Recognition theory:

A new lens for investigating language differences in multilingual organisations

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Introduction

People go through life struggling for recognition. We want to be accepted and respected for who we are, regardless of our gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other category of social difference that we embody. In multilingual contexts, language differences constitute one way in which people differ from one another. Coupled with the universal human need for recognition, this means that whether and how people are judged by others on the basis of their competence in a particular language – for example, the official language of the organisation they work for – will have an impact on their sense of self: whether and how they feel recognised and respected as human beings. With multilinguality and linguistic diversity being common features of contemporary society and organisations, approaching issues related to language difference from a place of respect and consideration for the other is a key societal and organisational challenge.

To date, studying language differences in organisational contexts remains firmly within the domain of language-sensitive IB research. This body of work has provided us with insightful and persuasive studies addressing the importance of language-related issues from the perspective of organisational performance, communicational effectiveness and power dynamics occurring at different levels of analysis (e.g. Brannen et al., 2014; Sanden, 2020; Tenzer et al., 2017). In this chapter, we introduce to language-sensitive IB research a new theoretical perspective on language differences in organisations, informed by research within organisation studies that attends to the political aspects of organisational processes related to difference, diversity and inclusion (Ahonen and Tienari, 2015; Tyler, 2019).

We draw on identity- and status-based recognition theory (Fraser, 2000; Honneth, 1995, 2001; Taylor, 1994; Zurn, 2003). An identity-based approach to recognition emphasises the fundamental human need for reciprocal social validation, whereby ‘the integrity of human subjects’ is dependent upon ‘their receiving approval and respect from others’ (Honneth, 1992: 188). Following this, *mis*recognition is an injurious act that denies self-realisation. A status-based approach, on the other hand, addresses the perceived lack of power of the identity-based model through a focus on the pursuit of social justice, framing recognition as concerned with ‘the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction’ (Fraser, 2000: 113). Misrecognition in the case of the latter, therefore, implies ‘a form of institutionalized status subordination’ (McNay, 2008: 22) rather than psychological injury only. Within a multilingual organisational context these perspectives enable us to examine a) the dynamics of relations of recognition, with an emphasis on the role of language differences, on an individual level and b) how those dynamics are embedded in organisational power relations and practices of giving recognition to individuals and groups, in particular to the non-native speakers of the organisation’s official language.

We also introduce the concept of *recognition work*, and apply it in theorising about actions performed towards, as well as by, staff from international, non-native English language backgrounds in a linguistically diverse but officially anglophone context: UK universities.[1] Recognition work encompasses acts undertaken by individuals as well as those undertaken by institutions through, for example, the implementation of guidelines and policies. The concept of recognition *work* draws attention to the continual creation, maintenance and withdrawal of recognition that underpins social

[1] Although our research is conducted in an anglophone context we refer to multilingual organisations to emphasise that organisations may be officially monolingual, yet multilingual by virtue of the variety of native languages amongst staff. The ‘unofficial’ status of different languages adds a further dimension to processes of (mis)recognition.

value hierarchies, as parties who undertake recognition work have varying degrees of access to resources, reflected in relations of power.

In what follows we first introduce recognition theory as an important theoretical lens for analysing issues of language differences in multilingual settings. We then present the methodology underpinining our study, before analysing the processes of (mis)recognition and recognition work performed in relation to international, non-native English speaking staff. We then discuss the contributions and implications of our study for language-sensitive IB research.

