets comprises of individual knowledge skills and attitudes
 - Baseline assets (basic skills and essential personal attributes such as reliability and integrity)
 - Intermediate assets (occupational specific skills, generic or key skills such as communication and problem solving and attributes such as motivation and initiative)
 - High level assets (skills which help contribute to organizational performance such as team working, self management, commercial awareness etc.)
- Deployment
 - Career management skills (self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making skills and transition skills)
 - Job search skills
 - Strategic approach
- Presentation skills (presenting CVs, qualifications, interview technique, track record etc)
- Personal and labor market circumstances (like disabilities, household status, macroeconomic demand for labor, job opportunities etc.)

The CBI report *Working towards your future* (Cbi/nus, 2011) has worked with its researchers to define what employer's mean by employability skills. According to their report, employability skills for employer's include:

- Business and customer awareness – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success, including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty.
- Problem solving – analysing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions.
- Communication and literacy – application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning.
- Application of numeracy – manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts (e.g. measuring, weighing, estimating and applying formulae).
- Application of information technology – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines.
- Underpinning all these attributes, the key foundation must be a positive attitude: a 'can-do' approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, openness to new ideas and a drive to make these happen.
- Frequently mentioned by both employers and universities is entrepreneurship/enterprise: broadly, an ability to demonstrate an innovative approach, creativity, collaboration and risk taking. (Cbi/nus, 2011)

In the model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), we see that they have defined five major components for employability in the lower tier, namely; career development learning, experience (work and life), degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and emotional intelligence. Under generic skills, they have suggested certain skills that are expected of graduates which include: imagination, creativity, adaptability, flexibility, willingness to learn, independent working, working in a team, ability to manage others, ability to work under pressure, good oral communication, communication in writing for varied purposes, numeracy, attention to detail, time management, assumption of responsibility and

for making decisions, planning, coordinating and organising ability and ability to use new technologies.

Archer and Davison (2008) have identified three skills that are considered the most important by employers when hiring new graduates; communication, integrity and team work skills. In the study by Andrews and Higson (2008), they have identified some key soft skills and competencies essential for the development of graduate employability, which include; professionalism, reliability, the ability to cope with uncertainty, the ability to work under pressure, the ability to plan and think strategically, the capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking, good written and verbal communication skills, information and communication technology skills, creativity and self-confidence, good self-management and time-management skills, a willing to learn and accept responsibility.

Similarly, in a study by Lapina and Aramina (2011), they have organized the employability competencies into four basic groups: professional competencies, social and communication competencies, personal and responsibility competencies, innovative learning and leadership competencies. Professional competencies revolve around self organization competencies, social and communication competencies include cooperating with others and the ability to express ideas in a well-structured and logical manner. Third group explores one's ability to self assess and develop one's talent where as innovative learning and leadership competencies include ability to combine emotions, motivation skills and experience.

Looking at it from the employer's perspective, Harvey et al. (1997) argues that most employers are looking for graduates who are proactive, can use higher level skills including analysis, critique, synthesis and multi layered communication to facilitate innovative teamwork in catalyzing the transformation of their organization'. The literature indicates that employers want graduates who can adapt to the workplace culture, use their abilities and skills to evolve the organization and participate in innovative teamwork (Lowden et al., 2011).

The UKCES model of employability skills, forwards a list of skills desired by employer's and workplaces (UKCES, 2009). The UKCES model has following elements

- A foundation of Positive Approach - being ready to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism and take responsibility for outcomes.

This foundation of positive approach supports three functional skills:

- Using numbers effectively - measuring, recording measurements, calculating, estimating quantities, relating numbers to the job.
- Using language effectively - writing clearly and in a way appropriate to the context, ordering facts and concepts logically
- Using IT effectively - operating a computer, both basic systems and also learning other applications as necessary and using telephones and other technology to communicate

These functional skills are exercised in the context of four personal skills:

- Self-management – punctuality and time management, fitting dress and behaviour to context, overcoming challenges and asking for help when necessary
- Thinking and solving problems – creativity, reflecting on and learning from own actions, prioritising, analysing situations and developing solutions
- Working together and communicating – cooperating, being assertive, persuading, being responsible to others, speaking clearly to individuals and groups and listening for a response
- Understanding the business – understanding how the individual job fits into the organization as a whole, recognising the needs of stakeholders (customers and service users, for example); judging risks, innovating and contributing to the whole organization.

In a study to explore the perceptions of employers and Higher Education Institution staff concerning the skills, knowledge and characteristics which help undergraduates/new graduates to be employable (Lowden et al., 2011), they found that there are characteristics, skills and knowledge and intellectual capability elements that are required for specific roles and combinations of transferable skills were also deemed particularly relevant. These skills are; team working; problem solving; self-management; knowledge of the business, literacy and numeracy relevant to the post, ICT knowledge, good interpersonal and communication skills, ability to use own initiative but also to follow instructions and leadership skills where necessary.

Authors have argued that employability is not about groups or categories of skills but refers to both the skilful practices in context and an approach to personal development and career

management and planning (Pegg et al., 2012). Workers will need the capacity to adapt and continually upgrade through sets of generic skills that can be readily transferred across different settings (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001)

3 Communication and Employability

Different studies on employability have agreed that communication skills play a vital role to make one employable, for example, studies by Andrews and Higson (2008); Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007); Lapiņa and Ščeulovs (2014); Morgan (1997); Rasul et al. (2013); Teijeiro et al. (2013); Yates (2007) etc. Communicative competence is believed to have a great influence in developing the potential of graduates both, socially and occupationally (Martín, 2014). Communication typically dominates skill frameworks and is believed by employers in developed economies to be one of the most important skill sets in new graduates (Jackson, 2014). In a similar study by Blom and Saeki, they focused on the new graduates engineers in India and found out that employers in India perceive communication skills to be very important as well (Blom & Saeki, 2011).

Studies have shown that graduates and employers both place a high level of importance to communication skills when we talk about graduate's employability (Andrews & Higson, 2008). In a study by Archer and Davison (2008), they found out that 86% of their sample employers considered good communication skills to be important, yet many employers are dissatisfied that graduates can express themselves effectively. Communication skills comprise specific skills like speaking clearly and directly, listening and understanding, empathizing, sharing information, using numeracy effectively, writing to the needs of the audience and engaging in non-verbal communication (DeGuzman et al., 2013).

Many studies point out that generic competencies related to the social domain, such as communication skills, leadership, customer focus, understanding, emotional intelligence, and so on, are directly related to labour market success (Teijeiro et al., 2013). Evers, Rush, and Berdrow (1998) believe that higher education should teach graduates four major competencies so that graduates will be successful in the workplace and one of those competencies includes the communication skills. They have defined communication as “interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating, and conveying of information in many forms.”

In order to improve the communication skills, authors suggest that organizations should communicate their purpose and goals consistently and establish different channels to disseminate information by the degree of its importance (Evers et al., 1998). Globalization has added complexity to the notion of communicative competence (Besnier, 2013). Global

competitiveness and increased knowledge sharing have accelerated the importance of oral communication skills in today's graduates. Oral communication dominates assurance of learning standards and is frequently cited as one of the most desired graduate employability skills (Jackson, 2014).

4 Language, Communication and Internationalization

There would be fewer debates if we say that language permeates every facet of international business. McCrum et al. (1968) mention that there is almost no aspect of our lives that is not touched by language. To simplify the question of “What is language?” Piekkari et al. (2014) have forwarded various layers of languages that are used in workplace.

- Everyday spoken/written language. This is the normal everyday spoken and written social language that is used for in interpersonal, inter-unit and external communications.
- Company jargon. These include the company specific acronyms, special terms, management process terminologies, etc. These evolve over time.
- Technical/professional language. These include coded languages that are common within and between groups, and can be used to include or exclude others from a specific group.

The interconnection between these layers of language is depicted in the figure below.

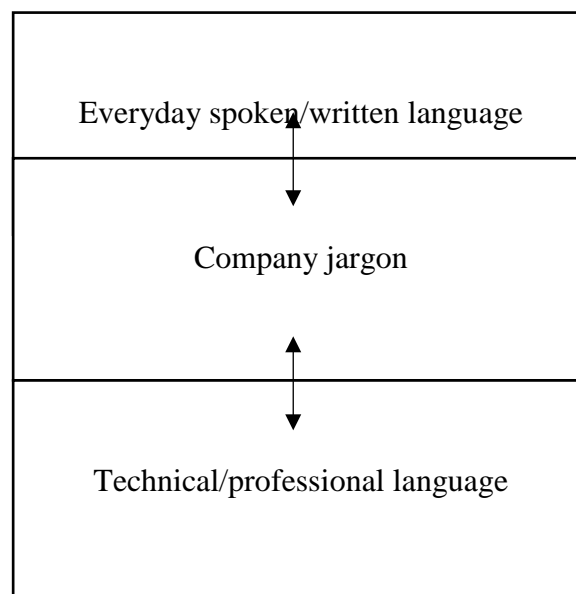


Figure 4-1 Layers of language (Piekkari et al., 2014)

The primary focus of this study will be on the spoken and the written language, however, it should be noted that language is an umbrella term that reflects organizational practice and it is quite obvious that everyday language will be mixed with company jargons and technical and professional language every so often in any globally operating organization.

Being exposed to different language highlights communication challenges. Piekkari et al. (2014) explain that crossing national, cultural and language boundaries brings additional communication challenges for internationalizing firms. Firms which are able to tackle these challenges efficiently have an edge when operating as a global entity. To repeat, communication is at the heart of any organization and the added layer of language groups makes it even more challenging. Managers and employees face the challenge as to which language will form the basis of everyday spoken or written form. Their model below explains the communication process and language role.

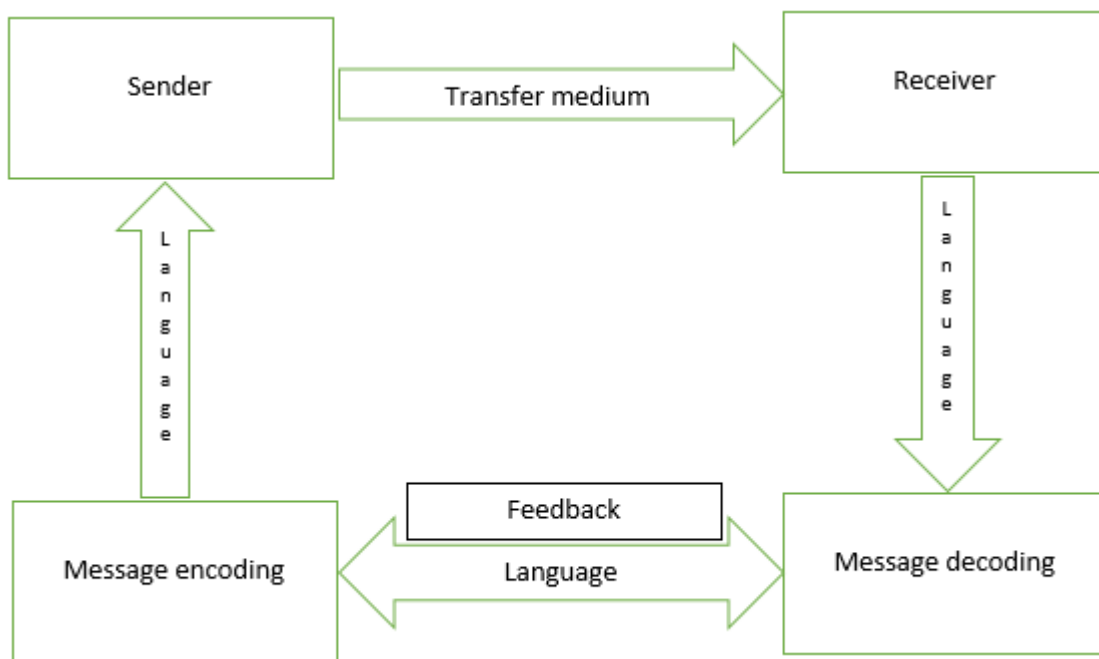


Figure 4-2 The basic communication model (Piekkari et al., 2014)

To understand the impact of language, we can see the basic communication model depicted above. Here is see how a sender transmits a message to a receiver through a transfer medium, which may be email, text, telephone or face-to-face. The effectiveness of the communication depends on the ability of the sender to accurately encode a meaningful, complete message; the selection of the correct transfer medium or channel of transfer and the ability of the receiver to decode and understand the message as it was intended by the sender.

The impediments in the communication process, sometimes referred to as noise, distortion or leakage, occurs even when the parties involved share a mother tongue. Thus, a successful communication is influenced by many factors. The authors added language to the model to illustrate how language may interfere with the transfer and receipt of the information. If the receiver is unable to decode the message because of the language used, translation may be

necessary. Translators have been known to place a key role in effective communication across language barriers. Feedback remains an important part of any communication process, which is why face-to-face communication is the preferred means for a feedback, particularly when there are language difference between the parties involved.

4.1 Globalization and the role of language in international business

Communication across cultural borders frequently involves misunderstandings caused by language and other barriers (Adler, 1991; Usunier, 1993). Language is an important component of culture and it influences the thoughts and behaviour of its users, however minimal the influence might be (Kondo & Tebble, 1997). The growing trend of globalization has introduced many challenges for organizations as well as individuals aiming for employment. When we talk about international business, the requirement scope of an employee is also widened. Intercultural interaction is becoming more frequent and workplaces are becoming more and more culturally diverse (Voss, Albert, & Ferring, 2014). With such trend in the international business world, there is a general acceptance of the fact that that these problems of increasing communication intensity, increasing linguistic diversity, and increasing scale of operations will augment the problems presented by the language barrier (Harzing & Feely, 2008). Increasing globalization has made the use and management of language a vital element of engaging in international business activities (Lauring & Selmer, 2012).

According to Welch et al. (2005), “Language is almost the essence of international business.” The very concept of international business revolved around crossing national and cultural boundaries and adding differences in language and culture in the business. Victor (1992, p. 15) also points out the fact that no other element of international business is so often noted as a barrier to effective communication across cultures than differences in language. Schweiger et al. (2003) argue that language is a critical factor for the global businesses in their efforts to address the growing challenge of integrating people from disparate places and cultures (Schweiger, Atamer, & Calori, 2003). In much of the research, when so-called “cultural” differences are discussed, the examples given are specifically related to language and communication problems (Henderson, 2005). Such problems result from the language diversity in teams composed of individuals who speak a variety of mother tongues and belong to different language communities.

Language has remained largely implicit and taken for granted in research on MNCs, despite the fact that it is critical for socializing managers, the development of commitment and trust in network relationships, and institutionalization (Piekkari & Welch, 2010). Research on the impact of language differences on intra- and inter-unit communication is still underdeveloped (Klitmøller & Lauring, 2013). Language in MNCs has been studied by international management scholars as a topic in its own right only since the late 1990s (Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1997) and there has been growing interest in the role of language in multinationals ever since (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013).

When talking about international business and multinational corporations, they consist of diverse and geographically dispersed subunits, which encounter language barriers when communicating with their local business community and within their global network (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). If an employee in a cross-cultural context has only a vague description of what he has to do, because he does not understand the language, a failure is generally bound to occur, because the employee will only do minimal job for fear of errors (Grosseck, 2012). There is evidence that work in cross-language environments gives rise to tensions and has a significant impact on teamwork and relationship building within the host unit (Welch & Welch, 2008).

Although 'language', naturally, is a resource that enables any – internal or other – communication, it has not been examined in public relations research but has been taken for granted or as given (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Difficulties in cross-cultural understanding result of the fact that we tend to interpret what we heard, saw or read with our own interactional competency, even if we master the pronunciation, lexis and grammar. Interactional competency can be understood as communication skills which define an individual's communicational ability in terms of listening and understanding the information. Their mastering does not guarantee yet that the information is understood the way the sender meant it (Grosseck, 2012).

It is by now widely accepted that language in multinational corporations merits study as a stand-alone topic rather than simply a component of cultural distance, and that the vast majority of multinationals are in fact multilingual (Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman, 2007; Luo & Shenkar, 2006). Companies measure their degree of professionalization to some extent also against the number of used languages (Grosseck, 2012). Language is paradoxical in the sense of being both powerful and powerless (Piekkari & Welch, 2010). Empirical evidence suggests that language

creates informal shadow structures along which social interactions in the MNC take place (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999).

Communication flows within the multinational are an essential element of its ability to control and coordinate global activities, and to respond rapidly and flexibly to changing circumstances (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999). Communication is vital and must be done in one form or the other in organizations. Being a part of a company, we must be able to make ourselves understood, therefore we must communicate in the corporate language (Grosseck, 2012). Multinational corporations are highly dependent on a corporate language to control and coordinate their distributed operations (Klitmøller & Luring, 2013). Intercultural communication represents specific contact situations that represent the contacts between individual persons or companies. This is predominantly mold by the contact of the person as individual to other persons, while in today's business world, person's communicate with companies and companies communicate with each other, at international level (Grosseck, 2012). There are many problems in communication. The problems are not just evident in cultures with different languages but it is also seen within similar cultures with similar languages.

In the words of Watzlawick, Bonsels, Noisternig, Knapp, and Otzelberger (1978), "One cannot not communicate". No matter where one serves, communication is inevitable. In regards to management and leadership, communication is essential and inseparable. Communication relies upon a shared language, a pre-requisite that is not existent in many international business situations which gives rise to many communication problems (Harzing & Feely, 2008). Communication which are unclear and of low quality leads to people experiencing anxiety and uncertainty. Poor communication leads to lower level of knowledge sharing and difficulty in management. Language barrier is one of the major proxies of communication barriers (Slangen, 2011).

Businesses today are not only using the local language of the corporate headquarters, but most often select a common corporate language (Luring & Klitmøller, 2015). Such a language functions as a standard for communication and allows members from different speech communities to participate in ongoing conversations and information sharing (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Luring & Selmer, 2012). However, while the selections of a common corporate language provides MNC employees with standard means for interaction, not all individuals are equally proficient with or capable of expressing themselves in a second, learned language. Eventually, the compulsion to speak in a language that one does not learn to

its entirety can lead organizational members to avoid communication in the corporate language.

The bigger concept of cultural diversity has blinded researchers to one of the core characteristic of cultures that has an influential impact, language (Harzing & Feely, 2008). Based on interviews with foreign parent-company managers working in UK subsidiaries, Neal (1998) identified language problems as the major source of frustration, dissatisfaction and friction between them and their UK colleagues. He noted that for many of these managers, the language barrier compounded their sense of being “outsiders” as they feel left out when conversations are carried out in a language that is unknown to them.

Language differences can in turn produce barriers and hinder knowledge sharing (Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2014). To reduce language barriers to knowledge transfer, multinational organizations have implicit or explicit language policies for corporate communication, documentation, and interaction (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). The difference in the language results in the increase of cost for both headquarter and the subsidiary when the message sent from one end is not clearly understood by the readers at the other end. Language distance, differences between parent and subsidiary in terms of national languages, has also been shown to hinder knowledge transfer in multinationals (Ambos & Ambos, 2009).

