



Assignment 1: Blog Posts 1-3

GENERATING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL PORTFOLIO

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Note: the source of the cover picture is from the language connections.

Blog 1: qualitative or quantitative?

Self-reflexivity of researcher

As novice doctoral management researchers, it is essential for us to engage with ourselves through self-reflexivity (Johnson and Duberley, 2003). Positionality is one essential piece included in reflexivity (Day, 2012). The social identity map in Figure 1 proposed by Jacobson and Mustafa (2019) offers many facets, including “social class, citizenship, ability, gender, age, race, sexual orientation,” for researchers to visualize and interpret the world around in a reciprocal way (Day, 2012). It is difficult for us as researchers to step aside to see and write our world objectively. Our interpretation aligns with our personal experience in education, work, training, interests and values, and culture and backgrounds. (Willig, 2013; Creswell, 2018). According to Leibing and McLean (2007), data creation and analysis are mainly responsible by researchers, who serve as instruments; it is pivotal to get acknowledged about their research motivations, which would pave the way the research is conceived, approached, interpreted, interacted with and finally produced (Haynes, 2012); this is beneficial for researchers to understand the power relations comparing to the participants, and allowing our readers to have clearer picture about the "back stage" of the research process (Harding, 1991; McCorkel & Myers, 2003).

The "back stage" of this research should be traced back to my educational background first. Majoring in International Business Administration, I finished my bachelor's degree study at Erasmus University in Rotterdam; after several years working, I continued my master's degree in Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, studying International Language Education. Now, I am honored to have the opportunity to go on my Doctoral Business

Administration study at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David; I am thinking about doing my doctoral thesis in the direction of language management, combining my education backgrounds and giving full play to my academic strengths in terms of management and linguistics as well as my past and current working experiences.

After my undergraduate graduation, I worked in Dell computer Ltd., one of the world's famous multinational enterprises (MNEs). Employees with diverse cultural backgrounds work and cooperate, speaking various kinds of language. Language barriers hinder the trust formation among working teams in MNEs (Tenzer, Pudenko and Harzing, 2014); impede team morale with ineffective communication (Aichhorn and Puck, 2017) and even MNE's business functioning (Harzing and Feely, 2008). My current job is as a university lecturer in a foreign language school, teaching both management and linguistics modules. It is noticeable that there are relentless stakeholders pressures imposed on MNEs due to the linguistic, cultural and institutional gap and differences (Selmier, Newenham-Kahindi and Oh, 2015) . As a researcher working in a university, I hope to combine the business activities of MNEs with the values, social conditions and public opinions of the stakeholders employing the study of language management, and analyze this research topic from a language management perspective to facilitate the enterprise's development. Specifically, the analysis of MNEs language acquisition and usage to communicate effectively in managing CSR with different stakeholders.

Justification for qualitative method choice

Researchers choose research practices relying on their chosen research questions, and the questions should be based on context (Nelson et al.,1992). This research is going to explore the interaction between language and CSR communication, “what, why, who, how, and when”

questions (Lofland, 1976) will be incorporated in the article, which qualitative methods will answer rather than quantitative methods coping with “how many” or “how much” questions (McCusker, and Gunaydin, 2015). It is feasible to investigate the language usage relating to CSR activities through a longitudinal, process focus study within a specific MNE or a cross-sectional study with in-depth interview-based comparative analysis among different MNEs. As a researcher, I do not know clearly in advance what I am looking for in terms of the language used in the MNEs connecting with the CSR activities or reports, the aspects of this study cannot be designed and hypothesized before the data collection; the discursive analysis of CSR reports or the language usage related to the CSR activities should be conducted in the context or setting in the form of words instead of numbers or statistics.

Moreover, within the interpretivist paradigm, the researchers are naturalistic to unravel the real-world situation and do not tend to be manipulative, obtrusive, and controlling. The reality or knowledge is assumed to be subjective, interpretive and mainly dependent on the researcher as an instrument interacting with the wider social system (Bryman, 2016; Maxwell, 2005). They play essential roles in ascertaining the research process quality in the interpretation and analysis work (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015). All the above points are contrary to the features of quantitative research, in other words, tailored to the qualitative research methods.