Introducing recognition theory to thinking about language differences in multilingual settings

Originating in a Hegelian phenomenology of reciprocal subject relations and a critical tradition of emancipatory justice, recognition 'is proving central to efforts to conceptualize today's struggles over identity and difference' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 1). Recognition theory seeks to understand how an individual's sense of self is grounded in relational forms of recognition, and what the conditions of social justice are with regard to parity of participation in social life. Recognition has recently begun to receive attention from scholars interested in workplace organisations (e.g. Grover, 2013; Hancock, 2015; Renger et al., 2020; Tyler and Vachhani, 2021). A small number of studies refer to organisational diversity, specifically how diversity management objectifies people as economic resources (Hancock, 2008), and how it reinforces an understanding of minorities as 'deviant, as deficient, and as less valuable labour' (Holck and Muhr, 2017: 9). To date, however, recognition theory has not been applied to our thinking about multilinguality and language differences in organisations. This, in our view, is an important omission. We see great potential in bringing this lens to our theorising about language because recognition theory enables us to see how differences – including language differences – are articulated at an individual level, and how expressions of felt mis/recognition are embedded in institutional and organisational regulations and practices, including policies and approaches towards multilinguality and linguistic diversity in organisations. Below, we briefly consider identity- and status-based approaches to recognition, before moving on to demonstrating, through empirical illustrations, their relevance to our theorising about language in multilingual organisational contexts.

Identity and status-based approaches to recognition

The identity-based model is grounded in the intersubjectivist tenet that 'individual identity is formed only in and through social relations of recognition' (Zurn, 2003: 519). Being recognised through the evaluative acknowledgement of others is seen as necessary for the formation of an 'intact sense of self' (ibid.). According to Honneth (1995), a key proponent of identity-based recognition theory, individuals experience a sense of dignity and self-esteem, insofar as they are recognised as being 'worthy of concern and acknowledgement' (Islam, 2012: 39). Following a relational model, the party who performs the recognitive act must also be judged as being capable of doing so by the 'recognisee', meaning that 'a genuine instance of recognition requires that we authorise someone to confer recognition' (McQueen, 2015: 19). Hence, processes of genuine recognition are predicated upon legitimacy afforded to the recogniser by the recognisee. The identity-based model of recognition draws attention to how acts of (mis)recognition shape individual experiences of being valued or mistreated, and thereby presents a valuable micro-level analytical lens. In the context of language-sensitive research it also enables us to conceptualise how others' evaluations of the linguistic competence of an individual is tied to that individual's sense of self and social worth (see also Śliwa and Johansson, 2014).

However, in bringing in a status-based perspective, Fraser (2000) argues that one must also look beyond individually focused effects on the self, to conceive of recognition as a matter of social status understood as parity of participation in social life. Fraser thus wants to connect the identity-based psychological aspect of recognition to a status-based perspective on recognition, which attends to social hierarchies and institutions. In other words, recognition does not only occur at the level of 'discrete individuals' (Smith, 2012: 7) but is also situated within 'institutions such as… the workplace [which]… produce or deny recognition' (Cox, 2012: 195). Conversely, 'misrecognition is relayed not through deprecatory attitudes… but rather through social institutions' (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 29). Relations of (mis)recognition take place within socio-cultural and political structures which facilitate or foreclose particular forms of recognition. Although recognition may 'empower subjects to make self-assertions of pride' (Wagner, 2011: 350), it may also fix relations of domination to the detriment of the 'recognised' subject. If recognition can be achieved through adhering to dominant norms, individuals may subject themselves to these even when these norms appear unfavourable or hurtful (Kenny, 2010). This is not necessarily a reluctant act; 'voluntary subordination' (Honneth, 2007: 326) occurs through the internalisation of patterns of social acceptance. In sum, recognition theory enables an analysis of the effects of interpersonal and institutional practices on individuals and groups, which, we argue, is of value to language-sensitive IB research.

Relevance of recognition theory to language-sensitive IB research

We introduce recognition theory to language-sensitive IB research, as it allows us to draw attention to language differences and multilinguality as an important organisational and societal challenge. As such, recognition theory provides a means for advancing language-sensitive IB research which examines languages and multilingualism in relation to power, status, privilege and marginalisation in organisations (e.g. Gaibrois and Nentwich, 2020; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Neeley, 2013; Neeley and Dumas, 2016; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2017). Specifically, we conceptualise the production of mis/recognition as recognition work, which denotes acts of bestowal, refusal and contestation of recognition undertaken within relations of recognition, in this case on linguistic grounds. Hierarchical positions are shaped by organisational power relations that enable certain forms of recognition, and individuals and groups associated with them – in particular, the 'native speakers' in a given multilingual organisational context – to hold a privileged position (Gaibrois and Nentwich, 2020). In other words, they have legitimacy to be recognisers, while others – in this case, non-native speakers of the official language of the organisation – struggle to be recognised, and to achieve parity of participation in organisational life.

