The role of language: Identification of factors that affect the implementation of internationalization strategies

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Preface

This thesis marks the end of my master's program at the University of Stavanger. These past two years have been both challenging and rewarding; to say that I have been overwhelmed at times is an understatement. I have, however, had the opportunity to develop and grow on both an academic and a personal level. As I close this chapter in my academic career, I am excited to enter the workforce with the new skills and knowledge that I have gained through this program.

Language has always been a topic of interest of mine, and it has been illuminating to incorporate my interest with a subject that is relevant for organizations today. This foundation has maintained my interest, kept me motivated and facilitated my educational experience.

There are many that deserve a thank you. I would like to thank the organization in question that gave me the opportunity to engage with so many interesting informants. I feel very fortunate to have a chance to write my thesis about their internal language change. Thank you to the informants that took time from their busy schedules to share their valuable thoughts and experiences with me. This thesis is made possible thanks to them.

A special thank you to my supervisor Benjamin R. Silvester for excellent advice, invaluable guidance, and encouragement throughout this writing process. Thank you to my parents for continued support. Lastly, I would like to thank my partner, Gøran, for supporting me through the ups and downs of this experience.

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Abstract

Organizations today continue to increase their operations beyond national borders. This indicates the need for a common way to communicate, leading organizations to change their language of operation. The goal of this thesis is to provide insight into this change process by addressing the overall problem formulation: "*What factors affect the implementation of an internationalization strategy whereby the language of operation for an organization changes*?" This is focused on small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Norway where the language is changing from Norwegian to English. A technology organization based in Oslo, Norway (referred to as TechO), is used as the case study. Three research questions are formulated to determine if TechO had a plan for the language change, explore the challenges that are experienced, and understand how the change has affected employees' working lives.

This study uses an exploratory design with an abductive approach. A qualitative data collection method is used, and semi-structured interviews are held with six informants. Relevant literature on change management, organizational culture, and language in an organization setting is included to provide background for the study. The empirical data is discussed in light of the theoretical framework and includes theory on planned change, implementation, linguistic knowledge corridor, and collaboration.

The findings indicate that challenges can arise even in cases where employees are comfortable speaking English and have good language skills. Three factors are identified to mitigate challenges and facilitate a language change. First, have a plan. Second, assign a change agent. Third, understand inherent resistance. In addition, communication is identified as the key tool that permeates these three factors. A well-defined plan is necessary to reduce uncertainty and thus facilitate the change. An assigned change agent will help to maintain momentum for the change and communicate the identified measures. It is important to recognize the value that is rooted in one's native language, as this can lead to resistance if a new language is forced. Continued support from top leadership plays an important role in the initial communication with the goal of creating a shared understanding.

Sammendrag

I dagens globaliserte virksomhetsverden øker organisasjoner stadig sin drift over landegrensene. Dette skaper et behov for en felles kommunikasjonsplattform, noe som ofte fører til at organisasjoner endrer sitt driftsspråk. Formålet med denne oppgaven er å gi innsikt i en slik endringsprosess ved å undersøke problemstillingen: *«Hvilke faktorer påvirker implementeringen av en internasjonaliseringsstrategi som innebærer endring av driftsspråket for en organisasjon?»* Forskningen retter seg mot små og mellomstore bedrifter (SMB) i Norge, der språket endres fra norsk til engelsk. En teknologiorganisasjon basert i Oslo (referert til som TechO) er brukt som en casestudie. Det er blitt formulert tre forskningsspørsmål for å finne ut om TechO hadde en plan for språkendringen, utforske utfordringene som oppstod, og forstå hvordan endringen har påvirket de ansattes arbeidsliv.

Denne studien bruker et eksplorerende design med en abduktiv tilnærming. Det benyttes en kvalitativ metode for datainnsamling, hvor det også er gjennomført semistrukturerte intervjuer med seks informanter. Relevant litteratur om endringsledelse, organisasjonskultur og språk i en organisasjonskontekst er inkludert for å gi en bakgrunn for studien. Empirien diskuteres i lys av det teoretiske rammeverket og inkluderer teori om planlagt endring, implementering, språklig kunnskapskorridor og samarbeid.

Funnene tyder på at det kan oppstå utfordringer selv når ansatte er komfortable med å snakke engelsk og har gode språkkunnskaper. Det ble identifisert tre faktorer som kan redusere utfordringene og legge til rette for en språkendring. For det første er det viktig å ha en plan. For det andre bør det utpekes en endringsagent. Og for det tredje er det nødvendig å forstå den iboende motstanden. Kommunikasjon er identifisert som et nøkkelverktøy og er gjennomgående i alle disse tre faktorene. En tydelig definert plan er nødvendig for å redusere usikkerhet og legge til rette for endringen. En dedikert endringsagent vil bidra til å opprettholde fremdrift i endringsprosessen og kommunisere de identifiserte tiltakene. Det er viktig å anerkjenne verdien som ligger i ens morsmål, da dette kan føre til motstand hvis et nytt språk blir påtvunget. Kontinuerlig støtte fra toppledelsen spiller også en viktig rolle i den innledende kommunikasjonen for å skape felles forståelse.

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1.0 Introduction

Organizations globally continue to become increasingly connected through the development of technology, and thus break down national borders as a result of globalization (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). As organizations increase their international operations (Welch & Luostarinen, 1988), this commonly involves engaging with new customers and providing services that transcend national borders. An important aspect of this is the ability to conduct business in the English language, as it has become the most commonly adopted shared language in organizations (Neeley, 2017).

In Norway, despite the national language being Norwegian, a substantial percentage of the population speak English. In the Norwegian school system, English became a compulsory subject in 1969 (Simensen, 2014) and has been mandatory from first grade since 1997 (Bedre Skole, 2018). In addition, Norwegians consistently get high scores on tests measuring English fluency (Sanden, 2020a). For instance, Norway is considered to have a “very high proficiency” in English and ranks 4th out of 111 countries and regions in EF English Proficiency Index (EF Education First, 2022). As mentioned, English is introduced at an early age in school, and for many, it continues to be a part of their daily lives as they enter the workforce. This becomes evident as Norwegian organizations with international aspirations often adopt English as their common language (Sanden, 2020a).

The Norwegian economy has a long tradition of trade with other countries (Rolsdorph, 2021). Organizations are constantly creating services in other countries, either to take advantage of lower wages, proximity to certain markets, or access to raw materials (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). As organizations build operations outside their home country, they inevitably take on a more diverse and multinational workforce (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). An important part of this strategy is creating a shared language within the organization by changing the language of operations from Norwegian to English. Implementing a shared language is a common tool that is used both for formal reporting and communication throughout organizations (Marschan et al., 1997). A shared language can enable better internal and external communication and can promote a sense of belonging regardless of geographic location (Neeley, 2017). Although a shared language can enable better communication, it does not ensure that meaningful communication occurs, and it may ultimately be a stumbling block in an organization's pursuit for global integration (Marschan et al., 1997).

The role of language is often studied in connection with multinational corporations (MNCs) (e.g., Fredriksson et al., 2006; Luo & Shenkar, 2006; Vaara et al., 2005), which are often associated with large and powerful corporations that employ thousands of people that speak many different languages. There has, however, been little reflection in research on the role of language in small and medium-sized enterprises[1] (SMEs), particularly concerning the positive and negative consequences, as well as the various practices associated with a transition to a shared language in the organization. Given this gap in research, this thesis aims to explore the role of language in the internationalization strategies of the technology industry in Norway. Specifically, this thesis focuses on a case of a SME in Oslo, Norway, that is in the process of changing their shared language from Norwegian to English. It does this, because it is essential to study the role of language as it permeates nearly every aspect of an organizations' business activities (Marschan et al., 1997). Additionally, it is very relevant to focus on the English language, as it has overwhelmingly become the most commonly adopted shared language in global organizations (Neeley, 2017). English is also the most commonly used language in Norwegian organizations, second to Norwegian (Språkrådet, 2015).

Although much of the literature on the role of language is directed towards MNCs, much of it has the potential to be applicable to the study of language issues in all organizations, whether small, medium, or large (Piekkari et al., 2015). While the importance of language has long been recognized and accepted in international business, it appears to have become neglected in contemporary research (Marschan et al., 1997). Marschan et al. (1997) state that organizations must ensure that language does not become "the forgotten factor" but rather viewed in strategic terms. Further, foreign language communication is referred to as "one of the most neglected areas of management" (Reeves & Wright, 1996). While organizations deal with language issues every day, the manner in which they go about it remains largely absent in literature (Maclean, 2006, referred to in Harzing et al., 2011). This study will therefore combine several areas of literature to examine the overall problem formulation.

[1] The terms "enterprise" and "organization" will further be used interchangeably, implying common use.

1.1 Problem Formulation

When organizations decide to increase their involvement in operations outside their home country, language is often overlooked as a crucial factor. The role of language has become increasingly relevant in recent years in Norway as more organizations look to internationalize and implement a change in their working language. It has become increasingly common to hire individuals with little or no knowledge of the Norwegian language, considering 75% of all Norwegian organizations have employees from non-Scandinavian countries (Språkrådet, 2015).

The goal of this thesis is to explore the role of the English language within internationalization strategies in Norway. This is focused on SMEs and how their internationalization strategies are impacted by changing their language of operations from Norwegian to English. By providing insights and creating an understanding of these processes, organizations are able to make more informed decisions regarding their own strategies. Changing the internal working language affects both the organization and employees in many ways, and there is always a possibility that it does not go the way it was planned. Identifying factors that can facilitate this change towards positive outcomes provides insights that can better support internationalization processes. The overall problem formulation is thereby composed as follows:

> *What factors affect the implementation of an internationalization strategy whereby the language of operation for an organization changes?*

The scope of this study is limited to one Norwegian SME and their language change from Norwegian to English. The organization in question has offices in both Norway and Sweden. However, the majority of the employees work in Norway and are used to communicating in Norwegian. To help address the overall problem formulation, the three following research questions (RQs) are explored in this study:

> RQ1: Did the organization have a plan for how to change from Norwegian to English as the language of operation?

> RQ2: What challenges are experienced with the language change from Norwegian to English?

RQ3: How has the language change affected the working lives of the employees in the organization?

Each of these research questions enable various reflections on many of the key factors that contribute towards addressing the overall problem formulation. This study focuses on a qualitative approach to exploring the individual understanding of what employees believe is important and why, as it is the individuals within these organizations which have to adapt the most to these changes. These insights are gathered from employees across the hierarchical levels of the organization primarily through semi-structured interviews (more on this in Chapter 4).

1.2 Context of Study

The context of this study concerns a technology organization based in Oslo, Norway. The organization will henceforth be referred to as 'TechO' in order to anonymize and bring clarity to the thesis. This fictitious name is based on the organization operating within the Technology industry in Oslo, Norway. The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) defines SMEs as organizations with under 100 employees and notes that they make up more than 99% of all organizations in Norway (NHO, n.d.). Based on this definition, this study will move forward by referring to TechO as a SME.

Whilst TechO originates in Norway, and is primarily based there, they also have a small group of employees in Sweden. These employees are able to communicate with each other due to the similarities in Scandinavian languages. However, over the last few years they have begun to hire contractors that are located throughout Europe who do not belong to the same language group. Due to this, certain parts of their communication have to be in English. As this thesis is being written, TechO has begun to expand outside of Europe as well.

Although they did not announce a change to their employees, TechO started a transition from Norwegian/Swedish to English a few years ago. Due to this change, the organization's website appears in English, and many of the official documents are now only available in English. In January 2023, the CEO communicated to a given number of employees that the language of operations would officially transition from Norwegian to English within the next two years.

Language changes are occurring at a faster pace than before, and TechO is now at the tipping point where the English language is starting to become normalized and is used more frequently. Officially, the CEO can be viewed as the person in charge of the overall language change. In reality, the changes so far have occurred somewhat organically as no one is assigned to enforce the transition. It seems that the organization is facing many hard decisions concerning which aspects of the organization should or should not transition to English.

1.3 Content of Thesis

It is important to note that this study is conducted while the language transition stage is in the beginning of the two-year time frame defined by the CEO. As a result of this, the research has to be concluded while the change is still ongoing. Considering TechO slowly started to transition to English a few years ago, this research has not been part of the initial stages nor can cover the end phase of the process. The thoughts and experiences shared by the informants are extracted from a time period where the decision to change has been communicated to certain employees (towards the end of the beginning stages). Therefore, it is not possible to study the process through to the end and follow the development of the informants due to the time limitation of this thesis.

This thesis begins with literature on change management, organizational culture, and language in Chapter 2 to provide background. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework to lay the foundation for the thesis. The methodical approach that is used for the study is covered in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the qualitative research. The findings are then discussed in light of the theoretical framework in Chapter 6. Lastly, Chapter 7 provides the concluding remarks of the thesis.

2.0 Background

This chapter presents literature on change management, organizational culture, and language in order to provide a greater understanding of the background for this study. First, implementing an internationalization strategy can be viewed as a planned change within an organization, and it is therefore relevant to discuss literature regarding change management and the role of resistance within this change. Second, the culture of an organization can play an important role in how changes are implemented. It is therefore important to explore culture and how this is separate from language, as these have previously been bundled together in contemporary research (Piekkari et al., 2015). Third, a key goal is to understand how language is viewed in international business and examine the role of language skills within an organization. These are central aspects that enable an understanding of what factors can affect the implementation of an internationalization strategy in TechO.

2.1 Change Management

Change management concerns the planned and managed changes within organizations (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). As such, it is an important field to situate elements of this thesis within as it entails the study of internationalization, of which a language change is an integral part of the process. At its core, change management involves getting people to change in order for the organization to transition to the desired end state (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). It is therefore important to involve employees in the process and enable them to adapt in order to reach the desired state of internationalization.

Beckhard and Harris (1987) describe how change starts with an organization in their existing state (A), with the future state (B) being the desired state of the organization, while the period of change (C) is the duration between A and B (referred to in Hennestad & Revang, 2017). This duration of time is crucial because success is dependent on how well leadership has implemented the change (Hennestad & Revang, 2017).

Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2019) point out recurring prerequisites in successful change processes. These include: 1) a common perception of a need for change, 2) a capacity to implement change, 3) that the implemented measures are research-based and have benefitted other change processes, 4) a clear vision and strategy that is communicated to the whole organization, 5) those affected have an opportunity to be heard and exert influence, 6) the progress of the change process is monitored closely with specified goals, and 7) changes that work are consolidated in new structures and processes (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

Three conditions must be fulfilled for an organization to be able to carry out a change process: 1) there must be a desire for the organization to be different, as well as a vision of how it should be and what needs to change, 2) something must in fact be done to make it happen, and 3) focus must be directed toward the period where the desired state is attained (Hennestad & Revang, 2017).

Once an organization has gone through a change process, certain characteristics can be used to determine if the organization has in fact changed (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). These include: 1) the organization has progressed from the current state to the future state, 2) the functioning in the future state is as expected, and 3) the change has been completed without disproportionate costs both for the organization and the members (Hennestad & Revang, 2017).

When it comes to the ability of individual employees to adapt to change, personal change adaptability is a key determinant regarding the success of a change process (Miller, 2001). Employees vary in their ability to adapt, and this can be both genetic in nature and learned (Miller, 2001). Change agents need a higher adaptability level considering that they both lead change and undergo personal change, as leaders with low adaptability may block change processes when they themselves are unwilling to change (Miller, 2001).