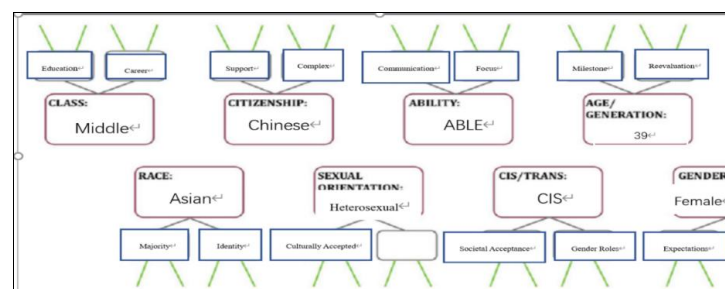


Figure 1 My social identity map (adapted from source: Jacobson and Mustafa, 2019, p.3)

Blog 2: possible qualitative research methods

Grounded Theory

Suppose the article will investigate whether MNEs could craft successful CSR through effective language policy, specifically, whether the acquisition of language in MNEs could facilitate its communication in managing the CSR activities with community stakeholders. “Stakeholders either affect or are affected by, corporate policies and practices” (Garriga and Melé, 2004, P.59). MNEs’ responsibilities to communicate in a language that their operating communities could understand, the appropriate selection of lingua franca could alleviate the information asymmetry and catalyse better CSR outcomes (Luo and Shenkar, 2006). To explore the language, stakeholder communication and better CSR interaction, the grounded theory approach (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) will be applied with in-depth interview-based comparative analysis among ten mining MNEs in East Africa. As Mayring (2004) claim, grounded theory might be preferred in very open research questions and an explanatory study.

A proper dialog could enhance mutual understanding between MNEs and communities (Kaptein and Van Tulder, 2003). The commonality of the community members in East Africa is loosely, implicitly defined (Dunham et al., 2006), so it would be more challenging to understand the community’s institutional logics, which could become more accessible with effective communication through internalizing a proper lingua franca. How do these MNEs managing stakeholder relationships (in East Africa settings) more successfully by tailoring CSR activities towards their preference and constraints? This research topic is complicated, and the grounded theory approach helps tease out nuances during the theory-building process

(Creswell,2013). In addition, it will assist the researcher in drawing a comprehensive picture in terms of evolving and changing social settings in East Africa. Meanwhile, I would like to propose emerging theoretical explanations for new observation and data collection instead of relying on the existing theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The grounded theory approach is quite flexible, just like piling a jigsaw that the researcher can add new pieces during the data collection process (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996).

There are six steps in applying the grounded theory method in this research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Research question formulation, literature supplement and the relevance research focus confirmation before and after fieldwork confirmation will be carried out in the first step. The second step will develop an interview system among these 10 mining MNEs, identify and open code data, synthesize emerging data categories, and compare and examine how each MNEs use language to communicate with its community stakeholder to manage its CSR activities successfully. Sampling bias could be lessened by choosing respondents from different genders, ages purposely. The face-to-face interview will be conducted in the third step; interviewees are allowed to choose the language to be interviewed to minimize the language bias. Question protocols should be pursued until no new categories and themes appear relating to language, CSR activities, communication and relationship with local communities (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The fourth step comes to the data analysis, applying the axial coding approach (Glaser and Corbin, 1998), including transcribing interview verbatim, coding data, writing memos and field notes, checking category properties and dimensions. The validity of the findings will be strengthened in the fifth step; the verbatim transcripts will be “member checks,” which will be confirmed and verified with key interview

informants regarding the correctness and their real responses to the interview questions. Finally, the new testable propositions will be created based on our previous research questions.

The biggest challenge using the grounded theory approach in this article topic is the research's time and costs. The process of discovery relating to the interview and data analysis should cost more than two years. It would be helpful to obtain new and more reliable data if the researcher could stay in East Africa to build up a rapport with our interviewees (Glaser and Corbin, 1998). However, this data collection requires a massive amount of time and resources, which would be far beyond this module task, but would be an exciting and valuable research topic relating to language management later on in my career development. As a novice doctoral researcher, the other challenges include putting the researchers' past knowledge and experience aside and judging the particular categories' saturation time.

