‘Talk your way out of Belgium!’

A study on multilingualism in Belgium and its impact on an SME’s internationalisation

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Abstract

This thesis aims to connect the fields of multilingualism and internationalisation by studying language strategies of SMEs located in Belgium. Thereby the access to foreign networks in relation to internationalisation theories and the role of language capabilities and multilingualism is examined. This combination of different academic fields in international business and linguistics has previously not been studied satisfyingly and this research thus furthermore provides theoretical and managerial implications in this matter. Hence, this study addresses the briefly presented knowledge gap by answering the research question:

*What effect does the multilingualism in Belgium have on an SME’s internationalisation?*

The two following sub-research questions have been raised additionally to ensure the ability to answer the main research question:

1. *What is the impact of the multilingualism in Belgium on an SME’s liability of foreignness when going international?*
2. *How does a language strategy support an SME’s internationalisation process and create a multilingual capability?*

Empirical data is collected both qualitatively by interviewing three Belgian SMEs and quantitatively by analysing secondary data of 30 Belgian company websites and their vacancy job postings, to provide answers to these questions. The findings are analysed by applying a conceptual framework, which was created by the authors.

The study’s findings summarise the presence of multiple individual language capabilities and highlight the lack and importance of institutionalising these in the SME. This step is vital to successfully access foreign networks and overcome liability of foreignness. Moreover, firm capabilities in relation to the SME’s industry are significant for the accurate implementation of a language strategy. Besides, the results show a crucial role of English in international business.

**Keywords**

*Internationalisation, internationalisation theories, SME, multilingualism, language strategy, capabilities, language capabilities, Belgium.*
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1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the study will be introduced, providing an overview of the multilingualism in Belgium and briefly pointing out the need for a language strategy within international business. First, the societal background in Belgium is discussed, before a problem discussion of the current academic literature is presented. The chapter further includes the research question, the study purpose and delimitations within the field. Lastly, to give the reader a more in-depth view of the phenomenon, a case study context will complete the introduction chapter.

1.1 Background

Over many decades, people, communities and cultures around the world have come in closer contact with each other than ever before. This increased interaction, provided by communication technologies, transportation political efforts, is called globalisation (Globalpolicy.org, 2018). Although there seem to be tendencies in the world like political uncertainty, protectionism and lack of trust in global institutions still remaining, increased levels of globalisation is still the future according to Ghemawat (2017). Despite the dream of a global free economy and a borderless world seeming far away, the author describes that internationalisation is still crucial for companies. Furthermore, the author states that a good strategy to enter a market that is preferably close in culture, distance and administrative structure, is still the key to become a successful company in this globalised world.

With the increasingly international interaction as a result of this globalisation, comes the issue of languages. Understanding the markets and allowing the transfer of knowledge is an essential part of international business and language skills play a crucial role in this (Brannen, Piekkari & Tietze, 2014). Although there are many large international firms that deal mostly in English, the majority of smaller local companies simply operate in their local language (Jolin, 2014; Steyaert, Ostendorp & Gaibrois, 2011). For this reason, there is a growing awareness in companies around the world towards language skills and training (McMunn, 2017). These language capabilities are what is holding the social capital of a firm together, which in turn results in a decisive factor in the success of a firm.
Globalisation and Multilingualism in Belgium

This is where Belgium comes in, according to the Swiss KOF globalisation index (Gygli, Haeg & Sturm, 2018), it is the third most globalised country in the world. This is not surprising considering Belgium hosts the second largest port in Europe (Lloyd, 2017) as well as the capital of the European Union (European Union, 2018). Situated in the centre of Europe, bordering its two largest countries, France and Germany, Belgium has always positioned itself as a neutral trading and exporting nation (De Lapradelle, 1914).

However, Belgium is not only special due to its high level of internationalisation, it is also characterised by a high diversity within the country, especially when it comes to languages. According to Xpats.com (2016), there are 108 languages spoken in the Brussels region alone. But the multilingualism does not stop there, in fact, the whole country is divided into different language regions. Although the details and political and cultural implications are complicated and far-reaching, the situation can be simplified. Flanders, the northern and most populous area of Belgium, prominently speaks a Dutch dialect referred to as Flemish. Brussels, the capital, has two official languages, Dutch and French with the majority being native French speakers. And lastly, Wallonia, which hosts mostly French speakers, except for a very small region in the east where German is the official language. (Export.gov, 2017)

This divides the country into three governing regions, Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels, and three language regions, French, Dutch and German. Although most of the Flemish population speaks French as a second language, only a small portion of Wallonians speak Dutch in addition to speaking French. This also indicates that the division is larger than just the separation of two languages according to Robinson (2015). The country is divided and faces many cultural, economic and legislative differences, which leads to a low level of unification within the small country. Although Belgium has a federal government, it has two very distinct communities (Vogl & Hüning, 2010), which even have their own parliament and government (O'Donnell & Toebosch, 2008).
Despite these potential problems that the division of languages can bring, it is interesting to see what opportunities the multilingualism in Belgium generates to their internationalising companies. Perhaps it is possible to look at languages as a valuable asset that companies can use to internationalise. Language has received substantial attention in international marketing and clearly plays a crucial role in international business operations of companies (f.e. Brannen & Doz, 2012).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are an essential part of the economy and one of the major factors of economic growth (Roy, Sekhar & Vyas, 2016). In a report by the European Commission (2016), Belgium is described as a very successful exporting nation, specifically regarding SMEs. Traditionally, SMEs have a harder time implementing a good and thorough language strategy according to Welch and Welch (2018). Due to their limited financial resources, it is harder to implement invasive strategies and to gain external capabilities. However, in Belgium, language capabilities might be more accessible by having three official languages, which are also the official languages of their neighbouring countries. Therefore, Belgian SMEs may have an advantage in internationalising to neighbouring countries, due to their language capabilities as a result of the country’s multilingualism. Even though the country might be divided in many ways, it may unify in being a country with one of the highest internationalisation potentials.

1.2 Problem Discussion

When switching the focus to an academic view on the above outlined situation, the topicality of the phenomenon appears evident. Speaking more clearly, a nearing and blending of formerly different theoretical fields in the literature derived in the course of globalisation, as it is seen with the importance of language in a business context. Thereby the academic fields of (international) business and linguistics were no longer studied from diverse perspectives, but business academia tied in with linguistic research and the new field of language strategy appeared. To further investigate in this topic, the chapter firstly discusses the current academic research knowledge and secondly highlights the important role of the phenomenon with a practical managerial perspective, concluding with managerial knowledge gaps.
1.2.1 Current Research Knowledge

Language strategy addresses the approach that organisations take on the issue of a multilingual situation and implies an organisation's international dealings, receiving foreign orders, expanding across borders or any other situation of a different language it may face (Welch & Welch, 2018). The overall performance of the company depends on the conducted communication efforts and emphasises a strategic approach to language (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012). As stressed by Brannen et al. (2014), the entangled difficulty between language, its accompanied aspects and the developing business activities is decisive for international competitiveness. Language strategy accordingly constitutes an even more vital role in connection with a multilingual home-market, as crystallised in the case of Belgium.

To this effect, the multilingual external environment of a company in Belgium should be emphasised deliberately with a language strategy. By reacting strategically to the organisational environment, language capabilities incorporate an expedient factor (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997), benefiting the internationalisation of Belgian companies. Besides, this strategic approach is especially crucial for SMEs due to their limited resources (Peel & Eckart, 1997). The underlying core theoretical ideas addressing the above outlined current phenomenon involve a resource based view of the firm, thus profitably approaching distance factors during the internationalisation process of firms, as described by Johanson and Vahlne (1977; 2009).

As a result of the focus shift and convergence of linguistics and business, there are several publications highlighting a strategic approach to language as a competitive advantage, as is done by Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011). In their paper, language barriers between the headquarter and subsidiary and possible solutions to overcome these, are empirically tested. Language strategy and its role during the internationalisation process is analysed in the same manner by Welch and Welch (2018). The authors classify language coping mechanisms as strategic actions, answering to the multilingual environment encountered during the internationalisation and thus result in a language capability.
Furthermore, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) generally point out the lack of theory examining the strategic role of language in a business context and claim that many organisations solely view language as taken for granted. They propose two different strategies, on the one hand, a multilingual approach and on the other hand the implementation of English as a corporate lingua franca. Even though they stress the comfort and ease of a corporate English language for international companies, a multilingual business environment can better involve distinct country and employee language specific strengths. English as an additional bilingual company asset is likewise stressed by Brannen et al. (2014) in an everyday working environment of international companies.

However, despite touching upon the topic of multilingualism as a given result due to internationality, none of the mentioned papers includes a multilingual strategic corporate approach.

Comparable to this, analysing the literature on multilingualism, publications mostly investigate merely the field of languages in a multilingual region, but do not address possible opportunities for international companies with regard to a multilingual language strategy. Franceschini (2011) for example, points out an individual competence-gain with the acquisition of several languages, resulting in a multi-competence installation. A societal look on the phenomenon is added by Cenoz (2013), who gives an overview of the dimensions and types of multilingualism in general. Moreover, the inclusion of a business environment is accurately described by Gunnarsson (2014), who identifies aspects of workplaces in multilingual regions in Europe, including migration and diversity management in her investigation. Interestingly, Janssens and Steyaert (2014) suggest a multilingual franca perspective with the use of a mixed-language strategy in a global work setting.

Linking the topics of an external environment view regarding multilingualism and the internal strategic reaction with language strategy, a resource based view can be presented and thus a profitable adoption of capabilities. Cooren et al. (2011) illustrate language capabilities as an important driver of current operations, as they are the tools to connect to the market and are the core aspect of an organisation. Brannen and Doz (2012) suggest language capabilities as crucial assets in this
regard since language will allow or deny easy access to new markets and differences may constitute a vital entrance barrier for companies when going international.

1.2.2 Managerial Knowledge Gaps

As a result of the globalisation and integration of market borders, international business strategy evolved to a target aspect of companies from both mature and emerging markets. The consequence of this international process implies versatile challenges and attractive opportunities at the same time. Aside from the most obvious advantages as the easy accessibility of knowledge and resources, languages still appear as country specific barriers and thus require an effective bridging measure (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012). First international actions of SMEs entail several risks and uncertain challenges, therefore it might be feared by managers. Internationalisation generally forces firms to overcome the so-called liability of foreignness, which means that companies need to address the financial barrier, which is created by the situation of a different environment abroad regarding institutions, geographical distance, but also language accordingly (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Almodóvar and Rugman (2015) describe that later research argues that the opposite force of the liability of foreignness are the firm specific advantages, which generates a competitive advantage and results in an incentive of going abroad. For an internationally operating firm, the advantages should outweigh the liabilities in order to have successful operations and hence, the following issues need to be addressed by managers.

Developing a functioning language strategy in a multilingual environment constitutes a challenge for companies and includes the recruitment of multilingual employees. Additionally, as described above, the implementation of a language strategy for organisations located in multilingual regions is not rare, but its role during the internationalisation has so far been neglected. Hence, another topic global companies need to face is understanding the role of language, which may decrease international barriers when going abroad. Moreover, fruitful capabilities can only be developed, when the specific company assets, including language diversity, are appropriately included in the internationalisation strategy and the newly generated international environment. Managers thus need to consider these
strategic challenges and accordingly include their possible advantageous multilingual environment during the internationalisation journey.

This study therefore analyses the above presented managerial knowledge gaps regarding the role of a multilingual language strategy when expanding internationally. Furthermore, it addresses the importance of language capabilities, which previously has not been studied satisfactorily in international business. In this regard, an internal strategic fit to the external multilingual environment by understanding the internationalisation barriers, as proposed by Johanson and Vahlne in the reviewed Uppsala model (2009), as well as the effectuation theory by Sarasvathy (2001) and additionally the main approaches to the network theory, is presented as a theoretical framework. The research will also point out practical tactics of SMEs, which already internationalised, to managers of companies in a multilingual region, intending to expand internationally.

