



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT



The Role of Language in the International Business Communication

A case study on the impact of linguistic diversity on the internationalization and
international business relationships of startups

Author: Anna Stuk

A Master's Thesis submitted to the faculty of Linguistics and Literature at the universities
KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and Åbo Akademi

In fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree

August 2023

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Thomas A. Fritz and Prof. Dr. Christopher Schmidt

Matriculation number: SLS26324

Abstract

Entrepreneurial innovative, proactive and risk-seeking behavior leads to fast internationalization of startups. Even though they have limited access to resources, young, small enterprises internationalize quickly, which leads to facing linguistic challenges in foreign markets. Based on the case study of two German companies, the challenges of language diversity of startups were analyzed. In focus of this study are different challenges caused by linguistic diversity, such as difficulty of establishing a common language, comprehension problems due to inadequate translation, challenges in using varying dialects and the potential concentration of power in the hands of those with superior language proficiency. Even though startups tend to internationalize quickly, they partially consider language proximity when selecting markets. It became evident that startups heavily rely on BELF, nevertheless the importance of languages spoken by customers cannot be ignored. Furthermore, even though the startups have limited access to resources, there is an example that they still invest in building the team with relevant language skills because they prioritize adapting to customers' languages. Using technology to enhance multilingual comprehension is also an important part of how startups deal with language diversity.

List of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Startup companies.....	4
3. Internationalization.....	6
3.1. Internationalization of startups.....	6
3.2. Influence of language on the internationalization process.....	9
4. Linguistic diversity management.....	12
5. Power dynamics in international business communication.....	14
6. Challenges and solutions in the international business communication.....	17
7. Method.....	19
7.1. Credibility of the qualitative study.....	20
7.2. Category system.....	22
7.3. Case Study.....	25
7.3.1. Interviews.....	27
7.3.2. Content Analysis.....	30
7.3.3. Combining the outcomes.....	32
7.4. Sample.....	32
8. Results.....	35
8.1. Company A - Born-global company relying on technology for multilingual communication.....	35
8.2. Company B - Gradual internationalization with focus on language-skilled teams.....	46
9. Conclusion.....	54
10. Discussion.....	62
Sources.....	64
Appendix.....	71

1. Introduction

Latest research suggests that language plays a significant role in the establishment and maintenance of international business relationships (e.g. Wilmot, 2017; Tenzer et al., 2017; Brannen et al., 2014; Mughan, 2015). Language diversity influences companies with international presence on various levels, impacting business areas such as knowledge gathering, managerial decisions and day-to-day coordination of projects (Tenzer et al., 2017).

Although the study of linguistic diversity in the context of international business has gained popularity in recent years, it remains a largely unexplored area (Selmier & Oh, 2012: 189). From the existing research material, the majority of articles focus on language diversity management in large corporations (Wilmot, 2017: 13). In terms of international activities, large companies are also referred to as multinational enterprises (MNEs) (Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2020: 1162). Only a small number of research papers is dedicated to the management of language diversity in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Wilmot, 2017). In addition to formal and organizational differences, multinationals and small businesses have different internationalization strategies (Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2020). A new category of enterprises, startups, has emerged and receives much attention in business research. Startups, often described as born-globals, present a new model of entrance to foreign markets (cf. Freeman et al., 2012). Startups, characterized as young enterprises, have limited resources, which makes them similar to SMEs, and at the same time, startups demonstrate rapid internationalization, which reflects their similarity to MNEs (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Wilmot, 2017; Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2020). Although the internationalization of startups has been researched and described in many works (e.g. Qian et al., 2018; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Freeman et al., 2012; Li et al., 2015), the linguistic aspect of international business activities of startups remains unexplored. However, research in this area can provide relevant findings in the field of international business. Considering that different types of companies have distinct organizational structures and different resources at their disposal, it can be assumed that their language management practices also differ (cf. Tenzer et al., 2017: 23).

In my study, I aim to explore the role of language in international business communication of startups. The objective of this study is to contribute to the research on linguistic diversity in international business relationships and communication. Given the evidence that language skills play a significant role in the internationalization process and overall company

performance (Tabares, 2021: 358), research in this area can assist enterprises in recognizing challenges and opportunities and creating strategies for managing linguistic diversity. This is particularly relevant because recent studies indicate that companies, especially small businesses with scarce resources, do not have clear strategies for management of linguistic diversity in international business communication (Wilmot, 2017: 235).

Previous studies have proven that linguistic diversity brings challenges to companies seeking to internationalize. This starts from the difficulty of translating desired messages to power building based on superior language skills. In this study, however, I want to look specifically at startups and whether their characteristics make certain challenges less or more prominent. I also focus on the practices of linguistic diversity management and try to identify certain trends.

I aim to investigate how startups manage linguistic diversity in the communication with customers, partners and suppliers. Even though internal communication is essential to consider when examining business communication, it should not be the main interest of this study.

In this work, I first summarize the current state of research. I define the concept of a startup as used in my study and describe the specific features of this enterprise category. Next, I explain the important aspects of the internationalization process and present the research findings regarding the influence of language on internationalization. Then, I emphasize the importance of linguistic diversity management and summarize the common practices. I address the aspects of the political perspective of language and link them to power relations in business. The last part of the presentation of the theoretical background, I dedicate to the overview of the possible linguistic challenges in international business communication. I proceed by describing my methodology in detail and introducing the companies for my research. In the subsequent chapter of my paper, I present the international activities of the selected companies, identify the challenges they face with their international customers and partners and describe their linguistic management practices. Finally, in the last chapter of this study, I identify patterns and make suggestions for further research.

2. Startup companies

In the context of a globalized world, dynamic and self-regulating markets emerge, creating conditions wherein success accrues to companies capable of swift adaptation and agile

maneuvering (Ireland & Webb, 2007: 49). This circumstance affords young entrepreneurs the opportunity to establish innovative and rapidly expanding enterprises (ibid.). Such companies are referred to as startups and can be defined as newly established business entities characterized by innovative and often technology-driven nature, with a focus on rapid growth and scalability (cf. Colombelli & Quatraro, 2019: 774). Even though startups are young and small, they “[...] play a key role in introducing technologies in the market, especially because they are often responsible for the development of radical innovations that lead to economic growth” (Marcon & Ribeiro, 2021: 1).

Startups are distinguished by several key features. First, they often operate with limited resources, necessitating efficient resource allocation and creative problem-solving (Gans & Stern, 2003: 335f). Second, startups exhibit a high degree of flexibility and adaptability, capable of quickly pivoting their strategies based on market feedback and changing conditions (Ireland & Webb, 2007: 52). Furthermore, they frequently employ lean and iterative development methodologies, allowing them to rapidly prototype and test their offerings before committing significant resources (Peralta et al., 2020: 729).

The entrepreneur plays a crucial role in the activities of a startup. Unlike traditional businesses, where decision-making might be spread out among different levels of management, in a startup, the entrepreneur holds significant power and influence (cf. Baron & Tang, 2011: 50). Accordingly, startup founders are the most important decision-makers in matters concerning product development, customer acquisition and expansion of the company (Marcon & Ribeiro, 2021: 3).

Frequently, however, entrepreneurs exhibit a lack of experience and limited familiarity with the markets that align best with their products. In this circumstances, “[...] a key management challenge is how to translate promising technologies into a stream of economic returns [...]” (Gans & Stern, 2003: 236). Hence, at the outset of their establishment, startups are confronted with the question of how to commercialize their innovations. In their quest to identify the optimal market for their products, startups frequently turn their attention to international markets, which often present them with greater potential than domestic ones (Acedo & Jones, 2007: 237). Their innovative nature of products allows startups to enter potentially global niches (ibid.).

3. Internationalization

Companies seeking constant growth eventually look for opportunities in international markets (Nadolska & Barkema, 2007: 1170). The internationalization process involves various strategies and approaches aimed at penetrating and operating in different countries or regions, with the ultimate goal of accessing new customer segments, diversifying revenue streams, gaining a competitive advantage and achieving long-term growth and sustainability (Cavusgil et al., 2014: 41).

The process of internationalization, once reserved for a select few, became accessible for organizations of all sizes and industries (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 124). From multinational corporations to agile startups, the allure of tapping into new markets and diversifying revenue streams has changed the global business landscape (Moen, 2002: 156f).

Companies select different market entry methods based on the companies' characteristics and goals (Laufs & Schwens, 2014: 1109). The selection of the foreign market entry is a critical decision for firms engaging in international activities, as it dictates the allocation of resources, exposure to risk and level of control (Hill et al., 1990: 117).

3.1. Internationalization of startups

Traditional studies on the internationalization of businesses claim that the process of entering foreign markets is carefully planned and gradual (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). According to early research, internationalization requires substantial resources, market knowledge and a strong network (ibid.). The development of the elements necessary for internationalization is, therefore, very complex and time-consuming.

However, in recent years, a new trend has emerged where small, young enterprises emerge and rapidly expand into the global market, challenging the traditional approach. Contrary to the traditional approach in internationalization research, small businesses with limited resources manage to successfully enter international markets (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). Startups “[...] demonstrate strong risk-taking, innovative, and proactive behaviors at the early stages of their founding” (Li et al., 2015: 839). The risk-taking characteristic also applies to trends in internationalization of young enterprises. They are keen to explore new markets across national borders shortly after their establishment (Covin & Miller, 2014, 12). This early and rapid internationalization has led to the emergence of the term “born-globals” (cf. Freeman et al., 2012: 432). Born-globals are characterized by their aggressive

internationalization despite lack of experience and limited access to resources (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 127). Companies that are described as born-globals are considered to be flexible, dynamic and less bureaucratic (Lewin & Massini, 2003: 209ff).

In the starting phase, startups typically face challenges in the internationalization process due to their limited financial, human and tangible resources (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 125). Resource-constrained industries, such as technology-driven sectors with short product life cycles, require frequent and substantial investments in research and development (R&D), marketing and distribution activities (Li et al., 2015: 840). Additionally, startups often lack sufficient knowledge of external factors in foreign markets such as political, economic and legal conditions (Qian et al., 2013: 636). As new and small players, young enterprises may be perceived as inexperienced by potential customers and investors, especially in foreign markets (cf. Qian & Li, 2003: 882f). However, despite the limited opportunities to develop resources, market knowledge and network, young enterprises can achieve rapid internationalization comparable to that of MNEs (Qian et al., 2017: 252).

Due to their nature, startups are partially compelled to internationalize early. In order to be able to scale up, they have to enter new markets before stronger competitors do (cf. Quian & Li, 2003: 882). Being innovative and offering unique products and services, young enterprises often “[...] integrate vertically at least some of their activities across countries” to stay competitive (Li et al., 2015: 842). Accordingly, startups have to find tactics to successfully penetrate international markets despite the challenges caused by their size and age.

There is evidence that companies, when internationalizing, try to lower risks by choosing markets similar to their domestic ones (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017: 1092). Market proximity strategies may be employed by startups to mitigate risks and minimize barriers to entry in international markets (Westhead et al., 2002: 53). Smaller firms tend to opt for market proximity due to their limited ability to manage uncertainty compared to larger, more experienced enterprises (ibid.). However, recent research suggests that startups are proactive and willing to take risks (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 129), which can also be reflected in their choice of foreign markets (Qian et al., 2018: 254).

Due to their unique characteristics, young enterprises can develop new strategies to overcome the challenges caused by limited access to resources. Their inherent innovative nature allows them to leverage exclusive knowledge and technological advancements to achieve success in foreign markets in their early stages of development (cf. Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 124;

Zander et al., 2015: 31). Startups often outperform competitors by offering innovative products and services (cf. Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 127). They prioritize investments in R&D (Qian et al., 2018: 258) and offer state-of-the-art technologies applied to create superior products, improve existing offers and maximize efficiency in production processes (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 130). Due to the unique knowledge and innovation in product development, startups often operate on niche markets where their exclusive expertise is required (ibid.: 132). It encourages startups to expand into foreign markets because “[...] dispersed customers and suppliers specializing in a niche technology in different countries can more easily understand (and trade with) each other than customers and suppliers in non-specialized, mass markets [...]” (cf. Fan & Phan, 2007: 1115). Niche markets, despite cultural and structural differences, share similar logic and provide opportunities for startups to enter and excel by catering to specific customer needs (Sarangee & Echambadi, 2014: 164; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 130). Serving niche markets helps startups overcome challenges caused by their resource scarcity. Following niche strategy, young enterprises activate unique capabilities and can concentrate their limited resources on one single niche (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015: 6).

Another important internationalization strategy implemented by born-globals is related to network establishment. Due to limited knowledge of the market, some companies form relationships through distributors and agents that act as market entry nodes (Jansson & Sandberg, 2008: 74f). Unlike established companies, young enterprises usually do not have access to stable long-term partnerships (Qian et al., 2018: 255). When forging relationships across borders, companies face challenges due to information asymmetry, geographical distance and complexity of assessing foreign partners’ capacities (Freeman et al., 2006: 37). The circumstances of the international network establishment lead to discovery of new tactics by young enterprises. In response, startups form joint ventures and strategic alliances involving multiple participants in a relationship, “[...] which affects interactions and the atmosphere in the network” (ibid.). Knowledge sharing and exchange of resources in the modern alliances influence internationalization strategies of startups (cf. Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 125) allowing riskier market entry decisions (cf. Lu & Beamish, 2006: 32).

When startups create innovative products to meet the demands of fast-changing markets, they operate within what is commonly referred to as “dynamic industries” (Li et al., 2013: 843). Dynamic industries require companies to adapt to unpredictable and rapid changes (Baron & Tang, 2011: 50). As startups are part of these dynamic industries, they often face shorter product life cycles, high levels of uncertainties and rapid replacement of technology (Qian &

Li, 2003: 882). These challenges compel young enterprises to pursue early and more aggressive internationalization (Qian et al., 2018: 255f).

Despite limitations in resources, knowledge and networks, startups can achieve successful early internationalization due to their specific characteristics and market conditions. When internationalizing into foreign markets, startups must be mindful of a number of potential obstacles and challenges. In this study, I focus on the aspect of language diversity that startups need to address when expanding into international markets.

3.2. Influence of language on the internationalization process

Internationalization is associated with high risks and uncertainties (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977), to which small, young enterprises are particularly vulnerable (Qian et al., 2018: 252). It is stated that the uncertainty associated with internationalization increases when a firm is distant from the market it intends to enter (Liesch et al., 2002: 19f). More important than geographical distance is the psychic distance between the home and foreign market (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017: 57). Factors such as culture, religion, language and political systems define psychic distance (Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975: 308). Depending on their proximity between the home and host market, these factors can influence a company's internationalization decisions. Language appears to be a key factor in psychic distance (Dow & Karunaratna, 2006: 578). Therefore, language differences between markets increase the uncertainty associated with expansion into foreign markets.

In the internationalization process, companies strive to develop strategies to mitigate uncertainties and maximize their opportunities in foreign markets (Chetty et al., 2015: 1436). Therefore, enterprises likely consider language proximity when deciding on a market to enter. According to Welch et al. (2001: 195), companies tend to stay within their language group(s) in the early stages of expansion to minimize uncertainties. However, it is not specified further whose language group is relevant for the internationalization decisions: the manager's, the employees', or the company's as a whole depending on the location of its headquarters. While the native language is perceived as an important factor for the internationalization of enterprises, knowledge of foreign language(s) can also play a significant role in expansion. The decision-maker's proficiency in a certain language can facilitate a company's market entry in the country where that language is spoken (cf. Fernandez-Ortiz & Lombardo, 2009: 135). Conversely, there is evidence that companies that internationalize have higher language diversity than those that stay in the domestic market (Hurmerinta et al., 2015: 1089). Yet,

some researchers state that language differences are no longer an obstacle to internationalization of small enterprises (Leonidou, 2004: 286). The study by Hurmerinta et al. (2015) suggests another perspective on the role of language knowledge for internationalization. The authors state that “[...] fluency in a language may create false expectations for the decision-maker’s understanding of the market and culture” (Hurmerinta et al., 2015: 1090).

On one hand, companies expanding into new international markets often face the imperative to adapt their communication strategies to the languages spoken in those markets (Steyaert et al., 2011: 273). For example, companies hire staff with required language proficiency or establish collaborations with mediators acting as linguistic and cultural interpreters between the enterprise and its customers or suppliers in foreign markets (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 43f). Linguistic alignment with the local context facilitates relationship-building and trust, which are essential for forming strong business connections in foreign markets (cf. Acedo & Jones, 2007: 247).

On the other hand, the emergence of globalization brings dynamism to the exchange between markets and blurs physical and psychic borders (cf. Knight & Cavusgil, 2004: 125). The establishment of international regulations, cultural fusions and communication tactics simplifies entry into foreign markets (cf. Vahlne & Jonsson, 2017). Additionally, standardized language use emerges and has a significant impact on international business relations. The English language has become a globally accepted instrument for international communication, reducing the importance of local languages for business exchange (Rogerson-Revell, 2007: 105). Large corporations, in particular, are eager to adopt English as their primary language for communicating with foreign partners (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005: 403). However, small enterprises are also increasingly using English for business communication (Wilmot, 2017: 237).

In light of English being widely used as a global language for everyday business communication, the perception of the English language itself has shifted. Since people worldwide communicate in English to achieve mutual understanding, English is no longer exclusively used by native speakers. The widespread adoption of English as the standard means of international communication has led to the establishment of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 43). The concept of English as a lingua franca suggests that language usage is not governed by fixed rules but is instead negotiated by the parties in the interaction (Gramkow, 1993: 108). When using ELF for communication, it is inevitable

that influences from other languages will be present (House, 2003: 557). Therefore, ELF can be described as a flexible form of the English language that is applied for global communication. Within the business context, ELF is specifically referred to as Business English Lingua Franca (BELF) (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005: 403). On one hand, BELF is considered a neutral form of the English language because it is not bound to any specific culture (cf. Crystal, 1997). On the other hand, BELF is used by individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Meierkord, 2002: 110), resulting in the expression of a cultural mix rather than cultural neutrality (cf. Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Nevertheless, by providing a common medium for interaction, BELF facilitates cross-border communication, allowing people with varied language proficiencies to engage in business interactions (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010: 400f).

Since BELF enables effective communication among individuals from different language backgrounds by providing a common medium for interaction, it provides businesses with easier access to international customers and partners (cf. House, 2003: 570). Accordingly, it can influence companies' internationalization decisions. The potential of using BELF encourages businesses to internationalize by effectively addressing language differences, thereby eliminating the necessity to communicate exclusively in local languages (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005: 417). This streamlined communication approach not only reduces the complexity and costs associated with language acquisition but also expedites international market entry (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010: 381). This means that companies can focus their resources on core business strategies and market penetration rather than investing extensive efforts in language proficiency (ibid.). BELF aligns with the principles of efficiency and agility that underpin the internationalization strategies of born-global firms. Due to BELF's capacity to facilitate cross-border communication, it can contribute to born-global firms' ability to quickly establish connections, explore international opportunities and expand their presence without being hindered by language barriers (cf. Feely & Harzing, 2003; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004).

In this study, I investigate if startups consider linguistic diversity in their internationalization decisions. Besides different languages spoken in foreign markets, I pay attention to the use of English in business communication and its influence on internationalization processes. Furthermore, it is relevant for my study to consider the influence of different cultures on BELF and its role in the internationalization decision making. The crucial question is whether startups still take into account linguistic differences or rely entirely on BELF when making

the decision to expand into foreign markets. Subsequently, the question arises as to whether the strategy of selecting linguistically proximate markets remains relevant for startups.

4. Linguistic diversity management

Depending on the internationalization strategy, companies can be exposed to linguistic diversity. In the context of international business relationships, communication is often executed in different languages. In order to effectively operate in these circumstances and establish sustainable relationships, companies implement various practices to manage linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity management is a critical aspect of international business operations, encompassing strategies and approaches to manage language-related topics within cross-cultural contexts (Aggarwal, 2017: 133). Effective management of linguistic diversity can significantly impact communication, collaboration and overall success in global markets (ibid.).

One approach to linguistic diversity management is the use of lingua franca, which is a common language used for communication among speakers of different native languages. As discussed in Chapter 3.2., English is a widely chosen lingua franca in the global business context. However, depending on the circumstances, the selection of the common language for business communication can differ. Organizations may opt for languages other than English as their lingua franca, particularly if they have a strong presence in specific regions (cf. Harzing et al., 2011: 280). However, in the European business setting English remains the dominant language often chosen as lingua franca (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010: 381). This common language serves as a bridge for communication, allowing individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds to engage in business negotiations and collaborations (ibid.).

Sometimes, it can be challenging for companies to establish a common language, either due to its absence or because employees lack sufficient language proficiency. That is why some companies focus on recruitment of personnel having required language skills. Employees with multilingual abilities can contribute to smoother communication, improved negotiation outcomes and enhanced relationship-building processes (cf. Feely & Harzing, 2003: 46). Hence, companies frequently engage in the recruitment of employees who possess proficiency in the language of their customers or partners.

However, it can also be challenging to find subject experts who additionally possess the required language proficiency (cf. Feely & Harzing, 2003: 47). To address these challenges,

companies often opt for language training as a linguistic diversity management practice (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002: 20). Some companies offer general language courses to improve employees' proficiency in relevant languages. However, the efficacy of general language courses may be limited, as they often lack focus on the specific communication needs of the organization (Huhta, 1997, as cited in Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002: 21). To enhance international communication skills of employees, there are various tactics suggested by Charles & Marschan-Piekkari (2002: 23-26), which include conducting linguistic audits to identify language needs, prioritizing comprehension proficiency over speaking skills, encouraging understanding of global English varieties, involving native speakers in communication training and centralizing language and communication training as a corporate-level function.

In addition to internal solutions for managing linguistic diversity, companies can also establish external alliances aimed at enhancing their ability to effectively engage with customers and partners in foreign markets. External translators and interpreters are specialized on connecting businesses from different countries and provide them with smooth communication (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 43).

Furthermore, in recent years, companies have increasingly benefited from technologies that enhance their communication capabilities (Wilmot, 2017: 146). Through the use of various technological tools, companies can overcome language barriers and achieve more efficient interactions with their customers and partners (Patiar et al., 2017: 129). For instance, technology is frequently employed by businesses for translations. Common translation tools, such as Google Translate, DeepL and Bing Microsoft Translator are widely used by businesses (Alsan, 2022). Companies often leverage these tools to translate documents, emails, and messages into various languages, enabling effective communication with partners who speak different languages (cf. Harzing et al., 2011: 284). In recent years, technological advancements have enabled businesses to utilize translation tools for an even wider range of applications. Translation technologies can be used in various business operations, such as website and social media content maintenance, mobile app development, marketing strategies, product localization and customer services (Bournias, 2023). The tools enhance communication in local languages and standardize responses to recurring customer issues (ibid.). Furthermore, modern communication technologies facilitate real-time communication, allowing companies to communicate with geographically distant customers and partners. For instance, video conferencing tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams enable

face-to-face discussions regardless of physical location, which is particularly valuable for negotiations and decision-making involving international partners (Manyika et al., 2017). Such technologies aid in breaking the asynchrony of communication, thereby facilitating improved exchange, a factor that can also prove advantageous in multilingual interactions (cf. Barnad, 2020: 38). Similarly, instant messaging applications like WhatsApp and WeChat can be used for efficient business interactions. Such messaging tools offer built-in language translation capabilities that automatically translate messages between users, enabling efficient communication between individuals who speak different languages (Yang & Lin, 2010: 312f). Furthermore, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants have been employed by companies to provide instant customer support and information in various languages (Vanjani et al., 2019: 19). These intelligent systems can understand and generate text or speech in multiple languages, enhancing user experiences and reducing language-related barriers (ibid.).

In this study, I explore the methods for managing language diversity in startups' international relationships. I examine whether the practices from the literature apply to the real-world strategies that startups employ. In addition, I try to find out if the startups have other methods that have not yet been captured in the literature.

5. Power dynamics in international business communication

Ideally, business relationships aim for a win-win situation (cf. Sako, 1992), where all parties involved are treated equally and collaborate to achieve the best possible outcome (cf. Lamming et al., 2001). However, business relationships are not always balanced, and power structures can emerge (cf. Cox, 2005).

In the customer-supplier relationships, it is common to see power dominance on the customer's side, reflected in the supplier's high dependence on the customer (cf. Wilmot, 2017). This imbalance is usually caused by a scarcity of customers or an oversupply of suppliers (Cox, 2004: 352). Conversely, if the supplier is not reliant on the customer or offers a unique service, there can be supplier dominance in the relationship (ibid.). This dominance in business relationships often leads to the adaptation of language use to the participant who has a powerful position.

