

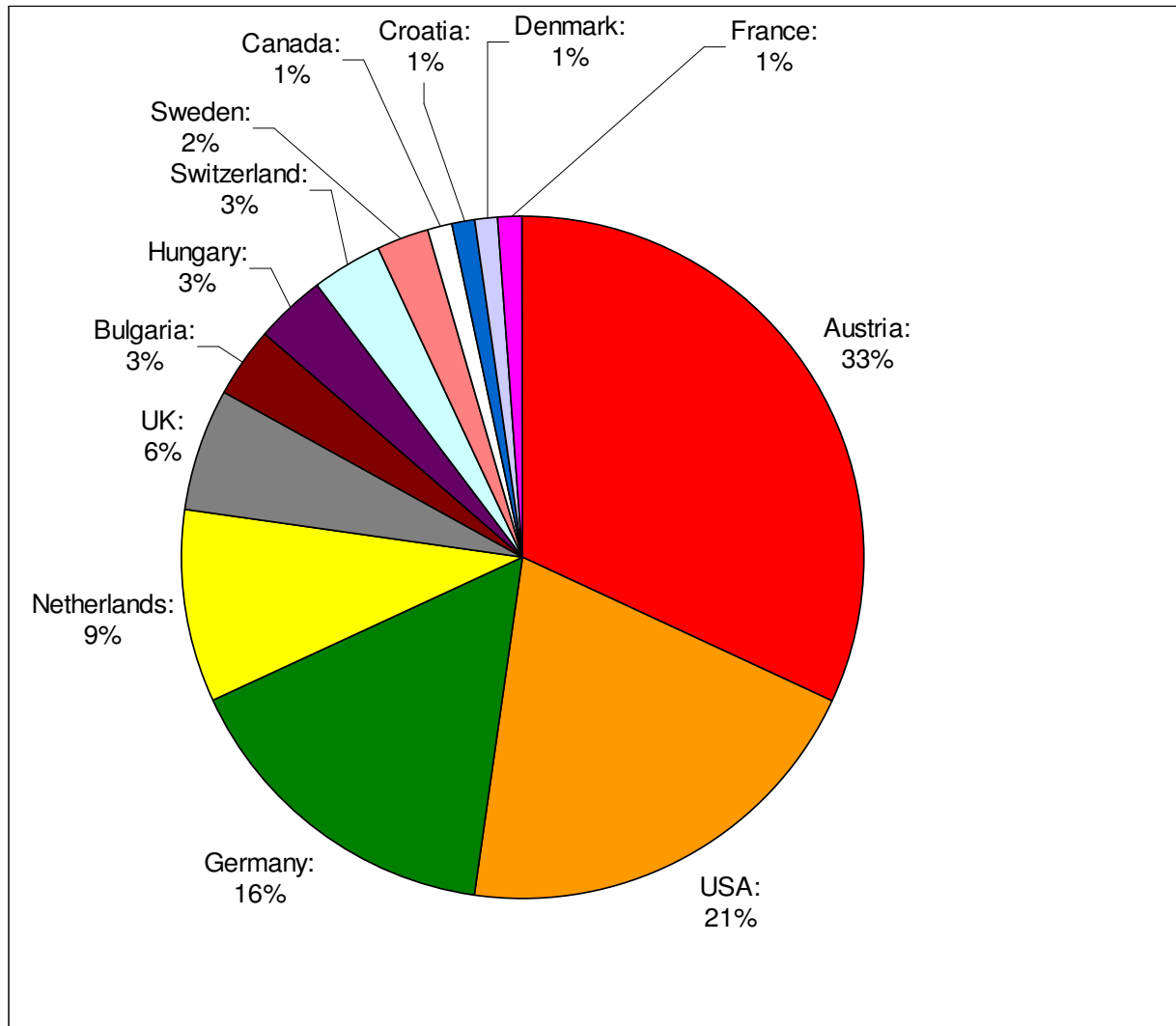
Using English as a foreign language in international and multicultural consulting: an asset or a hindrance?

