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Constructing Communicative Repertoires in a Multilingual Workplace: A Case Study of a Japanese Expatriate Employee

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The study explores the communicative repertoires of an expatriate employee in a multilingual workplace, focusing on his experience after being relocated to an American branch of a global Japanese company. Despite limited English proficiency and prior experience using English as a Japanese speaker, effective communication in English is crucial for successfully completing his expatriate assignment in a multilingual and multicultural workplace. The study investigates how he constructs communicative repertoires when engaging with coworkers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered from multiple sources, including observations, interviews, field notes and clarification emails. Findings reveal that his communicative repertoires were shaped by language proficiency, cultural values of the home country, and personal preferences. Notably, he predominantly used English to enhance his membership within the workplace despite language limitations and communication challenges. Furthermore, his navigation between two languages showcased a flexible approach, embracing both separate and bilingual positions, highlighting individual agency in shaping communicative repertoires tailored to specific communication needs. These findings suggest that multilingual organizations should foster both work environments and training programs that promote language flexibility, enabling expatriate employees to proactively shape their communicative repertoires and strategies within the workplace setting.

[expatriate employees/communicative repertoire/workplace communication/ multilingual workplace]

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, workplace communication dynamics have undergone significant evolution, especially for expatriate employees navigating multilingual and multicultural settings. Within such a working environment, individuals develop their professional communicative repertoires by engaging in various communication practices and social interactions. These repertoires are considered a comprehensive set of resources that individuals utilize to communicate effectively in their professional lives (Räisänen, 2013, 2018). Expatriate employees are often dispatched to workplaces in foreign countries without adequate preparation to attain essential proficiency in both the languages used in their new work setting and the associated communication practices and cultural understanding. This can lead to their isolation from the mainstream community and difficulties in effectively communicating, interacting, and adapting to the different climate (Hechanova et al., 2003). As a result, it can be inferred that expatriate employees construct more complex and dynamic communicative repertories as they engage in workplace communication with coworkers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Communicative repertoires by Rymes (2010, 2014), which serve as the theoretical framework for this study, refer to the collection of ways through which individuals employ language and other means of communication to effectively function in the multiple communities they engage in. Recognizing that multiple languages have become a crucial resource for individuals to fully immerse themselves in their world, recent attention has surged toward examining the communicative repertoires of professionals in a global work environment, often viewed through the lenses of multilingualism and translanguaging (e.g., Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Canagarajah, 2013; Jonsson & Blåsjö, 2020; Räisänen, 2018; van der Worp et al., 2017).

Yet, there has been a noticeable lack of attention directed towards the complex nature of communicative repertoires among expatriate employees. Previous studies have been constrained in comprehensively elucidating the dynamics and intricacies of this matter as they focused on exploring particular aspects of communicative repertories, such as identifying differences in communicative behaviors between immigrant professionals and their coworkers in the host country (e.g., Cui, 2015), expatriates' communication difficulties (e.g., Shah & Barker, 2017), cross-cultural understanding and work adjustment (e.g., Al Mahrouqi, 2018) and bilingual policies of international companies along with language barriers (e.g., van der Worp et al., 2017). As van der Worp et al. (2017) emphasize the necessity of a holistic approach towards the repertoire of languages in international workplaces, highlighting the intricate nature of language and communication practices, it is imperative to comprehensively and holistically explore the nature of communicative repertoires of expatriate employees in workplace interactions.

This issue becomes even more significant given the considerable number of expatriate employees in the U.S. workforce, with foreign-born individuals accounting for a record 18.1% of the civilian labor force in 2022 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). However, limited attention has been given to discussing expatriate employees' communicative repertoires in the US, as the previous studies have primarily focused on expatriates in Australia (Cui, 2015; Shah & Barker, 2017), Oman (e.g., Al Mahrouqi, 2018), and Spain (e.g., van der Worp et al., 2017). Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by exploring the communicative repertoires of expatriate employees within the American workforce and expand the body of knowledge on multilingualism in global work settings. In light of this, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do expatriate employees navigate and adapt their communicative repertoires within a new multilingual American workplace?
2. How do communicative repertoires of expatriate employees support or reshape existing literature on multilingual practices in global work environments?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Expatriate Employees in Multilingual Workplaces

International assignments are now considered a pivotal component of overall corporate strategy, as companies perceive expatriation as an essential tool for accomplishing organizational goals, sharing organizational and cultural knowledge, and fostering communication with overseas branches. This multifaceted role positions expatriates as operational, strategic, and critical components in a company's success, playing a key part in establishing and maintaining strong global competitiveness (Wilczewski, 2019). Consequently, numerous corporations are deploying expatriate employees to their branch offices or subsidiaries situated in foreign nations (Wilczewski, 2019).