In simple terms language barrier can be understood as factors which impedes firms to learn about and understand a foreign environment (Harzing & Feely, 2008). If a parent company faces problems with one subsidiary, then they will avoid facing similar problems in the future. Future target countries may be selected based on the parent language competence in the host country and entry methods may be altered to best avoid the language barriers during mergers and acquisitions. It is unlikely that the parent company will choose to establish a complex, multilingual supply chain and networks. When parent company cannot properly manage the subsidiary, the likely result is that decision-making will be centralized at headquarter.

The pressure for standardizing language is common for companies that operate in countries with different languages. The choice of promoting a particular language to the status of a common corporate language has many advantages from a management perspective, according to Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999). A common corporate language standardizes conventions for reporting and sharing information between foreign units of the MNC, reduces the potential for miscommunication, and improves access to corporate documents (Thomas, 2007). MNCs

use not only the local language of the corporate headquarters, but most often officially select a common corporate language.

The need for a common corporate language has been generally accepted by managers as important to communication within the organization and across units of the organization. A common corporate language in many ways is a resource, but it can also act as a linguistic barrier in the MNC. While a common corporate language improves global corporation wide communication and facilitates shared global corporate culture, it may restrict access to information in other languages. It may also restrict access to markets in foreign languages and can also lead to communication barriers between employees with limited proficiency in the common corporate languages (Thomas, 2007).

However, for competitive advantage, the local language is crucial, especially for interacting with the local market (Thomas, 2007). The subsidiary's use of the local language facilitates communication between the community and the subsidiary and between international members and local employees within the subsidiary. For companies which does business in foreign countries where there are variety of languages, knowledge of foreign language and culture is crucial for success. Effective multilingual management is crucial to group cohesiveness and teamwork (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, Goodall & Roberts 2003, Holden 2002, Schneider & Barsoux 1997). Goodall and Roberts (2003) found that making honest attempts to speak the language of others on one's team resulted in the development of trust between team members, thus improving the team's quality of work.

It can be agreed that accepting subsidiary language can improve access to foreign markets and information in foreign languages but the use of subsidiary language can also lead to miscommunication between expatriates and employees. It is argued that use of subsidiary language often does not facilitate development of shared corporate culture (Thomas, 2007). The communication barriers are evident in subsidiaries located in developing countries where the use of English is far from common and the subsidiary language is often not trained to expatriates before transfer to the subsidiary. Vihakara (2006) points out that one of the reasons for this is that language training is expensive, and there is no guarantee that the language skills developed will be useful in future projects. However, most companies do agree that proficiency in the local language is important.

4.2 Language skills and employability in Global Age

In one of the earlier studies, Bourgoin (1978) argued that during the next ten years a foreign language may be more helpful than a college degree, given the rapidly rising internationalization of business. Considering the role of language skills in communication and social integration of international graduates, studies agree that being skilled in the local language have enhance an international graduates and immigrants in job-search and also boost their productivity within an organization. As mentioned in the following phrase, lack of language skills can be an obstacle in career development. This is truer with growing globalization.

As mentioned by Yao and Van Ours (2015):

Language skills are considered to be extremely important for the social and economic integration of immigrants. Proficiency in the host language may have positive effects on immigrants' job search and their labor productivity at the workplace. Therefore, lack of language skills can be a severe obstacle to career success.

In the growing global age with reduced job security, the power to choose the career path has shifted from organization to individual and in this age, language skills represent a key career competence (Itani, Järnlström, & Piekkari, 2015). As firms are becoming more international, opportunities for physical mobility and the significance of language skills are shaping careers in today's global age (Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012; Piekkari & Tietze, 2012; Shamir, 2005). In a study by Grasmann and Grasmann (2011), they found out that students whose foreign language skills were at basic level were not willing to work in other countries because they were aware that for successful employability in the EU labor market their foreign language skills were critical.

Some authors argue that increasing globalization and internationalization has heightened the need for graduates with the ability to operate in culturally diverse contexts (Crossman & Clarke, 2010) and also that there is still limited literature on the nature of the relationship between international experience, more broadly and graduate employability. Their findings suggest that all employers identify clear connections between international experience and employability based on forged networks, opportunities for experiential learning, language acquisition and the development of soft skills related to cultural understandings, personal characteristics and ways of thinking.

In the study by Itani et al. (2015) they have concluded that good language skills accumulate an individual's knowledge base, generate personal and professional motivation at the workplace, and broaden career-related networks and contacts. Thus good language skills contributed to the acquisition, development, and maintenance of career competences that enabled the individual to cross organizational, geographical, and cultural boundaries at the workplace (Itani et al., 2015).

The importance of language skills as a career competence has attracted some attention in the field of international human resource management (Heikkilä & Smale, 2011; Itani et al., 2015; Piekkari, 2006; C. Yao, 2013). Most of the studies focus on expatriate's transition from preparation, adjustment to social interaction and success (Harzing & Pudelko, 2013; Mol, Born, Willemsen, & Van Der Molen, 2005; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). However, few competence frameworks explicitly incorporate language skills (Caligiuri, 2006).

In the study by Denise Jackson (Jackson, 2014), they state that global competitiveness and increased knowledge sharing have accelerated the importance of oral communication skills in today's graduates. They have identified an oral communication skill set where they have a behavior and a sub-behavior list. They have mentioned "language and expression" affect verbal communication and public speaking. However, these skills were rated low in compared to other oral communication skills by the graduates.

In a study about the employability of non-native-speaker teachers in the UK, Clark and Paran (2007) found that non-native-speaker teachers of English are often perceived as having a lower status than their native-speaking counterparts, and have been shown to face discriminatory attitudes when applying for teaching jobs.

In an early study by Dustmann (1994) where he studied the relationship between language abilities of migrant workers and the impact of language proficiency on their earnings position, the author found a positive correlation between speaking and writing proficiency and earnings. In the study of how Dutch language skills affect the labor market performance of immigrants, Yao and Van Ours (2015) concluded that female immigrants with language problems have lower wages by 48% than female immigrants with similar personal characteristics but without language problems. Also, females with worse language skills are more likely to stay unemployed or if they enter the labor market they do not to qualify for well-paid jobs.

In a study to investigate the career success of international expatriate women in Norway, Traavik and Richardsen (2010) concluded that motivation, self-focused conflict resolution and language competency were positively associated with subjective career success. They also suggest that although being foreign in Norway can be a disadvantage, expatriate women can overcome this liability through investment in education, language and motivation. They also mention that learning local languages can be desirable but it can be equally advantageous to understand and speak English.

In another similar study by Culpan and Wright (2002), they state that expatriate women managers with certain demographic characteristics and skills, like adaptability and knowing a foreign language, are more likely to succeed in overseas assignments than those without these characteristics. Flexibility, good communication skills and foreign language skills helped them to deal with problems in the international workplace, where most of the problems were cultural in nature. Their study also shows that knowing a foreign language has a significant impact on job satisfaction and the women interviewed stressed the fact that “language opened many doors” for them. They could communicate better with the local people and on occasion they could use their language skills to accomplish their tasks. The knowledge of a foreign language helped women in their professions to develop better communication at work and also to improve relationships with people in the host country. The interview results showed that language skills helped women to communicate better and deal with discrimination at workplace. When they were fluent in the local language spoken at the workplace, women spent longer listening to and understanding others and then used local language skills to clear the misunderstanding and misconceptions about them. Local language skills had a positive effect in reducing the level of discrimination at workplace.

To add a perspective of an employer, the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE), a strategic leadership network of blue-chip companies working with vice chancellors and universities to develop the UK’s knowledge-base economy note that;

Different employers need graduates who have different capabilities. All value the analytical and reflective qualities that lie at the heart of a quality learning experience. But there is a growing emphasis by employers on the need for graduates to demonstrate a range of competences which will equip them to work in a global environment, in different countries, in multi-cultural teams, be innovative and enterprising and have strong language skills...Businesses have diverse and multiple needs for higher learning.

(Lowden et al., 2011)

4.3 Human capital, Social capital and Language capital

When talking about human capital, we need to understand the difference between social capital and human capital, two concepts that are somewhat related to each other. In an early study, Burt (1997) cleared this difference stating that social capital is a quality created between people where as human capital is a quality of individual's. (Piekkari et al., 2014)

Human capital is commonly defined as an individual's set of knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through education and experience. A point to note about human capital is that it is owned by the individuals and not by the organizations they work for. Through careful selection of individuals, a firm is able to collect a pool of human capital which becomes the driving force of the organization. Companies give out company-based training to influence the quality of this resource and to retain to desired employees. In this sense, organizational human capital is generally considered as the combined sum of its individuals' human capital. Piekkari et al. (2014) argue that language ability is an intrinsic part of human capital.

Applying human capital theory to show how language may be valued in an organizational context, (Latukha, Doleeva, Järnlström, Jokinen, & Piekkari, 2016) have concluded that employees in Russian MNCs with a lower level of corporate language skills will be less likely to consider vertical and horizontal career mobility than employees with a higher level of these language skills. Equally, employees in Russian MNCs with a lower level of corporate language skills will be less likely to consider internal external career mobility than those employees with a higher level of these language skills. Corporate language skills and how they influence career mobility has appeared to be a significant part of human capital theory (Newburry & Thakur, 2010; Ridder, Evans, Pucik, & Bjorkman, 2011). The human capital variables of education and language competency were significantly correlated with objective and subjective career success (Traavik & Richardsen, 2010).

Building social capital and developing strong relationships is language-dependent (Piekkari et al., 2014). It is quite rare to find strong relationships being evolved around people who don't share a common language. A shared language is this critical to relationship building and the development of trust within the internationalizing firm. When there is no common shared language of communication, a translator is required and it is hard to build a strong, trusting relationship via language intermediaries such as translators. Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman

(2007) showed that language fluency is significantly related with shared vision and perceived trustworthiness. This relation can be better understood from the figure below.

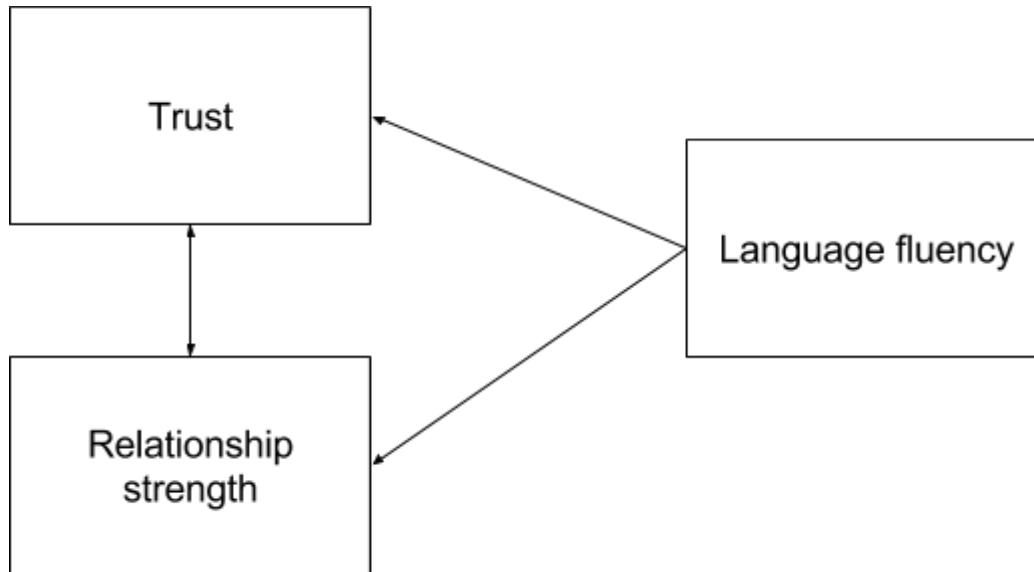


Figure 4-3 Language fluency and the development of relationships (Piekkari et al., 2014)

In an early study by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), they studied the structure of network and their content in three categories namely: structural (linkages between people or units); relational (kinds of personal relationships between people though interaction over time); cognitive (shared representation, interpretations and systems of meaning). The cognitive aspect includes aspects such as shared codes and language and shared narratives. Shared enhances access to people and information and the development of knowledge and thereby social capital.

Piekkari et al. (2014) have forwarded the concept of language capital which is depicted by the figure below.

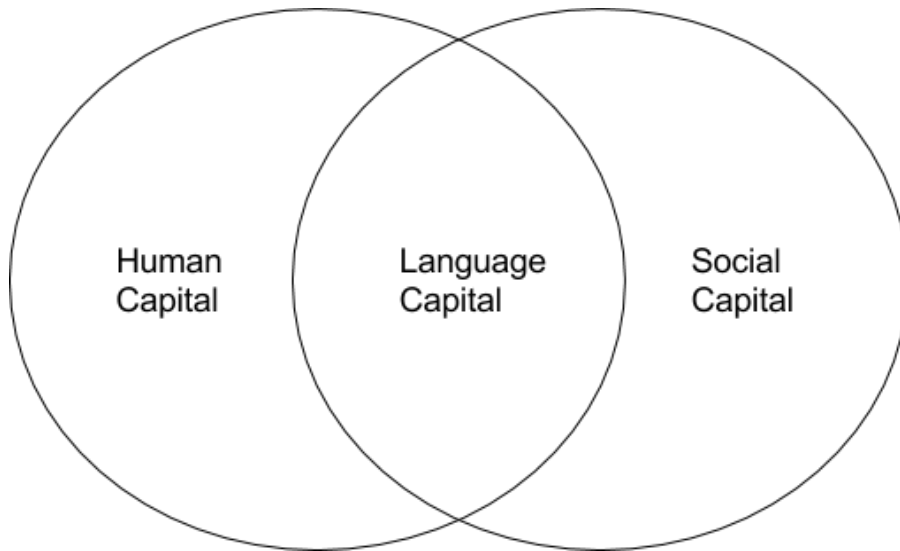


Figure 4-4 The concept of language capital (Piekkari et al., 2014)

Language is an active agent in the interaction between social capital and human capital. The authors use the term “language capital” to explain how language can be regarded as a unique resource that increases an individual’s stock of human capital. Language capital is not confined to individuals, in that part of organizational language capital is also codified in its various procedures and systems, such as corporate specific jargon and machine translation programs.

In the conclusive words of Piekkari et al. (2014)

Given that language capital is interwoven with human capital, individuals may decide whether to indicate language fluency on recruitment redeployment; whether to attend language classes in order to develop their language capital; or to actively employ their language capital for the benefit of the employing organization. Language ability also delivers the potential for wider interpersonal interaction to build social capital. However, one should not automatically assume that language ability necessarily translates into willingness to use this language at the work-place

5 Methodology

To what extent do local language skills affect an international graduate's employability? To answer this question, we have followed an in-depth interview approach. In-depth interviews are a qualitative data collection method that offers the opportunity to capture rich, descriptive data about people's behaviors, attitudes and perceptions, and unfolding complex processes (International). In-depth or unstructured interviews are one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013).

Classic ethnographers such as Malinowski have stressed the importance of talking to people to grasp their point of view (Burgess, 1982a), and personal accounts are seen as having central importance in social research because of the power of language to illuminate meaning:

“The expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts. A crucial feature of language is its capacity to present descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of almost infinite variety about any aspect of the world, including itself. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:126)”

There are two different approaches one can consider when doing research; quantitative, which concerns data collected in the form of numbers and qualitative, which concerns data in the form of visual images, words or sounds (Neuman, 2012). However, there are combinations of these research approaches as well. A good researcher can blend these approaches depending on their strengths and limitations and the researcher's need.

This study looks into the effects of language skills on the career development of graduates who study and work abroad. As we, the authors, are based in Norway, we are studying the effects of Norwegian language skills on the career development of international graduates. Therefore, the aim of our study is to capture the thoughts, attitudes, personal feelings, opinions and experiences of participants to explain the influence of language and cultural differences on the career development of international graduates. This study basically asks why an international graduate would require Norwegian language skills to boost their employability. It is a question of “why” rather than “how many”. Based on these requirements, this study uses qualitative methods.

In the qualitative dimension, there are various types of instruments used to collect data for research. Focus groups and indepth interviews are among the most utilized instruments that

researchers use in collecting their data (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008). When comparing the two, during in-depth interviews, the participants are more confident, more relaxed and they feel more encouraged to express their deepest thoughts about a certain subject while in focus groups, individuals may act according to their personality and there is the risk that weaker personalities may follow suit with the stronger ones.

According to Milena, Dainora & Alin (2008),

The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. During in-depth interviews, the person being interviewed is considered the expert and the interviewer is considered the student. The researcher's interviewing techniques are motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic.

For this study, in-depth interview was chosen to be the best method to capture valuable information at a comparatively low cost. There are three basic forms of interview methods. They are, structured interview, semi-structured interview and unstructured interviews. *Structured interviews* are planned and prepared in advance and all the participants get precisely the same questions. Usually there is a limited set of respondent categories and this is also the least flexible interview type. In contrast one has *unstructured interviews*, where the participants do not have to follow a limited schedule of questions and response categories are decided by the interviewer. The interviewer often has some key questions, but this type of interview is more like a conversation, since the participants more or less get the opportunity to act freely. Finally, one has *semi-structured interviews*, which were chosen for this research, because the interviewer has the opportunity to plan the questions/ the interviews in advance, while also giving the participants the opportunity to talk and act freely; thus this type of interview thus this type of interview has many of the features of a conversation, but still focuses on key questions conversation, it is still limited around key questions (Postholm, 2010).

5.1 Setting

As potential international graduates, we looked for personal contacts who had already graduated and were looking for or working in skilled graduate jobs in Norway. Internet and telephone were the main media of contact and follow up with the participants. We used

snowball effect to find more participants in the first group. Snowball effect in social science is non-probability *sampling* technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. The participants were located in Oslo and Aalesund, Norway. Oslo is the capital city of Norway with more than half a million people living here. Aalesund is comparatively a small city in western coast of Norway with around 45 thousand inhabitants. The interviews were conducted in the city of the participant. Most of the participants were located in Oslo.

5.2 Sample Selection

This study uses a non-probability sampling approach where participants are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of or groups within the sampled population. Our sample is not intended to be statistically representative but rather the characteristics of the sample are the basis of our selection. Participants were selected on criterion-based method where they were chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which enables detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and questions which we wish to study (Ritchie et al., 2013).

The purpose of this study is to understand the extent to which Norwegian language skills influences the employability of international graduates rather than to look into the quantitative aspects. The purpose of the sample selection represents the objective of studying their experiences, gaining an understanding of the international working environment, to develop explanations and to generate ideas and concepts. Samples therefore need to be selected to ensure the inclusion of relevant constituencies, events, processes and so on, that can illuminate and inform that understanding (Ritchie et al., 2013).

The first group of participants represent the international graduate population who are working on or are in search of a skilled graduate level position. This group represents the individual side of employability of international graduates. Each participant was chosen to represent and symbolize the features of relevance to the study. The greater the diversity of characteristics or circumstances, the more opportunity there is to identify their different contributory elements or influences (Ritchie et al., 2013). This group of participants are from diverse fields but share homogenous characteristics. The most common characteristics include; an international nationality, holding a degree from Norway, do not speak Norwegian as a first language, working in or seeking a skilled graduate level job in Norway. For this

study, these participants represent the individual side of employability of international graduates.