2.1.1 Planned and Continuous Change

Organizations are traditionally perceived as representing order and stability where changes are imposed by the leadership, and the activities and results of organizing are predictable (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). This view is partly reflected in the term episodic change, or planned change (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). Change agents are central in this approach, as they are the ones to analyze situations that develop and change over time, and thereafter develop and implement strategies for change (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Dunphy (1996) describes how planned change commonly is the result of an organization's failure to create a continuously adaptive organization (referred to in Weick & Quinn 1999). The term planned change covers organizational changes that are "infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 365). Organizations have over time developed a type of momentum where they get better at doing the same thing (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). They go through long periods of convergence of momentum that occasionally are interrupted by abrupt changes that are considered to be a type of punctuated equilibrium (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). Convergence of momentum is a consequence of collective habits, as employees tend to maintain and develop systems and ways of doing things that already work well (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). Punctuated equilibrium is triggered by external events such as a change in technology or key personnel (Weick & Quinn, 1999). The organization is gradually unable to recognize that the surrounding environment demands change, also called “inertia”, meaning that organizations have an integrated tendency to change more slowly than their environment (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). In such a case, “unfreezing” is needed to achieve change (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). This is part of a theory of planned change and will be a central part of the theoretical framework used in this study, elaborated on in Chapter 3.

The term continuous change implies a different approach as opposed to episodic change. In contemporary research, these approaches are partly viewed as competing and partly as mutually complementary (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). The term continuous change covers organizational changes that are “ongoing, evolving, and cumulative” (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 375). This view deviates from the concept of stability within an organization because the organization is now considered a phenomenon that is constantly changing (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). Continuous change is characterized by the idea that small, continuous, and simultaneous adjustments accumulate and result in significant change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Research is starting to rely more on the fact that models of planned change must be based on an understanding of organizations being in continuous change (Hennestad & Revang, 2017).

2.1.2 Leadership and Change Agents

Change by definition, as explained by Kotter (1995), requires creating a new system that subsequently demands leadership. Kotter (1995) describes eight steps to transforming an organization, and the first two are of particular interest. The first step starts by establishing a sense of urgency, where communication is key to convey information broadly and dramatically in order to promote aggressive cooperation among the employees of the organization (Kotter, 1995). Kotter (1995) further explains that unless employees are motivated to cooperate, no progress will be made as the employees will not help. When it comes to leadership, the CEO is a key figure if the target of the change process is the entire organization (Kotter, 1995).

However, this first step can be a challenge if this individual is not a new leader, a great leader, or a change agent (Kotter, 1995). A change agent can further be viewed as a central actor in the organization (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Once step one regarding communication is complete, step two involves creating a powerful coalition with a key person from leadership plus anywhere from 5 to 50 people depending on organization size (Kotter, 1995). This coalition includes senior managers at the core in addition to members outside senior management such as board members, key account representatives, or a powerful employee representative (Kotter, 1995).

2.1.3 The Role of Change Agents

Two elements are of significance and influence whether change agents succeed or fail with planned change: 1) Change agents must be able to create a perceived need for change, and 2) change agents must handle the resistance that often arises with change (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

A perceived need for change is often created through strategic analysis, where a competitive analysis that maps the organization's position in relation to competitors is central (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). By broadening the perspective and adding information regarding general social conditions, the need for change can be identified earlier by using competitive analysis (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Changes in the competitive situation and features of social development can be perceived and interpreted differently by employees in the organization, and precisely how a need for change is perceived is a critical factor in change processes (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

Organizations consist, first and foremost, of individuals and groups of people who represent the core element in all organizations (Jacobsen, 2018). The reactions from employees who need to change are experienced as the most challenging for change agents to handle, especially when reactions exhibit resistance (Jacobsen, 2018). Resistance to change is experienced by employees who are afraid of the unknown, and their competence, values, and power are all linked to the organization's existing state (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). Although resistance can appear to be a factor that makes change difficult to achieve (Jacobsen, 2018), it is built on the same conditions that make an organization effective and should be taken advantage of instead of being viewed as unequivocally negative (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). In order to handle resistance to change, it is essential to understand the reasons for resistance (Jacobsen, 2018). Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2019) highlight 10 reasons concerning why resistance for change usually occurs. These are described briefly below.

One is fear of the unknown, as change means moving from a safe state to a situation characterized by uncertainty. *Two* concerns the breach of a psychological contract, meaning certain employees may feel cheated, as unwritten expectations are broken. *Three* is a loss of identity, with the view that employees can place a special significance to their job and identify with their work. *Four* relates with the symbolic order changing, where many find it difficult to experience that everything that has been given a meaning, changes. *Five* concerns how power relations change, as some may resist change because they perceive that their possibility of influence diminishes. *Six* is the requirement for new investments, meaning employees have acquired specific competence that is of less use if their job changes. *Seven* concerns 'double the work', as organizational change is an extra task that must be completed in addition to regular work. *Eight* concerns how social ties are broken, being that the office community may disappear, and contact can be lost with long-time coworkers. *Nine* is the prospect of personal loss, because jobs may disappear or a change to a flat organization may result in fewer opportunities for promotion. And finally, *ten* relates to external actors wanting stability, as change affects external stakeholders that may lose their way into the organization.

2.2 Organizational Culture

One of the fields that has been most discussed in connection with change is the strength and unity of organizational culture (Jacobsen, 2018). Organizational culture has been defined by many scholars throughout the years, however Edgar Schein's (1985) definition is perhaps considered the one most often referred to in organizational literature (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Schein (1985) defines organizational culture as "a pattern of shared assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (referred to in Høyer et al., 2021, p. 89). A number of organizations are characterized by a strong and uniform culture that binds the organization together, others have a more fragmented culture that consists of subcultures, and some have a weaker culture with unclear, changing and often conflicting values (Jacobsen, 2018). Further, whether or not organizational culture can be designed is an interesting topic, as discussed in Blindheim et al. (2021). However, the goal of this study is not to determine if the organizational culture of TechO can be redesigned. For that reason, this study understands culture, once established, as something that is fundamentally stable and can only change over a long period of time (Jacobsen, 2018).

Cultural and psychic distance are two concepts that address different phenomena, however Sousa & Bradley (2006) argue that the concepts are poorly understood in literature and are used interchangeably. They further explain that cultural distance refers to a cultural level as opposed to an individual level and define it as "the degree to which cultural values in one country are different from those in another country" (p. 52). In contrast, psychic distance is defined as "the sum of factors preventing the flow of information to and from the market" (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, p. 24). Culture is identified as a factor that prevents the flow of information within psychic distance, which includes language (Piekkari et al., 2015). Bundling language into the culture box has contributed to language becoming "the forgotten factor" (Piekkari et al., 2015). This challenge has been recognized in literature, and language is now being studied as a separate component (e.g., Dow & Karunaratna, 2006). Therefore, this study also recognizes culture and language as two separate concepts that should not be used interchangeably.

2.3 Language

As organizations carry out their internationalization strategies, they will sooner or later cross language borders (Piekkari et al., 2015). Language can appear as a factor when organizations decide which markets should be avoided due to the challenges associated with different languages (Piekkari et al., 2015). Psychic distance, and specifically the component of language, has an impact on organizations as they decide what markets to enter (Piekkari et al., 2015). This is to be expected as organizations feel more at home in international markets that have a shared language, creating a "language comfort zone" that helps reduce psychic distance and also brings with it certain business advantages (Piekkari et al., 2015). These include: 1) information is easier and cheaper to gather as translation is unnecessary, 2) it is easier to network and negotiate when using one's native language, and 3) advertising may be carried out at a lower cost as it requires few to no alterations (Piekkari et al., 2015).

Neeley (2017) describes four reasons that organizations adopt a common corporate language: 1) Organizations strive to find a shared way to communicate following the pressure to grow globally, 2) using translators and interpreters is inefficient for everyday work relations, 3) it is challenging to share knowledge and collaborate without a common language, and 4) communicating a shared mission and values throughout the organization is difficult and inefficient without a common corporate language.

The English language is recognized as the global lingua franca of international business and functions as the communication tool in many cross-cultural encounters (Tietze, 2004). Lingua franca is defined as "any of various languages used as common or commercial tongues among peoples of diverse speech" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b). With the rise of English, it is relevant to touch on three terms that are commonly referred to in the literature. These will be discussed next.

2.3.1 ELF, BELF & Corporate Common Language

As language in international business has gained more attention, three terms have emerged as particularly relevant: 1) English as a lingua franca (ELF), 2) English as the business lingua franca (BELF), and 3) common corporate language (CCL).

ELF is a term that is used in communication context where English is used as the common language of choice among non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2009). To illustrate the use of ELF, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) describe it as a type of language that is used to communicate more generally and instead use BELF when shifting discussion to focus on a business situation. Although commonly mentioned in international business research, the term lingua franca is used more frequently in the discipline of sociolinguistics (Linn et al., 2018).

As an extension of ELF, BELF is also described as a form of communication that takes place between non-native English speakers and is further characterized as the language of international business (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). The B in BELF distinguishes it from ELF, as it entails communication in the professional domain for companies that operate internationally (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Written and spoken communication in BELF is influenced by the speaker's culture, meaning that certain societies tend to be more direct and issue-oriented than others (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

CCL is a term used in multilingual corporations that standardize the internal language for all corporate employees despite the many language backgrounds (Sanden, 2020; Linn et al., 2018). Given the dominance of English in international business, many organizations opt to use English as a common language by default (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). CCL is also referred to as a tool in the context of language standardization (Linn et al., 2018), which can be viewed as a form of human resource management (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a).

Although it is important to note the different aspects of language that exist in literature today, this study does not investigate the linguistic elements of an organization. As such, the aspects connected to CCL are the most relevant to this study as it relates on an organizational level.

2.3.2 Language as a Source of Power

Nadler (1981) describes how an organization is comprised of individuals, formal organizational arrangements (indicating "above the surface") and informal organizational arrangements (indicating "below the surface"). The informal organizational arrangements emerge over time, are neither planned nor written, and encompass characteristics of how an organization functions, including power (Nadler, 1981). In a period of change, the dynamics of political behavior become more intense because any significant change presents a possibility of altering the balance of power in an organization (Nadler, 1981). Employees may act based on their perception of how the change will affect their respective power (Nadler, 1981).

As companies internationalize and adopt a new CCL, internal communication is often conducted in a second language. In these information exchanges, the degree of language skills may vary greatly. Changing a corporate language is not a neutral decision but instead comes with many significant power implications that are easily overlooked (Vaara et al., 2005). Clegg (1989) defines power as a capacity rooted outside the authoritative structure of an organization, and further links language and knowledge with power. Employees who hold relevant language skills may appear in more powerful positions than normal (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999). Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999) describe how language can act both as a facilitator and a barrier within an organization. Employees with fluency in the CCL may have the power to act as informal gatekeepers and facilitate communication flow (Marschan et al., 1997). This power can be used in a productive way to ensure that critical information reaches the appropriate person (Marschan et al., 1997), and also in a counter-productive way to deliberately block information transmission (Macdonald & Williams, referred to in Marschan et al., 1997). Further, Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999) identify the existence of a language-based shadow structure that provokes the formal organizational structure. Due to the power of language, employees can influence the formal lines of communication and threaten the operations within the formal organizational structure (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999).

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework used in this study and is divided into sections comprised of relevant theory. The purpose is to provide a theoretical foundation in order to help guide the thesis towards answering the research questions and overall problem formulation.

First, Lewin's theory of planned change is presented, as it creates a sound basis for application to the first research question. Second, the framework of implementation by Fixsen et al. (2005) is highlighted and is relevant as implementation creates a new organizational reality that can have consequences for the employees and the organization itself. Third, the linguistic language corridor is included because the application of this concept can be used to explore if an employee is able to see new business opportunities (Hurmerinta et al., 2015). The fourth theory is the framework for collaborative practice that facilitates productivity (Schuh et al., 2014). It is therefore a useful tool to assess the effect of the change on the working lives of employees as addressed in the third research question. The framework also provides a relevant basis to analyze challenges as covered in the second research question. The combined theoretical framework will further be used in the discussion in Chapter 6.

3.1 Change Management

Language change is a planned transition within an internationalization strategy, and it is therefore necessary to incorporate principles of change management in its implementation. The theoretical framework of change management used in this study builds on the basic principles that are described in 2.1. These principles will not be repeated here. However, Lewin's theory of planned change will be introduced as an extension.

Lewin (1951) is considered the founder of the core principles regarding planned change (Hennestad & Revang, 2017), and his three stages of change is viewed as a generic recipe when it comes to organizational development (Weick & Quinn, 1999). The three stages consist of the processes: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). The first stage of unfreezing involves creating an awareness and increasing motivation for change with the intention that organizational members can unfreeze old behaviors and improve their openness for new ideas (Medley & Akan, 2008). Within this stage, Jacobsen (2018) explains that the change agent must create a perception among the employees that it is important or necessary to change, and that the change represents an improvement from today's situation. To achieve this, individuals in the organization must experience four perceptions: 1) that they are able to implement the change, 2) that the change is right for the organization, 3) that management is committed to the change, and 4) that the change is positive for the organizational members (Jacobsen, 2018). The second stage of moving includes an interactive process where organizational members identify the desired end state that includes the values, attitudes, and behaviors to support the new organizational vision (Medley & Akan, 2008). The third and critical stage, refreezing, entails reinforcing and institutionalizing the new behaviors among the organizational members to enable long-term success (Medley & Akan, 2008).

3.2 Implementation

Hennestad & Revang (2017) describe change management first and foremost as implementation of new ideas, meaning the process that creates a new organizational reality. It is the specified activities that are designed to put an activity or program into practice (Fixsen et al., 2005). It is not a one-time event that may or may not progress smoothly, but rather a gradual process that requires experience and repetition (Fixsen et al., 2005). Further, implementation of an organizational idea requires collective action (Hennestad & Revang, 2017), which is relevant when implementing an internationalization strategy whereby the language of operation changes. Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework by Fixsen et al. (2005) consisting of five components that demonstrate implementation in its simplest form.

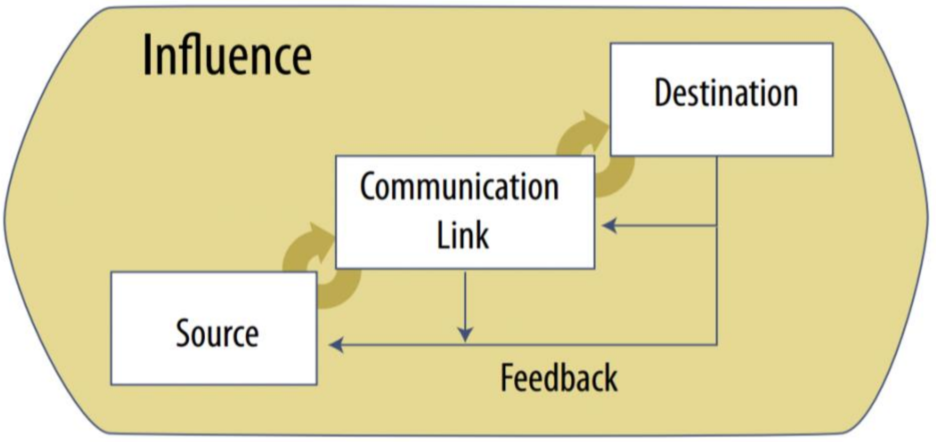

Figure 1. Implementation framework (Fixsen et al., 2005, p. 12).