A number of studies have focused on issues surrounding expatriate employees, highlighting the significance of the host language proficiency and communication skills. They argue that these skills empower employees to forge and sustain interactions with colleagues from diverse nations, enhancing their adaptability within the new work environment (e.g., Du-Babcock & Babcock, 1996; Lauring et al., 2023; Min & Lee, 2013; Selmer & Lauring, 2015; Varma et al., 2023; Wilczewski, 2019). Yet, expatriate employees often encounter various communication challenges arising from language and cultural barriers upon entering the dynamic multilingual and multicultural workspace. These difficulties hamper the effective intercultural collaboration and mutual communication

between expatriate employees and their local counterparts (Wilczewski, 2019). As a result, such hurdles frequently lead to the exclusion of expatriates from communication networks, constrained intercultural exchanges within the workplace, and hindrances to the flow of information (Peltokorpi, 2007; Wilczewski et al., 2018; Zhang & Harzing, 2016; Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016).

Moreover, many studies have emphasized the significance of informal communication practices in the workplace (e.g., Lee, 2020; Mak & Chui, 2013; Myles, 2009; Negretti & Garcia-Yeste, 2015; Pullin, 2010; Tange & Lauring, 2009). Research suggests that such communication, including casual social exchanges, plays a crucial role in fostering relationships among employees and is deeply integrated into the core aspects of workplace communication (Pullin, 2010). Holmes (2018) further explains that informal communication, especially during breaks such as tea or lunch times, provides international employees with regular opportunities to interact socially. In multilingual and multicultural environments, however, informal communication can be particularly challenging for non-native employees because of the use of less formal linguistic registers (Tange & Lauring, 2009). Non-native speakers might feel intimidated about seeming incapable if they misinterpret their colleagues during informal discussions. These challenges can adversely affect non-native employees' involvement in workplace communication and the development of their communicative repertoires.

Therefore, communicative interactions within a multilingual workplace give rise to a complex working environment, particularly for expatriate employees unaccustomed to the communication practices used in their new professional milieu. Despite the growing focus on studying international employees and their communicative interactions in diverse work settings, Wilczewski (2019) points out the scarcity of context-sensitive case studies that meticulously investigate the integration of communication processes and adaptation in the workplace.

2. Communicative Repertoires

Drawing upon a sociolinguistic view, a communicative repertoire refers to the collection of diverse ways that individuals use language and various means of communication, including not only languages, dialects, and registers but also gestures, attire, and posture, to effectively engage and function within the multiple communities they are involved in (Rymes, 2010). Shifting from Gumperz's (1964) concept of the verbal repertoire, which encompasses "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the community in the course of socially significant interaction" (Gumperz, 1971, p. 184), Rymes (2010) focuses on the resources utilized by individuals, rather than aiming to make generalizations about the verbal repertoire of the speakers' community. According to Rymes, an individual's communicative repertoire can encompass various elements, such as the use of multiple

languages, multiple ways of speaking the same language, and a range of other features beyond language (Rymes, 2014). Furthermore, the communicative repertoire reflects an individual's trajectories of socialization and membership in a variety of communities (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Räisänen, 2013, 2018). Therefore, Rymes's concept of communicative repertoire highlights that focusing solely on linguistic aspects may overlook the dynamic and diverse means by which individuals communicate meaning, express their identities, and establish connections with culturally diverse communities and groups (Martinez et al., 2017).

The development of communicative repertoires in a multicultural environment is complex, involving employees cultivating diverse verbal and nonverbal communication practices or patterns during workplace interactions. Dijkstra (2023) explores multilingual communication in Dutch logistics offices, showing that interactions between Dutch workers and Polish truck drivers rely on routine scripts and creative multimodal strategies. Scholars, such as Widianti (2021) and Yuan (2009), emphasize the significant impact of cultural values on communication dynamics within a diverse workforce. For example, Widianti (2021) showed that Japanese employees developed distinct communication patterns in a multilingual workplace, influenced by Japanese cultural values emphasizing disciplined behavior and politeness. The close connection between language competence and the formulation of specific communication strategies was also explored (e.g., Franziskus & Gilles, 2012; Kubota, 2015; Pham, 2022). Franziskus and Gilles (2012) revealed that international employees employed interactional strategies by relying on their first languages to communicate with each other, and in cases of lower competence in foreign languages, they resorted to using 'foreigner talk.'