Content Analysis

Different from the cross-sectional study with in-depth interview-based comparative analysis among different MNEs applying grounded theory approach above, the investigation of the language usage relating to CSR activities through a longitudinal study is more appropriate with content analysis approach. This research will explore the talk-action tension management in MNE's aspirational CSR communication longitudinally from discursive lens. To explore how the meaning of the organizational learning process in terms of tension management is constructed consisting of interpretative/constructive paradigm. Because of the latent and hidden characteristics of tensions, the richness of this research question could be best reflected in applying the content analysis, one of the main forms of qualitative data analysis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

Content analysis is rigorous; it examines and verifies the contents of written data in a strict and systematic process (Flick, 1998; Kuckartz, 2014). Content analysis attracts researchers for the following reasons. It belongs to the unobtrusive technique (Krippendorff, 2004a), research poses little to no harm on subjects, who can observe without being observed (Robson, 1993, pp. 280, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Analysing texts is a form to conduct unobtrusive research. Texts come in words, audio, photos, different formats. Content analysis addresses the core questions of “Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?” (Babbie, 2010, pp. 328–329). Content analysis is a flexible way of studying texts and their meaning (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013) by focusing on the linguistics and language features, using codes and categories to verify (Mayring, 2004). However, Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as unlimited to the textual analysis domain (Jaward, 2006).

Moreover, the text data are permanent; the researcher can look at processes occurring over time and is permitted to correct mistakes or do verification through reanalysis and replication (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In addition, contrary to grounded theory, content analysis is time efficient and costs less, which is more feasible and realistic for this module task. The detailed application steps in the research process and how to overcome the validity limits of content analysis will be elaborated in blog 3.

Content Analysis involves coding, both manifest and latent content will be focused on. What is latent content is totally up to the researchers’ judgments. To be specific, frequency, direction, intensity and space are four characteristics commonly coded in content analysis. Whether frequency plays an essential role in the analysis, in other words, whether this issue is pivotal even if its frequency is only once, it should be noted that content analysis data are

appropriate for being interpreted with both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). This means the theory will be generated in the final stage of content analysis, but the causal relationship could be found out in the further analysis, the diagram could be constructed to show the causal relationship direction.

Blog 3: a viable approach to researching the chosen topic

Introduction

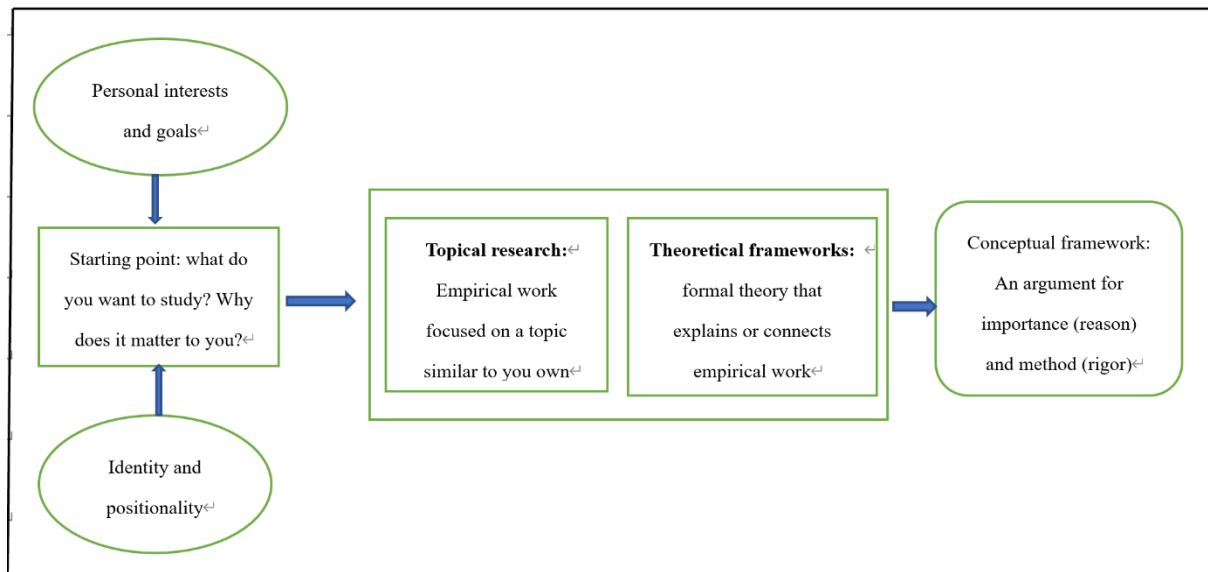


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework Elements (adapted from source: *Ravitch and Riggan, 2017, p. 9*)

The starting point of the research process is typically from the researchers' identity and positionality, which includes their interest and goals, how they view themselves and others, personal motivations and ethical issues, which are often being overlooked and should be highlighted and positioned at the beginning of the whole research process (Creswell, 2013). Then, researchers' philosophical and theoretical frameworks should be addressed, which will provide the foundation for the following research strategies, methods of collection, analysis, and interpretation, that is, a "basic set of beliefs that guides actions" (Guba, 1990, p.17).