There is evidence that customers always expect information and support in their local language, as do many business partners (cf. Tayeb, 2000). Hence, product or service providers must adapt to conditions set by customers and business partners and communicate in the local language of the markets they enter, even if it is not their native language (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 162). In this case, customers and business partners have the power to define the conditions. And when partners agree on a language that is not native to one of the participants, it may create or reinforce the existing power dynamics among the involved parties (Janssens et al., 2004: 424). The choice of a common language in business communication is connected to emotions related to national dominance, manipulation and persuasion (Piekkari & Zander, 2005: 5). Since language is bound to cultural background, it can shape individuals' values and influence their actions even against their own interests (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 61).

The imbalance of power distribution in business relationships can be influenced by various advantages held by one party. There is evidence that language proficiency of participants can impact the distribution of power (Piekkari & Zander, 2005: 5). To address the question of the influence of linguistic diversity on business relationships of startups, I align with the political approach to language (cf. Wilmot, 2017). The political approach to language recognizes that language is not only a means of communication but also a mechanism that can shape and reflect societal power dynamics. It suggests that language is not neutral but rather “[...] reflect[s] differences in status and power” between participants in the international communication process (Janssens et al., 2004: 424). In the modern enterprise organization, linguistic choices can reinforce or challenge social hierarchies, cultural norms and ideologies (ibid.: 414f). Henceforth, language assumes the role of a mechanism of power.

When choosing a common language in international relationships, mostly at least one party is forced to speak a language that is not their mother tongue (cf. Feely & Harzing, 2003: 43ff). In the context of international business, the English language is often considered a power mechanism, enjoying a privileged position as a universal solution to linguistic diversity (Wilmot, 2017: 61). Companies from English-speaking regions enjoy the advantage that in the business world, there is an assumption that everyone can speak English, which leads to their ignorance of linguistic diversity (cf. Bargiela-Chiappini et al, 2003: 74).

When choosing a common language for communication, it is often the case that native or fluent speakers of this language are perceived as more educated and experienced than those with a lower language proficiency (Barner-Rasmussen & Bjorkman, 2007: 123). Since

language is a means of controlling international communication, fluency in the dominant language(s) becomes an informal source of expert power (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999, 433). Participants with advanced language skills can, therefore, have a great impact on the course of business communication (cf. Steyaert et al., 2011). Native and fluent speakers are privileged, putting participants who must adapt in an uncomfortable situation (cf. Wilmot, 2017). Participants with limited knowledge of the dominant language may even be excluded from the communication process (Janssens et al., 2004: 425), resulting in biased business interactions. In such circumstances, business decisions depend largely on fluent language speakers rather than industry experts.

Companies engaged in international external communication often hire employees with language skills relevant to the customers or partners (Wilmot, 2017: 162). These employees can be considered “translators” (Janssens et al., 2004) or “language nodes” (Wilmot, 2017). In practice, translators are often seen as having a purely technical role, assuming that they simply reproduce information in a neutral manner (Janssens et al., 2004: 416). However, a closer examination reveals that this view underestimates the importance of fluent speakers of the lingua franca. Employees who speak the local language of the market are in direct contact with customers and partners. As a result, they often make decisions and perform tasks for which they were not originally responsible (Wilmot, 2017: 162-166). Translators ensure that communication between the company and international partners or customers functions smoothly. They can be considered bridges between customers, partners and the rest of the team. When translators facilitate indirect interaction between their team and external actors, they “[...] act as negotiators between the different value systems and discourses that different actors bring along” (Janssens et al., 2004: 425). To ensure the quality of communication under such circumstances, hierarchies within the company must be flexible and openly shared with all the participants of the communication process (ibid.).

In this study, I aim to investigate whether language proficiency among participants influences the power distribution in business relationships between young enterprises and their international customers and partners.

6. Challenges and solutions in the international business communication

When individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds interact, challenges in communication can arise. These potential complications can be caused by linguistic differences. Challenges stemming from linguistic diversity can significantly impact international business relationships, adding complexity to communication and interactions. Language barriers can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations and reduced trust among partners, potentially hindering effective collaboration (Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen, 2011: 16). Language barriers can lead to communication breakdowns, affecting engagements with customers and partners (ibid.). Linguistic diversity can create ambiguity and vagueness in negotiations and agreements, leading to differing expectations and potential conflicts (Wilmot, 2017: 19f).

Even when using English as *lingua franca*, cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and non-verbal communication cues may be misinterpreted, leading to misunderstandings (Mauranen, 2012: 186f). Communication using BELF might rely on simplification or avoidance of complex language structures, resulting in ambiguity or vagueness that can impact the precision of messages (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005: 266). Furthermore, BELF interactions may prioritize brevity and efficiency, potentially leading to the omission of contextual details that are essential for mutual understanding (ibid.). Consequently, even when both parties communicate in English, numerous misunderstandings can arise. This is primarily due to the fact that BELF is not a neutral language, and each participant brings their own cultural and linguistic background to their language use and interactions.

As Hall (1959) suggests, language shapes perceptions and cultural norms, and differences in linguistic expression can lead to varying interpretations of the same message. When parties speak different languages, nuances, idiomatic expressions, and cultural contexts may be lost in translation, resulting in confusion or even offense (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 37). Accordingly, linguistic diversity may hinder information sharing and knowledge transfer within international business relationships (ibid.: 28). Shared organizational knowledge may be more challenging to convey among individuals with varying language proficiencies, hindering the transfer of best practices and expertise (cf. Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985: 42).

In order to successfully enter foreign markets, some companies want to hire employees with required language skills, but this solution is very time-intensive and not always suitable, since

required language proficiency may not always be readily available in the labor market (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 46). Another, more sustainable option is to provide training for existing employees, a frequently employed solution by MNEs (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002: 21ff). However, considering the limited access to resources that startups have, such training may be unavailable to them (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 45). Instead, small enterprises often rely on individual employees with required language skills to facilitate communication between subject matter experts and international customers or partners (Harzing et al., 2011: 285). These employees do not hold positions related to the subject matter and “[...] become informal ‘language nodes’ establishing themselves as the default communications channel between the company and the external world” (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 46).

Multilingual communication services offered by external organizations or individuals may be another alternative to building up an internal team with language experts. Nevertheless, this approach presents inherent challenges. First, these services can be expensive (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 43f). Second, such organizations or individuals often focus on providing first-class translation without having an understanding of the subject matter required for interactions with customers and partners (ibid.). “So, in situations requiring negotiation, persuasion, humour, etc., the use of an interpreter is a poor substitute for direct communication” (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 44).

It is also common to apply technological tools such as translation and interpretation software to facilitate communication between parties speaking different languages (Nakamura, 2009: 35). Machine translation and machine interpretation are considered the most important technologies that can be applied in international business communication (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 49). However, technologies often struggle to accurately transfer nuances of emphasis or specific expressions, which can impede international communication (cf. Nakamura, 2009: 44).

Furthermore, language proficiency can impact perceived social status and authority within interactions. Power dynamics caused by superior language skills of one of the parties is also one of the big potential challenges in international business communication. When one party is more proficient in the common language than the other, it can create an imbalance in power dynamics, potentially leading to a lack of equitable participation and representation in the communication process (e.g. Wilmot, 2017: 47).

As a result, linguistic diversity can influence communication in various ways, including misunderstandings, hindered relationship-building, slower communication processes and

potential power imbalances. In order to communicate most effectively with customers and partners, companies can employ various methods to ensure the smooth operation of international business relationships.

Linguistic diversity management practices as described in Chapter 4 can also be deployed to handle challenging situations in international business communication. For example, companies often invest in language training programs for their employees to improve their language proficiency and bridge communication gaps (Feely & Harzing, 2003: 44). By enhancing employees' language skills, companies aim to improve effective communication and reduce misunderstandings (cf. Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010: 401). One of the simple but efficient ways to avoid misunderstandings arising from linguistic differences often applied in international communication is use of clear and concise language in written and verbal communication (ibid.: 392). Frequently, individuals respond to challenges in communication through improvisational methods “[...] when it is clear that they cannot possibly find a common language and they will need to improvise and actively mix several languages” (Steyaert et al., 2011: 274).

In this study, I will examine which challenges startups face in their international business communication due to language differences. Besides that, I elaborate on the methods to overcome possible misunderstandings or confusions.

7. Method

I have analyzed the current literature on the topic of linguistic diversity in international business communication and identified certain research gaps. Based on this analysis, I have formulated the following research questions that will guide me throughout my research:

Which role does language play for startups in the establishment of international business relationships?

What practices do startups apply to manage language diversity in their international business relationships?

How are language diversity management practices applied by startups related to the power dynamics in their international business relationships?

Research questions provide a clear and focused direction for a research study, guiding the investigation, analysis and interpretation of data (cf. Yin, 2009: 8). The research questions presented in my study shape my entire research process, especially the selection of appropriate methodologies and data collection methods (cf. Schreier, 2012: 6).

To address my research questions, it is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the processes involved in the international business activities of startups and identify the interrelationships. Since the topic is relatively new in business research and the research questions are exploratory in nature, I choose a qualitative rather than quantitative approach for my work (cf. Meyen et al., 2019). As the international relations of startups and the role of language in international business communication have gaps in research, it is not feasible to create predefined hypotheses leading to standardized questions. By opting for a qualitative approach, I expect to explore the field from various perspectives and gain a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon. Qualitative methods allow researchers to obtain in-depth insights into a subject that may be challenging to capture through quantitative methods (Rynes & Gephart, 2004: 455). One of the unique features of the qualitative methods is “[...] first-handedness in which researchers strive to be at one with their research phenomena [...]” (Birkinshaw et al., 2011: 455). Thus, through the application of qualitative methods, I seek to gather detailed information directly from decision-makers in startups involved in international business activities. I have picked out two startups that fit the criteria of this research. I write about the selection of the companies in detail in Chapter 7.4.

7.1. Credibility of the qualitative study

Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research aims to uncover in-depth insights into the complexity and context of human behavior, emotions and social interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 2). Therefore, qualitative studies cannot provide statistical generalizable results, but rather explanations and complex interrelations (Meyen et al., 2019: 28f). Since qualitative research aims to explore human experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 198), it acknowledges that the research cannot be objective (Haynes, 2012: 73). Qualitative researchers recognize that people's experiences and perspectives are influenced by their cultural, social and personal backgrounds (c.f. Plummer, 1994: 198). The researcher's role is to capture people's perceptions and interpret them in the course of study (Schreier, 2012: 6).

Therefore, the researcher plays a crucial role in the qualitative research process. They influence the course of the research starting with the design of the study, selecting the participants, collecting and analyzing the data and interpreting the results (Meyen et al., 2019: 27f). Since the researcher is not a neutral observer, but an active actor in the research process, their own biases and assumptions have an impact on the outcome of the study (Schreier, 2012: 23).

However, it is important to note that acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity does not imply that qualitative research lacks rigor or validity. In fact, qualitative researchers employ various strategies to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of their findings.

Researchers use multiple data sources and methods to ensure triangulation (cf. Fitzgerald & Dopson, 2009: 465). The aim is to corroborate and validate the findings from different angles, thereby strengthening the overall credibility (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 82). Furthermore, researchers should acknowledge their own biases, perspectives, and potential influence on the research process and findings (Haynes, 2012: 73). They engage in critical self-reflection throughout the study, documenting their personal beliefs and experiences that might shape their interpretations. By explicitly addressing their positionality, researchers enhance the transparency and credibility of their work (Wilmot, 2017: 82).

When planning the study, researchers must look at the current state of research. Current works by other scientists provide the theoretical basis for the study (Birkinshaw et al., 2011: 580). With respect to their own research question, the author can use existing materials to build categories that guide the course of the study (Meyen et al., 2019: 31). Category systems help the researcher to be aware of their perspective and prior knowledge, and allow the reader to follow the study and classify the findings (Miles et al., 2014: 62). The category system guides the entire research process. Category systems delimit a complex subject and divide it into individual, analyzable sub-aspects. They guide the construction of instruments (interview guides, observation and code sheets), the selection of interviewees and the search for sources or texts, and they provide the framework for the interpretation of the material (Meyen et al., 2019: 29). My category system, which I present in Chapter 7.2., was formed based on the literature review with regard to my research questions.

Furthermore, I must try to collect unbiased, natural data - data that would have existed even without scientific investigation (Reichertz, 2017: 33). In order to minimize the influence of my values and knowledge on the study, I must avoid normative judgment during data collection and analysis (Meyen et al., 2019: 41). Besides self-awareness, it is important to

implement active listening and empathy while collecting the data. Cultivating empathy allows researchers to approach data collection with an open mind and reduces the likelihood of imposing normative judgments (Creswell, 2013: 58). During the investigation, it is recommended to collect as detailed data as possible in order to draw less subjective conclusions during the analysis (ibid.: 46). For example, framing the data collection in an open-ended manner encourages participants to share their thoughts, experiences and perspectives in more detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). In addition, in this way, participants do not feel pressured to conform to any predefined norms or judgments (ibid.). After attentive listening, it is important to ask participants to provide specific examples or further details to gain deeper insights into their perspectives (Meyen, 2019: 54). Open-ended questions, active listening and clarification questions serve as a basis for the data collection in my study.

Treating participants' data anonymously also ensures higher quality of the study. Assuring participants that their responses will be treated confidentially and that their identities will be protected promotes an environment of trust and encourages participants to share their honest opinions and experiences without fear of judgment (cf. Creswell, 2013: 124). To comply with the data privacy of the participants, I do not mention any names of companies or employees in this work.

7.2. Category system

As mentioned in Chapter 7.1., the category system plays a crucial role in qualitative research as it provides the framework for organizing, analyzing and interpreting the data collected during the research process. The category system serves me as a bridge between the raw data and my research objectives, allowing me to address the research questions effectively (cf. Creswell, 2013: 64f).

Categories are broader conceptual containers that group related themes together (cf. Silverman, 2008: 222). Based on the theoretical material presented in this work, I identified five major categories that will help me systematically gather the data and answer my research questions. The category system with the theoretical background to each category is presented in Figure 1.

First, I focused on the internationalization process of the companies. Here, I included the development of the companies' presence in foreign markets. In this category, I aim to understand the startups' decision-making processes of expanding to certain markets. I am particularly interested in the language aspect of internationalization. So, within this category,

I will consider the following criteria: the influence of language in market selection decisions; the influence of language in establishing the company in the market; preference for linguistic proximity in selecting the foreign market.

My second category is directly related to the companies' language use for communication with foreign customers and partners. This includes also the aspects of confidence of the parties involved when speaking different languages. There is a particular interest in the use of BELF.

Next category includes management of linguistic diversity. Within this category, I explore the companies' strategies and practices that contribute to successful international communication and collaboration. This category includes different linguistic management practices like the application of translators, language nodes and possible tools. In addition to other considerations, this category delves into the communication channels used by companies for engaging with international customers and partners.

The fourth category is related to power relations in the business communication with international partners. Consistent with the overall topic of the study, this category centers its attention on the role of language in shaping power dynamics. As evident from the literature, inequalities often arise in business relationships when one of the parties feels more secure in the language chosen for communication. This category is intended to encompass precisely this aspect.

My last category addresses possible challenges in international business communication caused by linguistic diversity. In this category, the focus is on the misunderstandings or even conflicts caused by language differences. Additionally, it addresses the solutions or measures to mitigate challenges in international communication. While throughout the entire study I discuss the topic of possible issues in international communication, I have decided to create a distinct category to exclusively address the challenges. This approach will facilitate a focused exploration of misunderstandings and other challenges in international business relationships caused by language. Despite the implicit aim of language diversity management strategies to mitigate challenges, unforeseen difficulties may still arise, for which decision-makers are not prepared. Thus, the solutions discussed within this category differ from those in the category of linguistic management strategies, as they center on comprehending responses to specific misunderstandings rather than merely considering overall management concepts.

Category	Focus	Theoretical background
Internationalization	<p>Internationalization strategies of startups;</p> <p>Importance of linguistic proximity for internationalization decisions;</p> <p>Resource allocation in the internationalization process;</p>	<p>Gradual internationalization (Uppsala Model): Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J.-E., 1977; Johanson, J. & Wiedersheim-Paul, F., 1975.</p> <p>Born-global model: Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Freeman et al., 2012; Zander et al., 2015.</p> <p>Access to resources in startups: Qian & Li, 2003; Qian et al., 2018.</p>
Language use	<p>Differences in the language use in different countries;</p> <p>Adapting to the language of the market;</p> <p>Lingua franca and specifically BELF.</p>	<p>Language use in international business communication: Welch et al., 2001; Hurmerinta et al., 2015.</p> <p>Customer-centric language approach: Steyaert et al., 2011; Wilmot, 2017.</p> <p>BELF: Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010.</p>
Linguistic diversity management	<p>Existing strategies for linguistic diversity management;</p> <p>Communication methods with foreign customers and</p>	<p>Different strategies: e.g. Jansson & Sandberg, 2008; Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002; Feely & Harzing, 2003;</p>

	partners; Internal solutions: hiring programs, trainings; External alliances; Technologies.	Vanjani et al., 2019; Steyaert et al., 2011.
Power dynamics	Influence of language skills on power dynamics in business relationships	Piekkari & Zander, 2005; Janssens et al., 2004; Wilmot, 2017.
Linguistic challenges	Challenges facing in linguistic diversity management; Misunderstandings in international communication; Methods for prevention and solutions.	General challenges and solutions: Feely & Harzing, 2003; Steyaert et al., 2011; Wilmot, 2017. Challenges related to BELF: Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005. Technology-specific challenges: Nakamura, 2009.

Figure 1: Category system

The category system and the theoretical background guide all methodological decisions (Meyen et al., 2019: 33). In the following chapters I present my methodology, choice of cases and investigation material.

7.3. Case Study

From the various qualitative methods available, I have identified the case study as the most suitable approach for my research. Qualitative case studies are widely used in business research to explore complex topics in detail (Wilmot, 2017: 85). Originally developed in psychology and medicine (cf. Longhofer et al., 2017: 189) the case study method has been

adapted to business research and involves “[...] a research strategy that examines, through the use of multiple data sources, a phenomenon in its naturalistic context [...]” (Piekkari et al., 2009: 569). Instead of focusing on the mass appearance of the phenomenon and discovering universal regularities, the case study method delves into individual cases and examines them in depth. A case is defined as an entity that can be a state, organization or person and must encompass the phenomenon relevant for the research (cf. Gerring, 2016: 26). In my study, the cases are organizations engaged in international business activities. Although I describe individual cases that cannot be generalized, these cases serve as illustrative examples. Many organizations share similar characteristics and face similar challenges or opportunities (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 88). Therefore, in the course of this study, I try to suggest potential patterns that may be shared among startups. These patterns can be related to internationalization strategies, tactics of linguistic diversity management and solutions for challenges in international communication.

To identify relevant phenomena without explicit hypotheses and standardized questions, I need to collect comprehensive information. However, we gain the most from the data after it is analyzed and interpreted as the ground for conceptualization and hypothesis generation (cf. Gummesson, 2003: 482). While analyzing the data gathered during the case study, careful consideration is given to the context, which is subsequently incorporated into the analysis (Welch et al., 2011: 741). Context is viewed as “[...] the surroundings associated with phenomena which help to illuminate that phenomena [...]” (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991: 56). Combining the explicit information derived from cases and the contextual factors is the initial step in generating the results of a case study (Welch, 2011: 742).

To connect the context with the collected information, I use the method of interpretation for the analysis part of my study. Interpretation is a process of constructing meaning by analyzing the collected evidence, integrating different data sources, and drawing connections between various elements of the case (Yin, 2018). In the case study, interpretation allows the researcher to uncover underlying meanings, hidden dynamics and multiple perspectives that contribute to a deeper understanding of the case (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 233). I aim to analyze my cases by combining the insights given by the investigated companies and the background information obtained from the literature.

In general, the researcher’s understanding of reality plays a central role in the implementation of the case study (Wilmot, 2017: 76). This concerns in particular the part of the interpretation, because interpretation is a cognitive process that involves examining patterns, themes and

causal relationships (Yin, 2018). Within the framework of qualitative research interpretation of data acknowledges the influence of the researcher's subjectivity and the contextual factors shaping the case (Stake, 2005: 443ff). It recognizes that understanding the case is not solely based on objective observations, but also on the researcher's interpretation of the data within the specific socio-cultural and historical context (Wilmot, 2017: 76). This is consistent with the way qualitative research is conducted in general.

As stated by Piekkari et al. (2009), case studies use multiple sources to investigate the phenomenon deeper and from different perspectives. In addition, the use of multiple sources of data collection allows triangulation and thus assures the quality of the study, as discussed in Chapter 7.1. For this study, I decided to combine semi-structured interviews and content analysis of the publicly available materials of startups. In the next chapters, I discuss my data collection techniques in detail.

7.3.1. Interviews

Conducting interviews is one of the most common methods in qualitative research (Buchanan, 2012: 352). Data collection using interviews is suitable for deep analysis of the phenomenon in the case study (Wilmot, 2017: 98). Conducting interviews allows researchers to directly engage with individuals involved in or knowledgeable about the case (cf. Fontana & Frey, 1994: 362f). Due to this possibility, interviews provide an opportunity to delve deeply into specific topics, explore nuances and clarify ambiguities (Rubin & Rubin: 2004).

For my study, I choose semi-structured interviews. In contrast to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews “[...] allow for the provision of questions in order to guide the discussion to ensure that it is relevant [...]” (Wilmot, 2017: 98). On the other hand, they are more flexible than structured interviews (Alvesson, 2011: 14), which makes them more suitable for explanatory research (Wilmot, 2017: 98). In addition, the guide serves to make the results of the surveys comparable (Meyen et al., 2019: 85).

The planning of a semi-structured interview starts with the creation of an interview guide. Just like the questionnaire in a quantitative study, the interview guide mediates between theory and empiricism (ibid.). The guide should reflect the research questions of the study. Research questions and theoretical background cannot simply be passed on directly to the respondents, but must be operationalized and captured in the interview guide (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 132f). A guide contains a list of questions and interviewer instructions that have been formulated as well as put into a specific order (Meyen et al., 2019: 85).

The topics for the interview guide should be derived from the category system as mentioned in Chapter 7.2. According to my category system, the interview guide is divided into five substantive parts: internationalization process of the company; language use with international customers and partners; linguistic management in international business communication; power relations caused by linguistic diversity; challenges and solutions in multilingual external communication.

The interview guide is attached to this study. It covers all the topics I plan to investigate in my research and is composed in agreement with the best practices described in scientific literature.

Before the actual interview begins, it is recommended to start the conversation with a natural icebreaker (Meyen et al., 2019: 87). Next comes the introduction to the interview. The introduction explains the purpose of the study, assures confidentiality, and obtains informed consent from participants (ibid.). I recorded the interviews, so I asked permission for it during the introduction. I also assured the participants that the transcripts would serve me to evaluate the results and would not be treated anonymously without disclosing any information about the companies and their employees.

I phrased the interview questions so that respondents would feel comfortable and give detailed answers. The questions should be open-ended to invite participants to share their experiences or views on the topic of interest (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). However, it is suggested to mix open and closed questions to avoid monotony (Meyen et al., 2019: 87). The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews enables researchers to adapt their questioning and follow-up prompts to elicit rich and detailed responses (Yin, 2009: 107). Follow-up questions encourage participants to share their thoughts, experiences and perceptions in detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). As described, I used the active listening methodology in the interviews to ask meaningful and in-depth follow-up questions. An interview should resemble a natural conversation as much as possible not feel like a questionnaire (Meyen et al., 2019: 99f). To simulate a natural dialogue, interviews should use transition statements or prompts to smoothly move from one topic to another within the interview guide (cf. Fontana & Frey, 2005: 370). In conclusion, the interview guide should include closing questions that summarize key points and allow participants to provide any additional information they feel is relevant (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Accordingly, at the end of my interviews, I gave participants the opportunity to ask questions or share any final thoughts.