The cultivation of communicative repertoire within a multilingual environment involves diverse forms of multilingual interactions. These interactions encompass various descriptive terms, such as flexible bilingualism, translanguaging, crossing, and truncated language use (Rymes, 2014). In particular, Creese and Blackledge (2011) argued that two contradictory constructions of bilingualism, language separation and a flexible approach to bilingualism, coexist and are performed alongside each other. They introduce the term flexible bilingualism, emphasizing the significance of individual agency in language use. Canagarajah (2013), Du and Zhou (2022), Jonsson and Blåsjö (2020), and Räisänen (2018) place their emphasis on translingual practices in relation to the repertoires of professionals working on a global scale. For instance, Räisänen (2018) illustrates that professional communicative repertoires are manifested through dynamic and flexible translingual practices, where individuals combine and shift between languages and ways of speaking to foster relationships and effectively perform their jobs, and translanguaging emerges as a potential solution to overcome miscommunication. van der Worp et al. (2017) approach the issue from a multilingualism perspective, demonstrating that the use of multiple languages

plays a significant role in international companies concerning professionals' competences and attitudes. On the contrary, there have also been studies underscoring the significance of using specific languages in multilingual workplaces, such as the language of the host country (e.g., Du-Babcock & Babcock, 1996; Selmer & Lauring, 2015; Wilczewski, 2019) or English as a lingua franca (e.g., Hodges & Seawright, 2023; Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2023). For example, Hodges and Seawright (2023) demonstrated that participants made deliberate choices about using English terms in their communication within the multilingual workplace and highlighted the intricate role played by English as a lingua franca in workplace communication.

Comprehending the development of communicative repertoires is a complex endeavor, stemming not only from its diverse forms but also its intimate interconnection with identity development. Cui (2015) and Starks and Nicholas (2022) emphasized communicative repertoires from the perspective of individual identity development. Cui (2015) investigated the personal identity and interpersonal relationships of Chinese immigrant professionals working in Australia and engaging in small talk with Australian colleagues. Starks and Nicholas (2022) analyzed personal narratives of a Vietnamese English teacher who studied in Australia, exploring his past experiences in Australia and reflections on his identity after returning to the home country. The study found that the participant, through the long-term effects of his study-abroad experience, gained control over communicative features and established a new identity as an Australian-trained English teacher, building upon existing identities. As Riley (2007) asserts that identity is socially constructed, indicating that our sense of self only emerges through our engagement in communicative interactions with others, these studies showed that the development of individuals' communicative repertoires in a multilingual and multicultural environment is intricately intertwined with their identity development.

Nevertheless, there has been limited attention given to understanding how expatriate employees, while navigating different languages in a multilingual workplace environment, develop their communicative repertoires and shape their identities. Even previous studies (e.g., Cui, 2015; Shah & Barker, 2017; van der Worp et al., 2017) have limitations in fully unraveling the dynamics and complexity of this issue as they primarily focused on specific aspects of participant's communication experiences. Through an in-depth investigation, therefore, this study endeavors to deepen our understanding of the intricate relationship between language use, multilingual interactions, and identity development within the specific context of expatriate employment.

III. METHODS

1. Participant and Setting

This study was conducted within a global automobile manufacturer situated in the US, with its headquarters based in Japan. The company has an extensive network of subsidiaries and branches globally and operates multiple plants across the US. It regularly dispatches many Japanese employees on international assignments to various locations within the US, where these selected individuals are required to live and work in the US for five years. The study was carried out at a plant located in a state in the Mideast, encompassing a diverse workforce that includes native American citizens, American-born employees from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as well as immigrants.

The selection of research participants was based on four criteria established by the researcher to achieve the objectives of a larger research project focused on the communication practices and sociocultural transitions of Japanese expatriate employees, from which the study's data were derived[1]: 1) an individual with moderate English oral proficiency capable of communicating to some extent with coworkers; 2) an individual without any prior history of being dispatched to other overseas branches; 3) an individual who has worked in the US for under three years; and 4) an individual presently attending or recently enrolled in workplace-provided English classes.

Given the impracticality of personally visiting all the workplaces across the US and meeting numerous expatriates to identify potential research participants, collaboration with company stakeholders was essential. From a pool of many Japanese expatriate employees meeting the initial criteria for case selection, the administrator proposed six candidates based on the following criteria: 1) the flexibility of the employee's work schedule to accommodate participation in the study over the next six months; 2) the proximity of the plant where the employee works, ensuring it is within a reasonable driving distance; 3) the accessibility of the plant where the employee works, in terms of permitting visitors; and 4) the willingness of the employee to participate in the study.