Job-seekers were selected because they are in the phase of their career where they are evaluating their employability for the kinds of jobs they are pursuing. Their current job search experiences and responses from their potential employers can give a detailed insight into how international graduates evaluate their current skills for the international market and if their current Norwegian skills have any role to play in this. International graduates working in a skilled job were selected to study their experiences in the field. Their current skills and job-related experiences can provide the real view of what skills are directly correlated with their field of work and what skills are key in the real operation.

The second group of participants are employers who are working in Norway in a middle level or higher position and have the authority to, or contribute to, hiring new personnel. Their common characteristics include; minimum one year of skilled job experience and a role in candidate selection for the company. They represent the organizational view of employability and who have experience with international employees. They explain the demand side of employability and present the skills that are viewed as critical by the organization for the kinds of jobs they offer.

To evaluate the strength of the basic questions, a pilot study was conducted with an international immigrant with a dependent status seeking a full time job. Dependent status in Norway relates to status of temporary residence provided to spouses of immigrants who have temporary residence permit in Norway. The follow-up interviews were conducted with two additional participants.

Follow up interview was done with participant 1 from Nepal who was seeking a skilled job in health research field. The first interview session was in English and was limited in information. After analyzing his first interview session, we decided to probe further into certain issues that were stated in the first session. The second interview session was carried out in Nepali which led to more rich information that have been used in findings and discussion.

Second participant is participant 5, coming from a technical background, was interviewed without the base questions in the first session. This led to more irrelevant information. To retrieve more relevant information, the participant was contacted after we learned a few

techniques in interviewing. The second session was very fruitful have provided rich information for the findings and discussions.

The sample size for qualitative studies are usually small. According to Ritchie et al. (2013), one of the reasons for this is that the type of information that qualitative studies yield is rich in detail. There will therefore be many hundreds of ‘bites’ of information from each unit of data collection. In order to do justice to these, sample sizes need to be kept to a reasonably small scale. In our first group we have three participants who are job-seekers, five participants are working on skilled jobs who completed their degree in Norway. In our second group of employers, we have three participants. One participant overlaps the second and third category due to his experience in both context. There are 11 participants in total excluding the pilot study participant. For the pilot study, we had one participant.

The first limitation of our sample selection strategy may be the scope of the participants. Also, our inexperience in conducting such in-depth interviews may have influenced the kind of participants we chose to be most relevant for the study.

5.3 Data collection

The theoretical background for the study is based on secondary sources written by various authors. Secondary sources can be qualitative and quantitative data used in historical research that are reported or written by others who were not directly involved in the events or the setting (Neuman, 2012).

The base of this study is based on the models and theories forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), Andrews and Higson (2008), Scales and Kelly (2012), UKCES (2009) who have explained the concepts of employability of graduates from individual and organizations perspective. All the supporting theories were collected from various authors to explain the role of language skills within such models of graduate employability.

The internet was the main source of these secondary sources of literature. Google Scholar was one of the main search engines used to search for articles online. The links from Google search led to various online databases sources like Science Direct, JSTOR, Orio.no, Research Gate etc. The key words used to search for the literature include; employability, graduate employability, international graduate employability, language and employability, communication skills, language and communication, skills for employability, international business and employability, language and international business and various combinations

with supplementary words. The articles were selected on the basis of their title, abstract information and conclusive comments. The relevance to the title and the research question being the basis of all selection.

The interview questions are based on the literature review explaining employability. The methodology of this study is based on the theories forwarded by Neuman (2012) and Ritchie et al. (2013). The strength of the interview questions for primary data collection was tested with a pilot study sharing common characteristics as being international, speaking Norwegian as second language and seeking a full time job. The responses of the pilot study participant was evaluated before interviewing the main participants. Necessary amendments were made to get better responses from the participants based on the pilot study.

The major amendments included changing the words of the questions to keep it more open and some questions that sounded too vague were narrowed down. Some questions came out to be leading questions and trapping questions which were removed. Complicated words and phrases were removed to make the questions more simple and easy to understand for the participants. Questions which asked the participants to judge the feelings of others were removed. Introductory questions were prepared to start off the interview informally. Questions were rearranged to properly stage the interview. The questions that were changed after the pilot interview are marked with an asterisk (*) in the Appendix 1 and 2.

The questions were different for each category of participants. The basic questions for the first group and second group of participants are attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively. The questions have been made simple and easy to understand. Considering the situation and response of the participants we have explained some questions in more detail during the interview sessions. There were instances where participants did not properly understand the questions. After few interview sessions we realized that few questions were still too vague and all participants could not open up their responses equally. In such instance, we narrowed down such questions by explain the questions further in one direction. Such probing questions were prepared beforehand where we forecasted a scenario that some participants might find some questions difficult to answer. Some of these supporting and probing questions and explanations have been included in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 along the basic questions within the parenthesis.

The first set of questions for the first group of participants was aimed to retrieve information and experiences related to the particular skills required to get the kind of job they were

looking for and if their Norwegian language skills were important in this process. The second set of questions probe into the influence of Norwegian language in communication skills and whether they felt that language skills were a critical part of communication skills. The third set of questions probed into aspect of employability such as participants' self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem and whether Norwegian language skills had an influence on any of these.

The employers' interviews were more targeted towards what kinds of skills they wanted from candidates for the kinds of jobs they offered; their experience with non-native speaker of Norwegian, and their overall experience with the Norwegian labor supply market.

The interview were semi-structured. Thus, every interview was different depending on the response and situation. The sets of questions were not strictly followed and the participants were allowed to express their feelings and experiences without much direction. This led to more rich information.

All except three of the interviews were conducted in English. Three interviews including the pilot interview were conducted in Nepali. We, the authors, speak Nepali as our first language. We were limited in the languages in which we could conduct the interviews in that we cannot speak Norwegian and could not conduct any interviews in Norwegian. Thus, the participants from Norway or other countries had only the option of speaking in English while the Nepali participants were given the opportunity to speak in either Nepali or English. The aim of our interview was to retrieve deeper feelings and experiences. Thus, we chose to allow Nepalese participants to speak in Nepali so that we could retrieve richer information at least from them, if not all participants.

This is one of the limitations of our data collection and may have limited the information and responses that could have been possible otherwise. Participants who were able to speak in their first language, agreed that this was easier and enabled them to provide responses.

Another constraint was the time available to us as some participants had limited time to give us. Therefore, some interviews are shorter in length and less rich in information. Follow-up interviews have been conducted with two participants where it was necessary.

5.4 Interview sessions

The in-depth interview is often described as a form of conversation (Ritchie et al., 2013). Indeed Sidney and Beatrice Webb described the method of the interview as being 'conversation with a purpose'. But there are some obvious differences between normal conversation and in-depth interviews - their objectives, and the roles of researcher and participant, are quite different (Kvale, 1996; Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

The base questions were created to control the interview from straying away from the context. The interviews were conducted with much flexibility which led to interviews being more like a conversation. Probing questions have been used to retrieve more detailed information. The interview were generative, in the sense that participants were allowed to think and create knowledge and thoughts. All the interview sessions were conducted face to face and have been tape recorded with the permission of the participant.

The success of the interview depends, to a large extent, on the personal and professional qualities of the individual interviewer (Ritchie et al., 2013). We have allowed participants to speak about 90% of the time on each interview session, meaning, we as interviewers were basically just listening as suggested by Ritchie et al. (2013). When participants mentioned points which were relevant to the study, probing questions were used to retrieve deeper information. Mostly when participant's responses were unclear and incomplete, probing techniques were used to dig deeper.

The interviews were conducted in private apartments, cafés and offices. Private apartment and office interviews were silent and uninterrupted. There were some interruptions where interview sessions had to be conducted in the café and the surrounding have negative effects on the acoustics. There have been minor other interruptions due to phone calls and but the interview session are smooth.

In staging the interview, we followed Ritchie et al. (2013) methods. Each interview session started with informal conversations until the participant was comfortable with the environment. An introduction to the research was made to the participants stating the purpose and nature of the interview also stating the ethics and confidentiality of the process. This phase was not recorded. Once the participants were comfortable and ready we started with open topics such as asking about their study and work background. The recording of the conversation started from this phase. Where participants responded in an anticipated manner, we probed further with follow-up questions. After a qualitative interview session, the interview was brought back to informal topics where the recordings have ended. Thanking the

participants and farewells were carried off the record. All the interview process were carried out with the consent of the participants. Some of the sample of interview session can be reviewed from the Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 which includes samples of transcription of interview session with participant 7 and participant 8 respectively.

As some interviews were conducted in a second language for some interviewees, there have been instances where we have tried to build up the conversation by suggesting some words and conclusions. This is one of our limitation where we have unintentionally fed words to the interviewees with the objective of letting the conversation flow.

Our inexperience as interviewers is one of the limitations in these interview sessions, as we have made errors such as feeding words to the participants at some points in the interview. Our inability to probe deeper into the right responses at the right time can also be considered a limitation in these sessions. Finally, one interview session was ended abruptly because the participant had to attend a meeting and could not allocate us more time. Thus, time constraint is also a limitation for interview sessions.

5.5 Interview Analysis

Unlike quantitative analysis, there are no clearly agreed rules or procedures for analyzing qualitative data. Analysis is a challenging and exciting stage of the qualitative research process. It requires a mix of creativity and systematic searching, a blend of inspiration and diligent detection (Ritchie et al., 2013).

The data in qualitative study are reflecting a phenomena in terms of feelings, experiences, perceptions and events. The primary focus of the analysis is to capture and interpret common sense, substantive meanings in the data. After transcribing the relevant conversation, codes were developed to categorize different topics, issues, ideas and opinions into explainable categories and relationships which are discussed in the Findings section. The codes have been developed to reflect the literature review findings and have been categorized accordingly.

Both deductive and inductive codes have been found and analyzed. Inductive codes are raised by the participants themselves. The codes prompted by the interviewer using topics in an interview guide that were found in the literature and philosophical framework and are the deductive codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Coding is used to conduct a focused analysis on the specific issues relevant to the study. Qualitative studies comprise several

hundred pages, and therefore sorting the data makes it easier and more lucid to read (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010).

5.6 Reliability and Validity

In the broadest sense, reliability meaning 'sustainable' and validity meaning 'well grounded' have relevance for qualitative research since they help to define the strength of the data. As the concepts of reliability and validity were developed in the field of natural sciences, the very different epistemological basis of qualitative research means that there are real concerns about whether the same concepts have any value in determining the quality or sustainability of qualitative evidence (Ritchie et al., 2013).

In the words of Ritchie et al. (2013), reliability is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken. Looking at our interview session, it is highly unlikely that we can produce similar responses in each interview. However, the overall area of responses can be coded. Those who believe that qualitative research is dynamic and can only be conducted effectively in a responsive manner argue that studies can never be, nor should be, repeated (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997 cited in Ritchie et al. (2013)). Because of such concerns, the idea of seeking reliability in qualitative research is often avoided. Different authors prefer to use words such as “confirmability” and “trustworthiness” for the findings.

In a qualitative study, the collective nature of the phenomena that have been generated by the study participants and the meanings that they have attached to them is expected to be replicable (Ritchie et al., 2013). Thus, the reliability of the study method is determined by the kinds of responses that were derived from the participants that relates to the theories forwarded in the sections above.

The validity of findings or data is traditionally understood to refer to the 'correctness' or 'precision' of the interpretation of the data. Validity concerns truthfulness, and how well it fits actual reality. In other words, validity concerns questions of how well we measure social reality using our constructs about it (Neuman, 2012). It is often explained as a concept with two distinct dimensions, the first, known as internal validity, concerned with whether you are 'investigating what you claim to be investigating'; and the second, termed external validity concerned with the extent to which 'the abstract constructs or postulates generated, refined or

tested' are applicable to other groups within the population or to other contexts or settings (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 273).

As with reliability, there has been some attempt in the qualitative literature to move away from the concept of validity and to use instead other terms which are more appropriately related to the 'correctness' of qualitative evidence. Different authors suggest that words like 'credibility' and 'transferability', 'credibility' and 'plausibility' translate more appropriately for naturalistic enquiry than 'internal' or 'external' validity

To address validity issues, this study asks, "Are we accurately reflecting the phenomena under study as perceived by the study population?" To address this we developed hypothesis from one part of the data and compared them with another, checking for comparison across different settings, timing and participants. Also, including the perspective of the individual and organization side, this study method this study triangulates methods for external validation.

Triangulation assumes that the use of different sources of information will help both to confirm and improve the clarity or precision, of a research finding. Theory triangulation looks at data from different theoretical perspectives. There is clear consensus that qualitative research needs very clear description, both of the research methods used and of the findings, to aid checks on validity by others (Ritchie et al., 2013).

The interview session have been carried out using a similar approach and similar base questions and probing questions. The participants have been chosen to reflect similar characteristics. These consistencies were maintained to support the concept of reliability and validity in the study.

5.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines for qualitative research forwarded by Hennink et al. (2010) have been followed throughout the study method. Paramount are:

- Informed consent – the participants were provided with sufficient information about the research in a comprehensible form for the participant.
- Self-determination – after sufficient information was provided, the participants were allowed to choose to accept or refuse to participate in the research without any consequences.

- Minimization of harm – there were no risk or harm of any kind to the participants and all the interviews were conducted smoothly without any issues.
- Anonymity – All the participants have been informed that their identity will remain anonymous throughout the research and even after completion.
- Confidentiality – All the data and interviews will be kept confidential.

All the participants were contacted by telephone or email. The basic research information and basic questions were emailed to the participants before meeting for the interview. Once the participants responded with positive consent, meeting point and time were decided over the telephone. The meeting place and time are also kept confidential so that nothing can be traced back to the participants. All the ethical considerations were properly explained to the participants before the interview began so that they could feel relaxed and confident to share their deeper feelings and experiences. Due to the sensitivity of the information shared, the identity and recorded conversation shall remain completely confidential, unless deemed absolutely necessary. In such cases, information shall only be revealed after the full consent of the participant. The parts of conversation transcribed and discussed in the study have been used for analysis with the full consent of the participants.

6 Findings

Based on the deductive codes from the interview session, the relevant information has been categorized into three major codes; language role in globalized world, language role in communication and social skills, language and graduate employability in international business. An additional code was developed based on the responses of the participants and has been termed; English language and dialects effects in Norway. The base questions were structured to reflect the graduate employability model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007). When looking at their model from an international graduate's perspective, there might be other factors that affect lower tier and in turn affect the levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. The lower tier of the model has various elements out of which this study focuses on the generic skills. The research question, "To what extent does the local language skills affect an international graduate's employability?" tries to relate local language skills to the lower tier, focusing on generic skills which in turn affects the reflection and evaluation of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem.

An underlying hypothesis for this study, thus, can be stated as H1: Local language skills influence the generic skills for international graduates. This explicitly continues to argue that H2: Local language skills influences the employability of international graduates.

Due to ethical considerations the identity of the participants are not mentioned in the study. Participants are identified with numbers and only the required parts of the conversation have been transcribed and quoted. The common characteristics of the participants have been discussed earlier and their status of being a job-seeker, skilled job worker or an employer has been mentioned.

Some of the interviews has been translated from Nepalese to English. The translated version have been approved by the respective participants. Literal translation is not always 100% accurate as it is difficult to find the exact words in English to express the words used in Nepalese. This is one of our limitations for this study.

6.1 Participants

The participant's information that has been revealed in the study is with full consent of the participants. The participants were selected based on the sample characteristics required for

the study. All participants willingly participated for the study. 14 participants had been targeted and we have 12 interviews in total, where one interview was a pilot interview. We present the findings with 11 interviews.

Participant 1, 2 and 3 are job seekers who graduated with a Norwegian degree. Participant 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are international graduates with Norwegian degree working in a skilled job here in Norway and Participants 9, 10 and 11 are employers. Participant 9 overlaps the second and third category. We have 6 male and 6 female participants, including the pilot study participant.

Participant 1 is a male participant who graduated in August 2016 and is looking for career in health research fields. Currently employed as a chef, participant 1 comes from Nepal. Follow up interviews were taken with participant 1 for more detailed information where the follow up interview was conducted in Nepalese language, as preferred by the participant.

Participant 2, a male participant, is a job seeker with a social science background who is currently employed as a kitchen assistant. The participant is from Nepal. The interview was conducted in English as preferred by the participant.

Participant 3, male, completed bachelor's degree from BI Norwegian School of Management in 2015. With no success after seeking job for one year, is currently doing his masters. The participant is from Nepal and the interview was conducted in Nepalese language. The participant is currently employed in part-time jobs.

Participant 4 is a female participant currently studying Masters on Gender studies who completed a degree on International development previously and is currently employed as a personal assistant in Oslo Kommune. Participant 4 also comes from Nepal and the interview session was conducted in Nepalese language, as preferred by the participant.

Participant 5, a male participant, is from a science background with bachelors in mechanics and production and engineering degree in structure analysis and a master's degree in product and system design from Norway. The participant comes from France and currently working in Norway.

Participant 6 is a female participant who completed a bachelor's degree in digital archives from Norway and is from Russia currently employed on a skilled job.

Participant 7, a female participant, who graduated in petroleum geology and is currently working in oil and gas sector. The participant is also from Nepal and the interview was conducted in Nepalese language.

Participant 8, a male participant, is also from Nepal who is working as an android developer holding a master's degree in technical background from Oslo. The interview was conducted in English language.

Participant 9 is male participant from USA, holding a bachelor's degree in business administration from BI Norwegian School of Management, currently employed as production manager in Norway.

Participant 10 is a female participant from Norway, working as a leader in a unit of Oslo Kommune.

Participant 11 is a female participant, who is an IT Asset Manager from Norway in a multinational company in Norway.

The majority of Nepali participants were a result of personal contacts and the snowball effect. The pool of the participants has been made as diverse as possible. The interview session with participant 2 was the first interview which is why, we as interviewers were not skilled enough to conduct a good interview and also the participant was not able to provide us with rich data. This can be our limitation where we could not choose and understand a participant during the interview to extract rich information from him.

6.2 Quotations and analysis

The transcribed quotations are as close to participants words as possible. As spoken words in conversation spontaneous are not always grammatically correct, the grammatical errors within quotation are only slightly edited to represent the actual conversation with no intention of misrepresentation of the participant's communication and language skills. Some quotations have be arranged to remove unnecessary words between the conversations only to display the relevant parts of the quotation.

Words of the participants are included inside double quotations and are in italic font. Where relevant, longer quotations have been presented indented and in italic font without double quotations. A parenthesis with three dots inside (...) are used to illustrate a temporary end to a quotation, where some of the content is not included because of irrelevance, confidentiality or

if it has already been mentioned. The quotation that follows after the parenthesis belongs to the same participant. The original interview can be retrieved from the recorded version.