The guide to my interview is shown in the appendix. After the introduction and clarification of the questions, I started the interviews with an open question as suggested by Baxter & Jack (2008). First, I asked the participants to tell me about the company, its products and activities. Then I continued with the questions concerning the topic of the first category “internationalization process”. For example, I asked: “How did the selection of countries in which your company is active develop?” to see which factors influence the entrance of the companies to international markets. If not mentioned by the participants, I asked which role language played in the selection of foreign markets. To proceed to the topic of language use, I asked the interviewees which languages they speak with their international customers and partners (when applicable). First, I asked in general how the communication works in the respective language. Then I asked who from the parties determines the language and how my interviewee and his employees feel about communicating in this language. This also affected communication in their native language if the other party (customers and partners) had a different native language. To address linguistic management in international business communication, I again first asked a general question: “How do you manage communication in different languages?”. To follow up, I asked, for example, if the linguistic management strategies differed by language and if the companies use any tools to enable smoother international communication. To make a transition between the topics of linguistic management and power relations, I asked: “Do you notice any differences in communication in different countries?” and, if not mentioned by the participants, added: “Are the differences (among other things) due to language?” When power relations were not addressed by respondents, I asked directly if any of the parties felt more dominant depending on the language proficiency and how it was expressed. The last content part of my interviews was dedicated to the challenges in international business communication. Even though the difficulties could be mentioned during the interview, in this part, I explicitly asked: “Do you face misunderstandings in your communication with international customers and partners?” I then inquired whether the misunderstandings were caused by language differences. I followed-up, if necessary, to specify the kind of challenges and asked about the tactics for solutions or prevention of those challenges. After all the questions from my interview guide, I summarized the most important points to check if I correctly understood the participant. Furthermore, I asked if there is any other relevant input on the topic of my study. I also gave participants the opportunity to clarify any open questions.

To ensure the accuracy and richness of the data gathered, it is essential for the researcher to create a comfortable environment for the interview participants (Patton, 2015: 460). Even though it is claimed that face-to-face interviews are best for having intimate and deep conversations (Meyen et al., 2019: 99), I knew from my own experience that CEOs of startups are very busy and are much easier to engage in an online interview. For this reason, I invited my participants to virtual interviews. However, to recreate an atmosphere of a personal conversation, I chose video calls over phone calls.

Another aspect I considered is the use of language in the interviews. The language used during interviews directly affects the quality of communication between the researcher and the participants (Patton, 2015: 373). Especially because my study focuses on the role of language in international business communication of the companies, I carefully considered the choice of the interview language. Furthermore, using the participants' native or preferred language allows them to articulate their thoughts and emotions with nuance and depth, contributing to richer data (Seidman, 2013: 105). The interviewees I have selected for my study (presented in Chapter 7.4.) are native German speakers. My German language skills are on the native speaker level as well. Therefore, I decided to conduct the interviews in German. However, in this work I present only English translations of the questions and answers.

7.3.2. Content Analysis

As stated in the previous chapters, case studies combine various research methods to maximize the depth and richness of insights. Combining research methods allows researchers to collect data that complement one another (Wilmot, 2017: 91). By integrating methods, researchers can fill gaps and gain a holistic view of the case (ibid.). While interviews are useful for exploring participants' perceptions and experiences, content analysis can be implemented to uncover underlying meanings, concepts and ideas that emerge from the text (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 134).

Content analysis is a research method used to analyze textual, visual or audio data (Meyen et al., 2019: 133). Qualitative content analysis differs from quantitative content analysis in that it aims to capture meanings, context, and interpretations rather than numerical frequencies (Schreier, 2012: 7). When little is known about a subject, qualitative content analysis can serve as an exploratory tool to generate hypotheses and lay the groundwork for future investigations (Kondracki et al., 2002: 224f). Since my study deals with a little-researched

phenomenon that I would like to examine in detail, the method of qualitative content analysis is well suited for this purpose.

Content analysis can be applied to different types of audio and visual data, such as textbooks, newspaper articles, websites, advertisements and many more (Schreier, 2012: 2f). For my study, I identified companies' websites and social media presence as the most appropriate materials for the content analysis. Since I investigate the linguistic management of the companies, I focus on text (written and spoken) rather than on visuals.

To find data relevant for my research and systematically describe it, I first created a coding frame (cf. Schreier, 2012: 58). A coding frame is a crucial tool used to categorize and organize the data into meaningful units (cf. Mayring, 2014: 123). It involves systematically assigning codes to segments of the data that represent specific themes, concepts or patterns identified during the analysis (ibid.). The coding frame provided a structured framework for my analysis process, making it easier to identify and compare recurring themes and patterns within the data.

The coding frame is created based on the category system of the study (Kuckartz, 2009: 59f). I introduced my category system in Chapter 7.2. According to it, I will evaluate the text units of the websites and social media profiles with reference to the following topics: internationalization process of the company; language use throughout the channels; linguistic management in external communication; power relations; challenges and solutions in multilingual external communication.

In applying the categories in practice for the content analysis, I draw from the Grounded Theory by Glaser & Strauss (1998). Analyzing data based on Grounded Theory is characterized by an inductive approach, meaning that theories are derived from observations and data collected during the research process, rather than being driven by preconceived hypotheses (Kuckartz, 2009: 73f). The Grounded Theory anticipates open coding, the process in which the researcher thoroughly reviews the data and starts assigning initial codes to meaningful segments (cf. Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The process of open coding, therefore, involves not only conceptualizing the data but also identifying and dimensioning the properties of categories (Kuckartz, 2009: 76). After the open coding, axial coding begins. Axial coding can be described as a series of procedures through which data, after open coding, is reassembled in a new way by creating connections between categories (Strauss & Corbin 1996: 75). In the last step, selective coding is performed. During the process of the selective coding core concepts and their connections are identified (Kuckartz, 2009: 77).

I used my categories for the coding frame to filter relevant content. As the analysis progressed, I identified sections of text that fit into one of my categories and defined codes accordingly. I include the evaluation of the codes in the results section in Chapter 8.

7.3.3. Combining the outcomes

Finally, I combine the evaluation of the interviews and the content analysis to provide a deeper understanding of the linguistic diversity management of the companies studied. Since case studies involve an intensive examination of the cases, I present each case separately. So I present the findings from the interviews and content analysis of each company individually. This approach “[...] facilitate[s] the presentation of context at each organisation, enabling a holistic consideration of all the research aims as they were investigated at individual organisations” (Wilmot, 2017: 130). Accordingly, presenting the findings of the cases separately allows me to go deeper into the phenomenon being researched and describe the individual aspects of linguistic diversity management in each company in more detail. I apply the method of interpretation to present the complexity and richness of the cases’ contexts. I put the analysis from my cases according to the categories that I have developed for this study. This assists me in creating a systematic presentation of the findings.

Eventually, I identify the common topics in the cases and present them in Chapter 9. I am exploring the similarities and differences between the cases in order to identify possible patterns. I summarize the key points and relate them to the theoretical framework (cf. Wilmot, 2017: 204). Finally, I attempt to answer my research questions based on the findings of the case study and propose hypotheses for future research (cf. Creswell, 2013: 110).

7.4. Sample

Sampling for case studies involves the selection of the cases, participants and sources of data that are relevant to the research questions and objectives (cf. Yin, 2009: 54). Unlike quantitative research, where random sampling is commonly used to ensure representativeness and generalizability, qualitative research adopts purposive sampling methods (Creswell, 2013: 125). The goal of case study sampling is to carefully select cases that can provide valuable insights into the phenomenon under investigation and allow for a comprehensive and in-depth analysis (Yin, 2009: 58).

Since case studies aim to provide detailed insights into the phenomenon, researchers who select this method prioritize the amount of information gathered within each case rather than

the number of cases (David, 2009). I apply criterion sampling, according to which cases are selected based on specific criteria or characteristics that are deemed important for the research (Yin, 2009: 58). Considering that, in this work, I examine two companies that meet specific criteria defined by my research questions and the framework of my study. First, the companies I choose as my cases must be classified as startups based on the definition presented in this work. Second, the companies need to have international business relationships, e.g. customers, suppliers or partners in foreign markets.

In order to ensure the comparability of the results generated from both companies, it is essential to strive for a high degree of similarity between them (cf. Meyen et al., 2019: 101). Accordingly, I searched for startups that come from the same country, operate in a similar industry and are approximately the same size.

As I previously explained, my background and perception play an important role in this study. Particularly, since contextuality and interpretation are essential parts of the investigation, I relied on my prior knowledge when selecting the cases. Since I have been living in Germany for the past ten years and have accumulated work experience in this country, including in startups, I have chosen to investigate German startups. I can assert that I possess sufficient knowledge to collect relevant data and undertake meaningful interpretation thereof.

Both companies I have selected for my study have their headquarters in Germany. Furthermore, they both operate in the field of mobility technology and have up to 100 employees. The important factor for the selection of the companies was that they are conducting business successfully and have an established presence abroad.

As discussed in the theoretical part of this study, significant authority over the operations of startups lies in the hands of their founders. They often have the final say in decisions and accordingly possess a comprehensive understanding of the current organizational landscape. Therefore, when selecting the interview partners, I made sure to talk to the founders of the selected companies.

Following, I present the cases of this study. I introduce the companies, the participants and the materials selected for analysis.

Company A

Company A is a software development company that specializes in creating software for small transportation companies, typically those with one to ten vehicles or up to ten trucks.

Their software enables these companies to manage their entire business, including tasks such as scheduling transportation, creating and distributing orders to drivers and trucks, informing drivers about assignments, and generating invoices. The company adopts a "Mobile first Approach," providing a mobile app for easy access and management, catering to the needs of transportation company owners who often drive themselves and oversee a small team of drivers. As a result, the company owners have to manage office tasks over the weekends when they return home. The solution of the company A involves building software that allows these firms to manage their entire business digitally, making it more convenient for them to handle administrative tasks. The company is one year old and has six employees for the moment of the interview.

I was able to recruit the founder and CEO of company A as a participant for my interview. He is one of the three founders of the company. His main responsibilities revolve around customer-related tasks, including customer acquisition, sales and marketing, as well as overseeing various operations within the company.

The materials I analyze in this study additionally to the interview are the website and the crunchbase profile of the company A. Although company A has a profile Instagram, it is empty at the moment I conduct this study, so I excluded it from the selection of materials.

Company B

Company B offers digital solutions for parking management. They replace barriers, paper tickets and parking discs with digital parking solutions that include mobile payment options. Their Cloud and IoT infrastructure allows for tailored solutions for parking lots, parking garages and underground parking facilities, transforming ordinary parking spaces into smart mobility hubs. Their customers encompass municipalities, cities, and property owners with parking garages or open spaces, among others. The company employs license plate recognition technology to achieve a comprehensive digitization of the entire parking process. Their customer segments are: parking operators, public utilities, hospitality & event centers and health facilities. The company is three years old and has 100 employees for the moment of the interview.

I had a chance to conduct an interview with one of the founders of Company B. His position is Chief of Operations. At the beginning of the company's development, he himself spent a lot of time talking to customers, but now he is more involved with operational tasks within the company.

Additional materials I took from Company B for the content analysis are the website, the LinkedIn profile, the Crunchbase profile and the Instagram profile.

8. Results

This chapter presents the findings of my study, which comprises in-depth case studies of two companies. The research methodology employed a combination of interviews with companies' founders and content analysis of the companies' websites and social media profiles. The results obtained from these methods offer valuable insights into the companies' strategies, practices and communication approaches regarding linguistic diversity management. Both cases will be individually explored, highlighting the unique characteristics and challenges of each case. In the presentation of the results I am guided by the narrative style seen in the work of Wilmot (2017).

I analyze the findings of my case study within the categories established for this work: internationalization process, language use in international business communication, linguistic management practices, power dynamics and linguistic challenges in communication. However, certain phenomena can be put to more than one category or cannot be clearly categorized. As such, the category system serves as a mechanism for structuring and not as a means of segregating the presented topics.

8.1. Company A - Born-global company relying on technology for multilingual communication

Company A mostly has market presence in Eastern Europe. It includes such countries as, for example, Poland, Lithuania and Estonia. Furthermore, there are some customers in Germany, Austria and Denmark. The plan of Company A is to develop more in the direction of Eastern Europe.

Internationalization

Regarding the market selection for internationalization, Company A considers various factors when deciding on specific markets. One important criterion is the size of the companies in the target market, with a focus on smaller firms that can utilize mobile platforms for their operations. They observed that as they move further east in Europe, the fleet sizes tend to decrease. Another factor is the number of companies in the industry, with Eastern Europe having a significant concentration of logistics and transport companies. Additionally, they

assess the language barriers and the availability of German- or English-speaking customers for effective communication in their target markets.

“When we decide to enter the market, we see with whom we can even communicate. I mean, unfortunately, none of us speaks Polish or any other Baltic language, for example. Therefore, we must consider, of course, whether Eastern Europe or other countries... Who can actually speak our language or English? How can we communicate effectively?”

As observed, in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden, people generally speak either German or excellent English. The founder of Company A noticed that the market entrance in these regions is smoother as language barriers are minimal. Moving towards the Baltic countries, particularly Estonia and Latvia, English proficiency remains relatively high, making communication relatively easy. However, as one heads towards Poland and Southeastern Europe, like Bulgaria and Romania, the situation becomes more challenging, as people there tend to have limited English-speaking abilities.

The current state reveals that while language plays an important role in the internationalization process, it may not be determinant in the decision-making process of Company A. Various other factors hold greater prominence in shaping internationalization strategies for the startup. When estimating the attractiveness of the market, the company pays particular attention to the availability of the market segment at which their product is aimed. Due to the product's ability to offer customers a unique service that fulfills their needs and is not readily available in the local market, the company can establish a presence in foreign markets without necessarily speaking the customers' language.

Therefore, the company is not actively seeking similar markets, as commonly observed in traditional internationalization theories. Instead, it focuses on identifying niche markets where its product can meet specific demands, enabling successful entry into foreign markets despite not addressing the language aspect directly.

Currently, the company is also planning a foreign partnership to gain access to international customers. The potential partner of the company is located in Eastern Europe. In the selection of partnerships, Company A does not consider language as an important factor. The reason is that one can assume that all potential partners of Company A can speak good English.

Language use in international business communication

According to the founder, market entry was much easier in the countries where good German or English is spoken. He claims that his English language skills are excellent and he feels

confident to communicate in English. The same applies for his coworkers who also freely speak English.

The website of Company A is available in German and English. The idea is that the English-language site will appeal to all international customers who do not speak German.

Company A has German-speaking customers also outside the DACH region. For instance, one of their Danish customers is proficient in German, although their native language is naturally Danish. However, it is the customer's decision to choose the language more suitable for them. In the case of the Danish customer, they were asked if they would prefer to communicate in English, to which the customer responded that they would rather speak German. They found it more comfortable and preferable to communicate in German rather than English.

“We are flexible in that regard, as we can offer both German and English.

Then we simply ask the customer what suits them best.”

My interviewee emphasizes that the most important thing is that the customer feels comfortable with the language choice. It is also important to get the necessary information from the customer in the selected language.

However, of the customers the company has outside the DACH region, none are native speakers of either German or English. Moreover, the founder of Company A shares that the level of proficiency in English of many customers is rather low. It must be honestly acknowledged that due to their customer base, the majority of their clients, particularly the typical truck drivers, are not individuals who have grown up internationally or studied abroad. As a result, their English language proficiency tends to be basic.

The interviewee also confirmed that engaging with customers in their native language would enhance the potential for improved business communication. However, the team of Company A does not have a capacity, at the moment when this study is conducted, to communicate with all the customers in their local languages. Recently, Company A had an intern fluent in Spanish. He conducted customer interviews in various markets, including Spain. The intern reached out to companies in Spain, communicating with them in Spanish, providing valuable insights into the local market. According to the founder of Company A, having a team member who can speak the local language proved advantageous.

“It was quite interesting because having someone on the team who can speak the local language allows us to connect with customers in a different way. Especially in our industry,

where not everyone speaks much English and the environment is not as international, it adds significant value.”

Accordingly, the interviewee believes that in the future, the company may consider hiring employees who can speak the language of specific markets, such as Polish. As Company A observes market growth and customer acquisition in different regions, they will evaluate the need for hiring individuals who can communicate effectively in the local language. Although it's not a priority right now, the interviewee believes it will become important in the future.

When it comes to managing the partnerships, it's entirely different. As previously indicated, the company's employees operate under the assumption that all prospective partners possess proficient English language skills. Consequently, the communication hitherto has been conducted only in English.

“So, let me put it this way: in both companies, everyone involved is either international or operates within an international environment, which means they all speak English, so it's not a problem at all.”

The founder of Company A highlights that those companies are relatively large organizations, and in such environments, English proficiency is prevalent among the members. Notably, one of the potential partners of Company A has English as its corporate language. Therefore, it is quite common to use English as the primary language for communication.

Linguistic management practices

My interviewee shared some practices and technologies they use for international business communication. However, they rather improvise and do not have clear strategies for linguistic diversity management.

As previously mentioned, Company A does not have employees who speak the language of customers in foreign markets. However, the founder of the company sees the importance of communicating in the language the customer is comfortable with. The employees try to adapt to the customers and, when necessary, speak their language. In this endeavor, they are notably assisted by the technologies that are currently available.

The registration process on the website of company A is only available in German, which is not considered as an issue by the customers, because there is an automated website translation tool integrated into the browser. This way, customers can easily complete the registration process in their mother tongue without any additional effort made by Company A.

Nevertheless, Company A intends to translate its website into other languages in the future. The founder of the company shares his thoughts about how efficient the translation can be performed. He emphasizes that advancements in technology, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence and natural language processing, have significantly improved the capabilities of translation tools. These technological developments have revolutionized the way translations are conducted, making them more efficient and accurate than ever before.

“In the last months and years, a lot has changed for me, as nowadays you can work remarkably well with artificial intelligence, for instance. You can have your website translated, for example, using ChatGPT, and the result is really good.”

Company A uses modern technologies not only to facilitate website translation but also to enhance communication with its international customers. Recent technological developments, especially the availability of messaging platforms with translation features, have made it much easier for companies to communicate with foreign customers. These advancements have revolutionized how businesses engage with global markets, making it simple to have smooth conversations even when there are language differences.

“For example, Facebook now has automatic translation capabilities, and it works quite well. Thanks to this, you have the opportunity to connect with people even if you don't actually speak their language.”

According to my respondent, there are also useful external tools that he uses to translate his messages. The technology comes into play when Company A has an interesting customer, but they speak neither the service provider's language nor globally used English.

“Customers, for instance, who came from Poland, and we realized they couldn't speak English or German, and we weren't sure what to do. So, I used Deepl to translate everything into Polish and sent them messages via email or WhatsApp, and surprisingly, it worked.”

Accordingly, thanks to the technologies Company A can reach the customers with whom it would not be able to communicate without those tools. Since not all potential customers know German or English, it is very important for Company A to show the customer that they can also speak the customer's language.

“Normally, I write in English, but I also add the Polish text: ‘Yes, we can also communicate in Polish.’ I'm not sure what works best, using translation or not. And that's when we see how people react. If they respond in English, that's great. If they reply in Polish, then I use the translation tool.”

Usually, the customer response is positive, according to the founder of Company A. He assumes that it can be very challenging for a person who opens a message and sees a text in an unfamiliar language. Then it's always incomprehensible and may feel somehow like a few letters that make no sense.

“And as a result, I, as a customer, would feel uncomfortable and might potentially end the conversation abruptly or not respond at all.”

Therefore, my interviewee considers incorporating at least a brief part of the message in the customer's native language helpful for better communication. In doing so, the founder relies heavily on the technologies and claims that they are very advanced. He shared an experience when a customer was writing in WhatsApp in English but once accidentally sent a text in Czech language. He then quickly replaced it with a message in English, but this was how the employees of Company A noticed that the customer was actually using a tool to translate his messages. From this, the founder has concluded that the translation tools are so well developed by now that you don't even notice if the person uses them.

“That was a very, very interesting learning. You never know for sure if someone speaks English or if they are just using a translator.”

My interviewee appreciates the translation tools and finds them a perfect solution for messaging with foreign clients. In this regard, he has his preferred technology for communicating with customers. For the founder of company A, it is important to have real-time interaction. Hence, he prefers to utilize the messaging application WhatsApp. In comparison to emails, he finds WhatsApp much more practical for engaging with customers.

“Emails go down quickly because they receive dozens of emails from their contractors every day. So they get tons of emails every day, but WhatsApp is more like on their mobile phone. Then they also write with their family, but also with you. That's why you're more top of mind, so to speak, compared to if you were just writing emails.”

Agility and real-time communication are relevant requirements for the technologies that are suitable for customer conversations at company A. And even if the development of technologies facilitates access to customers, the company prefers to rely on the simple calls. According to my interviewee. in the logistics industry, it is relatively common to communicate through phone calls, making it the most preferred option. However, if that doesn't work out, WhatsApp is still considered a good alternative. On its website, Company A offers a phone call as a preferred contact option too.

As described, the employees of Company A would contact the customers via phone calls if they assume customers' ability to speak German or English. If this is not clear, they would start an interaction in a messenger. For this, they would primarily use English and write one or two sentences in the local language. However, it is interesting that when the customers themselves contact the company, they never do it in their local language. When the customers proactively contact Company A, they choose either German or English.

“So when customers approach us, it is mostly in German or English. This also arises from the fact that our website is currently available only in German and English. Consequently, I presume that customers will consider only one of these options.”

So as previously noted, the company's website is currently only available in German and English, which also, according to the founder, leads to customers contacting the company exclusively in one of these languages. The founder notes that translating the website into other languages could increase the number of contacts from the customers. He sees this opportunity as very attractive for the future.

“For example, I've seen another startup translating its website with ChatGPT in seven or eight languages in real-time. While we haven't implemented this yet, it's a really cool feature as it opens up a significantly broader customer base.”

Thus, the founder notes that the translation of the website would open access to a larger number of foreign customers. He sees great potential in technologies simplifying multilingual communication, thereby making national borders disappear. He feels glad about the progress and has a positive outlook for the future, when technology will enable entirely new ways of communicating with people from different countries.

“It won't take much longer, and then you can communicate about anything, like through PCs or something, in real-time. So, you could speak Danish or Finnish now, and I could speak German, and we could still understand each other and have a real face-to-face conversation.”

My interviewee concludes that technological development allows the company to be more flexible in internationalization planning. Due to existing and expected advancements in translation tools, language becomes less significant in the choice of new markets, according to the founder of Company A.

Power dynamics

As mentioned, the interaction of Company A with international customers is often performed in English, even though none of the customers are native English speakers. The interviewee also acknowledges that the customers often possess limited English language proficiency. Conversely, the founder and his team exhibit a strong command of the English language. During the communication, the service provider needs to occasionally adapt to the customer's preferences, as indicated by my interviewee.

“I look how well they understand me. And just adapt my language. This can involve speaking more slowly, accentuating clearly, or repeating the same thing with different words. But I think ultimately, I just need to ensure that I express myself as simply, succinctly, and concisely as possible.”

That means that my interview partner simplifies his expressions to be understood by the customers. Even though his level of English is very high, he adapts to the level of the customers. As he describes himself, he needs to use “*less sophisticated language*” to avoid confusing his counterpart. The founder feels in a similar way with the Danish customer who speaks German. The customer’s knowledge of German is limited, even though it is his preferred language for communication, so the founder of Company A makes an effort to make their exchange effective.

“Maybe I should repeat in different words to ensure absolute clarity, that is, to ensure that the entire message is understood in the same way by both parties.”

In both cases, when the founder of Company A speaks with foreign customers in German or English, he openly admits that he considers his language skills to be superior compared to his customers. He simplifies his expressions and tries to facilitate the communication by artificially lowering his language proficiency.

According to the approaches in the literature, the founder's behavior indicates certain power dynamics. He endeavors to communicate in a simpler manner with his customers, aiming to align with their level of understanding. As a result, it appears that he positions himself in a higher status. However, I am cautious with this interpretation as there are no direct indications that the founder feels overall more qualified due to his language proficiency. According to the founder, the linguistic adaptation is, in contrast, related to making the customer feel comfortable.

“We try to do everything so that the customer feels good and so that we can obtain the necessary information from them to assist them.”

Accordingly, the adaptation of language can be interpreted as an attribute of the customer-oriented approach of Company A.

It should be noted that the founder uses simpler language when translating messages to the native language of foreign customers. This raises the question of whether this is an indication of him perceiving his customers as less qualified. According to my interviewee, however, he employs simpler language to ensure accurate translation by the language tool. As he cannot verify the rendition in the unfamiliar language himself, he relies solely on the translation machine. Hence, he avoids linguistic intricacies to minimize confusion during translation.

According to the founder, the relationship with international customers is equal and not influenced by any power dynamics. The founder explicitly refutes the occurrence of power dynamics due to language differences. However, it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of this claim without hearing the perspective of the other party. Since I did not have a chance to speak to Company A’s customers, I can only draw on the words of my interviewee.