Concluding, this paper contributes to the knowledge gap regarding the role of language strategy of SMEs in a multilingual region during the internationalisation journey by studying language capabilities in the context of the behavioural approaches of internationalisation strategies. The current literature on language strategy within international business theory focuses on multinational companies featuring greater resources, hence, this study intends to outline distinct measures for SMEs, benefiting their internationalisation.

1.3 Research Questions

According to the above demonstrated theoretical research gap and managerial challenges, the following research questions were developed:

**Main Research Question:**

*What effect does the multilingualism in Belgium have on an SME’s internationalisation?*
Sub- Research Questions:

1. What is the impact of the multilingualism in Belgium on an SME’s liability of foreignness when going international?
2. How does a language strategy support an SME’s internationalisation process and create a multilingual capability?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyse multilingualism and its role for Belgian SMEs expanding abroad. The strategy and implementation of a language strategy as an internal organisational reaction to the existing external multilingual opportunities and challenges are investigated and aims to provide a better understanding of the role of language in international business. Hence, the authors intend to provide knowledge about the combined effect of language strategy and capabilities, linking the company with the international business environment. This will be done through a qualitative study of three Belgian business-to-business (B2B) SMEs.

1.5 Delimitations

Despite the fact that language closely correlates with culture, the study does not include other cultural aspects. Thus, in this paper, the authors restrict their focus on language and neglect any other cultural factors that may influence the international performance. Furthermore, the importance of a corporate lingua franca in multilingual regions will not be part of the research, but the focus merely lies on a multilingual strategic approach.

1.6 Case Study Context

The case study for this thesis are SMEs in Belgium that have successfully established international operations. Belgium is a country with a population of 11.2 million inhabitants in Western Europe, bordering France, Luxembourg, Germany and the Netherlands. Belgium has one of the highest incomes per capita in Europe and derives much of its income from services, but still has a significant manufacturing and agricultural sector. (OECD, 2018) Additionally, Belgium has
the second highest exports in value per capita of the European Union and according to OECD data, over 70% of this is generated by SMEs (OECD, 2018), which clearly indicates the importance of Belgian SMEs in an international context.

Belgium is a truly multilingual country, as it has three official languages, French, Dutch and German. In addition to that, a large proportion of the population speaks English (Ec.europa.eu, 2012). As investigated in a survey, conducted by the European Commission in 2012 (Ec.europa.eu, 2012), 38% of Belgium’s inhabitants are using at least two different languages at work. Moreover, 27% stated that they are able to talk in three or more languages. Surprisingly, the 60% of Dutch speakers also have French language skills, while only approximately 20% of the native French population can speak Dutch (Robinson, 2015). Similarly, in Flanders, 53% of the population speaks English, while in Wallonia this is only 17% (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2006). In Belgium, however, companies do not only face barriers of internationalisation when going abroad, they are also confronted with linguistic, cultural and even institutional differences within the boundaries of the home country Belgium.

For these reasons, Belgium is an excellent case for this thesis, as it contains a large multilingual population and neighbouring countries, in which these languages are spoken. The aim of this thesis is to use the successfully internationalised firms in Belgium as a case to test the links in language in SMEs and internationalisation.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the theoretical approaches and frameworks within the literature in a critical and thematic manner. It is divided into four main parts and comprises the main theories of firstly, internationalisation strategies and the importance of capabilities, secondly, multilingualism is further discussed and afterwards language strategy is presented as a strategic reaction to the formerly described theories. Lastly, a final part summarises the chapter and concludes with a conceptual model.

2.1 Internationalisation

Internationalisation is the process of increased expansion of business or activities on the international markets. There are many theoretical approaches discussing its influencing factors and the ability to use this to the advantage of firms. (Susman, 2007) There are two main streams of internationalisation theories, being the behavioural and economic approach. The behavioural approach, or the process approach, looks at the decision making and strategic results of experience and knowledge (Hermannsdottir, 2008). Going international is a risky undertaking for firms, due to the different environment and possible limitations in market knowledge (Johanson & Vahlne, 2013). Due to their limited resources, SMEs may need to be extra careful concerning their internationalisation, since the risks involved are potentially larger than for bigger companies (Peel & Eckart, 1997) and the social capital of the firm can be a decisive factor for success. However, there are several theories found to be especially applicable to the current research of internationalisation strategies in relation to multilingualism. One of the theories that is part of the behavioural approach and that will be used in this thesis, is the Uppsala model, which was originally proposed in 1977 (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977) and later revised multiple times by the same, as well as other authors (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Vahlne & Johanson, 2013; Yamin & Kurt 2018). The model approaches internationalisation as a gradual process by overcoming increasingly larger barriers. Another approach is the internationalisation theory based on the concept of effectuation, as proposed by Sarasvathy (2001). Effectuation looks at firm decision
making from a viewpoint of current capabilities and the situation in the environment, from which a strategy and goals are made. This theory has been applied to the internationalisation strategies of firms to better understand the underlying decision making process (Chetty, Ojala & Leppäaho, 2015; Galkina & Chetty, 2015).

Lastly, the behavioural approach often includes the network theory, which is especially relevant for SMEs, due to their limited resources (Sullivan Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). Although later versions of the Uppsala model also include the network theory, this theory by itself has a stronger emphasis on the sharing and linking of capabilities, resources and activities (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Coviello & Munro, 1997).

2.1.1 Uppsala Model

The original Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977) is a theory stating that in order to do business abroad, firms need to overcome the so-called liability of foreignness. This means that companies have to address the knowledge barrier, which is created by the situation of a different environment abroad. This includes factors regarding institutions, geographical distance, but also language accordingly. Moreover, the challenges of internationalisation are well documented in academic research and include economic, cultural, geographic and institutional elements (Rugman, Verbeke & Nguyen, 2011).

Johanson and Vahlne (2013) describe in their latest addition to the Uppsala model the importance of relationships and knowledge to become an insider in foreign networks, in addition to improving overall operational capabilities. The later revisions of the Uppsala model have put more emphasis on the ability to create and maintain a network of business relations that provides access to resources such as knowledge. Although lack of knowledge can still be a limiting factor, the main liability is in networks and relationships, rather than geographical location, due to the increased globalisation (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Vahlne & Johanson, 2013). This model, referred to as Uppsala-2, takes an increased network approach, rather than the geographical approach of the first Uppsala model. Therefore, network and relations in another industry are the limiting factors, in contrast to physic distance. Moreover, the importance of cost reduction is repeatedly stressed, as being of
significant value in doing business abroad, which is of relevance in relation to language capabilities and language strategy. By looking at the Uppsala model, the internationalisation barriers and success factors can be analysed while taking the factors, deemed relevant for this report, into account.

The Uppsala model focuses on the barriers, or liabilities, that firms have to cope with in order to internationalise (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Later research argues that the opposite force of the liability of foreignness are the firm specific advantages, which generate a competitive advantage and result in an incentive for going abroad (Almodóvar & Rugman, 2015). For an internationally operating firm, the advantages should always outweigh the liabilities in order to have successful operations abroad. Correspondingly, a firm should aim to keep the liability low by finding solutions to internationalisation barriers, as well as creating a competitive advantage over local players. Language capabilities may contribute to both the reduction of barriers (Welch & Welch, 2018) in addition to generating a competitive advantage (Rugman et al., 2011).

However, although not specifically discussed, the earliest version of the model gained significant attention and detail with the inclusion of the network theory in later additions and revisitations (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Yamin and Kurt (2018) revisit the Uppsala model and draw a link to the social network theory. In their article, they describe the investments that outsiders need to commit to gain insidership in a foreign market. Relevant in this article is the integration in a foreign social network and the possible influence of language in that context.

When analysing the original Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977), it becomes evident that commitment decisions are directly related to market knowledge. The model outlines that the factors hindering the information flow from market to market, are the forces that hold back internationalisation. Language is one of these factors and following the model, the capability of multiple languages should be an advantage in pushing forward internationalisation. In the Uppsala-2 model, this becomes even more relevant with the added emphasis on networks and thus, communication. Almodóvar and Rugman (2015) confirmed this by analysing the Uppsala-2 model and verifying it with a large data set. In this study, language was
found to be a contributor in avoiding outsidership, the performance of internationalisation efforts and the intensity of partnerships.

2.1.2 Effectuation

The effectuation theory was introduced by Sarasvathy (2001) to oppose the idea of causal reasoning in favour of decision making, based on firm capabilities and the environment. Whereas causal reasoning indicates that decisions are made based on a goal or target and the strategy to achieve those, effectuation looks at the tools a firm has to operate in an environment and bases strategy on the result of that. This means that the strategy or goal of a firm is decided last, after all the characteristics of the firm and the environment are analysed, involving trial and error. This makes the model more flexible and adaptable in a changing environment. Since this model focuses more on the utilisation of capabilities, instead of aiming for maximum opportunity, it has a strong focus on cost reduction and minimising possible losses. Together, this makes it extra applicable to the subject of language capabilities in the context of the internationalisation of SMEs.

The core principles related to effectuation, as described by Sarasvathy (2001), are that a firm must first look at who they are, what they have and what their network is. Cooperating with other parties that are trustworthy, goes along with it, as more partners minimise possible losses and expand the network. So in many ways, this builds and expands on network theories that describe the importance of relationships and networks in foreign markets for internationalisation strategies (Jansson, 2008).

Sarasvathy et al. (2013) were the first to apply the effectuation theory to an internationalisation context and with that, also link it to the Uppsala model. The article states that foreign uncertainty, limited resources and especially network relationships have significant overlap between the two theories. Chetty, Ojala and Leppäaho (2015) found that there are similarities in the effectuation and Uppsala model regarding the slow and incremental expansion to other countries. Galkina and Chetty (2015) explore the idea of the unintentional effect of networking by analysing the Uppsala and effectuation theories. Foreign business networks are created by partners that show interest and that eventually prove to be valuable,
rather than pre-planned networks. This results in firms internationalising to countries, where strong networks are built up, due to opportunities from committed networks. This combines the insiderness in networks, as described in the Uppsala-2 model (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) with the effectuation theory that builds on networks and the decision making based on capabilities and partners.

2.1.3 The Network Theory of Internationalisation

The network theory aims to explain internationalisation by putting network relations central in a firm’s international expansion. The resources in a network provide market knowledge and the ability to recognise opportunities, which are supplied by all players in the market, such as institutions, suppliers and competitors (Coviello & Munro, 1997; Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). The network theory looks at the entire market as a network of connections and relations, in which every relation serves a different goal, such as market intelligence, technological advantages, connections to other networks and all kinds of other resources (Hadley & Wilson, 2003).

Networks are especially valuable for SMEs due to their limited set of resources and existing partners. Coviello and Munro (1997) describe that smaller firms are often able to use the network of larger firms and can thus find an entrance to a market abroad. It is argued that the external resources in the network are as important as the internal resources, which is an advantage for SMEs considering that their internal resources may be limited but their external ones are not (Glückler, 2005).

This then goes hand in hand with the Uppsala model and the network aspect discussed in the later versions, written by the authors Johanson and Vahlne (2003), in which the network is the motivational factor, potential limitation and generally the main aspect in internationalisation. In this sense, the network theory looks at other markets not as foreign markets with their own specific characteristics, but rather different networks with different characteristics and relations. Hence, the main challenges in internationalisation are the managerial challenges that come with establishing and maintaining a network (Glückler, 2005; Johanson & Vahlne, 2003). Consequently, internationalisation is never the effort of a single firm, but rather the result of formal and informal networks taking a step abroad (Mtigwe,
2006). This approach therefore looks at internationalisation as a more natural process that is the result of the environment and changing networks in domestic and foreign countries. This works for the benefit of SMEs, as they can benefit from the larger networks from partners and thus lowering entry barriers to foreign markets.

When taking all the discussed theories together and applying these to the situation in Belgium, the Uppsala model is especially applicable since all countries with a geographical proximity, speak one of the official languages of Belgium. This then has an effect on the incremental increase of networks, as described by Galkina and Chetty (2015), which connects to the Uppsala-2 model (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). The networks allow firms, especially SMEs, to have easier access to market knowledge and resources, and thus find easier market access (Coviello & Munro, 1997; Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). Following these models, increased network relations should increase the incentive and market commitment of the firm, when taking steps in expanding abroad. Brannen and Doz (2012) describe the importance of local language competences when it comes to entering a foreign market, which supports the idea of liability of foreignness. Not only does the formal language matter, the informal language also plays a key role in understanding the market and creating valuable networks, which completes the connection to the Uppsala-2 model.