In cases where the participants have mentioned a company or an individual name, the names have been replaced with [organization name] and [person's name] respectively. In cases where quotations have used pronouns relating to conversations previously done, a short code has been used within square brackets "[...]" to explain the pronoun. All the information related to the participants that are mentioned in the quotations are revealed with full consent of the participants. All other information will be held confidential in the quotations.

One of the participant has mentioned "Bergens Test" which evaluates the language skills of immigrants in Norway. Talking a little about Norway's language skills evaluation systems, the Bergen Test defines the level of language skills a non-native speaker of the language has. However, for this study, Norwegian language skills refer to the general level of language skills of the participants, depending on whether they can have a normal conversation with a native speaker. If yes, we consider them to speak the language while a basic speaker, the study considers them a learner. Thus, not skilled in the local language. The aim of the study is not to show the relation between the level of language skills and graduate employability, but to show the extent to which language skills affect the employability of the participants. Thus, the study does not focus on the level of the language fluency achieved by the participant.

Participants have mentioned much more information than what was intended. These information have been recorded but not used in the quotation unless relevant to the topic of research. Such personal information were mentioned without any intention of bias, harm or hidden motive. These information shall always remain confidential.

6.2.1 Analysis and discussion

In the lower tier of the graduate employability model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) they have included degree subject knowledge and skills as an essential element for graduate employability. The majority of the international graduates working on a skilled job agree that educational background is necessary and important for graduate level jobs. One participant mentions that her employers looked into her degree and courses taken within that degree during her selection process. A participant also expresses his opinion that qualification and getting a job are so closely related that it seems quite obvious that one needs qualification

to be employed. Four participants from the first group expressed that qualifications were important for getting the kind of job they were looking for. Employers also support and mention this.

Participant 7: *“First they [organization] look for what subjects you have learnt. Degree is one important thing, even in that, what courses I took in that degree.”*

Participant 6: *“I would divide it [skills] into one’s personal character and one’s qualification. Qualification for my job is very important.”*

Participant 3 *“To get a job here, the first thing is, qualification should be high that’s obvious”*

Participant 4 *“My experience in Norway says that it does not matter whomever you know, all that matters is how qualified you are.”*

Participant 11 *“Of course they [candidates] have to fulfil the qualification part of it...”*

Participant 9 *“In terms of education it will be great if you have a degree”*

One participant also mentions that he was trying to publish his thesis to boost his CV effectiveness because the kinds of jobs he was looking for preferred academic publications.

Participant 1 *“In research jobs, if you have 2 or 3 academic publication, it helps when you apply for Phd (...) they [organizations] look for publications, that is why I am planning to publish my thesis”*

The fact that research field require high quality report writing supports participant 1’s claims that such organizations would look for candidates who have published quality academic writing. This information was from the participant’s experience of applying for different health research related vacancies.

Most of the international graduates undertook their degree through English. Many schools and universities in Norway provide courses through the medium of English to international students. This is one of the main reasons international students have been able to study and be awarded degrees here in Norway. This might be one reason why participants did not feel any need for Norwegian language skills in this aspect. Participants agreed that they did not need Norwegian language skills to attain this aspect of employability as English language was used.

Participant 7 *“The study was in English language, so I did not need Norwegian”*

As international graduates have the opportunity to complete a degree in English language, Norwegian language was not a problem to attain the degree and subject knowledge.

Looking at another element in the lower tier of the model; experience. Many participants agree with the fact that experience matters and boosts one employability. One of the findings mentioned in Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) study suggest that employers value people who have undertaken work experience, been able to reflect upon that experience and then go on to articulate and apply what they have learnt. Participants have highlighted this aspect in their comments.

Participant 7 *“In my case, my geology background from Nepal where I had worked with mapping and similar things, they were easily impressed understanding that I had a good base of geology, they evaluated me from this point of view”*

One participant mentioned that his past experience was the main reason that got him hired. He is from a technical field requiring expertise in technical aspects such as 3D modelling.

Participant 5 *“I was like searching, for like design, they asked experience in 3d modelling and simulation experience, this is what they were searching for, and I had this in background (...) If I wouldn't have this experience they wouldn't take [hire] me.”*

Studies by Hillage and Pollard (1998), Andrews and Higson (2008) and Bennett et al. (1999) also include work experience and workplace experience as elements of graduate employability. Much research points to work experience as being something that prospective employers value greatly in graduates. According to The Pedagogy for Employability Group (2004), it is widely agreed that graduates with work experience are more likely to secure employment than graduates without. This was supported by some other participants as well.

Participant 4 *“all that matter is how qualified you are and how experienced you are.”*

Participant 6 *“I got a [the] job because of experience [from] before.”*

Participant 3 *“They [organizations] also check if you have done any internships.”*

The study was conducted with international graduates who completed their degree in Norway. Which means that they did not have any work experience from Norway. Some of them had work experiences from their own country.

One of the elements in Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) model is generic skills. Under generic skills they have mentioned many different skills. Participant 6, currently working in the

education sector, mentions many different skills that she thinks are necessary for the kind of job she is working on. Focusing on personal skills she supports Dacre Pool and Sewell's (2007) study that one needs skills such as coordinating and organization ability, attention to detail, ability to use new technologies, good oral communication to be employable. She also adds that a person should be able to influence or motivate people without controlling them. Studies by Hillage and Pollard (1998) have forwarded similar idea in terms of baseline assets which include reliability and integrity, intermediate assets including communication and problem solving and attributes such as motivation and initiative and high level assets such as team working skills and leadership skills. Participant 3 mentions that organizations look for such skills in fresh graduates from the extra-curricular activities they were involved in school.

Participant 3 *"They look for leadership role participation in your school and how involved are you in extra-curricular activities."*

Participant 6

Structured person and good in detail, sociable are personal skills and you should know what you are doing and be very competent (...) Information technology knowledge for sure (...) The second thing being good in the way you speak, to give information in a good way so that other people can understand you, good vocabulary and can influence other people but not controlling them... like you know, teach them. Two most important.

She also mentions that, due to the advance of technology and Norway following suit, one needs to stay updated with the internet technology and other IT updates. As for personal attributes, she mentions that one needs to be well-structured at work, good in details, sociable, competent at work, good at speaking skills, motivation skills and leadership skills.

Participants coming from a technical background also support the view that one needs to have sound technical knowledge and must be updated with today's technology to be employable.

Participant 8 focused on the technical skills as being the most important skill for his field of work.

Participant 8 *"The first and most important thing is you should know the field or technology of the job you are looking for"*

This was also supported by participant 5 who comes from engineering field and 3d software.

Participant 5 *“They were asking someone who knows the mechanics but, like the analytic part, which means that they need someone who knows the software, the 3d software with the analysis,”*

The skills listed in the CBI report Working towards your future (Cbi/nus, 2011) mentions application of information technology as a skill necessary for employability. This includes basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines. This study has been supported by a couple of participants where they have mentioned that one needs to stay updated with various everyday IT applications such as word processors, cloud computing, social networks etc.

Participant 3 *“They [organizations] also look for technical knowledge for example, skills related to various software”*

Participant 6 *“so you [as an applicant] have to know at least word, cloud, internet tech, drop box, before you apply for the job”*

Participant 8 *“For example if you want to work as an android developer then you should have some experience in developing apps and java language, if you want to do some software engineering then you should know some dot net or java.”*

Participant 7 *“you need to update yourself, like you apply one method today but surely you can’t apply same method tomorrow so you need to update and see changes for another method for tomorrow.”*

Coming from the employer’s perspective, participant 9 had similar responses. He also emphasized the need of technical knowledge, organizational skills, interpersonal skill, leadership skills, social skills that have been supported by many authors discussed in the literature review of this study. He mentioned working with different things at the same time. Which is why the participant stressed over organizational skills such as multi-tasking to be very important at work.

Participant 9

To be a production manager (...) I wouldn’t just say my company, it would be basically the same thing, even if you go [one company name], or food manufacturing [another company name]. They will want you to have some kind of experience and knowledge of CGMP and the guidelines. You need to be updated on that. And you have to be good in multitasking. Really really good in multitasking. You need to have organizational skills,

interpersonal skills and leadership skills. You have to be able to motivate people to work. You have to be able to lead. You have to be able to be firm and fair. You know those are some character traits.

Participant 9, being a production manager, explained about what skills one would need to work in similar jobs. He also generalizes that, by his experience, different companies of a similar nature would look for similar skills for similar kinds of jobs.

Participant 10, an employer from social field emphasized the need of emotional intelligence, communication skills and Norwegian language skills. Coming from the area where employees have to deal with young individuals, the sensitivity of the work environment demands a different set of skills. As discussed in the literature review, many studies support the fact that communication skills are essential in any kind of work. Participant 10 has mentioned skills that support DeGuzman et al. (2013) study where they have mentioned communications skills such as speaking clearly and directly, listening and understanding, empathizing as being important.

Participant 10 *“they have to be empathic, and also I prefer them to have experience from youth work (...) I would absolutely prefer good Norwegian communication skill (...) being able to communicate and express themselves is really important.”*

It would be noteworthy to point out our limitation in data collection here, as participant 10's first language was not English and we could not conduct the interview in her mother tongue (Norwegian) because this is not a language either of us, the authors, understand. We therefore conducted the interview in English although participant 10 agreed that she was not good with English vocabulary and would not be able to express fully what she actually means. From this comment and her interview, we understand that she wants employees who can deal with children and teenagers who can be sensitive to handle. Due to this situation, she has mentioned the need of good communication skills throughout the interview. As her organization is based in Norway, the communication in her organization is in Norwegian.

Many international companies have started adopting English as their corporate language (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio, 2011). Participant 11 is an employer in a multinational organization where English as the corporate language. Because of this, the participant emphasized that English language was compulsory for the kinds of vacancies she has in her department.

Participant 11 *“and then English is the main language that they need to be good in (...) If I'm going to hire them then English is what they need to know and understand in IT because I am now working in IT.”*

Having proficiency in English can be advantage in today's business age (Traavik & Richardsen, 2010). Participant 1 shared a common thought.

Participant 1 *“other things like presentation skills and like how well your English language is also very important”*

Talking about language as a skill, participant 1 mentioned that Norwegian language skills have been the most important skill to find the kind of job he was looking for. Despite his qualifications or previous work experience from his home country, participant 1 found it difficult to step through the door because he lacks Norwegian language skills.

Participant 1 *“Last time I applied for the job, they did not ask for Norwegian language skill, but when they replied [email], they asked if I had Norwegian skills. I said no. Then they said that I was not qualified for the interview.”*

To be qualified for an interview, a candidate must meet the basic requirements for the vacancy. The participant had the required level of education and experience for the vacancy. However, he was declined for the interview because he was not skilled in Norwegian language. This shows that language skills can be vital for certain kinds of jobs. Language skills seems to have surpassed qualification and experience in his case. The participant mentions that this is so because health sector is a sensitive area and communication skills are really important for such kinds of projects. The participant also mentions that research projects requires qualitative report writing and since the reports are written and published in Norwegian, it is a basic requirement to be fluent in both oral and written Norwegian skills.

Participant 8 also shares from his international experience that understanding the environment and its culture is an important aspect besides technical things.

Participant 8 *“second things is you have to know the place you are in, for example if you are in Norway the you should know the Norwegian culture and language”*

As for participant 1, he shares his experience of his job-search where Norwegian language has been one of the biggest challenge and hurdle to progress in his career in Norway.

Participant 1 “*First of all is, the most important skill is, of course, Norwegian language and I think that’s been the biggest obstacle to find the right job for me.*”

As discussed earlier, participant 1 is looking for job in a field which requires good written and oral communication skills because of the requirement of talking with local personnel and writing reports. Since, he is looking for jobs in Norway, he shares from his job-search experience that most of the employers list Norwegian language skills as a requirement and this skill has been one of the biggest challenge for the participant.

We as authors agree that Dacre Pool and Sewell’s (2007) model holds true in case of graduates in Norway and supports the claims of international graduates seeking and working in graduate level jobs. The aim of the study is not to explain the model but rather to seek the role of local language skills within the model, when applied from a global perspective. The findings have been presented from the perspective of international graduates and employees in Norway. This extends the model to include an international perspective where factors can change compared to domestic labor supply. This is where language skills play a role. International graduates, such as the ones interviewed, have faced additional challenges to improve their employability in the foreign market. International experience provides skills such as networking, experiential learning, additional language acquisition, and development of soft skills (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). The findings section focuses on the role of language skills on the employability of international graduates.

Coming back to the main research question, “To what extent does the local language skills affect an international graduate’s employability?” we have many comments from participants which explain this relationship. Different perspectives have been presented. Some with common grounds and some coming out of their experience. In this study, Norwegian language is the local language in questions. The aim of the findings section is to explain the role of local language role in the real business operation which in turn affects the employability of the graduates who aim to work for those companies.

6.2.1.1 Language role in globalized world

As mentioned by Piekkari et al. (2014), crossing national and cultural boundaries adds communication challenges. Coming from a different cultures and different languages, participants have shared their experiences of living and working in Norway where Norwegian language played a vital role in in their work life. The quotations and analysis mentioned in

this section focuses on how the participants look at language to adjust to the cultural shock. The process of cultural understanding also involves being able to integrate into the society. As the world is taking a turn towards the globalized village, crossing national boundaries has introduced many further challenges. Here, participants share their views on how they believe language could be a critical factor in “stepping into” a new society and an international labor market. Focusing on the employability aspect, here we analyze how language skills have affected the participants’ exposure to a new market.

Beginning with a general comment from participant 7; she mentioned an international graduate’s perspective, being a foreigner in Norway, that it was common sense to speak the local language. She emphasized the fact that language plays a critical role in day to day communication and translation is not always accurate and appropriate. Local language is useful to avoid misunderstanding in everyday communication.

Participant 7

When people like us come to foreign lands, as a foreigner, and choose to stay here, we need to use their own language to be more practical and to make our responses more effective (...) There are many things here that are not in our language. That is why, when we say it in their mother tongue, they understand it better as well. When we use other language and translate sometimes information can be misunderstood”

After we explained the topic and started the interview, participant 7 started off with this phrase and chose to do the interview in her mother tongue as well. She mentioned that speaking in one’s mother tongue is always better to express feelings and clearly expressing one’s idea, compared to any other language one is fluent in. This is an undeniable argument and a simple common sense. We can also agree, similar to participant 7 and other Nepalese participants who chose to do the interview in Nepali language that everyone would prefer to speak in their mother tongue, if given an option. As Grosbeck (2012) states, an individual is born as part of a community in a culture, in order to learn there and to communicate in his national language, in that thereby resulting society, general behavior patterns and to overtake special attitudes, value systems and knowledge and to transmit these in turn to the next generation. Her following comments tend to support this study furthermore.

A similar thought was forwarded by participant 5 where he mentioned that he would like to learn Norwegian language in the future, not only for career growth but also for social integration. He mentions that language skills can be additional advantage, or in business

terms, give a competitive edge. Also, he shares his feelings about feeling ashamed of not being able to speak the language even after being in the Norway for almost half a decade. These are his motivations to learn the language in future.

Participant 5

In the future I would like to speak Norwegian because not only with work but also for use in daily life. For the work it could be good for integration. If you speak Norwegian then people they are “ok so he is a hard worker he also speaks the language”, it is like a great value. It is a reward. If you do not speak [the language], people are like “ah 4 years and you still don’t speak [the language] it is a bit like, it is shame,”

When talking about language as a stepping stone, participant 6 had to learn language to start her education her in Norway. She is one of the few international graduates who completed her degree in Norwegian. She had to learn Norwegian just to begin her education which is the entry level of her career path, which explains the need of Norwegian language in her career. If international students want to start education from the bachelor’s level in Norway, there are limited number of institutions that offer education through English. This is why, most of the international students doing bachelor’s degrees learn Norwegian.

Participant 6 *“I have learn language before coming to Norway. I study [studied] Norwegian language in university in Russia. The when I came to Norway I practiced, and before I started to study here I learn here.”*

Talking about to language as a stepping stone, participant 9 is currently working in a position that he was rejected for in 2006. This shows that language played a critical role in stepping through the door. Even though much of his skill sets and qualification have not changed, now he was able to get to interview and explain his capabilities. The participant believes that having improved in Norwegian language skills also played a role in getting him through the “door”.

Participant 9 *“That is why I think in 2006 I did not get the job. Qualification was same. The owner was same. At that time my Norwegian was not enough to say hello. I was awkward to say hello to.”*

Similarly, participant 8 also learnt the language when he thought it was necessary for him. He mentions that he completed a level 3 Norwegian course from the University of Oslo and he is

capable of working with the Norwegian language. We understand that he is able to speak Norwegian on an everyday basis and consider him a speaker of Norwegian language.

Participant 8

I finished level 3 from University of Oslo and working language is Norwegian so I speak almost 70 to 80 % of Norwegian language (...) If I had Norwegian skill then [before language course I probably would have started the job at that time so I don't have to wait for language to be finished to get the Norwegian skills in my CV.

The fact that he completed the language course to make his CV stronger shows a direct relationship between local language skills and employability. And the fact that he got the job after completing the language course also supports the same argument. His comment also backs the previous comments from the participants that language proved to be the key to get through the door.

Similarly, participant 4 also speaks Norwegian having taken language courses. She mentions that she is confident and comfortable working and studying in Norway and that she can speak the language which also helps her to feel so. She also shared her experience of how she is able to work more efficiently and integrate better in to the society. She works as a personal assistant for Oslo Kommune's unit and her language skills helped her to get here.

Understanding the need for language in a foreign land, participant 4 has also taken language courses and is ready to enter the labor market after her second degree.

Participant 4 *"I am confident and comfortable as well. Be it games, food, system of education, I got to learn a lot of different and new that I otherwise [living in home country] couldn't have. Now I speak the language as well. I have finished my third level. Next is Bergen Test"*

Looking at following comments from participant 4, when asked why she was taking the courses, she mentioned that she does not have definite plan and that she was simply grabbing the opportunity to learn the language while the courses were being provided by her school. In her words, it is an "arrow in the blindness" i.e. she took the language courses with the hope of reaching somewhere better in the future, although she is not sure herself where, or what this is.

Participant 4 *"Actually, it is an arrow in the blindness. First, I felt like I have to grab the opportunity I am receiving right now. After the degree I am no longer eligible for free course. So, I decided to study while I had time. Else, I have to work 3 months to study this course."*

Looking at her comments, we understand that she believes that the language courses that she is taking now will eventually benefit her in the future, be it career wise or socially. Continuing with her comments, she mentions

Participant 4 *“I have seen many senior students who did not take the courses while in school but later got enrolled in it. I am sure they saw something too that is why they are taking the language course now [laugh]”*

She is not sure what her school’s senior students saw that persuaded them to come back to take the courses, but this shows that other students in her network have decided to upgrade their language skills. The action of these students and the participant herself shows that language skill is an important skill to have.

Similarly, participant 3 is also taking Norwegian language courses to be better prepared to enter the labor market. Looking at further comments from participant 3, we understand that his motivation to learn the language is also related to career growth.