In the relationship with international partners, no disparities arise due to the linguistic aspect. Both parties share a common background. They use BELF for their interactions, where neither the Company A’s employees nor the partners have English as their native language. As a result, they communicate on the same level and do not experience power dynamics based on language.

Challenges in communication

My interviewee emphasized multiple times that effective communication with customers and partners is of utmost importance to them. Company A tries to circumvent language barriers and establish clear international communication. Especially considering the company's early-stage development, where product evolution is highly dynamic, the customers play an active role in shaping the product development process. In the current phase of their business, understanding customers' work processes, identifying their challenges, and adapting the product accordingly are crucial aspects for successful startup development. This necessitates a keen comprehension of the customers' perspectives and requirements.

However, the founder of Company A admits that communication with customers is not always flawless. For instance, he often finds himself uncertain about the precise intentions of the Danish client during their interactions.

“So, if he now says, ‘I want to manage my orders’, he might actually mean that he wants to forward his orders or something like that.”

These linguistic misunderstandings sometimes lead to the employees of Company A not precisely knowing the needs of the customers. The terminology in the industry is not as straightforward as it seems, says my interviewee. Especially with the Danish customers, the company has experienced the need to double-check and ask for clarification two or three times to ensure a clear understanding.

“We often rephrase the communication in different words to ensure that both parties are on the same page and that there are no misunderstandings.”

Such misunderstandings also arise with other customers with whom Company A communicates in English or, through translator tools, using the customer’s mother tongue. As mentioned by the interviewee, the language proficiency of many customers is not at an advanced level. In general, basic everyday communication functions quite effectively. However, when the need arises to clarify specific matters, it can become challenging.

“When you have to explain a complex matter, for instance, how a product works or what it includes, through WhatsApp, there can be occasional misunderstandings, which, I believe, are also attributable to the language.”

Such misunderstandings render collaboration with customers more challenging and hinder the efficiency of processes. Especially when communication with the customer occurs through translation tools, misunderstandings are sometimes identified only at a later stage. This may even lead to customer loss.

This happens most frequently with new customers or those with whom they work occasionally. However, they also have customers with whom they collaborate closely and perceive the exchange completely differently in these cases.

“We do have customers with whom we have very close relationships. We call each other every day or every two days and say: ‘Hey, I have a new idea here, it could work here, or it could work there.’ With such customers, we know them well and understand how to respond to their expressions and needs.”

According to the founder, in this type of relationship with the customers there are hardly any misunderstandings. The daily exchange between the parties enables a comprehensible and straightforward communication. This is the objective pursued in the communication of Company A.

As previously mentioned, some of the functions of the startup's website are only available in German. Although one could argue that technologies such as integrated translators would allow customers to translate everything directly into their language, there is a possibility that customers would not take that step.

For interactions with partners, Company A relies on the use of English. The founder describes the communication with partners as seamless and purposeful. As mentioned, the partners of Company A all speak very good English and frequently even use English as their corporate language. My interviewee emphasizes the importance of effective self-expression and the ability to comprehend others.

“Yes, it definitely makes things much easier when you know or can be sure that the other person comprehends everything you are saying to them. With that, you can undoubtedly build a business relationship in a completely different way.”

Thus, Company A can establish strong relationships with its international partners and customers who possess a high proficiency in English. In this context, BELF plays a significant role in facilitating successful business communication.

However, Company A has many customers with limited proficiency in English. As mentioned, the company faces challenges in the communication with those customers. To overcome the challenges and secure efficient communication with international customers, Company A applies various methods. Some of these methods have already been addressed earlier in this work. On one hand, the employees of Company A adapt their language to the language proficiency of the customer. This includes the use of simple terms, simplified sentence structures, or even slowing down the speech when communicating over the phone. Furthermore, the employees of Company A repeat the key points multiple times when they know that certain customers may experience misunderstandings.

“We have made the experience that it is better to ask two or three times to ensure that we have understood correctly. We might repeat it in different words to be absolutely certain that the message is clear and that the customer means exactly the same thing as we do.”

These are the actions that Company A undertakes to minimize the challenges of international interactions. Even though my interviewee mentions some of the actions they take to ensure seamless international business communication, he admits that there are no specific strategies for linguistic diversity management.

“I mean, we do all of this because we are still relatively small. Naturally, we handle everything in a very informal and straightforward manner, just as it fits in the moment.”

I could see that Company A faces several challenges in communicating with customers, especially because some customers do not have a strong command of either German or English. The company's employees make efforts to establish a communication approach with international clients that fosters understanding. Because the decision makers of the startup have noticed that addressing customers in their native language is much more efficient, they plan to use the services of a partner in the near future. Accordingly, this partner company will reach customers in their language and thus improve access to certain markets.

8.2. Company B - Gradual internationalization with focus on language-skilled teams

Company B has its customers mostly in the DACH region. In Addition to Germany, Austria and Switzerland, it recently started operating in Italy. Now, Company B focuses on being established in the markets they entered and does not plan to expand to new countries at the moment.

Internationalization

Company B started its operations in Germany and then expanded to Austria and Switzerland. The key factors influencing the decision to enter these markets were the physical proximity of the countries to Germany and the language barrier.

“Although they speak a dialect, they do not speak any other language; they still speak German. This aspect was the most important for us.”

The ability to speak German with customers was crucial for expanding the operations into other countries. Accordingly, Company B is exclusively present in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. They do not currently consider expanding into the French- and Italian-speaking regions.

After successfully entering the Austrian and Swiss markets, Company B expanded to Italy. At the moment when I am conducting this study, the company is only active in the Italian region of South Tyrol.

“Currently, we are only active in South Tyrol in Italy, as it provides easier access to German-speaking people.”

According to my interviewee, entering the German-speaking region is considered the initial step for the company's expansion into Italy. While Company B is still only active in the northern part of Italy, where it mostly focuses on German-speaking customers, it recently gained Italian-speaking customers as well.

To make market entry decisions, the company considers language and geographical proximity as crucial factors. They also assess the potential attractiveness of the market and its alignment with their business model. Additionally, they examine whether the market is well-established or untapped, which influences their strategic evaluation of the business and its prospects.

Therefore, the company approached internationalization slowly and gradually. According to the founder, it was crucial for the company to establish a strong connection with customers in each country before moving on to the next one. In order to establish these strong relationships, Company B had to communicate excellently with its customers, for which linguistic proximity was of high relevance.

They also receive regular inquiries from potential customers in other regions. For instance, interested parties from the Middle East frequently contact Company B's team. However, the startup always declines these requests. It is crucial for them to first establish a presence in those regions rather than accepting individual orders. In doing so, they will focus on identifying attractive markets and ensuring they have representatives who speak the language of the respective country.

To establish a presence in selected markets, the company has also opened offices in the respective countries. This means that in addition to Germany, Company B has employees in Austria, Switzerland, and Italy.

The company also has international partners and suppliers, primarily hardware manufacturers. These partners are located in Scandinavia, specifically Sweden and Norway, as well as in the UK. Thus, the partners and suppliers are not located in regions where German is primarily spoken.

The selection of partnerships was initially based on the products and their specifications. Language played a minor role in this decision-making process. The company focused on the availability and quality of the products, conducting various test projects before finalizing the rollout. Therefore, language was considered secondary, while the key factors were product quality, responsiveness and other relevant aspects. The geographical proximity was a crucial factor as well. They decided that they definitely wanted to stay in Europe because it would

simplify their supply chains. However, cultural or linguistic proximity was not considered for the decisions of partnerships and supplier choices. In contrast to the requirements for communication with customers, Company B does not aim to adapt its language to partners and suppliers.

Language use in international business communication

As previously mentioned, Company B was attentive in selecting international markets that facilitate access to German-speaking customers. Consequently, employees directly engaging with customers in Austria and Switzerland exclusively communicate in German. In order to establish a stronger rapport with customers, it is essential for Company B that its employees not only speak German but also the respective dialect spoken in the region. This approach facilitates better communication and connection with the clientele.

“That means, it's always quite advantageous to have a Swiss accent if you talk to Swiss customers. At least, that's the feeling I get. It's the best because then, you sound more natural in that setting.”

Accordingly, the communication with Swiss customers takes place in Swiss dialect, and with Austrian customers, in Austrian dialect. This also applies to the communication with customers in Italy. As the founder explained, Company B is exclusively present in the northern region where German is widely spoken. In this context, just like in Switzerland and Austria, it is important to communicate with customers using the dialect of South Tyrol, says the founder.

In addition to the German-speaking customers, Company B recently gained Italian-speaking customers as well. When the startup made the decision to serve Italian-speaking customers, the management team ensured that the sales team with Italian language skills was built.

“For us, it was important to have employees from South Tyrol who can speak both Italian and German. This way, the employees can interact with customers in Italian and communicate internally with the team in German.”

In this case, it was also important that the employees speak both German and Italian in the same manner as the people from the region. To ensure smooth communication with the customers, it was ensured that the employees working in the Italian-speaking market were proficient in German as well. This allowed them to discuss the customers' needs with the rest of the team effectively.

The communication with partners and suppliers also plays a crucial role in managing the business relationships of Company B. However, speaking the native language of partners and suppliers is not a priority for the startup. The communication with international partners and suppliers is exclusively conducted in English. Coincidentally, one of the suppliers, based in the United Kingdom, also speaks English as their native language. The other partners and suppliers from Scandinavia, however, possess a high level of proficiency in English. The startup team communicates flawlessly in English, enabling them to conduct business communication with the partners and suppliers using BELF.

The website of company B is available in German, Italian and English. The founder emphasizes the utmost importance of providing customers with all the necessary information in their native language. Therefore, when the management team decided to target Italian-speaking customers, the company translated the contents of the website into Italian.

The communication on the LinkedIn channel of Company B is mixed. The banner, company information and most of the posts are in English. Rarely there are posts in German. However, there is no communication on LinkedIn in Italian. Due to the limitation on LinkedIn where language switching is not possible as on a regular website, the startup had to carefully consider which language to choose. Presumably, the decision was made against mixing all languages (German, English, and Italian) to maintain a certain level of consistency in communication. As most of the general information and posts on the company's LinkedIn page are in English, it becomes evident that the page aims to target an international audience. Despite English not being the native language for most of the startup's customers and partners, it still probably attracts more international prospects than any other language. In this context, BELF once again comes into play to address the management of linguistic diversity in international communication.

BELF indeed plays a significant role in the communication of the company. The team also communicates internally in English.

“The public communication within the team is always in English, which means it provides a homogeneous structure. Documentation, for example, software code, is also consistently in English. Our entire tech team works with all literature and materials in English as well.”

This means that English is used throughout the company wherever individuals with diverse national backgrounds are involved in the interaction.

Linguistic management practices

According to my interviewee, Company B pursues strategies for managing linguistic diversity. These strategies are integrated into the overall company strategy and play a significant role in planning the startup's business activities.

First, the management team of Company B ensures that they have employees who speak the language of the country in which the company intends to establish itself. At the beginning, the company decided to exclusively internationalize in German-speaking countries to avoid the issue of language diversity among its customers. However, there are still language variations in the regions where they operate. For instance, dialects are spoken in Austria and Switzerland. In order to enable efficient communication between the team of Company B and its customers, the management verifies that the language is perfectly tailored to the customer base. If a specific dialect is spoken in the respective country, team members who are proficient in that dialect are also recruited.

“So, we specifically searched for someone with a Swiss accent [to work for the Swiss market]. We did not want to hire a German who then tried to sell things to the Swiss.”

When Company B decided to establish itself in the Italian-speaking market, the startup built an entire team. It was crucial that not only the sales representatives spoke fluent Italian but also the employees providing support related to the product, such as handling technical inquiries, for example. The company also established call centers staffed with Italian speakers to address inquiries from potential or existing customers. It was of paramount importance to build the infrastructure not only to sell to Italian-speaking customers but also to provide them with proper support and assistance in their mother tongue.

To establish a stronger connection with Italian-speaking customers, Company B ensured efficient communication and exchange between the Italian- and German-speaking teams.

“So, we have hired a country manager who speaks both German and Italian and resides in South Tyrol. For us, it was important that he is fluent in both languages, as it makes the communication with us much easier when it's in German.”

In this case, the Italian Country Manager fulfills the role of a language liaison, bridging the Italian and German teams.

This is one of the methods employed by Company B to manage linguistic diversity. Externally, the employees communicate with the customers in their language, while

internally, within the sales and project management teams, they use German for better understanding and coordination.

The communication with the international partners of Company B, on the other hand, is exclusively conducted in English. The startup does not consider it relevant to hire employees who are fluent in the languages of the countries where it has partners and suppliers. Similarly, there is no interest for Company B to hire English native speakers to communicate with them.

“And from the supplier’s side, no one takes over communication with us too. Therefore, it remains the case that expertise in the field is more important than language proficiency.”

Therefore, the knowledge of the industry and the specific products is seen as the most relevant aspect for hiring the employees who handle partner and supplier relationships. According to my interviewee, fluent English skills are sufficient for Company B to deploy its employees in negotiations with partners and suppliers.

In contrast to the communication with international customers, Company B does not have dedicated practices to manage linguistic diversity in communication within international partnerships or supply chains. Here, BELF is employed as an effective method for experts to communicate with each other.

In general, it can be argued that in the startup, BELF is used in all cases when there is no direct one-on-one communication with the customer. As mentioned before, this tendency can also be observed on the company's social media channels.

According to the founder of Company B, the employees use various tools for communication when BELF is applied, such as online translation programs. However, these are individual cases managed by each employee themselves. There are no overarching strategies for this purpose.

Power dynamics

Company B fully adjusts its language use to the customers’ needs. Indeed, my interviewee confirms that customers expect to be addressed in their native language.

“When it comes to South Tyroleans, I would say it is still acceptable [not to speak Italian], but as soon as you move a bit further south, it is expected to have an Italian speaker approaching the customers. The same, in my opinion, applies even to Switzerland and Austria.”

To meet customer expectations, Company B hires employees who can speak the language or even the dialect of the customer. From this, it can be inferred that the customer holds the power to determine the language, and the employees of Company B must adapt accordingly. However, in the communication itself, no power dynamics on linguistic basis arise, as the customer and the employee with whom they speak use exactly the same language. The emergence of power dynamics in communication with international customers is consequently avoided through the selection of a common language from the outset.

When communicating with international partners, the startup operates differently. Company B does not hire anyone who speaks the language of the partner, and the partners, on the other hand, do not have a dedicated employee to handle communication with Company B in German. Consequently, the communication is conducted using BELF. According to the founder of the startup, the employees of Company B speak English at the same level as most of the partners. The exception is a contact person at a supplier in Norway who speaks significantly poorer English than the rest. Nevertheless, my interview partner asserts that this employee is treated equally and considered a valuable expert. Other employees on the side of Company B do not necessarily feel more qualified simply because they speak better English.

On the other hand, Company B has a partnership in the United Kingdom, where the point of contact is a native English speaker and thus possesses better English proficiency than the startup's employees. However, as my interviewee asserts, there is no perceived hierarchy based on this linguistic difference.

“I would say that there are no particular power dynamics in communication. Just because someone is a native speaker doesn't make them feel more confident or superior in any way.”

According to the founder of Company B, the goal of both sides is to achieve maximum understanding. Therefore, both the partners and the startup focus on their expertise in the products they discuss. As a result, the communication is harmonious, and there are no power dynamics based on language.

Overall, the founder of Company B does not perceive any difference in communication with the partners. This means that regardless of whether the other party has English as their native language or not, the communication proceeds on an equal footing in all cases.

In my study, I must draw conclusions based on a single perspective. By observing Company B, there is no demonstration of power based on linguistic reasons. However, forming a definitive opinion is challenging without knowing the perspective of the other party involved.

Challenges in communication

My interviewee acknowledges that international communication can be challenging. Due to the language differences, occasional misunderstandings arise in the business relationships of the startup.

As previously discussed, Company B ensures to communicate with its customers in their native language. Part of this effort is driven by the experiences of employees who have encountered misunderstandings in international communication. For instance, the founder of Company B shared with me his experience with Italian people.

“Communicating with Italians can sometimes be more challenging. I mean, English is not our native language either. But I think Italians find it even harder to communicate in English.”

For this reason, it was crucial for Company B to find bilingual employees who can communicate with customers in Italian and with the team in German. This approach to managing linguistic diversity helps the company to avoid misunderstandings in communication with Italian customers.

An even more extreme example of communication challenges was experienced by my interviewee in Switzerland.

“Communication with customers from Switzerland can be challenging, especially as it appears that the Swiss don’t like the Germans. At least I feel so.”

Despite this negative personal experience, the founder has recognized the potential in the Swiss market and, in collaboration with other decision-makers, selected the country as a target for internationalization. To avoid experiencing such negative encounters in business communication, the company decided to hire employees from Switzerland. By avoiding direct contact between German employees and Swiss customers, potential language-related conflicts can also be circumvented.

Overall, the founder perceives the communication with international customers to be smooth from a linguistic perspective. Some misunderstandings may occur because of other, rather product-related topics.

The founder of Company B describes the communication with international partners as smooth. Usually, important matters can be efficiently resolved, and misunderstandings,

especially language related ones, rarely arise. In order to avoid potential misunderstandings with international partners, the employees of the startup have implemented several methods.

“When we have telephone conversations, we usually take meeting notes. These notes are then sent to all participants of the meeting, for instance. This way, everything is summarized again and can be reviewed later.”

In this manner, the employees ensure that all important points discussed verbally with international partners are thoroughly understood. Therefore, a written summary of the key topics is provided after each phone call.

However, my interviewee reports a challenging case where communication with the partner has been difficult. This pertains to the supplier from Norway with whom the startup engages in regular interactions.

“The contact person is in his early 50s, and he doesn't speak perfect English, and he also doesn't always understand everything.”

Due to the contact person's lack of language proficiency, occasional communication difficulties arise. However, given that this individual is a subject matter expert, his professional qualifications are more crucial than his English language skills. Therefore, the team at Company B strives to achieve the best possible understanding with the supplier.

“Sometimes, it is necessary to reiterate and possibly provide written explanations to achieve our intended goals in such situations.”

My interviewee explains that he typically communicates with the contact person via Skype, but whenever he needs to provide more detailed explanations to the partner, he prefers to use emails or short messages. Accordingly, written communication proves to be an effective method for clarifying ambiguous issues in international interactions.

It is important to note that the use of BELF in communication with partners is still perceived as efficient. Even when misunderstandings arise due to linguistic reasons, they are still resolved using English.

9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I will summarize the results of both cases, Company A and Company B. The aim is to identify their similarities and differences, which will serve as the basis for developing the hypotheses for future studies.

Throughout the study, some phenomena from the literature have been recognized in the actual linguistic management practices of startups. For example, the use of clear and concise language has been confirmed as one of the most effective methods of linguistic management. Other themes such as adapting to customers' linguistic preferences, use of BELF and implementation of technology could also be found in the case study. However, there were also new findings such as the importance of dialects and the use of communication tools to interact in the language that none of the startup's employees speak. The key findings from the study are summarized in this part.

The role of language for born-global strategy vs. gradual internationalization

My first observation is that Company A and Company B have different internationalization strategies. While Company A conforms to the born-global pattern, Company B opts for gradual internationalization. Market attractiveness is highly relevant for Company A. Once the startup identifies this attractiveness, the language of the market becomes secondary. The use of BELF and the implementation of new translation technologies appear to minimize the significance of linguistic diversity in the internalization process for Company A. Accordingly, Company A quickly began to internationalize into physically and psychologically distant markets. In contrast, Company B has strongly considered the physical and linguistic proximity of foreign markets in its internationalization decisions. After establishing its presence in the German market, the startup expanded to two other German-speaking markets: Austria and Switzerland. Only after successfully entering these two markets did the company select its next nearby market, South Tyrol. Following its experience in Italy with German-speaking customers, Company B built a team to address Italian-speaking customers. This internationalization approach aligns with the traditional principles of the Uppsala Model. Based on the analysis of available literature and the findings from the case study, it can be interpreted that the selection of internationalization strategy and the role of language in the internationalization process largely depend on the specific characteristics of the product. According to the born-global principle, companies internationalize rapidly and extensively by targeting niche markets, offering innovative products and having the drive to enter markets ahead of larger players. In line with what the founder of Company A disclosed and what I inferred from their website, Company A operates in fact within a niche market, catering to a specific user group that is more prevalent in certain countries. The product of Company B, although innovative, does not specifically cater to a niche market. The founder of the startup also confirms that when selecting markets,

the primary concern is not whether there are enough potential customers in the market. Therefore, Company B focuses much more on the proximity and linguistic familiarity of foreign markets. The startup also addresses the limited access to resources, as is typical for young small enterprises, by cultivating linguistic resources for engaging with international clients prior to market entry. From this perspective, I would infer that the crucial factor in the internationalization strategy is whether the product is tailored to a niche target audience or not.

Consequently, I can assume that there are two decision paths: if a product of a startup caters to the needs of a niche, the internationalization strategy is based on market attractiveness; however, if the product targets a broader audience, the physical and linguistic proximity of the market become crucial factors.

Another assumption I can draw at this point is that the aspect of language becomes more relevant when startups choose gradual internationalization. However, if they follow the born-global strategy, the language factor is not considered in the decision-making process.

Hiring staff with language skills vs. language nodes

The primary approach employed by Company B in managing linguistic diversity involves the recruitment of personnel dedicated to communication with international clients. The startup not only hires individuals engaged in direct customer interaction, but also dedicates employees to facilitate the integration between the foreign sales and customer support team and the German team. The company A does not have dedicated employees for communication in foreign markets. However, the startup had an experience where an intern possessed proficiency in a foreign language, which was employed during customer acquisition efforts. Company A utilized the language skills of the intern to tap into a new market. Consequently, both startups benefited from employees' foreign language skills. However, as evident, the role of these employees differed between the two companies. In Company B, the primary role of the employee designated as the "Country Manager" was to serve as the bridge between the foreign market and the local team. Conversely, in Company A, no dedicated individual was specifically sought to fulfill this role. By coincidence, the startup hired an intern who possessed a language skill deemed useful for Company A. However, this intern was initially not qualified for the task.

As recent studies reveal, it is a known phenomenon that employees, through their linguistic competencies, often fulfill functions of far greater importance than expected based on their

official positions within an organization. These employees act as language nodes. In Company B, this phenomenon is entirely absent, and the founder emphasizes the selection of only qualified personnel for the role of communicating with foreign customers. Company A, on the other hand, sees language nodes as a useful solution to linguistic diversity in international business communication.

From my case study, it can be deduced that language nodes can be applied by startups to facilitate business relationships with international customers. However, taking into account the difference between two cases, it is possible to assume a correlation between the internationalization strategy and the willingness to work with language nodes within the organization.

Another significant finding is that a startup (Company B), despite limited resource capacity, hired entire teams for communication with international customers. This practice extends not only to foreign-language markets but also to German-speaking markets where dialects are prevalent. This resource-intensive strategy aligns with the model of gradual internationalization, yet contradicts the conventional notion of a typical organizational structure in startups.

BELF - an important but not a universal solution

My next conclusion based on this case study is that BELF plays a significant role in the international relationships of the startups. Indeed, the utilization of BELF allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to communicate effectively and work together towards shared objectives. Its adoption provides companies with the flexibility to select internationalization targets without the need for additional language-specific resources. This aspect proves advantageous for startups, considering their limited access to resources.

Both investigated companies exclusively communicate with their foreign partners in English. In this regard, both Company A and Company B follow similar approaches. The expertise of the partners or the availability of products from the suppliers are the primary factors influencing their selection. As a result, no consideration is given to the language spoken by these partners. It is essential to note that both companies assume that all the partners they choose are willing to communicate in English. So far, this expectation has always been met. From this observation, an intermediate thesis emerges, suggesting that in modern international B2B communication, proficient English skills are considered a standard requirement.

In the context of my investigation, it has been confirmed that BELF is not a neutral language, and there are influences from various cultures and mentalities on how English is used. Nevertheless, BELF facilitates smooth interactions and fosters understanding among individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. And even if misunderstandings arise during the communication process, they can still be clarified without hurting the business relationship. This demonstrates that within the scope of BELF, the use of non-perfect English is tolerated, and it does not hinder the comprehension among business partners.