The implementation framework starts with a source, or more specifically as the change that is to be implemented. On the opposite side is the destination, which refers to the employee and the organization that will adopt, house, support, and fund the change. The communication link consists of purveyors, meaning the employee or a group of employees that will actively work to implement the change. Next is the feedback mechanism that illustrates the flow of information relating to the performance of employees, teams, and the organization. Influence is the final component and helps one understand the sphere of influence that the organization is operating within, including social, economic, and political factors that either directly or indirectly affect employees or the organization (Fixsen et al., 2005). As the framework relates to this study, the source is the language change, and the destination is the employees in TechO. The communication link, feedback, and influence will be examined in Chapter 6.

3.3 Linguistic Knowledge Corridor

The linguistic knowledge corridor has roots in the corridor principle proposed by Ronstadt (1988), which explains how prior knowledge creates a knowledge corridor that enables one to recognize other opportunities selectively (Hurmerinta et al., 2015). According to Ronstadt (1988), one must first enter a corridor in order to be able to discover new corridors as a result of increased knowledge and understanding. Based on this way of thinking, the concept of the linguistic knowledge corridor refers to how the decision-makers' skills with multiple languages may encourage or prevent recognition of international opportunities (Hurmerinta et al., 2015). Both positive and negative outcomes are associated with this concept. The linguistic knowledge of an employee, meaning their skills with multiple languages, can be used as an operative tool to understand a new market (Hurmerinta et al., 2015). English skills can open doors to new markets with a shared linguistic heritage, but in order to build trust the local language must be used (Hurmerinta et al., 2015). Further, if employees have strong competence in one foreign language this can cause them to hit blind spots that lead them to focus on one single market while other opportunities are left unrecognized (Hurmerinta et al., 2015).

The linguistic knowledge corridor is relevant to this study because implementation of an internationalization strategy may result in the expansion to new markets. Hurmerinta et al. (2015) use this concept more broadly in reference to the decision-maker of an organization, while this study will use elements from the original concept and apply them at an individual level. The focus of consideration is therefore on the linguistic skills of the employees, and the opportunities they recognize within the organization. Additionally, the concept will further be referred to as the language corridor for simplicity.

3.4 Collaborative Practice

Schuh et al. (2014) present a framework for collaborative practice that includes the three dimensions: communication, coordination, and cooperation. Each of the dimensions further consist of two practices that are meant to facilitate collaboration (Schuh et al., 2014). Collaboration is explained as key for increasing the overall productivity within organizations, which is essential to successfully compete and produce in high-wage countries (Schuh et al., 2014). Productivity is an important measure when it comes to a language change as it is assumed that a change in language will improve the overall productivity and performance of an organization (Linn et al., 2018, referred to in Sanden, 2020). The dictionary definition of collaboration is “to work jointly with others” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). Therefore, the framework for collaborative practice is a relevant tool when a language changes as part of an internationalization strategy. Such a process necessitates a joint effort between the employees in the organization, which can be guided by the use of the individual elements in the framework.

The framework is illustrated in Figure 2 and is followed by a description of the three dimensions within the framework. Each of the dimensions within the framework are important, but certain elements within the dimensions can have a greater potential to facilitate collaboration and create a positive effect for an organization. The three dimensions will first be presented with reference to the collaboration framework before they are discussed in light of a change in language.

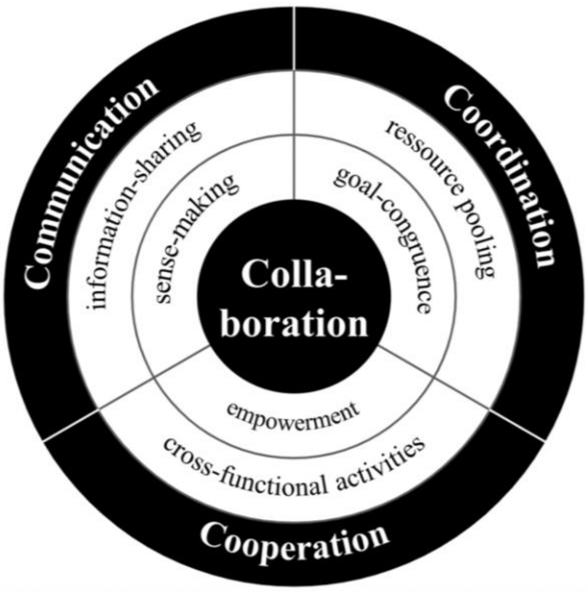

Figure 2. Collaboration framework (Schuh et al., 2014, p. 5).

3.4.1 Communication

Communication enables the two collaborative practices: 1) information-sharing and 2) sensemaking (Schuh et al., 2014). Sharing information among organizational members is described as fundamental for all collaborating activities while sensemaking is the process of interpreting information in order to understand complex situations (Schuh et al., 2014). Sensemaking is an ongoing process that turns circumstances into words that guide action (Weick et al., 2005). Taylor & Van Every (2000) describe how communication is a central element of sensemaking because it involves interactive talk that uses language to formulate and exchange words, which speaks a situation into existence and lays a basis for action (referred to in Weick et al., 2005). Although leaders are viewed as the ones who communicate the most, all employees participate in communication through sensemaking of the information that is conveyed (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Over time, organizations create a shared repertoire of resources to negotiate meaning, including routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, actions, or concepts that have become a shared practice (Wenger, 1999). Creating a shared repertoire allows an organization to coordinate its members, activities, and practices in a way that enables effective and efficient communication (Komori-Glatz, 2018).

Communication is key for an organization to function and enable collective action; employees must talk together, understand each other, and be able to share information (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). This relies on a shared language, which is a prerequisite that is often nonexistent in many international business situations (Harzing & Feely, 2008). Handling communication challenges that result from exposure to a different language is key in being able to operate as a global entity (Piekkari et al., 2015). It is useful to distinguish between internal and external modes of communication. Bartlett & Ghoshal (2002) describe how external communication takes place between the organization and the outside world including customers, partners, and suppliers, while internal communication takes place within the organization itself, such as with individual employees, departments, or divisions (referred to in Sanden, 2020). Welch et al. (2001) associate internal communication with human resource management as it concerns the language skills of employees, while external communication commonly concerns the marketing side of an organization (referred to in Sanden, 2020).

Within the internal mode of communication, a distinction is made between vertical and horizontal communication. Vertical communication occurs between leaders and subordinates at different hierarchical levels, and horizontal communication takes place between employees in the same department or between departments on the same level (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). When vertical communication is conveyed top-down through several hierarchical levels, the information can become distorted (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Middle managers will interpret information based on their own work situation, which can lead to them withholding information in relation to their subordinates (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). When conveyed bottom-up, communication is filtered and slow moving which can cause important information to be lost, plus information is often inadequate and unreliable as subordinates withhold negative information in an attempt to present themselves in the most favorable light (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Within horizontal communication, communication decreases considerably when crossing formal organizational boundaries that separate departments or offices, leading Thompson (1976) to recommend that employees working on tasks that require close collaboration should be gathered in the same formal unit (referred to in Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

Communication is considered a critical success factor to any change process, as it can be used as a tool to announce, explain, and prepare employees for change (Spiker & Lesser, 1995; Kitchen & Daly, 2002). When the language changes as part of an internationalization strategy, this can bring a lot of uncertainty concerning how to communicate and what the new expectations are. Organizations can help employees reduce uncertainty through communication, and leaders can contribute to reduce problems if they state their communication expectations explicitly (Gilsdorf, 1998). Communication lays the foundation for coordinating tasks and functions in the organization, as this requires employees to communicate as they adapt to each other (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). This opens the door to the topic of coordination that will be discussed next.

3.4.2 Coordination

Coordination refers to managing dependencies between activities, which includes administering available resources, aligning activities, and synchronizing tasks (Schuh et al., 2014). This perspective links coordination to an organization's productivity as it relies on the efficient coordination of its employees, resources, and activities, which can reduce costs and time (Schuh et al., 2014). The two collaborative practices resource pooling and goal-congruence are central to coordination (Schuh et al., 2014). Resource pooling involves allocating relevant employees, information, and equipment to reach the overall goal, where tasks are assigned and time limits are established (Schuh et al., 2014). Goal-congruence is crucial to organizations as they practice resource-pooling and compete for limited resources and refers to the shared understanding and agreement concerning the overall goal of the organization (Schuh et al., 2014). High levels of goal-congruence can increase productivity, considering the objectives and activities of employees are aligned (Schuh et al., 2014).

As a result of how language affects communication and information flows within an organization, it influences the coordination between functions, processes, employees, and departments (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b). Language is described as a key ingredient that shapes global coordination (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). As organizations expand their operations outside their home country, this inevitably results in a more diverse workforce that increases the demand for effective coordination within the organization (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). With proper language design, organizations can improve the coordination between their home country and their international divisions (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). Language design is a strategic tool that is used to develop a language system that aligns operations across multiple environments, where the languages in all divisions are related and used concurrently (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). Organizations with global strategies are expected to use a uniform functioning language to support coordination, meaning the language that is formally designed for verbal and written use (Luo & Shenkar, 2006).

3.4.3 Cooperation

Cooperation involves the collective recognition of the overall goal, which employees work together to reach (Schuh et al., 2014). Leadership must facilitate and encourage cooperative behavior, which consequently leads to a better performance of the organization (Schuh et al., 2014). Cross functional activities and empowerment are the two collaborative behaviors that represent cooperation and involve transferring control from central entities to empower decentralized decision-makers, while simultaneously interconnecting these decision-makers across departments (Schuh et al., 2014). The result of this allows local information to be utilized simultaneously with global knowledge, which enables greater decision-making that increases overall productivity (Schuh et al., 2014).

As previously established, aggressive cooperation among employees is one of the most important elements of initiating a change process (Kotter, 1995). This stands true when implementing an internationalization strategy, as this in fact is a change process. As a result of work assignments increasingly becoming digitized, modern organizations are progressively characterized by complex problem solving that can only happen in cooperation with others (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). It becomes essential to understand how to cooperate effectively, especially when communicating across large geographical distances and time zones (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Employees from the same linguistic backgrounds often develop a common language as a way of communicating, which in turn facilitates cooperation (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

3.5 Summary of Theory

Change management, as described in the literature chapter, is at the core of this study. Lewin's theory has been a natural extension to change management as it introduces an additional dimension to planned change. Language change is a planned transition, and Lewin's theory offers three important stages to facilitate such a change. The three stages comprise unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). These stages define a process starting from creating awareness of the change, through identification of the desired state, to the final establishment of it (Medley & Akan, 2008).

The framework presented by Fixsen et al. (2005) is included to highlight the role of communication in the implementation whereby the language changes. This framework stresses change as an interactive process, making communication the key factor when moving the organization from the source to its destination.

The language corridor refers to a process where an individual steps into a corridor, where linguistic skills are key either to encourage or prevent recognition of opportunities (Hurmerinta et al., 2015). This theory is important to underscore an individual's ability to recognize opportunities.

The framework for collaborative practice offers a holistic approach where collaboration is key to increasing productivity (Schuh et al., 2014). The framework identifies the three dimensions of communication, coordination, and cooperation as necessary elements to achieve this goal

(Schuh et al., 2014). Communication enables sharing information where sensemaking is key to reach the desired goals, coordination takes advantage of available resources where it is essential to understand the overall goal, and cooperation involves empowering and connecting decentralized employees to reach the overarching objective (Schuh et al., 2014).

4.0 Method

This chapter will present the methodical approach that has been used to examine and answer the research questions and the overall problem formulation in this thesis. Methods are various research strategies that are used to produce valid and reliable knowledge about reality (Jacobsen, 2015)[2]. This section starts by presenting the research approach and design, followed by the phases of the research process. Next, reliability and validity are discussed within the chosen method. Lastly, the ethical guidelines are considered.

4.1 Research Approach

The three approaches of inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning are central in research. Although this study uses an abductive approach, the two others are briefly explained to justify the chosen approach. An inductive approach involves working from empirical data to theory, meaning the researcher enters reality with an open mind, then gathers relevant information, before systematizing the data and forming theory (Jacobsen, 2015). On the other hand, a deductive approach entails moving first from theory to empirical data, meaning the researcher creates expectations about reality based on prior empirical findings and theories, before gathering empirical data to discover if the expectations correspond to reality (Jacobsen, 2015). Lastly, an abductive approach is a combination of both induction and deduction as it involves continuous interaction between theory and empirical data, and consequently becomes an ongoing problem-solving process (Jacobsen, 2015). In this process, findings lead to new curiosities that again lead to new questions that once again must be investigated (Jacobsen, 2015).

In this study, it is difficult to *only* consider theory as it is a result of something which has been previously observed and may not apply to contemporary phenomena in different contexts and times (Jacobsen, 2015). Furthermore, it is perhaps naïve to assume that one can enter reality without any assumptions and pre-judgement (Jacobsen, 2015). Therefore, this study uses an abductive approach. This study started with some preconceptions and theoretical knowledge applied with an open mind during the data gathering process (Kovács & Spens, 2005). This

[2] *Hvordan gjennomføre undersøkelser?* by Jacobsen (2015) is a particularly important piece of research that will be widely used to support the methodical approach in this thesis.

created the basis for the following process where continuous interaction between the empirical data and theory is necessary. This makes it possible to explore descriptions and explanations in order to create a holistic understanding of the language change (Jacobsen, 2015).

4.2 Research Design

After deciding on the overall problem formulation, the next step was to select a suitable research design (Jacobsen, 2015). It is common to distinguish between three main types of design: 1) an exploratory design when little is known about the topic, 2) a descriptive design when there is a basic understanding of the topic, and 3) a causal design to explore possible causal explanations (Silkoset et al., 2021). The researcher had limited prior knowledge about language change within internationalization strategies, this study therefore uses an exploratory design where the primary goal of the research is to examine this theme more closely (Silkoset et al., 2021).

4.3 The Research Process

Research generally goes through a set of relatively clear phases where the researcher must make choices that will have consequences for the validity and reliability of the research (Jacobsen, 2015). The structure of the following section is based on the phases outlined in Jacobsen (2015).

4.3.1 Sources of Data

It is important to distinguish between what primary data and secondary data has been used in the thesis. Primary data refers to the initial data collection of the researcher, where the researcher goes directly to the primary source for information and the data collection is tailored to a specific problem formulation (Jacobsen, 2015). As it relates to this study, the primary data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with employees at TechO.

Regarding secondary data, the researcher does not gather this information directly from the source, being instead based on information that is gathered by others (Jacobsen, 2015). It is important to note that secondary data is often gathered for different reasons, meaning it was gathered with a different problem formulation in mind than the one the researcher who is using it second-hand may be looking to investigate (Jacobsen, 2015). Within this study, secondary data was taken primarily from published literature and used to help select an appropriate theoretical framework. The secondary data includes, for example, textbooks and published research articles obtained from Google Scholar and Oria when searching for key words and sentences related to this study. Example search terms include: “common corporate language”, “ELF framework”, “internationalization process”, “corporate language management”, and “change management”.