Participant 2 *“I finish my A2 level and I have basic understanding of speaking and writing in Norwegian (...) The most challenging task I see is to learn Norwegian language.”*

Regarding investing one’s time and resources into learning a language, participant 4 shared a thought that it depends on where one plans to settle in the long term. When asked what she thinks about investing in learning language. She replied

Participant 4 *“What is your priority? That should be clear. [If one says] “I will go to Norway and return back [to home country], it’s one thing. Another, if they want to settle here, it’s different. Of course language has a very important role.”*

What the participant may mean is that if an individual wants to complete studies in Norway and look for opportunities in their own home country, in the participant’s case, Nepal, they would not need to invest in learning Norwegian as a degree can be achieved in English. Learning Norwegian is not seen as a good investment if a student returns to their home country. The participant then mentions the other side, which is if one decides to settle here in Norway, then it is a different perspective. In the second case, the participant feels that leaning language can be fruitful.

Participant 4 goes on to mentions an interesting view about language. Language is not a simple thing to learn and practice. Based on her experience, one needs to master a language before being able to write a good report. Learning certain aspects of a language can make one

good in oral communication but writing reports require a different set of skills and knowledge. This, she finds as an obstacle in her career.

Participant 4 *“By learning the language [Norwegian], you can never write a good report. You have to master the language. You can have oral communications, but for writing reports, you have to be well learned. This is definitely an obstacle.”*

Language skills was an obstacle for the participant because she chose to find a career here in Norway. She mentioned in her interview that she planned to complete her studies and go back to her home country, but she is no longer sure that that is what she wants to do. Like everyone, she is after better opportunities, but language skills have been an obstacle for her to progress in her field of work in Norway as it is difficult to master a language in just a couple of years.

Explaining why she thinks that language plays a vital role, she described a situation which demonstrates the impact of language on customer satisfaction, service and comfort from the local customer's perspective.

Participant 4 *“Suppose there is a middle aged individual [Norwegian], if you give them English and Norwegian [manual, reports], maybe they would prefer Norwegian one. This is all related to comfort. At the end of the day, sleep matters, not the luxury of the bed.”*

Talking about language roles in business terms, her comments explain that some customers prefer to receive information in their own local language because it is easier for them to receive information, as the participant says, it is related to comfort for the customer. In international business, penetrating a local market needs strategies that can win local customers. Looking from customers' perspective, the participant relates language roles to communicating with customers and providing better services.

Participant 4 is one of the participants who chose to do the interview in Nepali. Talking more about language she supported participant 7's comments that speaking in one's own language is easier to express feelings and deliver one's idea. Even if they were fluent in English and good in Norwegian, they both agreed that they can provide much richer information if they in Nepali.

Participant 4 *“Let me give my own example. Why am I speaking in Nepali? Why am I giving this interview in Nepali? Comfort. Because I can exactly express my feelings. I can choose better words. I can say the same thing in English or Norwegian, but it is different.”*

Relating again to a psychological factor, comfort, she comments that speaking in one's own language is different than speaking any other second language. By different, we understand, less open and less expressive than speaking in the mother tongue. Once again we would agree that most individuals would prefer to speak, read or hear information in their own language.

As globalization is increasing, we are receiving information in many different languages. For international students, the local language of the country is also one more language. Similarly, the market of customers as well as the supply of labor is changing due to globalization. Organizations need to think from many different perspectives before choosing in which language to relay the information. Be it internal communication or external, choosing the right language is critical now-a-days as the market is mixed with nationals and internationals and it depends on the target market of the organization. As for internal communication, it depends on the composition of the workforce. These facts are further supported by comments from the participants in the sections below.

Talking about the complexity of language skills, participant 9 and others agree that learning language is not a simple process. One needs to invest a great deal of time before becoming skilled in a language to a point that one is regarded as fluent. This is why investing in learning a language seems to be an issue for the participants as well as the organizations. Many participants agreed that their organization was not planning anything specific related to language courses for their employees. Currently, not a single participant working on a skilled job or employers were aware of any schemes or effort on the part of their organization to promote or teach Norwegian to employees. However, almost all of their educational institutions provided Norwegian courses during their study course. Some participants have taken such courses to improve their language skills, as discussed earlier. However, the interviews showed no evidence of any similar effort from the workplaces.

This is however also related to the labor supply market in Norway as organizations have a wide pool of candidates to choose from. They can easily find candidates that match their required competency and skill set with additional skills such as fluency in Norwegian, international experience. Thus, they need not invest additional resources in training their employees in Norwegian.

Participant 9

Learning a language is not like going to technical school where you build up technical skill in 6 month. It does not work that way. It takes years (...) To understand the

language you must have to go school for at least I would say a couple of years. I don't want to pay for that, it is out of my budget, I am sorry. I doubt any Norwegian company would spend that kind of resources on teaching Norwegian to employees. I just don't see that kind of scenario, not in my business.

Many other participants agreed that their organization also does not plan on giving up resources to teach Norwegian to their employees. This raises an additional challenge for international graduates who do not speak the language. These graduates lack a competitive edge while competing with the local candidates who are on equal grounds with regards to qualification and experience.

6.2.1.2 Language role in communication and social skills

In this section, we look at the effect of language as a skill in the communication skills and social skills of an international graduate. As discussed in the literature review, communication skills and social capital are necessary elements to improve one's employability and networks. Also, additional language acquisition is considered an advantage for a graduate with international experience. Norwegian language skills could be a competitive advantage for international graduates when in Norway. Similar thoughts were forwarded by participants which have been included in this section. As discussed earlier, many skills are necessary for employability. The aim of this study is not to prove language as a stand-alone factor affecting employability but to explain the extent to which language skills are influential over an international graduate's employability.

Participant 6 mentioned that in her field of work, it was important to speak Norwegian as well as having some kind of experience. When asked, if qualification and experience were enough to land a job in her field, she replied

Participant 6 "but in first place you need to speak good Norwegian and you need to have experience from before. That's the most important."

Participant 5 comes from a social science background and is currently working in a management position in a social field. She mentions that it is a requirement to have Norwegian language skills in her position. There are no other options. She also mentions that a certain level of Norwegian language fluency is required to meet the job specifications.

Participant 5 *“I work as personal assistant. Part time. The requirement for that is that you have to speak Norsk [Norwegian] or Scandic language. Bergen test is not always necessary. B2 is also an accepted level.”*

This comment also reflects the organizational perspective. The demand also affects the participant’s employability and a requirement of language from the organizational side shows a direct relationship between language skills and employment opportunities, or in a sense, employability of the participant.

Participant 7 continued to explain how her Norwegian language skills impacted her work. She mentioned that, as the company was based in Norway, the majority of the employees were Norwegian. This led to meetings and small talk being conducted in Norwegian. One experience from her meetings supports the view that language skills play a role in understanding the information and having the required social skills as explained by Itani et al. (2015), Grosseck (2012) and Welch and Welch (2008). When asked if Norwegian skills impacted her job seeking process, the participant responded:

Participant 7 *“Yes, it did not affect me immediately at that time, but I have to say that when I started working I felt the impact”.*

When asked to explain how, the participant responded as follows.

Participant 7

Since it is Norway, it’s obvious that Norwegians are like main personnel. So, when there are Norwegian... even though the main subject matters are discussed in English in the meetings, it’s just like us you know... when we Nepalese meet together, we tend to start talking in Nepalese, it’s the same with them, as soon as the meetings are over, they gather around and start discussing in Norwegian.

Participant 7 felt that she was at a disadvantage because she lacked the language skills. She agreed that she was not skilled enough to understand the discussion completely and that she misses out some of the information. She said that she tries to ask some questions, which are always answered, but is not able to ask about everything she is unsure about because of the fear of disrupting the meeting flow. After a meeting, before everyone separates, the casual talk is in Norwegian. She mentions that this is usually about the subject matter but she cannot participate in the conversation because of her language skills.

As she continued to mention:

Participant 7 *“One thing is that, even though they are talking about the subject matter, we do not understand what they are talking about. We can say that it is like a disadvantage for us because we do not understand the language.”*

Here participant 7 mentions that she misses out on subject matter information because of her language skills. The disadvantage she mentions refers to is her inability to understand the information, which exists because of her language skills. Language skills are directly affecting her communication skills. Looking back at “the key to employability” model, the lower tier has generic skills which includes communication skills. Looking at the effect on employability, the reflection and evaluation of the lower tier leads to increased or decreased self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem with regards to the positive or negative effects on the lower tier. In participant 7’s case, comparatively lower Norwegian skills it seems to lower her self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Participant 7’s interview was interesting as the model is clearly reflected in her comments.

During the interview, participant 7 shared some inner feelings which, when analyzed according to the model, relate to the second and third tier of this model. She mentions how she is unable to understand complete information and is still unable to ask about all she needs. This relates to the self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem of the participant. She could have been reluctant to ask for fear of being perceived as incompetent or inefficient. This suggests an effect on her confidence in a way. Her body language and these words during the interview also suggested that she felt lost in such situations and felt inefficient herself. This motivated her to learn Norwegian and now she is able to have normal conversations in Norwegian.

Participant 7

There are experts in our fields and when Norwegian experts gather, they discuss in Norwegian language. Sometimes, we did not understand what they are saying and just kept wondering what they were discussing about. When we asked they definitely answered our questions and explained but you know, it does not feel good to ask about every other thing, like what is this? What did you just say? What does this mean? It is difficult to ask this on every situation. At that time I felt that I should have learned Norwegian.

Eventually, she goes onto support findings forwarded by Grosbeck (2012) where she mentions that she would have incomplete understanding of information but continue to work with it despite being afraid of making mistakes. Here we find that language skills can directly affect

an employee's productivity and efficiency. The inhibition to ask can lead to incomplete information and eventually unwanted outcomes. As she gradually learned the language, we assume that her efficiency and confidence increased along with it. The inhibition can be linked with the emotional intelligence of the participant. Not being able to communicate effectively as and when required and not being able to express oneself openly can limit one's emotional intelligence, which is a required element in the employability model.

Similar experiences were shared by participant 9 where he mentions that due to language skills he cannot understand complete information when meetings are held in Norwegian and when his colleagues are discussing in Norwegian. When they are speaking fast, trying to understand one word leads to missing out other words that follow. He also stops himself from interrupting the flow of the meeting by asking about everything he does not understand:

Participant 9

We have management meetings (...) I might miss a word cause I am not very fluent and when I miss a word while I am trying to concentrate what that word really means (...) he is continuing and I am still holding on to that like "What does that mean?" (...) you don't want to interrupt (...) so sometime you have to struggle.

Participant 7 also mentioned similar comments in the interview

Participant 7 "with this level [Norwegian level], I would understand a little and guess a little, ask a little bit and you know we cannot ask everything... these kinds of things happened. But later I gradually started learning as I thought it would be eventually necessary."

She also mentions that she was not as confident before she started learning Norwegian. Not being able to express her thoughts and not being involved in the discussions or just normal conversation made her feel less capable. This motivated her to learn Norwegian and now she is more confident, increasing her self-efficacy as well. Her comments can also be analyzed from the point of view of social capital and human capital theory.

Relating language skills to confidence, participant 9 also described how language skills affected his confidence while speaking in front of fellow professionals in Norwegian. Despite the courses taken, participant 9 agrees that he is still a learner and does not have good presentation skills in his level of Norwegian. He mentions that his ten-year-old son corrects his Norwegian, which contributes to his lack of confidence in talking to professionals in Norwegian.

Participant 9 *“I have 10 years old son and sometime he corrects my Norwegian (...) How do I sell or talk with these people who are professionals, sitting there?”*

This suggests that his language skills relate to his communication skills, presentation skills and also his self-confidence and self-efficacy. Participant 7 also shares experiences where language played a role in her communication skills and social integration skills.

Participant 7

Like I told you earlier. When we are sitting in groups, they speak totally in Norwegian and I start feeling like I am missing out on a lot of things. We do not understand what the subject matter is and it is difficult to ask about each and everything. The situation becomes awkward you know (...) Mostly it [conversation] is in English, but when socializing it is in Norwegian, like after work having coffee or so. [Corporate communication] is mostly in English.

When we see her ability to interact and make connections with other people before and after learning the language, we can see that she has been able to develop her human capital in terms of language skills and apply it to gain more social capital in terms of good social integration and good networking. She mentions that speaking a common language in a team can greatly improve the working environment and cooperation. When asked what difference she found before and after learning the language, she responded as follow

Participant 7 *“Yes, I feel the difference, when I speak in Norwegian it is easy to communicate with people and establish good relationship. Its friendly when we speak their language and while working also it is more cooperative and I can be friendly with the people”*

This is also supported in the literature related to team work cooperation, working environment and cooperation among team members and the role of language (Harzing & Feely, 2008; Klitmøller & Luring, 2013; Luring & Klitmøller, 2015; Welch & Welch, 2008). The participant also mentioned the difference it has brought to her work environment and team work communication.

Participant 7

In my profession you need to have teamwork [skills]. It is really hard to work alone in my profession. When you know the language it is really easy to communicate and cooperate and also main thing when you speak their [Norwegian team members] language the

environment is really good, which is good at work. I see that language is really important at work for good environment and cooperation.

Here she mentions that using the local language used by the team members leads to a good work environment and this is important for outcomes. Many studies discussed in the literature review support the fact that globalization has led to many complications in knowledge sharing and communication among team members from different nations. This comment shows that language also plays a role in creating a good working environment for cooperation and flow of communication, and not understanding the local language can be a complication. This also supports this participant's feelings of confidence and efficiency in a team project. When asked if she felt more confident at work after speaking Norwegian. She directly replied.

Participant 7 *"Yes I do feel, [laugh] I definitely feel that"*

Sharing similar experiences, participant 4 also mentions that there are many operational inefficiencies due to language issues. She mentions that during meetings, these usually start in Norwegian. When meeting participants realize that there are people who do not completely understand the information in Norwegian, they change to English. She mentions that this is not preferred by the Norwegians as it is not comfortable for them either.

Participant 4 *"What happens is for example if you organize any sort of meetings, they will start speaking in Norwegian. Then when they see "oh, there are English speakers too", then they change to English, even if they don't prefer to. There are lot of meetings at my place."*

She mentions that she can have normal conversation and understand more than 50 percent of the information in meetings. But when speaking in Norwegian, local employees speak in their native tempo, which is sometimes too fast for non-native speakers. When they change to English, the native speakers then start having difficulties in finding the right words in English. She mentions that she has meetings at her workplace with 9 to 10 speakers where most of them start speaking in Norwegian and slowly explain in English for those who do not understand the local language.

Participant 4

They won't speak slowly for us. Even after third level, we can only understand 50 percent. We can't catch their speed. They change to English but it is not their first choice. It is a second alternative. They always start in Norwegian and then they start speaking in English and are like "and what do we call that in English?" We lose time.

Talking about operation inefficiencies caused by language, here participant 4 mentions the loss of time. Having to explain the same information twice and having unnecessary interruptions in the meetings costs time. Supporting similar concepts, participant 4 goes on to mention the costs that are involved in report writing and distribution. Here we see an indirect relationship between language skills and organizational efficiency. Also the participant's communication skills are directly influenced by the level of her local language skills.

Participant 4 *“If there are any reports that needs to be published, we need to do it once in Norwegian and once in English. Everything needs to be done twice.”*

Similarly participant 9 also shares his thoughts on how language skills could affect one's efficiency and the operational efficiency of the whole organization.

Participant 9 *“Like we have clients in Sweden. I get the emails from clients you know, in Swedish when they send you email to Norway, they don't bother to translate, they expect you to understand (...) Sometimes I need to google translate or ask my colleagues”*

Swedish and Norwegian language are almost similar, in the sense that Swedish speakers can understand Norwegian speakers and vice versa which is why participant 9's clients do not bother to translate when sending emails to Norway in Swedish. Here, the participant has to go through additional means to understand the information because of his lack of proficiency in either of the languages. He explains that even when he needs to respond to emails in Norwegian, it always take three to four times longer than for emails that he writes in English. This can be seen as a barrier to communication within an organization due to language.

Participant 9

So if I am writing an email in Norwegian it will take me 3 to 4 times longer than writing it in English. In English [expressing fast typing] it's done. In Norwegian, you write it and read it and again proof read it again and take this off and write it again as you know you want to send a point of plus want to be professional.

With regard to corporate communication, participant 9 mentions that all the documentation in his organization is in Norwegian which is why he requires his employees to understand Norwegian and is also a requirement for the applicants for most of the vacancies in his organization.

Participant 9 *“You do not need to be an expert but if you can understand (...) because our documentation is in Norwegian (...) so it is a requirement”*

Regarding communication flow within the organization, participant 5 mentions that when emails are forwarded, the ones directed towards him are in English while the emails which are forwarded to all the departments together are in Norwegian. He has no problems with that system as he is receiving the information in English. He mentions that he ignores the emails that are directed towards all the departments as they contain information that is not always important for him.

Participant 5 *“I receive e-mails in English when it is directed to me but when its directed to all the department it is written in Norwegian (...) If it is for all the apartments then its means that it is not very important, so then I skip but when I feel that its important I just translate.”*

However, sometimes he finds information that is relevant to his area of work, which he then translates and reads. Considering the emails that are in Norwegian, it can be understood that the reason for ignoring those emails are because they are in Norwegian. Also, we can understand that the information that is in Norwegian is not always accepted, received or understood by the participant. This can be understood as a hindrance to the communication process, the reason being language.

Supporting this concept of social capital, participant 6 mentioned that she has a good working environment and everyone is friendly. Participant 6 speaks Norwegian and can use the language for work and everyday communication. She mentions that all the conversations within the breaks are in Norwegian. Nevertheless, she credits the luck factor for finding a job where the work environment is so friendly. Thus, she does not directly credit her language skills for creating this good environment. However, compared to the comments from other participants, we see that she has mastered the language and is able to easily integrate with the local employees. This is why she has not focused on her language skills. However, other participants who are still incapable of using the language for everyday conversations, have a common thought that they miss out on small talk and feel left out from local groups because of the language. Participant 7 also mentions that it is easier to integrate with people in Norway if you know the language and learning language is not only useful career-wise but generally as well.

Participant 7 *“You know it is really hard to socialize with Norwegians, but if you know the language maybe it won't be that hard and you can build up good relationships with Norwegians (...) learning local language is good for future, not only in career but generally.”*

However, participant 6 has not had any issues with socializing with Norwegians and other internationals as she has Norwegian language skills.

Participant 6 *“I think I am lucky. We have good environment. So, we usually sit together during the lunch. When we work, we are very good to collaborate and help each other and very open and support each other (...) We use Norwegian.”*

Being in a similar position, participant 5 had a totally different perspectives of such social breaks. The biggest difference we find between these two participants is the language skills. The comment from participant 5 is self-explanatory when it comes to relating language skills with social skills, emotional intelligence, social integration, self-confidence and self-efficacy. This concept was also mentioned in the study by Neil (1998) that language barrier compounded a sense of being an outsider when being left out of conversations in language that is unknown for the participants.

