

Virtual Teams and Development: A Language Games Perspective.

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Abstract

Communication and language are important in international negotiations and even more so when these negotiations are conducted in virtual settings. This paper investigates discourse in virtual teams comprised of international civil servants who interact online to negotiate terms on an agreement concerning terrorism. As these discussions took place shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, they represent negotiations between officials representing countries with roles to play in addressing this global problem. Following an exploratory analysis of these online interactions, this paper provides insight into the language games that relate to the roles played in negotiating actions against terrorism. The contribution of this paper lies in the identification of the language games that take place in virtual teams and how these enable aspects of development to be addressed.

1. Introduction

Research in virtual teamwork has provided a wealth of insights into the ways in which virtual teams work. This concept has been developed through many years of research in how people use various collaborative technologies to achieve their tasks and objectives [51], [44]. It appears that the use of collaborative technologies to support organizational processes has the potential to increase productivity in organizations [34], [53]. [29].

Moreover, there is a sense that the virtual organizing has opened up opportunities for development by increasing opportunities for self advancement and in participation in governance and politics [39], [24]. The concept of development is seen to be the attainment of human freedoms through empowerment, social inclusion and civic engagement through participation in public life [54], [60], [39]. Social development activities are designed to raise living standards, increase local participation in development and address the needs of vulnerable and oppressed groups [36], [4]. There is a sense that the internet has opened up opportunities for development by increasing opportunities for self advancement and

in participation in governance and politics [39], [24]. This suggests that an understanding of how people interact online can enable participants from the less empowered nations to have a say in a process that is dominated by people from countries that have a strong national identity. This paper investigates virtual teams in which international negotiations on terrorism take place in order to arrive at an agreement to be signed by representatives of member countries.

Communication is key in organizations [62], [41], [8], and it is even more central in virtual contexts where language is the main locus. We adopt such a view in this paper and adapt the concept of language game [63] as it allows us to analyze the communicative practices of the participants who interact electronically. Language games are indeed more than patterns of language use; they are “forms of life” [63], i.e. they include linguistic interactions, but also activities, social interactions. This paper investigates virtual teams in which international negotiations on terrorism take place in order to arrive at an agreement to be signed by representatives of member countries. The question it investigates is how can virtual teams enable development to take place through empowerment? Following an investigation of language games that take place in the virtual teams, this paper provides insight into the language games that take place in virtual teams and how these enable aspects of development to be addressed.

2. Theoretical Background

The concept of development in social science explores how reality is constituted in the development process [4]. The social development perspective enables a broader understanding of development to be achieved by enabling people to take their lives into their own hands [4], [10], [59]. According to Sen [54] human freedoms should be at the heart of development efforts. He suggests that empowering people to achieve their potential, be autonomous in their decision making and be free from encroachment are the three tenets of human development. It appears that access and the use of the internet to support virtual teams has the potential

to enable human development by empowering people who are able to interact in the social spaces. This ability to take control of their lives is considered self-efficacy in the literature on empowerment [6], [27], [13]. This suggests that by enabling people from dispersed parts of the world to access knowledge and skills necessary to carry out complex tasks, virtual teams foster processes of learning. In particular negotiations carried out across geographical and political boundaries entail discourse on a number of levels through which participants engage in exchanges of divergent perspectives. This process of learning occurs in formal as well as informal discourse and brings about the creation of shared understandings through which development objectives can be attained. In this paper the development objectives attained include participation by stakeholders in the process of negotiating an agreement on terrorism.

When stakeholders interact, they enter into a learning process. Learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it occurs (i.e., it is situated) [32], [33]. Learning in that sense is always situated and social interactions are a critical component in this process -- It is not so much that learners acquire structures or models to understand the world, but become involved in a "community of practice" which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired [33]. It has also been shown that participants in communities of knowing experience change in their behaviors. As they acquire new knowledge, and ways of doing things they may take on different roles [11]. As defined by Orlikowski, practice is the "recurrent, materially bounded and situated action engaged in by members of the community" ([42]: 256).

