

Leading Across Languages: How Linguistic Diversity Moderates Leadership Impact in a Public Service Organization



Bernhard Lang and Markus Gmür

Keywords: multilingual leadership, linguistic proximity, servant leadership, transformational leadership, leadership role occupancy, quasi-experimental study

Anstract: This study examines how teams' linguistic proximity to their leader moderates the effects of servant and transformational leadership on leadership role occupancy in a multilingual public service context. Drawing on relational schema theory and inclusive leadership research, we conceptualize linguistic proximity as a continuous cognitive–relational mechanism that shapes leader–team interactions. Data were collected from 68 platoon leaders and 755 followers in the Swiss Army, surveyed across four time points, and linked to objective career records. Hierarchical regressions show that linguistic proximity predicts leadership-role occupancy above and beyond leadership style and motivation, and conditions the effects of a common leadership core and style-specific components. Servant leadership exhibits a dual-channel, near-universal pattern of effectiveness across linguistic contexts, whereas transformational leadership follows a linguistically contingent, compensation-based trajectory. These findings position language as a central relational

mechanism in multilingual leadership and underline the importance of linguistic alignment in leadership development within public-service institutions.

Führen über Sprachgrenzen hinweg: Wie sprachliche Vielfalt den Effekt von Führung in einer Public-Service-Organisation moderiert.

Zusammenfassung: Diese Studie untersucht, wie die sprachliche Nähe eines Teams zu seiner Führungskraft die Wirkungen von Servant Leadership und Transformational Leadership auf die Übernahme von Führungsrollen in einem mehrsprachigen Public-Service-Kontext moderiert. Auf Grundlage der Relational-Schema-Theorie und der Forschung zu inklusiver Führung konzeptualisieren wir sprachliche Nähe als einen kontinuierlichen kognitiv-relationalen Mechanismus, der die Interaktionen zwischen Führungskraft und Team prägt. Die Daten stammen von 68 Zugführern und 755 Angehörigen der Schweizer Armee, wurden über vier Messzeitpunkte hinweg erhoben und mit objektiven Karrieredaten verknüpft. Hierarchische Regressionen zeigen, dass sprachliche Nähe die Übernahme von Führungsrollen über Führungsstil und Motivation hinaus vorhersagt und sowohl die Effekte eines gemeinsamen Leadership-Kerns als auch die stilspezifischen Komponenten konditioniert. Servant Leadership weist dabei ein doppelkanaliges, nahezu universelles

Wirkmuster über sprachliche Kontexte hinweg auf, während Transformational Leadership einem sprachlich kontingenten, kompensatorischen Verlauf folgt. Die Ergebnisse positionieren Sprache als zentralen relationalen Mechanismus multilingualer Führung und unterstreichen die Bedeutung sprachlicher Passung für die Führungsentwicklung in öffentlichen Institutionen.

Stichwörter: mehrsprachige Führung, sprachliche Nähe, dienende Führung, transformationale Führung, Übernahme von Führungsrollen, quasi-experimentelle Studie

Introduction

Multilingual Leadership as a Relational Challenge

Leadership in multilingual contexts requires more than the application of universal leadership traits or culturally dominant prototypes, as commonly emphasized in cross-cultural leadership research (Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004; House et al., 2014). Multilingualism refers to the coexistence and use of multiple languages in organizations, across both formal and informal interactions. In such contexts, leaders and followers must continually navigate differences in values, expectations, and communicative styles. This relational complexity aligns with recent critiques in cultural research, which argue that contemporary workplaces are shaped not by single, nation-based cultural categories but by multiple, overlapping, and context-dependent cultural identities (Philipps & Sackmann, 2015; Sackmann & Phillips, 2004). Because these identities are enacted and negotiated through communication, language serves as a primary medium through which individuals express their belonging, interpret intentions, and manage relational boundaries. In multilingual teams, language therefore functions not only as a vehicle for information exchange but also as a salient socio-cultural cue that shapes interpersonal perceptions and leader–follower alignment (Henderson, 2005). Extending this perspective, research on multilingual teams demonstrates that language differences also give rise to emotional and relational dynamics, as language barriers can trigger anxiety, frustration, and interpersonal tensions among team members, thereby shaping interaction patterns and relational quality (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2015). Beyond these relational dynamics, emerging research highlights that language also plays an important role in shaping leadership effectiveness and team performance. Drawing on a micro-foundational perspective, studies show that managers' multilingual communication abilities enhance team performance by enabling more effective coordination, clearer communication, and stronger leadership influence, particularly in linguistically diverse settings (Szymanski et al., 2022). These dynamics are particularly consequential in public service organizations, where coordination, legitimacy, and sustained engagement depend on effective communication and shared understanding across diverse stakeholder groups. In such contexts, leaders and followers must continuously align expectations and interpret meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries, making relational clarity central to organizational functioning. Despite these insights, existing research has primarily focused on institutional and policy-level aspects of multilingualism, whereas micro-level relational and psychological dynamics have been examined more fragmentarily and rarely integrated into leadership research on leader–follower interactions.

Building on this perspective, this study advances the discussion by examining teams' linguistic proximity with the leader as a relational mechanism that shapes leader–team

interactions in multilingual settings. From this perspective, teams' linguistic proximity to the leader becomes a key contextual factor that structures how cultural meanings are negotiated in leader–team relationships. Building on this relational perspective, a team's linguistic proximity to the leader may shape the extent to which leaders and followers develop shared psychological schemas. When such schema congruence is achieved, alignment between leaders and followers enhances the quality of leader–member exchange, promoting trust, knowledge sharing, and reduced turnover intentions (Liu et al., 2025; Tsai et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2023). When incongruence prevails, divergent expectations disrupt communication, reduce relational quality, and may even foster disengagement or dysfunctional behaviors (Tsai et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2024). Language is central to sensemaking processes, functioning not merely as a medium of communication but as a cognitive mechanism through which schemas, frames, and associations are activated, interpreted, and negotiated in organizational contexts (Whittle et al., 2023). While cross-cultural leadership research, such as the GLOBE study (Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004; House et al., 2014), has provided important insights into culturally endorsed leadership prototypes and value alignment, it has largely overlooked the relational and linguistic mechanisms through which leader–team schemas are enacted in practice, as well as variations within cultural contexts (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024; Schedlitzki et al., 2017). The social categorization model suggests that leadership moderates the effects of diversity by reducing subgroup distinctions and fostering information elaboration, thereby transforming linguistic diversity into a resource (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). This study addresses this gap by conceptualizing teams' linguistic proximity to the leader as a cognitive-relational contextual mechanism that shapes the quality of leader–team interactions in multilingual environments.