Participant 5 *“when they are in the coffee break, I don’t like to go there because everybody speaks Norwegian I would not understand and its very embarrassing for me, and also maybe for them because they should speak English because of me. I want them to speak freely.”*

Participant 5 continues to explain that he would rather sit in his office alone during such breaks than go around bothering other social groups. He perceives that he will cause unease among his colleagues by making them speak in a language different from their mother tongue. Due to language barriers, the participant excludes himself from social groups, which will in turn affect his social capital. This shows that the participant has a feeling of exclusion and dissatisfaction within himself for not being able to integrate properly. This affects the participant’s self-confidence and self-efficacy as well.

Participant 8 talks about work environment, mentioning that he has colleagues who only speak English but still enjoys a friendly working environment. Despite the language barrier there is a warm and welcoming environment for everyone.

Participant 8 *“Its really nice (...) regardless of the language you speak, English or Norwegian they are very warm welcoming and helping each other every time.”*

Relating his language skills to his self-efficacy, participant 8 continues to mention that learning the language and overcoming the language barrier is an achievement for the participant.

Participant 8 *“Giving my interview in Norwegian language and doing all my work in Norwegian language. So, having overcome the language and getting the job while speaking Norwegian I think that’s my biggest achievement so far.”*

Looking at this concept from a psychological perspective, participant 4 mentions that language is integrated with everything, meaning that meeting people with a common language can elicit good feelings. Even without knowing a third person, one can feel a connection with a person if they share a common culture and language, especially if an individual rarely meets people from a similar background while living in a foreign country such as Norway.

Participant 4

Language is everything. Everything is related to this thing. Feeling of affection. For e.g. even if they are not Nepalese, even if they are Indians, we feel so glad to meet them. Because we have a common ground of language and culture. In some gatherings, if I am going and I hear that some other Nepalese people are coming, I get excited. It is because we share a common language and culture. I feel like at least I can talk freely and openly with them.

Psychologically, participant 4 feels comfortable meeting and being around people with a common language and culture. Being able to express oneself openly and freely is a comfort and creates a good feeling. This leads to better relationships and better bonding. Participant 4 shares her thoughts that there is stronger social capital among people who share a common language and a common culture.

Participant 9 is a candidate whose experience in Norway can be grouped into the employees as well as employers category since he has been an employee and is currently an employer. He had many experiences to share which explains the deeper relations between language skills and one’s career development in an international environment. Participant 9 shared a thought which effectively summarizes the comments from the other participants:

Participant 11

Norwegian for me is like, here you are in a management position you could not technically understand when you have a board meeting (...) you have an management meeting, where you meet manager, you know, CEO, directors and discuss strategy, they are mostly in Norwegian. So when you want to contribute it will like (...) I had just gotten here like I said having experience and you know that it was hard.

Coming back to basic Norwegian language skills, participant 10, a Norwegian employer working for Oslo Kommune mentioned that she lists Norwegian language skills as a necessary requirement for any vacancy that she has in her department. Her comments have been discussed earlier as they demonstrated that Norwegian language skills are critical for dealing with young students in her organization. Restating her above mentioned comment, we see an organizational perspective here, where the needs of an organization led to language skills being really important for applicants wishing to work in this field.

Participant 10 *“I would absolutely prefer good Norwegian communication skill and it's not so important that they can write Norwegian but communication at my workplace with the young are really important.”*

This contradicts the thoughts of participants 1 and participant 4, as participant 10 as an employer, mentions that in her organization, oral communication is more important than written communication. This is explained as due to the nature of the organization and work. They need to deal with youths between the ages of 13 and 18. Communication with this age group can be sensitive which is why she stresses the need for Norwegian language skills.

Participant 10 also relates her employees' language skills to her organization's efficiency in terms of loss of time, supporting comments from participants discussed earlier. She mentioned that all her meetings were held completely in Norwegian and all the corporate communication is also in Norwegian. This comment supports the claims of participant 1 and participant 4 that communication related to social fields and documents related to public organizations in Norway are in the local language.

Participant 10 *“Everything is in Norwegian. And also all information from Oslo Kommune. I've never seen actually that they send out information in other languages. Only if it is of a specific need for like a mother and you need information for the children then may be (...)”*

She goes on to mention that

Participant 10 *“If I have an employees that is not good in Norwegian, I have to translate. I have to write emails specified for that because I send out emails in Norwegian to everyone and I have to use more time also to explain. It takes time and time is money [laugh]”*

Saving organizations time and money is her job as a manager. Optimum utilization of available resources is an organizations' objective. In such instances, language skills tend to use additional resources of the organization. It is the job of a manager to take actions that can

make organization more efficient as a whole and this is why she mentions that she has decided to list Norwegian language skills as a necessary requirement for any new vacancies she will have.

Participant 10 goes on to mention that, sometimes, even decision making skills can be influenced by language skills. Such cases arise in her organization when there are conflicts among youngsters and employees need to take quick decision. If an employee is poor in the local language skills and does not understand what is happening, they may not be able to handle the situation or communicate with the parties involved. They will not be able to decide quickly about what to do just because they do not understand the language. Skills in handling conflict through effective oral communication is really important for the participant's organization.

Participant 10

Also sometimes we need to make quick decisions (...) We need to react very quickly and we need to understand each other. And we need to give like really strict messages, like, "Don't fight!" or you know "Let go of the guy!" or you know sometimes (...) so we need to be very fast in decisions, and of course language is a factor in that."

Participant 11, as an employer has also acknowledged the importance of language skills in social capital. Like many participants above, participant 11 also mentions that international employees would need language skills to integrate into the social circle of the local people. However, she comes from an IT department, a "technical" field in the words of many participants above and she also support their claims that language is not necessary in such field. Being a multinational company, she rather demands fluency in English language than the local language.

Participant 11

If they understand or speak Norwegian, that is not important for me. I think it is important for the person themselves because they are going to lack out in some of the small talks in the work environment between colleagues. Little jokes and you know, the social part, because that is in Norwegian of course between Norwegians so that is where they are going to lack out.

6.2.1.3 Language and graduate employability in international business

In this section, the quotations have been presented to show the relationship between language skills and a graduate's employability considering the findings and discussions in the previous sections. Language has been argued to be a stepping stone into a new culture and international labor market. Language skills have been discussed to be a critical skills in communication and social integration. This section presents the relationship between language skills and a graduate's employment opportunities, from the participant's view as they have experienced through their career development path.

Participant 9 had extensive work experience from the United States and came to Norway with a positive hope of getting a similar level job. However, despite his education and experience, he still could not get a job that fitted his expertise back in 2006 and therefore continued with his education here in Norway. When asked what the reason was:

Participant 9 *"The main reason why I couldn't get a job even though I had education and experience was obviously due to language."*

Furthermore explaining his experience, participant 8 mentions that he had applied for a lot of vacancies before he had learned the language and most of them rejected his application only because he did not have Norwegian language in his course. We see that employers also seek Norwegian language. Despite coming from a technical field, participant 8 needed Norwegian language skills before being considered for a vacancy. This motivated him to learn Norwegian before stepping into the market.

Participant 8

To talk a little history about myself, I was here in Norway as a job seeker at that time I did not even know a word of Norwegian language. I tried to look for the job at that time with my skills that I had that time and I almost applied 50 or 60 companies but most of them said that the only thing lacking in my CV is Norwegian language at the time I think of learning Norwegian language before applying for the next job or like getting into the market.

Understanding the need of language, participant 5 has also been taking language courses and now is able to understand parts of conversations. Participant 5 has been taking language courses while working. His motivation for taking language courses is not solely career

oriented but for social integration as well. We understand that for international graduates and skilled workers like participant 5, their career growth incentive has motivated them to learn Norwegian. Simply stated, the participants believe that learning language can help boost their employability.

Similar experiences were shared by participant 4 as well. When applying for the job that she is currently employed in, her employers asked her to present her language course certificate to prove her language skills before being hired for the job. They asked her to contact them only after she had received her results.

Participant 4 *“When applying for the personal assistant, I was interviewed. I spoke in Norwegian. They asked if I had the certificate. I said that I was waiting for my B1 level exam results. They said that they would contact me only after I had received my certificate.”*

This supports the earlier view that organizations in her field of work are also looking for language skills.

Sharing a similar experience, participant 5 also mentions an interview session where he was rejected for not having Norwegian language skills.

Participant 5

I remember when I was in [company], I had this interview and the [interviewer] said “Ok, so you don’t speak Norwegian?” I’m like, “Not yet!” [eye-roll by participant]. [The interviewer said] “Yeah but we have a lot of costumers only Norwegian so it will be hard”. Then it means that it can be a break in your career. So I think that, yes, speaking Norwegian, if you want to be well established in Norway, it could be nice to speak [Norwegian language].

Participant 5 is still in the process of learning the language. He mentions an interesting point when talking about comfort while working in Norway. He is afraid is that his career might be affected by language in the future, if he was to be laid off by the current organization. He mentions that his lack of language skills could lead to fewer opportunities as many organizations in Norway are particularly seeking Norwegian language and, in his words, may not be interested in candidates who do not have Norwegian language skills. When asked if he felt comfortable working in Norway, he replied

Participant 5

Ahm, yes, and no (...) No because if they fire me, then it means that when I would have to find a job, I need to find a company that accepts that I speak English you know and some companies, they are like “ah, no no no, you need to be fluent in Norwegian”. Which means that it closes a lot of doors so I am a bit stressed about that, so it could be nice to speak Norwegian and then you can just say ok “I am fluent in Norwegian” and that’s it. Then you have all doors open but then in this (...) it is a problem if you don’t learn Norwegian.

This comment also supports the study by Itani et al. (2015) where they mentioned that with growing globalization and reduced job security, language skills can be a key career competence. Looking deeper into participant 5’s comment, his inability to speak Norwegian makes him worried about being unemployed. Many of the studies and definitions of employability mentioned in the literature review suggest that employability is related to being employed sustainably and being able to find work related to one’s ability. Here, despite his skills, qualification and experience, he is not confident that he can remain employed in Norway, because of his language skills. He is confident that if he is skilled in Norwegian, he will have more employment opportunities. Metaphorically, he mentions doors which represent employment opportunities which are unavailable because he lacks Norwegian language skills.

Related to such experiences, participant 6, having learnt the language is still facing issues in her career path due to language. Norway is a country with many dialects which are different from one another. Having learnt the widely spoken dialect, participant 6 is still unable to understand other dialects. When asked if she had faced any difficulties due to the dialects here in Norway, she replied

Participant 6 “A lot, a lot. There are some dialects I never understand like Stavanger, Bergen. It is like Greek for me. I have [had] this problem in the interview, when my [company] employers asked me some questions, I answered differently, because I couldn’t catch the [questions].”

We see this as a language barrier. She did not understand the dialect, or the language of the employer and ended up answering something different to what the employer had asked. This, she believes eventually cost her the position. This shows a different approach to employability, as language was the main reason that she was rejected. This also shows a direct relationship between local language skills and the employability of a graduate.

Participant 8 also mentions a similar experience. Despite having the required qualifications, he was rejected from interviews because of his language skills.

Participant 8 *“I did have some couple of interview and while having interview the last thing was [interviewer says] “you have a good set of skills but you do not have Norwegian language”. And most of the technological field they required Norwegian language.”*

Participant 8 goes on to add that she feels that language has been a barrier to her career development. She believes that she could have already achieved a higher position if it was back in her country because of her skills and experience. Her comments reflect and support a view that directly relates language skills to career growth and employability as a whole.

Participant 7

If I was in Nepal and had been working there I would definitely be holding good position in Nepal and here I think because of barrier of language I am a bit behind [laugh] (...) I feel I am behind just because of language despite having other skill. When you get good position it is not only about speaking I mean you should have some professional skill in writing in Norwegian also (...) I can say myself I was delayed in my career just because of the language.

She mentions that her current work placement does not ask strictly for Norwegian skills but would prefer their employees to speak the language. Concerning her organizational perspective, she mentions that her organization is not involved in any language learning activities for the employees and that the corporate language is English, so she does not need to speak the language fluently at work.

Participant 9 is working in the same company that he was rejected from because of his language skills almost a decade ago. He was offered a position when coincidentally this employer and the participant happened to meet after he had completed his degree. After having lived in Norway for almost a decade, he mentions that his Norwegian skills had greatly improved compared to 2006. He shares his experience of the interview

Participant 9

Presenting myself in Norwegian I felt like, you know. You have to stop, you think before you speak so I felt like I was coming unintelligent (...) So I was like I am sorry but if you don't mind I would like to speak English if its ok so I asked permission to speak English. [Interviewers] “Yes yes, go ahead” So then I was in my element (...) the owner was

really impressed and at that time he actually offered me 2 position (...) Production was my bread on butter so I gladly took production manager.”

This comment from participant 9 support many of the different idea discussed above. First, he was more confident speaking in his native language, English. He felt that he was not able to present himself properly when speaking in Norwegian, which shows that language skills can affect one’s presentation and communications skills. The participant was confident enough to take control of the situation and guide it to his favor. Once he was able to express his qualities and experience, the employers were impressed by his experience. Language skills became a secondary factor outweighed by his experience. The participant currently is a production manager and works in a technical field. Comments in this sections further support this idea that language skills are more focused on social and management fields than in technical fields.

Participant 7 also mentions that it is dependent on department. She is only speaking for her department and her field of work. She mentions that in departments such as marketing and personnel, where one needs to communicate constantly with the clients and third parties, most of the employees are fluent in Norwegian.

Participant 7 *“In marketing department, administration department, personnel relationship department, there are rarely international [employees], they speak Norwegian (...) it depends on department, where you need to communicate with people you really need language.”*

Coming from one of these fields, participant 4 shares a common thought from her experience, saying that the chances of getting a skilled jobs are directly related to language skills one has. It is just a statement, but she was confident that the relationship existed while speaking in the interview as well.

Participant 4 *“If you plan to graduate and look for a graduate level skilled job, then you will need the language. But you have other jobs that you can do.”*

She goes on to mention that there are other available jobs to do which do not require language skills and she is also doing a similar part-time job. If the objective is financial, then lower level skilled jobs are available which do not require language skills, but for skilled level jobs, she believes language skills are necessary. However, she continues to stress that this is truer in the social field.

Participant 4 *“But you have other jobs that you can do. But like I said, for skilled jobs, like in social field, you need language skills. You don’t get the chance in many places, it is really very important in social field.”*

Participant 8 had similar comments when talking about language requirement being dependent on the type of job. Supporting the comments that language is necessary for positions which involve more communication, he mentioned that today’s technology has made operations simple and communications easier, companies are opening positions which do not require direct communication with third parties and clients and do not ask for Norwegian language. Stressing on his past experience working as consultant, which required direct communication with clients, he stresses that these jobs need language skills.

Participant 8 *“consultant which was required to have communication directly with the customers so at that time the Norwegian set of skills would be really important”*

This comment also supports the study by Piekkari et al. (2014) where she has explained the role of language in communication and international business. Communication skills have been argued to play a vital role in any business and is regarded highly by employers in every field of business, as discussed in the literature review. Following this concept, participant 7 recommended that international students who are seeking a career in Norway, learn language not with just the aim of getting a good job but also to live a better social life and for better social integration.

Participant 8 shares his experience while searching for a job as a consultant and goes on to support similar studies that language is required for jobs involving more communication. He mentions that jobs in technical field such as software developers, might not need Norwegian to get a job.

Participant 8 *“It depends on what position you are apply for (...) I mostly applied for consultant position. And at the time [4 years ago] consultant position or consultant was most popular but now a days, developer positions are opening which does not require Norwegian language.”*

Furthermore, he continues to support this by sharing his current experience as an android developer where he does not feel the need of language as he did when he applied as a consultant.

Participant 8 *“In Android developer position, I had the language. It was “nice to have things” so throughout the interview period the things that we discuss were personnel skill, technological skills and past experience”*

Participant 6 also agrees that the need for language skills might be dependent on the type of job as she mentioned similar thoughts. But in addition, she mentions that due to macro-economic factors playing a role in Norway, people need to have a competitive edge to be employable. Norwegian language skills, she thinks, are a priority for people in every field to stay ahead in Norway.

Participant 6

It depends on what kind of job in Norway (...) We have crisis so many people are unemployed (...) competition (...) So to learn Norwegian it's on the top for all of the people in every field. I think so. Not other language, everybody can speak English, Spanish, it is not important, but its Norwegian, you have to speak. It's what I think

The concept of employability has been discussed from three dimensions, as discussed in the literature review. Participant 6 mentions the economic-social perspective of employability which are affected by macro-economic factors such as labor market competition, economic crisis etc. To overcome this, she mentions that speaking Norwegian can give a competitive edge to international employees. She repeats that it is not other languages that are important in Norway, it is the local language that matters.

Similar concepts came from participant 5 as well. He directly compared his technical field with management work and does not feel he needs the language as much as a manager would. So depending on the kind of job requirement, language could be a critical skill to have. He mentions that in technical fields, if the employers are looking for the kinds of skills an international graduate has, then the employers can overlook the language factor for the set of skills the graduate has. So, if a graduate has the required set of skills, then language requirement will be secondary, but as a manager, there is a greater emphasis on the “human-side” rather than the “technical-side”, in the exact words of the participant.

Participant 5

I think if a company really needs the skills like technical skills, they can take me, you know, if they see there is nobody else then, the language will come later [secondary importance]. It is not a problem I think. It [language] is more for the integration you

know, because the managers, they take care of their team, and sometime they take more of the human side than the technical side. So they will be like “Ok, he has to be integrated... if you don’t speak then you will not understand...” and so on. Then it can be important.

Participant 5 mentions that a manager needs to “take care of their team”, which means that a manager needs to lead and manage their teams where they will be constantly communicating and maintaining personal relationships. Since managers have to create a sound, social environment in which their teams can cooperate and integrate, local language skills can be necessary to maintain a good relationship with the local employees. A manager needs to understand the team members and if a manager is not able to understand the local language, then he/she will not be able to understand his/her employees. This can affect a manager’s capability to lead and motivate.

Similar thoughts were shared by participant 9 where he mentioned that lower level skilled jobs did not need language, according to his past experience. This comment supports the argument that individuals who have best developed skill which organizations feel to be most important are most likely to get the job (Teijeiro et al., 2013). If organization are only looking for the technical skills and not the language skills, then language will not affect the employability. Following comments also supports participant 5’s comments that for fields like management, language matters.

Participant 9 *“With those type of labor job, does not matter if you speak the language or not, but to have a position in management, then it matters you know.”*

Participant 4 is currently doing her second master’s degree having already completed a master’s degree in a social field. She also mentions similar arguments that language requirements depends on the kind of field or job one applies for. She explained that in her previous degree, she had the issue of language skills because she was enrolled in a social field and was looking for a job which required the ability to write reports in Norwegian.