2.1.4 Capabilities
According to the resource based view, as described by Barney (1991), firms gain sustained advantages from applying strategies that optimise the use of their internal capabilities. This means that a firm's performance is largely dependent on internal characteristics, rather than external forces. However, resources can only provide a competitive advantage when they are specific to the firm, and not available to the entire market. One of the possibilities, as described by Barney (1991), is the ability of a firm to obtain a resource depending on unique historical conditions. This is relevant for this study, as language can be seen as a valuable capability, specific to the Belgian firms due to historical and geographic reasons (Barney, Wright & Ketchen, 2001).

As described by Easterby-Smith and Prieto (2008), operational capabilities are seen as the current resource that the firm has access to, to successfully operate business.
The ability to process external information is of special interest, as it closely relates to language capabilities that enable the understanding and detection of information (Teece, Pierce & Boerner, 2002) and in a broader sense, this means that language may incorporate a capability, which is seen as the profitable social capital. Hence, language capability is one of the main drivers of current operations, as they are the tools to connect to the market and are the core aspect of an organisation (Cooren et al., 2011). According to Welch and Welch (2018), language capabilities are a valuable asset for every multinational company and research done by the European Commission (2006) suggests a correlation between language and current export performance.

However, in addition to this, language is a capability since it will allow or deny easy access to new markets. This is due to the fact that language differences may constitute a significant barrier in some markets and in extreme cases even a vital entrance barrier (Brannen & Doz, 2012). Thus, by having access to multilingual resources, companies can avoid these barriers and have an improved response to the market.

Hurmerinta, Nummela and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki (2015) found out, by analysing the Finnish food sector, that language skills can create a ‘knowledge corridor’. This corridor allows decision makers to recognise opportunities abroad and understand the situation in foreign markets. However, the report states that foreign language knowledge can also create a corridor that makes the decision focus only on the market where one possesses the language skills, and ignores all other markets, thus creating a blind spot. The result of this is that on the one hand, a similar language in another country opens up the possibilities for an improved capability in that market through the knowledge corridor. On the other hand, the language capabilities also create a limiting capability for other markets, since the knowledge corridor focuses only on similar language markets, but ignores other markets. In conclusion, Hurmerinta et al. (2015) show that multilingual capabilities can improve capabilities in some country markets, but harm others. Strategic reactions to successfully incorporate and manage these language capabilities will be discussed below in the chapter addressing language strategy.
After investigating the theoretical internal asset of a company, the capability, which may enable growth by employing the beneficial social capital language of the SME, distance aspects during the internationalisation have to be taken into account, regarding a successful internationalisation performance. There has been a variety of literature over the years describing different modes of entry and internationalisation strategies (Olejnik & Swoboda, 2012; Sarkar & Cavusgil, 1996).

2.2 Multilingualism

Multilingualism is not a recent phenomenon, but already in the Middle Ages for example, multilingual skills were needed to translate studies from Greek and Arabic scholars into Latin (Cenoz, 2013). The term itself has evolved in the linguistic field of academia and means using more than one language in social, institutional and individual fields of communication on a regular basis. Thus, it may include national, regional and minority languages, as well as sign languages and dialects likewise. (Franceschini, 2011) In this paper, multilingualism refers to the existence and use of two or more officially recognised languages in one country such as Dutch, French and German in Belgium.

2.2.1 Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism as Drivers for Multilingualism

In the course of globalisation, increased mobility and the invention of new technologies, multilingualism, covering both an individual and societal perspective, was studied not only in linguistics but also became a central research field in international business studies (Cenoz, 2013), which will be the focus in this paper. Janssens and Steyaert (2014) identified pertinently the causal overlapping of multilingualism and the ongoing development of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. They argue for an interdependence between local and global and hence, see language as a local aspect in a global business network. By following Featherstone's (2002) discussion on cosmopolitanism, a global democratisation disrupted the strictness and insuperableness of country borders and nation-state limitations as a phenomenon of the twenty-first century. A result of this focus shift and global development is the need of rethinking and reorganising affiliation in general and corporate structures specifically, which is perceivable in the
implementation of various transnational organisations such as Amnesty International, the European Union and the World Trade Organization (Janssens & Steyaert, 2012).

One aspect of cosmopolitanism can be seen in “the cultural dimension of living and working in a global and mobile world” (Janssens & Steyaert, 2012, p. 65) and may be defined as an impartial approach to different languages and the willingness to make use of these in an international context. An anthropological mindset in this regard, emphasises unbiased intercultural experiences and a quest for differences in contrast to uniformity (Hannerz, 1990). When analysing research on bilingualism in well-paid jobs and well-educated professionals, Day and Wagner (2007) emphasise an uncomplicated moving between jobs and countries of “bilingual professionals”, who are characterised by a non-belonging to one specific country on account of their active commitment in the labour market. Another possible explanation for “bilingual professionals” is given by the authors regarding employees using a second language professionally.

The topic is further complicated with respect to a globalisation approach, where local particularities in international business seem to get neglected, while global marketing and corporate strategic decisions are favoured. Hence, the question is how various local aspects as are seen in language, can be addressed with a global mindset, benefiting a multilingual working environment. For Belgian SMEs, this means not to follow a lingua franca concept, but to implement a strategic multilingualism in the organisation, aspiring an inclusion of the coexisting languages Dutch, French and German. (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014) Thus, the importance of language in the context of culture is actively supported and may be transferred accordingly during the internationalisation in the bordering countries France, the Netherlands and Germany.

2.2.2 Dimensions of Multilingualism and the Role of Power

Language competencies in today’s business world are often crucial due to a bigger focus on services and information (Gunnarsson, 2013). Top positions and low-paid jobs are likewise affected by this trend and organisations therefore stress the
importance of multilingual competencies, bridging the individual with the societal language aspect.

However, multilingualism may comprise both an individual and societal perspective simultaneously, since individuals living in a multilingual area have a higher chance of speaking more than one language than individuals of a monolingual society (Cenoz, 2013). As a result, a corporate multilingualism implicates the multilingual skills of the individual employee but is embedded in the organisation in a societal perspective.

Beyond that, Franceschini (2011) adds two additional dimensions by introducing an institutional level of multilingualism and a so-called discursive multilingualism. She depicts these dimensions as follows: The first dimension, the societal level, evolved in a macro view and expresses the presence of multilingual societies such as the Belgian, which exist due to the steady historical language groups. The second dimension means the institutional perspective to multilingualism and addresses institutional aspects such as official company documents or the communication between a doctor and his patient in a hospital. Furthermore, the third dimension comprises individual language skills and hence, the individual perspective to multilingualism. Since all three dimensions causally influence each other and are even overlapping to some extent, Franceschini recommends a fourth dimension, the discursive multilingualism, which stresses the observable oral and written communication in an explicit way. Discursive multilingualism highlights informal group communication and the implementation of sense in a dialogue and thus, excludes individual language skills. One example for this fourth dimension of multilingualism is stated by the author in the “lingua franca” approach.

When having a closer look at the individual level of multilingualism dimensions, the interdisciplinary topic gets further complicated with regard to diverse positions on dialogues in foreign languages, depending on the person’s fluency. Given the fact that language entails a close connection to the building and maintaining of relationships and trust (Welch, Welch & Piekkari, 2005), a synergy between power and language skills is displayed.

Basically, languages are competencies on the individual level and the skills implicate power due to the thus generated opportunities regarding the control of communication. Hence, language competencies may “empower” or “disempower”
communication resources and according to Vaara et al. (2005) are associated with professional competence. The authors furthermore point out that this can affect the structure of social networks in the organisation.

Welch et al. (2005) demonstrate language power in the example of a multinational company and highlight a possible positive influence of the individuals and groups featuring fluency in the key language. Thereby language skills may enable access to strategic information and an active opportunity on deciding what kind of information will reach the headquarter of the company in the role as the communication-leader across departments originates. Besides, similarly, language can generate both barriers and opportunities regarding relationship-building and networking that comes along with informal communication (Chiocchetti, 2018). In the same manner, language plays a vital role regarding the belongingness of employees with the corporate identity (Welch et al., 2005) and may be the reason for a feeling of exclusion in the company. Moreover, having a closer look at the peculiarities of SMEs, in many cases decisions are made centrally by a few key-managers who therefore possess a big influence in forming an institutional knowledge-sharing culture, which thus is dependent on the manager’s individual (multilingual) proficiency (Chiocchetti, 2018). Chiocchetti stresses the vital role of personal informal communication in SMEs regarding knowledge transfer and power has a big influence on the accessibility to this knowledge.

Hence, it gets clear that multilingualism cannot be studied only from an individual perspective because of the fact that individual language proficiency may overpower company aims. Accordingly, “language as power” can be reduced with a spread of fluency reaching all employees (Welch et al., 2005) and thus, multilingualism would get institutionalised in the company. Concluding this subject, power relationships regarding language address multilingual social and cognitive competencies of individuals that are embedded in a distinct status of language in a society (Franceschini, 2011) and thereby a connection between multilingualism and multi-competence develops. Yang, Wei and Chen (2008) highlight the relevance of a multilingual knowledge management for countries featuring more than one official language in this matter. The strategic implementation of such a multilanguage-competence and management on an institutional level will be presented
in the next chapter, studying a multilingual language strategy as the outcome of language capabilities.

2.3 Language Strategy

Firstly, it is interesting to note that Chiocchetti (2018) distinguishes between managing language diversity and multilingual knowledge management for SMEs located in a multilingual area. She explains that language diversity can be seen as a profitable aspect for a company, providing a good management of this diversity is pursued and hence, a competitive advantage may occur. In this context, the knowledge based view of a firm is the main driver for competitiveness and a continuous quest for creating, acquiring, transferring and managing knowledge is executed (Grant, 1996) to benefit from the multilingual environment. Moreover, communication practices in SMEs are often informal and direct, resulting in a lack of a strategic organisation of language and a challenge in defining internal knowledge transfer practices (Chiocchetti, 2018). Piekkari et al. (2013) furthermore emphasise the vital role of language regarding knowledge creation. Besides, Chiocchetti (2018) ascertains that multilingual knowledge management studied from a perspective of large multinational corporations can be adopted likewise for SMEs in multilingual regions. However, she points out possible advantages for SMEs in this matter due to their short and feasible face-to-face communication lines, easing knowledge management.

In a systematic review of 264 articles on language in international business, Tenzer, Terjesen and Harzing (2017) identify three different major approaches to the phenomenon in the literature, which are organisational behaviour, economics and strategy. For this study, theories of power relations in the field of organisational behaviour and resource based views concerning strategy will be discussed. However, the big influencers on strategy in the organisation, are those who possess the most power, and thus the strategic and behavioural point of view on language should be combined correspondingly. In other words, from a linguistic perspective, organisational strategy goes hand in hand with language strategy, managing the right use of organisational practices, communication and behaviour, based on shared rules and values (Mantere, 2013). Language therefore incorporates the
strategic regulation of corporate goals and the employees holding language expertise will influence strategic decisions. Nevertheless, these influences on the outcome of the strategy occur not always consciously, but subjective interpretations and reconstructions (Vaara et al., 2005) by the powerful communicators can have an impact on the language strategy. Besides, poor implementation of a multilingual language strategy and a lack of translations may entail hindering strategic circumstances, since only some employees have access to specific knowledge (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012) and thus, the vital role of language and language strategy in a multilingual environment gets clear.

Welch and Welch (2018) specify language strategy as an approach organisations take in multi- or bilingual situations to receive foreign orders, expand across borders or handle any other dealings in a different language successfully and strategically. Therefore, companies in multilingual areas should actively embrace language diversity and include different languages in different local environments, instead of assimilating one corporate language (Janssens, Lambert & Steyaert, 2004). A sophisticated plan on the implementation of the strategy, including distinct rules and guidelines for the language use is vital since otherwise inequality and confusion can arise and employees feel unsure which language to use in what situation (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). The company's dependency on the current situation is also stressed by Welch and Welch (2018) to ensure profitable business operations without loss of integrity.