Building on a social-cognitive perspective (Tyler & Lind, 1992), we emphasize the role of relational schemas, implicit mental models that individuals use to interpret and respond to social interactions (Baldwin, 1992; Engle & Lord, 1997). These schemas serve as cognitive templates, shaped by cultural norms, past experiences, and contextual cues, that guide expectations regarding roles, authority, and interpersonal behavior. In leadership contexts, relational schemas influence how followers interpret leaders' actions and how leaders anticipate and respond to followers' needs. In multilingual settings, high teams' linguistic proximity to the leader may facilitate schema alignment through shared communicative norms, mutual understanding, and coordination. By contrast, low teams' linguistic proximity to the leader, arising from proficiency gaps, idiomatic variation, or culturally embedded styles, can disrupt schema activation, leading to misinterpretation, ambiguity, and weakened exchanges. By integrating relational schema theory with the dynamics of language use, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of how leaders and followers construct shared meaning, transcending static models of value alignment.

Inclusive Leadership in Multilingual Teams

To address schema misalignment, we focus on inclusive leadership approaches, particularly servant and transformational leadership. Though distinct in their theoretical roots (Stone et al., 2003; van Dierendonck et al., 2014), both styles promote inclusion by fostering trust, alignment, and identification (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2025; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Inclusion is defined as the simultaneous experience of belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2009; Shore et al., 2011). Inclusion is achieved through the recognition

and integration of differences. Servant leadership supports this process by cultivating trust, mutual adjustment, and psychological safety through empathy, humility, and relational repair (Eva et al., 2019). Transformational leadership promotes alignment by articulating a compelling shared vision, reinforcing value congruence, and strengthening group identification (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Together, these styles provide relational mechanisms that may bridge linguistic barriers in multilingual teams.

The multicultural leadership literature offers important complementary insights. The GLOBE project (Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004; House et al., 2014) demonstrated that leadership effectiveness is shaped by culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories, or schemas of what constitutes effective leadership. More recently, Rockstuhl et al. (2023) identified three perspectives for understanding leadership effectiveness across contexts: (1) the cultural congruence perspective, which argues that leadership is most effective when aligned with culturally shared expectations; (2) the cultural compensation perspective, which suggests leadership can offset cultural gaps through structured behaviors; and (3) the near-universality perspective, which posits that certain styles, especially transformational and servant leadership, are broadly effective across cultures, partly due to converging global work norms (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Rockstuhl et al., 2023). However, despite these advances, most research has focused on alignment at the level of values or prototypes, while the relational, dyadic, and language-driven processes of schema congruence remain underexplored.

The Swiss Public Service Context

The Swiss context provides an ideal setting to investigate these dynamics. With four national languages and a tradition of receptive multilingualism, Switzerland institutionalizes linguistic diversity, particularly in public service organizations. Receptive multilingualism, in which individuals communicate in their own language while relying on others' partial comprehension and accommodation, is not only tolerated but also widely practiced in these organizations (Berthele & Wittlin, 2013). Unlike in many international or business firms, no lingua franca such as English is typically used, making communication contingent on mutual adjustment. Leaders and followers must therefore continually negotiate meaning across language boundaries. These dynamics are especially salient between Swiss Germanic, Swiss French, and Swiss Italian groups, which differ in communication styles and leadership prototypes (Brodbeck et al., 2000), making relational alignment both essential and fragile. Public service organizations, including non-profit associations, government bodies, civic institutions, and the Swiss Army, are characterized by a strong reliance on coordination, legitimacy, and sustained engagement rather than purely market-based performance logics. Their effectiveness depends not only on formal structures but also on shared understanding, trust, and voluntary commitment among members. In such contexts, communication plays a central role in aligning expectations and enabling cooperation across diverse stakeholder groups. This makes multilingual communication particularly consequential, as linguistic differences can shape how individuals interpret meaning, assess competence, and access opportunities. Evidence from comparable public service settings illustrates these dynamics. For instance, research on military organizations shows that language is not merely a neutral communication tool but can actively structure inequality and career trajectories. Peled (2000) demonstrates that language-based evaluation systems in the Israeli Defense Forces systematically disadvantaged certain linguistic

groups, leading to their underrepresentation in leadership positions despite comparable capabilities. Such findings highlight how linguistic structures shape not only communication processes but also perceptions of competence and access to opportunities. As a compulsory and national institution, the Swiss Army not only reflects Switzerland's linguistic and cultural diversity but also depends heavily on multilingual coordination, intergroup cooperation, and inclusive leadership. Unlike profit-oriented firms, these organizations depend on sustained participation, volunteer engagement, and alignment with values. Their continuity, therefore, hinges not only on formal structures but also on members' willingness to assume leadership responsibility. In this environment, leadership role occupancy emerges as a decisive success factor: stepping into leadership roles ensures accountability, continuity, and strategic renewal, while signaling commitment and organizational identification (Avolio et al., 2009; Schuh et al., 2014). However, the conditions that foster or hinder such role transitions remain underexplored, particularly in multilingual public service settings where linguistic barriers and diverse expectations complicate relational dynamics. This study examines leadership in the Swiss Army, where multilingual interactions are a routine occurrence. Using the loci and mechanisms of leadership framework (Hernandez et al., 2011), this study investigates leadership at the dyadic level, focusing on how team members perceive their leader's style (servant or transformational) within relationships characterized by varying degrees of linguistic proximity. It further examines how these perceptions influence followers' willingness to assume leadership roles. In this context, language functions as a key mechanism through which relational schemas are formed, aligned, or disrupted.

Leadership in the Military

The military provides a particularly relevant context for studying multilingual leadership, as many armed forces operate in linguistically diverse environments that require continuous coordination across language boundaries. Comparative research shows that countries adopt different institutional, cultural, and structural approaches to managing linguistic diversity, particularly regarding the use of official languages as a language of work and the organization of units (Fourestier, 2010). Despite this contextual complexity, research on leadership in military settings has largely focused on the effects of established leadership styles, such as transformational and transactional leadership, on performance-related outcomes. For instance, Tremblay (2010) finds that transformational leadership can both strengthen and weaken soldiers' commitment and turnover intentions depending on perceived fairness, whereas transactional leadership tends to reduce commitment. Similarly, Swiss military research shows that transformational leadership elicits substantially more extra effort from subordinates than transactional leadership (Stadelmann, 2010). While these studies provide valuable insights into leadership effectiveness, they primarily emphasize performance outcomes and formal leadership styles, paying limited attention to the contextual and relational conditions under which leadership unfolds. More recent research has begun to address this limitation by focusing on relational leadership approaches. For example, Richardson et al. (2023) note that servant leadership behaviors are present in military contexts but remain underrepresented in formal leadership development programs. Likewise, Wuli et al. (2020) show that servant leadership can transform conflict management practices by fostering dialogue, mutual respect, and compassion. However, even this emerging focus on relational leadership largely overlooks how linguistic diversity

shapes the relational processes through which leadership is enacted. In particular, the role of language in shaping shared understanding, relational alignment, and leadership outcomes remains insufficiently understood in multilingual military settings.