Recognition theory provides a valuable lens for examining the constitution and effects of differences in organisations, including language differences. First, it enables an inquiry into how and in which situations differences emerge and how they are articulated. Mis/recognition is contextual and dynamic, meaning that a particular context can produce recognition for some and misrecognition for others, and that the same individual may experience recognition or misrecognition depending on what differences become salient in any given context, brought into being through the relational dynamic between recogniser and recognisee. This means that differences, be it of a linguistic or other nature, are not essential or static, but relational and dynamic. The forms of recognition that are required in any given case depend on the forms of misrecognition to be redressed – recognition can either address distinctiveness ('difference') or commonality ('sameness'). Misrecognition may occur through 'burdening [some people] with excessive ascribed "difference" *or* by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 36, added emphasis). This underscores that, when examining organisational differences with regard to language use, we must be mindful of the assumed, politically informed grounds for *sameness* – here, with regard to certain types of language use or degrees of competence – which underpin social relations (cf. Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013). This is especially pertinent in relation to dominant groups, such as the 'native speakers' of the official language of the organisation, whose characteristics are presumed to be universalist due to their distinctiveness having become construed as the norm. Further, recognition theory enables us to explore discrepancies between organisational policy in relation to language(s) and organisational members' accounts of their effects. For genuine recognition to occur it must be viewed as credible, including being supported by material changes which aim to redress inequalities.

Moreover, recognition is not about merely acknowledging already existing differences; rather, recognition is 'a constitutive act' (Honneth, 2007: 331) which *produces* that which it mis/recognises. From this follows that being recognised can include expectations regarding how 'someone ought to act in a certain way by virtue of being recognised' (McQueen 2015: 20). Power is thus inherent in processes of recognition: ‘one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognising, and being recognised by, another subject’ (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 10). This reciprocal relation opens up the possibility for analysing, in the context of language differences in multilingual organisations, the complexities of power relations through both considering how particular individuals and groups are granted or denied recognition and how individuals and groups are granted or denied the position of being a recogniser, for subsequent mis/recognition to occur. We conceptualise these processes as facets of recognition work, which is performed both at an individual and organisational level, within wider structures. To achieve recognition is not equally possible for all; rather, it is something that is negotiated, demanded, granted or denied, depending on power relations. As recognition is crucial for self-enhancement and organisational participation, and mis/recognition is hence impossible ‘to behave indifferently toward’ (Wagner, 2011: 355), there is considerable investment by individuals into achieving and maintaining recognition. In our empirical analysis and discussion, we demonstrate how these ideas can enrich our theorising about language differences within language-sensitive IB research.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

The research design reflected the tenet of recognition theory according to which social struggle can be understood through exploring ‘experiences that shape [people’s] agency’ (Smith, 2012: 7). We conducted 54 professional life history (Maclean et al., 2012) interviews with non-native English speaking full-time employed academics in 19 business schools in the UK, including 31 women and 23 men aged between 29 and 50, and representing all levels of seniority, from Lecturer to Professor. The participants originated from 22 countries; most of them were European (see Table 1), reflecting the overall profile of UK academia where the majority of non-national faculty are from the EU. Participants were recruited through university websites and professional contacts, with subsequent snowball sampling.

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To preserve anonymity, continents rather than countries are mentioned in relation to interview extracts, and the participants are divided into age groups in the table. We have chosen Anglophone pseudonyms to avoid indicating specific regions or countries. The interviews lasted between 46 minutes and two hours, and were recorded and transcribed.