Regarding the communication with customers, the processes of Company A and Company B differ. Company B, having prioritized linguistic similarity in selecting target markets from the outset, ensures that its employees always speak the language of the customers. For Company A, however, BELF serves as a commonly applied communication method in interactions with international customers. Nevertheless, since a complete understanding must be achieved in customer communication, the customers' proficiency in English is often not sufficient, and Company A must switch to the customers' language to avoid the customer loss.

Based on these findings, I conclude that English is an important language in the business world of startups. BELF is frequently employed to manage international communication. And although BELF tolerates imperfect English skills, having a good level of English proficiency is essential for successful business communication. In the establishment of partnerships, the use of BELF emerges as a dominant solution. However, when engaging in communication with customers, the significance of their native language becomes crucial for successful relationships.

Adaptation to the customer's language

A novel insight that can be gleaned from my study is the relevance of linguistic precision when engaging with customers. Even when prioritizing physical and linguistic proximity during internationalization, there are linguistic aspects to consider. Based on the experience of Company B, it is crucial to adapt even to the dialects spoken by the customers. As mentioned by the founder of the startup, the inability to speak the appropriate dialect with customers hindered the business relationship. As a result, the startup established teams proficient in the respective dialects.

From my case study, it is evident that the company that adapts more closely to the language of its customers experiences fewer misunderstandings with them. Company B ensures

complete adjustment to the language spoken by its customers. Accordingly, the founder of Company B confirms that interactions with international customers are conducted with mutual understanding. In contrast, at the time of the case study, Company A has not allocated additional resources, such as personnel or external agencies, to facilitate communication in the customers' native languages. Taking into account the statements of the founder of Company A, it becomes clear that this startup faces challenges in the communication with its international customers. Due to the fact that some customers have no or very poor English skills, communication problems and misunderstandings arise.

In addition, it can be observed that both startups have misunderstandings in communication with their partners. Neither of the startups communicates with international partners in German. At the same time, both startups do not have additional employees who are proficient in the languages of their partners. Therefore, communication is exclusively performed using BELF. In this context, when at least one of the parties is not a native English speaker, misunderstandings often occur.

In this regard, it can be observed that linguistic diversity indeed poses challenges. Particularly in communication with customers, it becomes evident that addressing them in their native language helps avoid misunderstandings. The Company A also realized that addressing customers in their native language brings significant advantages to business relationships. Therefore, the startup considered forming a partnership with a company that specializes in communicating with customers in Eastern Europe in their respective languages.

Importance of technology

Both startups shared several methods on how they resolved misunderstandings arising from linguistic differences in their daily business communication. Digital innovation in communication plays a crucial role in addressing challenges encountered in daily business interactions. As discussed in the theoretical framework, translation tools and messengers have already been recognized for their role in facilitating international communication. However, the rapid pace of technological advancement means that, at the time of this study, there are even more opportunities to apply digital innovations to facilitate cross-border communication. Both Company A and Company B use technologies to facilitate their international business relationships, but their approaches differ in several aspects.

The founder of Company A confirms that the startup heavily relies on technologies to enhance its communication with international customers and partners. Firstly, company A

employs translation tools in its daily business communication to interact with customers and partners. Similarly, employees of company B also occasionally resort to translators for communicating with foreign partners. However, a distinction emerges in the utilization of digital translation tools between the two startups. Company A translates content into languages that none of its staff members can comprehend. This implies that the material disseminated by the company to its clients remains unintelligible to its own employees, who rely entirely on the capabilities of translation machines. In contrast, company B employs translation tools primarily to enhance the phrasing of their communications in English, a language already proficiently wielded by the company's personnel. Consequently, those employees utilizing the translation tool retain control over the outgoing communication, ensuring that despite translation assistance, they maintain oversight of the conveyed message. Furthermore, both companies concur that the written mode of communication proves to be the most efficient in the context of linguistic diversity. However, in this aspect as well, the startups implement different communication methods. Company A relies on real-time exchange with foreign customers and partners to promptly and efficiently address potential misunderstandings. As a result, the employees of Company A predominantly communicate with international clients through instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp. Conversely, Company B employs written communication as a complement to verbal interactions with foreign partners. During calls with partners, Company B's employees create meeting notes and subsequently send them via email. When comparing Company A and Company B in terms of technology application, it becomes apparent that Company A employs a significantly greater array of technologies to facilitate communication with foreign customers and partners. They engage in real-time communication methods and utilize artificial intelligence to enable communication in various languages. Furthermore, the founder of Company A envisions substantial potential in further developing technologies for internationalization and improved communication with international counterparts for the startup. In contrast, Company B employs technologies to a smaller extent and uses translation and text generation tools with more caution. Nonetheless, the founder of Company B confirms that they could consider incorporating more technologies as the startup continues to internationalize.

As an interim conclusion, it can be stated that the use of modern technologies is an effective method for mitigating misunderstandings in international communication. In addition, I assume that startups adhering to the born-global internationalization model rely more on

technology to manage linguistic diversity compared to startups adopting a gradual internationalization strategy.

Power dynamics in the process of language selection

Overall, both startups tried to adjust to the linguistic preferences of their customers. Throughout my study, it has also been confirmed that customers expect to be addressed in their own language. In both cases, the startups ensured that the language of communication was chosen according to the customers' preferences. Despite lacking sufficient resources, Company A tried to facilitate communication with customers in their respective languages as best as possible, utilizing technologies, for instance, to engage in dialogue in the customer's language. This adaptation confirms the phenomenon described in the literature that in business relationships, the customer holds more power and the supplier adjusts to the wishes of the customer.

On the other hand, I must consider the fact that in my case study, the suppliers that served the startups did not linguistically adapt to them despite having them as customers. The suppliers only offered English as the means of communication. It becomes evident that in this context, the customer does not have the power to determine the language of communication. The assumption could be that startups, as new and small companies, are generally more willing to adapt to their customers compared to larger and more established corporations.

Power dynamics based on language proficiency

In the literature, there has also been discussion about power dynamics that arise when one of the interaction partners has poorer language skills compared to the other. This assertion is described in the context of the use of BELF. In such situations, the individual with superior English language proficiency is perceived as the more qualified expert. This statement was not directly supported by the findings of my study. The founder of Company A has mentioned that he starts speaking more simply when he perceives that his conversation partner has poor English language skills. The way he describes the situation leads me to speculate that he overall feels more qualified during these conversations. However, I have not obtained direct evidence to support this assertion in the study. Company B uses English only in communication with partners and, according to the founder, does not experience any language-related power dynamics. The most significant finding is that the employees of Company B do not perceive any power dominance from the side of their British partners. Despite the partners being English native speakers, they do not present themselves as superior

to the employees of Company B. From the interviews and content analysis, it becomes evident that expertise in the technologies with which the startups are engaged is more relevant than English proficiency. In this context, and given the absence of direct evidence of power dynamics based on language, it can be inferred that the complexity of the products and topics being discussed places the emphasis on technical expertise and puts linguistic competence to a secondary position. Therefore, people having better language skills do not feel more qualified or powerful in such business relationships.

These findings lead me to hypothesize that there are no strongly presented power dynamics in international relationships of startups. This could be attributed to the fact that because of the complexity of the products technical expertise is valued most, and linguistic competence does not hold as much significance. On the other hand, this could also be attributed to the nature of startups, which uphold modern values and believe in flat hierarchies. It is possible that power dynamics are inherently avoided, including those stemming from language, possibly due to a fundamental aversion to hierarchical structures.

10. Discussion

In this study, I have examined the role of language in the international business communication of startups. My aim was to better understand the linguistic management methods in the internationalization process and the interactions with international customers and partners.

In general, I can affirm based on my study that startups lack well-developed strategies for managing language diversity. As a result, the findings of this research could serve as a starting point for the formulation and refinement of methodologies aimed at addressing the challenges posed by language diversity. I have extracted several significant findings from the study that could be elaborated upon and further investigated.

For instance, I hypothesized that the internationalization strategy of startups depends on whether they cater to a niche market or not. A larger sample could be examined to determine whether the issue of linguistic proximity plays a more significant role in the internationalization process for companies targeting a broad market compared to those entering a niche market.

The internationalization strategy of Company A aligns with the born-global principle. The startup initially engages with customers in English, yet has progressively been endeavoring to

align more closely with customer languages. This would also constitute a compelling subject for future research. Firstly, one could investigate whether the utilization of English for international business communication is characteristic of born-global firms. Furthermore, an exploration of the sustainability of business relationships employing BELF could also be done in more detail.

An interesting subject for further exploration, extending beyond the borders of linguistic research, would be to investigate how startups manage to establish multilingual teams considering the limited access to resources. This would be particularly of interest when compared to the establishment of such teams within MNEs.

The significance of dialects in customer communication represents a rather unexpected outcome of my study. Given the context of globalization and the increasing prominence of BELF in communication, I did not anticipate that the utilization of dialects would play such a pivotal role in building connections with international customers. It would be interesting to further explore this topic in different regions where dialects are spoken.

A topic that is becoming increasingly important is the use of technologies for multilingual business communication. In particular, translation tools are evolving and becoming more and more adaptable to the language use of the communicators. In my research, it was confirmed that international business communication benefits from the use of translators and messengers. In addition, both companies confirmed that they see great potential in applying the technologies as they continue to internationalize. So it would be reasonable to further explore the use of the technologies in managing language diversity.

Another potential topic for further research concerns the availability of the certain sections of Company A's website exclusively in German. The founder of the startup implies that it is nowadays possible for website visitors to translate everything into their language using integrated translation tools. However, there is evidence in the literature that people have difficulty building trust if they are not familiar with the language. At this point, it would be interesting to investigate whether online offerings appear less trustworthy when they are in an unfamiliar language. Or whether translation technologies compensate for this mistrust.

One of my research questions addressed power dynamics based on differences in language proficiency levels. I could not identify any obvious evidence of power in the relationships with either customers or partners of both startups. This phenomenon could be attributed to the modern structures and the trend towards flat hierarchies within startups. Alternatively, it is

plausible that employees of startups themselves exhibit dominant behavior due to their superior language skills and simply do not acknowledge this fact. To delve deeper into this aspect, a more comprehensive investigation would require perspectives not only from startups but also from their customers and partners. To have an even deeper insight, it would be useful to analyze selected excerpts from their communication.

In conclusion, this study offers a better understanding on the role of language in the international relationships of startups. Although the findings from this study offer rich insights and a deep understanding of the phenomena studied, it is important to recognize the inherent limitations resulting from the small sample size. Although I cannot generalize the results of this study, it provides important approaches for further research. What I can definitely conclude from this study is that the issue of linguistic diversity is relevant for startups. Perhaps due to their agility and adaptability, they are ready to internationalize faster than other types of companies. However, they cannot ignore the linguistic barriers in foreign markets. That is why the issue of the role of language in the international communication of startups is relevant and could be further explored in further research.

Sources

Acedo, F. J. & Jones, M. V. (2007): *Speed of internationalization and entrepreneurial cognition: Insights and a comparison between international new ventures, exporters and domestic firms*. Journal of world business. 42(3). 236-252.

Aggarwal, R. (2017): *Developing Linguistic Diversity Management in Teaching IB: Introduction to this Issue*. Journal of teaching in international business. 28(3-4). 133-136.

Alvesson, M. (2011): *Interpreting Interviews*. London: Sage.

Alsan, M. (2022, October 9): *The best machine translation software you can try in 2023*. Weglot. <https://www.weglot.com/blog/machine-translation-software> [11.08.2023].

Bargiela-Chiappini, F., Bülow-Møller, A. M., Nickerson, C., Poncini, G. & Zhu, Y. (2003): *Five Perspectives on Intercultural Business Communication*. Business communication quarterly. 66(3). 73-96.

Barnad, B. (2021). *Discord to support synchronous communication in distance learning*. 2nd Annual Conference on blended learning, educational technology and Innovation. 34-38. Atlantis Press.

Barner-Rasmussen, W. & Bjorkman, I. (2007): *Language Fluency, Socialization and Inter-Unit Relationships in Chinese and Finnish Subsidiaries*. Management and organization review. 3(1). 105-128.

Baron, R. & Tang, J. (2011): *The role of entrepreneurs in firm-level innovation: Joint effects of positive affect, creativity, and environmental dynamism*. Journal of Business Venturing. 26. 49–60.

- Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008): *Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers*. The Qualitative Report. 13(4). 544-559.
- Birkinshaw, J., Brannen, M. Y. & Tung, R. L. (2011): *From a distance and generalizable to up close and grounded: Reclaiming a place for qualitative methods*. International business research. 42. 573-581.
- Bournias, S. (2023, April 4): *Best translation software tools for business growth*. Lokalise. <https://lokalise.com/blog/best-translation-software-tools-for-business-growth/> [11.08.2023].
- Brannen, M. Y., Piekkari, R. & Tietze, S. (2014): *The multifaceted role of language in international business: Unpacking the forms, functions and features of a critical challenge to MNC theory and performance*. Journal of International Business Studies. 45(5), 495-507.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013): *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Buchanan, D. A. (2012): *Case Studies in Organizational Research*. In: G. Symon & C. Cassell (Ed.), *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London: Sage. 351-370.
- Cappelli, P. & Sherer, P. D. (1991): *The missing role of context in OB: The need for a meso-level approach*. In: B.M. Staw (Ed.), *Research in organizational behavior*, (Vol. 13). 55–110. Stanford: JAI Press.
- Cavusgil, T. S. & Knight, G. (2015): *The born global firm: An entrepreneurial and capabilities perspective on early and rapid internationalization*. Journal of International Business Studies. 46(1). 3–16.
- Cavusgil, T.S., Knight, G. & Riesenberger, J.R. (2014): *International Business. The new realities*. International edition. Second edition. Pearson Australia.
- Charles, M. & Marschan-Piekkari, R. (2002): *Language Training for Enhanced Horizontal Communication: A Challenge for MNCs*. Business communication quarterly. 65(2). 9-29.
- Chetty, S., Ojala, A. & Leppäaho, T. (2015): *Effectuation and foreign market entry of entrepreneurial firms*. European Journal of Marketing. 49(9/10). 1436-1459.
- Clegg, S.R. (2014): *Circuits of power/knowledge*. Journal of Political Power. 7(3), 383- 392.
- Colombelli, A. & Quattraro, F. (2019): *Green start-ups and local knowledge spillovers from clean and dirty technologies*. Small Business Economics. 52. 773–792.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008): *Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. SAGE Publications.
- Covin, J. & Miller, D. (2013): *International entrepreneurial orientation: Conceptual considerations, research themes, measurement issues and future research directions*. Entrepreneurship theory and practice. 38(1). 11-44.
- Cox, A. (2004): *The art of the possible: relationship management in power regimes and supply chains*. Supply Chain Management: An international Journal. 9(5). 346-356.
- Cox, A. (2005): *The Rules of the Game*. Helpston: Earlsgate Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013): *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crystal, D. (1997): *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- David, M. (2009): *Case study research*. SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446260968> [12.02.2023]
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994): *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Donmoyer, R. (2000): *Generalizability and the single-case study*. In: R. Gomm, M. Hammersley, and P. Foster (Ed.), *Case study method: Key issues, key texts*. London: Sage. 45–68.
- Fan, T. & Phan, P. (2007): *International new venture: Revisiting the influence behind the 'born global' firms*. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 38(7). 1113–1131.
- Feely, A. J. & Harzing, A. (2003): *Language management in multinational companies*. *Cross cultural management*. 10(2). 37-52.
- Fernandez-Ortiz, R. & Lombardo, G. F. (2009): *Influence of the capacities of top management on the internationalization of SMEs*. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*. 21(2). 131–154.
- Fitzgerald, L. & Dopson, S. (2009): *Comparative Case Study Designs: Their Utility and Development in Organizational Research*. In: D.A. Buchanan & A. Bryman (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*. London, Sage. 465-483.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006): *Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research*. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 12(2). 219-245.
- Fontana, A. & Frey, J. H. (1994): *Interviewing: The art of science*. In: N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage Publications Inc. 361–376.
- Freeman, S., Edwards, R. & Schroder, B. (2006): *How Smaller Born-Global Firms Use Networks and Alliances to Overcome Constraints to Rapid Internationalization*. *Journal of International Marketing*. 14(3). 33-63.
- Freeman, S., Hutchings, K. & Chetty, S. (2012): *Born-Globals and Culturally Proximate Markets*. *Management International Review*. 52. 425-460.
- Gans, J. S. & Stern, S. (2003): *The product market and the market for "ideas": Commercialization strategies for technology entrepreneurs*. *Research policy*. 32(2). 333-350.
- Gerring, J. (2016): *Case study research: Principles and practices (Second edition.)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1998): *Grounded Theory*. Bern: Hans Huber.
- Gramkow Andersen, K. (1993): *Lingua franca discourse: An investigation of the use of English in an international business context*. MA thesis. Denmark: Aalborg University.
- Gummesson, E. (2003): *All research is interpretive*. *The Journal of business & industrial marketing*. 18(6/7). 482-492.
- Hall, E.T. (1959): *The Silent Language*. New York: Doubleday.
- Harzing, A., Köster, K. & Magner, U. (2011): *Babel in business: The language barrier and its solutions in the HQ-subsidiary relationship*. *Journal of world business*. 46(3). 279-287.
- Haynes, K. (2012): *Reflexivity in Qualitative Research*. In: G. Symon & C. Cassell (Ed.), *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London: Sage. 72-89.
- Henderson, J. K. & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2011): *Does Language Affect Trust in Global Professional Contexts? Perceptions of International Business Professionals*. *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*. 2(1). 15-33.

- Hill, C. W. L., Hwang, P. & Kim, W. C. (1990): *An eclectic theory of the choice of international entry mode*. Strategic Management Journal. 11(2). 117–128.
- House, J. (2003): *English as a lingua franca: A threat to multilingualism?* Journal of Sociolinguistics. 7(4). 556-578.
- Huhta, M. (1997): *The dynamics of language training: From an element of cost to an investment in communication*. Licentiate thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Hurmerinta, L., Nummela, N. & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki (2015): *Opening and closing doors: The role of language in international opportunity recognition and exploitation*. International Business Review. 24. 1082-1094.
- Ireland, R. D. & Webb, J. W. (2007): *Strategic entrepreneurship: Creating competitive advantage through streams of innovation*. Business horizons. 50(1). 49-59.
- Janssens, M., Lambert, J. & Steyaert, C. (2004): *Developing language strategies for international companies: the contribution of translation studies*. Journal of World Business. 39. 414-430.
- Jansson, H. & Sandberg, S. (2008): *Internationalization of small and medium sized enterprises in the Baltic Sea Region*. Journal of International Management. 14(1). 65–77.
- Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J.-E. (1977): *The internationalization process of the firm – A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments*. Journal of International Business Studies. 8(1). 23–32.
- Johanson, J. & Wiedersheim-Paul, F. (1975): *The internationalization of the firm: four Swedish cases*. Journal of Management Studies. 12. 305–322.
- Kankaanranta, A. & Planken, B. (2010): *BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals*. The Journal of Business Communication. 47(4). 380-407.
- Knight, G. A. & Cavusgil, S. T. (2004): *Innovation, organizational capabilities, and the born global firm*. Journal of International Business Studies. 35(2). 124–141.
- Kondracki, N. L., Wellman, N. S. & Amundson, D. R. (2002): *Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education*. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior. 34(4). 224-230.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009): *Interviews. Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Kuckartz, U. (2009): *Einführung in die computergestützte Analyse qualitativer Daten*. 3., aktualisierte Auflage. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Lamming, R. C., Caldwell, N. D., Harrison, D. A. & Phillips, W. (2001): *Transparency in supply relationships: concept and practice*. Journal of Supply Chain Management. 37(3). 4-10.
- Laufs, K. & Schwens, C. (2014): *Foreign market entry mode choice of small and medium-sized enterprises: A systematic review and future research agenda*. International business review. 23(6). 1109-1126.
- Leonidou, L. (2004): *An analysis of the barriers hindering small business export development*. Journal of Small Business Management. 42(3). 279–302.
- Lewin, A.Y. & Massini, S. (2003): *Knowledge Creation and Organizational Capabilities of Innovating and Imitating Firms*. In: H. Tsoukas & N. Mylonopoulos (Ed.): Organizations as Knowledge Systems. Palgrave: Basingstoke. 209-237.

- Li, L., Qian, G. & Qian, Z. (2015): *Should Small, Young Technology-Based Firms Internalize Transactions in Their Internationalization?* *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. 39(4). 839–862.
- Liesch, P. W., Welch, L. S., Welch, D., McGaughey, S. L., Petersen, B. & Lamb, P. (2002): *Evolving Strands of Research on Firm Internationalization: An Australian-Nordic Perspective*. *International Studies of Management & Organization*. 32(1). 16-35.
- Longhofer, J., Floersch, J. & Hartmann, E. (2017): *A Case for the Case Study: How and Why They Matter*. *Clinical social work journal*. 45(3). 189-200.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., Charles, M. & Kankaanranta, A. (2005): *English as a lingua franca in Nordic corporate mergers: Two case companies*. *English for Specific Purposes*. 24. 401-421.
- Lu, J. W. & Beamish, P. W. (2006): *SME internationalization and performance: Growth vs. profitability*. *Springer Science + Business Media*. 4. 27-48.
- Manyika, J., Chui, M., Miremadi, M., Bughin, J., George, K., Willmott, P. & Dewhurst, M. (2017): *A future that works: AI, automation, employment, and productivity*. McKinsey Global Institute Research, Tech. Rep. 60. 1-135
- Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D. & Welch, L. (1999): *In the shadow: The impact of language on structure, power and communication in the multinational*. *International Business Review*. 8. 421–440.
- Marcon, A. & Ribeiro, J. L. D. (2021): *How do startups manage external resources in innovation ecosystems? A resource perspective of startups' lifecycle*. *Technological forecasting & social change*. 171.
- Mauranen, A. (2012): *Exploring ELF: Academic English shaped by non-native speakers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mayring, P. (2014): *Qualitative content analysis: Theoretical foundation, basic procedures, and software solution*. Klagenfurt.
- Mendenhall, M. E. & Oddou, G. R. (1985): *The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: A review*. *The Academy of Management Review*. 10(1). 39-47.
- Meyen, M., Löblich, M., Pfaff-Rüdiger, S. & Riesmeyer, C. (2019): *Qualitative Forschung in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. Eine praxisorientierte Einführung*. 2nd edition. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldana, J. (2014): *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage Publications.
- Moen, O. (2002): *The Born Globals. A new generation of small European exporters*. *International Marketing Review*. 19(2). 156-175.
- Mughan, T. (2015): *Introduction: Language and languages—moving from the periphery to the core*. In: N. Holden, S. Michailova & S. Tietze (Ed.): *The Routledge companion to cross-cultural management*. New York: Routledge. 79–84.
- Nadolska, A. & Barkema, H. G. (2007): *Learning to Internationalise: The Pace and Success of Foreign Acquisitions*. *Journal of international business studies*. 38(7). 1170-1186.
- Nakamura, S. (2009): *Overcoming the language barrier with speech translation technology*. NISTEP Science & Technology Foresight Center. *Quarterly Review*. 31. 35-48.
- Patiar, A., Kensbock, S., Ma, E. & Cox, R. (2017): *Information and Communication Technology-Enabled Innovation: Application of the Virtual Field Trip in Hospitality Education*. *Journal of hospitality & tourism education*. 29(3). 129-140.