Contributions and Research Framework

Building on this contextual and theoretical foundation, the study makes two contributions. First, it introduces teams’ linguistic proximity to the leader as a novel cognitive-relational contextual variable, extending cross-cultural and multilingual leadership research by conceptualizing language as a continuous, perception-based mechanism rather than a categorical demographic attribute. Second, it demonstrates that linguistic proximity serves as a contextual moderator, influencing the relationship between leadership style (servant and transformational) and the occupancy of leadership roles. By positioning leadership role occupancy as a novel outcome, the study contributes to understanding how inclusive leadership supports sustainable leadership development in multilingual public service organizations. From this theoretical integration, the study derives one core research question:

RQ: How does the team’s linguistic proximity to the leader modify the relationship between teams’ perception of servant or transformational leadership and teams’ leadership role occupancy?

The model introduces teams’ linguistic proximity to the leader as a continuous cognitive-relational variable capturing the perceived degree of linguistic alignment within leader–team dyads (see Figure 1). Rather than relying on categorical distinctions such as linguistic congruence or incongruence, linguistic proximity reflects the nuanced realities of multilingual interaction in which team members may differ in their fluency, comprehension, and communicative ease with their leader. Conceptualizing language in this way positions proximity as a theoretically grounded and empirically sensitive indicator of relational alignment, enabling a more fine-grained understanding of how language-based dynamics shape leader–team interactions in multilingual settings. This variable provides the foundation for investigating how linguistic alignment influences perceptions of leadership.

Figure 1: Teams’ Linguistic Proximity to the Leader

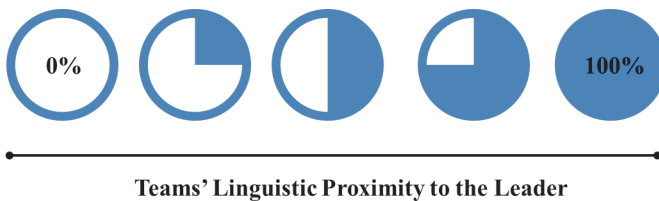
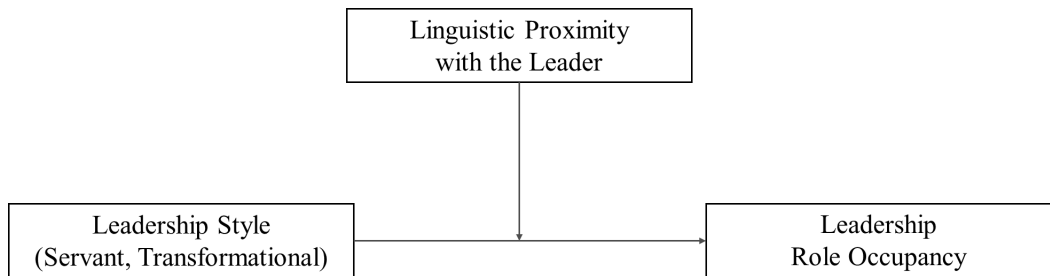


Figure 2 depicts the conceptual research model. Servant and transformational leadership serve as independent variables that predict leadership role occupancy, defined as a behavioral and objective indicator of followers’ attainment of formal leadership positions within the organization (Avolio et al., 2009; Schuh et al., 2014). Teams’ linguistic proximity to the leader is introduced as a contextual exogenous moderator that conditions this

relationship. By capturing the degree of perceived linguistic alignment within the dyad, linguistic proximity reflects how communicative ease, shared understanding, and relational attunement shape the extent to which leadership behaviors translate into followers' willingness to assume leadership roles. This framework thus conceptualizes language not as a background demographic attribute but as a central relational mechanism through which leadership behavior influences followers' future occupancy of formal leadership roles.

Figure 2: Conceptual research model



Method

The Swiss Army is one of the country's largest public service organizations, with an active force of about 150,000 soldiers (VBS, 2025). As a militia-based institution, it depends on civic duty and, for leadership roles, on voluntary engagement. Most personnel serve part-time while balancing civilian careers or studies, creating a fluid leadership pipeline where individuals regularly transition between follower and leader roles. The willingness to assume formal leadership responsibility is, therefore, central to sustaining both operational effectiveness and organizational continuity. The Army is explicitly structured to integrate soldiers from all cultural regions, thereby promoting national cohesion and mutual understanding (Schweizer-Eidgenossenschaft, 2022). With four national languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), it mirrors the diversity of Swiss society. Historically, units were organized along territorial lines; however, ongoing restructuring and increased specialization have led to the creation of more mixed-language units, making multilingual collaboration a routine feature of training and operations (Jager, 2020). Regulations recognize this diversity: Article 57 of the Army's service code mandates that commanders address subordinates in their mother tongue whenever possible (Der Schweizerische Bundesrat, 2018). In practice, however, this principle is difficult to implement consistently. Mixed-language units often rely on the standardized written forms of German, French, or Italian (Jager, 2020). Spoken communication presents additional challenges: Swiss German dialects, widely used informally, differ substantially from the Standard German taught in schools, creating barriers for speakers of Latin languages. These linguistic hurdles can undermine communication, strain leadership, and erode cohesion, underscoring the importance of intercultural competence for operational effectiveness. Empirical studies in the Swiss Army context confirm that practice diverges from regulation. German dominates much of everyday interaction, while French is underrepresented outside Romandie, Italian is nearly absent, and Romansh plays a mostly symbolic role (Berthele & Wittlin, 2013). In