**MCD 2009 4th International Conference on Management
Consulting
The Changing Paradigm of Consulting
Success and Sustainability for Management Consulting**

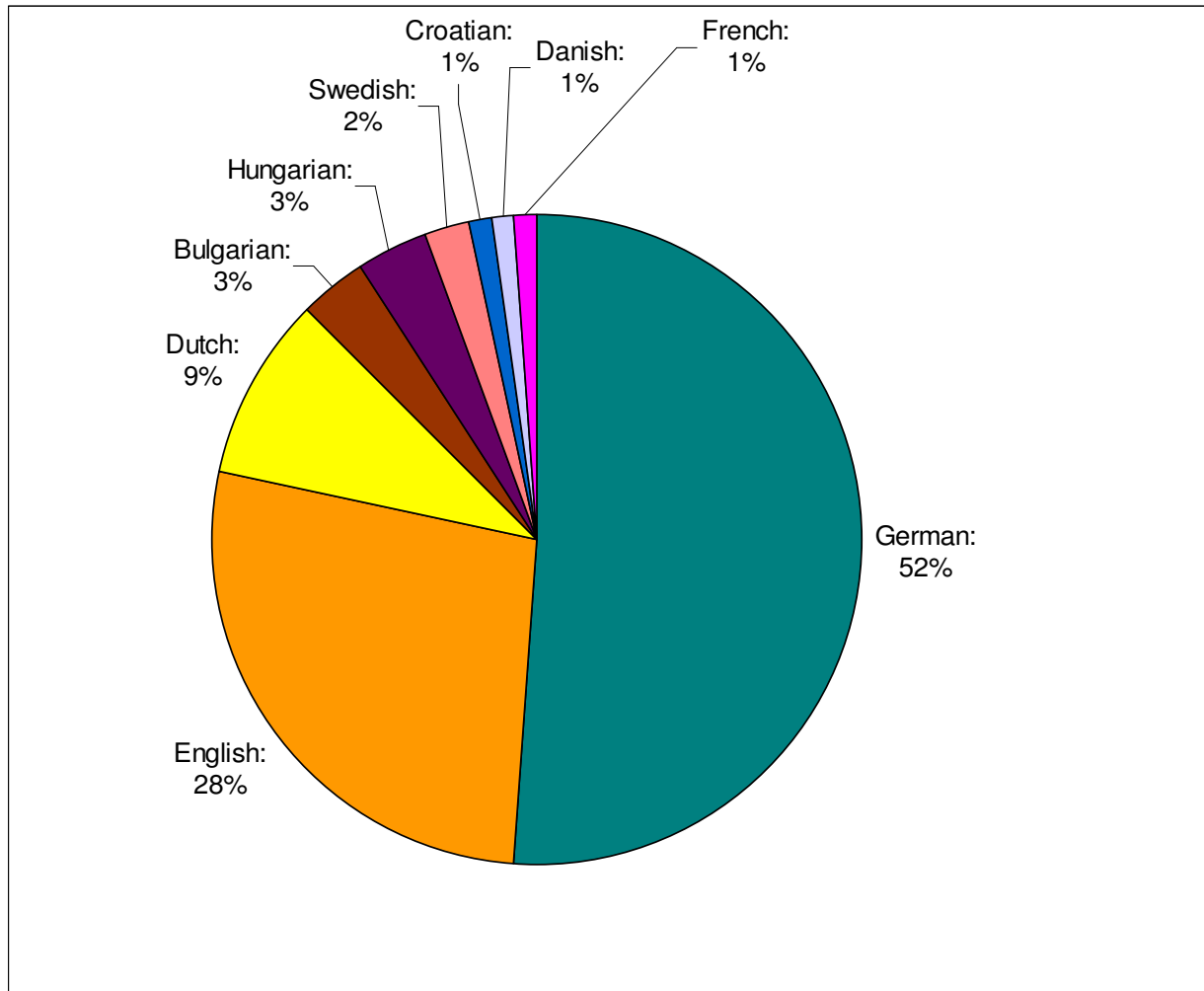