The “mechanical perspective to language” on the contrary, means a one-sided communication approach, where external translators are not instructed with background and context information on the organisational aims (Janssens et al., 2004) and hence, emotions cannot be transferred, which might lead to a competitive disadvantage due to misinterpretations of the external translators.

However, Welch and Welch (2018) describe a multitude of language strategies ranging from low-cost and simple solutions such as automated (reasoned) website translations to complex and intrusive measures like adopting a common foreign corporate language. Most relevant for this study in the context of Belgian SMEs, are the language similarity pathway and the building of a requisite multilingual capacity.
The language similarity pathway is an approach in which a firm expands to countries that have the same or similar language as the firm’s country of origin (Rugman et al., 2011). Nevertheless, this is neglecting the entire issue of language barriers and thus is not necessarily a strategy, but rather avoiding its implementation. Besides, a procedure like this drastically limits the options for expansion due to the limited number of countries with the same language. However, adapting the theory to the multilingual context of Belgium, this approach seems highly relevant due to the fact that all neighbouring countries use one of the official Belgian languages (Dutch, French and German).

The second suitable language strategy described by Welch and Welch (2018) emphasises the implementation of a requisite multilingual capacity. In this approach, the firm actively tries to acquire several language resources within the firm to cope with demands from other language areas. In this regard, companies can execute different actions to acquire the language capabilities, of which hiring multilingual employees and training are the most common. Evidently, this strategy requires lots of resources to gain access to a wide variety of language capabilities (Peel & Eckart, 1997) and hence, SMEs may face severe difficulties implementing this approach.

To sum up, language diversity can be seen as a capability, provided that a systematic embedding in a multilingual language strategy is present. In the knowledge based view of the firm, companies are constantly aiming at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge to stay competitive (Grant, 1996) and language plays an important role in this implementation. As a result, international company growth is feasible as a result of the firm’s specific social capital, a multilingual language strategy.
2.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, a model was created to apply and link the theoretical approaches and answering the research question (Figure 1). Thereby Belgium’s multilingualism and its effect on an SME’s liability of foreignness are examined and additionally, the role of a language strategy supporting internationalisation processes is analysed. The bases of the literature review are the capabilities of the firm in relation to multilingualism, and in particular the language capabilities. This is also the fundamental concept of the model, as the language capabilities are the key component of the thesis and with capabilities, a firm can build a language strategy in order to internationalise. These capabilities are influenced by the characteristics of a multilingual country, company and environment. In a broader sense, all the capabilities of a firm contribute to successful operations and internationalisation but it is the language capabilities, exploited through the language strategy, that release these capabilities. In a way, the use of language capabilities is the key to unlock the firm specific capabilities and apply those capabilities in a foreign market. These language capabilities lower the barriers to foreign networks and decrease the liability of foreignness, depending on the

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Own model based on the literature review
language characteristics of the foreign market. As discussed in the literature, the access to networks allows firms to gain or develop capabilities and deal with challenges by using their network. Hence, the language capabilities and strategies might result in an improved internationalisation, as described in the literature. The literature discusses the decision making, barrier breaking and networking aspects of internationalisation, in order to analyse which factors are of importance to internationalisation motivation and success. In addition to that, the analysed theory discusses the effects of multilingualism on a firm, as well as the influence of language capabilities. Language strategy does not only let a firm apply their language capabilities, it also improves and strengthens the language capability, hence there is a two way interaction in the model (Figure 1).
3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological approach used in the research and thereby provides certainty that it was implemented in a systematic procedure. Discussion on the structure, strategy and ethical manner to ensure answers to the presented research questions will be outlined with the help of academic literature regarding methodology. The chapter is divided into six main parts, illustrating the research approach, research method, data collection, operationalisation, data analysis and lastly, research quality.

3.1 Research Approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), the research approach gives insight into the connection between theory and research and plays a vital role regarding the aspired outcomes of the study. The major approaches guiding a research consist of the inductive, deductive and abductive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) that each emphasises a different perspective to the study process and thus, needs to be defined specifically. Besides, depending on the used method, qualitative or quantitative, the approach needs to be adjusted (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The distinct characteristic of a deductive approach is the research’s perspective starting from existing theory before analysing and translating the theoretical framework in a real case afterwards (Patton, 2002). Given the fact that Belgium’s multilingualism is a real life phenomenon and the specific case seems unique in various aspects, the deductive approach is not executed. Furthermore, an inductive approach on the contrary, tries to generate theories explaining the collected data, which is grounded on observed patterns and regularities and thus, the theoretical discussion is the result of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Even though that this study shows some similarities to the inductive approach, this paradigm is not entirely satisfying, since it assumes generalisations and rules from a data pool of several cases (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In other words, a real life phenomenon was recognised in the Belgian society and possible clarifying theoretical assumptions are used subsequently and hence, neither of these two approaches fit perfectly. To be able to draw grounded conclusions in this study, an abductive approach is taken, allowing to combine the other two types of research approaches.
(Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In this regard, interactions between theoretical frameworks and practical empirical findings are feasible and reinterpretations of both the data and theory may be demonstrated concurrently.

The abductive approach allows us to interpret the empirical cases of language strategies in a multilingual society, described at the beginning of the study while comparing and guiding the results to existing theory without precluding possible results. Thereby, the aims that were set for the research, are rigorously realisable and not hindered by the more rigid inductive and deductive perspectives.

3.2 Research Method

In order to support the abductive approach in this paper, insight must be gained in Belgian SMEs and their language capabilities in relation to internationalisation strategy. For conducting research, various methods are possible to acquire information on a topic, depending on the nature of the research (Yin, 2014).

Since this is an abductive research, the authors aim to explain and explore a real life phenomenon that is occurring in the world right now. In order to attain complete and exploratory results from the study, a qualitative method is chosen as the main focus of this thesis. This qualitative research is particularly useful to get a complete and meaningful image of complicated and hard to quantify subjects (Leung, 2015).

Since the research aims to combine the hard to define and quantify language capabilities, overall effects of languages and liability of foreignness, the qualitative research is found most suitable. However, due to the relatively small sample size of interviewed companies, it is hard to draw conclusions or to make comparisons, in this case between language regions (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Hence, to overcome this weakness, the study also contains a quantitative research to support the findings, resulting in a mixed-method approach. Since there are aspects of this study that have a very quantifiable nature, such as the demand for multilingualism and the number of company websites that offer translations, a quantitative research is relevant as well. The results collected in this quantitative research are easily translated into numbers and statistics, which will then be used to support the qualitative results (Bryman & Bell, 2015).
3.3 Data Collection

To ensure appropriate results of the presented research problem, the chosen technique for data collection is crucial (Merriam, 2009) and should be in line with the pursued qualitative research method. For this chosen method, data is generally gathered through interviews, observations, as well as documentary analyses (Silverman, 2001), although qualitative interviews of single cases are especially applicable for a qualitative case study (Bryman & Bell, 2011), as in this present research. However, to support the results of the qualitative research method, a quantitative approach is followed additionally.

3.3.1 Sampling Process

**Qualitative research:**

Firstly, regarding the selection of suitable companies to interview, the crucial factors are that the Belgian company features a maximum of 250 employees and already experienced internationality in at least one country. For this study, three different companies are interviewed: Mecaspring, located in Wallonia, is a spring manufacturer with global sales activities and a subsidiary in Bosnia. Transport Joosen is a Flemish logistics solution provider for international road-transport, based in the harbour of Antwerp. Van Hoecke, located in Flanders, call themselves experts in functional furniture hardware and occupy the distributor role for an Austrian manufacturer in Benelux with an additional sales office in the Netherlands, and furthermore manufacture their own products for international sales.

Secondly, according to Merriam (1998), there are several factors that need to be taken into account, when choosing appropriate respondents for the research. These factors include knowledge and relevance of the study topic, which allows the usage of the data regarding the research problem. In this case, this addresses knowledge about the language proficiency of the employees in the company, as well as a potentially implemented language strategy and generically the internationalisation strategy. In this regard, primary data is acquired through interviews with the Sales and Export, Marketing manager of Mecaspring, Olivier Wattiaux, the CFO of Transport Joosen, John Smet, and Van Hoecke’s CEO, Peter Van Hoecke.
Quantitative research:
The sampling process for the quantitative research likewise followed a specific criterion for the chosen companies, which was simply the firm-size. Belgian companies with not more than 250 employees were hence considered.

3.3.2 Primary Data
To gain insight into the proposed research questions, interviews were conducted with the Belgian SMEs that have successfully internationalised in the past and operate in different industries and language areas. Thereby we have determined semi-structured interviews as the main source for our empirical findings to provide first-hand information on the phenomenon. The collection of data is conducted in personal meetings since we believe that this most suitably allows us to acquire the needed in-depth qualitative knowledge by asking both open-ended and closed-ended questions that may result in follow-up questions. (Merriam, 2009) In this context, closed-ended questions provide distinct information, while open-ended questions facilitate profound knowledge on the topic of multilingualism and internationalisation.

The aim of the interview is to get information from different companies on the same questions that are of interest for this research. With the help of an interview guide and on the contrary the opportunity of flexibility regarding its semi-structured format, relevance and an adequate response to the research question is realisable. During the interview, notes are taken and recordings taped to ensure the accuracy of the reported information. (Creswell, 2013)

In the scope of this research, it is only feasible to conduct personal interviews with a limited amount of companies, hence the emphasis lies on the qualitative nature of the research. In the appendix (Appendix B) an overview of the interviewed companies and links to their websites for more information can be found. The interview guide is also shown in the appendix (Appendix A).

3.3.3 Secondary Data
In addition to the qualitative interviews, this research also contains a quantitative part to support the findings. The study includes an analysis of 30 online job applications posted by Belgian SMEs throughout the country. In order to maintain
validity, the number of applications analysed per region is roughly in proportion to the region’s population size. By analysing company size, required and preferred languages, information can be derived regarding the importance of acquiring language capabilities in Belgian SMEs. Using this data, the qualitative findings of the interviews can be supported by a larger data set, which is obtained remotely through the internet. The independent job board glassdoor.com is used to find the postings, as it allows reliable data on company size to be applied during job searches. No other restrictions than company size are made while looking for job applications within Belgium, although the authors are aware that very small local companies such as independent retailers, manufacturing and the catering industry might be underrepresented on online job forums. Additionally, the websites of these companies, found on glassdoor.com, are quantitatively researched regarding available website translations. All data is available in Appendix C.

3.4 Operationalisation

Transferring the theoretical ideas and frameworks into empirical results, gained through perceptions and experiences of the interviewed companies, is the main aim of conducting this research. To facilitate this, it is vital to implement suitable variables to explore specific categories (Bryman & Bell, 2015), which includes the theoretical approaches of internationalisation, multilingualism and language strategy. With the operationalisation of the conceptual framework, the semi-structured interview-guide is developed (Appendix A) and thereby systematically linked to the research field. This prior literature study allows us to ask distinct questions and investigate further in the presented research gap and thus, bridging the theory with a real-life phenomenon. (Potter, 2013) Thereby, the focus is set on language and language diversity in the company and hence, drawing conclusions in connection with the importance of multilingualism and language strategy in the Belgian SME. Moreover, questions addressing internationalisation efforts aim at deepening the knowledge about networks and behavioural approaches of internationalisation that may ease international activities of the SME.