response, the Army has come to rely heavily on receptive multilingualism: soldiers speak their own native language and rely on others' receptive abilities to follow. This practice is valued for protecting minority rights and fostering solidarity, but it is also criticized for imprecision and the risk of misunderstandings in operationally critical moments. Acceptance of receptive multilingualism increases with experience, suggesting that it is a learned practice rather than an innate ability (Berthele & Wittlin, 2013). Unlike in international and business organizations, where English often serves as a lingua franca, the Swiss Army has no neutral bridging language, making linguistic (in)congruence in leader–follower dyads a daily, unavoidable challenge. Beyond its multilingual composition, the Army offers unique methodological advantages for leadership research. Training conditions are highly standardized, and followers are randomly assigned to leaders, creating a quasi-experimental environment that allows for rigorous analysis of leadership effects. Soldiers' decision to pursue leadership training after basic service introduces an element of self-selection, making leadership role occupancy a meaningful behavioral outcome. Compulsory service for Swiss men aged 18 to 20 ensures a diverse pool of recruits, many of whom enter with varying levels of leadership motivation. Leadership service has historically been recognized as a valuable credential in civilian life, underscoring the Army's broader societal role. Although the Swiss Army has not engaged in warfare since 1848, it remains a vital civic institution contributing to disaster relief, infrastructure support, and national cohesion. The Swiss Army's leadership doctrine is grounded in mission command, which emphasizes decentralized decision-making: senior officers set objectives, while subordinates are entrusted with autonomous execution (Der Schweizerische Bundesrat, 2022). This approach aligns closely with servant and transformational leadership, which emphasize empowerment, responsibility, and initiative-taking (Knevelsrud et al., 2024). Empirical studies have shown that servant and transformational leadership behaviors among young Swiss officers are positively associated with their intrinsic motivation to assume leadership roles (Lang et al., 2022). Servant leadership is most effective in stable environments, such as structured training contexts. In contrast, transformational leadership proves especially effective in dynamic or crisis situations, inspiring followers through a shared vision and identification with the mission (Humphreys, 2005). In the Swiss Army, these two styles may operate in tandem: servant leadership strengthens motivation and continuity within the training system, while transformational leadership becomes critical in deployments such as disaster relief or peace support. Taken together, the Swiss Army combines the defining characteristics of a public service organization (purpose-driven mission, reliance on voluntary leadership, and civic significance) with the unique challenges of multilingual interaction in the absence of a lingua franca. Its standardized, quasi-experimental structure, coupled with the civic nature of leadership pathways, creates a natural laboratory for investigating how linguistic proximity to the leader and inclusive leadership styles shape perceptions of leadership and influence the filling of leadership roles.

Sample

The sample consisted of 68 leader–team dyads (68 leaders, 755 followers). The leaders were drawn from three officer training schools of the Swiss Army, where they had completed the standardized military training pathway, including basic training, the non-commissioned officer course, and the practical phase as group leaders, before entering the 15-week officer school and assuming formal command over a platoon. The average age

of leaders was 20.9 years ($SD = 1.25$). Only male leaders were included in the analyses. Although three women served as platoon leaders in the sample, they were excluded because military service is voluntary for women but compulsory for men. This structural difference introduces systematic self-selection: women who choose to enlist are likely to differ from conscripted men in motivation, commitment, and career orientation. Including female leaders would therefore have introduced variance attributable to selection effects rather than leadership behavior itself. Restricting the analytical sample to male leaders reduces this source of bias and ensures comparability. Regarding linguistic background, the leaders closely reflected Switzerland's national distribution, with 61 % German-speaking, 34 % French-speaking, and 5 % Italian-speaking officers. In terms of education, 70 % of the leaders had not obtained a Swiss Federal Baccalaureate (Matura), while 30 % had. The Matura represents the highest secondary school qualification in Switzerland and constitutes the formal prerequisite for admission to university-level education. Followers also reflected Switzerland's multilingual composition, with 76 % of individuals being German-speaking, 18 % French-speaking, 4 % Italian-speaking, and 1 % Romansh-speaking. This distribution broadly aligns with national demographics, though German speakers were slightly overrepresented compared to their proportion in the general population. The average age of followers was 20.2 years ($SD = 1.60$). Female followers were likewise excluded for the same reason as female leaders, since voluntary service introduces systematic self-selection effects that differ from those of conscripted men. Team sizes varied from 2 to 34 members ($M = 16.52$, Median = 15).

Procedure

Data were collected at four points in time within the highly standardized training environment of the Swiss Army, which provides a unique quasi-experimental setting for leadership research. At the first measurement point (T1, June 2021), demographic information about the leader, including native language, was collected. At the second measurement point (T2, July 2021), followers evaluated their platoon leaders using validated scales of servant and transformational leadership. At the third point (T3, August 2021), approximately four weeks later, the same followers completed measures of motivational variables, specifically public service motivation and extrinsic motivation for a leadership career, which served as control variables in this study. At the fourth measurement point (T4, September 2022), leadership role occupancy was determined using objective administrative personnel records obtained from the Army's Personnel Service. These official data reflect whether individuals were promoted into formal leadership positions, thereby capturing an observable behavioral outcome rather than self-reported aspirations or intentions. The quasi-experimental design of the Swiss Army context enhances internal validity in several ways. First, followers were randomly assigned to leaders through standardized allocation procedures, eliminating self-selection and reducing common-source bias. Second, all participants were exposed to identical training schedules, shared accommodation, and uniform professional demands, creating an environment of controlled situational variance. Although leadership style was not experimentally manipulated, these structural conditions provide an as-if random assignment framework in which the effects of naturally occurring leadership behaviors can be observed under rigorously standardized circumstances. This allows for stronger causal inference than typical cross-sectional survey designs. To evaluate potential common method bias, Harman's single-factor tests were conducted sep-

arately for the leadership and motivational data. For the leadership variables (T2), the first unrotated factor explained 42 % of the total variance. For the motivational variables (T3), the first factor explained 43 %, which is well below the conventional 50 % threshold for factor loadings. These findings, combined with the temporal separation of measurement points and the inclusion of objective outcome data (T4), suggest that common method variance was not a major concern (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Overall, this multi-time and partially objective research design provides a robust quasi-experimental framework for examining how leadership style and the exogenous contextual variable of teams' linguistic proximity to the leader jointly predict leadership role occupancy within a real-world institutional setting.

Measures

This section outlines the procedures employed to assess the study's key constructs. Surveys were offered in German, French, and Italian to enable participants to respond in their preferred language. The original English questionnaire was translated into these languages using a back-translation process. To ensure linguistic precision and conceptual alignment, a panel of multilingual experts reviewed the translations for equivalence and clarity.

Linguistic Proximity with the Leader

Linguistic proximity was assessed based on the match between the leader's and followers' native languages. First, native language information was collected for all participants. For each leader-follower dyad, a binary match score was created (1 = same native language; 0 = different native language). These values were then aggregated at the team level by calculating the proportion of followers who shared the leader's native language. This resulted in a continuous percentage-based score ranging from 1 to 10, where a score of 1 represents 0–10 % linguistic proximity and a score of 10 represents 90–100 % linguistic proximity, reflecting the degree of linguistic alignment within each platoon leader.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was measured using the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The instrument consists of 18 items that capture five core dimensions: empowerment, stewardship, humility, standing back, and authenticity. Responses were recorded on a six-point Likert scale. The item wording was adapted to reflect the operational language of the military context, enhancing clarity and relevance. A representative item states, "My platoon leader helps me to develop myself." Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .90. Followers' ratings of servant leadership were aggregated to the team level by computing the mean score within each platoon, reflecting shared team perceptions of the leader's behavior.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (B. Bass & Avolio, 1995). The instrument comprises 16 items that capture four core dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Responses were

recorded on a six-point Likert scale. The wording of the item was adapted to reflect the military context, enhancing clarity and relevance. A representative item states, “My platoon leader makes it clear how important it is to commit 100 % to the mission.” Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .93. Followers’ ratings were aggregated to the team level by computing the mean score within each platoon, reflecting the shared team perception of the leader’s transformational leadership.