Our key criterion behind sample selection was a distinction between native UK-born (native English speaking) and 'international' (i.e. non-UK born and non-native English speaking) academics. We are aware that by applying the criterion 'international academic' we become complicit in reproducing a potentially essentialising category. However, we view the demarcation UK-born/international academics as analytically relevant for this chapter. We therefore apply this category here while acknowledging that it represents a wide variety of individuals and experiences. Meanwhile, the criterion of selecting non-native English speakers meant that all participants had this aspect in common. As English is the dominant language in the UK context and our theoretical framing emphasises struggles for recognition, we chose not to include native English speakers in our sample.

Our own experiences as international faculty in UK academia were useful for conducting the research in that we had the sense that commonalities existed – such as having experiences of moving countries, and learning to navigate a new social, cultural and professional context, as well as not having English as our first language – which helped us establish rapport with the participants. The shared articulated experiences of how one's accent is noticed and sometimes evaluated, and the differing degrees to which individuals feel confident in expressing themselves in speech and writing provided common ground. We were interested in accounts of instances in the workplace where, for some reason or other, the participants described the situation as having to do with difference; of being positioned as different, for example, or of any form of difference surfacing as meaningful in some other respect. Although we were specifically interested in the participants' experiences of working in UK academia, the interviews began by exploring their educational background and their reasons for coming to and staying in the UK, before addressing their career progression.

Data analysis

Data analysis began by individually reading the transcripts and noting instances where 'difference' – be it directly related to an individual's positioning as a person of non-UK origin, or in relation to other aspects such as gender – emerged. We noted all instances which, following the relational focus of recognition theory, included some form of counterpart; either between the participants and other individuals or groups in concrete interactions, or between the participants and some institutional entity such as 'the university'. This first reading generated a 'list of incidents' (van Laer and Janssens, 2011: 1210) indicating which notions of difference came to the fore in particular contexts, including being downplayed or dismissed. Differences included gender, race, nationality, and language. We then brought our descriptive 'lists' together for continued analysis. In the second phase we focused on the participants' interpretations, responses and expressed felt effects, and assigned refined themes to each 'incident'. The iterative, dialogical analysis process enabled us to confirm or question our individual readings of the data and produce a co-constructed analysis (see Gilmore and Kenny, 2015). During the next phase we moved back and forth between data and the literature to theoretically make sense of the emerging themes. Through this process we related overlapping themes with particular theoretical dimensions, which then informed the structuring of the analysis.

Analysis

Institutional mis/recognition of 'international academics'

In the participants' accounts, an international staff composition emerges as a common feature of present-day UK business schools. While the variety of nationalities and language backgrounds is viewed as a commonplace and often valuable aspect of the workplace, English proficiency is highlighted as a universal criterion for international academics' ability to be accepted within the organisation:

> This is an international university so nobody really minds whoever you are and wherever you're from or what nationality you are. As long as you can speak English and you can communicate. (Robert, 32, Lecturer, Europe)

The presence of a number of international staff and the fact that 'nobody minds', provided that English language competence requirements are met, was generally seen as offering a comfortable work environment where difference represented by nationality is accepted, and identity-based recognition can be achieved. From an instutitional perspective, having an international staff base serves marketing purposes: international diversity becomes celebrated and used in public relations (PR) materials aimed at attracting international students. Whilst such celebration of international staff can be seen as recognition work undertaken by the organisation, through the practices by which the category is framed it becomes infused with particular ideas of value: recognition is bestowed from a market-based position of identifying a competitive resource. In this sense, a person's linguistic background and skills are only recognised if they are considered useful for the organisation's competitiveness.

Liam (40), a Professor from a country in continental Europe, framed the employment of international staff as 'a big selling point for the UK', expanding on the point further:

> I've actually found out that one of the reasons we've got, like, 36% in this business school, of foreign academics, is because this is the only way to meet the EQUIS[2] criteria or something. So, to be a top league university, you have to have foreign academics as well. So, fair enough, I'm ticking one box for them.

[2] EQUIS is a major quality assessment accreditation often sought by business schools.