Of the three participants ultimately selected for the larger research project, the current study particularly centered on Juno (pseudonym), a Japanese male employee who was the most recent to join the workplace in the US. The rationale behind this focus was the belief that Juno's experiences could offer valuable insights into the development of communicative repertoires for expatriates who had recently joined the new work environment, whereas the other two employees, nearly three and two years of work experience in the US, respectively,

[1] The data were extracted from the author's doctoral dissertation and analyzed for the purposes of the present study.

were less likely to shed light on the developmental process of communicative repertoires for newcomers. Juno, a Japanese native speaker in his mid-30s, had an 11-year work history in Japan before joining the US workplace. At the time of data collection, he had been working in the US for six months. Prior to his assignment as an expatriate employee in the US, he had no experience living or working abroad and had pre-intermediate English proficiency, which limited his ability to communicate effectively at work.

2. Data Collection

Data collection for this study spanned six months and encompassed multiple sources, including interviews, observations, audio recordings, field notes, and clarification emails. I conducted field observations by visiting the cafeteria, where Juno would regularly have lunch with a group of teammates at a spacious table. When conducting observations, I adopted an observer-as-participant approach (Merriam, 2009), making my role known to the group and interacting with focal participants and coworkers when necessary, such as helping them feel at ease or clarifying specific communication situations. During the research period, nine observations were carried out during lunch breaks, each lasting between 30 to 50 minutes. Handwritten field notes were recorded during these observations and subsequently transcribed into a Word file within a maximum of two days after each observation. In total, these processes generated 24 pages of documented field notes. Additionally, two semi-structured interviews, each lasting between 40 minutes and an hour, were conducted: one at the beginning and the other at the end of the research, resulting in a total of 14 pages of transcripts. The participant's responses and communication in both interviews and observations were captured through audio recordings and subsequently transcribed verbatim. In certain instances, clarification questions were sent via email on the same day as the observations with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of specific behaviors or remarks made by the participant. Due to practical challenges in conducting immediate clarification interviews with the participant after lunch or break, emails served as a method to gather supplementary information. Three emails containing specific questions about observed communication situations were sent to the focal participant, and his responses were incorporated into the datasets for this study. One example question was about Kate, whom I saw in the lunch group for the first time: "What is your relationship like with Kate in the workplace? For instance, how long have you been working together with her in the same team? When do you usually talk with her, and how often do you have lunch with her?"

3. Data Analysis

The data analysis process in the study aligns with the interpretive qualitative research paradigm and grounded theory. This approach allows researchers to initiate data analysis with individual cases or experiences and progressively develop more conceptual categories and theories to synthesize the data, revealing patterned relationships within it (Charmaz, 1995). The present case study employed thematic analysis, which refers to a process of encoding qualitative data requiring a systematic identification and analysis of themes in the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Additionally, it conducted constant comparative analysis, aiming to compare each unit of information with the subsequent one to identify and scrutinize recurring regularities in the data (Merriam, 2009).

Following Merriam (2009), the analysis began with a thorough review of the transcripts from the initial interview and observation along with its accompanying field note. While going through the transcripts and field notes, I documented comments or notes that appeared potentially relevant to address my research questions. This process of open coding enables the researcher to identify distinct concepts and themes for subsequent categorization (Williams & Moser, 2019). After completing the open coding of the entire transcripts, I proceeded with axial coding, a process involving grouping related open codes together (Merriam, 2009). I revisited the codes and grouped those that were conceptually connected to construct categories. Through this axial coding process, three categories that shed light on various aspects of international employees' communicative repertories in the workplace were developed: Construction of unique communicative patterns, Critical awareness of the importance of English, and Intentional segregation of languages. Table 1 illustrates the categories derived from the open and axial coding processes.

TABLE 1
Axial Coding Developed from Open Coding

Open coding		Axial coding	
Code 1:	Participating in conversations upon a coworker's invitation due to communication difficulties	Category 1:	Construction of unique communicative patterns
Code 2:	Preferring communicating with a nearby coworker based on Japanese cultural values		
Code 3:	Demonstrating a lack of willingness to engage in communication		
Code 4:	Making an effort to use only in English for workplace interactions	Category 2:	Critical awareness of the importance of English
Code 5:	Acknowledging the importance of using English for communication with coworkers		
Code 6:	Recognizing the company's stance on English language use in the workplace		

Code 7:	Switching languages when communicating, based on the interlocutor	Category 3:	Intentional segregation of languages
Code 8:	Developing professional identity by using different languages depending on the interlocutor		

4. Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure the study's trustworthiness and validity, three key strategies were utilized: triangulation of data sources, clarification emails, and the use of a computer-assisted tool. Triangulation of data serves to enhance the validity of a qualitative case study as "multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" (Yin, 2009, p. 116), subsequently minimizing the potential for misinterpretation of the phenomenon (Stake, 2000). By gathering data from various sources, the study was able to present more convincing and accurate findings. Additionally, the use of clarification emails to understand the meanings behind the participant's observed behaviors or utterances during field observations played a crucial role in mitigating researcher bias and enhancing the trustworthiness of the interpretations and analysis of the observation data. Lastly, as highlighted by Merriam (2009) and Spencer et al. (2013), systematically and consistently managing large datasets and closely examining data through Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) enhances a study's rigor and consistency. The use of NVivo software, a popular CAQDAS tool that allows researchers to analyze qualitative data in a systematic way and visualize relationships among codes and themes, contributed to improving the consistency of the study by enhancing data interpretation (Spencer et al., 2013).

IV. FINDINGS

1. Construction of Unique Communicative Patterns

In accordance with Rymes' (2010, 2014) assertion that individuals communicate meanings by using diverse means, Juno cultivated a range of communication repertoires, encompassing both verbal and nonverbal dimensions, as he engaged in workplace interactions. During lunch and break times with his non-Japanese coworkers, Juno participated in conversations in response to his coworkers' invitations to join the conversation. The following Excerpt 1 illustrates the communication pattern where Juno's coworkers initiated conversations with him (Line 4, 13) after conversing with each other,

and Juno readily participated in the communication.

Excerpt 1

1	(Ron and Jeremy are talking to each other)	
2	Ron:	Are you doing anything this weekend? Nothing good?
3	Jeremy:	Nothing good. Just hanging out with friends on Saturday.
4	Ron:	(Looking at Juno) Are you doing anything this weekend?
5	Juno:	Yes, I have a plan to go to Chicago.
6	Ron:	Chicago? Oh, how many days?
7	Juno:	Three days.
8	Ron:	Leaving tomorrow?
9	Juno:	Uh.. on Monday.
10	Jeremy:	Nice.
11	(Some more talks about Juno's plan in Chicago are followed, and then Ron	
12	and Jeremy are talking to each other about lunch menu)	
13	Jeremy:	(Looking at Juno) So Chicago, you know Michigan Avenue?
14	Juno:	Michigan?
15	Jeremy:	Lake Michigan St, maybe. [These is] a Japanese restaurant,
16		Ron of Japan.
17	Juno:	Ron of Japan?

This communication repertoire was developed as a response to the communication challenge Juno faced when attempting to seamlessly join or intervene in his coworkers' ongoing conversations. Regarding this issue, Juno expressed, "when US associates talk to each other, it's difficult to understand. So, … I don't know 60% or 70%, I cannot understand." He added further remarks:

> [When I don't understand what non-Japanese coworkers say], I concentrate [on] having lunch or [using my] smartphone. [I can join their talk again] if they request. Normally, I don't try to join [because it is] difficult to join for me.

Another recurring communication pattern observed in Juno was his inclination to engage in conversations primarily with the person sitting beside him at the lunch table. Juno himself explained this behavior, stating, "in Japan, [we] don't talk loudly over the table. Sometimes that's trouble," This suggests that Juno's communicative pattern in the workplace reflects his sociocultural background, which places importance on not speaking loudly across the dining table in Japan and led him to choose not to actively participate in conversations occurring

among other coworkers. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Mak and Chui (2013), which suggests that engagement in small talk within the workplace is intricately connected with specific cultural norms and values. Interestingly, Juno's tendency to participate in conversations when invited by his coworkers, as described earlier, is also linked to this communicative pattern as he became more willing to engage across the table in situations where he was invited to join conversations.

Juno displayed yet another distinctive communication pattern, occasionally opting to concentrate exclusively on his lunch while engrossed in his smartphone, rather than participating in conversation with his non-Japanese coworkers. He employed this particular communication strategy to clearly communicate his disinterest in engaging in conversations with them. In his own words:

> Sometimes, I [feel] tired to talk in English. For example, before lunch, we had lunch meeting [in English]. [So after the meeting], sometimes I feel tired and I want to have rest by myself. Not talking in English. […] Sometimes I want to talk, [but] it depends on the day. […] [Instead talking in English], I concentrate having lunch or smartphone use.

This case highlights that Juno's personal decision regarding whether to participate in workplace communication was an integral part of his communicative repertoire. His use of a smartphone as a nonverbal communicative cue effectively signaled his lack of willingness to participate in conversations.