June 11, 2009

Kathrin Kordon
University of Vienna
beraterInnenengruppe naschmarkt

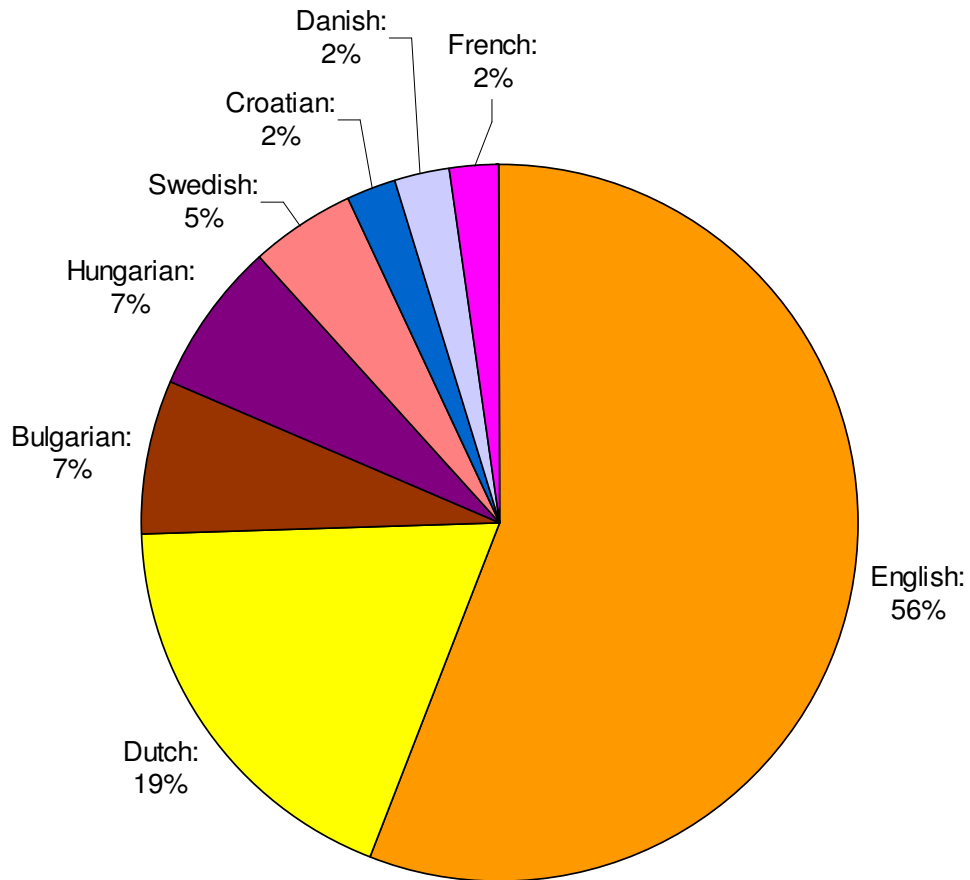
MCD Conference Participants countries of origin