4.3.2 Collecting Information

There is a general distinction between collecting information quantitatively in the form of numbers, or qualitatively in the form of words (Jacobsen, 2015). An explorative design is suitable for collecting qualitative data, as this method helps to study phenomena comprehensively and thoroughly by focusing on just a few informants and bringing to light nuanced data (Jacobsen, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study, as the individual’s experiences, thoughts and feelings were of interest (Thagaard, 2018). The semi-structured interviews were conducted one-to-one with an interview guide as the starting point (Silkoset et al., 2021). The semi-structured approach allowed for greater flexibility in wording of questions and a more focused two-way communication, where it was possible to add or remove questions based on how the interview developed (Silkoset et al., 2021).

Qualitative interviews enable: 1) closeness, because informants are met on their own terms, 2) openness, because few guidelines are set for the information that is gathered, and 3) high relevance, since the informants largely define the “correct” understanding (Jacobsen, 2015). However, certain limitations also follow this type of data. Qualitative interviews are time consuming and require a lot of resources, which limits the number of informants and present generalization issues (Jacobsen, 2015). In addition, the data can be complex to analyze, closeness can become too intimate, and flexibility can create a negative cycle where it becomes difficult to complete the research because new information constantly emerges (Jacobsen, 2015). Although it may be difficult to draw absolute conclusions that can be broadly applied, this study is interested in how an individual interprets and understands the internalization strategy in an organization where language changes take place, and what factors affect this change. This opens up the possibility for a discussion where insights from this study can be applied to other organizations that are going through a similar change.

4.3.3 Case Study

This thesis is primarily a case study, which can be described as an in-depth study of either one or a few research entities (Jacobsen, 2015). A case study within qualitative social science disciplines is typically defined on an intermediate level, meaning research is rarely interested in the lowest level concerning only one individual or the highest level where the case becomes too extensive (Jacobsen, 2015). A case can for example be an organization, a department, or a specific decision (Jacobsen, 2015). In this case study, the research entity is considered a collective entity as it consists of several absolute entities within the organization in question (Jacobsen, 2015). A commonality for all case studies is that the object of study is delimited in time and space (Jacobsen, 2015), which holds true for this thesis as it explores one broad overarching strategy that can have multiple implications for the organization. The goal is therefore to obtain good insights concerning a language change as part of an internationalization strategy and detailed descriptions of reality (Jacobsen, 2015).

TechO represents the case in this thesis. A connection was made with one of the employees at the organization, leading to an opportunity to write the thesis about TechO. The organization is going through the early stages of a language change from Norwegian to English and therefore is a near-ideal organization to use as the case for the thesis when looking at change processes. Some of the interviews were done in person, and some were done over Zoom due to employees either being unable to meet in person or due to the challenge of working in different geographic locations in and outside of Norway. It is important to mention that the information pertaining to the organization under study has been anonymized so that both the organization and informants are non-identifiable.

4.3.4 Selection and Recruitment of Informants

It is important to identify informants that have good knowledge of the role of language in TechO, as the goal of this study is to develop an understanding of this phenomenon (Silkoset et al., 2021). Considering TechO is a SME, the sampling frame was relatively small from the start. The organization also chose to exclude several central employees from the selection, which put further limitations to the sampling frame. These employees were considered too important to take time away from work to be interviewed. After creating an overview of the available employees, an assessment selection was used to select informants. This means informants were chosen because they appeared to hold certain information, which made them interesting to explore in the study (Silkoset et al., 2021). This decision was based on the goal of identifying informants across the various departments and hierarchical levels in order to obtain diverse viewpoints as well as a broad understanding of the language changing. Jacobsen (2015) explains that one cannot research very many individuals in qualitative research. Considering the size of the organization plus the scope of the study including time constraints, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with the intention of obtaining different perspectives on the language change. With this approach, the size is considered adequate and is deemed a realistic decision for the purpose of this study based on established research norms for qualitative interview data (Jacobsen, 2015). The informants were based in Norway and Sweden. Additional information about the informants is restricted to safeguard their anonymity and ensure they are non-identifiable.

The communication with the informants was first initiated by e-mail where a request for an interview was sent along with the information letter and consent form that was approved by Sikt, the Norwegian State administrative body under the Minister of Education, who regulate research practices and data collection. Six e-mails were sent, and all six informants agreed to participate. Written consent was obtained before the interviews took place.

4.3.5 Interview Guide

The structure of an interview guide can be viewed on a sliding scale, where the starting point is completely closed with questions that have fixed answer options, and the other end is completely open and the conversation is conducted without an interview guide (Jacobsen, 2015). This study uses a semi-structured interview guide to allow greater flexibility during the interviews. This allowed for questions to be added or removed based on the development of the interview, and enabled two-way communication where it was possible to both give and receive information (Silkoset et al., 2021). Considering theoretical knowledge had been obtained before starting the data collection, this inspired and influenced the interview questions. The interview guide was created in both Norwegian and English, and both guides were used.

The interview guide included a set of general questions at the start, because complex and detailed questions that may require more effort for the informants to answer at the beginning could have led to the conversation getting stuck, or the informant dissuaded from engaging earlier on (Jacobsen, 2015). The guide was further divided into themes, making it easier to divert attention to a new topic. Some questions were designed to be simple with straightforward answers, while others were designed to enable a deeper conversation. Open questions enabled informants to express their views and experiences (Silkoset et al., 2021). The guide ended with two concluding questions to give the informants an opportunity to reflect on the theme and the interview. The interview guide was slightly revised during the interview process, as certain questions were considered irrelevant or repetitive as more was understood about the organization.

4.3.6 Conducting the Semi-Structured Interviews

When scheduling the interviews, it was important to keep in mind that TechO has employees based in different locations. The employees based in Oslo received two options, either to meet in-person at their office or conduct the interview digitally. The employees located outside Oslo received only the digital interview option, which was through Zoom.

Audio recording the interviews was identified as the most suitable option to collect data as opposed to taking notes. This way, the focus could be on the conversation instead of being distracted by detailed note taking. Although Jacobsen (2015) describes good reasons to take notes during the interview, this method was excluded as it could have been distracting and limited understanding of what the informant was saying, leading to a lack of follow-up questions to explore the topic and hinder knowledge acquisition. The informants gave verbal consent to have the audio recorded prior to starting the interview. The secure solution Nettskjema Diktafon was used to collect data for both the in-person and digital interviews. The interviews were recorded with the Diktafon app and delivered to the secure website Nettskjema for further transcription. When using the app, the recordings are immediately encrypted in the phone and for security reasons it is not possible to listen to the recordings in the mobile app (Universitetet i Oslo, 2017).

The digital interviews were conducted with the communication platform Zoom, and the guidelines set in place by UiS for audio recordings of interviews were followed. As such, Zoom was logged into via the secure Feide login, end-to-end encryption was enabled, the meeting link was not shared openly, the meeting was password protected, and the online waiting room was used to allow only the invited informant to participate in the meeting (Universitetet i Stavanger, 2021). Video was turned on while conducting the interviews on Zoom, which enabled better control of the interview situation.

As previously mentioned, the informants received an information letter and consent form via e-mail that was approved by Sikt, and written consent was obtained before starting the interviews. Although the informants had received this information beforehand, it was still important to start each interview with a brief overview explaining the purpose of the research (Jacobsen, 2015). The purpose of the introduction was to act as a warm-up to create an open and safe atmosphere before the actual interview started (Jacobsen, 2015). Once the interview started and questions were asked, the priority was to listen and regularly show interest and understanding. Comments and follow-up questions were added when natural to do so, or when an answer needed more clarity. Since TechO has employees from different countries, not all questions were relevant to all employees. As the interviews developed, it became clear when a question could be removed, or an additional question needed to be asked. Every interview concluded by asking if the informant felt as though a certain question should be asked or if they would like to add anything themselves. All interviews were conducted after receiving approval from Sikt. The interviews varied in length; however, the median length was approximately 53 minutes per interview.

4.4 Qualitative Analysis

The interviews resulted in raw data that needed to be processed and analyzed in order to both understand it and make it appropriate for the application of the theoretical framework in Chapter 6. Qualitative analysis often involves reducing texts to smaller components, then binding these elements together, and afterwards trying to understand the new parts in light of the entirety that is created (Jacobsen, 2015).

4.4.1 Transcription

The first phase of analysis is transcription and involves transferring the audio recordings, or raw data, from verbal speech to a written text (Jacobsen, 2015). A written text creates a better understanding of the entirety of the interview and makes it easier to move back and forth in the conversation (Jacobsen, 2015). This process was completed after finishing each interview, and involved transcribing exactly what was said during the interview. Pauses and expressions in the form of "ehh" were also included in the transcription. This was considered relevant for future analysis, as it may indicate that the informants were unsure or needed some extra time to think. However, when the pauses and expressions were later used to understand the informants' responses, they were excluded from the written analysis to provide clarity.

Although transcription is necessary, it comes with its challenges. Typing out all the recorded interviews is a particularly time-consuming process that requires a high level of concentration. Several informants spoke quite fast, which made it difficult to keep up with them. However, this was possible to solve by reducing the speed of the audio in half, which significantly decreased the number of times needed to jump back and forth in the audio file. Additionally, there were instances of inaudible speech and mumbling, possibly due to the speed of the speaker, the fact that various languages were used, or that the audio recorder occasionally was unable to capture all the sounds correctly. It is important to note that several interviews were conducted in the informant's native language and the extracts were then translated to English. Certain parts were more difficult to translate than others, and nuances may have been lost in translation.

4.4.2 Analysis

This study uses a thematic analysis to examine the six qualitative interviews. Braun & Clarke (2012) explain this as a method used to systematically identify, organize, and provide insight into patterns of meaning, also referred to as the themes, across a data set. The purpose of a thematic analysis is to identify patterns to answer the research questions and thus answer the overall problem formulation (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The themes from the interview guide were used to guide the analysis. The six-step approach presented by Braun & Clarke (2012) was relied on to analyze the interviews. This approach was applied as outlined below.

Phase one involves becoming familiar with the data. This was done by reading the transcripts, making items of potential interest bold and underlined in the electronic file, and adding notes on the side of the document. It was important to read the data actively and analytically in order to critically ascertain the meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Phase two entails creating the initial codes. The codes were a mix of both descriptive and interpretive, as certain codes were used to describe or summarize data while others were used to interpret meanings beyond the surface of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The data was organized in a table with two columns, with the data on the left and the codes on the right. This enabled a clear structure that separated the codes from the initial bold and underlined words and notes.

Phase three concerns searching for themes, where the coded data was used to identify similarities and overlap (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Codes with shared features were clustered together to describe a pattern in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This process made it easier to identify subthemes within the themes that were guided by the interview guide.

Phase four involves reviewing potential themes, where quality checking is involved (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The collected extracts of data were reviewed to determine if they contained useful information to support the theme. This process involved deleting codes that did not support the theme and relocating other codes under relevant themes. Extracts were often reviewed in the original transcriptions to ensure the meaning was correctly understood.

Phase five concerns defining and naming the themes, where each theme has a unique and specific purpose that together creates a coherent story about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The themes and subthemes were named by describing their meaning in a few words.

Phase six involves producing the thesis, which does not only begin at the end of the process of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The writing and analysis were interwoven when producing the findings in Chapter 5.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the research is central when considering the quality of the study. Many choices have been made throughout this thesis, and it is important to consider any issues that have occurred or decisions that have been made that could affect the research process and its outcome. This section will therefore reflect on the validity and reliability of this study in light of the data that has been collected and the decisions that have been made.

4.5.1 Validity

Validity means the empirical data that is gathered must be valid and relevant and addresses how well the data *actually* answers the questions that have been asked (Jacobsen, 2015). In other words, it concerns how well a researcher measures what they have intended to measure (Silkoset et al., 2021). There are two different types of validity: internal validity refers to whether there is support in the data for the conclusions that are drawn, and external validity covers generalizability, meaning whether the results from the research are valid in other contexts (Jacobsen, 2015).

The selection of six informants can be viewed as a challenge with regard to the validity of this study, as this may imply that the selection is not necessarily representative of the entire TechO employee base. However, based on TechO being a SME and the pool of potential informants being limited, plus the scope of the study having clear time constraints, the selection of six informants is sufficient and can be considered to represent employees experiencing the internationalization process and the organization in general. In addition, the exclusion of certain employees from being selected for interviews weakens the validity of this study in part. This is because with every employee follows new and valuable insights that could have had important impacts on the results. Thus, to strengthen the validity, informants from the different hierarchical levels throughout the organization and across the various departments were included. Interviews often provide high relevance since the informants establish the “correct” understanding of a situation (Jacobsen, 2015), which is in line with this study as it focuses on the individual understanding of what is important and why. Using a mixed-methods design where a survey was used to confirm the findings with the entirety of the organization could have provided heightened knowledge and validity (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017), but ultimately it was not feasible to do so due to the time constraints of the study.

4.5.2 Generalizability

Generalizing findings from research to other contexts is difficult to achieve in a qualitative approach (Jacobsen, 2015). This is true for this study, as it addresses only one organization that was pointed out for the purpose of providing good information about language change as part of their internationalization strategy. It would be irrational to assert that the findings from a small study of six informants is valid in every technology SME. However, as more companies internationalize, this study can hopefully shed light on how a language change affects employees and the organization, and certain aspects that should be considered. The findings from this study are limited to TechO, but the assertion that language choice is an important topic that should be considered in an organization’s internationalization strategies is not limited to just one organization.

4.5.3 Reliability

Reliability means the empirical data that is gathered must be reliable and trustworthy (Jacobsen, 2015). The research must be carried out in a credible way that creates trust, and it cannot be affected by obvious measurement errors that cause the results to be incorrect (Jacobsen, 2015). One factor that can affect the reliability of the study is the role of the researcher. As it relates to this study, the possibility to write this thesis about TechO was enabled through a connection with one of the employees. This connection led to the opportunity to approach the organization and subsequently interview employees in this research project. This could, however, in principle weaken the reliability of this study and affect the informant's ability to provide honest and correct information as they know the contact person and may act differently because of it when being interviewed (Jacobsen, 2015). To combat this challenge, the informants were, in addition to the information letter, verbally informed about their anonymization in an attempt to make them non-identifiable. Although it is difficult to know what impact this has on the informants, they did appear to answer truthfully during the interviews and gave an impression of being open throughout the experience.

Other features that can affect the reliability of the study include the context of the digital interviews, as it can be more difficult to establish trust and transparency, and it is easier to lose control over the interview situation (Jacobsen, 2015). This was solved to a certain degree by enabling the video function in the digital interviews. However, technical problems still arose, and it made it more difficult to read the body language of the informants. The audio was recorded from the computer using the Diktafon app on a telephone and a tablet, which resulted in varied quality of the audio recording. This led to certain details becoming inaudible and therefore unable to be included in the transcription. Transcribing the interviews manually made this process more straightforward, as it was easier to move back and forth in the recording to understand the context and make sure no crucial details were omitted. Additionally, certain interviews were conducted in different languages, which can affect the reliability as there may have been misunderstandings from both the researcher and the informant.

Implementing an internalization strategy can be viewed as a long process where employees gradually adapt to the new language that is changed. It would therefore have been interesting to observe the employees in the organization over a long period of time, as the information generally becomes more reliable the longer the period of study is (Jacobsen, 2015). However, prolonged observation was not possible due to the time frame that follows a master's research project.