2. Critical Awareness of the Importance of English

Juno's communication experience in the workplace led him to be aware of the inherent imbalance in the importance placed on English compared to Japanese. Because of having spent a short period of time living and working in the US, Juno's English proficiency was low, causing him difficulties in both understanding and communicating effectively with his non-Japanese coworkers in English. Nevertheless, unlike other Japanese employees who often used Japanese words or expressions when facing difficulties in English communication with non-Japanese coworkers, considering the latter's familiarity with basic Japanese terms and their occasional use of Japanese vocabulary, Juno made a conscious effort to use only English when interacting with the coworkers at the workplace. Regarding this, he stated that English is important to be recognized as a member of the workplace and "[although this is a Japanese company] I think.. sometimes I feel separated a little bit.. [because] they are speaking English." In accordance with prior research on expatriate employees (e.g., Du-Babcock & Babcock, 1996; Selmer & Lauring, 2015; Wilczewski, 2019), this finding

underscores the importance of host language communication as it not only enabled employees to foster and sustain interactions with their colleagues but also contributed to their overall adaptability in the workplace.

However, this finding diverges from the discussions presented by Du-Babcock and Babcock (1996) and Peltokorpi (2010), who categorize expatriates into three distinct zones based on their proficiency in the host country's language. According to these studies, expatriates with insufficient host country language skills often rely on language intermediaries, such as bilingual or multilingual managers, to convey complex messages to local employees. In contrast, even though Juno had limited proficiency in English, he consistently endeavored to communicate with his non-Japanese colleagues in English, without the assistance of intermediaries for transferring him between Japanese and English and refraining from utilizing any Japanese vocabulary. This implies that Juno likely took proactive steps to employ English in his interactions with his non-Japanese coworkers, acknowledging its significance in membership development within the workplace.

Furthermore, during the second interview, I asked him about his perspective on whether non-Japanese coworkers should learn Japanese to enhance communication effectiveness among them, and he replied, "I don't think so. Almost nothing." These practices illustrate his development of a communicative repertoire, in which he deliberately restricted the usage of Japanese words to enrich his involvement in workplace interactions and he gained an increased awareness of the emphasis on English that played a pivotal role in delineating the boundaries of membership within the workplace.

This finding presents a contrast to Kubota's (2015) study, which indicated that Japanese expatriates working in China predominantly used Japanese as their primary language for communication with both local employees and clients, occasionally incorporating Mandarin, the host country's language, to varying extents. In Juno's case, however, English, the host language, was his primary choice for communication with his coworkers. This finding underscores the significant influence of the company's language approach on Juno's communication repertoire, which predominantly favored the use of English in the workplace. Juno reflected on this by stating, "it is (would be) better for them to learn Japanese. But they don't. The company says the common language [within the workplace] is English. [It is the] company's direction. I cannot change [it]." As Ansah (2014) demonstrates that language policies of multilingual communities play essential roles in determining language spoken in some speech domains, Juno's account also suggests that the company's stance on language usage significantly influenced his perspective on the importance of English within the workplace context.

3. Intentional Segregation of Languages

Recognizing the significant role of English in workplace communication, Juno adeptly navigated his language usage based on his interlocutors. During lunchtime conversations with coworkers, he consistently maintained his practice of using English when interacting with non-Japanese coworkers or participating in mixed-group conversations. Conversely, he exclusively employed Japanese when communicating with his Japanese coworkers. For instance, when Juno joined his team members at lunch with Ken, who recently moved to the workplace from Japan, he exclusively spoke English to communicate with coworkers in the mixed group, but shifted to Japanese when conversing solely with Ken (Line 11 and 21 in the following excerpt). Excerpt 2 showcases Juno's communicative repertoire that intentionally segregates the two languages depending on his conversational partners.

Excerpt 2

1	Juno:	He (Ken) plays baseball.
2	Harry:	Baseball?
3	Ken:	Yeah, I like.
4	Harry:	Many homeruns? You hit many homeruns, right? You have a
5		special bat for homeruns?
6	Mike:	Ha ha. Pine tar, pine tar!
7	Harry:	Yeah, magic bat.
8	Juno:	What is flying car?
9	Harry:	Pine tar, it is used to put on bats to make it like steeper and easy
10		homeruns.
11	Juno:	(Explaining baseball bats to Ken in Japanese)
12	Harry:	Maybe we can take him (Ken) to Dragons field and see how
13		many homeruns [he hits]. […] If you (Ken) are over fence, I will
14		give you 20, but if no make it over, then you give me 20. 100
15		pitches.
16	Juno:	Is it right now [the baseball] season?
17	Harry:	Yeah. Play off. (Talking to Ken) Do you know [Dayton
18		Dragons]?
19	Ken:	No.
20	Mike:	A major league team right now.
21	Juno:	(Talking to Ken about the Dayton Dragons in Japanese)