- Patton, M. Q. (2015): *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 4th edition. Sage Publications.
- Peralta, C. B. d. L., Echeveste, M. E., Lermen, F. H., Marcon, A. & Tortorella, G. (2020): *A framework proposition to identify customer value through lean practices*. *Journal of manufacturing technology management*. 31(4). 725-747.
- Piekkari, R., Welch, C. & Paavilainen, E. (2009): *The case study as disciplinary convention: Evidence from international business journals*. *Organizational Research Methods*. 12(3). 567-589.
- Piekkari, R. & Zander, L. (2005): *Language and Communication in International Management*. *International Studies of Management & Organization*. 35(1). 3-9.
- Plummer, K. (1994): *Critical Humanism and Queer Theory: Living with the Tensions*. In: N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage. 195-213.
- Prashantam, S. & Birkinshaw, J. (2020): *MNE-SME cooperation: An integrative framework*. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 51. 1161-1175.
- Qian, G. & Li, L. (2003): *Profitability of small- and medium-sized enterprises in high-tech industries: The case of the biotechnology industry*. *Strategic Management Journal*. 24(9). 881-887.
- Qian, G., Li, L. & Rugman, A. M. (2013): *Liability of country foreignness and liability of regional foreignness: Their effects on geographic diversification and firm performance*. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 44(6). 635-647.
- Qian, G., Lee, L. & Qian, Z. (2018): *Interactions Among Factors Driving and Inhibiting the Early Internationalization of Small, Young Technology Enterprises*. *Management International Review*. 58. 251-280.
- Reichertz, J. (2017): *Gütekriterien qualitativer Sozialforschung*. In: L. Mikos & C. Wegener (Ed.), *Qualitative Medienforschung. Ein Handbuch*. 2nd edition. Konstanz: UVK. 27-35.
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2007): *Using English for International Business: A European case study*. *English for Specific Purposes*. 26. 103-120.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (2004): *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226651>.
- Rynes, S. & Gephart, R. P. (2004): *From the Editors. Qualitative Research and the "Academy of Management Journal"*. *The Academy of Management Journal*. 47(4). 454-462.
- Sako, M. (1992): *Prices, Quality and Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sarangee, K. & Echambadi, R. (2014): *Firm-specific determinants of product line technology strategies in high-technology markets*. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*. 8(2). 149-166.
- Schreier, M. (2012): *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. SAGE Publications.
- Seidman, I. (2013): *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (4th ed.)*. Teachers College Press.
- Selmier, W. T. & Oh, C. H. (2012): *International business complexity and the internationalization of languages*. *Business Horizons*. 55(2). 189-200.
- Silverman, D. (2008): *Doing qualitative research: A comprehensive guide*. Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2005): *Qualitative Case Studies*. In: N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.)*. 443-466. London: Sage Publications.

- Steyaert, C., Ostendorp, A. & Gaibrois, C. (2011): *Multilingual organizations as 'linguascapes': Negotiating the position of English through discursive practices*. Journal of World Business. 46. 270-278.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1996): *Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Tabares, T. (2021): *Opportunity-related behaviors in international entrepreneurship research: a multilevel analysis of antecedents, processes, and outcomes*. International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal. 17. 321-368.
- Tayeb, M.H. (2000): *International business*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Tenzer, H., Terjesen, S. & Harzing, A.-W. (2017): *Language in International Business: A Review and Agenda for Future Research*. Management International Review. 57. 815–854.
- Vahlne, J.-E. & Johanson, J. (2017): *From internationalization to evolution: The Uppsala model at 40 years*. Journal of international business studies. 48(9). 1087-1102.
- Vahlne, J.-E. & Jonsson, A. (2017): *Ambidexterity as a dynamic capability in the globalization of the multinational business enterprise (MBE): Case studies of AB Volvo and IKEA*. 26. 57-70.
- Vanjani, M., Aiken, M. & Park, M. (2019): *Chatbots for multilingual conversations*. Journal of Management Science and Business Intelligence. 4(1). 19-24.
- Welch, C., Piekkari, R., Plakoyiannaki, E. & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, E. (2011): *Theorising from case studies: Towards a pluralist future for international business research*. Journal of International Business Studies. 42(5). 740-762.
- Welch, D. E., Welch, L. S. & Marschan-Piekkari, R. (2001): *The persistent impact of language on global operations*. Prometheus. 19(3). 193–209.
- Westhead, P., Wright, M. & Ucbasaran, D. (2002): *International Market Selection Strategies Selected by 'Micro' and 'Small' Firms*. The International Journal of Management Science. 30(1). 51-68.
- Wilmot, N. V. (2017): *Management of language diversity in international supply chain relationships of UK SMEs*. Doctoral, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Yang, C. Y. & Lin, H. Y. (2010): *An instant messaging with automatic language translation*. In 2010 3rd IEEE International Conference on Ubi-Media Computing. 312-316.
- Yin, R. K. (2004): *The Case Study Anthology*. London: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2009): *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Zander, I., McDougall-Covin, P. & Rose, E. L. (2015): *Born globals and international business: Evolution of a field of research*. Journal of International Business Studies. 46. 27–35.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview guide

1. Beschreibe kurz das Unternehmen und deine Rolle.
2. In welchen Ländern habt ihr Kunden / Lieferanten / Partner?
3. Wie ist die Auswahl an diesen Ländern entstanden?
 - a. Habt ihr euch bewusst für die Märkte entschieden oder hat es sich zufällig entwickelt?
 - b. Gab es Länder, in denen es eine Möglichkeit gab und ihr habt euch bewusst dagegen entschieden?
 - c. Haben Sprachkenntnisse eine Rolle bei der Auswahl der Länder gespielt?
4. Wie war es für euch, in die ausländischen Märkte einzusteigen?
 - a. Gab es Märkte, die schwieriger waren als die anderen?
 - b. Woran lag es?
5. Welche Sprache sprecht ihr mit den Kunden / Lieferanten / Partnern?
 - a. Wer bestimmt, auf welcher Sprache die Kommunikation stattfinden wird?
6. Welche Sprachen kannst du?
 - a. Wie wohl fühlst du dich, andere Sprachen zu sprechen?
 - b. Wie ist es bei den anderen Mitarbeitern?
7. Wie managt ihr die Kommunikation auf verschiedenen Sprachen?
 - a. Kommuniziert ihr nur mit Kunden und Partnern, die eine Sprache sprechen, die ihr gut könnt?
 - b. Habt ihr verschiedene Strategien für verschiedene Länder?
 - c. Verwendet ihr Übersetzer?
8. Habt ihr extra Mitarbeiter für bestimmte Märkte angestellt?
 - a. Wenn ja, sprechen diese Mitarbeiter die Sprache, die in dem jeweiligen Land gesprochen wird?
 - b. Wenn nein, warum habt ihr euch dagegen entschieden?

9. Über welche Kanäle kommuniziert ihr mit den Kunden in verschiedenen Ländern?
(persönlich, telefonisch, Email usw.)
 - a. Unterscheidet es sich je nach Sprache?
 - b. Wie läuft die Kommunikation auf verschiedenen Kanälen?
10. Merkt ihr Unterschiede in der Kommunikation in verschiedenen Ländern?
 - a. Liegt es (unter anderem) an der Sprache?
 - b. Wie kommt ihr damit zurecht?
11. Gibt es Fälle, dass in der Kommunikation der oder diejenige, die die aktuelle Sprache besser beherrscht, sich während der Interaktion sicherer fühlt?
 - a. Gibt es Hinweise, dass eine Person mit besseren Sprachkenntnissen als mehr qualifizierter Experte oder qualifizierte Expertin angesehen wird?
12. Ist eure Kommunikation mit den ausländischen Kunden / Lieferanten / Partnern problemlos oder entstehen Missverständnisse?
 - a. Falls ja, sind diese Missverständnisse mit der Sprache verbunden?
 - b. Falls ja, wie löst ihr die Probleme?
 - c. Falls nein, macht ihr aktiv etwas dafür, dass keine Probleme entstehen? Was?

Appendix 2: Interview with Company A

A 00:00:00,090 - 00:00:06,150

Hast du, bevor wir anfangen, noch irgendwelche Fragen? Sachen, die du klären würdest?

B 00:00:07,650 - 00:00:19,380

Eigentlich passt soweit, dass ich mal ganz interessant wäre, wenn du mir ganz kurz einen Abriss gibst oder ganz kurz sagst, was du eigentlich machst in deiner Masterarbeit und um was es geht. Und ja, dass ich den Kontext noch ein bisschen besser einordnen kann.

A 00:00:19,950 - 00:01:12,060

Ja, genau. Ich schreibe meine Masterarbeit über die Rolle der Sprache in der internationalen Kommunikation von Startups. Und dann will ich untersuchen, wie die Startups allgemein internationalisieren, wie die Kommunikation ist, weil man ja auch weiß, im Vergleich zu großen Konzernen gibt es nicht immer die Möglichkeit, Mitarbeiter für bestimmte Märkte einzustellen und wie dann die Kommunikation abläuft. Und dann einfach zu schauen, wie es abläuft und dann bestimmte Konzepte vielleicht entwickeln, wie man das verbessern kann. So als Idee, was man nach meiner Masterarbeit machen könnte.

B 00:01:16,320 - 00:01:21,780

Toll und sehr spannend. Studierst du in München oder wo bist du?

A 00:01:22,740 - 00:01:23,580 In Finnland.

B 00:01:24,210 - 00:01:28,410

Ah, okay, ganz interessant.

00:01:28,470 - 00:02:06,640

Persönliche Information. Nicht relevant.

A 00:02:06,760 - 00:02:13,680

Ja, ja, klar. Könntest du vielleicht erst so kurz über das Unternehmen erzählen und was du genau machst?

B 00:02:15,180 - 00:03:06,510

Genau. Also, was wir machen ist quasi wir bauen Software für kleine Speditionsunternehmen. Also du kannst dir vorstellen, so Transportunternehmen mit nur einem bis zehn Fahrzeugen oder einem bis zehn zehn LKWs. Und für die bauen wir im Prinzip eine Software, womit die ihr komplettes Business managen können. Also fahren, Aufträge anlegen, über Aufträge verteilen, auf die LKWs, die Fahrer informieren, hinten raus, aber auch Rechnungen erstellen. Genau, quasi die ganze Sache daraus. Das Interessante bei uns ist, dass wir das Ganze mit nem Mobile first Approach machen. Das heißt, es gibt eine App auf dem Handy, weil diese Unternehmen so geführt werden, dass der Chef quasi fährt, meistens selber einen LKW, dann hat er irgendwie seine fünf sechs Fahrer, die fahren auch LKW.

B 00:03:06,720 - 00:03:21,990

Das heißt, die sind eigentlich ständig auf der Straße unterwegs und er kommt dann am Wochenende nach Hause und muss dann halt irgendwie Samstag und Sonntag die ganze Büroarbeit machen, weil er die nicht unterwegs auf der Straße machen kann. Und genau da kommen wir rein und sagen, wir digitalisieren quasi diese kleinen Firmen.

A 00:03:23,580 - 00:03:27,690

Okay. Und du bist der Gründer?

B 00:03:28,320 - 00:03:57,210

Genau. Ich bin einer von denen. Von den drei Gründern. Genau. Und was ich im Grunde mache, ist alles, was in Richtung Kunden geht. Also Kundenakquise, Sales, Marketing, die ganzen Operations in der Firma. Etwas, was meine beiden Mitgründer machen. Der eine kümmert sich um das Produkt, also der, der baut quasi das Produkt, der überlegt, was wir als nächstes bauen müssen. Und der andere ist quasi ein Software Engineer. Also das heißt, der programmiert das Ganze dann.

A 00:03:57,720 - 00:04:03,120

Und wie viele Mitarbeiter habt ihr insgesamt?

B 00:04:03,870 - 00:04:10,740

Gerade haben wir es. Wir sind fünf also sind auch ziemlich ziemlich klein. Haben wir auch als letztes Jahr gestartet jetzt damit und genau. Ja.

A 00:04:11,580 - 00:04:19,260

Und in welchen Ländern habt ihr internationale Kunden?

B 00:04:20,040 - 00:05:04,200

Genau. Wir haben, was ja ganz, ganz interessant ist. Und deswegen habe ich auch gesagt, dass es sicher Sinn macht, wenn wir uns da mal austauschen. Und immer drauf drauf achtet. Nächstes Mal, wenn du in Deutschland auf der Autobahn auf der Autobahn unterwegs bist, kannst mal schauen auf die Kennzeichen von den LKWs und da siehst du, die sind eigentlich zu 90 % kommen die irgendwo aus Osteuropa. Also das heißt zum Beispiel Polen, Rumänien, Litauen, Bulgarien, Estland. Also komplett Osteuropa. Natürlich auch ein paar Deutsche, aber ist schon sehr stark geprägt. So und unsere Kunden sind jetzt sag ich mal, aus verschiedenen Ländern gerade also wir haben jetzt aktuell noch nicht so viele, wir haben so ein paar Pilotkunden, die halt mit uns zusammen das Produkt bauen.

B 00:05:04,410 - 00:05:25,350

Aber nichtsdestotrotz, die kommen gerade aus Deutschland, aus Österreich, einer kommt aus Dänemark, dann haben wir schon zwei aus Polen und lass mich überlegen. Und mit ein paar Leuten aus Litauen und Estland haben wir noch gesprochen. Genau. Also so ist schon schon internationaler und es wird aber denke ich auch in der Zukunft noch sehr stark Richtung Osteuropa gehen.

A 00:05:25,840 - 00:05:44,340

Hm, okay. Und wie entscheidet ihr euch für die Märkte?

B 00:05:45,090 - 00:06:15,690

Wir schauen natürlich schon stark auf die Kosten zum einen. Oder einfach was in attraktive Märkte für uns anhand von verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten. Einer davon ist zum Beispiel wie groß sind diese Firmen? Also ich habe ja gerade eben gesagt, wo wir einen Fokus drauf haben ist, dass du das Ganze auf dem Handy machen kannst oder auf dem Tablet, also mobil. Das heißt, es ist eher geeignet für kleinere Firmen. Wenn du jetzt irgendwie 50 LKWs hast, dann gibt es da ein Büro, dann sitzt der Chef im Büro von früh bis abends, hat ganz andere Anforderungen als jemand, der irgendwie auf der Straße rumfährt.

B 00:06:16,050 - 00:06:49,950

Also das ist eine die Größe quasi vom Unternehmen. Da haben wir halt gesehen in Osteuropa, umso weiter du nach Osten kommst, umso kleiner werden die Flotten. Das heißt, wo du in Deutschland der durchschnittliche Größe von ich sag mal zehn oder zwölf LKW pro Firma hast, hast du... In Litauen glaube ich, sind es irgendwie vier oder fünf. Also das heißt es wird immer kleiner und plus natürlich on top, was obendrauf kommt. Der zweite Punkt ist, wie viele Unternehmen gibt es eigentlich davon? Und gerade in der Logistik oder in der Transportindustrie ist natürlich Osteuropa kommt kommen sehr sehr viele Firmen her.

B 00:06:50,070 - 00:07:24,360

Also da sind. Ich glaube Polen alleine hat lass mich ganz kurz überlegen hat knapp 80.000 Firmen in dem Bereich Deutschland zum Vergleich hat irgendwie 40 oder 50.000. Also das heißt wo, wo sind eigentlich die Unternehmen? Und das dritte ist natürlich auch, mit wem können wir überhaupt reden? Also ich meine, von uns spricht es leider niemand polnisch, es spricht keiner russisch, es spricht keiner irgendwie lettisch oder so was. Und deshalb müssen wir uns natürlich auch überlegen okay, Osteuropa ja oder Ausland? Ja, aber wer spricht denn überhaupt unsere Sprache? Wie können wir uns verständigen ohne bzw. wer spricht Englisch?

B 00:07:24,840 - 00:07:31,800

Und genau. Also das ist so die die die drei Punkte eigentlich also Größe, Anzahl und Sprache.

A 00:07:32,370 - 00:07:47,070

Okay, klar, der dritte Aspekt ist für mich sehr interessant. Und gab es dann Unterschiede bei dem Einstieg in die Märkte, die ihr ausgesucht habt?

B 00:07:47,820 - 00:08:21,170

Ja, also ich meine ja, man muss grundsätzlich immer so ein bisschen vorsichtig sein, weil ich würde jetzt nicht sagen, dass wir schon komplett in diesem Markt drin sind, aber war es. Was wir schon gemerkt haben, ist, dass zum Beispiel die skandinavischen Länder, also Dänemark oder auch Finnland, da bist du gerade oder Schweden oder keine Ahnung, Die sprechen alle entweder Deutsch oder sie sprechen super gut Englisch. Also das heißt, da hast du eigentlich gar kein Problem, mit irgendwelchen Leuten sprechen zu können. Auch sage ich mal so Richtung Baltikum, also Estland, Lettland, Litauen, insbesondere Estland und Lettland war auch meine Erfahrung.

B 00:08:21,180 - 00:08:56,580

Ich spreche nämlich auch gut Englisch, da kommst du auch relativ gut durch. Wo es dann schon schwieriger wird, ist Richtung Polen oder Richtung Südosteuropa, also Bulgarien, Rumänien. Da sprechen die Leute schon entsprechend natürlich kein Deutsch mehr und die sprechen schon sehr schlecht Englisch. Also da ist aber das Interessante und da auch so ein bisschen, ich sage mal, hat sich in den letzten Monaten und Jahren für mich viel getan, weil du mittlerweile zum Beispiel super gut mit irgendwie künstlicher Intelligenz arbeiten kannst. Du kannst deine Homepage zum Beispiel über ChatGPT übersetzen lassen und es ist halt auch wirklich gut oder benutzt irgendwie DeepL.

B 00:08:58,170 - 00:09:11,310

Facebook zum Beispiel hat mittlerweile auch automatische Translation dahinter und so was und es funktioniert relativ gut und dadurch hast du schon, finde ich, die Möglichkeit mit den Leuten in Kontakt zu treten, obwohl du die Sprache eigentlich gar nicht sprichst.

A 00:09:12,720 - 00:09:20,100

Okay. Und also bei euch ist dann die Kommunikation entweder auf Deutsch oder auf Englisch?

B 00:09:20,730 - 00:09:50,990

Im Grunde genau richtig. Also ich hatte ich hatte teilweise auch schon, aber das war ziemlich ziemlich wild, Kunden, sag mal angesprochen, die zum Beispiel aus Polen kamen und da haben wir dann konnten die halt irgendwie kein Englisch und kein Deutsch und keine Ahnung was dann habe ich dann mit DeepL dieses ganze Zeug irgendwie auf Polnisch übersetzt und denen dann über über Email oder zum Beispiel WhatsApp einfach irgendwelche Nachrichten geschickt und da hat dann auch irgendwie funktioniert. Weil es aber nicht der beste Weg muss mir ehrlich sagen. Aber es war okay.

A 00:09:51,530 - 00:10:12,400

Okay, verstehe. Dazu würde ich noch später kommen. Und ähm, also wenn man mit euch Deutsch spricht, ist es meistens dann auch die Muttersprache von der Person, oder?

B 00:10:12,990 - 00:10:35,870

Nicht zwingend. Also ich mein, kommt ganz drauf an, zum Beispiel einer unserer dänischen Kunden spricht Deutsch, aber seine Muttersprache ist natürlich Dänisch. Aber ja, der kann es halt, weil er relativ nah an der deutschen Grenze wohnt. Genau. Aber ansonsten gerade bei den Osteuropäern und so was eigentlich spricht keiner wirklich Deutsch als Muttersprache.

A 00:10:36,290 - 00:10:53,980

Okay, aber wie läuft da die Kommunikation ab? Also wenn er, äh der Kunde Deutsch spricht und das nicht seine Muttersprache ist, ähm. Hm. Läuft es gut oder gibt es da bestimmte Missverständnisse?

B 00:10:54,880 - 00:11:30,970

Ja, es ist ganz, ganz interessant, weil. Weil gerade wenn du mit den Kunden sprichst und die halt gerade jetzt in der Phase, in der wir sind, geht es viel darum zu verstehen, wie die Kunden arbeiten, was eigentlich die Probleme von den Kunden sind und wie wir unser Produkt bestmöglich darauf anpassen können. Und das Interessante daran ist, dass das dafür natürlich genau verstehen muss, was der andere meint. Also wenn der jetzt irgendwie sagt hier, ich möchte, ich möchte keine Ahnung, meine meine Aufträge verwalten. Vielleicht meint er aber, er möchte seine Aufträge weiterschicken oder so was. Ja, nur ein Beispiel.

B 00:11:30,970 - 00:11:54,280

Aber es ist einfach von der Begrifflichkeit her schwierig. Das ist schon gar nicht so einfach. Und insbesondere mit dem dänischen Kunden haben wir da die Erfahrung gemacht, dass man schon noch mal besser zwei, drei Mal nachfragt, ob man es auch richtig verstanden hat. Vielleicht nochmal in anderen Worten wiederholt, um eben wirklich sicherzugehen, dass ja dass das Ganze auch klar ist und dass er genau dasselbe meint wie du.

A 00:11:55,030 - 00:12:22,510

Okay, ähm, es gibt auch. Also, was für mich auch interessant ist, wenn man verschiedene Sprachen spricht und zum Beispiel für für euch ist Deutsch Muttersprache und für den anderen nicht. Ob es dann so ist, dass einer an den anderen eher anpasst oder ob da bestimmte Verhältnisse entstehen, dass man sagt so, man fühlt sich in der besseren Position ein bisschen. Oder hattest du die Erfahrung?

B 00:12:23,260 - 00:12:33,720

Kurz die Gegenfrage Warst du schon mal in in? In Südostasien? Im Urlaub?

A 00:12:34,480 - 00:12:37,180

Ja schon

B 00:12:37,390 - 00:13:20,710

Also. Weil ich hatte da immer das Gefühl, sie sprechen ja alle auch so super gebrochen Englisch. Und dann musst du einfach so irgendwie deine eigene Sprache ein bisschen anpassen und halt nicht so sophisticated, sondern irgendwie einfach so: I want this how much. So und dann genau so ist es eigentlich. Finde ich mit denen auch. Also du musst halt schauen. Okay, wie gut versteht er mich? Und deine Sprache einfach anpassen. Also das kann von langsamer sprechen über klarer akzentuieren, über das Ganze mehrfach sagen mit verschiedenen Worten. Aber ich glaube, im Grunde musst du einfach schauen, dass du es möglichst einfach und möglichst knapp und kurz ausdrückst.

B 00:13:20,710 - 00:13:23,830

Und genau das hat eigentlich immer ganz, ganz gut funktioniert.

A 00:13:24,250 - 00:13:27,700

Okay, also du würde sagen, trotzdem funktioniert die Kommunikation gut?

B 00:13:28,090 - 00:13:52,600

Also ja, also ich würde nicht unbedingt sagen gut, weil gut ist für mich, dass ich mit jemandem wie dir zum Beispiel jetzt einfach sprechen kann. Ich muss mich nicht verstellen, ich kann einfach sprechen wie ich bin normal und der andere versteht es. Das wäre gut für mich. Und da ist es halt natürlich schon so, dass du es anpassen musst und dass du, dass du ein bisschen mehr Arbeit reinstecken muss, dass es der andere versteht.

A 00:13:53,200 - 00:14:03,340

Okay, ja und Aber ihr habt trotzdem entschieden, bei Deutsch zu bleiben. Wie ist das eigentlich dazu gekommen, dass ihr euch auf Deutsch geeinigt habt?

B 00:14:04,480 - 00:14:38,410

Okay, also ich meine, wir fragen natürlich den Kunden schon, was für ihn am besten funktioniert. Also jetzt mal ein Beispiel mit dem einen dänischen Kunden, den haben wir auch gefragt. Hey, wir können übrigens auch auf Englisch sprechen, wenn du möchtest. Und dann meinte er, da sprechen wir lieber Deutsch. Klappt für mich besser, ist für mich angenehmer als auf Englisch. So, okay. Und deshalb also wir sind da in dem Sinne flexibel, Deutsch oder Englisch können wir beides anbieten und genau. Dann fragen wir den Kunden einfach, was für ihn am besten passt und schauen dann, dass wir da sage ich mal auf den Kunden einfach eingehen.

B 00:14:38,440 - 00:14:49,150

Also was wir nicht machen wollen, ist dem Kunden was aufzudrücken, dass er sich denkt so, okay, die sprechen jetzt mit mir Deutsch und eigentlich verstehe ich gar kein Deutsch und irgendwie bin ich überfordert. Also das sollte natürlich nicht passieren.

A 00:14:49,660 - 00:14:53,850

Okay. Ja, also die Priorität ist eher, dass der Kunde sich wohlfühlt.

B 00:14:53,860 - 00:15:05,410

Genau, absolut, absolut. Und dass wir natürlich auch die Informationen von Kunden rauskriegen, die wir brauchen. Also das ist ja das Wichtigste für uns und darum machen wir das Ganze ja auch.

A 00:15:05,920 - 00:15:15,490

Ja, okay, klar, verstehe. Und, ähm mit welchen, also in welchen Ländern sind dann die Kunden, mit denen ihr Englisch sprecht?

B 00:15:17,110 - 00:15:30,970

Genau. Englisch ist tatsächlich im Normalfall eigentlich alles, was irgendwie Osteuropa ist. Also so, ich sag mal Polen oder auch Estland, Lettland zum Beispiel. Ja, also genau das geht eigentlich alles auf Englisch.

A 00:15:31,450 - 00:15:37,390

Okay. Gibt es auch Kunden, die Englisch Muttersprachler sind?