4.6 Ethical Reflection

Carrying out a research project presents ethical challenges, and the researcher has a duty to think carefully about how the research can affect the informants, and how the research will be perceived and used (Jacobsen, 2015). Jacobsen (2015) points out three basic requirements concerning the relation between the researcher and the informants: informed consent, the right of privacy, and the right to be cited correctly. These will be briefly discussed.

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH, 2021) asserts that researchers must, as a general rule, obtain informed consent for participation in research. Informed consent entails that the informant must have competence to decide if they want to participate, participate voluntarily, receive full information about the study, and understand the information (Jacobsen, 2015). The informants were contacted by e-mail, where the purpose of the study was explained and the information letter and consent form that was approved by Sikt was attached. These approved documents are attached as Appendix 1. Informed consent was obtained by collecting the signed forms prior to conducting the interviews.

Privacy is a human right, and the researcher must show respect for personal integrity and protect human beings against unwanted intrusions and access (NESH, 2021). The researcher must always carefully consider how sensitive the information is for the informant (Jacobsen, 2015). This study focuses on the individual understanding of the language change as part of an internationalization strategy in a work setting, and not on a personal level. This contributes towards the understanding that the information is not very sensitive. Regardless, it is still important to consider the level of possibility for informants to be identified from the data (Jacobsen, 2015). The danger for a breach of privacy arises when it is possible for outsiders to identify the informants, and this danger becomes greater with a smaller selection of informants (Jacobsen, 2015). Certain measures have been taken in an attempt to anonymize the data. The information regarding the organization and the informants is not revealed, for instance there is no mention of the exact number of employees in the organization, and the demographic information of the informants has been excluded. The informants are also referred to as EI1-

EI6, short for “Expert Informants”, where the number assigned is not based on the order or timeline that was followed for the interviews.

Finally, the informants have the right to be cited correctly (Jacobsen, 2015). To the extent that it is possible, researchers must attempt to reproduce results in their complete form, as quotes can have a completely different meaning if they are applied without context (Jacobsen, 2015). In an attempt to manage this challenge, data has been presented in its complete form when considered important in better understanding the result (Jacobsen, 2015). In addition, the choices that have been made during the research process have been stated clearly, and the quality of the study has also been considered.

5.0 Findings

The findings from this research are presented in this chapter. In order to provide a structured and organized presentation, they are presented with the same structure as used in the interview guide when the semi-structured interviews were conducted. The intention is to make it easy to synthesize the findings in the discussion chapter. The findings are therefore divided into the seven categories: internationalization, organizational change, organizational culture, strategy, challenges, the English language, and collaborative practice. The empirical data mainly consists of direct quotes and summaries from the informants to highlight their thoughts and experiences. The majority of the themes are summarized consecutively to provide a coherent presentation of the findings.

The empirical data presented in this chapter was gathered from six informants across the hierarchical levels of TechO. As previously mentioned, the informants are anonymized and have been assigned a number between EI1-EI6 for privacy. The informants will also be referred to as s/he to anonymize their gender. The informants were initially asked about their background, including how long they have worked at TechO, and their general working experience. Although this information cannot be explicitly stated in this chapter due to challenges with anonymization, these questions facilitated a greater understanding for the researcher in terms of who the informant was and offered a baseline for their experience.

5.1 The Concept of Internationalization

TechO is currently increasing their involvement in operations outside of Norway, making the concept of internationalization a relevant area of interest in the organization today. The informants were asked what the word "internationalization" meant to them in order to help them focus on the theme of the interview and create a foundation for the following conversation.

5.1.1 The View on Internationalization

The individual views on internationalization varied among the informants. The question presented a challenge for one informant who requested repetition of the word, which allowed for additional time for reflection. The rest of the informants answered this question without much trouble. The responses from two informants were product oriented in nature as they associated internationalization with the system and how it may be used in different countries. EI1 said it concerns: *"… if there is [a] difference from country to country in how one uses the* *system"*. EI6 also referenced the system: *"… that it is available for all different languages …"*. The answers from the remaining four informants were business oriented in nature and they talked about expansion. EI4 explained internationalization as: *"… expanding internationally"*. EI3 described the meaning as: *"… one goes from being national to international, meaning out into the world"*. EI5 introduced the word "market" when s/he explained: *"Well internationalization is the company going into a new market basically"*. EI2 connected TechO with the concept of internationalization, pointing out: *"… that is a little bit what [TechO] tries to be. An international company, not just Norwegian …"*.

5.2 Organizational Change

TechO operates within the technology industry where changes constantly occur. It was therefore important to find out what the informants believe about change in the organization.

5.2.1 Openness to Change

All of the informants except one initially described themselves as being open to change. When asking if s/he is open to change, EI3 answered: *"Yes and no … I am open to change as long as it has been carefully … considered and discussed … that more than one person has been involved in making a decision …"*. Although the other informants initially described themselves as being open to change, contradicting answers were given throughout the interview. For EI2, it depends on the effect on their current work processes: *"As long as it is not a change that is the complete opposite … of what one does in the workday"*. EI2 explained that it has to do with their personal level of comfort: "*… yes, I would say that I am open to change. But I always have a little reluctance if it is something I am very comfortable with …"*. EI5 said: *"… yes, I am open to change. But when you ask me to use a new system, I hate that …"*. EI6 described a change that had taken place in the organization and said: *"… in the beginning I noticed that I was a bit negative …"*.

5.2.2 Understanding the "Why"

Considering there are many different changes that occur at TechO, several informants emphasized their need to understand why a change is carried out. EI3 explained that it has to do with their personal point of view:

> *"It again depends on the change if I am a positive or negative. If I am negative … towards a specific change, then I probably have to see more clearly the result … the positive about it … is it something [that] I welcome with open arms, then it takes quite [a] short time to adjust …".*

Further, when referencing change, EI3 explained: *"I feel that I need to have a little more understanding of why it happens … all change is [not] necessarily good change".* EI3 also stated: *"… there is no point in just making suggestions without knowing what the basis for it is …".* Seeing the value of change was emphasized by EI4 when s/he talked about certain changes that are being considered in TechO: *"… everyone agrees in the changes that are coming, the proposals that are desirable, that one sees the value of making that type of change …".* EI4 also explained that it is appealing for them to understand the purpose of a change: *"… if you explain why something is being done, or will be done, then it is much easier to actually appeal to the change that will take place. So, start with why".* When carrying out a change, EI5 explained that: *"… how you influence, how you involve your team, and how you speak to your team to make them understand how important things are is really important …".* Additionally, EI5 communicated that with change that one should not *"… impose things on people … we want to understand how you [the leadership] did things …".*

5.2.3 The Effect of Change on Routines and Habits

The informants at TechO have their own areas of responsibility, and some commented on how change effects their way of doing things. EI2 explained that if a change concerns the employees' routines and something they are quite comfortable with, then it can be a pity to let it go. EI6 pointed to difficulty experienced by long-term employees: *"… but perhaps for those who have worked here the longest. Then it is the most difficult to go through with changes. Because they sort of have a routine for everything and their [own] way of doing things …".* EI4 explained that although people express that they are willing to change, *"… it is not so easy to carry out [change] because much is, in a way, incorporated and rehearsed in habits. So, I think probably people express more willingness to change than it is actually feasible …".*

5.2.4 Top-Down Versus Bottom-Up Approach

Willingness to change in TechO is viewed quite positively by the informants. Some touched on how decisions are made, as related to top-down versus bottom-up approaches. EI4 explained that changes should be a top-down process in TechO:

> *"... if the change request comes from, what shall we say, the mass of people. Then it is not necessarily as easy, or willingness, to make that type of change. So, I would potentially say that it is a bit top-down vs. bottom-up when it comes to changes in this company. But that is, if you ask me, how it should be ...".*

Although EI5 believes that change should be communicated from the top leadership, s/he said: *"... it is really important to take the perspective of your team that actually [is] dealing with the day-to-day business ...".* The team approach seems to be supported also by EI2 as s/he touched on the importance of discussing change and not just carrying it out because the organization can. EI3 described the need for a bottom-up approach: *"... I feel that [the decision to] change must be made ... in cooperation, not by individuals. I guess that is really it".*

5.2.5 Summary of Organizational Change

Five informants initially describe themselves as being open to change. Despite this, contradicting answers were given throughout the interview. Understanding why a change is carried out is valuable information for several informants. Three informants view change as having a negative effect on routines and habits. All the informants have a positive view on employees' willingness to change. One informant described feeling more willingness to change when the request comes top-down, and three informants noted the importance of including the team's perspective when implementing change.

5.3 Organizational Culture

The informants were asked how they viewed the culture in the organization and how they thought the language change would affect the culture.

5.3.1 Organizational Characteristics of TechO

As the organization has a young workforce, EI4 described the employees as nerds that have grown up in the IT world where the language is English. EI6 said that TechO is: *"... notorious* *for hiring people who like gaming…"* and that *"… most of the people who work in [TechO] are quite young and have a fairly good knowledge of English. So, there is no problem in that sense"*. EI3 explained the team as helpful: *"… everyone is very willing to help others, stand up for each other at all times, and work for each other as a team. I would say we have a good culture in that sense …"*. EI3 further explained that the employees from the Scandinavian countries are very used to both speaking and writing English. EI2 pointed out that TechO is relatively newly established and commented on the size of the organization: *"Since we do not have very many employees, then one has a greater influence. And that is, in a way, part of the appeal of being able to work here"*. Some employees brought up the geographic distance between the different offices. EI1 described the culture as "cozy" but pointed out a negative aspect concerning how employees geographically work a bit far from each other. EI4 talked about sub-cultures as s/he explained: *"… the culture in [TechO] as a whole is one thing, and the culture internally in the various offices is something else. [I] would like to wish and try to make the culture common everywhere"*.

5.3.2 The Effect of English on Culture

When asked about the effect of language change on culture, EI2 said:

> *"… since we are a young environment, I would really say no … we work with technology, so, I have a good relation to English … compared to an older company with older employees, maybe it can be a bit more [of a] difficult transition"*.

EI1 talked about how a language change will take time: *"If we were to officially switch to English as the main language in [TechO], there will be an adjustment period. And I think there will be a lot of what is called codeswitching …"*. Even if the organization "officially" changed the language of operations to English, EI1 further explained that s/he thinks the offices will continue to speak their local languages. EI4 reflected on employees being forced to speak English:

> *"Not necessarily. I think it can affect potentially the culture if one is forced to talk together orally in English … [but] I do not think that the English language will affect these here nerds that sit here and have grown up in the IT world …"*.

5.3.3 Summary of Organizational Culture

Several characteristics of organizational culture are worth highlighting in summary. TechO is a relatively new organization, has a smaller employee count, a young workforce, and the employees have good English skills. One informant had a negative opinion concerning the geographic distance between the offices as this can have an impact on culture. Another informant pointed out that subcultures exist between the various offices. Two informants think the change to English will affect employees less due to organizational characteristics.

5.4 Strategy

Strategy was another central theme in the interviews. The informants were asked questions related to topics such as the necessity for change, goals, personal involvement in the change process, and opportunities. The main findings are presented below.

5.4.1 English in Standardization

All six informants agree that it is necessary for TechO to change the language of operations to English. Several informants reflected on how English facilitates standardization. EI1 explained that English is useful to make sure everyone is included: *"I think that it [English] can be useful, especially if they [TechO] wants to expand … then we need to have a standard that is in English, to reach both more customers and also more employees …"*. EI2 agrees that English standardization is key: *"… one can standardize things more easily instead of having to do it in several languages …"*. EI4 builds on this: "*… everything we actually do is easier to standardize because you have one way of doing it; you have one language to write it in …"*. EI4 further described how the internal onboarding process can be standardized to a greater extent because small things are in English: *"… it is incomprehensible for some and difficult for some to enter a company where you have to google translate the title of a chat group or the title of a task type of an agreement …"*.

5.4.2 The Importance of Strategy Versus No Strategy

Three informants reflected on the importance of having a strategy. One informant pointed out that a strategy in general is important, another thinks strategy is not so important with the change to English, and one believes that an individual strategy is key with the language change. EI5 explained that strategy is key when it comes to change: *"… you have to look at a strategy in how to do it. You cannot … all of a sudden … change things without even … telling people …"*.

EI5 also said: *"… I think the process or way of doing it [the change] is very important …".* EI1 commented on the necessity of a strategy with the change to English: *"I would actually like to say that it is not so important that one needs to have it [a strategy]. Because a fixed structure in such a transition, then one forgets the human factors …".* EI1 described that a fixed strategy is not necessarily the best solution for the employees and customers, but that it should rather be a natural process. EI4 discussed strategy as an individual act:

> *"… it seems a bit like it is up to each individual to adopt it [English]. It is an overarching plan to say that we [TechO] will switch to English over time … strategy is something each individual must find the way it best can be done …"*

5.4.3 Natural Process

In order to understand if a strategy is apparent to the informants, they were asked if they think that those who are responsible have a strategy for the change. One informant chose not to answer this question, three do not think there is a strategy, and two believe there is one. EI5 does not think there is a strategy: *"Not really, we are just doing it … it is a need. It is something we are doing because it is needed to communicate with our … English speaking team members …".* EI4 thinks a strategy is created along the way. EI1 described the strategy as a natural process: *"I do not actually think so. Not that is mirrored out to us employees. Or it happens so naturally that we do not notice it … but no firm [strategy] at least".* EI3 also commented on English being a natural step, and especially as TechO continues to grow: *"… I also feel that it is natural. Eventually as we then open for more departments, many different places in the country, more places in the world …".* Among the two informants that believed there is a strategy in place, EI6 did not know what the strategy is and EI2 said that not everything is communicated to them. EI2 further explained that the process just happens naturally: *"… it has actually just come a little more natural when we have gotten more, more employees who speak English then. So, it has just come a little natural that we have to communicate with them in English too".* Although the informants' answers differed, the consensus is that there is no known strategy in place.

5.4.4 Reflections on Implemented Changes to English

Despite the lack of a perceived strategy, the informants reflected on changes that have taken place during TechO's transition to English. EI3 mentioned some changes that have occurred:

TechO has a help center that supports the entire organizational system, where the main language is now English, and is translated to other languages as needed. TechO's website is also mainly in English now. In addition, employees have realized that TechO will continue to grow and gain customers from around the world, so they have started to write most documents that will exist for several years in English. EI4 explained how many *"small technical things"* have changed to English: titles in their internal chat groups, texts on the categories for agreements to customers, and categories for internal follow-up tasks or to-do lists.

EI4 reflected on many other changes that TechO has carried out regarding the change. Titles of projects in their customer database are now starting to become more natural to write in English, and it was decided that agreements signed by customers now only exist in English. TechO has TV screens around the office that show the pulse of the organization including details regarding how many customers they have and how much they invoiced last year compared to this year. Some of these screens are in Norwegian and others in English, where the Norwegian screens will at some point be changed to English. Most employees conclude their e-mails with the English version of "best regards" rather than the Norwegian version. There is a lot of written material that is created in English instead of Norwegian, especially documentation and descriptions of internal processes. In addition, EI4 pointed out that the help center material *"... will and must be in English in text"*. LinkedIn posts are published in English, and newsletters are mainly sent in English as well. EI6 also reflected on certain changes that have taken place with the transition and explained how bugs in the system are reported in English. Moreover, all videos in the support department are now recorded in English.