Liam frames the institutional recognition of international staff in calculative terms and while he acknowledges the recognition afforded by the organisation, he also views his role as 'ticking a box'. Relationally this is a dismissal of the other as a bestower of identity-based recognition, as the relation is framed as a purely transactional exercise rather than grounded in respect. Although these organisational measures render a particular difference, including the fact of not being a native English speaker, visible (Ahonen and Tienari, 2015), they do not necessarily result in a *meaningful* kind of recognition (McQueen, 2015), especially as in other contexts this category does not seem to warrant concrete institutional measures:

> It would be nice if we had a little bit more encouragement or acknowledgement about the difficulties we can face as foreigners… we [employing university] have this international emphasis, we employ people from many different countries, but there is no training offered, for example, in English writing, any kind of support, or maybe even just speech training. There is nothing there. (Emma, 35, Lecturer, Europe)

While international academics merit institutional recognition on the grounds that they enhance the market profile, this is not considered a 'relevant' difference in the context of staff development, especially for creating effective structures of support and dedidating resources to help international staff improve or facilitate their professional linguistic performance in English. As such, the symbolic recognition is not reflected in material measures that might redress inequalities. It is also a telling example of how a category is mobilised for particular institutional purposes in some contexts, while the same category does not merit institutional recognition in relation to another situation. This produces misrecognition, in that some expressed needs do not result in organisational intervention, thus potentially denying some full participation, for example, due to a level of competence in English that is lower compared to that of native speakers. Specifically, language differences and the associated support needs are either ignored or treated as an issue that the individuals should address themselves, without institutional support. These illustrations show that power works through what differences gain recognition, and under what conditions.

Not having English as one's native language is also reflected in organisational hierarchies. Emma points to hierarchical patterns in relation to the organisational positions of international academics:

> In my department it's very clear that the Management Committee is dominated by white, male, British people… there are no foreigners on the committee… And the rest of the department is international and… it's very difficult to put your finger on it because it's done in such a subtle way it will never be made explicit, it's just very hidden when it happens… it's something I know now it does have an impact on my career.

Emma does not explicitly refer to language difference, but notes how the categories of gender, race and nationality are reflected in the hierarchical pattern of the distribution of power in her department. She also sees a connection between the existence of that gendered and racialised power structure and her own career progression. Language, however, is an implicit dimension of this pattern, since the juxtaposition of the categories 'British people' and 'foreigners' points to the distinction between 'native' and 'non-native' English speakers. Emma, similar to other participants who have noted the same issue in the departments they work for, is unable to articulate how the system of academic employment and progression, which is built on meritocratic principles and within which equality of treatment is legally guaranteed, produces this particular pattern. What this shows is that institutional processes produce individually felt (mis)recognition, and that the two dimensions are intertwined.

Processes of 'saming'

A significant part of our data related to how participants expressed their relation to a perceived norm, and the means by which they could potentially be recognised as belonging to it. In several cases there was an emphasis on seeking similarity, which we refer to as processes of ‘saming’: an ongoing form of recognition work which takes different forms and draws on different resources. For example, Thomas (34, Senior Lecturer, Asia) expressed sameness with a perceived dominant norm as follows:

> The thing that plays for me in this environment is that it is probably more difficult… to single me out... I don’t stand out in terms of the colour of my skin […] the shape of my face […] I kind of merge with the background very nicely.

Thomas’s whiteness, understood in terms of skin colour and facial features, is understood by him as an advantage as it allows him to pass on the basis of his looks. This simultaneously serves as the basis for recognition work (emphasising similarity to the norm) and performs misrecognition towards those who are more visibly different. It also indicates the power of ‘race’ as a key signifier of differentiation (cf. Ahmed, 2012), and equates the dominant norm with whiteness. In Thomas’s case, the notion of ‘merging nicely with the background’ versus fearing being misrecognised through being singled out demonstrates awareness of the existence of a norm, of one’s standing relative to it, and the possible misrecognition resulting from a distance from the norm. The potential reward to be reaped from being recognised within the dominant norm (Kenny, 2010), or at least avoidance of devaluation resulting from being positioned outside it, means that individuals in different ways seek to position themselves as being part of, or close to it. Therefore, to be negatively evaluated for not corresponding to an expected norm results in trying to counteract such evaluations:

> I had complaints [from students] … One of the complaints was that ‘the teacher speaks with huge accent, with a very strong accent. I don’t understand the teacher’. I don’t believe it. I know some other people who have a stronger accent than I have. (David, 39, Lecturer, Asia)

David feels professionally misrecognised as a result of a student complaint about his accent, and refuses to accept the anonymous student as somebody who can legitimately act as a recogniser. Instead, David positions himself closer to the norm compared to other colleagues who according to him have a stronger accent. Recognition work aimed towards becoming closer to the norm involves being aware of its key characteristics, assessing if and to which extent one might be recognised as fitting within it, and taking action to achieve a fit. A primarily British composition of students – particularly MBA cohorts – was raised as a context that presented challenges for some and that led to work being undertaken by the individual to redress the felt misrecognition. In particular, several women academics in our study expressed concern about potentially being stereotyped by students as not professional and knowledgeable enough, and about having their presence interpreted as not 'natural' in a professional context of this kind, due to their gender, skin colour, and the way they speak English.

The data also suggest that recognition work undertaken to position oneself as being closer to the norm can take the form of embodied self-modification. In such cases, one's way of speaking becomes integrated into a range of dimensions of such self-modification. Below, Beatrice reports on how she purposefully changed her voice, accent and posture to better meet what she perceived were implicit expectations when teaching MBA students:

> A certain type of student, for example the MBA, expects a male, possibly oldish, possibly pretty tall, with a posh voice, and with a very strong, clear voice. I'm sure about that because I have, actually, tried to experiment, whereby I taught an MBA class, speaking with a lower voice. I coached myself, I actually did it and my feedback went up. So it's true. I did a little test… I tried to experiment with changing my accent and changing the tone of voice and posture. All of it. And it resulted in a higher feedback. (Beatrice, 35-39, Senior Lecturer, Europe)

Being perceived as part of the social norm provides the opportunity to achieve recognition in terms of 'solidaristic acceptance' (Honneth, 2001: 49) and hence social inclusion. To be socially 'worthy' might mean to show likeness with the norm, including the norm of speaking English with a native English accent, presumed to be used by 'posh' men in the UK. Such practices of 'behavioural saming', however, leave the underlying recognition regime unquestioned and thus serve its continued reproduction. Further, by engaging in recognition work of 'saming', for example through lowering their voice and mimicking 'posh English men's' accent, individuals may partake in misrecognition of others by reinforcing a perceived – and exclusionary – norm.

Discussion

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate the value of recognition theory for advancing theorisation about language differences in multilingual organisations. We contribute to language-sensitive IB literature through offering a perspective on language differences which is grounded in relations of recognition. Existing language-sensitive IB research which focuses on how language shapes organisational inclusion and exclusion partly addresses similar issues, but recognition theory brings a two-pronged perspective which analytically distinguishes between individual identity-based recognition and institutional status-based recognition, but also shows how they are linked. Below we outline the key insights gained through our analysis.

Multilingualism and recognition work

The attribution of difference, including language difference, shapes the possibilities of individuals and groups (Ahonen and Tienari, 2015). In this chapter, we have introduced the concept of recognition work to consider acts of agency in relations of recognition in the context of language differences. Recognition work encompasses individual and organisational acts of bestowal or denial of recognition, to account for how recognition does not only take place between individuals but, significantly, also involves institutions such as the workplace (Cox, 2012). This enables us to, for example, enrich research which focuses on the implementation and effects of corporate language policies in terms of inclusion and exclusion (e.g. Sanden, 2020). Viewing such policies through a recognition theory lens draws into focus how such policies do not simply bring out already existing differences, but that they *produce* particular forms of (mis)recognition (Honneth, 2007) along linguistic lines. Our findings highlight how both formal and informal organisational relations result in affirmation or dismissal related to a person's language use – for example, their competence in the official language of the organisation or the accent with which they speak. Being set in an officially anglophone working context, our research, which specifically includes participants who are not native speakers of English, brings out interesting aspects of language-specific (mis)recognition.