Hence, a situated approach allows for specific attention to processes of actions and interactions, to their social and technological context, as well as to the meaning of these processes to community participants. In order to understand better negotiation processes among policy makers and decision makers involved in discussions relating to international concerns/issues that are global, we need to take a situated approach. In this paper, we use the notion of language games [64] to frame our analysis, as it offers a situated perspective [19] and therefore allows us to provide a rich description of the learning practices and negotiation processes in which the participants are engaged. The language game perspective enables learning from a situated perspective to be investigated.

Investigating the language games that take place in virtual teams allows us to uncover the communication patterns that enable actions to be taken as a result of negotiations. In particular, when

addressing development objectives using virtual teams, these language games provides insight into how certain development objectives can be achieved. In virtual settings, language is the main locus, and communication the main activity. It follows that the organizational understanding of these venues lies within their discourse. Language games offer a framework focusing on the discourse of the participants. Yet, they also provide a means to take into account the situatedness of the interactions. Indeed, language games are "forms of life" [63] and are deeply embedded in the social and physical context. Indeed, "language games in forms of life are the basis for all we know. Through action within communities of knowing we make and remake both our language and our knowledge" ([9], p. 353). Therefore, the language game framework offers a situated approach, which describes communication as inherently situated in the context of our communities. Participants in a community develop routines of speech and through their constant alignment define their rules of engagement and thus the actions they take. They are important for us to understand as they form the basis for how information is shared and interpreted within a group [5]. They provide a powerful lens of analysis to observe and understand how people interact, learn and develop social structures. Through discourse analysis, it provides us with a means for analyzing the interactions of the participants, and focusing on the social interactions developed by the participants.

3. Research Approach

According to Klein and Myers [28] Information Systems (IS) research can be classified as interpretive if it is assumed that our knowledge of reality is gained through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artifacts. Interpretive methods of research in IS are "aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the information system, and the process whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context" [58]. This research follows an interpretive approach in which grounded theory is used for the discovery of theory from data systematically gathered and analyzed from the research process [25], [55]. Within this approach, theory is discovered first, through conceptual categories and their conceptual properties; and second, through hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and their properties [25].

Theory can be further refined through a process of disciplined imagination or "sense making" [61]. This is a process of collective sense-making about what people have been doing, what they might want to do in the future, including how they might want to do it [26]. Our analysis consisted of three phases. The first phase

consisted of multiple readings of the complete text of the 747 messages that composed the transcripts. Three major categories - roles, emotions and collective identity - emerged from our reading. In a second phase, these categories were coded by two research assistants. The two research assistants and the authors had several meetings to refine the definitions of the categories. In a third phase, we went back to the transcripts and did an in-depth analysis of several interactions based on the results of the coding.

Our data comprises of logs and transcripts of interactions among diplomats who have served in the capacity of ambassadors, negotiators and/or civil servants. They were invited to workshops conducted in Malta by the international affairs academy sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The data for this analysis comprises 747 lines of interaction in a set of transcripts that relates to discussions on global terrorism and how these threats can be addressed. The aim was to simulate the protocols of the United Nations General Assembly which entails structured processes of negotiation, and voting that lead to documents describing resolutions agreed upon by representatives of the participating countries.

The technology used by the participants was a synchronous chat function with X-Links to members who were not online but could receive email messages as to the progress of the discussions. This electronic meeting software was seen to embody structures for international negotiation by simulating discussions at the United Nations General Assembly. Two types of discussions took place in this electronic forum: the first were informal discussions relating the topic of terrorism, its causes and possible ways of addressing these; the second set of discussions were formal and participants logged on as a particular country they were representing and argued from their respect country's position.

The participants conducted discussions on Terrorism and were expected to arrive at a consensus as to what they understood to be Terrorism and then arrive at a resolution on terrorism. As these discussions took place shortly after September 11th 2001, the process and format of the discussions took place in parallel to the UN General Assembly's session on Global Terrorism. The process was conducted as follows:

27th September - Informal preparatory discussions on content. Participants ensure that they have certain positions representative of certain countries.