Leadership Role Occupancy

Leadership role occupancy was assessed using objective behavioral data from the Armed Forces Personnel Service, providing a valid and reliable indicator of leadership career pursuit within the Swiss Army. This measure captures enacted leadership behavior rather than self-reported intentions or aspirations. At the individual level, the variable was coded dichotomously (0 = did not pursue a cadre career; 1 = voluntarily continued into formal leadership training). These values were then aggregated at the team level by calculating the proportion of followers within each platoon who entered a leadership role. This resulted in a continuous percentage score reflecting each team’s overall leadership advancement rate.

Control Variables

To account for contextual variation across platoons, leader education and two motivational variables were included in the analyses. Leader education was coded based on whether the platoon leader had completed the Swiss Federal Matura (0 = no Matura; 1 = Matura). Two motivational orientations toward leadership service were also considered. Public service motivation refers to an intrinsic commitment to the public interest and willingness to prioritize collective welfare over personal benefit. This construct was measured with five items adapted to the military context (Ritz & Brewer, 2013; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$). A representative item reads: “It is important to me to contribute selflessly to the common good.” Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, reflects the external incentives associated with leadership training, such as its recognized value for future civilian careers (Schweizer Armee, 2025). It was measured using four items rated on a five-point scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .90$), for example: “Pursuing leadership training is valuable because it benefits my future civilian career.” An exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring, oblimin rotation) confirmed that the two motivational constructs represent empirically distinct dimensions. Two factors with eigenvalues greater than one emerged, jointly explaining 71 % of the total variance (57 % and 14 %, respectively), with strong positive loadings for public service motivation items on the first factor and strong negative loadings for extrinsic motivation items on the second, and minimal cross-loadings ($< .30$), supporting conceptual distinction. Because the unit of analysis in this study is the leader–team dyad, the motivation scores were first aggregated at the team level by averaging the responses of followers within each platoon, resulting in shared motivational profiles for each team.

Analytical Strategy

All analyses were conducted at the team level. We began by computing Spearman rank-order correlations to explore the bivariate relationships among the control variables, teams’

linguistic proximity to the leader, perceived leadership styles, team motivational variables, and leadership role occupancy. This initial step provided a descriptive overview of how these constructs relate to one another, before moving on to more complex modeling. To address the research question, we examined whether teams' linguistic proximity to the leader conditions the relationship between perceived leadership and leadership role occupancy. These analyses controlled for leader education and the team-level motivational variables. A methodological challenge arose due to the extremely high correlation between servant and transformational leadership ($r = .91$), which made it inappropriate to enter both variables simultaneously in their raw form. To disentangle their common and unique components, perceived leadership was decomposed into three elements: (a) a Common Leadership Core (CLC) capturing the variance common to both servant and transformational leadership, and (b) two residualized variables representing the unique variance specific to servant leadership and to transformational leadership, respectively. This decomposition allowed us to examine how both the common core and the style-specific aspects of leadership relate to leadership role occupancy, and how these relationships vary as a function of linguistic proximity. Using this decomposition, we estimated a series of hierarchical regression models. We first introduced the control variables, followed by an examination of linguistic proximity. We then entered the CLC and, in separate steps, the servant leadership residual and the transformational leadership residual. To test moderation effects, we added interaction terms between linguistic proximity and the leadership components, first with the CLC, and then with the style-specific residuals. Parallel sets of models were estimated for residual servant and transformational leadership. Changes in explained variance across successive models were used to evaluate whether linguistic proximity, leadership components, or their interactions contributed significantly to predicting leadership role occupancy. Taken together, this analytic strategy enabled us to assess both the direct influence of linguistic proximity on leadership perceptions and leadership role occupancy, as well as its moderating role in shaping how the common and style-specific components of perceived leadership translate into actual leadership advancement within teams.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations among the primary study variables. Several consistent patterns emerge. Leader education shows meaningful associations with team motivation and leadership role occupancy, suggesting that more formally educated leaders tend to foster motivational climates linked to sustained leadership involvement. At the same time, leader education relates differently to linguistic proximity and servant leadership, indicating that formal education does not necessarily align with perceived relational closeness or servant leadership behavior. Team public service motivation correlates with both motivational and leadership-related variables, pointing to a broader attitudinal constellation in which a shared public service ethos accompanies more positive evaluations of leadership and a higher likelihood of assuming formal roles. A comparable pattern appears for extrinsic motivation. Linguistic proximity is systematically associated with perceptions of servant and transformational leadership, underscoring the role of language alignment as a relational mechanism shaping leadership evaluations. Finally, servant and transformational leadership are strongly interconnected, and both relate to leadership role occupancy.

Variable	M ± SD	Range	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Leader's Education (0 = no Matura, 1 = Matura)	.71 ± .45	0 - 1						
2. Teams' Public Service Motivation	2.98 ± .30	2.30 - 4.00	.17**					
3. Teams' Extrinsic Motivation	2.65 ± .53	1.25 - 4.75	.11**	.80**				
4. Teams' Linguistic Proximity with the Leader	7.54 ± 3.42	1 - 10	-.26**	-.24**	-.17**			
5. Teams' Perception of Servant Leadership	4.41 ± .37	3.59 - 5.61	-.08**	.21**	.25**	.37**		
6. Teams' Perception of Transformational Leadership	4.65 ± .38	3.50 - 5.95	-.01	.25**	.27**	.37**	.91**	
7. Teams' Leadership Role Occupancy	.25 ± .14	0 - 1	.16**	.25**	.36**	.04	.13**	.15**

Note: Significance levels: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; $N = 759$; $K = 71$

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Spearman rank-order correlations among the study variables

To address the research question, we examined whether teams' linguistic proximity with the leader modifies the relationships between leadership perceptions and leadership role occupancy, while controlling for leader and team motivational characteristics (see Table 2). For this purpose, we decomposed teams' perceived leadership into three components: a Common Leadership Core (CLC) capturing the common variance between