According to Rymes' (2014) concept of multilingualism in a communicative repertoire, it

seems that Juno's communication practices are more in line with a double monolingual perspective, positioning him as an individual who minimizes the interaction between two languages. However, Juno used the two languages as part of one larger communicative repertoire by moving between them depending on his interlocutors, rather than rigidly keeping them separate. Juno's decision to separate languages served a dual purpose: he aimed to foster a stronger sense of belonging within each language group while also shaping his professional identity within that specific environment. During the interview, he highlighted that engaging in English communication with his non-Japanese colleagues played a crucial role in enhancing his interactions across both informal and work-related contexts, fostering mutual understanding and unity within the team.

> Simply [English] communication is important for working together. […] [By having small talks during lunch breaks], coworkers are (became) very close and friendly [to me]. Lunch talking with them [is] very important for me to communicate with them. [Through the opportunities] during working, I can understand their personality, and they also can understand me. I have chances to know each other.

His subsequent account also demonstrates that language segregation contributed to shaping his professional identity. Engaging in English communication with coworkers led him to perceive himself as a part of the workplace, rather than merely as an international or expatriate employee. Furthermore, as exemplified in the earlier dialogue involving Juno, Ken, and their non-Japanese coworkers, Juno's practice of providing explanations in Japanese to assist newly arrived Japanese coworkers in their interactions with non-Japanese coworkers helped him establish his professional identity as a communication facilitator, mediating effective communication between these two groups.

> I think most important. English skill is [most] important not only [to] speak but also to tell my opinion [during meetings or discussions]. […] To express.. [English communication] made us considerate each other [while] spending many working time [together]. Some projects, we can understand each other [because] I think [my] English skills are better than before.

In this sense, he developed a distinctive multilingual communicative repertoire characterized by a flexible approach to bilingualism, as described by Creese and Blackledge (2011), where bilingual speakers selectively navigate their languages for different activities. They also stress individuals' navigation between languages by examining how they lived both separate and flexible positions simultaneously. This finding aligns with Dweik and Qawar (2015), who emphasize that multilingual individuals have the capacity to select

specific languages for specific purposes, and Hodges and Seawright (2023), who illustrated participants' appreciation for the multilingual workplace environment while also acknowledging the influence of English on their workplace. Furthermore, this finding also resonates with Duff's (2015) emphasis on the interplay between particular language and literacy practices and the construction and expression of identity within multilingual settings. However, Juno's development of a communicative repertoire primarily centered on using English exclusively to enrich his interactions and relationships with coworkers stands in contrast to the viewpoints presented by Räisänen (2018) and Jonsson and Blåsjö (2020); Räisänen (2018) demonstrated that a professional's translanguaging practices involving different languages, including the use of elements from the host language, played a significant role in overcoming miscommunication within the workplace. Similarly, Jonsson and Blåsjö (2020) highlighted that language competence is one of the essential factors influencing language choice, and the translingual nature of communication enables efficient and successful workplace communication.

V. DISCUSSION

This study sought to shed light on the communicative repertoires of an expatriate employee within the American workforce, exploring multilingualism in global work settings by examining how the employee develops communication practices in multilingual and multicultural workplaces. Regarding the first research question, which explores how expatriate employees navigate and adapt their communicative repertoires within a new multilingual American workplace, drawing on Rymes' (2010, 2014) insights that individuals convey meaning through various means, the expatriate employee developed a complex and dynamic communicative repertoire in multilingual and multicultural workplaces. This encompassed his willingness to engage in communication when invited by his coworkers, his inclination to initiate conversations with coworkers seated nearby, and his occasional decision to refrain from engaging in workplace conversations. These findings not only support but also expands earlier studies (e.g., Franziskus & Gilles, 2012; Widianti, 2021; Yuan, 2009) by offering more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of expatriate employees' communicative repertoires. They highlight that the verbal and nonverbal communicative repertoires are not only influenced by the host language competence and different cultural values but also significantly shaped by individuals' personal preferences.