A presentation of the mentioned variables and indicators of the research, relating to the theoretical concepts, is shown in the operationalisation table below.
Table 1: Operationalisation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Concepts</th>
<th>Variables/Sub-Concepts</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internationalisation</td>
<td>Language similarity pathway and the importance of networks</td>
<td>14, 15,</td>
<td>The intention for these questions is finding out about actual internationalisation efforts including the main factors deciding for a specific market entry. The aim is investigating possible connections to language and informal relationships based on language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capabilities and reasoning</td>
<td>16, 17.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingualism</td>
<td>Globalisation and cosmopolitanism</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>With these questions, we want to find out how present multilingualism is in each dimension in the company, how it deals with it during daily business and informal/formal communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice of dimensions and power</td>
<td>6, 7, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Strategy</td>
<td>Knowledge management</td>
<td>11, 13</td>
<td>The questions regarding language strategy aim at exploring the actual strategic answers to multilingualism in context with sharing of knowledge and the role of power. Those questions causally lead to the reasons for internationalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power and requisite multilingual capacity</td>
<td>8, 9, 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own table (based on literature review)

In addition to the semi-structured interview, a quantitative study is conducted to provide the thesis with a larger data set from a wider source. With the gathering of data on language requirements and multilingualism in online job applications, conclusions can be drawn on the importance of language capabilities within the company. Moreover, information on languages the websites are available offers an insight into language strategy and language capabilities of Belgian SMEs.
3.5 Data Analysis

The process of analysing collected data is a decisive step to properly answer the research question (Merriam, 2009) by emphasising certain points of the large data pool and causally connecting the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For this study, the first step is transcribing the interviews in detail to ensure the conservation of all context and emotions during the conversation. Secondly, the empirical data is structured according to our operationalisation, which allows us to accurately combine the data with the outlined theory. Thereby, crucial ideas and concepts are highlighted and codes determined to break down the big amount of data of the qualitative research into meaningful indicators (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Regarding the structure of these findings, we find it to be most effective to categorise them in the same manner as our operationalisation table is outlined, which is 1) internationalisation including strategies and capabilities, 2) multilingualism and the SMEs awareness of this capability and 3) language strategy as a reaction to multilingualism. This categorisation simplifies the process of directly comparing the number of languages spoken in the SME with the entry of international markets. Furthermore, the importance the companies put on language and language strategy is interpreted in connection with multilingual communication efforts in the organisation. Additionally, this coding and categorisation process facilitates comparisons between the SMEs and their strategies (Merriam, 2009).

Besides, the results of the quantitative research are structured and sorted in an additional table (Appendix C), showing language requirements and website translations in a clear manner, to support the research goal, allowing us to analyse and draw conclusions on a bigger scale. Lastly, the presented findings are analysed by connecting our conceptual framework with the empirical data and our own interpretations of the respondents’ narrations and statements. This process allows us to create a clear analysis table, summarising the main ideas and interpretations and facilitating the drawing of conclusions on the topic and answering the research question.

3.6 Research Quality

Trustworthiness and replicability of a study are two crucial characteristics to guarantee valid and reliable data and results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The
research thus must guarantee that the process and results are constructed ethically, truthfully and rigorously, constituting a possible source for future research. Validity, addressing the study’s quality and accurateness, and reliability, concerning the replicability of the research, are decisive measurements for the research quality (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and will be further discussed below. Nevertheless, due to the subjective nature of a qualitative study, relying on assumptions, these two indicators for the research quality are mostly used in quantitative studies (Merriam, 2009). To overcome this weakness, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) propose the variables credibility, consistency and transferability as ethical indicators for a qualitative research instead. However, to ensure clarity and not further complicate the subject, credibility and transferability are included by the indicator “validity” and consistency refers to “reliability” in this study.

3.6.1 Validity

A valid study comprises an appropriate and accurate research question, methodology, empirical findings, analysis and conclusions (Leung, 2015) and depicts the reality in accordance with the study outcomes (Yin, 2011). Hence, it is vital to interpret the empirical findings correctly and provide a transparent process. This way subjective and biased assumptions can be eliminated (Maxwell, 2013) and the study thus deemed true. Although generalisations are crucial for a study’s validation, qualitative research limits the extent of generalising, due to its subjective nature (Yin, 2011). This research follows a generic theoretical approach to a phenomenon, which is studied in the exemplary case of Belgium. In this regard, generalisations may be made for SMEs in multilingual regions of developed countries. To ensure validity furthermore, Patton (2002) proposes triangulation, which is the combination of several data collection methods and thus, ensuring credibility and decreasing the risk of errors. In this study, the combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach supports valid results relating to this. In addition, by providing both open- and closed-ended questions during the interview, we assure not to influence and guide the findings in a certain way. The transcript of the data is sent to the interviewees after the meeting to ascertain credibility and “respondent validation” furthermore (Maxwell, 2013).
To reduce bias and subjective interpretation of the findings, the two authors interpret the data independently, but are in constant discussion, comparing the conclusions and analyses afterwards (Patton, 2002).

The transferability of a study implies the inclusion of a theory and methodology chapter, discussing the context of the research in depth and hence, generating validity regarding possible comparisons or references of other researchers, focusing on a different topic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At the same time, the weakness aroused by the limited amount of respondents in a qualitative method (Bryman & Bell, 2015), can be overcome and help the reader putting the results into an appropriate perspective. However, as argued earlier, language and language proficiency can be measured with clear variables and a valid transferability of this study thereby is ensured by providing transparency and detailed descriptions and tables of the interview-guide, secondary data of the quantitative analysis and additional sources in the appendices. Furthermore, audio files and interview transcripts of the recorded interviews can be provided by the authors upon request.

3.6.2 Reliability
Similar to transferability, is the proof of a reliable source in qualitative studies not definitely identifiable, keeping in mind the quickly changing environment of human interactions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise a consistency between the gathered raw data and a study’s findings to warrant replicability. In this regard, replicability describes a process that guarantees the same results, if a study would be repeated (Leung, 2015).

However, replicating social phenomena in qualitative studies is furthermore difficult, since statements and answers of the interviewed respondents are highly dependent on the contextual set-up of the conversation and Yin (2011) therefore suggests to guarantee consistency concerning the implementation and reporting of the research. Thereby reliability is given through publicly available proof of the research design, showing a clear connection between the raw data and the study's findings. In this sense, the research question is formulated and answered in accordance with the study purpose, literature review and the collected data, ensuring reliability.
Moreover, this study has been continuously supervised and critically observed by an external person and additionally, other external researchers regularly assessed the study during several opposition seminars, ensuring the reliability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter, the relevant data, extracted from the conducted interviews, is presented for each case. The empirical findings are sorted by company, as well as by concept, as presented in the operationalisation table. The companies discussed are: Mecaspring, a global B2B seller of springs, based in Herstal, Wallonia; Transport Joosen, a transportation company located in Antwerp, Flanders; and Van Hoecke, a furniture component supplier and pre-assembly partner from Sint-Niklaas, Flanders. All detailed company information can be found through website links presented in the appendix (Appendix B). Additionally, the relevant and important findings from the quantitative method are presented in the last chapter of this part.

4.1 Mecaspring

4.1.1 Internationalisation

Language Similarity Pathway and the Importance of Networks

Wattiaux explains that the first steps that the Walonian based Mecaspring took into the international market were leading to France, Germany and the Netherlands. Due to the language similarities, it was convenient to find customers in France at first, since it was easier to build up a solid customer relationship. However, as the company grew, the language similarity factor became less important, even though the available language skills are still seen as a beneficial factor during expansion to a new market. Nowadays, most networks are set up in English, regardless of the local language of the partner’s country during internationalisation, but Mecaspring still notices that even though relationships with companies in another language are just as good, the communication might be a bit less direct. This is of relevance, as Mecaspring focuses heavily on custom made products which are highly specific and depending on the demand of the customer. Additionally, no one-time orders can be placed, only ongoing projects, as part of a long term relationship. Another factor contributing to the good establishment of Mecaspring is that the players in the industry are well known to each other and customers are able to find them regardless of language. This is mainly since the industry is mature enough that language is not a relevant factor in recognising a network or creating partners, because English has become the common standard. Therefore, most business is
conducted in English, which diminishes the positive impact of the firm’s multilingualism on internationalisation.

Capabilities and Reasoning

When Mecaspring was founded, they had a mostly European perspective for sales and new customers due to their limited resources. In Mecaspring’s industry, long term relationships with extensive cooperation with customers are necessary, which makes it difficult to immediately expand to countries with a larger distance from them like Spain, Italy, the UK or other parts of the world. Therefore, it was natural to first look at the home market, and the closest countries such as the Netherlands, France and Luxembourg. These decisions, however, were driven by market opportunities such as pricing or competitor activities. Since customer relations are crucial for Mecaspring, one of the competitive advantages, according to Olivier Wattiaux, are their solid language capabilities.

4.1.2 Multilingualism

Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism as Drivers

In international business the most used language at Mecaspring is English, taking into account that the company delivers to 39 countries worldwide. However, in the domestic market, French is the most practised language, as their biggest customer is also located in Wallonia and is French speaking. Considering not only the biggest customer, the sales department is mostly fluent in the three languages English, French and Dutch and some people additionally require perfect German skills during their daily business operations. Besides, it is not only the sales department with several language capabilities, but all office-employees are at least trilingual and all needed language skills are present in the firm's social capital. Interestingly, the three most used languages in purchasing are English, French and German.

Practice of Dimensions and the role of Power

The multilingualism within Belgium is seen as a challenge by some, especially younger, employees, who are not confident in the other languages Dutch and German. This language barrier declines with an increase of foreign language capabilities and even is regarded as an agreeable upside by Olivier Wattiaux
personally, who enjoys the practice of various languages with worldwide customers in his job. The international environment he operates in, motivated him to acquire numerous language capabilities, including French, Dutch, English, German and Spanish, as he finds it easier to communicate with his customers in the local language than in English. Nevertheless, internally at Mecaspring, both formal and informal communication is only performed in French and internal documentation is also merely available in French since all staff members master the local language. Nevertheless, not all employees are Wallonian, but a Croat, who is managing the communication with the subsidiary in Bosnia in Bosnian, Croatian, French and English, and two Flemish people are working at the company.

4.1.3 Language Strategy

Knowledge Management

Regarding the sharing of knowledge, the company uses an intranet and wiki platform, which both are only available in French. No newsletter or company magazine is produced. However, for the communication with the production staff, information is transferred with announcements on paper that can be found on a distinct place in the production hall. Professional translators were hired twice and concerned public and advertising communication means, due to a need for precise and correct language. Otherwise, translations are conducted in-house with the existent language capabilities.

Power and Requisite Multilingual Capacity

Olivier Wattiaux emphasises the importance of language capabilities during his daily work concerning the contact with his customers. Although the company does not actively implement language courses, the interviewee regards it vital for the development of German customers to learn German for instance. However, the company is paying for these language courses that have also been attended by other employees in the past. Foreign language skills are furthermore helpful during trade fairs, where the most used language is English. Moreover, the proficiency of languages (French, Dutch, English, German, Spanish and Italian) and several other abilities of the staff is documented in a data-sheet in the internal wiki, using grading points from one to five, which is assessed by the management. Relating to this,
Wattiaux argues that their biggest competitor does not manage language as efficient as they do and he thus sees the language management as a competitive advantage.

French and English are necessary skills for all job applicants including production workers, due to the fact that the machine-software runs in English. For a job in the sales department, a sales feeling is most important and language capabilities are only the tool for a profitable job. Nevertheless, for office jobs, French, English and Dutch are a must for all applicants and Wattiaux states in this regard: “the more, the better”. Notable is the statement that Dutch skills are needed, since Wallonia’s nearest customers are Flemish people and adversely, Mecaspring is the first supplier for Flemish people. Another interesting fact in this matter is that German was not mentioned, but had to be asked explicitly by the authors. According to Wattiaux, English plays a bigger role than German and he explains that the reason for this are the business partners, who mostly are Flemish or Wallonian and in the international context, English is more present.

4.2 Transport Joosen

4.2.1 Internationalisation

Language Similarity Pathway and the Importance of Networks

In recent years, the strongest network that Transport Joosen operates in is the regional network in the harbour of Antwerp. Due to the characteristics of the logistics industry, it is most profitable and optimal for a company like Transport Joosen to engage mostly within close proximity of their headquarters. For this same reason, the international operations consist mainly of the neighbouring countries of Belgium, being France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany. In conclusion, the decision for the market entry abroad was completely dependent on geographical distance and demand from customers. However, for network and relationship building in some countries, it can be a beneficial factor if the customer can be approached in the native language. This is especially the case with customers in France, as Smet has noticed that they have come to solutions in an easier manner when they have been able to communicate in the native language of the customer. German customers are especially sensitive to network partners that speak the same language, even though Transport Joosen does not possess any German language
capabilities due to the very limited business operations there. Despite all this, language has never been regarded as a considerable barrier for internationalisation or for network building in the perception of the company.