Variables	Teams' Leadership Role Occupancy								
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Leader's Education	.11**	.15**	.15**	.16**	.16**	.20**	.16**	.16**	.20**
Teams' Public Service Motivation	.06	.09†	.11*	.12*	.15**	.14**	.12*	.15**	.14**
Teams' Extrinsic Motivation	.33**	.31**	.32**	.31**	.30**	.25**	.31**	.30**	.25**
Teams' Linguistic Proximity with the Leader (LP)	-	.15**	.17**	.18**	.15**	.14**	.18**	.15**	.13**
Teams' Perceived Common Leadership Core (CLC)	-	-	-.08*	-.09*	.42**	.38**	-.07*	.43**	.22
Teams' Perceived Servant Leadership Residual (SL-R)	-	-	-	.04	.05	.06†	-	-	-
Teams' Perceived Transformational Leadership Residual (TFL-R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.04	-.05	-.06†
LP × CLC	-	-	-	-	-.52**	-.48**	-	-.52**	-.27†
LP × SL-R	-	-	-	-	-	.24**	-	-	-
LP × TFL-R	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.25**
<i>F-Value</i>	53.15**	45.74**	37.81**	31.81**	29.64**	35.10**	31.81**	29.64**	35.10**
<i>R</i> ²	.175	.196	.202	.203	.217	.274	.203	.217	.274
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.172	.192	.196	.197	.210	.266	.197	.210	.266
<i>Adjusted ΔR</i> ²		.021** (in relation to model 1)	.005* (in relation to model 2)	.002 (in relation to model 3)	.014** (in relation to model 4)	.056** (in relation to model 5)	.002 (in relation to model 3)	.014** (in relation to model 7)	.056** (in relation to model 8)

Note: Significance levels: † $p < .05$; * $p < .01$; $N = 759$; $K = 71$

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Model for the research question

servant and transformational leadership, and two residualized variables representing the unique servant-specific and transformational-specific components.

Across all analyses, leaders' education emerged as a stable and robust predictor: teams led by more highly educated leaders consistently showed higher rates of leadership role occupancy. In the baseline model with controls only, leaders' education and teams' extrinsic motivation were positively associated with occupying a leadership role, whereas public service motivation was not yet significant. When teams' linguistic proximity with the leader was added, the model improved, and linguistic proximity emerged as a positive predictor. In this extended specification, public service motivation also became positive, while extrinsic motivation remained robust. Introducing the teams' perceived leadership common variance index (CLC) led to a further improvement, with leader education, public service motivation, extrinsic motivation, and linguistic proximity all remaining significantly positive. At the same time, the CLC showed a small negative association with leadership role occupancy. Adding the teams' perceived servant leadership alongside the CLC did not change model fit. Leader education, public service motivation, extrinsic motivation, and linguistic proximity remained positive, the CLC remained negative, and the servant leadership residual was not significant. When the interaction between the CLC and linguistic proximity was introduced, the model improved, and the interaction was strongly negative, indicating that the positive effect of the common leadership core weakens as linguistic proximity increases. In a more comprehensive specification that included both the CLC and the servant leadership residual, the model improved further. Leader education, public service motivation, extrinsic motivation, and linguistic proximity all remained significant. The CLC showed a positive main effect, while the servant leadership residual showed a marginally positive tendency. Two interactions appeared: the CLC \times linguistic proximity interaction remained negative, whereas the servant leadership residual \times linguistic proximity interaction was positive. This pattern suggests that the common leadership core becomes less beneficial at higher linguistic proximity, while servant-specific components become more important as leaders and followers are linguistically closer.

The parallel set of models for transformational leadership showed a similar structure. Adding the teams' perceived transformational leadership residual to the CLC model did not improve model fit. In this model, leader education, public service motivation, extrinsic motivation, and linguistic proximity remained positive, the CLC was negative, and the transformational leadership residual was not significant. Adding the CLC \times linguistic proximity interaction improved the model, yielding a negative interaction effect again. In the full specification, which included both leadership components and interactions, the model improved further. Leader education, public service motivation, extrinsic motivation, and linguistic proximity remained positive. The CLC was no longer significant as a main effect; the transformational leadership residual showed a marginally negative tendency; the CLC \times linguistic proximity interaction was marginally negative; and the transformational leadership residual \times linguistic proximity interaction was significantly negative. This indicates that the transformational-specific leadership component becomes increasingly negatively associated with leadership role occupancy as linguistic proximity increases. Across all models, leaders' education was consistently the strongest and most stable predictor. Teams' public service motivation became more robust once leadership variables were included, while extrinsic motivation remained positive but weakened slightly as model complexity increased. Overall, the analyses show that teams' linguistic proximity with

the leader not only directly enhances leadership role occupancy but also systematically moderates how both the common leadership core and the style-specific components relate to leadership development within teams.

Discussion

The present study contributes to the emerging conversation on multilingual leadership as a relational challenge by demonstrating that linguistic proximity to the leader meaningfully shapes perceptions of leadership and its relationship to followers' willingness to assume leadership roles. Building on relational schema theory, multicultural leadership research, and inclusive leadership scholarship, the findings show that leadership in multilingual contexts is not simply a matter of universal leadership traits but depends on how leaders and followers navigate linguistic boundaries that structure relational alignment and expectations. This aligns with recent critiques in cultural research that emphasize that contemporary workplaces are shaped by multiple, context-dependent cultural identities rather than single national categories (Sackmann & Phillips, 2004; Phillips & Sackmann, 2020) and extends the emerging discourse on leadership in multilingual teams (Szymanski et al., 2022). A major insight of the study concerns whether linguistic proximity conditions the relationship between perceived leadership and leadership role occupancy. Because servant and transformational leadership are highly correlated at the team-perception level ($r = .91$), decomposing them into a common core (CLC) and style-specific residuals provided a more fine-grained perspective. Servant leadership shows a dual-channel pattern of effectiveness across linguistic contexts. The common leadership core is particularly influential under low proximity, supporting the compensatory view that value-based elements retain effectiveness when relational cues are difficult to decode (Rockstuhl et al., 2023). In contrast, the servant-specific residual becomes more influential when linguistic proximity is high, consistent with van Dierendonck's (2011) view that servant leadership activates followers' psychological needs through subtle cues that require clear communication to be perceived. Together, these dual patterns support the near-universality perspective, indicating that servant leadership remains effective across linguistic contexts, albeit through different relational mechanisms depending on the degree of linguistic alignment (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Rockstuhl et al., 2023). Transformational leadership follows a more linguistically contingent trajectory. Its style-specific component is more effective under low proximity, where followers rely on expressive or visionary cues to reduce uncertainty, again consistent with the compensation perspective. However, transformation-specific behaviors lose relevance and may be perceived negatively in proximity, particularly in cultural contexts such as the Germanic-Swiss setting, where restraint and factual objectivity are normatively preferred (House et al., 2004). Thus, transformational leadership can be effective in low-proximity contexts but lacks the dual-context adaptability characteristic of servant leadership. Taken together, these findings yield several theoretical implications. First, linguistic proximity emerges as a relational mechanism that shapes how leadership is interpreted and enacted in multilingual teams, rather than a binary condition—linguistic alignment functions as a continuous, relational process that structures the clarity and coherence of relational cues. Second, the results advance a relational-linguistic perspective on inclusive leadership, showing that servant and transformational leadership promote a sense of belonging and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2009) through distinct pathways, depending on linguistic context. Third, linguistic proximity predicts leadership role occupancy above