Participant 4 *“In my previous masters degree, I had the issue of language skills because it was related to social field. Compared to the technical field, we have to write a lot of reports here, and the reports have to be written in their [Norwegians] own language.”*

Here, we see that she compares her field to a technical field and concludes that social fields require a lot of report writing in Norwegian. Going back to participant 1’s comments

mentioned earlier, this supports the very same argument. Participant 1 has not yet been able to find a job just because of his language skills and in that he also mentioned that writing reports was an important part of the kinds of job that he was looking for. He also came from a social field. It is necessary to mention here that report writing skills comprise a set of skills including linguistic. Both the participants have relatively good report writing skills as they are master level graduates and that much can be expected from a master's level graduate in any field. Still, language skills have limited their report writing ability and in the end limited their employment opportunities.

Many participants mentioned similar ideas about technical and social fields. Based on the words of the participants, we understand that participants feel that language is more important in jobs related to the management field where there is more importance placed on communication. While technical fields require more operational knowledge, there is less need for communication resulting in less importance given to language.

Participant 4 goes on to mention that it is a specified requirement for the job that one needs to speak Norwegian. Sometimes the employers look for Bergen Test results while some accept B2 level. However, the main point is that employers in her field are also looking for language skills.

As participant 4 goes on to mention, this is in no way an unjust decision on the part of the organization. We can all agree that relaying information in the local language is much more efficient and the right thing to do to achieve success in the local market. This introduces challenges to employability. In such small things, we discover here that globalization has brought along new challenges in the face of growth and when talking about employability of graduates with relation to skills sets, local language skills can play a role. Participant 4 comments

Participant 4 *“Comfort. They [organizations] can easily find someone who can speak Norwegian. Why should they hire you [non-speaker of Norwegian]? It is human tendency. We cannot say that it is injustice. It is a struggle because it is our choice.”*

Participant 4 relates the growing challenges to a psychological factor, comfort. Seeking comfort is a human tendency and if speaking in the local language makes one comfortable, then they will choose to do so. Organizations would also like to keep the working environment friendly and comfortable for everyone, so they would choose team members accordingly. In simple words, organizations choose team members who make the

organization more efficient. Individuals who decide to see a career path in a foreign language and foreign culture should have a strategy to deal with such obstacles for employability.

Participant 3 also mentions that if he had the language skills, he could have secured a job related to his study. Currently studying his master's degree and seeking a graduate level job with a Norwegian bachelor's degree, he is currently working part-time on a job unrelated to his career path.

Participant 3 *“Well I think that due to language I was unable to get a job related to my study field. Regarding this [current job] I don't feel that but surely this is not my career job but yeah I feel, if I had known the language I could have got my job [skilled job].”*

Talking about the labor supply availability in Norway, there is no shortage of people who can speak fluent Norwegian and also have the set of skills that match an international graduates' set. As mentioned by participant 4 and also participant 9, employers have many candidates on hand who have good Norwegian skills to supplement a good set of skills. International graduates without language skills need to present some outstanding set of skills that can outweigh the language barrier as in participant 9's case as discussed earlier; otherwise, why would employer's choose a candidate without language skills when they have a pool of equally good candidates with the additional language skill?

Participant 9 *“If I am getting 30 candidates and if I see that you say “No I don't speak any Norwegian at all.” I got 29 other candidates to pick from, why would I pick you?”*

Participant 10, an employer mentions that she recently posted a vacancy in her department and has Norwegian language skills as a requirement. In other words, one cannot apply without Norwegian language skills. In relation to the research questions, we see that local language skills are affecting graduate's employability seeking careers in her department.

Participant 10 *“I just wrote it [Norwegian language requirement] like yesterday or two days ago actually because we are seeking more people, so yes [speaking Norwegian is necessary]”*

When asked for the reason, she repeated the fact that communication with the youngster was very important.

When talking about language and employment, participant 11 as an employer stated that Norwegian language was not important in her field which is IT. She rather required English language as a priority because her corporate language is English and all communication is in English.

Participant 11 *“if I'm going to hire them, then English is what they need (...) If the qualification if I have to equal candidates, eh, both of them are none Norwegians, eh, I would choose the one with the best English skills.”*

Also supporting many comments discussed above, participant 11, as an employer also agrees that language skills are dependent on the needs of the department. She mentions that if she were in a different department other than IT, then the needs for the language could have been different depending on job requirements.

Participant 11 *“If I for instance were in another department where we may have some customer relationships with customers here in [city] or in [city], then Norwegian would of course be also something that would be one of the qualification that they would have to pass”*

Participant 9 mentioned one interesting fact when it comes to language and a level of experience and expertise. Once you have a certain level of experience, it is not the difference in language that matters. He mentions that no matter which part of the world he has to deal with, the production managers in that company understands him and he understands their technical terms as they are all experienced up to that level in production, where they know what the other person is trying to say, even if they do not share a common language.

Participant 9 *“It [production] is just a language we all understand because no matter where you are manufacturing is manufacturing. We speak the same language. The same problem I have is the same problem he has.”*

As an employer, participant 9 mentions that he works in a Norwegian company so he expects all job candidates to have a good understanding of Norwegian. They do not need to be expert, but they need to have at least a basic understanding and should be able to communicate. English language is not a requirement, but is considered a bonus as all employees are good with English. For communicative efficiency, participant 9 expects his candidates to have very good Norwegian and good enough English or good enough Norwegian with really good English. He mentions that all his staff are able to use both to some extent, with excellence in one.

Participant 9 *“You know this is a Norwegian company, so you know Norwegian you know, so I expect you to understand and speak Norwegian. Where they are Norwegian or not. You have to be able to communicate.”*

Here participant 9 mentions that he expects his employees to understand and speak Norwegian. He needs his employees to communicate. However, he has agreed that he speaks in English and

is not fluent in Norwegian. He has also mentioned in the interview session that he understands Norwegian and can speak when required, but uses the mix on both English and Norwegian language at work. He also mentions that there is no problem of communication within the organization despite the lack of language skills within members of the team. This suggests that local language skills may not be so influential at workplace with the support of a secondary common language, such as English in the participant's case.

6.2.1.4 English language and dialects influence in Norway

Participant 11 *“In Norway, everybody speaks English.”*

Participant 11 has mentioned that English language is the main language in her organization and that she requires the applicant to understand and speak English. She also mentions that everyone in Norway speaks English and are not reluctant to speak in English. This is why many international graduates do not feel too held back because of lack of Norwegian skills.

This sections provides comments which suggest that the proficiency of English language in Norway has helped international graduates integrate and work efficiently in skilled jobs. The general fluency of Norwegians in English supports this claim. Some participants have argued that Norwegians would prefer to speak in Norwegian and would choose to speak in English as a second option, which seems to have affected the social capital of some participants.

However, considering the effect of Norwegian on international graduates' employability, the following quotations support the fact that English language as a second language option has increased participants' employability.

All participants, including the participants whose interviews were conducted in Nepali, are fluent in English. Much literature supports the fact that English language is gaining importance as a business lingua franca. Terms like ELF (English as lingua franca) or BELF (Business English as Lingua Franca) are coming up in to explain that English is being used as common language by people with from different mother tongues (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). For example, in this study, a participant from Nepal and a Norwegian would use English to communicate, establishing English as the business lingua franca.

This has been supported by the comments of the participants where they mention that use of English is the alternative and is effective as almost all Norwegians are fluent in English.

Participant 8 mentions that all the documentation in his organization is in English, which is why he does not feel the need for Norwegian in his daily work. However, he also mentions

that the documents are available online and he can use online software to translate when the documents are in Norwegian.

Participant 8 *“The documentation are mostly in the English and all the documentation are online so if anything is in Norwegian then I can just translate it in google.”*

Also he further mentions that in Norway everyone speaks English and it is not difficult to switch to English if it is difficult to communicate in Norwegian. Other participants have also mentioned the fact that almost every Norwegian can speak and understand English properly, which is one reason participants have not had any issues with communication within the organization.

Participant 8 *“The good things about Norway is that in this field everybody talk English. All the documentation is in English. So it does not bother me to talk in English (...) if something is very important or that is not understood in Norwegian language then I switch to English”*

He also mentions similar experiences with his local clients.

Participant 8 *“And clients are open to English language as well.”*

Participant 5 is also a teacher who is teaching in a Norwegian university through English. He also mentions that use of English helps with communication and improves teaching and that Norwegian students are good in English as well. When asked about the teaching environment is and whether language has played any role in it, he replied:

Participant 5 *“It [teaching] is alright in English, even with, even with the Norwegians [students], they speak English well (...) because everyone is fluent in English, so it is fine”*

Participant 8 also mentioned that as “everyone” in Norway is fluent in English, it is comfortable to work and live in Norway. He replied to our question about this:

Participant 5 *“Ehm, yes, and no [laugh] Yes because its, ah, because everybody speaks English so then its fine.”*

Similarly participant 3 also mentions that it is easier to communicate with other because if the participant does not understand then he can easily switch to English.

Participant 3 *“Well in my work place its diversified working culture and people are from all around so basically communication are held in English.”*

This is supported in the literature discussing the many multinational corporations adapting to English as their corporate language. Participant 11 working in a multinational company in Norway stated that their corporate language was also English and English language skills are a requirement, rather than Norwegian language skills.

Participant 11 *“Our main language or the company language is English because of the internationality”*

Participant 6 goes on to mention how dialect differences affect her work. Sometimes when information is relayed in a different dialect or the paper work and presentations are made in different dialects, she needs to translate it to Bokmal or take help from her colleagues. This shows that language can directly affect work related activities and cost additional time and effort on the side of the employees.

Participant 6 *“When the course is in Nynorsk or Bergen dialect, I have to ask my colleagues to translate after work and also to get this power point presentation in the paper so that I can translate it to Bokmal. I have to deal with that.”*

Furthermore she mentions how she deals with such issues. If she does not understand completely, she confirms the information after the meetings.

Participant 6 *“May be I understand 80 or 85 percent. After the meeting I write them email, ok we discuss this this and that, it is correct? Or maybe I ask questions about what I did not understand. So we do it afterwards.”*

Talking about dialects, participant 8 mentions that even for local Norwegians it is sometimes difficult to understand each other coming from different parts of Norway. We understand from the participants comments that even within similar cultures, language can still be a communication barrier.

Participant 8 *“Most of them are from Norway different part of Norway even though they are all Norwegian but they have different dialects as well so I think they, internally, also they have some confusion among them as well”*

Participant 8 also mentions that when he has problems understanding dialects he asks people to speak in English and then the misunderstandings are cleared up.

Similar thoughts about dialects were shared by participant 9 where he mentioned that even though he is becoming better at Norwegian, the dialects of some cities are impossible for him to understand.

Participant 9 *“the accent and dialect throw me off though it was the people of Stavanger I can't understand at all, you know what I mean. It's like different language for me, more like OMG [laugh]”*

English language is a second option not only for the Norwegian but also for the participants whose first language is not English. Providing a common ground for communication, English language has made this study and research possible. We, as authors, agree with the participants that language plays different roles in different aspects of one's life.

7 Conclusion

Based on all the findings and discussion, the first thing we can conclude is that the model forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) is a simple and effective model to explain a graduate's employability, be it international graduate's employability. Participants' comments can be traced back to the model in one way or another. Based on the model and participants comments we can agree that academic qualifications and experience play a vital role in international graduate's employability. Similarly generic skills are also an essential element which comprises of various skills discussed in the literature review. Based on the findings, we can conclude that skills such as working in a team, ability to manage others, good oral communication, communication in writing for varied purposes, organizational ability and the ability to use new technologies are essential for the employability of the international graduates. Social integration skills and emotional intelligence have been taken to be similar attributes in the study and have been explained from the view of social capital. This element is also found to be critical in the work environment and the employability of the international graduates as a whole.

Based on the participants quotations, we can also agree on Andrews and Higson's (2008) study that explained employability in terms of experience, work-based learning, interpersonal skills and hard business skills. Based on participant 9 and 10's comments, we can agree on Rasul et al's (2013) stud that employers demand good communication skills, teams work skills, personal skills, leadership skills, entrepreneur skills, technology skills and informational skills.

Many participants have agreed that language skills are dependent on the type of job. People can find jobs that do not require language skills and some jobs demand language skills as a requirement. These comments support the study by Teijeiro et al. (2013) where they have concluded that individuals who have the competencies that are most required by an organization are more likely to be in a position to get the job. Depending on the departments, the participants present the fact that different fields have different needs. We found a paradigm differentiating the "social" field and the "technical" field which most of the participants tend to use to differentiate between their fields and the ones that have different requirements. Participants suggest a common idea that language requirements are higher in the social fields whereas it might be secondary in the technical field, depending on the need of the organization.

As suggested in UKCES model of employability skills, based on participants comments, we can agree that skills like self-management, thinking and solving problems, working together and communication, using language effectively, using IT effectively are all regarded as critical skills by employers. Findings also support the study by Hillage and Pollard (1998) where they forwarded many components of employability. Based on the participants' comments we can conclude that the following components are seen to be critical by the participants as well; personal attributes, communication skills, motivation, team working, self-management, decision making skills, CV presentation skills, qualifications, interview technique and macroeconomic demand for labor to be related to employability.

Looking at the Cbi/nus (2011) Working towards the future report and based on findings, we can conclude that employers seek communication and literacy skills which are related to the ability to produce clear and structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning. Also, basic IT skills including skills related to word processing, use of internet and search engines and current applications also seems necessary for an international graduate's employability. Based on participant 9, 10 and 11's comments, the study also supports Archer and Davison (2008)'s study and concludes that employers consider communication, integrity and team works when hiring new employees and also that the ability to communicate and interact with others in teams and networking, good written and verbal communication skills and information and communication technology are important for employers as well.

Similarly, Lapina and Aramina (2011) have mentioned social and communication competencies as one of four main competencies required for employability. This has been supported by majority of participants. As mentioned in the literature review, employers and graduates both place a high level of importance to communication skills when talking about graduate's employability (Andrews & Higson, 2008), which has been supported by the comments of the participants discussed in the section above. The effect of language role in an international graduate's employability starts here.

As discussed and as participants have mentioned, communication skills comprise various skills such as speaking clearly and directly, listening and understanding, empathizing, sharing information and writing to the needs of the audience (DeGuzman et al., 2013). As mentioned repeated throughout the study, communication skills are essential generic skills that affect a graduate's employability. However, looking at communication skills from an international

graduate's perspective, the findings suggest that, in the realm of international business, communication skills are influenced by the language in question and in turn affect the international graduate's employability. The fact that language has a role in communication has been studied by Piekkari et al. (2014) and discussed in the literature review.

Coming back to the research question, "To what extent do local language skills affect an international graduate's employability?" Harzing and Feely (2008) have mentioned that there will be problems with language barrier with growing globalization as problems of communication intensity and linguistic diversity also increase. Victor (1992) also noted that differences in language will be a barrier to effective communication in international business. The local language in question being Norwegian and the study being based in Norway, based on the findings the study concludes that for an international graduate:

1. Local language skills are influential to enter international labor market.
2. Local language skills can improve communication skills and social capital and influence employability as a whole in an international market.
3. Organization's need for language skills is based on type of job and its requirements.
4. English language has influence and support for international graduate's employability in Norway.

7.1 Local language skills are influential to enter international labor market

This conclusion can also be based on the process of cultural adaptation. When one arrives in a new culture one needs to adapt to different kinds of differences. As participants suggest, language is influential in different aspects of everyday life, not only in career aspects. Language is an important part of a culture. Workplaces are becoming more international in Norway. As mentioned by the participants, intercultural interactions are normal for everyone and language is an integral part of those interactions.

Understanding the very concept, we find many international participants who see a career in Norway are in the process of learning the language or have already learnt the language up to certain level and continuing. This common motive of learning Norwegian shown by majority of the participants suggest that local language is necessary in one way or another for the participants and they have also agreed that it helps to make through "the door" in the career path. In this study, we analyze this as a barrier to employability due to lack of language skills.

This, as shown by the findings, is because organizations that are based in Norway will require the language in one way or another and they have many applicants with equally good credibility with local language skills. Thus, for participants who are completely unskilled in language, getting in the list probable list of candidates is difficult. However, it can also be seen that normal level of language is also sufficient to greatly overcome the language barrier. One need not be an expert in the language in question. If one is able to carry out normal conversation, then it becomes easier to introduce oneself in the international labor market. Such findings also support the study by Goodall and Roberts (2003) that even speaking a little or attempting to learn the local language can grow trust and build relationships with the native speakers.

The findings also suggest that learning a language is not a simple process and requires time. Being good in a language does not guarantee that the information is understood the way the sender meant it (Grosbeck, 2012). Crossman and Clarke (2010) argue and encourage universities to take exchange programs to non-English speaking countries which provides the opportunity of new language acquisition. Findings suggest that, having come to Norway, learning a new language, Norwegian in this case, is an opportunity for all the international graduates to add a valuable skill set in their life and work experience.

7.2 Local language skills can improve communication skills and social capital and influence international graduate's employability

Communication skills include speaking and writing clearly, but it is not always required in one's mother tongue or English language. For international graduates like our participants, we find that writing a simple report could be a huge challenge if it has to be done in Norwegian. Similarly, for some participant, it might be difficult to even introduce oneself in Norwegian, let alone explain complex strategies to their team. Also, communication skills comprise good listening and understanding skills. Many participants agree that they do not always understand all the information that is delivered in Norwegian. Be it in meetings or casual discussion, language barrier hinder the listening and understanding skills of the participants.

Also many participants have agreed that language skills affect their presentation skills and social capital. When one is not fluent in Norwegian, it affects the confidence of the speaker and in turn his self-efficacy and self-esteem can also be affected depending on the situation and circumstances. When speaking in the mother-tongue, it is totally different, meaning that it affects the speaking ability, expressing ability, connecting ability and also the confidence of

the speaker. Such concepts have been shared by Jackson (2014) where they mention that language and expression affect one's verbal communication and public speaking skills.

Participants share their experience where they do not understand the language and do not attempt to interrupt the conversation. This shows that they are not confident enough to speak up even in cases where they do not understand the information. Participants also share experiences where language barrier affect their ability to indulge in the conversation or provide a proper response. When compared to the "key to graduate employability" model, many comments reflect that their language skills affect their self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem.

There are many comments related to the social capital and language. In simple terms, language seems to play a vital role in social integration and creating networks of friends and colleagues for the participants. This being said, the findings also support the study by Goodall and Roberts (2003) that when individuals make an attempt to speak the language of others on one's team, it develops trust between team members and improves the team's quality of work too. Relating back to Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) model of graduate employability we can conclude that emotional intelligence is also influenced by language skills when talking for international graduates. Findings suggest that the majority of international graduates feel the need of language skills in this aspect. As mentioned by Yao and Van Ours (2015) that language skills are extremely important for social integration. Findings also support the study by Itani et al. (2015) where they have mentioned that good language skills improves an individual's knowledge base, develops personal and professional motivation at workplace and broaden career-related networks and contacts.

Many participants have agreed that learning the local language helped them improve their resume and build better relationships. They also mentioned that it improved the working environment and team work. Many participants have shared their job-seeking experiences where they were denied the job only because of the language skills. In a way, we can see that language sometimes outweighs even the qualifications and experiences of the international graduates. Such experiences revealed that language can in fact be directly related to getting hired in certain cases.