3rd Oct - Address to the UN General Assembly by the Secretary General on Terrorism. Formal sessions of this workshop begin. Participants

in this study take on the countries' positions in the UN General Assembly. Purpose is to arrive at definition of terrorism.

16th Oct - Participants discuss different kinds of aspects of terrorism - give own views and examples. End formal sessions and debrief with informal discussion.

End deliverable - Resolution on Terrorism

The participants of both sets of discussions comprised of diplomats representing their country's political interests. Some of these diplomats served in the capacity of international civil servants to help solve a country's problem. There were two professors who served as experts on subject areas under discussion and a moderator who organized the workshop and was responsible for ensuring that the resolutions required from this group were produced in the form of official documents. The negotiation processes took place among these policy makers to address concerns relating to global terrorism. While the main aim was to simulate a general assembly of the United Nations, before and after the simulation of the assembly, participants interacted and exchanged ideas electronically. These interactions before and after the simulation were informal, similar to discussions people would have in the corridor of the UN. We call these interactions, "the informal interactions". The interactions taking place during the simulation are what we call the "formal interactions".

4. Results and Analysis

The results in this section illustrate how development takes place through situated learning in virtual teams. In this paper development is seen to be the processes of empowering people to achieve their potential. The technology supports the negotiation process by enabling participants to communicate with each other. These interactions between human beings and the technology iteratively shape each other to bring about emerging patterns of collaborative technology use [14]. These emerging patterns of collaborative technology use take place within social structures found in institutions such as hierarchies, organizational knowledge, and standard operating procedures. DeSanctis and Scott Poole [14] suggest that some of these structures are incorporated in the technology by designers for possible use in interpersonal interaction (i.e. rules represented by voting procedures and resources by stored data). As these structures are brought into interaction, they are instantiated in social life. There is a recursive relationship between technology and action each iteratively shaping the other. Giddens [23] explains that the social systems in which structure is recursively implicated comprise the situated activities of human

agents, reproduced across space and time. Interactions on electronic spaces bring about social structures that are reproduced across space and time.

As participants become more comfortable with the electronic space and shape their discourse, the process of empowerment takes place. Also referred to as self-efficacy, empowerment takes place through the situated practices of participants. Originally our discourse analysis was focused on the formal sessions (which aimed to produce the final output of the workshop) and we were expecting to see patterns of interactions that will enable us to map the different negotiations practices that take place in the discussion on terrorism. The first finding was that the participants in the workshop enacted two different learning language games, that we will call the formal and the informal language games. Although this finding is supported by other studies on the importance of informal interactions [3], [43], [20], especially in virtual contexts [31] we were not expecting such a noticeable distinction, especially as there were very little variations between the linguistic practices (see table 1).

Table 1: Linguistic Practices

Dimension	Indicators	Codes	Informal	Formal	Total
Message structure	long, short, interrupt, polite, impolite, structured	Long	29	18	47
		Short	39	17	56
		Polite	7	41	48
		long, polite	1	7	8
		Short, polite	2	11	13
Paralinguistic features	all caps, punctuation (such as !!!), informal, formal, emoticons	Emoticons	2	2	4
		punctuation (!!!)	1	0	1
		Caps	1	0	1
		Total	82	96	178

The only significant differences in the linguistic practices were in the message structure. The formal discussions were very polite 41 occurrences in the formal sessions and on 7 in the informal sessions. There was also a greater variation in the length of sentences in the informal discussions. However, as highlighted above, the strength of the language game approach is to not only include linguistic practices, but to include - as “forms of life” - activities, roles, emotions etc. Therefore by observing variations in roles and in the expression of emotions, we found variations indicating the enactment of two language games - that we will call the formal and the informal language games.