*Capabilities and Reasoning*

The demand in the transport sector has been high for the past two years, thus customers contact the company for solutions and no active salespeople are employed at the moment. After having operated a lot more internationally previously, it has proven to be more lucrative to engage in the strong network within the harbour of Antwerp, due to optimisation reasons. With their current capabilities and market conditions, it is possible for Transport Joosen to maintain a relatively passive stance and focus optimisation and profit margins, rather than (international) expansion. Therefore, with the additional experiences from the past, a strong focus lies on the local network at the moment. For this reason, offers for contracts further away from Belgium are often granted to subcontractors.

4.2.2 Multilingualism

*Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism as Drivers*

Within the company, Transport Joosen is quite international, with employees of ten different nationalities especially concerning the truck drivers, but also in the office, Smet appreciates the internationality and foreign language expertise of some colleagues from Bosnia, France and Italy. However, all other office employees are Flemish and thus, the internal communication in the office is carried out mostly in Dutch and for clarity reasons with the French colleague sometimes in French. Nevertheless, English is the international trucking language and hence vital for the transport business of the SME. Since most of the drivers come from Eastern-Europe, especially Romania, there are many different languages spoken amongst the drivers, while Dutch skills are often not present. According to Smet, German is not important for their business.

*Practice of Dimensions and the role of Power*

The above mentioned French colleague is currently learning Dutch, as most of the communication, both informally and formally, is carried out in Dutch at the office.
Likewise, all documentation is in Dutch, irrespective of the fact that some truck drivers have limited Dutch and English skills, which generates frequent misunderstandings and wrong handling of crucial transport formalities with the Belgian authorities. However, due to the shortage of drivers in Belgium, the company is dependent on Eastern-European employees and cannot expect Dutch skills from the driver-staff. This means, those employees either require English or French skills, for the business in Wallonia and Northern France. As a result, the office employees, especially the transport planners, often need to have English and French capabilities beside their Dutch proficiency.

Smet furthermore states that he feels challenged by the multilingual environment in Belgium in his daily business context and claims that English skills, for example, are already taken for granted during international operations. Besides, generally the communication with Wallonian customers are held in French, but if some colleagues at Transport Joosen are missing French skills, English is sufficient. According to Smet, switching between languages is not problematic, but part of the daily life today and hence, the importance of an advantage due to the multilingualism of Belgium decreased with the individual proficiency of several languages of most Europeans in the last years.

### 4.2.3 Language Strategy

**Knowledge Management**

With the decline of international activities due to the business with subcontractors, professional translators are not hired anymore. Additionally, the internal language resources of French and Romanian are often used for translations, since the translation content is rather simple and does not require professionally experienced capabilities.

Concerning internal communication, knowledge is shared via email or in-person in Dutch and the company does not have an own intranet platform or similar communication means. Depending on the language skills of the driver, orders are given either in French or English.
Power and Requisite Multilingual Capacity

Regarding the question if Transport Joosen actively follows a language strategy, Smet admits that the company can still improve on this matter and language skills are taken for granted without a strategic management. English skills are comparably a basic necessity for job applicants, while other language skills, especially French, are simply seen as a plus without looking for it actively. However, Smet recognises the advantages of the language skills of his colleagues but also claims that such capabilities are not the main criteria when hiring a new employee.

Moreover, besides the offered Dutch course for the French employee, the company organises a so-called “taalbad” (languagebath) for all truck drivers, during which the basic terms for trucking in the harbour are taught in Dutch. This five-day event aims at understanding accident formalities, safety announcements and decreasing misunderstandings with the authorities at the harbour. Although the taalbad is organised by the company, the teacher is from an external language school. However, no other language courses are offered.

4.3 Van Hoecke

4.3.1 Internationalisation

Language Similarity Pathway and the Importance of Networks

The main market for Van Hoecke is, and always has been, the Benelux countries, mainly in their role as distributor for the Austrian firm Blum. Although the Benelux remains their main focus, Van Hoecke also seeks to expand further abroad by actively looking for opportunities that might be valuable for them. This is mainly due to the difficulties of growth in the Benelux because of the already high market share of 75% to 80%.

For the expansion abroad, Van Hoecke mainly uses the well-established and global network of their strongest partner, Blum. The relationship with Blum goes back decades and at this moment, 90% of business depends on this partner. This way, Van Hoecke is able to set up meetings with potential customers in a market where they currently do not have a network themselves, by following this existing business relations. Within this network, markets are mostly chosen by their business opportunities in relation to the manufacturing capabilities of Van Hoecke and not on the language similarity. However, if Van Hoecke possesses the language skill of
a potential market for expansion, this is seen as a significant advantage, as it lowers the entrance barriers in their perception. This also depends on the specific market, however, when doing business in France it is expected to adjust to the local language, whereas in Sweden or Israel it is the norm to operate in English. But also in Italy, the situation is different, where initial contact needs to be in Italian with partners or through translators, whereas later in-person meetings are held in English.

Capabilities and Reasoning

Van Hoecke does not only distribute but also delivers a highly customisable pre-assembled product with 48,000 billion varieties, which can be delivered within 72 hours from the moment of ordering. Due to the B2B context and customisable products, high context communication plays an important role. Despite this, internationalisation decisions are mostly driven by the market, according to Van Hoecke. However, the decision is also largely dependent on the network experience of Blum, as explained in the paragraph above. Based on this and their own market knowledge, meetings are organised and following that, a decision is made whether to enter the market or not.

4.3.2 Multilingualism

Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism as Drivers

According to Van Hoecke, multilingual capabilities declined during the last generations in Belgium and he sees a possible combination with the bigger presence of English. Although English is much used during Van Hoecke’s international business until today internally everything is handled in Dutch only, since all employees with 18 different nationalities are able to speak the local language. Regarding Belgian staff members, there is only one Wallonian employee. Moreover, for the sales department, French skills are necessary, as they have many French speaking customers. Additionally, German plays a vital role in the company, keeping in mind the close collaboration with the Austrian company Blum, especially because Van Hoecke considers the English skills of some Blum staff as not fluent enough. However, if Van Hoecke’s export is growing in the future, a plausible reaction for daily business operations would be adapting to English as a second language, as is claimed by the CEO.
4.3.3 Language Strategy

Knowledge Management

Professional translators are hired for the translations of folders, catalogues and the company website, which according to Van Hoecke, is not enough to be just in English. The website is available in Dutch, French, German, English and Italian. Internally, knowledge is shared via the intranet, which is accessible in Dutch, and an employee magazine, which is additionally sent out to business partners, in Dutch and English, informing about the happenings at the company.

Power and Requisite Multilingual Capacity

When hiring new employees, Van Hoecke generally does not look for specific foreign language skills, however, German proficiency is always gladly seen, especially for product managers and marketers. The reason for that is the close relationship with Blum and communication problems if discussions have to be held in English. Besides, the origin of furniture hardware lies in Germany, Austria and Italy, hence these languages are crucial for the business. Applicants for sales positions need to possess French skills since many customers are French speaking. When asked about Dutch requirements, the CEO highlights this basic necessity for all applicants regarding safety and the smoothness of workflows.
Furthermore, the company offers language courses in German and additionally provided a Dutch course to a Wallonian employee, and an Italian course. This Italian course was visited by an employee in close relationship with an Italian customer, as speaking the local language in Italy is very well appreciated and supports the SME’s business goals. Although these courses aim at employees who will need the language skills during their work, extra spots can be attended by all employees. Interestingly, French courses are not offered but the language is predefined for sales positions.

4.4 Quantitative Findings

Language of Job Postings

Of the 30 open job applications analysed, 13 of the SMEs are based in Flanders, 12 in Wallonia and 4 in Brussels, roughly reflecting the proportion of the population within the country. All but five of these job postings are advertised in the local language of the region where the firm is based in. The remaining five positions are posted in English, of which four are Flemish SMEs and one a Wallonian company. In the Brussels region, two of the jobs are posted in French and two in Dutch, despite being all situated in predominantly French speaking areas of the city.

Table 2: Language of Job Postings per Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies per Region:</th>
<th>Posting Language</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanders 13</td>
<td>Dutch 9</td>
<td>French 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallonia 12</td>
<td>Dutch 0</td>
<td>French 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels 4</td>
<td>Dutch 2</td>
<td>French 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 30</td>
<td>Dutch 11</td>
<td>French 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Own table based on quantitative research*

Required Languages

Of all the companies in this research, 19 request the applicant to have sufficient Dutch language skills in order to apply. For French language skills, there is a similar pattern with 19 companies requesting this skill from their applicants. The demand
for English proficiency is evenly spread throughout the different regions, with a total of 14 out of 30 firms requesting this skill.

Additionally, two of the Wallonian firms request German language capabilities with both of these firms situated near the German speaking area of Wallonia, as well as to the German border. Lastly, there is only one firm that requests another language than the four mentioned previously, namely Spanish.

For the language capabilities of an applicant that employers consider an asset, rather than a necessity, there is a similar pattern as with the necessary ones, although less frequent.

On average, the Flemish firms request the applicant to be fluent in 1.92 languages, which is the same as the 1.92 in Wallonia and higher than the 1.75 in the Brussels region. If we include the languages that a firm considers an asset, a Belgian company requests on average 2.17 languages from their applicants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Required Languages per Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Companies per Region:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallonia 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Required languages in red, preferred in green  

Source: own table based on quantitative research

**Websites**

Of the 30 analysed SMEs, 2 do not have an operational website, despite being companies with current activities. Of these 28 websites, 11 are just available in one language, 5 in English, 4 in Dutch and 2 in French. Six of the websites are translated in both French and Dutch, covering the main languages of the country. Six of the websites are available in French, Dutch and English, as well as one website in Dutch, English and Russian and one in French, Spanish and English.

In conclusion, 60.07% of websites are available in two or more languages and 28.57% in 3 languages.
### Table 4: Website Language Availability per Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies per Region:</th>
<th>Websites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders 13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallonia 11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels 3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 28</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own table based on quantitative research
5 ANALYSIS

The combination of the above presented theory and empirical findings is executed in this chapter, guiding the authors’ interpretations according to the composed conceptual framework. Thereby the SMEs’ internationalisation is depicted as the desired goal and is influenced by several factors during their internationalisation journey. Firstly, multilingualism is analysed according to the corresponding theoretical concept. Secondly, profitable firm capabilities and a matching language strategy are studied and interpreted with regard to the theoretical approach of language strategy. Finally, the last part of this chapter focuses on the access to foreign networks by applying internationalisation theories and the examined ideas of language strategy.

5.1 Multilingualism

Previous research argues a causal overlapping of multilingualism, globalisation and cosmopolitanism (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014), speaking against a lingua franca approach. However, our findings show an increased existence of English in international business of Belgian SMEs in relation to an expansion to more foreign countries. One respondent even stated a decline in multilingualism of Belgian inhabitants during the last years. The bigger presence of English, not only in international business, explains the increased moving between jobs and countries, without belonging to one specific home country (Day & Wagner, 2007), as was recognised by two of the three interviewed companies, both employing staff of at least ten different nationalities. Hence, English eases the communication between international business partners, limiting the aspect of power, which will be further discussed below. Surprisingly, the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism is not applicable within the Belgian country border, as a moving between the areas of Flanders and Wallonia is hardly seen with Belgian employees, even though the second language is respectively used during the communication with business partners from the other language part. Our quantitative research stresses this circumstance furthermore, as 25 out of 30 SMEs posted job vacancies only in the local language of the region.
Nevertheless, outside of Belgium an impartial approach to different languages and the usage of these in international business, as explained by Janssens and Steyaert (2012), is highly accentuated by all respondents of the qualitative research. Relating to this, the SMEs’ sales employees all are at least trilingual and use several languages during daily business operations, which on the other hand, speaks for a connection between multilingualism of SMEs and globalisation.

Cenoz (2013) argues that multilingualism can be discussed both from an individual and societal viewpoint and Franceschini (2011) adds two other dimensions of multilingualism to the discussion, which are the institutional and discursive perspective.