5.4.5 Negative Change

The informants referred to many of the changes on a positive note, however, one change was highlighted as negative. When customers call TechO, they are met by an automatic calling voice. TechO once tried to change this voice from Norwegian to English, and EI3 explained how this change was not well received by the customers. The voice sounded very American, and the customers thought TechO lost a part of the core values they have as a Norwegian organization. TechO ended up removing the English voice and went back to Norwegian. EI3 also pointed out that TechO attempted to change the language of operations to English a few years ago and it did not work:

> *"… it is a bit funny; we did try to [change to English] a few years ago and then it did not work as well. But now … it is very much about whether the time is right for it. And now it is, I feel".*

When asked why the time is right now, EI3 mentioned two factors. TechO has in recent years started to receive many more inquiries from other countries in Europe and has also started to expand outside of Europe. EI3 pointed out that it would be a little weird for these potential customers to be met with a Norwegian website and system.

5.4.6 Common Understanding of the Change

To shed light on whether or not the informants have a common understanding of the change, they were asked both why they think the organization decided to change the language to English and what they think the goal of the change is. For four of the informants, their answers addressed the growth of the organization and reaching customers beyond Norway and Scandinavia. EI1 pointed to the change being a top-down decision: *"It is now, the biggest degree … [the CEO's] desire to expand … and become more international".* For EI2 it is illogical to place a geographical limit to growth: *"… [the goal is] to reach out with our product as much as possible. It does not really make sense to limit [it] only to Norway".* Two informants referred to communication as a key goal. EI5 said: *"… the overall goal is basically internal communication …"*, while EI3 touched on both communication and the benefit of TechO appearing international:

> *"Yes. It is to find a common … language, then, for everyone who will start to work in [TechO], at the same time that … it is perhaps desirable that we should seem a little more international than just Norwegian too …".*

EI4 considered whether or not a common understanding exists for the change among the employees in the organization: *"… I think most [people] probably have their own understanding of "why", something that perhaps should have been centralized a bit, that everyone had the same "why" description …".* EI6 said: *"… I do not think, in a way, that it has been presented to everyone … but I think most [employees] understand that [TechO] is going to get bigger …"*

5.4.7 Benefits with the Change to English

The informants see many benefits with the change from Norwegian to English. EI1 talked about a situation where the Norwegian employees have incorrectly translated words to other languages. If the system is in English from the start, then employees from other countries can translate these words themselves to the local meaning. This makes it easier in the long run. EI1 explained: *"… if one uses English from the start, then it is easier to adapt [the system] to new countries"*. EI2 explained how standardization results in less work: *"… one can standardize things more easily instead of having to do it in several languages … so it is much easier to just be able to deal with doing it in English then"*. EI4 pointed out a benefit concerning documentation:

> *"… if a customer requires access to some form of documentation we have, it is much more advantageous that it is in English. One could have written it in both languages, but these are living documents. So, if you then go in and change a sentence, or one or another thing, then you have to do the whole thing twice …".*

EI4 explained how employees can: *"… save time internally on what we actually produce and work with. Meaning, that it is time-efficient …".* EI4 also believes that TechO can become more efficient because they have resources in countries around the world. EI4 gave an example of how the use of English can increase the productivity and efficiency in the work they do:

> *"… [a] customer contacts support [department] in Norwegian; describes a problem. It may be discovered as a mistake or a bug or some other issue that then must be communicated to a technician. The technician potentially does not speak English. And managing it so that the person receiving the inquiry adjusts this [problem] to the English language and then processes it further to the technician; then we will save an incredible amount of time vs. if it first is documented in Norwegian, passed on to a person who has to interpret this, then translate it, and then communicate it to a technician. And then we potentially have failure in the translation … potentially something that will then be lost in translation. It is very important that one uses [English] as the starting point and has it described in English from the start, or else language changes will occur. Change and interpretation can affect the end result if you translate further into the process …".*

EI6 also weighed in and explained a more simplified version of the issue that was solved with the transition to English: *"… before, we used to communicate everything in Norwegian [to the developers]. And then it was … translated to the developers. But now … we have cut a link and conduct everything in English because it was much easier".*

EI4 explained how English makes it easier to onboard new employees across the world when the tools that the new hire gets access to are in English, including the personnel handbook, employment contract, and training material. The second a new hire gets a login and an invitation to the organization; everything is in English. In addition, EI4 mentioned the benefit of reaching customers: *"… and of course, you reach much more potential customers and faces in general …".* EI5 also reflected on this theme and said: *"… [English] brightens our horizon and our expansion ambitions. And if you want to grow internationally you kind of have to do that [change to English]. It is important".* EI5 further explained: *"Of course we have the reach of the world because it is easier to change from English to any other language …".* EI6 weighed in with an important point that there can be small misunderstandings when communicating between the Scandinavian offices. However, if they communicate in English, then both parties understand.

5.4.8 Identification of Success Factors

The informants were asked what they think is the most important thing to focus on for the language change to be a success. Their answers can be divided into internal and external factors.

Internal Factors:

Within the internal factors, three informants think it is important to ensure employees are on board with the change. For EI2, it is key that s/he and the rest of the employees at TechO are heard. EI4 also reflected on this topic and said: *"It is a bit like all other changes, so you have to try to get everyone on board as best you can. Not everyone is willing …".* EI4 further pointed out how focus should be placed on those who are willing:

> *"… I believe that more focus should be placed on those who are willing and able to carry out the change. To get it established into the standard procedures and standard routines and make it the norm; to normalize it. Then those who initially were not so*

> *willing will follow and do it [change]. Because when 70% do this [change to English], the last 30% must join …".*

EI3 also explained the importance of inclusion and added communication as an internal factor to facilitate successful change:

> *"… it is very important to include everyone on the journey. Make sure that everyone is still on that journey … take a break and ask how it is going, if everyone is on board, is it going too fast, is it going too slowly, yes".*

One informant highlighted communication as the most important factor for successful change. EI6 said: *"… [I] think communication is the key for it [English] to be successful … [to] follow the rules that, in a way, are set then".* EI4 builds on this and explained that a simple plan should be communicated properly:

> *"… I also think it is important to get it communicated properly. That everyone is involved in the change that is taking place. Not necessarily to say: "you have to do this and that". But just to communicate to everyone that we will do it, whether it takes 2 years or 10 years, or whether it takes 6 months. It does not matter. But everyone must get a common message that this is a plan we have. What it entails. Not necessarily explicitly, but here are some points we must deal with. And if there are three simple points that: all documentation we produce is in English, titles of what you create is in English, and preferably the internal communication in common channels in the chat is in English. Three simple things to deal with. That is it …".*

The two last informants provided thoughtful answers regarding internal factors. For EI5, translation of internal documents is very important for the change to English to be successful. Lastly, only one informant said s/he could not think of any factors that must be considered for the change to be a success; EI1 explained that the change is a little easier for the Scandinavian offices because their English skills are so high.

External Factors:

For the change to English to be successful, two informants were also especially concerned with TechO's existing customers. For EI2, communication with customers is important:

> *"Yes, we have to think about our existing customers who may not be very good at English … we have to try to communicate with them and try to get some feedback. Find out … what others think about it [the change]".*

EI6 builds on the communication aspect and explained the importance of keeping their Norwegian values:

> *"I think it is important to communicate to the existing customers that even if we make a major change to the system; [that it] mainly will be in English when you go on the site and things like that. It does not mean that we are … moving away from the original [TechO] … we still are a Norwegian company that has full assistance to Norwegian customers … the system [will not] go away and forget those who are Norwegian".*

For EI6 it is important to keep their values as a Norwegian organization and continue to provide the same level of support to their Norwegian customers, even as they expand and get new customers that transcend national borders.

5.4.9 Involvement in the Change

The informants were also asked in what way they think they should be involved in the change to English, and the answers ranged considerably. Three felt that they personally should be involved in the process, while the other three answered the opposite. EI1 feels s/he should be involved to prevent mistakes in the transition, although s/he pointed to the change as a natural process that can be solved with time. EI4 explained that their involvement can be two-fold. The first part is the personal aspect because s/he produces material that has to be written in English, and the second part is the team orientation and making sure that others do the same. EI6 said their department should be involved and stated further: *"… I think it is very important that a company involves most people so that everyone knows what is going on and can help".* Among the informants on the opposite side, the answers varied as one informant already felt involved and two do not want to be involved. EI3 felt that s/he is involved to a large extent and has been involved during the whole journey. EI2 said: *"No, I do not really feel a need to be involved. I feel it [the change] happens so naturally and organically …".* EI5 clearly stated: *"Oh no, I don't want to be involved in that …".*

5.4.10 Summary of Strategies

There is agreement among all informants that it is necessary to change the language of operations to English, and several informants agree that English facilitates standardization. Two informants think there is a strategy in place for the change, three do not, and one chose not to answer. The word "natural" was repeated many times in reference to the change to English. One informant thinks strategy is important, one does not, and one thinks an individual strategy is key. Regardless of strategy, it is evident that the change to English is already underway as many changes have already taken place. The change concerning TechO's automatic calling voice was not well received by customers and was highlighted as a negative change. Although the informants provided similar answers, they do not share a unanimous understanding of why the language of operations is changing to English. Still, there are already noticeable benefits with the change to English. The following four factors are highlighted by the informants to facilitate a successful language change. First, ensuring employees are on board with the change. Second, communication about the change is vital. Third, translation of documents is necessary. Fourth, retaining existing customers is important. The informants' answers were split in two equal parts regarding whether or not they should be involved in the change.

5.5 Challenges

The informants were asked what they think are the biggest challenges with the change from Norwegian to English. In addition, many challenges also became evident throughout the interviews. The results are categorized and presented below.

5.5.1 Values

Four informants see a challenge with losing the original values associated with TechO. EI4 explained: *"… [TechO] started a bit like a Norwegian, Oslo company with good and close relations with their customers. They [employees] showed up, and picked up the phone, and talked to each other, and everything was in Norwegian, and you knew each other on a first name basis …".* EI4 described how it can be challenging for customers:

> *"… I think some of our customers who were particularly involved from the start, where everything happened in Norwegian, to be part of the change as a customer of [TechO], that I think can be a bit challenging. [One] might lose a bit of the personal touch that one had before …".*

EI4 also pointed out that this is something to consider as a customer-oriented organization. EI3 said it is a concern if they are to solely speak English to all customers. Earlier in the interview, EI3 mentioned how English is not a natural step with their customers right now: *"… if I had suddenly started to speak English with my Norwegian customers, then I probably would have been greeted with a big question mark".* Additionally, for EI3, it is important to keep the "family feeling":

> *"… we have a lot of values here in the [TechO] that I really want us to take care of … we have the personal aspect and the personal approach to all of our customers, all prospects … the customer support we give; we have [the] support [department] … I do not want to lose that family feeling …".*

EI5 pointed out that Norwegians like to speak their native language: *"… as much as Norwegians are open to speak English, Norwegians like to speak Norwegian …"*. EI5 also explained how Norwegians want to protect their language and do not want to change to another language because they feel comfortable speaking Norwegian. EI6 builds on this when reflecting on employees who are hired into a Norwegian organization and expect their tasks to be done in Norwegian, which can cause complications. As previously mentioned in *section 5.4.8*, EI6 also thinks it is important to assure the existing customers that the Norwegian values will not go away: "*… we still are a Norwegian company that has full assistance to Norwegian customers … the system [will not] go away and forget those who are Norwegian".* With the change to English, two informants feel it is important to keep their native language in work relations. EI2 commented on this when s/he said: *"… [it is] nice to keep your own language …"* and EI3 said s/he hopes they can keep their native language as well.

5.5.2 Forced English

EI4 elaborated on a challenge in terms of forcing employees to speak English in the organization:

> *"... if you force antisocial people to speak English, that can pose a challenge. People will probably become a bit limited by that. Perhaps they do not want to speak up because they do not want to speak English. Perhaps [they] will not give the message they wanted if they have to speak English ...".*

> *"... to force English in where it is unnatural; I think we should be a little careful about that ... you quickly lose a bit of the context, or the opportunity to give the message you want to give. You lack the words. You lack the vocabulary. You have uncertainty related to speaking English ...".*

In addition, EI4 said: *"... I hope we do not get to the point where we ... [are] forced, in quotation marks, to speak English with the Norwegian colleagues at the coffee machine. I hope not. But you potentially have to ...".* Moreover, EI4 commented on the Norwegian language continuing in TechO:

> *"... I think that it is important that some framework is laid for what should not be translated. Personally, I believe that we should not go full mayhem and say that the Norwegian language should be phased out in its entirety ...".*

EI3 adds to this as s/he said: *"... changing a language completely will probably not work ...".* EI6 pointed out: *"... so it is perhaps if someone is not so good at speaking and writing English that there may be challenges ...".* EI1, on the other hand, is concerned about using the correct version of English from the start, as a low level of English does not give a good impression.

Phasing out the Norwegian language is also important to EI2 as s/he communicated that the biggest challenge involves determining *"... how to cut out the Norwegian ...".* EI2 provided an example regarding the help center that also operates in Norwegian and thinks it can be a bit problematic to halfheartedly keep it updated. EI2 questioned: *"... if we should just let it expire and become outdated, or if we should just remove it ..."*.

5.5.3 Strategy

EI3 pointed to strategy as a challenge, considering no plan has been communicated: *"… again, we do not seem to have a clear picture of how to handle this [change to English] …"*. EI1 builds on this when s/he reflected on communication regarding the change:

> *"… the negative is how we should adapt to such a change [to English]. Should we speak English in [the local offices]? ... Or should it primarily be the local language in the office even if the organization itself is English?"*

EI4 weighs in with an important point when s/he explained how the change to English has not been communicated to everyone, but:

> *"… it could have been done, and preferably with some simple measures that each person can relate to … To sort of lower people's shoulders … So that people can be a little reassured that it [the change] will not go completely bananas …".*

EI6 also reflected on the lack of communication regarding the change and described how those who are responsible could have provided a simple message: *"… just a concrete [message], like, "Hello, we are going to make a change and that is what is happening" is really what we have needed".*

5.5.4 Involvement

Making sure everyone is on board with the change is another challenge. This theme was previously mentioned in *section 5.4.8*, as making sure employees are on board is mentioned as an important factor for the language change to be successful. However, if employees are not on board with the change; this results in a challenge. EI3 introduced lack of employee involvement as a challenge: *"… another thing [challenge] we talked about is [making sure] that everyone is on board here and comfortable with English being used as the language among those who already are employed. So that no one feels left out …".* As previously mentioned, inclusion is also important for EI4: *"… you have to try to get everyone on board as best you can. Not everyone is willing …"*, and for EI2: *"… it is important to consult with us employees as well …".*

5.5.5 Communication

Through the interviews, it became clear that communication is a challenge within TechO. EI4 elaborated on communication within the organization:

> *"What is communicated, is communicated well … but we may have a small challenge with what is not communicated. There is a small stopper somewhere, which indicates that some form of information is not shared with everyone, or with anyone at all …".*

Two informants assert that the communication in TechO could improve. EI3 said: *"… I would say that the communication is good, but it can always be better, simply".* EI6 explained*: "… but there is perhaps one thing that [TechO] should be a little better at … and that is communicating internally about various changes …".*

In connection with the change to English, EI4 explained that a message regarding the change to English has not been collectively shared within the organization. EI1 described that the change to English has not been officially communicated and pointed out how sporadic the communication has been: *"No, so that is a little interesting. There is a small weakness. A little [is] communicated there. And then someone has heard something here".* EI2 added to this: *"… it [the change] is not something we have talked about very specifically …".* EI3 explained that the change to English has happened gradually, but s/he has never felt that the organization has communicated: *"… now we have changed the language [to English] …".*

5.5.6 Summary of Challenges

Several informants identify a challenge with losing the original values associated with TechO. If employees are forced to speak English in the organization, this can pose a challenge. Two informants do not know how to relate to the change because no plan has been communicated, and two think the change should have been communicated. It is important to make sure employees are on board with the change, so it does not result in new challenges. In addition, communication is identified as a challenge.