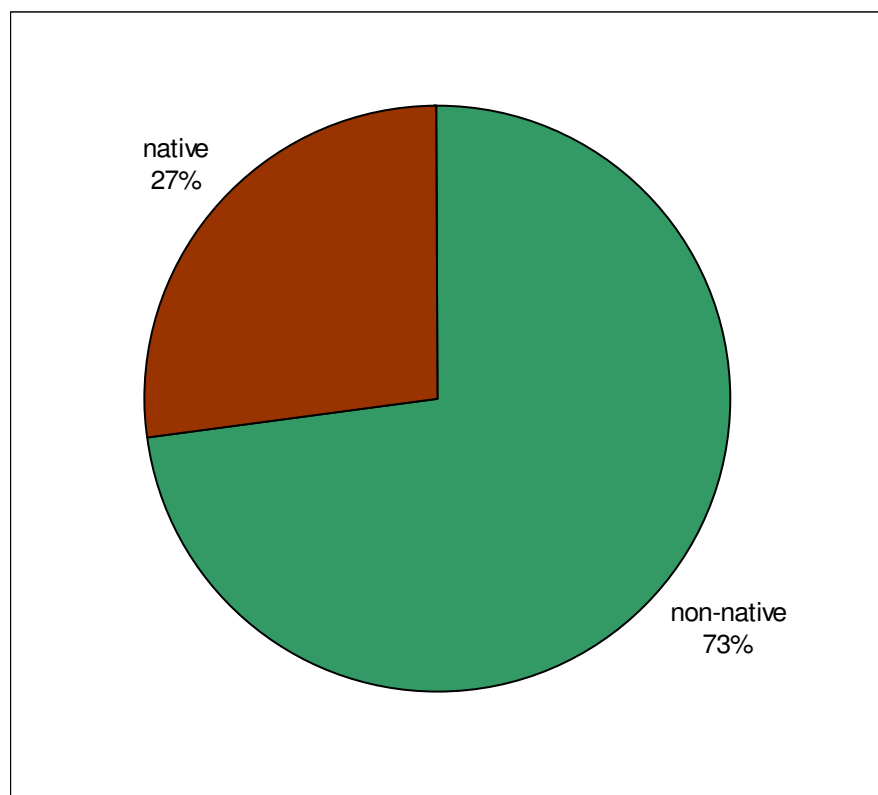
MCD Conference Participants assumed first languages



MCD Conference Participants dominance of English

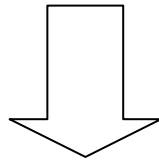


MCD Conference Participants native vs. non-native speakers



native vs. non-native speakers of English

The number of **non-native speakers** of English by far **transcends the number of native speakers.**

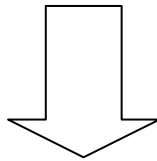


Which ***form*** of English is used?

English as a lingua franca

ELF Conversations

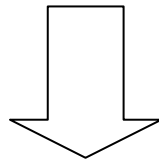
**Interactions in English among
speakers whose first language is
NOT English**



English serves as **the only common
code** of communication

Question of „ownership“ of English (ELF)

Native English (ENL) as the only point of reference for **„correct“** usage?



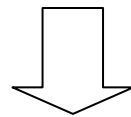
ELF = language use in its **own right**
with **specific characteristics**

ELF speakers = **language users** in their
own right

working hypothesis

Consulting processes among non-native speakers of English can be carried out **successfully** despite clear deviations from native speaker norms.

The use of ELF in multicultural and multilingual consulting context can bring about **additional resources** for the working process.



from **deficit-oriented** thinking

towards a

resource-oriented thinking

Consultants' perception of ELF

- ELF is **simplified** and **reduced** form of language
- ELF does not allow for **linguistic 'nuances'**
- Being a **native speaker** means **power**
- ELF is **free of 'culture'**

Consultants' perception of ELF

Vs. Ressource of ELF (lingua franca) in consulting processes:

Much of what supervisors do becomes even more evident in intercultural working contexts. (cf. Tatschl, 2003, 6)

Consultants' perception of ELF

- Use of **metaphors and images**
- Addressing **taboos**
- Asking **‘naive’ questions**
- **Reducing pace**

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE?