and beyond leadership style and motivational factors, suggesting that linguistic alignment shapes developmental trajectories rather than merely perceptions. In multilingual public service environments, linguistic proximity therefore represents an overlooked dimension of leadership development and relational coordination.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that warrant consideration in future research. First, the very high intercorrelation between servant and transformational leadership raises the possibility of multicollinearity. Although the two constructs have distinct theoretical roots (Stone et al., 2003; van Dierendonck et al., 2014), their substantial empirical overlap suggests that followers may perceive them as complementary facets of a broader inclusive leadership schema. While this study addressed the issue by decomposing the constructs into common and style-specific components, future research should apply more advanced analytical approaches to disentangle their unique and common variance more precisely. Alternatively, scholars may conceptualize servant and transformational leadership as formative rather than reflective constructs and examine their effects at the sub-dimensional level, thereby enabling a more granular understanding of which specific behaviors drive follower outcomes across varying linguistic conditions. Second, the study did not explicitly capture individual bilingualism or language proficiency gradients, which are highly relevant in multilingual environments, such as the Swiss Army. Linguistic proximity was operationalized as a continuous team-level variable, reflecting the percentage of followers who shared the leader's native language. This approach overlooks the fluidity of bilingual communication and receptive multilingualism, which are central to real-world interactions in Switzerland. Future research should adopt more fine-grained linguistic measures that account for self-assessed proficiency, habitual language use, and communicative switching behaviors. Third, the study did not include data on participants' migration backgrounds, a factor that substantially shapes linguistic identity, cultural orientation, and perceptions of leadership in Swiss public service contexts. Including this variable would allow for a deeper understanding of how intersectional forms of diversity, linguistic, cultural, and migratory, jointly influence leadership dynamics. Finally, while the quasi-experimental setting of the Swiss Army enhances internal validity through standardized structures and random assignment, it may also limit external validity. The hierarchical, male-dominated, and mission-oriented nature of this organization differs from that of many civilian public service institutions, nonprofit associations, or corporate environments. Replications across varied organizational and national contexts are therefore necessary to assess the generalizability of both the inverted-U relationship between linguistic proximity and leadership perceptions and the moderating role of linguistic proximity in shaping the relationships among different components of leadership and leadership role occupancy.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the *Swiss Armed Forces* for their support in conducting the field study and the Army Personnel Service for providing access to administrative data. Special thanks also go to the study participants for their voluntary engagement throughout the research process.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

While preparing this work, the authors used ChatGPT to enhance clarity, improve readability, and refine certain theoretical explanations. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed, taking full responsibility for the publication's content.

References

- Adler, N. J., & Aycan, Z. (2018). Cross-cultural interaction: What we know and what we need to know. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5(1), 307–333.
- Assefa, E. A., & Mujtaba, B. G. (2025). Exploring transformational leadership in education by leveraging diversity and technology for inclusive practices. *International Journal of Public Leadership*.
- Avolio, B. J., Rotundo, M., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2009). *RETRACTED: Early life experiences as determinants of leadership role occupancy: The importance of parental influence and rule breaking behavior*. Elsevier.
- Baldwin, M. W. (1992). Relational schemas and the processing of social information. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(3), 461.
- Bass, B., & Avolio, B. (1995). *MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*. Mind Garden.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Psychology Press.
- Berthele, R., & Wittlin, G. (2013). Receptive multilingualism in the Swiss Army. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 10(2), 181–195.
- Brodbeck, F. C [Felix C.], Frese, M., Akerblom, S., Audia, G., Bakacsi, G., Bendova, H., Bodega, D., Bodur, M., Booth, S., & Brenk, K. (2000). Cultural variation of leadership prototypes across 22 European countries. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 73(1), 1–29.
- Chhokar, J. S., Brodbeck, F. C [F. C.], & House, R. J [R. J.]. (2007). *Culture and leadership, across the world: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies. Lea's organization and management series*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Engle, E. M., & Lord, R. G. (1997). Implicit theories, self-schemas, and leader-member exchange. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(4), 988–1010.
- Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D [D.], & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(1), 111–132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004>
- Fourestier, J. de (2010). Official languages in the armed forces of multilingual countries: A comparative study. *European Journal of Language Policy*, 2(1), 91–110.
- Gotsis, G., & Grimani, K. (2016). The role of servant leadership in fostering inclusive organizations. *Journal of Management Development*, 35(8), 985–1010. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-07-2015-0095>
- Hartog, D. N. den, & Hoogh, A. H. B. de (2024). Cross-cultural leadership: What we know, what we need to know, and where we need to go. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11(1), 535–566.
- Henderson, J. K. (2005). Language diversity in international management teams. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 35(1), 66–82.