Research Background

Spolsky (2012) carries out research on language policy and planning. There are three interrelated but independent components of the language policy: language practices, language beliefs and language management. Sanden (2016) further advanced Spolsky's research and proposed a hierarchical model of language management, from organized language management

to simple language management. Language management flows from the domain of state (macro) to the institution (meso) and then the individual(micro). My research will focus on language management in the domain of institution (meso) level. Language has been taken as a variable in multinational enterprises (MNEs) management. Many pioneering researchers (Aichhorn and Puck, 2017; Harzing et al.,2011; Harzing and Pudelko, 2013; Harzing and Feely, 2008;)have felt interested in the influence of language on MNEs.

In the past two decades, influenced by the "linguistic turn"(Tietze, 2008) in the field of organization and management; discursive and textual analysis has gradually become the hot spot of empirical research in the field of accounting and finance (Longhran and McDonald, 2016; Henry, 2008) . The focus of research on financial discourse has shifted from the influence of quantitative financial reports data on the market (Ball et al., 2014; Francis et al.,2002) to the impact of qualitative narrative methods on investors' judgments and decisions, and these narrative contents are released at the same time as financial data, the impact of former has even been more significant than the latter (Merkl-Davies and Niamh,2007). Thus, the economic power of speech cannot be underestimated.

Increasing attention has been paid to the non-financial information with narrative by "telling a story" to unveil soft details or plot in the process of information disclosure, transfer text emotional tendencies, achieve independence attribution and impression management (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen,2010), build up a rapport with stakeholders and gain legitimacy (Castelló and Lozano,2011), which has led to the increasing investing trend in CSR programmes.

CSR reports have become mandatory for MNEs with over 500 employees since 2017(European Parliament Directive, 2016). There is the proliferation of a wide range of

guidelines for CSR reports, in which the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is the most common and prevalent, and its implementation catalyses the quality improvement of CSR reporting (Graafland and Smid, 2019). CSR reports “combine factual reporting with promotional discourse” (Bhatia, 2012, p.235) as a hybrid discourse genre (Fuoli,2017), which are not only as tools to legitimate the organizational activities (Chen and Bouvain, 2009; Deegan, 2014) but also as forms of self-representations to influence public perception (Gössling and Vocht, 2007; Fuoli,2017). In order to avoid being accused of greenwashing, action elements of CSR communication should be made sure to align with social values (Fuoli,2017). It is proved that organisations embrace the talk–action tension rather than suppressing it could generate “creative tension ” (Mitra and Buzzanell, 2015; De Cock and Richards, 1996).

The objective of this study

Many longitudinal studies examining CSR reporting have been conducted with a quantitative approach, especially in accounting and finance (Pollach, 2018; Eric, 1998; Gray, Kouhy and Lavers,1995). The empirical interpretative research on uncovering how the talk-action tension is navigated discursively in MNE’s CSR reporting over a long run is scant and valuable (Koep, 2017), which is also significant and practical for MNEs development as well as my university research career.

This article will shed light on the dynamic changes of talk-action tension of Shell’s CSR report communication from discursive lens to enhance its corporate image over 23 years (from 1998 to 2020).

Justification of Research Methodology

In Blog 1, the tailored reasons for applying qualitative research method were identified,

qualitative content analysis discussed in Blog 2 was seen as the most appropriate approach, according to Krippendorff's (1980, p.51) claim that "much content analysis research is motivated by the search for techniques to infer from symbolic data what would be either too costly, no longer possible, or too obtrusive by the use of other techniques. "

From the Stemler and Bebell (1998, cited in Jaward, 2006) example of making inference about the existence reason of school mission statement by conducting the content analysis, it is said that the content analysis can monitor the public opinion changes based on practical perspective (Jaward, 2006). Content analysis methodology could support the CSR communication from a constitutive angle and the language's performative role. To investigate the tension navigating by the language used between the talks and action in the CSR reports of Shell, content analysis can offer practical application.

In order to improve the validity and rigor of the research, an in-depth interview will be added as a triangulation, which is said to reduce the researchers' bias and enhance data validity if they only rely on a single method and aid the researchers to gain more assurance (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

The Rationale for the Selection of Shell

Shell has been identified as a leader in oil MNEs to combine stakeholder management principles with business practice (Skillern, 2004). It has published its first sustainability report since 1998, and its reports have been researched by many researchers (Livesey and Kearins, 2002). Its sampling size is sufficient and guaranteed to carry out the longitudinal research. Shell has been operating in more than 70 countries with 87,000 employees (Shell, 2020). Also, Shell has experienced the Brent Spar and Nigeria controversies. So, the research context would

become richer and more interesting based on the selection of the Shell sample.