The recognition work that is required in any given case depends on the forms of misrecognition to be redressed – it can either address distinctiveness (‘difference’) or commonality (‘sameness’). In terms of individual recognition work we gave examples of ‘saming’ – a notion that draws attention to the ongoing, varying means by which closeness to particular aspects of a perceived norm – such as a specific tone of voice or accent with which the official language of the organisation is spoken – is strived for, rather than conceiving of sameness as monolithic and binary. The work of ‘saming’ might enhance one’s position as close to the norm but it also contributes to the distancing of others from it, by reproducing the dominant norms of recognition (Wagner, 2011), such as consideration of native speakers in multilingual organisations as superior and non-native speakers as inferior (see e.g. Gaibrois and Nentwich, 2020).

Instrumentality and institutional bases for recognition

Our study gives insigths into instrumentality as a significant aspect of misrecognition of international staff. As discussed in the findings, there were forms of institutional recognition which, on the one hand, highlighted the value of international academics for the organisation. However, these forms of recognition remained void of meaning for individuals who were part of this category, for example because international staff were not given the support they needed in order to overcome disadvantages associated with not being a native English speaker. As a result, this institutional recognition was dismissed as inauthentic. The reason for this can be understood in terms of its instrumentality, which is related to the conditions through which recognition is bestowed. The category is meaningful for the institution in that it fits the contemporary market-based logic of the marketisation of higher education. The market-based impetus for the recognition renders it a calculative practice, the object of which is not the individual encompassed by the category, but ultimately the institution itself through enhanced market strength and reputation. This can be understood as instrumental recognition for economic purposes (Hancock, 2008). Such practices, and resultant relations of recognition, are shaped by the wider societal context. With regard to UK academia, New Public Management (NPM) practices informed by neoliberal principles of marketisation, managerialism and internationalisation are prevalent (Bamberger et al., 2019). These principles produce particular institutional forms of recognition – for example market-based forms – which have a bearing on individuals' identity-based recognition (such as 'ticking a box').

Conclusion

We have introduced recognition theory as a new theoretical lens for analysing issues related to language differences in multilingual organisations. The chapter contributes to understanding and addressing an important contemporary challenge facing multilingual society and organisation, i.e. the need for developing sustainable, constructive and positive relationships between actors in multilingual contexts. Recognition theory complements the ideas about how to address this challenge that have previously been proposed within language-sensitive IB research. Specifically, it reminds us that in their everyday lives – including as citizens and employees – people struggle for recognition. Recognition theory gives rise to the realisation that language differences have an impact not only on organisational communication, performance or power relations, but also on the sense of self and the feeling of being (mis)recognised by staff in multilingual organisations, especially those for whom the official language is not their native language.

Introducing recognition theory to language-sensitive IB research allows for carving space within the latter for attending to issues of social justice, respect and parity of participation among staff from different linguistic backgrounds and with different levels of competence in the official language of the organisation. Recognition theory can help analyse and understand patterns of recognition as relations and hierarchies of power in multilingual contexts, and hence generate insights into how power works in these contexts. It can also provide the means for engaging with those patterns and hierarchies with a view to changing them and redressing language-based, and indeed other types of inequalities and disadvantages. Future research might therefore draw on recognition theory to also attend to how, for example, gender and race intersect with language-specific forms of (mis)recognition, possibly also addressing contexts characterised by the dominance of languages other than English.

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Table 1 Overview of participants

		Number of participants
Academic position	Lecturer	33
	Senior Lecturer	9
	Reader	2
	Professor	8
	Other	2
Region of origin	Africa	4
	Asia (incl. Russia)	12
	Europe	36
	South America	2
Age group[1)]	25-29	1

	30-34	14
	35-39	17
	40-44	13
	45-49	7
	50-54	1

1) One participant preferred to withhold the age.