- **...for my research hypothesis**
- **...for the resources mentioned above**

Sample analysis

Intervision:

- **duration:** ~ 42 minutes; ~ 10 000 transcribed words
- **3 participants:**
 - S1: Dutch, female, 40+
 - S2: Estonian, female, 30+
 - S3: German, male, 40+
- **context:**
workshop on international conference for supervisors

working hypothesis & argumentative line

Supervisions in ELF can be carried out successfully



challenge of measuring 'success' of supervision



subdivision into phases, which all serve a particular purpose



language as a „means to an end“/“mediational means“ (Scollon
1998, 2001)

Phases and their purposes

Phase 1 (~ 3,2 min) „setting the scene“

purpose: distribution of roles and decision on formal criteria such as method („reflecting team“) and time management

Phase 2 (~ 2,1 min) „the case and the working task“

purpose: presentation of the case/problem and definition of working task

Phase 3 (~ 9,5 min) „peeling the onion“

purpose: identification of possible explanations or reasons for the presented problem

Phase 4 (~ 6 min) „from passivity to activity“

purpose: „transfer“: recognition and assurance of the working results and reflection on transfer into professional life

Phase 5 (~ 20,8 min) „process-reflection and meta-communication“

purpose: process reflection

Main outcome of process-analysis

Outcomes are based both on analysis and explicit statement of participants in phase 5:

- ✓ purposes of individual phases fulfilled
- ✓ **satisfying working result** is achieved despite the complexity and the density of the case presented by the 'supervisee'
- ✓ participants manage to **establish and maintain rapport** (i.e. indispensable prerequisite for successful supervision process)
- ✓ widely acknowledged **methods and interventions in supervision are successfully applied**, e.g. 'reflecting team', resource-oriented questioning (systemically oriented consulting), transference/counter-transference, changing of client's perspective, transfer-assurance, etc. (note: without use of specific vocabulary)

Data analysis: language

clear deviations from native norms on all levels of language

z.B.

grammar:

3rd person ,s': ,you believes'

„wrong“ prepositions: ,protect yourself for'

lexis:

new word coinages: ,your belongs'

lexical gaps:

'to er (.) accompany: er: (4) an event no <Lnde> ein
ein erlebnis? {an experience} </Lnde> (.) what that in
english'

transfer from L1: 'you cannot all (.) the time it (.) it stand out'

Data analysis: language

clear deviations from native-speaker norms



**do not provoke communicative problems,
problems of understandings or
misunderstandings**



- **Lexical gaps are skillfully bridged** (e.g. by paraphrasing) → professional discourse is successful without the use of specific vocabulary (e.g. ‚countertransference‘)
- **ELF is highly consensus-oriented, cooperative and supportive**

Data analysis: language

different levels of language proficiency among speakers



**do not provoke communicative problems,
problems of understandings or
misunderstandings**



- mutual accomodation of speech style
- Problems of understanding are immediatley solved

Data analysis: language

Interruptions of the communicative flow

Due to, e.g.

- Comprehension checks
- Pauses
- Lexical gaps
- Self-interruptions or self-repetitions



**do not provoke communicative problems,
problems of understandings or
misunderstandings**



Reduction of pace (resource?)

Data analysis: language

Speakers use a number of communicative strategies in order to create and maintain a positive interpersonal relationship (rapport)

e.g. through:

- ‚backchannelling‘, i.e. use of ‚minimal responses‘ as ‚mhm‘, ‚yeah‘, ‚yes‘ (signals attention and listenership)
- **Expressions of respect and admiration** (e.g. compliments)
- Creation of a „**common ground**“ (e.h. professional culture)



= prerequisites for a successful working environment

S1: our profession is about making connections.