In relation with Franceschini’s approach, one respondent claimed that the Belgians as a society, referring to the first dimension of multilingualism, always try to speak the language of the conversation opponent, which was further accentuated by the fact that all sales employees of the SMEs are fluent in several languages and operate in the language of the customer, whenever possible. However, existing English skills are taken for granted in international business as elaborated above, and since English is not an official Belgian language, the unconcern of switching to this foreign language by the employees of the SMEs, additionally speaks for an effective societal multilingualism within the companies.

The second dimension, importing an institutional perspective, is only implemented to some extent. Even though all three SMEs use at least two languages for external communication means, catalogues or emails for instance, internal documentation of all interviewed companies is only produced monolingually in either French or Dutch, depending on the SME’s location in Belgium. As discussed in the empirical findings, misunderstandings may occur when the institutional language does not match with the individual skills of the employees, as was the case at Transport Joosen. Hence, a successful institutionalisation of individual language capabilities, that are applicable for all employees, is crucial.

This third dimension of multilingualism, on the contrary, individual language skills, are present and numerous within the social capital of the SMEs, as was outlined above and are practised on a daily basis not only in international business operations but also regarding the contact with partners from the other language part within Belgium. However, the country’s multilingualism is seen as challenging by
employees lacking language skills of the other official languages, as was stated by Wattiaux, connecting the third and first dimension of multilingualism. Relating to this, two of the three respondents furthermore claimed and recognised a decrease of the advantageous aspect of Belgium’s multilingualism with an increase of individual proficiency of several languages of most Europeans during the last decades.

Lastly, the fourth dimension, addressing discursive multilingualism, is not applicable in relation to internal communication since the observable group communication in each SME is only monolingual in the language of the region. However, dialogues with customers and business partners outside of the language region are held in the language of the opponent, when these capabilities are present and hence, according to Welch et al. (2005), language skills and power are in close interaction. Moreover, the professional competence of language capabilities is decisive for the activation of communicational resources and the structure of networks (Vaara et al., 2005), which appears in the case of all three respondents. Firstly, Wattiaux explains his ambition in learning several languages including Spanish for a better communication and relationship with his Spanish customers and thus, power influences the structure of social networks. Secondly, keeping in mind the discussed misunderstandings at Transport Joosen, a disempowerment of the truck drivers to efficiently operate, originates due to several reasons: The limited Dutch skills of the truck drivers in relation with the Dutch proficiency of the office staff creates an imbalance, while the presence of only Dutch documentation internally intensifies the problem. Furthermore, Belgian authorities make use of their more powerful position and communicate only in Dutch with the drivers. Finally, Van Hoecke stresses the fact that Dutch is only spoken by a small number of people in the world, forcing Belgian employees adapting to the language of the opponent and hence, disempowering their proficiency in the network compared to a native speaker. Besides, due to the close collaboration with Blum and the multinational’s power, German skills are necessary for Van Hoecke’s business to successfully work with the Austrian partner. Welch et al. (2005) affirm this idea and discuss an influence of individuals and groups in the key language of multinational companies, which additionally empowers access to strategic information and control over the information reaching the headquarter. At the
Wallonian SME, this appears evident, as the Croatian employee manages the communication with the Bosnian subsidiary based on his language skills.

However, at two of the interviewed SMEs, all employees master the local language, which diminishes the relevance of the power of language (Welch et al., 2005). Yet, the one employee without fluent Dutch skills at Transport Joosen is currently learning the language and thereby disempowering other staff members with Dutch proficiency. Multilingualism which is institutionalised in the organisation disempowers these specific language capabilities likewise, as can be seen in the case of Van Hoecke, where French skills are necessary for all sales applicants and are not regarded as an additional asset. Nevertheless, these capabilities are not institutionalised in the third dimension of multilingualism, regarding internal documentation for example.

To sum up, Belgium’s multilingualism is very present in the dimensions of individual skills and obviously in the societal dimension, but is not satisfyingly institutionalised in the organisations, causing an empowerment and disempowerment of certain individuals. In other words, the institutionalisation of multilingual capabilities requires a specific strategic management in the SME to benefit from Belgium’s multilingualism as a firm. This idea implicates a resource based view, aiming at optimising internal capabilities by establishing strategies and hence, gaining sustained advantages (Barney, 1991). Language skills are part of the internal capabilities and thus, need to be strategically managed. This is especially crucial for companies located in multilingual areas concerning a multilingual knowledge management (Yang et al., 2008) as part of the resource based view. To further develop this subject, the following chapter will analyse the strategic management of firm capabilities by applying a language strategy.

5.2 Language Strategy

In accordance with Janssens et al. (2004), companies located in multilingual areas need to integrate language diversity in their strategic approach to competitiveness and thereby apply different languages in different local contexts. All respondents follow this language strategy concerning their external communication and
relationships with business partners, however internally, multilingualism in connection with knowledge management is not implemented. Although two of the three interviewed SMEs share knowledge via an intranet platform, the content of these are only available in the local language. Other internal communication transfer means include email, notice boards and face-to-face dialogues, which are likewise only carried out monolingually. However, Van Hoecke establishes an employee magazine, which additionally to the staff, is sent to business partners in Dutch and English.

Moreover, all respondents confirmed a deployment of professional translators in the past, as demonstrated as a language strategy by Welch and Welch (2018), yet the frequency is dependent on the content’s difficulty. Mecaspring and Van Hoecke make use of external translations in terms of advertising material and similar communication means, while Transport Joosen relies more on internal language capabilities since the content is simple and does not require experienced translation skills. Our quantitative research revealed in this matter that 11 out of 28 company websites were only available in one language. Interestingly, five of these monolingual websites were not accessible in any of the official Belgian languages, but in English, speaking against a multilingual corporate strategy of Belgian SMEs, but for the presented debate of cosmopolitanism. This is furthermore assured by the fact that in total, the number of English available websites (16) made up almost as much as the amount of French (16) and Dutch (17) websites. Regarding bilingual websites, several combinations between English, Dutch and French were present in the data sample and for multilingual website translations, even Spanish and Russian were included, while no company offered a German website. Hence, for Belgian SMEs, German is not included in the language strategy and this capability is not decisive during international operations. Even though Van Hoecke stresses the importance of German during their daily business, this circumstance simply arises due to the relationship with the Austrian company Blum and the specific industry’s focus on Germany and Austria. However, almost a third of the quantitatively analysed SMEs translated their website into three different languages, supporting the idea of a positive influence of Belgium’s multilingualism on a multilingual language strategy.
As discussed above, the resource based view of a firm aims at optimising internal capabilities (Barney, 1991), which is implemented by Mecaspring with a capability matrix, including language capabilities, grading certain language skills. This language management is seen as a competitive advantage by the respondent in relation with the SME’s biggest competitor, lacking such a language strategy. On the contrary, Smet emphasised in this matter, that Transport Joosen takes language skills for granted and he believes that the company could still improve by applying a real language strategy, as was done by Mecaspring. Moreover, an important internal resource is a company’s knowledge and its management, which aims at creating, acquiring, transferring and managing knowledge as much as possible (Grant, 1996). The acquisition of foreign language capabilities plays an important role in that and furthermore eases the process of creating and transferring new knowledge in the business network. A requisite multilingual capacity strategy pursues the goal of acquiring language capabilities by hiring multilingual employees and offering language training (Welch & Welch, 2018).

Firstly, language courses were made use of by the employees of all interviewed SMEs, although only at Van Hoecke frequent German courses are actively offered by the company. However, at Mecaspring and Transport Joosen, language courses for specific employees in need of a certain language were paid by the SME, as it benefits its business goals. One of the three respondents furthermore explained the need of teaching the company’s truck drivers the local language Dutch, which is implemented with a five-day crash course, including the most needed words in trucking at the harbour.

Secondly, the acquisition of language capabilities through the employment of applicants with the desired language proficiency was adopted by all interviewed SMEs. In two of the three companies, English was a necessary skill for all office jobs. The results of our quantitative research however, show that English skills were only asked for in not even half of the job postings, while respectively 19 out of 30 vacancies requested Dutch and French capabilities from the applicants. Besides, German was required in two postings. However, all respondents of the qualitative study stated that the actual jobs skills are most important and language skills are not decisive, but viewed as an additional asset, when deciding for a new employee. The quantitative data reveals that English and French each are favoured four times
as an asset, while Dutch skills are viewed as a plus only in three companies. Recapitulating, on average a Belgian SME requests approximately two languages in a job posting.

5.3 Access to Foreign Networks and Internationalisation

At the start of their internationalisation process, all interviewed companies initially sought expansion to the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg and France. They did this not only because of the geographical proximity, as described by the early Uppsala models but also because of the easier access to foreign networks, as described in the later versions of the model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; 2009). Outsidership is difficult to overcome for SMEs, which appeared especially important when the SMEs were in their initial internationalisation phase. As a result, the markets with the lowest liability of outsidership were chosen first. Mecaspring, as a Wallonian firm, described that it was easier to build up customer relationships in France at first, with the language similarity as one of the reasons, in combination with a lower cultural and geographical proximity.

This internationalisation pattern is especially the case with Mecaspring and Van Hoecke, as they require long term partners due to their specialised and custom products. This requires a high level of interaction and a well-established network, which increases the barriers for internationalisation. This gave the companies an extra incentive to focus first on the markets where the barriers otherwise would not be as high as they could be in a distant market, and thus focusing on markets with a similar language first. The SMEs therefore had an advantage, since they had an option to expand to several different countries from the early onset of their internationalisation, due to the fact that they are proficient in multiple languages. This is in line with the findings of Almodóvar and Rugman (2015) who tested the Uppsala-2 model for the same phenomenon, in which companies experience a lower liability of outsidership in relation to language skills. At Van Hoecke, the respondent points out that their language skills have lowered barriers and helped them execute an internationalisation strategy, depending on the market of entry. This is likewise the reason that Mecaspring recognises its competitive advantage due to their language capabilities, as they can better communicate, create in-depth
relations and create superior networks over competitors since their industry requires such a high level of interaction.

The opposite can be seen at Transport Joosen, where less interaction with customers is required since the transport service is very price based and has little room for customisation, thus interaction with the customer. Even though there is a lower necessity for a strong, long term network, even Transport Joosen has recognised that depending on the market, language skills can help to come to a solution for customers more easily. For this reason, Transport Joosen might have fewer benefits from language capabilities regarding internationalisation, in comparison to companies operating in industries where in-depth relationship building is required. Van Hoecke uses a different approach to internationalisation by utilising the global network of their long relationship partner to enter new markets. As described by Coviello and Munro (1997), this allows Van Hoecke to enter markets with relatively limited resources of their own, which indicates the high value of the existing network the company already has access to. A part of the strength of this network however, is the ability of Van Hoecke to communicate in the native language German with their most important partner. This shows that due to the language capabilities, network establishment and expansion is stimulated and thus allows easier internationalisation with the limited resources that characterises an SME.

Altogether, it seems that for the companies that have advanced and custom products, requiring a high level of interaction, a strong network is of high importance. The communication in the native language within the network, was by none of the companies assessed as essential, although all recognised the positive influence. However, the interviewed companies are not in a language tunnel or stuck in a language similarity path, as described by Rugman et al. (2011). All companies state that market demand is the major reason to seek access to a foreign market. Although this can also be influenced by a lack of market knowledge in a market outside of their networks (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). However, the respondents did not experience a lack of market knowledge in any foreign country due to a possible lack of language skills.
For Mecaspring, the most important factor for internationalisation is the demand from a foreign customer. Since Mecaspring is such a highly specialised company, they emphasise firstly their own capabilities and deny customers that are looking for just one time catalogue orders, rather than the complicated and build to order products, which they usually offer. This is an effectuation approach of decision making, as the strategy depends on the market, network, capabilities and previous experience (Sarasvathy et al., 2013).

Transport Joosen is in the luxury position that internationalisation strategies are not relevant for their business. Due to capabilities and high-demand market conditions, the company can focus on strengthening their own capabilities, rather than actively internationalise. However, when demand comes from a customer abroad, they look at their own capabilities and see if that could be a profitable opportunity for them, thus following an effectuation decision making path to internationalisation, while not actively expanding an international network (Sarasvathy et al., 2013).