Coming back to our underlying hypothesis of the study H1: Local language skills influence the generic skills for international graduates and H2: Local language skills influences the employability of international graduates. The findings agree with both the hypothesis.

Regarding H1, findings suggest that local language skills can greatly influence communication and emotional intelligence skills. Relating back to the “key to graduate employability model”, we see that the influence of language in the generic skills and emotional intelligence goes on to affect the reflection and evaluations of their self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. Based on the model and the quotations, findings and discussions, the study agrees with H2 as well.

7.3 Organization’s need for language skills is based on type of job and its requirements

Many participants agreed that language skills are not always critical to influence international graduates’ employability. The comments from many participants suggest that there exist two realms of skilled job which many participants commonly term as “social” and “technical”. The study concludes with the paradigm of “technical” and “social” field of skilled jobs and that language skills are more influential for international graduates who seek career in the “social” paradigm compared to international graduates who see are in the “technical” paradigm.

For this study, we analyzed the social field as those fields which include human-to-human interaction more than human-to-machine interaction and vice versa for the technical field. The kinds of jobs where people need to communicate more requires better communication skills and better language skills, which is more common in the social paradigm.

The information from the employer participants and also the experiences of participants from the social field suggest that language skills are important for getting graduate level skilled job. This conclusion has been supported by participants who mentioned that social field related jobs require communication with thirds parties like clients and customers. Many participants also mentioned that high quality report writing in Norwegian is required in such fields. This also relates to communication skills of the participant. However, this conclusion focuses on the organizations’ perspective.

The findings also suggest that the technical field focuses more on technical skills. Based on participants’ comments, the study concludes that technical fields require more technical skills and expertise which can outweigh the need of language skills. This argument is also supported from the pool of participants, where all skilled job employee participants are working in a technical field and job-seeking participants are from social fields. Based on such

findings, the study supports the study by Teijeiro et al. (2013) and concludes that language skills influence on international graduate's employability depends on the needs of the organization. International graduates who seek career in social fields are more likely to need language skills to get a graduate level skilled job than international graduates who are in the technical field.

7.4 English language has influence and support for international graduate's employability in Norway.

As discussed earlier, English is becoming the business lingua franca of today's international business community (Chan & Dimmock, 2008). Coming to Norway, international graduates are seen to be trying to learn Norwegian. As discussed earlier, no matter how fluent one is in a language, they may never be perfect in a foreign. Considering this study's participants, most of them arrived here not more than a decade ago and some of them are still in the basic of Norwegian language. Even the participants who are skilled in Norwegian Bokmål, still have difficulties with dialects.

Considering this, we see that English language has played a crucial role in supplementing as the second language of choice. As the findings suggest, most Norwegians are fluent in English which is why participants working in a skilled job do not have any difficulties related to work. They mention the need of language in social capital, emotional intelligence and communication skills but are still able to continue with the operations. Regardless of the fields, findings suggest when Norwegian language is too complicated to support and maintain the communication, English language is the second option and is equally effective. Traavik and Richardsen (2010) mention that understanding and speaking English is equally advantageous in career success in cross cultural work environment. As discussed, all the participants in the study are fluent in English in the sense that they can give a normal interview in English.

For the participants that are working in skilled jobs, if necessary, they can receive the information in English rather than Norwegian. Online applications also helps to translate languages from Norwegian to English which the participants have mentioned to use when necessary. However, the language that they translate Norwegian to, is English. The idea of business lingua franca is globally applied and is considered to hold true around the globe. This study supports the claims that English influences and supports the communication skills, emotional intelligence and social capital of international graduates in Norway.

8 Limitations

One of our first limitation is related to all the qualitative studies that are based on in-depth interview. These limitations have also been mentioned by Boyce and Neale (2006) and this study agrees with their limitations related to in-depth interview. They mention that in-depth interviews are prone to bias. Related to their study, as authors and interviewers, we agree that participants' responses could have been biased after we explained the topic and our research area. Participants might have focused their answers on the local language skills and provided answers that were supportive of the study. We as authors agree that there might be various other reasons that can make participants' interviews prone to bias one being their stake in the study program.

Our second limitation was the time constraint as in-depth interview are vast in information and takes time to conduct the interview, transcribe them, analyze them and create codes from such large amount of information. This study required greater amount of time than expected and still lacks deeper information that could have been otherwise retrieved with further analysis. Being time bound, this study might lack in information.

Our third limitation, as discussed in earlier sections, was our inexperience and lack of training as interviewers. The interview sessions could have been richer in information if it had been conducted by people more experienced than us. We, as interviewers, also agree that our inexperience might have led to some leading questions and we might have fed some words to the participants. But it was unintentional with the only objective of maintaining the flow of the conversation. Also, our inexperience to select the right sample and analyze the interview might have led to limited information.

Also, talking about our own language skills, we could not conduct interview in languages other than English and Nepali. This limited the information that could have been otherwise retrieved from participants whose mother tongue is neither English nor Nepali. Also, as mentioned a participant did not have enough time for the interview Talking about the interview recording, some of the interviews were taken in public places due to which there are noises affecting the acoustics.

Finally, our last limitation, as discussed earlier is the limited sample scope i.e. we only have 11 participants in the study, thus, we cannot generalize the findings. Our sample are not selection by sampling methods and was random selection, using snowball effect. So, as

authors, we agree that we cannot easily generalize the findings as there are more perspectives to employability that discussed.

9 Implications for further research

This study focuses on language skills and explains its effects on employability of international graduates. The base being “the key to employability model” forwarded by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), this study analyzes the relation between local language skills and international graduate’s employability, introducing a global perspective to the model. This might be considered as an extension to the model. The research has been conducted with in-depth interview analysis of job-seekers and graduate level skilled job workers in Norway as first group of participants and employers in Norway as the second group. The findings suggest that there is a relation between local language skills and the employability of international graduates in Norway.

This leads to various implications for future research. This is a small scale study and can be extended to a larger scale. Based on the conclusions, future studies can be directed towards studying the relationship between language skills, communication skills and social skills. If improving local language skills helps in improving the employability of a graduate, then educational institutions and organizations in Norway can look into developing such skills in future candidates from an early phase. If language skills are indeed so influential over an international graduate’s employability, then education institutions can revise their curriculum to include language as an important course over a degree or make provisions for international graduates to be skilled enough in local language to enter the international labor market after graduation. Also, international graduates can understand that local language skill can indeed be influential over their career path and make preparations for such obstacles in their career path. Future studies can be directed to such areas of graduate employability which can help them remain and sustain their employability in the growing age of globalization.

Considering the findings related to “social” and “technical” paradigm, further research can be directed towards studying what kinds of organizations seek language skills and what kinds of occupations require language skills. Regarding the effect of language skills on communication and social skills, studies can further elaborate on the relation and this study has only explained the relationship on a superficial level. Furthermore, studies can research the local language role differences that are evident between English speaking countries and non-English speaking countries. There are many aspects to study if it can be generalized that local language skills in fact influence an international graduate’s employability. This study also

forwards and supports the idea that language can be studied as a stand-alone factor in international business, permeating cultural boundaries.

Based on the findings and conclusion that English language is gaining importance as the second option for different language communication barriers, future research can be directed towards English proficiency and employee productivity or graduate employability. Seeing that English language is becoming more dominant, studying if English proficiency can really lead to successful managers and leaders in the future can provide insights for organizations and for academic institutions to develop potential candidates beforehand. It would be fruitful to know if English is bound to dominate the global business world as a corporate language.

This study, like many studies before, concluded that differences in language skills act as a barrier. The study was aimed to find the effects of language skills on international graduate employability and majority of the effects have shown that language acts as a barrier for international graduates in their career development. However, some participants do agree that learning the local language can enhance communication and social skills and improves employability. They show that language can in turn be powerful and a positive factor in employability. Future studies can be directed towards studying the positive influences of language differences on different aspects of international business.

Talking about positive aspects, a comment from participant 11 not yet discussed, shared a cliché

Participant 11

It might even sound almost like a cliché but actually, I strongly believe and I've seen that our work environment containing both genders and people from different cultures, it is a really healthy and good working environment because you get so much input on how to behave and how to interact. And also the understanding that when you have, if for instance let's say you have a colleague from Korea in the office here, that's going to help you to understand, when you have to speak and communicate with someone from Korea (...) so it is really important for us that we have a different nationalities.

With this comment, we would like to share one additional implication that is not directly related to the study scope. This comment suggests a research to look into the positive impacts on language difference where language difference can promote learning opportunities within an organization. As discussed, organizations seek to hire personnel with their corporate

language proficiency, which we believe has a drawback as it impedes the people in the organization to learn new language and cultures from international colleagues. The study agrees with the participant's comments that integrating teams with different cultural and language distances can create problems, but if managed intellectually, they can shape and breed essential attitudes like difference tolerance, team learning beyond project limitations and involuntary learning of cultural differences. Future research can be directed towards potential learning opportunities in teams with language difference and cultural distance.

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11 Appendix

11.1 Appendix 1

Base questions for first group participants. * Questions that were modified after pilot interview. (...) probing questions and hints provided to participants in cases where questions had to be explained further.

1. *Can you share a little about your study and work background?
2. Can you tell me about your work/job-hunting history since graduation? (what did you do after graduation, what kind of jobs did you apply? How far did you get with those applications? What kind of responses did you get? etc)
3. *What skills do you think are most important in Norway for the kind of job that you are looking for?
4. *Career-wise, what are your biggest achievements since graduating in Norway? (When did you feel like an achievement or success, jobs, projects done, references built?)
5. *What part did Norwegian language skills play in this/these?
6. How well do you and your colleagues communicate?
7. How well do you and your supervisors communicate?
8. How well do you and your clients/third party communicate?
9. Have you taken part in any group projects as part of your job? Can you tell me about your role in this/these? (challenges/successes/failures etc)
10. How well do you feel your comments and suggestions are understood and appreciated?
11. Are there any obstacles to communication that you feel are noteworthy?
12. How has Norwegian language skills affected these everyday communication? If it has.
13. Are you taking or considering of taking Norwegian language courses? *Yes/No, Why?)
14. Do you feel comfortable and confident working in Norway? (Why/Why not?)
15. *How effective do you feel working in international environment? (motivated/lagging behind/easy/hard?)
16. *How have Norwegian language skills affected these aspects?
17. *In your experience as a job-hunter in Norway, what skills do you think Norwegian employers are looking for in the kind of jobs you applied for/have applied for/are applying for?
18. What are the biggest challenges in your job? Can you tell me about them?
19. *Can you share an experience where you felt that Norwegian language skills were really important for your employability as a whole in Norway?

11.2 Appendix 2

Base questions for second group participants. * Questions modified after pilot study. (...) probing questions and hints provided to participants in cases where questions had to be explained further.

1. *Can you share a little bit about field of work and your work environment?
2. *What skills do you think are the most important for the kind of positions offered by your organization? (This depends on the kind of job. Might lead to probing questions like what kind of positions do international applicants apply for and focus on the skills for these jobs.)
3. Is speaking Norwegian or any specific corporate language essential for your company? (May depend on the position, so further questioning when necessary)
4. Have you noticed any cultural differences that impact positively or negatively on the workplace? (Details?)
5. *What influence do Norwegian language skills/other language skills have on international applicants' employability? (Can you specify?)
6. How well do you think international employees and their colleagues communicate with each other?
7. How well do you feel you can communicate with international employees in the work context?
8. *Are your international employees involved in group projects? Can you tell me about any of these projects?
9. *How well do you think international members cooperate in group projects?
10. *How well do you feel you understand the comments and suggestions of your international employees?
11. Are there any obstacles to communication between you and your international employees?
12. What role does Norwegian play in your organization? (E.g. important in meetings/ social interactions/ paperwork / appraisals/ site visits etc)
13. *Do you recommend your international employees to take Norwegian language courses? (Yes/No, Why?)
14. What is the company's role? (If they are providing any support for this like pay/provide a teacher/time/financial incentives/other incentives?)
15. Do you feel international employees in your organization are comfortable and confident working here in Norway?
16. *How has Norwegian language skills affected these aspects?
17. What skills are you looking for in the posts you offer?
18. Are there any challenges/problems/difficulties international graduates face in your organization? (Can you tell me more in detail?)
19. Can you share an experience where you felt that Norwegian language skills were really important for your international employees in your company?

11.3 Appendix 3

Sample conversation with participant 7. The interview was conducted in Nepali and has been transcribed to English. It is translated as close to the participants words as possible. The participants' words have been italicized

Definitely mother tongue is easier for everyone. And one language may not be sufficient to describe everything in another language, like typical things. Even in that case, when people like us come to foreign lands, as foreigner and choose to stay here, we need to use their own language to be more practical and to make our responses more effective. There are certain things here that we do not have in our language. We got to know that from our stay. There are many things here that are not in our language. That is why, when we say it in their mother tongue, they understand it better as well. When we use other language and translate sometimes information can be misunderstood.

Yes, that is true. I am recording this conversation just so that you know.

Can you tell me more about your study background?

I completed my master's in geology in Nepal and came here for master's in petroleum geology in University of Oslo. The study was in English language, so I did not need Norwegian and was a two years course. After completion I started looking for work. I knew I needed language but when I went to organizations, they focused more on my experience and study background. They looked more for what courses I took in my subject. They compared my courses with their requirements and evaluated my course on its implementation ability. When I went for the interview, they did ask if I was able to speak Norwegian, but, the interview was conducted in English.

So, your Norwegian skills didn't impact much on this journey?

Yes, it did not affect me immediately at that time, but I have to say that when I started working I felt the impact.

In what kind of instances?

Like, the work was in a Norwegian company. Actually it is a German company, but under Norwegian majority lets say. Since it is Norway, it's obvious that Norwegians are like main personnels. So, when there are Norwegian... even though the main subject matters are discussed in English in the meetings, it's just like us you know... when we Nepalese meet together, we tend to start talking in Nepalese, it's the same with them, as soon as the meetings are over, they gather around and start discussing in Norwegian. One thing is that, even tmhough they are talking about the subject matter, we do not understand what they are talking about. We can say that it is like a disadvantage for us because we do not understand the language. There are experts in our fields and when Norwegian experts gather, they discuss in Norwegian language. Sometimes, we did not understand what they are saying and just kept wondering what they were discussing about. When we asked they definitely answered our questions and explained but you know, it does not feel good to ask about every other thing, like what is this? what did you just say? What does this mean? It is difficult to ask this on every situation. At that time I felt that I should have learned Norwegian.

Did this affect your confidence in any way?

At that time, I started off as a fresh graduate and did not have any experience. Its definitely easier to work in our own language. It would have been easier even if it was in English. But coming to Norwegian language all at once, a language that I did not study or learn, as I studied for two years in English language so I did not learn Norwegian... with this level, I would understand a little and guess a little, ask a little bit and you know we cannot ask everything... these kinds of things happened. But later I gradually started learning as I thought it would be eventually necessary. (unable to understand and work at optimum level affected confidence, language being one reason not understading the information)

Did you take formal classes to learn Norwegian language?

Yes I did take classes.

So do you speak fluent Norwegian now?

Umm.. I can't say fluent but I can speak Norwegian, yes.

So you use Norwegian for everyday conversation?

Yes, I do. But recently I don't have to use so much of Norwegian. I mean, everyday conversation at work, I have not used so much Norwegian recently.

Can you tell us more about your why it is so at your work?

I am currently in oil and gas sector, and this organization is totally international, which is why there is no compulsion of use of any specific language. It (Norwegian language) is obviously useful in many instances, but getting the job or not does not depend on the language skills. Experience counts. What one is working in and what the company is looking for, how is the market? This is how it works in our company. This is why I did not need the language when I started working. But as I started working... you know one feels.. Like I told you earlier. When we are sitting in groups, they speak totally in Norwegian and I start feeling like I am missing out on a lot of things. We do not understand what the subject matter is and it is difficult to ask about each and everything. The situation becomes awkward you know...

What kinds of skills do you think one needs to work on the job you are working. What kinds of skills are your company looking for in the candidates?

First they look for what subjects you have learnt. Degree is one important thing. Even in that, what courses did I take in that degree. I mean, masters degree can be done in many fields like petroleum, geology, environment. You can get here from different fields like these. It is not like you can get there by studying in just one field, there are around 3-4 fields which can apply for this kind of job. Besides this, what they are actually looking for matters. In my case, my geology background from Nepal where I had worked with mapping and similar things, they were easily impressed understanding that I had a good base of geology, they evaluated me from this point of view.

11.4 Appendix 4

Sample conversation with participant 8. The participant is from Nepal. The interview was conducted in English. The words of the participants has been italicized.

Did you apply for the job after your graduation?

Actually I was working as a developer for a called startup company called [company] when I was doing my graduation because and they were in need of developer and since it was startup company, they weren't able to pay for the professional so I was there to help their development. After that I did some consultancy work for the company called [company name] and then I switched to company called [company name] and I chose to work full time so I have to close my company and do the full time here.

Seems like you have no problem finding the job in Norway?

Yes probably it because it is related to the field that I am in and also I have experience from Nepal as well.

What skill are important in Norway that the kind of job you are looking for?

The first and most important thing is you should know the field or technology that you are trying to get job off. For example if you want to work as an android developer then you should have some experience in developing apps and java language. For example if you want to do some software engineering then you should know some dotnet or java. So first important thing is you should know the technology and second things is you have to know the place you are in, for example if you are in Norway then you should know the Norwegian culture and the language is also important. But it depends on the area that you are interested in. For example if interested in accountancy, business or communication, the first priority is Norwegian language. But in our field that is technology Norwegian language is a second priority. At least I think so.

Career-wise, what is the biggest achievement since graduating in Norway?

I think, achieving this position at this company is my greatest achievement. When I first came to Norway I have no idea that I would be getting a job speaking in Norwegian language, doing my interview in Norwegian language and doing all my work in Norwegian language so having overcome the language and getting the job while speaking Norwegian I think that is my biggest achievement so far.

Did you feel the level of Norwegian did that play any role in getting a job?

Yes, of course it does play a major role to get a job because, there was like 3 interview that I gave in these companies and all of them were in Norwegian I did not even speak a word in English language. So, I think Norwegian people are a bit closed in a since that they are not open to other people so if you speak on their native language then they are more open to other people and I think that implies to every human beings.

While giving interview do they required you to?

No, that was not requirement actually, that was nice to have a thing not requirement.

While working how is the communication between you and other colleagues?

The good things about Oslo Norway is that in this field everybody talk English. All the documentation is in English. So it does not bother me to talk in English. But most of the time in my project and in my work life, I speak Norwegian. But if something is very important or

that is not understood in Norwegian language then I switch to English but that does not play any role or hinder block anything at all.

If you need to communicate with your customer or clients or third party what mode of language do you use? Do you feel some problem if they comment in Norwegian

Normally we use Norwegian language to communicate with clients and customer as well. And I don't think there is any kind of hmm.... While communicating with customers, we do not use difficult Norwegian words. It is just a basic communication. I think Norwegian is the language that is sufficient to communicate with the clients and customer as well.

Basically you can communicate with Norwegian language?

Ya. And clients are open to English language as well.