Data Collection

All sustainability report/CSR report of Shell could be downloaded from Shell's official website homepage (<https://www.shell.com/sustainability/sustainability-reporting-and-performance-data/sustainability-reports.html>). Overall, there are 24 English-version sustainability reports available from 1998 to 2020 (2 version reports in the year of 2000) (see Appendix I), totaling over 1000 pages available to be read and discussed, which is allowable to design 23-year research to elucidate how the promotional talk and action performance tension emerge, evolve and changes over time.

The interviewees include three internal stakeholders (managers and directors) and three external stakeholders of Shell (various NGOs) that will address the stakeholder management challenge proposed by Freeman. The length of managers' working years and efficient knowledge about CSR development should be ascertained. The choice of NGO stakeholders should cover people whom both have positive and negative interaction with Shell. All the interview processes will be recorded and transcribed verbatim and then be analysed using Nvivo software to encode.

Data Analysis

There are several steps in applying the content analysis method in this research process. The first step is to answer "who says what, to whom and how," repeated close reading of all the reports will be carried out to get a feel of the language data, which will be coded into categories inductively (Creswell, 2013). The second round of category of coding data will be partly based on the existing theory relating to the research question and partly emerge from the researcher

and data-discourse of promotional talk and discourse of action performance. Example of passages being coded as the promotional talk is “Our ambition of Goal Zero is to achieve no harm and no leaks across all of our projects and operations” (Shell, 2015, p.33); In contrast, passages being coded as the action performance is “We introduced a safety programme to encourage contractor partners and the industry to share their knowledge and experiences. This has led to better leadership and safety behaviour. The number of serious or potential incidents has been reduced by more than half within Shell since 2011” (Shell, 2015, p.33). Unlike grounded theory, content analysis is said to be less inductive (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). However, the deny of less inductive content analysis could mispresent its flexibility. The data coding analysis could be applied to examine whether the existing theory has been restructured regarding the research question. The final step is to see what themes and phases will emerge to unravel the interplay between the talk-action tension. The follow-up interview data coding will be carried out deductively firstly, categories leaning on tension management theory; meanwhile, new categories will emerge inductively and lean on internal and external stakeholders’ dialogue. The process of participant validation ideally occurs continuously.

Possible ethical risks

In this unobtrusive research, data collection is mainly based on the sustainability reports of Shell on its homepage website. For an ethical reason, whether there is user agreement regarding the prohibition of research usage should be checked in advance. According to McKee and Porter's (2009) heuristic of variables for guidance, I could comfortably proceed with this research since the data are public and insensitive and the participants are not vulnerable.

For the interviewees, based on the individual layer mentioned by Seedhouse and the relational perspective by Flinder, all the participants' participation should be voluntary (Stutchbury and Fox,2009). Interviewees should fully understand the research aim and purpose, and the researcher should assure confidentiality and anonymity according to Flinders' deontological layer and Seedhouse's consequential layer.

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Appendix I

Year	Title
1998	Profits and Principle-Does there have to be a choice?
1999	People, Plant and Profits: an act of commitment
2000	How do we stand? People, Plant and Profits: The Shell Report
2001	People, Plant and Profits: The Shell Report 2001
2002	Meeting the energy challenge: The Shell Report 2002
2003	The Shell Report 2003: Meeting the energy challenge– our progress in contributing to sustainable development
2004	The Shell Report 2004: Meeting the energy challenge – our progress in contributing to sustainable development
2005	The Shell Sustainability Report 2005: Meeting the energy challenge
2006	The Shell Sustainability Report 2006: Meeting the energy challenge
2007	The Shell Sustainability Report 2007: Responsible energy
2008	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2008: Responsible energy, Sustainability Report
2009	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2009
2010	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2010
2011	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2011
2012	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2012
2013	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2013
2014	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2014
2015	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2015
2016	ROYAL DUTCH SHELL plc SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2016
2017	Sustainability Report 2017 (website layout)
2018	Sustainability Report 2018 (website layout)
2019	Sustainability Report 2019 (website layout)
2020	Sustainability Report 2020 (website layout)