- Hernandez, M., Eberly, M., B., Avolio, B., J., & Johnson, M.,D. (2011). The loci and mechanisms of leadership: Exploring a more comprehensive view of leadership theory. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 1165–1185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.009>
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*. Sage Publications.
- House, R. J., Dorfman, P. W., Javidan, M., & Hanges, P. J. (2014). *Strategic Leadership across Cultures: The GLOBE Study of CEO Leadership Behavior and Effectiveness in 24 Countries*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374581>
- Humphreys, J. H. (2005). Contextual implications for transformational and servant leadership: A historical investigation. *Management Decision*, 43(10), 1410–1431.
- Jager, M. (2020). Interkultureller Pragmatismus in der Schweizer Armee. *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militärzeitschrift*(8).
- Knevelsrud, H.-C., Sørli, H. O., & Valaker, S. (2024). Mission command: A self-determination theory perspective. *Military Psychology*, 36(6), 672–688.
- Lang, B., Sansossio, R., Annen, H., & Gmür, M. (2022). Zur Wahrnehmung von Führung in der Schweizer Armee – Die Bedeutung von transformationaler und dienender Führung : Militärwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift. *Stratos*, 22, 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.48593/ekem-ca54>
- Liu, X., Huang, P., Li, Z., Zhao, D., & Wu, Y. J. (2025). The effects of leader–follower relational schema congruence on employees’ knowledge hiding. *Journal of Knowledge Management*.
- Mittal, R., & Dorfman, P. W [Peter W.] (2012). Servant leadership across cultures. *Journal of World Business*, 47(4), 555–570. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2012.01.009>
- Peled, A. (2000). The politics of language in multiethnic militaries: The case of oriental Jews in the Israel defence forces, 1950–1959. *Armed Forces & Society*, 26(4), 587–605.
- Perry, J. L., & Hondeghem, A. (2008). Building theory and empirical evidence about public service motivation. *International Public Management Journal*, 11(1), 3–12.
- Philipps, M., E., & Sackmann, S., A. (2015). Cross cultural management rising. Dans N. Holden, S. Michailova et S. Tietze (dir.), *The Routledge companion to cross-cultural management*. Routledge.
- Podsakoff, P. M., Podsakoff, N. P., Williams, L. J., Huang, C., & Yang, J. (2024). Common method bias: It’s bad, it’s complex, it’s widespread, and it’s not easy to fix. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11(1), 17–61.
- Richardson, T. M., Earnhardt, M. P., Morris, T., & Walker, S. M. (2023). Servant-Leadership in the Military: An Investigation of Servant-Leadership among Technical Sergeants in the United States Air Force. *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 17(1), 18.
- Ritz, A., & Brewer, G. A. (2013). Does societal culture affect public service motivation? Evidence of sub-national differences in Switzerland. *International Public Management Journal*, 16(2), 224–251.
- Rockstuhl, T., Wu, D., Dulebohn, J. H., Liao, C., & Hoch, J. E. (2023). Cultural congruence or compensation? A meta-analytic test of transformational and transactional leadership effects across cultures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 54(3), 476–504.
- Sackmann, S. A., & Phillips, M. E. (2004). Contextual influences on culture research: Shifting assumptions for new workplace realities. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 4(3), 370–390.

- Schedlitzki, D., Ahonen, P., Wankhade, P., Edwards, G., & Gaggiotti, H. (2017). Working with Language: A Refocused Research Agenda for Cultural Leadership Studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19(2), 237–257. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12100>
- Schuh, S. C., Hernandez Bark, A. S., van Quaquebeke, N., Hossiep, R., Frieg, P., & van Dick, R. (2014). Gender differences in leadership role occupancy: The mediating role of power motivation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120(3), 363–379.
- Schweizer Armee. (2025). *Schweizer Armee verteidigt*. <https://www.armee.ch/de>
- Schweizer-Eidgenossenschaft. (2022). *Diversity in der Schweizer Armee*. <https://www.vtg.admin.ch/de/diversity-in-der-schweizer-armee>
- Der Schweizerische Bundesrat. (2018). *Dienstreglement der Armee (DRA)*.
- Der Schweizerische Bundesrat. (2022). *Dienstreglement der Armee*. https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1995/170_170_170/de
- Shore, L. M., Chung-Herrera, B. G., Dean, M. A., Ehrhart, K. H., Jung, D. I., Randel, A. E., & Singh, G. (2009). Diversity in organizations: Where are we now and where are we going? *Human Resource Management Review*, 19(2), 117–133.
- Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Holcombe Ehrhart, K., & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1262–1289.
- Stadelmann, C. (2010). Swiss armed forces militia system: effect of transformational leadership on subordinates' extra effort and the moderation role of command structure. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 69(2), 83–93.
- Stone, A. G., Russell, R., F., & Patterson, K. (2003). Transformational versus servant leadership: a difference in leader focus. *The Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25(4), 349–361.
- Szymanski, M., Alon, I., & Kalra, K. (2022). Multilingual and multicultural managers' effects on team performance: insights from professional football teams. *Multinational Business Review*, 30(1), 40–61.
- Tenzer, H., & Pudelko, M. (2015). Leading across language barriers: Managing language-induced emotions in multinational teams. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26(4), 606–625.
- Tremblay, M. A. (2010). Fairness perceptions and trust as mediators on the relationship between leadership style, unit commitment, and turnover intentions of Canadian forces personnel. *Military Psychology*, 22(4), 510–523.
- Tsai, C.-Y., Dionne, S. D., Wang, A.-C., Spain, S. M., Yammarino, F. J., & Cheng, B.-S. (2017). Effects of relational schema congruence on leader-member exchange. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(2), 268–284.
- Tyler, T. R., & Lind, E. A. (1992). A relational model of authority in groups. Dans *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, p. 115–191). Elsevier.
- van Dierendonck, D [D.], Stam, D., Boersma, P., Windt, N. de, & Alkema, J. (2014). Same difference? Exploring the differential mechanisms linking servant leadership and transformational leadership to follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25, 544–562.
- van Dierendonck, D [Dirk], & Nuijten, I. (2011). The servant leadership survey: Development and validation of a multidimensional measure. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26(3), 249–267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9194-1>

- van Knippenberg, D., Dreu, C. K. W. de, & Homan, A. C. (2004). Work group diversity and group performance: an integrative model and research agenda. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(6), 1008.
- VBS, & Eidgenössisches Departement für Verteidigung, Bevölkerungsschutz und Sport. (2025). *Das VBS in Zahlen*. [https://www.vbs.admin.ch/de/vbs-in-zahlen#Armee-\(Diensttage,-Ausr%C3%BCtung-usw.\)](https://www.vbs.admin.ch/de/vbs-in-zahlen#Armee-(Diensttage,-Ausr%C3%BCtung-usw.))
- Whittle, A., Vaara, E., & Maitlis, S. (2023). The role of language in organizational sensemaking: An integrative theoretical framework and an agenda for future research. *Journal of Management*, 49(6), 1807–1840.
- Wuli, R., Luddin, M. R., & Suyatno, T. (2020). Servant Leadership to Manage Conflict: Case Study of the Indonesian Military Ordinarate. *Organizational Cultures*, 20(1), 13.
- Zhang, X., Lin, Z., Chen, X., Zhang, Z., & Liu, D. M. (2023). Leader–follower congruence in psychological capital: effects on LMX and turnover intention. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 44(4), 489–502.

Bernhard Lang is a PhD candidate at the Verbandsmanagement Institut (VMI), University of Fribourg. His research focuses on leadership in intercultural and nonprofit contexts.

Address: Verbandsmanagement Institut (VMI), University of Fribourg, Boulevard de Pérolles 90, CH-1700 Fribourg, Switzerland, Phone: +41 76 451 27 25

E-Mail: bernhard.lang@unifr.ch

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5960-0894>

Markus Gmür, Prof. Dr., is Full Professor of NPO Management and Director of the VMI at the University of Fribourg.

Address: Verbandsmanagement Institut (VMI), University of Fribourg, Boulevard de Pérolles 90, CH-1700 Fribourg, Switzerland, Phone: +41 26 300 84 05

E-Mail: markus.gmuer@unifr.ch

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5761-3308>