Regarding the second research question, how the communicative repertoires of expatriate employees support or reshape existing literature on multilingual practices in global work environments, the study also provides meaningful insights. The discovery concerning Juno's reluctance to use Japanese words in workplace communication challenges the perspective

that places an emphasis on the significance of translingual and multilingual communicative practices. Previous research argues that translanguaging, involving the use of more than one language, plays a crucial role in facilitating effective and successful workplace communication (e.g., Du & Zhou, 2022; Jonsson & Blåsjö, 2020; Räisänen, 2018), and translingual dispositions are a more constructive human capital for knowledge workers worldwide (e.g., Canagarajah, 2013). The expatriate employee examined in the study had limited proficiency in English and encountered challenges in fully comprehending and engaging in workplace communication with coworkers, as discussed in previous studies (e.g., Peltokorpi, 2007; Wilczewski, 2019; Wilczewski et al., 2018; Zhang & Harzing, 2016; Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016). However, it is important to note that, contrary to Jonsson and Blåsjö (2020) who address the significance of language competence as a pivotal factor influencing language choice and use, the study demonstrates that the expatriate employee developed a specific repertoire of communication that exclusively relied on English for interactions with his coworkers, abstaining from employing Japanese words or expressions, despite facing limitations in English proficiency. This finding resonates with Hodges and Seawright (2023) and Roshid and Kankaanranta (2023) by emphasizing the intentional decisions made by employees regarding the use of English use in workplace communication. In addition, as previous literature highlights that individuals' communicative repertoires reflect their pathways of socialization and membership in various communities (e.g., Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Räisänen, 2013, 2018), the deliberate use of specific languages by international individuals plays a significant role in fostering and sustaining effective communicative interactions with colleagues, thereby solidifying their membership within the workplace.

Nonetheless, it is significant to refrain from categorizing the expatriate employee's predominant use of English as monolingual practices, given his adept navigation between the two languages in alignment with his specific communication needs and goals. His embrace of a flexible approach to bilingualism demonstrates that the communication practices of international individuals are primarily influenced by their specific communicative goals, such as strengthening a sense of belonging and projecting a professional identity, rather than their language proficiency. This finding is consistent with previous research, such as Creese and Blackledge (2011), which underscores the significance of individual agency in language use within multilingual contexts, and Coulmas (1997), Dweik and Qawar (2015), and Sadanand (1993), which emphasize the substantial relationship between the use of different languages and speakers' perceptions of each language's role and/or their specific communication needs and purposes. Furthermore, it is also essential to acknowledge that an organization's language policy or approach heightens individuals' awareness of the significance of using specific languages in their professional setting, ultimately shaping their unique communicative repertoires and language choices.

These findings offer valuable insights for multilingual and multicultural organizations aiming to enhance communication effectiveness. Recognizing that employees have the agency to adapt their communicative repertoires according to their goals and preferences and acknowledging the flexibility inherent in language use, organization should consider adopting more flexible language approaches that allow employees to choose the language(s) in which they are most comfortable when engaging in workplace communication. Such an approach holds the potential to cultivate inclusiveness among employees. Additionally, given the complexity and sensitivity associated with language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding in workplace communication, organizations offering comprehensive language and cross-cultural training programs can provide significant advantages for expatriate employees. Such programs can empower employees to expand their communicative repertoires, enabling them to have a wider range of communicative choices and navigate the intricacies of cross-cultural communication effectively. This, in turn, can enhance interactions with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, potentially improving their overall workplace experiences.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

While expatriate employees may appear passive in their communicative interactions with coworkers influenced by several factors, they also possess the ability to actively shape their communicative repertoires according to their preferences and objectives, even in situations where language limitations exist. The multifaceted nature of expatriate employees' communicative repertoires in multilingual workplaces highlights the importance of gaining a nuanced understanding of language use, individuals' agency, and the broader social context influencing the construction of their communication practices.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study's use of a qualitative case study approach, centered around a single participant, inherently presents a notable limitation due to the restricted participant pool. Additionally, field observations were confined to lunch or break times due to workplace confidentiality concerns, preventing the researcher from observing communication during formal working hours. Consequently, the researcher had to rely on the participant's accounts provided during interviews, potentially hindering a comprehensive understanding of the expatriate employee's workplace communication from the researcher's perspective.

To overcome these limitations, future research could benefit significantly from

incorporating multiple participants from diverse multilingual work environments. This approach would broaden the study's scope and enrich the depth of research findings, offering a more comprehensive perspective on workplace communication dynamics. Furthermore, incorporating a more ethnographic approach, encompassing long-term observations of expatriate employees' authentic communication during working hours, would significantly enhance the study's findings by offering a more holistic picture of their communicative interactions. In addition, since this study primarily focuses on expatriate employees' verbal communication, including an analysis of their non-verbal cues could yield deeper insights.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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