B 00:15:38,380 - 00:16:11,320

Nee, bei uns tatsächlich. Also ich kann mich jetzt nicht erinnern. Also es ist aber auch muss man ehrlicherweise sagen. Bedingt durch unsere Kunden sind. Ich sag mal so also wenn du dir jetzt so einen typischen LKW Fahrer vorstellst, es ist halt niemand, der irgendwie international aufgewachsen ist oder der irgendwie im Ausland studiert hat oder irgendwas in der Art und deswegen sind die Leute schon sehr sehr basic und sprechen. Also ich habe bisher noch nicht erlebt, dass einer irgendwie als zum Beispiel Englisch als als zweite Muttersprache hatte.

A 00:16:11,650 - 00:16:18,490

Okay. Wie wohl fühlst du dich selber Englisch zu verwenden?

B 00:16:19,060 - 00:16:41,770

Ich habe gar kein Problem. Also ich meine, wir haben zum Beispiel auch bei uns in unserem Team ist eigentlich auch die grundsätzliche Sprache Englisch, weil unser dritter Mitgründer, der, der quasi alles macht, was die Software angeht, der ist tatsächlich auch zur Hälfte Amerikaner, zur Hälfte Kolumbianer also das heißt, er spricht Englisch und Spanisch. Insofern müssen wir uns da auch anpassen. Und genau.

A 00:16:42,340 - 00:17:01,570

Okay. Und dadurch, dass zum Beispiel er Spanisch spricht. Ähm, hattet ihr auch, ähm. Habt ihr berücksichtigt, zum Beispiel in einen Markt einzusteigen, wo auch Spanisch gesprochen wird hatte? Habt ihr das als Vorteil gesehen für euch?

B 00:17:02,290 - 00:17:40,600

Genau. Wir haben, was wir tatsächlich gemacht haben in den letzten Monaten. Wir hatten einen Praktikanten, der kam auch ursprünglich aus Venezuela. Also, das heißt, spricht auch

Spanisch und dann klar noch Englisch und Deutsch. Aber da haben wir tatsächlich mal auch so ein bisschen geschaut, was sind spannende Märkte und haben ein paar Kundeninterviews gemacht in verschiedenen Märkten, unter anderem auch in Spanien. Da hat der Praktikant bei uns dann quasi auch mal einfach ein paar, ein paar Unternehmen dort einfach angerufen und dann auf Spanisch mit denen gesprochen. Also es war schon schon interessant, weil wenn du natürlich die lokale Sprache sprechen kannst, dann kommst du noch mal ganz, ganz anders an die Kunden ran und.

B 00:17:40,900 - 00:17:58,300

Und vor allem gerade eben, wie gesagt, in der Branche, wo die Leute nicht so viel Englisch sprechen oder wo es nicht so ein internationales Umfeld ist, da ist es noch deutlich mehr wert. Genau in dem Sinne war das dann schon für uns ganz, ganz gut, dass wir da den Praktikanten hatten, der eben Spanisch spricht.

A 00:17:58,630 - 00:18:15,820

Okay, also habt ihr auch überlegt, weil wie ich es verstanden habe, sind trotzdem die osteuropäischen Märkte attraktiver für euch. Habt ihr überlegt, in der Zukunft auch Mitarbeiter anzustellen, die die Sprache können? Zum Beispiel Polnisch?

B 00:18:16,990 - 00:18:52,530

Ich glaube ja. Also ich meine, jetzt gerade eben ist es für uns auch nicht wirklich relevant. Ich glaube aber definitiv, dass es das in der Zukunft sein wird, also je nachdem, was dann auch oder wo wir auch sehen, welcher Markt besonders gut wächst oder wo wir irgendwie mehr Kunden kriegen, muss man sich natürlich überlegen, ob man dann in diesem Markt auch oder für diesen Markt natürlich ein paar Leute einstellt, die auch die Sprache sprechen. Genau. Also das ist, sage ich mal, ein Muss. Auch denke ich muss nicht zwingend jemand sein, der vor Ort ist, sondern es kann ja auch jemand sein, der zum Beispiel in Deutschland lebt.

B 00:18:52,530 - 00:18:56,640

Aber halt irgendwie, weil er zum Beispiel polnische Eltern hat, einfach polnisch spricht.

A 00:18:57,900 - 00:19:02,600

Okay, also momentan ist noch nicht das die Überlegung?

B 00:19:02,740 - 00:19:03,480

Jetzt noch nicht.

A 00:19:03,810 - 00:19:26,270

Okay. Ähm. Und dann wollte ich noch Fragen zu den Kanälen. Du hast ja erwähnt, dass ihr ChatGPT verwendet. Auch und DeepL. Kannst du noch ein bisschen mehr erzählen, wie ihr dann kommuniziert mithilfe diesen Tools?

B 00:19:26,470 - 00:20:00,470

Genau. Ich meine eben im Grunde alles, was irgendwie übersetzt werden muss. Machen wir eben wie gesagt über zum Beispiel DeepL, gerade gerade auch zum Beispiel WhatsApp. Wenn ich dann mit dem Kunden geschrieben habe, ist es eigentlich eine ganz, ganz gute Geschichte, weil dadurch können wir halt. Ich sage es mal so: dadurch, dass es schriftlich ist,

kannst du mit dem Kunden kommunizieren, mehr oder weniger in Echtzeit, in dem du ihnen einfach die Nachrichten schickst und die quasi übersetzt. Mit denen telefonieren kannst du natürlich nicht, weil Liebermann spricht ja kein Wort Englisch oder Deutsch.

B 00:20:01,040 - 00:20:41,180

Deswegen ist eigentlich zum Beispiel WhatsApp für uns eine sehr, sehr coole Sache, weil du da schnell und unkompliziert mit den Kunden sprechen kannst, gleichzeitig aber halt die Möglichkeit hast, einen Text zu übersetzen. Und was ich tatsächlich auch schon mal erlebt habe, ist das einer aus Polen war oder aus der Tschechei und der hat dann tatsächlich auch seine Texte auf Tschechisch bei DeepL angegeben oder bei Google Translate und hat die dann in WhatsApp auch übersetzt. Und das habe ich dadurch gemerkt, dass er quasi einmal aus Versehen den tschechischen Text geschickt hat und den dann schnell durch ersetzt hat durch den englischen.

B 00:20:41,660 - 00:21:14,030

Aber was ich da ganz ganz interessant, dass der quasi auch dachte, okay, ich muss mit denen jetzt Englisch sprechen. So, und wir haben im selben Moment aber auch das Zeug dann irgendwie auf Englisch eingetippt da eigentlich hätte er uns auch einfach das Zeug auf Tschechisch schicken können und wir hätten es dann übersetzt. Genau. Aber das war ein ganz, ganz interessantes Learning. Trotzdem, dass du nicht immer weißt, ob jemand auch Englisch spricht oder ob er nur eine Übersetzung verwendet. Weil natürlich DeepL und z. B. keine Ahnung was, ist halt schon wirklich gut. Also du erkennst es eigentlich nicht mehr wirklich, dass das jetzt maschinell übersetzt ist.

A 00:21:14,810 - 00:21:23,900

Was ist denn für dich einfacher? Schreibst du immer noch auf Deutsch meistens und übersetzt das oder schreibst du gleich auf Englisch?

B 00:21:25,130 - 00:21:35,900

Ich schreibe tatsächlich eigentlich eher auf Englisch, weil ich. Aber ich weiß nicht, ob es nur ein Gefühl ist für mich. Aber ich habe die Erfahrung gemacht, dass die Übersetzungsmaschine auf Englisch trotzdem nochmal besser funktioniert.

A 00:21:36,950 - 00:21:37,370

Okay.

B 00:21:37,910 - 00:21:38,990

Genau. Also das ist.

A 00:21:43,250 - 00:21:51,170

Okay, und wie ist sonst die bevorzugte Methode zu kommunizieren? Telefonierst du dann lieber mit den Kunden?

B 00:21:51,170 - 00:22:09,290

Wenn ich telefonieren kann, einfach rein sprachlich, dann auf jeden Fall. Telefon ist auch in der Branche, sage ich mal, relativ üblich, dass man da telefoniert. Deswegen ist das so die

absolut präferierte Variante. Falls es nicht klappt, dann ist zum Beispiel WhatsApp auch eine gute Möglichkeit.

A 00:22:09,620 - 00:22:16,040

Okay, das heißt so, die Echtzeitkommunikation ist schon immer gewünscht?

B 00:22:16,280 - 00:22:51,320

Also ich finde, ich finde tatsächlich, das ist eigentlich das Wichtigste, dass du, dass du ihnen in Echtzeit gewissermaßen kommunizieren kannst und gerade Emails. Ich meine, es ist in der Logistikbranche auch wieder so ein Ding. Emails gehen schnell runter, weil die bekommen jeden Tag zig Emails von ihren Auftraggebern, dann will einer noch eine Rechnung haben, dann will einer irgendwas. Keine Ahnung. Also die kriegen jeden Tag zig Emails und WhatsApp ist aber eher so auf dem Handy. Dann schreiben sie auch mit ihrer Familie keine Ahnung was, sondern halt auch mit dir. Deswegen bist du da eher so top of Mind sag ich mal, als wenn du einfach nur E Mail schreiben würdest.

A 00:22:51,620 - 00:22:59,930

Okay. Verwendest du dann auch einfach dein privates Konto von WhatsApp?

B 00:22:59,930 - 00:23:30,080

Wir haben uns schon so ein smarter Business Account geholt. Hängt damit zusammen, dass das wir sage ich mal gerade was den Kundenkontakt angeht, machen wir zu zweit bzw. zu dritt eigentlich. Und mit diesem WhatsApp Business Account können sich mehrere Leute einfach drauf einloggen plus natürlich. Ich meine, da muss ich auch sagen, ich habe da schon gerne. Gerade wenn ich mit vielen Leuten irgendwie schreibe, mit irgendwelchen random Leuten aus Osteuropa, dann habe ich eigentlich schon gerne das getrennt von meiner Privatnummer und von der Firmennummer.

A 00:23:31,100 - 00:23:45,980

Und wie würdest du sagen, insgesamt funktioniert die Kommunikation?

B 00:23:48,340 - 00:24:00,730

Ich find, im Großen und Ganzen funktioniert es eigentlich sehr gut. Und ich meine, klar. Also, es ist natürlich. Es kommt immer darauf an, wie.

B 00:24:03,010 - 00:24:42,160

Ist so jetzt meine. Es kommt immer ganz darauf an, auf welcher Ebene du in der Zusammenarbeit ist. Wir haben natürlich Kunden, mit denen sind wir sehr, sehr eng. Das heißt, die rufen uns alle zwei Tage an, sagen: Hey, ich habe hier noch eine neue Idee, könnte mal hier, könnte mal da, da ist es, ist es schon, da passt eigentlich alles. Da kennst du ja den anderen auch und weißt, wie der sich ausdrückt und darauf eingehen muss. Hmmm. Wenn du aber gerade zum Beispiel über WhatsApp irgendwie mal einen komplizierteren Sachverhalt erklären musst, so funktioniert ein Produkt. Was kostet dieses Produkt, was es darin inkludiert? Keine Ahnung, aber da passieren schon ab und zu Missverständnisse, die dann denke ich schon auch auf die Sprache zurückzuführen sind.

A 00:24:51,910 - 00:25:12,550

Und habt ihr irgendwelche Managementstrategien, um die Kommunikation reibungslos durchzuführen und Missverständnisse zu vermeiden?

B 00:25:12,760 - 00:25:36,730

Was du meinst ist quasi, wie wir mit verschiedenen Sprachen umgehen oder? Oder ob wir dafür einen Prozess haben oder irgendwelche Tools oder keine Ahnung was wo genau. Nee, im Grunde eigentlich nicht wirklich. Also ich meine, wir machen das alles noch dadurch, dass wir noch sehr, relativ klein sind. Natürlich machen wir das alles sehr hemdsärmelig und einfach so wie es halt gerade passt. Ja genau.

A 00:25:38,380 - 00:25:54,940

Okay. Und zum Beispiel weil du meintest, auch einer der Mitgründer, er spricht Englisch und Spanisch. Ich weiß nicht, spricht da dann kein Deutsch oder Englisch oder wenig?

B 00:25:55,690 - 00:26:25,570

Genau, der da spricht relativ wenig Deutsch und man kann sich jetzt hier im Cafe irgendwie einen Kaffee bestellen. Ja, aber jetzt auf keinen Fall Business fluent. Und genau. Aber das ist für uns, sage ich mal, bei uns im Team intern und bei ihm passt es auch, weil er ist ja der, der irgendwie programmiert, das heißt, er spricht nie mit dem Kunden, insofern passt es auch. Aber genau. Also bei uns im Team ist es gar kein Problem, da spricht jeder Englisch. Wie gesagt, wenn wir im Büro sitzen, sprechen wir Englisch. Also das, das passt dann auch leichter.

A 00:26:25,900 - 00:26:43,180

Macht ihr dann die Sales-bezogene Dokumentation auch auf Englisch oder auf Deutsch?

B 00:26:43,310 - 00:27:16,450

Ja, also wenn man sich mal anschaut, was wir, also unsere unsere Firmensprache ist im Grunde schon Englisch. Das heißt, wir schauen auch, dass wir Dokumente oder auch zum Beispiel Interviews mit dem Kunden. Also das heißt, wenn wir jetzt mit dem Kunden uns unterhalten haben und der Kunde sagt uns sein Feedback zum Produkt, was er gerne haben würde, dann schreiben wir das natürlich im Eifer des Gefechtes auf Deutsch mit, aber übersetzen das Ganze danach schon auf Englisch. Einfach aus dem Grund, weil wir sicherstellen wollen, dass das ganze Team das auch lesen und verstehen kann. Und insbesondere auch Developer.

B 00:27:16,720 - 00:27:25,380

Man könnte sagen okay, die müssen ja nur programmieren. Aber noch viel besser ist es, wenn die Developer auch wissen, warum sie was programmieren. Und dafür muss es natürlich dann auch auf Englisch sein.

A 00:27:26,570 - 00:27:47,430

Ja klar. Und wenn ihr zum Beispiel einen neuen potenziellen Kunden habt. Ähm. Schreibst du dann die erste, so die erste Nachricht. Wie entscheidest du, auf welche Sprache du die ansprichst?

B 00:27:48,060 - 00:28:13,290

Naja gut, ich meine, ich weiß woher derjenige kommt. Also im Normalfall schreibe ich auf Englisch, schreibe aber noch dazu. Ja, wir können auch auf Polnisch. Keine Ahnung was mit Translation, was okay ist oder was besser funktioniert. Und da schauen wir ja schon, wie die Leute reagieren, wenn sie dir auf Englisch antworten, alles cool, wenn sie dir irgendwie auf Polnisch antworten. Gut, dann benutzt du halt die Übersetzungsmaschine.

A 00:28:13,560 - 00:28:19,280

Okay, aber du schaust schon, dass irgendein Satz zumindest auf der Sprache des Landes da ist?

B 00:28:19,290 - 00:28:49,710

Im Normalfall eigentlich schon, ja, weil ich meine, der andere. Also wenn ich mir jetzt vorstellen würde, hier schreibt jemand in einer Sprache, die ich gar nicht kenne. Dann ist es ja immer super unverständlich und irgendwie so ein bisschen so ein paar Buchstaben, die aber für mich keinen, keinen Sinn ergeben. Und damit würde ich mich als Kunde wieder unwohl fühlen und womöglich dann irgendwie gleich das Gespräch abbrechen oder gar nicht antworten oder sonst was. Und deswegen kommt da schon. Schauen wir schon, dass von der jeweiligen Sprache zumindest ein kurzer Satzteil ist.

A 00:28:50,070 - 00:29:03,660

Und wie ist es, wenn sie euch ansprechen? Wenn Kunden auf euch zukommen, bekommt ihr normalerweise Nachrichten auf Deutsch, Englisch oder manchmal auch auf einer anderen Sprache.

B 00:29:04,590 - 00:29:20,610

Meistens eigentlich Deutsch oder Englisch. Also wenn die Kunden auf uns zukommen, dann ist es meistens Deutsch oder Englisch. Kommt auch daher, weil unsere Homepage gibt es gerade zum Beispiel nur auf Deutsch und Englisch. Deshalb genau, nehme ich mal stark an, werden die Guten sich denken okay, ich habe entweder die eine Möglichkeit oder die andere.

A 00:29:22,170 - 00:29:27,990

Habt ihr auch vor, eure Homepage später in andere Sprachen zu übersetzen?

B 00:29:29,010 - 00:29:51,870

Ja klar, absolut. Also ich meine, wird sicherlich vorkommen. Und wie gesagt, dass ich meine, da kenne ich zum Beispiel auch ein anderes Startup die haben ihre Homepage über z. B. die das haben wir jetzt auch noch nicht gemacht, aber haben die halt komplett in Echtzeit einfach live übersetzt in sieben oder acht Sprachen. Und das ist natürlich auch eine ganz coole Sache, weil das eine deutlich breitere Menge an Kunden natürlich eröffnet.

A 00:29:53,730 - 00:30:14,520

Ok, sehr spannend. Und habt ihr auch Partner im Ausland?

B 00:30:14,520 - 00:30:43,030

Genau. Jetzt gerade eben noch nicht. Da sind wir aber auch momentan dran, dass wir eine Partnerschaft anstreben mit zum Beispiel einer einer Plattform, sage ich mal, die sind eben vorrangig in Osteuropa unterwegs. Genau. Und da sind wir gerade dran. Das wäre dann definitiv der erste Schritt in die Richtung, dass man auch sagt okay, man geht da näher oder mehr in diesen Markt rein.

A 00:30:43,040 - 00:30:43,047

Der Partner würde dann auch die Kunden auf ihrer Sprache ansprechen?

B 00:30:43,050 - 00:30:43,055

Genau.

A 00:30:43,570 - 00:31:13,990

Okay. Und gibt es allgemein den Unterschied, wenn du mit Kunden oder mit einem potenziellen Partner sprichst. Es ist ja auch alles eine Fremdsprache, aber dadurch, dass die Beziehung ein bisschen unterschiedlich ist. Hast du da den Unterschied, in dem wie ihr kommuniziert?

B 00:31:15,130 - 00:31:38,590

Eigentlich nicht wirklich. Also ich sage es mal so bei beiden Partnern sind es auch alles Leute, die sind international oder im internationalen Umfeld, das heißt, sie sprechen alle Englisch und da ist es gar kein Problem. Also da ist es. Ich sag mal, ist relativ klar, wenn du mit jemandem sprichst, der aus Deutschland kommt, dann bist du deutsch. Aber ansonsten, wenn er jemand dabei ist, der nur Englisch spricht, dann ist halt Englisch. Und das ist aber auch kein Problem.

A 00:31:39,310 - 00:31:46,120

Und du meinst, dass du auf dem Level schon auch alle Englisch sprechen, auch in osteuropäischen Ländern?

B 00:31:46,600 - 00:32:03,610

Da schon, ja. Ich meine, es sind irgendwie größere Unternehmen und da, also da, da spricht eigentlich jeder und jede Englisch, ist dann teilweise zum Beispiel in dem konkreten Fall ist auch Englisch soweit ich das verstanden habe so die Company Sprache. Das heißt, meistens ist es dann relativ üblich, dass man Englisch spricht.

A 00:32:05,320 - 00:32:11,440

Fühlst du dich dann auch immer wohler, wenn du mit den Menschen sprichst, die auch besser Englisch können?

B 00:32:12,310 - 00:32:34,390

Ja klar, absolut. Also ich meine das natürlich. Ich finde es immer, immer besser, wenn du dich, wenn du dich gut ausdrücken kannst oder auch gut verständigen kannst und vor allen anderen verstehen kannst. Also ja, man macht natürlich vieles einfacher, wenn du weißt oder wenn du sicher sein kannst, dass der andere alles versteht, was du ihm gerade sagst. Und damit kannst du natürlich ganz anders irgendwie eine Geschäftsbeziehung aufbauen.

A 00:32:36,100 - 00:32:52,050

Okay. Ja, macht Macht so auf jeden Fall. Okay. Danke, ich bin mit den Fragen fertig. Dann hast du vielleicht etwas, was du so ergänzen würdest, was ich nicht gefragt habe, was du denkst, aber wäre wichtig?

B 00:32:53,080 - 00:33:35,020

Ich überleg halt mal ganz kurz zu überlegen. Ich meine, was, was, was ich halt schon eine sehr spannende Sache finde. Jetzt auch mal abseits vom vom Berufsleben. Aber tue ich, durch die Technologie, die wir mittlerweile haben, verschwinden halt diese Grenzen oder diese sprachlichen Grenzen eigentlich immer mehr. Und das ist finde ich eigentlich super, super interessant. Ich meine, es wird sicherlich auch nicht mehr lange dauern, dann kannst du über keine Ahnung so was wie zB PC oder so wirklich Echtzeit kommunizieren. Also dann könntest du jetzt irgendwie Dänisch sprechen oder Finnisch und ich könnte Deutsch sprechen und wir verstehen uns aber trotzdem und können uns wirklich face to face unterhalten.

B 00:33:35,020 - 00:34:03,370

Also als ob wir einen Übersetzer neben uns sitzen hätten, der das direkt live übersetzt. Und das finde ich schon eine ziemlich coole Geschichte. Da bin ich auch echt gespannt, wie das weiterhin läuft, weil du dir dadurch natürlich ganz andere Möglichkeiten öffnest, sowohl im Beruf als auch natürlich privat. Wenn wir im Urlaub bist oder wenn du andere Leute kennenlernenst oder keine Ahnung hast. Und genau das finde ich eine super spannende Sache. Ich glaube, dass ich schon für Italien und dann wird sich auch noch in den nächsten Monaten und Jahren viel tun.

A 00:34:03,790 - 00:34:13,060

Ja, das stimmt. Also ich glaube, du könntest das auch bestätigen. Du meinst ja auch, das ist wichtig, dass ihr euch verständigen könnt. Das heißt, wenn man so. Okay, klar, es gibt auch andere Übersetzer, andere Tools, aber ich glaube, so wie ich dich verstehe auch, Je mehr Technologie es gibt, desto besser die Kommunikation läuft, desto mehr traut man sich, in fremde Märkte zu gehen.

B 00:34:43,929 - 00:34:48,130

Ja, genau. Absolut. Absolut. Ja, Ja, genau das stimmt.

A 00:34:48,909 - 00:34:55,750

Okay. Ja, Danke. Das nehme ich dann mit. Hast du sonst irgendwelche Fragen?

B 00:34:55,750 - 00:35:03,910

Oder weil du sonst soweit eigentlich passt? Soweit also. Ja, war sehr spannend. Und ich hoffe, ich habe dir geholfen.

A 00:35:03,910 - 00:35:12,310

Ja, sehr. Es ist ja toll und ich freue mich auch. Also ich wünsche euch auch sehr viel Erfolg mit dem Startup

B 00:35:12,490 - 00:35:12,660

Danke!

A 00:35:22,750 - 00:35:25,960

Danke dir. Ja, dann schönen Tag noch.

B 00:35:25,990 - 00:35:26,770

Dir auch

A 00:35:27,040 - 00:35:29,110

Danke, tschüss!

Appendix 3 - Interview with Company B

A 00:00:00,900 - 00:00:05,190

Hast du, bevor wir anfangen, irgendwelche Fragen?

B 00:00:07,790 - 00:00:22,820

Eigentlich nicht. Ich habe die Fragen auf der linken Seite hier auf. Ich gehe davon aus, dass wir sie einmal durchgehen. Oder von 1 bis 10. Ich weiß nicht. Fragst du? Willst du die Frage immer fragen, dass es im Transkript drin ist? Oder wie soll man es machen?

A 00:00:26,150 - 00:00:51,530

Genau. Ich würde einfach mit der ersten Frage gleich anfangen. Je nachdem, was du dann erzählst, würde ich vielleicht bestimmte Nachfragen stellen oder etwas weglassen, wie ich schon gemeint habe, weil manches vielleicht, ist dann ganz spannend. Dann würde ich einfach näher darauf eingehen. Und manches ist vielleicht nicht zutreffend, dann lasse ich es weg. Genau. Aber vielleicht als erstes könntest du so kurz erklären, was die Firma macht und was du machst.

B 00:00:53,180 - 00:01:21,300

Das kann ich gerne machen. Ja, genau. Also ich bin einer der Gründer von ***. Und wir machen digitales Parkraummanagement für Kommunen, Städte, Immobilienbesitzer, die Parkhäuser beispielsweise oder Freiflächen haben und nutzen dazu Kennzeichenerkennung, um den kompletten Parkvorgang zu digitalisieren. So die Kurzzusammenfassung.