The following sections further illustrate the results and provide an analysis of how different language games bring about empowered negotiations. In both cases, they took on roles, enacted linguistic practices, using the material context and engaging in learning activities. Although both language games can be defined as language games of learning (Participants share information and ideas; they solve problems, debate issues, and attempt to establish the legitimacy of their claims; they enter in conflicts and solve them) they varied in terms of the roles participants took on, the references (or absence of reference) to collective identity and emotions, and the types of learning activities performed (e.g. information seeking vs. information providing; challenging vs. explaining vs. asking questions vs. interpreting). In the section below, we will describe in details the enactment of these language games.

5. Enactment of Language Games

While engaged in the informal language games, participants log in as individuals, and they take different roles. Apart from the formal role of the moderator, some participants facilitate discussions (JV the facilitator does it often, but he is not the only one) and some play the role of experts. In the informal language game, there is no chairman and people log in as "individuals". Interactions are distributed quite evenly among the participants who express emotions, and often refer to a shared collective identity. In the formal language game, people take on formal roles – they log on either as chairman or countries- they rarely express emotions and barely refer to a collective identity. By enacting these two different language games, they engage in different learning activities - to ask questions, give opinions and explain topics of discussion. Although the two language games are distinct, they are complementary: the informal language game is the one developed in the hallways of the United Nations, which allows effective negotiations in the formal meetings. This illustrates how participants appropriate technology to support different types of interactions and how both types of interactions need to be supported to empower participants. In this way participants are empowered by being able to take control of their own communication and work practices.

5.1 Roles

While no formal roles are assigned to participants when carrying out negotiations to arrive at resolutions for the Commonwealth Secretariat on Terrorism, we observe variations in the roles taken on by participants during the formal and informal sessions. In the formal context,

roles are clearly defined: a chairman and country representatives.

The Chairman asks for various comments to be used towards a UN declaration on terrorism and is active in both sessions. He both moderates and facilitates the discussion. As a moderator, he reminds the rules of the formal negotiation and makes sure that the steps are followed. For example, the Chairman will ask “DD of the USA, Have you completed your intervention?” Country representatives also ask him the floor. E.g. Caricom and Finland ask one after the other “May I have the floor please” and the Chairman replies: “DD of Caricom has the floor. Finland will follow.” As a facilitator, he asks questions, summarizes the discussion and moves this forward, e.g. “THANK YOU DD OF RUSSIA FOR YOUR INTERVENTION WITH WHICH WE CAN CLOSE THIS SESSION. MESSAGE IS CLEAR - WE HAVE TO ACT AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. TIME IS NOT ON OUR SIDE.” The chairman role is taken on by a participant who is a professor - “Prof Kaplan” - very active in the informal sessions.

In the formal sessions, there is also a third type of participant, who is neither the Chairman nor the countries representatives: JV the organizer of the forum, who logs under his name – even in formal sessions. While he takes on a facilitator and moderator role in informal sessions, in formal sessions he only facilitates the discussion, as the Chairman is moderating. The following transcript illustrates the moderator role of the Chairman and JV’s facilitating role.

Transcript 1: Chairing and Facilitation

<chairman> THANK YOU DD OF FINLAND
 <JV> COMMENT - UNOFFICIAL - realistic intervention from Finland. One can expect differences between the USA and EU on the question of the international court of justice.
 <USA> Can I have the floor please
 < JV > while there will be general consensus USA-EU-RUSSIA-CHINA there will be differences on the mechanisms/implementation (including ICJ)
 <chairman> DD OF USA HAS THE FLOOR

In this excerpt, JV facilitates but in a provocative tone - which in fact is his tone in most of his comments in the formal sessions. The note “COMMENT – UNOFFICIAL” at the beginning of JV’s first intervention highlights his role of the “devils advocate”. This allows him to provide provocative or challenging remarks that other

participants cannot make because of the “formal rules” of the session. Yet, his facilitating role is specific as he is mostly provocative. In informal sessions, JV (as the organizer) also performs the moderator role. As illustrated in the Transcript 2, as soon as the formal session ends, JC starts moderating.