5.6 The English Language

The informants were asked multiple questions related to the English language, which is not their native language. There are in total seven questions with some additional sub-questions that cover many topics. Certain questions and responses are grouped together to bring clarity to the results.

5.6.1 Switching Between Languages

All six informants expressed that they are comfortable communicating in English. TechO has employees and customers around the world, and it is normal for the employees to communicate in different languages on a daily basis. An employee may communicate in the office in their native language, then enter a meeting where they speak English, and then go straight into another meeting where their native language is spoken again. EI4 elaborated on this:

> *"… to have it [the switch] as a natural thing, that you can speak both languages interchangeably, I think it is essential. That you leave a meeting and speak Norwegian, then you go to a meeting and speak English, and then you sit down and write a Norwegian e-mail, and then you have to produce an English document. The ability to switch back and forth like that, I think that is a must in the long run. And it is not natural. I do not think many people have it. Then you potentially need to be fluent in both …".*

EI1 explained switching between languages as a natural process: *"No, it happens quite naturally mostly, because I have been self-taught with English since I was 5 years old. I think I started to speak fairly good English when I was 7 years old".* EI2 explained that this process depends on their mindset:

> *"… if I am set on going into a conversation and speaking English, it usually goes well. But if you suddenly walk down the street … and are asked a question by a foreign tourist, then you get a bit out of balance. Then it [the response] will probably come a bit, like, broken Norwegian/English out then".*

EI2 also pointed out that it can be a natural process: *"… I write quite a bit in English as well. But it mostly comes naturally; that I do not think about it".* EI3 adds to this when s/he explained:

"… of course, sometimes there are some hiccups. Depends on the day you are having. But it usually goes very well …". E6 said: *"… I like writing in English. A bit the same as writing in Norwegian when it comes to vocabulary …".*

5.6.2 What English Means for TechO

The informants were asked what they think English means for the organization. Three informants think English means opportunities for TechO. EI4 elaborated on this: *"… it is not possible to get [TechO] into the global market without switching to English. So, it is a must. One has to do it …".* EI3 added: "… *had we been only Norwegian speaking, we would not have had the chance to have as many opportunities as we have today …*". For two informants, English means communication. EI5 explained: *"It means the way of easily communicating with international teammates".* One informant described that English means reaching out. EI2 said: *"… the more customers we get outside of Norway and Scandinavia, it [English] only becomes more and more important".*

5.6.3 English and the Workday

Most of the informants predominantly speak their native language during the workday. The informants have their own routines and habits that are conducted in their native language, and changing the language of operations to English can potentially affect their workday. Several informants reflected on this. Two informants said the change to English does not affect their current workday. The change does not affect EI1, plus s/he described: *"… it would almost be easier to have certain matters in English …".* EI1 also thought that their future would be positively affected, considering they work in IT where the language is primarily English. For EI2, s/he mostly works in Norwegian, and English comes so naturally that s/he does not really think about it. EI2 does not think it will affect their future considering: *"… I am very comfortable writing and speaking English if I have to".* One informant does not think the change to English will affect their workday very much; EI6 said: *"… I think it will go just fine".*

EI4 explained that the threshold to switch to English is lower than before and provided an example. If s/he is in a meeting with someone from another Scandinavian country where both individuals have difficulty understanding each other, the threshold to switch to English is much lower: *"… we just say: "Should we not take this in English?", and then we do it …".* EI4 also described how the end result of the language change would eventually affect their workday:

"I do not think … [that] the language change in itself will change my day, but I think the result of the language change will. The fact that you actually get more customers globally. The fact that you potentially get more employees who do not speak Norwegian … Language [English] is the prerequisite … a condition to bring about the transition …".

5.6.4 Language Barriers

The informants were asked if they experience any language barriers when they communicate at work. Considering the employees often communicate with Scandinavian customers and coworkers, two informants said they experience a language barrier with the Scandinavian languages. Two informants explained more about the language barrier they experience. Standardization would be easier for EI2, as s/he explained that there is a language barrier within the system. Certain features have different names in the various languages, and EI2 described that there can be some misunderstandings connected to that. For example, if a customer contacts EI2, s/he may not understand what they mean because the feature may have one name in one language, and a different name in another. EI4 explained that one barrier includes how certain IT concepts in English do not exist in Norwegian, and s/he also pointed out a barrier with the Scandinavian languages. Additionally, EI4 explained the challenge of switching to English:

"I can probably feel that if I go from a meeting where everything is in Norwegian, or I have been speaking Norwegian all week. Then I have to jump into an English meeting. Then it may be that I have challenges with communicating the actual message. It would have been a lot easier for me to have it explained in Norwegian. I get it done in English, but it is a bit like, 85% in a way. You get the context of what it is, you get the totality of it. You are just missing the last "oomph" that you would have gotten in Norwegian …".

For EI4, it is easier to communicate the actual meaning if s/he speaks their native language. The last two informants said they did not experience a language barrier.

5.6.5 English Skills and Opportunities

Several informants reflected on whether or not English skills make a difference in being able to see new opportunities, in contrast to business being conducted in their native languages. Two informants explained that it was situational. For EI1, s/he answered both yes and no, as their understanding of system specific matters is higher than their understanding of industry specific matters. It may be easier for EI1 to see opportunities when it comes to the system, compared to the industry. EI2 said it depends on the familiarity of a topic:

> *"[It] depends how well you know the topic that one is talking about, in both languages … If you are very used to talking about a topic in Norwegian, it may not be as easy to talk about it in English …".*

Two informants pointed out how their English skills create opportunities. EI4 explained an example where s/he created documentation for a project. Because s/he was confident in their English skills, it was natural for them to raise the question if the documentation should have been written in English. EI4 further pointed out that if s/he was not as confident, then s/he never would have suggested it. The documentation would have been written in Norwegian, and then at some point it would have been translated to English. In this example, EI4 saw an opportunity to eliminate additional work, and instead wrote the documentation in English from the start. EI6 builds on this when s/he said: *"… I would say my English skills are quite good. So, it may well be that it creates more opportunities even, in that sense …".*

The final two informants gave varying responses. EI3 gave a contradicting response: *"Yes, no I do not feel that …"* before saying: "*… of course, if I only spoke English and only thought in English, I would probably have a problem …*". On the other hand, EI5 said: *"Yes, of course they [English skills] matter. Absolutely …".*

5.6.6 English Language and Power

Whether or not one's English and communication skills have an impact on power in TechO is another topic the informants reflected on. Four informants pointed to a connection between the two. For EI1, s/he sees a relation between one's language skills and one's power in the organization: *"Yes, if we have someone who is not proficient in English, then … that person has less power to influence what happens in [TechO]. Compared to if you had a good* *understanding of English …"*. EI1 also explained how a problem may not be taken seriously without knowledge of English:

> *"… you become weak if you have understood a problem that you have to explain in English, but you have no knowledge of English. So then, the problem is suppressed and not taken seriously in the same way as if you had good knowledge of English".*

EI4 described how career opportunities in the organization potentially will increase with good English knowledge:

> *"… and with the career ladder … then you receive power if you are the head of a department, or you have a managerial role. And that you can only achieve that through being competent in English. So, it affects both your personal opportunities and the power you eventually gain definitely".*

EI5 explained how s/he sees a connection between one's ability to communicate and one's power:

> *"… absolutely, because the way that you communicate … does affect your influence and how powerful you are in your role. Or … if you do not feel comfortable sharing ideas or expressing yourself … but that … also depends on your personality …".*

EI6 gave an example about how certain meetings are in English, where s/he connected one's communication skills with one's power:

> *"… you also notice that maybe others become a little quieter then, and that they maybe explain themselves a little shorter than they actually would have usually done. Because they might not have the vocabulary. So, in terms of that, it would give you more power in the sense that you bring out your opinions much easier if you have that knowledge of English then".*

EI4 added to this by explaining that a lack of English knowledge could be a challenge:

"… people's competence in English can be a bit of a showstopper for them if they were to produce some material, or write an internal dialogue, or hold a meeting. And then they are not comfortable conducting it in English, then it is a challenge one has …".

Two informants see little or no connection between language skills and power. EI3 considered whether or not their own language skills have an impact on power in the organization: *"… for my part, no. Maybe for someone else …".* EI2 explained how English skills in TechO have no impact on power and noted the size of the organization was a factor in level of comfort with English communication:

"… I feel that everyone in the office here and everyone in [TechO] has … similar knowledge when it comes to English. So, if someone makes a mistake … in conveying something, then it is nothing to worry about … but if we have more employees, then it would perhaps be a little more awkward to make a mistake with the language".

EI2 also described the employees as: "*Few and interconnected in a way, everyone knows everyone".*

5.6.7 Summary of the English Language

All informants are comfortable communicating in English, and several informants switch between languages on a daily basis. Three informants see a connection between English and opportunities for TechO as an organization. Although the language of operations is changing to English, most informants mainly speak their native language during the workday. Language barriers are present with the Scandinavian languages, and only one informant sees a barrier with English as it could affect their ability to communicate a meaning in a work setting. Four informants see a connection between one's English skills and one's opportunities, and four informants pointed to a link between one's linguistic skills and one's power.

5.7 Collaborative Practices

Many of the questions described in this chapter are inspired by the framework for collaborative practice (Schuh et al., 2014). Thus, the key words in the questions include the terms cooperation, coordination, and communication.

5.7.1 Cooperation

The informants reflected on how they cooperate in regard to the language change. Two informants pointed out how the language change does not follow a strict plan; it is more natural and something that is commonly understood. EI1 explained cooperation as a natural process, considering there is no direct structure for how to make the transition to English. EI1 described cooperation as something that happens naturally, employees do not think: *"... now we have to do this in English ..."*. EI2 described how the change to English essentially is something that is understood among the employees: *"... it is not like we are going to say that "today we are going to work on internationalization of language change", it is just something that we agree on, as a matter of principle".*

Three informants reflected on various cooperative practices when it comes to the change to English. Of the three informants, two gave positive reflections, and one provided an ambiguous answer. EI3 explained that the cooperation has gone well, and that it mainly happens in written form. EI3 provided an example of how employees have had to throw themselves into writing English, and how the organization is good at delegating tasks:

> *"... it is always the case, that someone writes [English] better than others ... it [a task] might go to one person who can write well, then it might go to someone else who can peer review, and then there is someone that ... translates it to another language again ... from English to that [language] ...".*

EI6 talked about communicating bugs in the system and explained: "*... it has, in a way, become automatic [to communicate bugs in English] ...".* EI6 also explained that the organization follows many standard operating procedures (SOPs), and all are in English. S/he explained this as a benefit as it avoids translation to many additional languages. In addition, EI6 pointed out that there was good cooperation with the help center, where the focus was to finish the English parts first.

In contrast to the above informants, EI4 reflected on cooperative practices from two perspectives. EI4 said cooperation is good with some employees, and not as good with others. S/he added a point regarding communication of bugs and explained that this is an established practice where everything happened in English, no matter who is involved. On the other hand, EI4 explained that employees continue to produce internal documentation in their native language, and they continue to get reminders to translate the documentation to English. EI4 pointed out that employees translate the documents to English when they get the reminder, but: "*… it [English] should probably have happened in the first place. Not [with] the reminder to write it in English … it is probably because it [the change] is so new …".*

5.7.2 Coordination

The informants were asked about their view on coordination within TechO. Four informants described the coordination as good in the organization. Two of these referenced technical tools as key to good coordination. EI4 explained how the organization has the tools in place for everyone to coordinate with everyone because the English language is at the foundation, regardless of location. EI4 summarized their point: *"... good technical tools, together with a unified language, will make collaboration [coordination] better, and easier, and more efficient".* EI5 explained that their communication tool, the software Slack, is great for coordination. One informant also linked coordination with communication. EI3 gave an example regarding expansion outside Europe and explained that the coordination had gone well as there had been very good written and oral communication with the new department. For EI6, s/he thinks the coordination is good because the onboarding process for new customers was first standardized, meaning a common way to onboard customers was established in practice. Once the practice was established, it was then documented in English as the overarching standard. This was then translated to other languages as needed. This assured quality, as everyone operated on the same foundation and understanding, which was made possible by English.

In contrast to the informants above, two informants pointed out that coordination could be better. EI2 also recognized a link between coordination and communication and pointed out that coordination could be better if communication within the organization improved. EI1 was the only informant that reflected on structure and explained how a clearer structure is necessary to clarify tasks and work processes. For EI1, it is important that the structure is not absolute, because there still needs to be room for the language change to be a natural process.

5.7.3 Communication

The informants had both positive and negative views regarding communication in the organization. Two employees explained communication more in a neutral manner. EI5 thought communication is good thanks to the tool Slack, and EI2 explained that communication is an employee's own responsibility because everyone works so independently. Four employees pointed to communication as a challenge within the organization. All four informants started on a positive note before they changed their focus to the negative aspects of communication. For example, EI6 stated: *"I think it [communication] works really well …"* before explaining a challenge that entailed how coworkers are not the best at adding meetings in their calendars. This can be problematic when EI6 needs to answer a customer quickly, and instead has to spend time waiting for a reply. Two informants explained how important information is communicated well. EI3 explained this explicitly: *"… all important information flows, we do have a very good arrangement for, communication wise …".* EI3 provided an example of how communication took place earlier:

> *"… if we look back 3 years … then there were changes that you might not have found out about before they were released, for example in the system. The customers found out at the same time as us …".*

EI3 ended by stating that communication is good, but it could always be better. As previously mentioned in *section 5.5.5*, EI4 gave a similar answer: *"What is communicated, is communicated well …".* EI4 continued to explain that communication can be scattered among employees in the organization:

> *"… there are some instances where one individual person gets to know one thing, and another person gets to know something, a third person gets to know something, a fourth person gets to know something. The three/four together have the whole answer. They have a quarter each. But if they put their heads together, then they have the totality of some message, or some information …".*

EI1 had a similar understanding: *"… what is negative is that communication can take place at point A, point B, point C, point D …",* and emphasized that distance between the offices is a challenge.

5.7.4 Communication Regarding the Change

The informants were asked what they think about the communication regarding the language change. EI5 answered that the change has been communicated, but it needs to be enforced often. The rest of the informants conversely explained how the change has not been officially communicated. As mentioned in *section 5.5.5*, EI1 said it is a weakness that communication regarding the change is scattered, and thus does not know how to adapt. EI2 said it has not been communicated as an overarching goal, but it was conveyed that it would be more efficient to write things in English. EI3 pointed out how it has not been explicitly stated that the language of operations was English, but it has rather been a gradual process where employees have been told to communicate a certain way in different channels. EI6 confirmed the point about gradual process as well as the lack of explicitness, and also pointed out how communication is naturally conducted in English to be inclusive of the new international coworkers. EI4 thought certain people had been informed about the change but said there has not been a common message to the entire organization.