In summary, the interviewed firms did experience a benefit in accessing a foreign network, as described by Coviello and Munro (1997), due to their language skills. Especially Van Hoeke and Mecaspring experienced these benefits, as their business requires intense communication to set up a business network. When we then take the Uppsala model-2 (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) into account, we see that this increase in access to foreign networks results in a lower level of outsidership for these companies. Although even Transport Joosen experienced some outsidership in certain markets due to language barriers.

Despite this, none of the interviewed firms implements a language similarity pathway, as described by Rugman et al. (2011), but follows the market regardless of language. Their internationalisation strategy is mainly based on the firm capabilities and demand from abroad, thus having an effectuation approach to their internationalisation (Sarasvathy et al., 2013).

Table 2 summarises the main aspects affecting multilingualism in a Belgian SME and points out several crucial aspects concerning its internationalisation. The main concepts influencing the presence of Belgium’s multilingualism within SMEs constitute two different perspectives. Firstly, external factors impacting the SME from the environment, which are globalisation and cosmopolitanism, the societal, institutional and individual dimension of multilingualism and lastly, the power of
certain groups and individuals due to language proficiency. The second vital aspect controlling the extent of multilingualism in a Belgian SME addresses strategic approaches of the company to manage language diversity, including internal and external knowledge management, training and the acquisition of language capabilities through the employment of certain applicants. Moreover, the impact of networks, outsidership, language similarity pathway and firm capabilities were analysed regarding the internationalisation of Belgian SMEs.

**Table 5: Analysis Table**

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*Source: own table (based on analysis)*
6 CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter is divided into five parts. Firstly, the research question and sub-research questions will be answered according to our analysis. Furthermore, theoretical and managerial implications will be presented with respect to the discussed knowledge-gap. A fourth part highlights limitations of this study and Lastly, suggestions for future research are given by the authors in the final part of the chapter.

6.1 Answer to Research Question

The first sub-research question this study was aiming to answer is: What is the impact of the multilingualism in Belgium on an SME’s liability of foreignness when going international?

Our research showed that an SME’s internationalisation is affected by several factors of the multilingualism in Belgium, which comprises aspects of multilingualism and internationalisation strategies. While cosmopolitanism decreases the presence of multilingual capabilities in the organisation due to a dominance of English, is the impact of globalisation and the first three dimensions of multilingualism (societal, institutional and individual) as well as the role of power highly benefiting multilingualism in Belgian SMEs. In addition to this, the internationalisation concepts of networks, outsidership, language similarity pathway and firm capabilities are vital aspects concerning the liability of foreignness. Multilingualism has a substantial positive effect on creating networks and relations and depends on the available language skills, which are mainly French, Dutch and English, as our research identified. However, the importance of networks differs between industries according to its level of communication and interaction requirements between the business partners, as in industries that have high customisation or advanced products.

The access to networks is furthermore facilitated when outsidership is decreased, which is vital in relation with the SMEs’ initial internationalisation to the neighbouring countries of Belgium, France and the Netherlands in particular, and the language capabilities French and Dutch. However, our results indicated that the underlying internationalisation strategy is not depending on the SMEs’ language
capabilities, but on industry and market conditions, as well as general firm specific capabilities and thus not following a language similarity pathway.

Summarising this, globalisation, the three dimensions of multilingualism and the role of power support the implementation of multilingualism in Belgian SMEs. Furthermore, this multilingual firm capability benefits overcoming liability of foreignness during the internationalisation by making use of the access to networks, reducing outsership and incorporating firm capabilities.

Similarly, the purpose of the second sub-research question asked in the study, was to enable a clear answer to the main research question and is as follows: *How does a language strategy support an SME’s internationalisation process and create a multilingual capability?*

Since the mobility of native language groups within the country is limited, but the demand for multilingual employees is high, we see that companies put importance on the individual multilingual capabilities within the firm. Multilingualism within the SME thereby is highly positively affected by training, language courses and additionally supported by employing individuals with certain language capabilities, despite the increasing importance of English in international business. Moreover, while firms have a pro-active language strategy for external knowledge management, as is proven by their effort in translating websites and hiring translators, internal knowledge management is not conducted multilingually.

Firms therefore aim to apply language strategies to improve multilingual capabilities so that knowledge can be transferred in a business network, benefitting international business goals. As a result, language strategy connects with the first sub-research question and decreases the liability of foreignness with strategic multilingual actions such as knowledge management, language courses and employment of multilingual individuals.

Lastly, our main research question was: *What effect does the multilingualism in Belgium have on an SME’s internationalisation?*

There has been a decrease of multilingual language importance in internationalisation for SMEs in Belgium due to the increase of individual
efficiency of several languages of most Europeans during the last decades. Despite this, available language capabilities are factors in the internationalisation strategy of firms, due to the positive effect on network and relationship building in countries for which the firm possesses language capabilities. Language capabilities are therefore an important organisational resource to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Even though firms recognise the lower barriers and competitive advantages brought by multilingual capabilities, firms do not actively seek out countries or networks for internationalisation based on language similarities. Additionally, our results show that language capabilities are not decisive for the SMEs’ internationalisation strategy, which contradicts the fact that they recognise the benefits. However, the positive effect of multilingualism has more impact on industries with strong networks that require in-depth relationships and communication.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

International competitiveness is depending on the close connection between language and the subsequent business activities (Brannen et al., 2014) and our research revealed that networks and firm capabilities are vital for international competitiveness. An SME’s resource based view enables the profitable implementation of these capabilities and in accordance with Cooren et al. (2011), this study’s findings confirm the decisive role of language capabilities as the tool to connect to international markets and reducing barriers and outsidership. The main theoretical contribution of this research in this regard is the importance of language strategy to overcome liability of foreignness and approaching distance factors strategically, as described by Johanson and Vahlne (1977; 2009). The strategic approach to language and its barriers in international business was earlier studied by Harzing et al. (2011) and Welch and Welch (2018), suggesting specific strategies. However, the exemplary case of Belgium and the role of multilingualism in SMEs located in a multilingual country expanding internationally was neglected in this prior research. Hence, language strategy is especially applicable in this context and our findings show a clear need for a strategic approach. Relating to our conceptual framework, Belgium’s multilingualism elicits multilingual capabilities in the individual dimension of its inhabitants. These vital capabilities are
incorporated in the social capital of the firm and other main firm capabilities, which reciprocally influence each other, provided they are managed accordingly with a language strategy. The two crucial factors concerning access to networks are thus language capabilities and language strategy. A successful internationalisation then opens up opportunities for acquiring more capabilities in the foreign market. Consequently, a multilingual language strategy in the organisation should be followed, notwithstanding that our findings revealed a dominance of English in international business. However, English as an institutionalised second corporate language hinders the maintenance of in-depth relationships in the SME’s network. The transfer of knowledge, embedded in emotions, and context-information is difficult to undertake and the use of the local language and language diversity therefore should be emphasised.

These theoretical implications have been included in a revised conceptual framework (Figure 2), which includes the overall English language environment that surrounds all international business. Additionally, the importance of institutionalisation of language strategy and the influence of the specific business characteristics are included.
Figure 2: Revised Conceptual Framework
*Source: Own model based on analysis and results*

6.3 Managerial Implications

The research shows that despite the demand for language capabilities and recognition of its importance, firms do not implement an institutionalised language strategy. Even though individual language skills are present in Belgian SMEs, there are much more benefits that multilingualism offers to be gained with an institutionalisation of a language strategy. Hence, for firms it is beneficial to implement an internal multilingual knowledge management, in addition to the external multilingual approach, they already take for interactions within their network. By doing this, the SMEs would optimise their internal capabilities, which lowers barriers to foreign networks and creates a competitive advantage in their internationalisation.

Additionally, even though SMEs recognise the importance of language in the maintenance and creation of networks, they do not take this into consideration when creating an internationalisation strategy. This is except for when SMEs conduct
initial internationalisation, where firms choose to expand to markets that are closest to them in a geographical and cultural way, of which language is a part. Firms should be more aware of the impact of language when internationalising, as it has an effect on their performance in the network. This is especially the case for firms with a product that requires a high level of interaction within the network.

6.4 Limitations
The main limitation of this thesis arises with the small sample size of interviewed companies. Relating to this, the underrepresentation of the one Wallonian interviewed SME compared to the two SMEs located in Flanders evoked another weakness. Besides, the Brussels region was not studied in the qualitative research as a separate region and merely was analysed in the quantitative data as an indicator. However, the interviews with three SMEs were in-depth and allowed us to acquire extensive knowledge in each of the cases and the authors have provided high transferability and credibility by assuring the results are valid. This weakness was further reduced by studying the phenomenon additionally with a quantitative research, including data from 30 different Belgian SMEs.

Lastly, English as a corporate lingua franca approach was not included in the research in favour of a multilingual perspective to language. Nevertheless, since our results show a clear predominance of English in international business, this fact illustrates a weakness of the research.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research
Building on the limitations of this study, there are several topics related to this research that have not been thoroughly discussed but could lead to valuable research in the future. The influence of language capabilities in firms in relation to a country’s specific characteristics has received limited attention in academics and provides plenty of room for further research.

A research with a larger data set and quantitative research among Belgian firms regarding their language and internationalisation strategy would give a complete image of the current situation for all Belgian firms. In a research with a larger data set, it would be relevant to compare the differences within industries and regions within Belgium. The perceived difference between language regions is often heard
and mentioned by firms in Belgium and would therefore be worth investigating more deeply than is done in this study. Additionally, since the current research indicates that there are differences in language capabilities and the effect on internationalisation between industries that require a high or low level of interaction, a research comparing, for instance, the commodity with the high tech industry could proof differences in language strategy depending on the communication requirements of the industry.

Another factor worth investigating further, is the influence of English in internationalisation within multilingual environments, especially since this seems to be a changing factor. This and the other factors discussed in this research are also interesting to compare between different countries with different country specifics. Lastly, an often requested, discussed and commented on aspect of this research, is the cultural differences within Belgium and the potential similarities to neighbouring countries. There are many aspects of culture that influence business and internationalisation that would be interesting to investigate in the context of Belgium.
References

Literature and Online Sources


Potter, W. J. (2013). *An Analysis of Thinking and Research About Qualitative


Interviews

Smet, J., CFO. Interview, 2018-04-30, Antwerp.

Van Hoecke, P., CEO. Interview, 2018-05-02, Sint-Niklaas.

Wattiaux, O., Sales and Export, Marketing Manager. Interview, 2018-04-26, Herstal
Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Please introduce yourself and company shortly.
2. How many employees does your company have?
3. Have you ever considered the multilingualism in Belgium and language strategy in general in your business strategy?
4. Are there more than one language spoken during daily business operations (for internal communications) within the company? If yes, which ones?
5. Are there any employees in the company from the other language part (Wallonia/Flanders)?
6. Does everyone in the company master the local language? Is this being taken into account in internal communications?
7. Do you feel challenged by the multilingual environment in Belgium in your daily business context?
8. Do you actively follow a language strategy? Please specify.
9. How important are language capabilities of job applicants, and what languages do you look for?
10. What language is your internal documentation in?
11. Do you ever employ professional translators?
12. Do you offer language courses? If yes, in what languages?
13. What kind of knowledge sharing means/platforms do you use? (Intranet, wiki, magazine, newsletter,...) Are they multilingual?
14. To which countries did you already expand? In what way (entry mode)? Please also state the chronological sequence of chosen countries.
15. Does the language of the country affect your decision to move there?
16. When thinking about expansion to other markets, what markets did you look at first? Did you also consider markets where you do not have the language skills?
17. Do you think language capabilities are decisive for your network- and relationship building with foreign customers or business partners?
Appendix B: Company Information

Interview with Olivier Wattiaux - Sales and Export, Marketing Manager

Transport Joosen: [http://transportjoosen.be/](http://transportjoosen.be/)
Interview with John Smet, CFO

Interview with Peter Van Hoecke, CEO
### Appendix C: Quantitative Research - Full Table

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