Data analysis: language

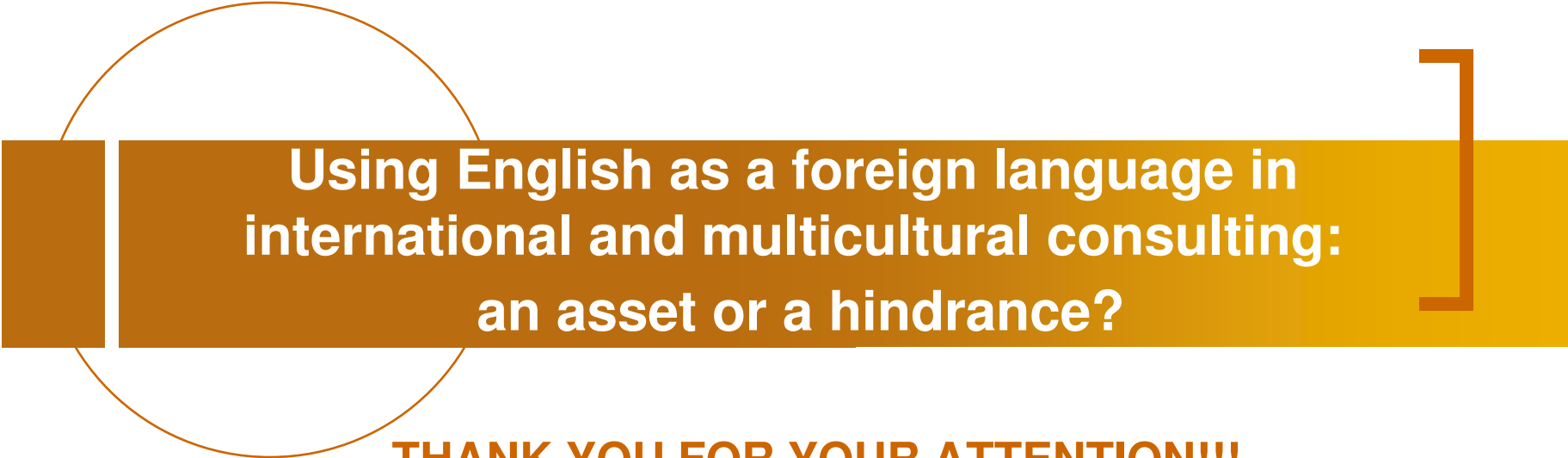


1 S1: and the <1> strange</1>ness (.) is there in the language? the searching <2> for words? </2>
2 S3: <1> <un> xx </un> </1>
3 S3: <2> yes </2> yes <soft> that's that's right mhm yes er to do it in er (.) third language </soft>
4 S1: in a <3> third language </3>
5 S3: <3> aha </3> mhm
6 S1: <4> yes </4>
7 S2: <4> mhm </4> (7)
8 S3: and it fo- fo- for me it was? er (1) if you er: (.) erm it (1) was not er: hier- hierarchy? that (.) and (that) i felt i i
9 wa- wa- i was sure if i have a question about the words? to find (.) you could help me
10 S1: yes (.) yes @ <5> @@ </5>
11 S2: <5> mhm </5>
12 S3: yes (2)
13 S3: that puts it er=
14 S3: =yes
15 S1: <6> on </6> equal <7> level yeah </7> (1)
16 S3: <6> (ok) </6>
17 S3: <7> equal mhm </7>
18 S1: <soft> yeah </soft>
19 S2: <soft> mhm? </soft> (3)
20 S1: and the <1> strange <un> xx </un> </1> <un> xx= </un>
21 S3: <1> it wasn't </1>
22 S3: =yes (.) it (.) it was not that not necessary to present me: as somebody who was perfect (.)
23 S1: no.

summary & outlook

Preliminary hypothesis:

- a high level of linguistic proficiency is NOT the prerequisite for successful supervision processes
- many **negative assumptions** concerning the use of a lingua franca (e.g. ELF) in the context of professional consulting are **not justified**
- **linguistic „irriations“** can be used as **resources**
- **practical trainings** instead of „common“ language trainings (with a focus on grammar and on specific vocabulary training), e.g. international intervision groups



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an asset or a hindrance?**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!!!

Mag. Kathrin KORDON

English Department of Vienna University (research
assistant)

beraterInnengruppe naschmarkt (networkpartner)

kathrin.kordon@univie.ac.at

kordon@naschmarkt.co.at