A 00:01:22,170 - 00:01:27,420

Und wirst du dann auch oft in Gesprächen mit den Kunden Partnern?

B 00:01:28,600 - 00:01:54,660

Okay, also nicht mehr so oft, wie es früher mal war. Aber ja, natürlich, von Anfang an. Wir machen das jetzt über drei Jahre und haben jetzt hier mehrere Standorte, mehrere Länder. Kommen wir gleich dazu. Und war dann auch viel am Anfang mit Kunden, Partnern einfach in Kontakt, die auch eben international aktiv sind.

A 00:01:55,100 - 00:02:00,210

Okay, damit ist ein bisschen die Größe des Unternehmens verstehe, Wie viele Mitarbeiter habt ihr momentan?

B 00:02:00,810 - 00:02:10,259

Wir haben aktuell 100 Mitarbeiter am Hauptsitz in München, weitere Tochterfirmen in Österreich, Schweiz und Italien.

A 00:02:10,949 - 00:02:15,930

Okay, alles klar, danke. Dann seid ihr schon ein bisschen größer.

B 00:02:16,980 - 00:02:20,850

Ist ja auch nicht riesig. Aber wir sind auf dem Weg.

A 00:02:20,850 - 00:02:31,200

Da sind es dann auch die Länder. Du hast da Deutschland, Österreich, Schweiz, Italien genannt. Sind es auch die Länder, in denen ihr Kunden habt?

B 00:02:31,770 - 00:02:45,180

Ja, es ist ja so, wir sind gerade nur in den Ländern aktiv, wo wir auch Kunden haben. Und das sind eben diese vier Länder haben mit Deutschland angefangen, danach Österreich, Schweiz letztes Jahr gegründet und dieses Jahr Italien dazugenommen.

A 00:02:45,810 - 00:02:51,480

Okay, und wie ist dann die Auswahl in diesen Märkten entstanden?

B 00:02:53,550 - 00:03:32,820

Zum einen, also Österreich und Schweiz, letztes Jahr sehr stark natürlich die Nähe an Deutschland, die Nähe an München auch, sowie auch die sprachliche Barriere ist natürlich einfacher. Man spricht zwar Dialekt, aber man spricht keine andere Sprache, sondern trotzdem noch Deutsch. Auch in Italien sind wir derzeit nur in Südtirol aktiv, weil wir da eben auch noch mal einfacher Zugriff haben oder Zugang auch zu deutschsprachigen Leuten. Das war für uns eigentlich so der erste Schritt, dass wir nach Italien dann auch gehen.

A 00:03:33,870 - 00:03:37,710

Seid ihr dann in der Schweiz auch nur in der deutschsprachigen Region?

B 00:03:38,670 - 00:03:44,490

Ist in der deutschsprachigen Region. Genau, nicht in der französischen Schweiz und nicht Italienischen.

A 00:03:44,940 - 00:03:51,750

Okay. Das heißt also hat die Sprache dann auch eine große Rolle gespielt, dass ihr die Märkte ausgewählt hast?

B 00:03:51,750 - 00:04:17,760

Sprache und Nähe, würde ich fast sagen. Sowie dann halt auch für unser Geschäftsmodell. Ähm, wo lohnt sich das bzw. muss es auch attraktiv sein. Das sind dann auch die Länder, in denen wir aktiv sind.

A 00:04:18,120 - 00:04:27,780

Hm okay und ähm also sprecht ihr dann mit allen euren Kunden nur Deutsch oder gibt es auch Ausnahmen?

B 00:04:29,550 - 00:04:36,240

Es gibt auch Ausnahmen. In Italien haben wir auch Kunden, die nur Italienisch sprechen.

A 00:04:36,810 - 00:04:42,030

Okay, und habt ihr dann auch Mitarbeiter, die Italienisch können?

B 00:04:42,890 - 00:05:02,280

Ja, Mitarbeiter, die italienisch können. Wir haben Callcenter, die italienisch sprechen, wenn jemand anruft. Und das heißt, wir haben die italienische Journey schon gemacht. Aber sonst natürlich Österreich und Schweiz. Und Deutschland ist sehr einfach mit deutscher Sprache dann auch.

A 00:05:03,630 - 00:05:18,240

Ist es dann auch so, dass ihr erst nach Italien gegangen seid, weil wegen Südtirol, weil es nahe war und dann hat sich das ergeben. Und dann habt ihr auch die Mitarbeiter angestellt, die italienisch konnten. Oder hat sich das so ergeben, dass sie schon italienisch gesprochen haben?

B 00:05:18,690 - 00:05:52,590

Also wir haben einen Vertriebsmitarbeiter oder einen Country Manager eingestellt, der Deutsch spricht, aber auch Italienisch, der in Südtirol lebt. Das heißt, für uns war es wichtig, dass er beide Sprachen spricht, weil die Verbindung zu uns natürlich einfacher ist, wenn es auch noch auf Deutsch ist. Und zum einen sprechen wir hier in München gerne Italienisch, das heißt auch mit Englisch. Die Kommunikation mit Italienern ist manchmal anstrengender. Auf jeden Fall.

A 00:05:53,070 - 00:05:53,400

Okay.

B 00:05:54,540 - 00:06:01,110

Deshalb haben wir gesagt okay, er muss auf jeden Fall deutschsprachig sein, aber halt aus, aus Südtirol, aus, dann arbeiten.

A 00:06:02,220 - 00:06:08,250

Und weil du gemeint hast, ja, auf Englisch mit Italienern ein bisschen schwierig. Hattest du die Erfahrung schon?

B 00:06:09,300 - 00:06:18,510

Ähm, ich habe mal ein Auslandssemester gemacht, da waren viele Italiener dabei.

B 00:06:29,310 - 00:06:42,440

Ich meine, für uns Deutsche ist Englisch auch nicht die Muttersprache. Aber ich glaube, den Italienern fällt es noch mal schwerer, auf Englisch zu kommunizieren.

A 00:06:43,910 - 00:06:59,450

Okay, deswegen versucht ihr mit den Kunden dort nur Italienisch zu sprechen? Verstehe. Habt ihr dann auch. Also, habt auch Partner im Ausland?

B 00:06:59,830 - 00:07:21,350

Ich meine, wir haben auch Partner im Ausland, vor allem Hardwarehersteller beispielsweise, wo wir die Hardware beziehen. Die sitzen zum einen in Skandinavien, also Schweden und Norwegen, aber auch in UK zum Beispiel. Da ist es aber wirklich so, dass man mit Englisch sehr, sehr gut durchkommt.

A 00:07:21,870 - 00:07:25,560

Okay. Das heißt, mit denen sprecht ihr ausschließlich Englisch?

B 00:07:26,060 - 00:07:27,170

Ja.

A 00:07:28,070 - 00:07:35,190

Ähm. Und wie ist da die Auswahl gefallen? Auf die Länder?

B 00:07:36,320 - 00:08:11,000

Ähm. Die Auswahl ist eher gefallen durch Produkte, die wir wollten. Und Spezifikationen. Ähm, Sprache war es da egal. Für uns war dann das Produkt wichtig, dass es lieferbar ist, dass es eine Qualität hat. Haben da verschiedene Testprojekte auch gemacht am Anfang, bevor wir uns dann da bei dem für den Rollout entschieden haben. Das heißt, da ist Sprache zweitrangig. Wichtig ist das Produkt, Qualität und auch so Reaktionszeiten etc., dass die da sehr, sehr gut sind.

A 00:08:11,330 - 00:08:24,230

Okay, aber also es gab auch keine Länder, die vielleicht potenziell infrage kommen würden, aber von euch ausgeschlossen wurden wegen wegen Sprache, Kultur oder so?

B 00:08:25,010 - 00:08:45,520

Also in der Sprache definitiv nicht. Ähm. Ja, wir wollten weiter in Europa bleiben. Das heißt, wir wollten jetzt keine chinesischen Hersteller zum Beispiel kontaktieren und da ist ja Sprache dann wieder ein Thema. Das heißt, wir haben wir dann gesagt, wir wollen auf jeden Fall in Europa bleiben, weil es für unsere Lieferketten her einfacher ist.

A 00:08:45,850 - 00:08:58,960

Okay. Ja, verstehe. Und weil du meintest, es ist Skandinavien und UK. Und in UK sind es ja Muttersprachler. Ähm, merkst du da einen Unterschied in der Kommunikation?

B 00:09:00,690 - 00:09:24,280

Hm, ich würde sagen, teilweise schon. Kommt immer darauf an, wie gut jemand Englisch spricht. Klar, nicht Muttersprachler. Ganz einfach. Gerade bei den Norwegern oder bei den Schweden. Manche Dinge muss man vielleicht auch zweimal erklären oder noch mal wiederholen, bis es dann am Ende auch wirklich durchdrungen wird.

A 00:09:25,570 - 00:09:29,350

Okay. Aber würdest du sagen, es klappt gut? Beides.

B 00:09:30,660 - 00:09:34,050

Es klappt nicht sehr gut, aber es klappt.

A 00:09:34,470 - 00:09:39,570

Okay. Also, könntest du darauf näher eingehen?

B 00:09:39,820 - 00:10:03,000

Ja, kann ich machen. Ich meine, wir haben zum Beispiel einen Ansprechpartner in Norwegen. Der ist irgendwie Anfang 50, der spricht jetzt kein perfektes Englisch am Ende und versteht auch nicht immer alles. Das heißt, manchmal muss man da einfach eben das noch mal erklären, vielleicht auch noch mal schriftlich erklären, dass wir dann das erreichen können, was wir erreichen wollen.

A 00:10:03,540 - 00:10:12,840

Okay. Und Aber von eurer Seite gab es nicht die Überlegung, jemanden anzustellen, der Norwegisch spricht?

B 00:10:14,040 - 00:10:19,410

Nein. Das ist eine zu große Nischensprache am Ende.

A 00:10:20,310 - 00:10:43,700

Und für sie übernimmt auch keiner die Kommunikation? Also es ist trotzdem so, dass die Expertise in dem Bereich wichtiger ist, als die Sprachkenntnisse?

B 00:10:43,710 - 00:10:43,750

Genau.

A 00:10:43,720 - 00:10:43,769

Okay. Und wie wohl fühlst du dich, andere Sprache zu sprechen? Dann in dem Fall Englisch, richtig?

B 00:10:43,770 - 00:10:57,990

Englisch sehr wohl. Ich war schon viel im Ausland. Ich kann das sehr gut. Andere Sprachen und ich kann ein bisschen Französisch. Aber das reicht nicht, um da Business Meetings zu halten. Am Ende.

A 00:10:58,590 - 00:11:06,900

Okay. Und wie ist es für die anderen Mitarbeiter? Ist das für euch auch ein wichtiges Kriterium, wenn ihr jemanden einstellt?

B 00:11:07,690 - 00:11:34,350

Ja, bei uns ist Firmensprache Englisch, weil wir dort einige Leute haben, die auch entweder im Ausland leben oder zumindest nur Englisch sprechen. Das heißt auch Kommunikation. In den öffentlichen Kanälen, sage ich jetzt mal von der Firma, ist immer Englisch, auch Kommunikation intern von den Teams, wo dann nur englischsprachige Leute dabei sind, es auf Englisch, das heißt, das ist schon sehr, sehr wichtig.

A 00:11:34,830 - 00:11:51,450

Okay, und weil du meinstest, das leben auch Menschen im Ausland, ähm, sind es dann auch so ganz verschiedene Länder, wo zum Beispiel sie auch andere Sprachen sprechen. Jetzt keine Ahnung. Spanisch oder Portugiesisch.

B 00:11:52,450 - 00:11:54,430

Ähm, Algerien zum Beispiel.

A 00:11:54,540 - 00:11:54,930

Okay.

B 00:11:55,960 - 00:12:06,160

Wenn man also in Spanien. Ähm. Polen. Und Nepal, Nepal und Türkei.

B 00:12:08,050 - 00:12:13,290

Also sind wir sehr international. Und sprechen alle englisch am Ende.

A 00:12:13,300 - 00:12:23,440

Aber sie haben ja andere Muttersprache. Gab es bei euch die Überlegung, dass ihr dann in die Märkte einsteigt, wenn ihr schon die Mitarbeiter habt, die diese Sprache sprechen?

B 00:12:24,740 - 00:12:25,760

Nein.

A 00:12:26,980 - 00:12:33,040

Also das ist jetzt kein Kriterium, wo du sagen würdest, dass ihr den Markt berücksichtigen würdet?

B 00:12:33,400 - 00:12:58,840

Nein. Also wir sind dann von Algerien super weit weg, Nepal noch weiter weg, Türkei auch weit weg von uns. Das würde auch Fokus sein. Wenn dann wirklich noch Polen, ähm, weil wir da die Nähe dann schon auch haben. Aber für mich war es kein Kriterium, nur weil wir eine Mitarbeiterin haben, die polnisch spricht. Dass wir dann in den Markt eintreten würden.

A 00:13:00,220 - 00:13:13,840

Aber würdest du sagen, wenn wir zum Beispiel ihr euch entscheiden würdet, in diesen Markt zu gehen, wäre das dann auch die Person, die du als erstes ansprechen würdest, um dann die Kommunikation anzufangen.

B 00:13:16,320 - 00:13:19,240

Die Kommunikation anzufangen mit Kunden meinst du?

A 00:13:19,840 - 00:13:20,170

Äh, ja.

B 00:13:21,700 - 00:13:37,260

Ich würde sagen nein, weil die Personen, die wir gerade haben. Ist keine Vertriebsmitarbeiter oder Mitarbeiter und die Person, auch wenn sie die Sprache sprechen würde, würde es schwer fallen, ein Produkt zu verkaufen.

A 00:13:38,380 - 00:13:38,700

Okay.

B 00:13:39,330 - 00:13:43,110

Da würde ich wieder eher Skills wie Sprache hoch ranken.

A 00:13:44,010 - 00:13:59,490

Okay, ja, verstehe. Und weil eure Unternehmenssprache Englisch ist und aber ähm manche dann deutsch oder Italienisch reden, wie dokumentiert ihr das Ganze, dass es für das ganze Team verständlich ist?

B 00:13:59,790 - 00:14:08,670

Auf Englisch. Also alle öffentlichen Dokumente. Die werden alle auf Englisch gemacht.

A 00:14:09,360 - 00:14:43,830

Okay. Hm. Ähm, jetzt wollte ich nochmal zurück auf das. Auf die Kommunikation mit den Menschen im UK. Weil. Also, wie ich schon gesagt habe, Sie sprechen ja Englisch als Muttersprache ist es dann manchmal so, dass bestimmte Verhältnisse entstehen, weil sie sich sicherer fühlen in der in der Sprache, wie sie sich ausdrücken. Das ähm, da bestimmte, wie soll ich sagen, hierarchische Verhältnisse entstehen. Kannst du das bestätigen?

B 00:14:44,410 - 00:15:07,170

Also ich würde sagen nein, weil nur wenn man Muttersprachler ist, fühlt man sich ja nicht irgendwie sicherer. Ich glaube, das hängt ja auch bisschen von der Person ab, wie sicher man sich fühlt. Es gibt auch Deutsche, die sich einfach unsicher fühlen, wo sie die Sprache sprechen.

A 00:15:08,430 - 00:15:32,280

Okay, also du würde sagen, du hast. Du merkst da keinen Unterschied. Okay. Ähm. Hm. Ähm. Genau. Wie managt ihr die Kommunikation auf verschiedenen Sprachen? Du hast gesagt. Okay, macht dann zum Beispiel auf Englisch die ganze Dokumentation. Habt ihr noch irgendwelche Tools oder bestimmte Maßnahmen?

B 00:15:33,660 - 00:16:05,550

Die öffentliche Kommunikation Richtung Team ist immer auf Englisch, was bedeutet, dass das einfach eine homogene Struktur ist. Dokumentationen von zum Beispiel Software Code ist auch immer auf Englisch. Bei uns arbeitet das ganze Tech Team, ja die ganze Literatur etc. alles auf Englisch. Und klar, wenn jetzt zwei Leute in einem Meeting sitzen, so wie wir jetzt, wir würden jetzt nicht Englisch sprechen, sondern würden Deutsch sprechen, weil wir beide Deutsch verstehen.

A 00:16:05,820 - 00:16:20,250

Ja, okay, klar. Und verwendet ihr für die Kommunikation, ähm, auch Übersetzer oder irgendwelche Online Tools? Jetzt, vor allem, wenn du mit jemandem auf Englisch sprichst?

B 00:16:21,270 - 00:16:25,680

Also Übersetzer, meinst du als eine Person, als Übersetzer, oder?

A 00:16:27,900 - 00:16:33,330

Ja, also ich werde beides interessant. Eine Person oder auch Tools.

B 00:16:33,600 - 00:16:51,630

Also Person nein. Und Tools, bin ich mir ziemlich sicher, dass viele mal Google Translate, die gängigen Online Tools haben, um da einfach ein besseres Englisch auch zu schreiben oder zu kommunizieren. Ansonsten nichts besonderes.

A 00:16:52,890 - 00:17:10,079

Okay, ähm, würdest du sagen, ansonsten läuft die Kommunikation problemlos sowohl mit dem Kunden als auch mit Partnern? Oder gibt es Missverständnisse, die auf die Sprache zurückzuführen sind?

B 00:17:14,109 - 00:17:49,840

Also bei den Partnern. Ja, das ist der Fall, weil ich dir vorhin schon gesagt hab, da würde ich fast sagen, das ist auch die Sprache und auch ein bisschen Mentalität zurückzuführen. Okay, bei dem Kunden. Wir haben mit Italien erst angefangen, deshalb bisher wenig Erfahrungspunkte. Ich glaube aber, da ist es ganz, ganz wenig, dass das wirklich auf die Sprache zurückzuführen ist. Ich würde eher sagen, dass das dann auf andere Themenblöcke zurückzuführen ist.

A 00:17:50,240 - 00:18:11,710

Okay, aber vor allem, weil ihr ja darauf achtet, dass die Muttersprachler oder also das bei euch im Team auch die Menschen gut Italienisch können. Würdest du sagen, dass die Kunden in Italien in dem Fall schon erwarten, dass ihre Sprache gesprochen wird?

B 00:18:13,370 - 00:18:39,250

Hm, also bei den Südtirolern würde ich sagen, ist es noch okay, aber sobald du ein bisschen südlicher kommst, wird erwartet, dass man eigentlich einen Italiener da hat oder eine Italienerin, die dann auch italienisch spricht. Das gleiche ist aber meiner Meinung nach sogar

schon in der Schweiz und in Österreich. Vor allem die Schweizer mögen die Deutschen nicht so richtig.

A 00:18:39,640 - 00:18:40,090

Ah wirklich?

B 00:18:40,870 - 00:18:51,340

Ja. Das heißt, es kommt immer ganz gut, wenn man einfach einen Schweizer Akzent hat. Also Schweizer auch. Ist am besten, weil dann, dann klingt man da auch besser. Habe ich so das Gefühl zumindest.

A 00:18:52,030 - 00:19:06,130

Okay, das ist aber auch interessant. Also selbst innerhalb von deutscher Sprache gibt es da Unterschiede. Aber meinst du, dass ihr, weil es Kunden sind, euch stärker versucht anzupassen als zum Beispiel an die Lieferanten?

B 00:19:06,970 - 00:19:20,260

Äh, ja, auf jeden Fall. Also wir haben dediziert jemand mit Schweizer Akzent gesucht, und keinen Deutschen, der dann eben versucht den Schweizern was zu verkaufen.

A 00:19:21,220 - 00:19:38,650

Okay, also schon auch so eine Stellenausschreibung stand das? Okay.. Und über welche Kanäle kommuniziert ihr mit den Kunden und Partnern?

B 00:19:40,000 - 00:19:51,270

Also hauptsächlich würde ich sagen E Mail und Telefon, teilweise aber auch über Slack und Skype vielleicht noch.

A 00:19:52,000 - 00:19:52,750

Skype. Okay.

B 00:19:53,470 - 00:19:57,970

Mit dem norwegischen Partner machen wir viel über Skype. Okay, liegt vielleicht auch an seinem Alter.

A 00:20:10,000 - 00:20:12,760

Macht er dann Anrufe auch über Skype?

B 00:20:13,000 - 00:20:13,090

Ja.

A 00:20:13,690 - 00:20:26,730

Okay. Wie ist das für dich? Zum Beispiel, weil du auch meintest, dass er manchmal Sachen nicht versteht. Ist es für dich dann doch einfacher, manchmal schriftlich zu kommunizieren? Oder doch telefonisch?

B 00:20:27,490 - 00:20:33,310

Okay, manchmal muss glaube ich wissen, was man mündlich kommunizieren kann und was man schriftlich kommunizieren muss.

A 00:20:35,440 - 00:20:35,920

Hm.

B 00:20:36,490 - 00:20:46,990

Das ist wichtig zu wissen, eine Einschätzung zu haben. Was wird auch verstanden und was kann vielleicht, was muss man vielleicht auch zweimal durchlesen, dass man es erst richtig verstanden hat.

A 00:20:48,340 - 00:20:56,330

Und ist es dann auch so zum Beispiel nach einem Anruf, dass du eine Zusammenfassung über Email schreibst?

B 00:20:56,350 - 00:21:09,880

Ja, also wir machen meistens Meeting Notes und dann diese Meeting. Genau das werden dann an alle Teilnehmer von diesem Meeting beispielsweise geschickt. Dann ist nochmal alles zusammengefasst und kann man sich nochmal nachlesen.

A 00:21:10,210 - 00:21:15,490

Okay, aber macht ihr das bei allen oder jetzt speziell, wenn ihr auf Englisch.

B 00:21:18,310 - 00:21:33,340

Kommt immer bisschen auf den Kunden drauf an und auf die Topics. Ähm, ich würde sagen, bei den Partnern machen wir das bei allen. Bei den Kunden kommt es auf, dass die Tiefe des Themas auch an.

A 00:21:35,250 - 00:21:54,110

Okay. Gut. Gerade haben wir viele Technologien und Tools für Übersetzung und allgemein für die Kommunikation. Benutzt ihr irgendwas davon?

B 00:22:18,820 - 00:22:42,040

Nutzen wir wirklich im Kundendienst zum Beispiel. Und wir haben es aber bisher immer nur auf Deutsch gemacht. Das heißt, wir haben jetzt noch nicht irgendwie andere Sprachen da eingebaut, was man aber natürlich auch machen kann. Aber das wird, glaube ich, noch mal sehr, sehr spannend werden.

A 00:22:43,540 - 00:23:06,130

Okay, und ja, ich habe auch angeschaut, das sind die Webseite von euch, die ist auch auf Deutsch, Englisch und Italienisch verfügbar. Es ist für euch dann sehr kundenorientiert, so für Partner. Habt ihr euch nicht überlegt, die Webseite noch auf Norwegisch und Dänisch?

B 00:23:08,380 - 00:23:25,070

Also bei uns ist wirklich Kundenfokus. Das ist der Partner oder sonst irgendwas zu übersetzen. Machen wir nicht. Und auch wirklich Italienisch haben wir erst dieses Jahr,

glaube ich übersetzt, weil das war bei mir nicht italienischen Markt. Das heißt dann haben wir auch keine Webseite gehabt.

A 00:23:26,180 - 00:23:38,360

Okay und ist es passiert das auch, dass die Kunden oder Partner aus verschiedenen Ländern auf euch zukommen und euch kontaktieren, obwohl ihr gar nicht da seid?

B 00:23:38,390 - 00:24:07,220

Ja, also wir hatten auch schon Anfragen aus, ähm, Middle East zum Beispiel. Wir hatten schon Anfragen aus verschiedenen Ländern in Europa, aber für uns ist es, wir sind nicht so groß derzeit. Wir müssen da immer eine Firma dann wieder gründen, Man muss da Abrechnungen machen etc. Das heißt, es lohnt sich dann erst ab einer gewissen Schwelle und nach einer gewissen Anzahl an Kunden, dass wir dann in einen neuen Markt reingehen.

A 00:24:07,730 - 00:24:19,940

Okay. Ja, verstehe. Okay. Ja, Gut. Sind wir mit allem durch? Wenn du keine Ergänzungen hast.

B 00:24:20,180 - 00:24:22,370

Wo bist du denn gerade?

A 00:24:23,270 - 00:24:24,230

Private Informationen. Nicht relevant.

I affirm that I wrote this Master's thesis without any unauthorized third-party support. I indicated all used references and resources. I referenced all quotes and citations properly. I have not previously presented this work to another examination board and I have not yet published it.