Transcript 2: Moderation

<chairman> THANK YOU DD OF FINLAND.
 <chairman> WE WILL CLOSE TODAY'S SESSION. PLEASE CHECK YOUR E-MAIL WHERE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND ADDRESS FOR THE DRAFT TEXT ON WHICH YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO MAKE INTERVENTIONS TILL NEXT SESSION.
 <chairman> I WOULD LIKE TO CLOSE TODAY'S SESSION. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION.
 <USA> Jovan and Prof...Jamaica is normally mandated to represent CARICOM on such issues
 < JV > after sleepy start we made some progress. Let me just bring a few follow-up points:
 [...]
 < JV > - you will get address of the text where you should make hypertext interventions
 < JV > - I will send you more information on hot pursuit and you should indicate parts of the UN SC resolution that may contain openings for it in the context of terrorist campaign.
 < JV > - we should conclude negotiations next Thursday.
 < JV > - next thursday all delegations will be invited to make statements if they have not done it via hypertext

In informal sessions, JV also facilitates some of the discussion, but he shares the facilitating role with other participants. Indeed others also summarize, ask questions, and challenge. As participants log in as individuals, they have more freedom to perform these facilitating activities; they also can share their expertise, or be asked specific questions because of their knowledge. Several participants appear as, and are referred by others as experts. The interactions and discussions are more distributed in the informal context and in fact, most of the expertise is shared during the informal sessions.

In the formal negotiation process, the participants log in as the country they represent and take the official position of that country as it was being played out in the UN General Assembly. The geographic distribution of the participants logged in as representatives of each of the countries is described in the following table 3:

Table 3: Country representatives

Country	Frequency of Communication
USA	81
South Africa	11
Russia	11
Pakistan	1
Iran	8
Finland	8
Egypt	24
CARICOM	17
Canada	5

As can be seen in the above table, formal discussions were dominated by a few countries with the most at stake in this discussion. In particular, the USA dominated the discussions while Egypt and the Caribbean CARICOM states challenged and added to the discussions. In addition the Chairman's spoke 98 times and JV's 72 times. This dominance most apparent in the discussion relating to content and format of the communication. This is illustrated in the following transcript:

Transcript 2: Dominance in Simulated Negotiations

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<USA> therefore it is USA's best interest to assist its
neighbours that possess scarce resources in
fighting drug
<USA> JV I am in difficult position
<USA> very difficult
<JV> we will invite delegates to return to the
conference hall (after this short coffee
break).
<Finland> but if it will come worldwide can the USA
allow any one to enter us borders?
<chairman> DD, BEFORE THE COFFEE BREAK
WE DID NOT HAVE ANY
INTERVENTION. DO WE HAVE ANY
DELEGATE THAT WOULD LIKE TO
INTERVENE ON THE AGENDA ITEM
FOR TODAY'S SESSION?
<USA> Chairman USA would like the floor
<chairman> DD OF USA HAS THE FLOOR.
<USA> And comment that we agree with the present
structure
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The above transcript illustrates that although USA might talk often it is put in difficult situations, and challenged. The format of the formal negotiations followed the strict guidelines of the UN General Assembly where participants could only address each other through the chairman and the facilitator intervened as and when necessary to ensure that the participants remained on task. References to geographic regions by participants were made in the

informal negotiations as well. The USA was referenced 24 times while Israel, China, Russia, the Middle East were referenced about 3 to 4 times. Other countries that were referenced included Bosnia, Kosovo, Pakistan, India, Israel, Palestine, South Africa, Canada, Grenada, and the UK. Populations referred to included Arabs, Afghans, Israelis, Russians, Romanians, Yugoslavs, and Palestinians. This suggests that while the discussions appeared to be dominated by the USA, participation in the informal sessions included much wider range of countries.

5.2 Emotions

While analyzing the data, we uncovered how the participants related to each other and the topic of their discussions, express emotions. We therefore decided to code the data for expressions of emotions. The emotional experience was coded as any comments made in anger, frustration or even happiness. Codes for emotional experience were found in both the informal and formal sessions, but the frequency of expression of emotion were significantly more prevalent in the informal sessions. These are illustrated in the following table 4:

Table 4: Expression of Emotions

Codes	Informal	Formal	Total
Frustrated	7	3	10
Hopeful	3	0	3
Impatient	7	1	8
Happy	2	3	5
Surprised	1	0	1
self-protective	1	0	1
Angry	4	1	5
Upset	3	0	3
Total	28	8	36

Participants might express less emotions in the formal context, due to the nature of the setting itself and by their role; as a country representative, they might not feel allowed to express emotions, at least less than as an individual. The expression of emotions in the informal context before the simulation might serve as a catharsis, allowing participants to negotiate better.

5.3 Collective Identity

Routines of identity-related speech – such as use of collective language, reference to a professional collective, reference to a common geographic locale - reflect the coherence of the communities of which it is a part. Shared identity is known to bring many

advantages to a group process--lower attrition, reduced conflict, improved sense making, citizenship, commitment and control practices [21], [45]. Identity helps to create and preserve a “system of meaning” that binds people together [2]. Kogut & Zander [30] and Moreland and Levine [38] note that identification with a group can act as an intrinsic motivator for individuals to contribute and not free ride. Also, Blanchard and Markus [7] suggest a feeling of belonging is important in a virtual community.

Collective identity indicators were only identified in the informal part of the negotiation transcripts. One indicator we used was the use of collective language as it relates to the group and the use of pronouns such as we, our, and us. This indicator for collective identity was enacted in the informal sessions of the negotiations on terrorism. These resulted the use of "we" 27 times, "our" 6 times "us" 4 times and combinations of these 3 times. The second indicator for collective identity was references made to diplomatic activities such as comments relating to “the diplomats“, "the diplomatic community“. These references were only made in the informal negotiations. Of a total of 11 references for this indicator, the following codes were identified once: Diplomatic (NATO), Diplomatic (UN GA), and Diplomatic (UN coalition). The code for Diplomatic (UN) was identified 8 times.

The enactment of a collective identity during the informal discussions is an important difference between the informal and formal language games. Following Fayard and DeSanctis [19], we believe that the collective identity emerges from the enactment of the language game and can be considered as a product of the language game. This suggests that the enactment of a collective identity, of a “community of knowing” [9] is part of the learning process itself. Last, the development of a collective identity appeared to enable empowered negotiations in the formal negotiations. This is consistent with the development literature, which suggests that the use of Internet technologies, and in this case the use of collaboration technologies on the Internet, enable social inclusion and a greater participation in politics [60], [39]. According to Warschauer [60], social inclusion refers to the extent that individuals, families and communities are able to fully participate in society and control their own destinies.

6. Empowerment

The language game perspective enables variations between formal and informal negotiations to be uncovered. This provides a unique lens through to

analyze empowerment. The concept of empowerment has been used to describe power and control in organizations [27], [13]. Though popular in the psychology and management literature, this construct has been defined mainly in terms of self-efficacy and organizational communication and management practices [6], [27], [13]. In recent years this concept is being used to describe the participatory gains made in civic engagement from collaborating in cyberspace [39], [24], [48]. The shaping of structures by communicating electronically does bring about new patterns of use which may indeed empower participants to achieve gains in ways previously thought unattainable [14], [40], [42].

Our analysis suggests that although the US dominates policy in the formal discussions, it does not dominate the informal discussion. When US are mentioned in the informal discussion it is often in challenging or questioning the position of this country's representative. By developing their language game in the informal context, the participants enact a collective identity which is important for learning, and for bringing about a different understanding of the situations and the problems. The following transcript 4, illustrates a discussion involving the US in which other countries are included in the negotiations:

Transcript 4: Empowerment through Inclusion

<JV> If not let me explain briefly. It is one of the controversial issues in relations between Caribbean region and the USA.
 <Finland> hot pursuit
 <JV> KR, it is correct, but to add more..
 <CARICOM> Chairman, please for further explanation
 <JV> enforcement agencies (police, emigration police, etc.) are allowed to enter territory of other countries in search for indicted people..
 <JV> Celene, currently I am in capacity of "JV".
 Virtual world... Hot pursuit can be found in...
 <Finland> just in a hot pursuit
 <JV> bilateral agreements between Caribbean countries and the USA. The reason why I am bringing this issue is that it seems that..
 <JV> this SC resolution and other multilateral initiatives will move towards global implementation of the concept of a hot pursuit.
 <Finland> its very dangerous JV
 <JV> Since this issue provoked a lot of controversies in the Caribbean region (at least during the conferences I attended) I thought that...
 <USA> Celene 'Hot Pursuit' is similar to the 'Ship Rider' agreement which St. Vincent signed with the USA
 <JV> the view from the Caribbean view could be useful for global discussion.

<USA> It gives the USA permission to enter your waters in pursuit of drug smugglers and criminals
 <JV> thank you salas.
 <CARICOM> thanks too
 <USA> Some Caribbean countries thought it was arrogant and out of place and refused to sign it
 <USA> Barbados and Jamaica refused
 <JV> agree KR that it could be very dangerous and misused. <Finland> its against the principal of the UN charter (...)

In this example the US is talking a lot because it is under a lot of criticism not so much to impose its views. Representation appears to be an important requisite for empowerment. Blanchard and Markus (2004), who found that while support was an important part of the community, it was informational and not social (and emotional) support that was considered most important. The following transcript 5 illustrates how the negotiations will be effected if Egypt leaves the discussion.

Transcript 5: Empowerment through Representation

Egypt> Mr.Chairman, DD's may i be excused to withdraw from the session, please. due to my vast exposure in these sessions i have been requested to officiate at government high powered meeting on this topic . I apologise to the meeting.
 <Finland> Thanks you Chairman
 <Finland> the court here present the International community
 <CHAIRMAN> DD OF EGYPT, WHILE WE CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR SPECIFIC SITUATION WE CAN EXPRESS OUR CONCERN THAT VIEW OF EGYPT, AS CRUCIAL COUNTRY IN THE REGION, WON'T BE HEARD.

It appears that a diversity of knowledge and perspectives enable empowered negotiations to take place. This diversity adds value to learning in the form of socio-cognitive conflict. According to Doise and Mugny [17], learning takes place via a socio-cognitive conflict where ‘conflict’ does not refer to an argument or even a quarrel between some actors, instead ‘conflict’ is only to be understood as cognitive difference as it is recognized by actors. Hence participants develop language games that brought certain divergent views together. The use of phrases such as "I can understand your views" and "I see your point but I do not agree with you". This learning enabled participants to challenge each other

but also arrive at areas of agreement. The enactment of the informal language game involving learning empowered diplomats to participate and have their voices heard. This is consistent with Lave and Wenger's view that learning involves the construction of identities, knowing and an evolving form of social membership in a group.

7. Summary and Conclusions

This paper has investigated the language games of diplomats involved in the negotiation of a resolution on terrorism in informal and formal of online sessions. The informal sessions were free form discussions relating to the topics being addressed and demonstrated characteristics of an online community in which a strong collective identity emerged. The formal sessions involved a simulation of the United Nations General Assembly in which participants represented countries and followed strict protocol. The analysis has illustrated the language games that enable development to take place in virtual teams are those that enable empowerment based on inclusion and representation. It shows that while learning takes place in both types of sessions, it was the development of collective identity coupled with situated learning that empowered participants in the informal sessions. It has investigated the enactment of language games situated in the practice of negotiations. It was the reoccurring interactions on the online spaces that generated language games which empowered participants to challenge each other and prevent a country with a dominant identity to dominate the discussions. In the informal sessions the participants produced a collective identity explicitly (through expressions of identity) and implicitly (through a shared language game).

This has implications for how virtual teams can be set up to support international negotiations. Future research should investigate the language games uncovered in this research in other development contexts such as the distributed drafting of international agreements, resolutions and action plans involving multiple stakeholders representing different institutions and countries.

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