Although the language change has not been explicitly communicated, two informants explained that they feel updated on the change to English. EI2 explained how s/he picks up the cues: *"Yes, I do not feel that we are missing any information … I see that there are new employees and that we get new customers abroad. So, you kind of know which way it is going".* EI4 explained that s/he feels updated because material s/he works on and produces is so natural to write in English.

5.7.5 Communicated Differently

Four informants have varying opinions on how the language change could have been communicated differently. EI1 does not know how to adapt to the change and thinks communication should be more structured concerning the office, local languages, and organization. As mentioned in *section 5.5.3 and 5.4.8*, EI4 thinks the change could have been communicated with some simple measures that each employee could relate to. S/he thinks this would reassure employees that the change is not so big that it needs to be feared. EI5 explained that the initial communication should have come from the top leadership first, and then reinforced by the heads of each department. EI6 pointed out that if there was one thing the organization could improve on, it is communicating with all employees. As described in *section 5.5.3*, EI6 explained that a simple message explaining that the organization is changing to

English is all that is needed. The last two informants pointed out that they do not need more information about the language change.

5.7.6 Summary of Collaborative Practices

Two informants explained that cooperation happens naturally and three reflected on various cooperative practices. One informant pointed out that employees need reminders to translate documentation to English because they continue to utilize their native language. Four informants think coordination within the organization is good, while two informants pointed out that it could be better. Communication is viewed both positively and negatively, however, four informants see it as a challenge. Information is often not communicated to the entire organization and is instead scattered among some employees. One informant said the change has been communicated but needs to be enforced often, while five explained that it has not been officially communicated to the entire organization. Despite this, two informants feel updated on the change. While four informants have differing views concerning how the change could have been communicated.

5.8 The Final Question

The informants were asked if there is anything they wish was done differently with the change to English, and three informants provided interesting concluding remarks. Two informants gave answers that include the need for more of a plan. EI1 said: *"… if I had to say something, it would probably be something more concrete about what should be in English or not"*. EI4 explained that a working group could be set up consisting of one person from each department. These employees could sit down and map the current situation and plan for where the organization wants to go and what action steps are needed to get there. The last informant described how communication is key. EI6 said: *"… for me it [English] is in a way more of a natural thing happening. Why not, like, why should we limit ourselves to such a small audience when we can grow to something bigger. So, no. Just communicate it …"*.

6.0 Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings in light of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 and applies literature from Chapter 2 to make further linkages with established knowledge and practices. The structure of this chapter is based on the order of the research questions. The first part discusses whether or not the organization had a plan for the change. The second part focuses on the challenges that became evident during the transition. The third part covers how the change has affected the working lives of employees.

6.1 Planning the Change

The first research question will be discussed by applying Lewin's theory of planned change and the implementation framework. The research question is as follows:

> *RQ1: Did the organization have a plan for how to change from Norwegian to English as the language of operation?*

TechO is a technology SME based in Oslo, Norway, that is expanding their operations beyond national borders. TechO is currently in a period of change, as the organization is shifting from the existing situation entailing the Norwegian language, towards the desired state concerning the widespread use of the English language (Beckhard & Harris, 1987, referred to in Hennestad & Revang, 2017). The period of change is considered the implementation of an internationalization strategy whereby the language of operation changes.

Findings show that all informants agree it is necessary for TechO to change their language of operations to English. The majority of informants understand that there is a need for this change in order to expand internationally and reach customers beyond Norway and Scandinavia. A common perception of a need for change is therefore present, in line with recommended practice for a successful change process (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). However, for several informants it is unclear exactly what the desired state of the organization entails. The informants recognize that TechO is moving towards an English change, but the degree to which English should be used is unknown.

6.1.1 Planned Change

Planned organizational changes are "infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 365). The change from Norwegian to English was an intentional decision made by the CEO. The current momentum of the daily operations in Norwegian was interrupted because of the change which created a disturbance to the stable and collective habits in Norwegian communication, thus providing a state of punctuated equilibrium to enable accelerated business development (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). Such planned change requires that one or more people initiate a change process, which entails that a set of activities are initiated to create change (Jacobsen, 2018). This has been done in TechO, as many activities have already been initiated to facilitate the change to English.

In order to support a more thorough understanding concerning how changes are carried out in TechO, it is necessary to look at the process in a more systematic way. Lewin's theory of planned change will be used for this purpose. According to this theory, change goes through three different stages identified as: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (Hennestad & Revang, 2017). The last stage, refreezing, entails reinforcing and institutionalizing the new behaviors (Medley & Akan, 2008). This is excluded as it is outside the scope of this study. This, however, is not too detrimental as Jacobsen (2018) asserts that change management mainly focuses on the first two stages. The following discussion will therefore focus on the stages unfreezing and moving to enable several reflections that seek to answer the first research question.

Unfreezing

Unfreezing includes two elements: 1) to create a willingness to change among the employees in the organization, and 2) to have a change agent to facilitate this process (Jacobsen, 2018). The informants appeared to have a mindset of willingness despite the lack of proper vertical communication. The element missing from the unfreezing process was the absence of a change agent. According to Jacobsen (2018), this can be one or more people who must create a common perception of the need for change, which involves developing a good reason for the change before communicating it to the organization. Such an agent was not identified during the interviews, and therefore the sense of urgency that should be present as defined by Kotter (1995) was not observed. Regarding communication in TechO, it is evident that certain employees have been informed about the change, but it has not been explicitly communicated to the entire organization. With the lack of communication regarding the change, it appears that employees have created their own sense of urgency; their own sense of "why".

The findings indicate that some kind of "partial agent" was identified by one of the informants. EI4 pointed out that one employee has taken on the responsibility to remind fellow employees to translate documentation to English. EI5 pointed out that the heads of each department should enforce the plans. Although not officially assigned the task, it is evident that the head of one department is gradually moving into the role of change leader. Therefore, both elements within the stage of unfreezing are at least partially fulfilled. With this in mind, this stage can be viewed as an initial planning phase, where the organization is getting ready to change.

Within the first stage of unfreezing, Jacobsen (2018) describes four perceptions that are necessary to create momentum for the change. These are discussed point by point in light of the findings.

The employees must be able to implement the change

Regarding the ability of the informants, they all expressed that they are comfortable communicating in English. Even though the majority of informants speak their native language during most of the workday, it is considered normal to switch back and forth to English on a daily basis. It appears that the informants have a high level of personal change adaptability when it comes to the English language (Miller, 2001).

The employees must experience that the change is right for the organization

All informants in TechO agree that it is necessary for the organization to change to the English language. They understand that this change will either enable TechO to grow or facilitate better internal communication.

The employees must experience that leadership is committed to the change

Although the change to English has not been officially announced to all employees, the informants know that it is happening, and they have their own individual understandings of why. As explained by EI2, s/he knows which way it is going because s/he sees that new employees are hired and that many new customers are from abroad. In connection with this, Kotter (1995) explains that change is commonly referenced as impossible to achieve without the active support from the head of the department. It is evident from the interviews that the informants know the decision to change to English comes from the top, which may help them see the need to change more clearly. Because of this, a strict plan may not be needed. Instead, findings show that the change to English happens more naturally. The process appears to follow an informal plan where employees have an underlying understanding that they need to switch to English, as this is necessary in order to communicate with coworkers who do not speak Norwegian. Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2019) highlight strategy as a prerequisite for successful change. However, in TechO it appears that the informal process is key, which may be a result of both their young culture and the fact that everyone is so comfortable with the English language.

The employees must experience that the change is positive for the organizations' members
While the informants did not share a common understanding of the change, they shared many positive reflections and saw a great deal of benefits with the change to English. In fact, many informants point out how conducting certain matters in English makes their workday easier.

<u>*Moving*</u>
Moving is the second stage where the change is carried out, and involves getting people to change their behavior, the way they act, and how they interact (Jacobsen, 2018). It is evident that TechO currently is in the stage of moving, as the organization is still in the interactive process where the change is being carried out. This stage can lead to several different scenarios. The employees can, for instance, partially or wholeheartedly support the change, or they may passively or actively resist the change (Jacobsen, 2018).

Medley & Akan (2008) add to the understanding of moving, explaining that it is the stage where employees identify the desired end state to support the new vision. The informants know that the language of operations is changing to English, and it is clear that the informants are positive to the change. However, it is also evident that the desired end state is unclear to several informants. As EI1 explains, s/he does know how to adapt to the change and questions what the desired state is. Many informants have already begun to change languages and now speak English on a daily basis, but the change has not been enforced. For example, as EI4 points out, employees do not remember to produce material in English from the start and need reminders to do so. The change leader has a key role to carry out measures and actions to enable the transition from the current state of the organization to the desired end state (Jacobsen, 2018). It is evident that a change agent could assist in this transition.

6.1.2 Implementation Framework

It is difficult to know whether or not the CEO in fact has a plan for the change to English. If there is a plan, the empirical data shows that it has not been communicated to the informants. However, considering no plan has been identified, the empirical data can still be used to reflect on how the implementation of the language change has occurred in light of the implementation framework presented by Fixsen et al. (2005). This framework shares several similarities with Lewin's theory of planned change, and several details from the empirical data are therefore relevant to include for both frameworks. Implementation in its simplest form consists of five components (Fixsen et al., 2005):

First is the source. In this study, the source is the language change from Norwegian to English. *Second* is the destination, which relates to the employees in TechO that will adopt the change to English.

Third is the communication link that consists of individuals or groups named purveyors (Fixsen et al., 2005). The purveyor can be described as the change agent or agents that are actively working to implement the change and are a central component to implementation. Each change agent has a set of activities designed to implement the change, such as training, coaching and administrative support (Fixsen et al., 2005). As previously described, no one is technically assigned to this task in TechO, but there is one employee that seems to be moving into the role. It appears that this employee has an understanding that it is expected of them based on their work responsibilities and their standing in the hierarchical level of the organization. It is evident through the interviews that a communication link is needed as certain informants do not know how to adapt to the change.

Fourth is the feedback mechanism that includes the flow of information related to performance (Fixsen et al., 2005). Concerning feedback in TechO, this is currently given by the one employee that seems to be moving into the role of change agent. As this is not their official role, it would be helpful for the employees to have someone who is officially assigned to this task. To facilitate the change to English, this person would observe performance, review progress, answer questions, and assign new tasks (Fixsen et al., 2005).

Fifth is the sphere of influence the organization is operating within (Fixsen et al., 2005). TechO operates within the technology industry, and it is evident from the empirical data that this is an industry that is already heavily influenced by English. EI4 points out that the official IT language is English, which is supported by EI1 who describes the use of English as having a positive effect on their workday. TechO has a young workforce, and the employees are very used to speaking English. Many informants use the word "natural" throughout the interview, and especially referring to how naturally the change to English has happened so far. One may therefore argue that the sphere of influence is so positive that it provides a more natural implementation, compared to how implementation is outlined in literature. Several informants point to the change as a natural process, which may suggest less of a focus on having purveyors that actively work to implement the change.

6.2 Challenges

The second research question will be discussed by highlighting resistance to change as a challenge, followed by a discussion on challenges in light of the language corridor and the communication element of the framework for collaborative practice. The second question is as follows:

> *RQ2: What challenges are experienced with the language change from Norwegian to English?*

6.2.1 Resistance to Change

Employees' reactions to change can be a challenge, especially when they come to light in the form of resistance (Jacobsen, 2018). Identifying reasons for resistance is necessary in order to discover how to influence people or situations so changes are easier to implement (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). It is therefore relevant to discuss reasons for resistance presented by Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2019) with respect to a language change.

Fear of the unknown can lead to resistance because change means moving from a safe state to a situation characterized by uncertainty

In TechO, the safe state is daily use of Norwegian, and uncertainty is connected to the desired state where English is the new language of operation. Some informants do not know how to adapt to this change because no plan has been communicated. This makes strategy a challenge. EI4 reflected on this and explained how communicating simple measures that each person can relate to will cause less fear within the organization.

Breach of a psychological contract can lead to resistance because employees may feel cheated as unwritten expectations are broken

As it relates to TechO, this can be viewed in light of the psychological contract that employees assume they have with respect to their native language. Some informants think it is important to keep their native language and see challenges in losing the original values associated with TechO. This could be particularly challenging if informants are forced to speak English in all situations, for instance for Norwegian coworkers during a break or at the coffee machine.

Loss of identity can lead to resistance because employees can have created a special significance with their job and identify with their work

The employees in TechO have their own routines and habits that are conducted in their native language. Although the findings point to some informants that view change as having a negative effect on routines and habits, several informants see benefits to the change to English and believe it will have a positive effect on their workday. On another note, a challenge is probable as informants have created a special significance with their customers. As EI4 points out, this may affect the personal touch between employees and customers who have had relationships from the start.

The symbolic order changing can lead to resistance, as employees may find it heavy to experience that everything that has been given a meaning, changes

It is evident that the ability to communicate in one’s native language has a great symbolic value. Any language change can introduce vulnerability if one is forced out of the comfort zone of one’s own native language. Lüdi (2016) reports that malaise can result from not being able to use one’s own native language. This could very well be the reason that two informants express the importance of keeping their native language in their workplace. There is therefore a possibility for resistance if the freedom to use one's native language is infringed upon beyond necessary use in a work situation. EI4 supports this view by asserting that the Norwegian language should not be phased out in its entirety.

Power relations can lead to resistance because some may perceive that their possibility of influence diminishes

Four informants see a connection between language skills and power in TechO. Findings indicate that the informants mostly speak their native language during their workday. With the change to English, employees may not be able to express themselves as easily as they used to. As EI1 points out, that if an employee has a problem to address, it may be suppressed and not taken seriously without the employee having a good command of English. On the contrary, EI2 points out that making mistakes with English is nothing to worry about considering TechO is so small, and everyone has similar knowledge with English. EI4 explains that there are instances where s/he struggles to communicate the actual meaning in English. This might suggest that one's power has the potential to be a challenge in TechO, especially if the organization hires additional employees who are not comfortable speaking English. In the current situation, however, the small organizational size and a young workforce combined with good English knowledge and skill appear to be factors that contribute to make power less of a challenge in TechO.

The requirement for new investments can cause resistance, meaning employees have acquired specific competence that is of less use if the job changes

With the transition to English, it is evident that advanced English knowledge and competency is an absolute necessity. Although all informants express that they are comfortable speaking English, it is evident that there may be some difficulties in certain situations. For example, EI3 explains that s/he sometimes experiences hiccups when communicating in English, and EI2 points out how s/he can get a bit out of balance if not adequately prepared to be approached in English. This may necessitate an investment in improved language knowledge. This will require additional effort from the employees, which can be a source of resistance. The more specific and demanding the competence is, the greater the resistance to change can be (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

Double work can lead to resistance, considering the organizational change is an extra task that must be completed in addition to regular work

Findings indicate that many changes have already taken place with the transition to English. Several informants see the change to English as a benefit, especially when it comes to standardization. The change results in less work, as it eliminates certain tasks. However, as the desired end state is still unclear, employees still need reminders to translate documents to English. They may not be motivated to do this of their own initiative to avoid double work. In addition, there appears to be double work with the help center as it also operates in Norwegian. EI2 points out that it can be a bit problematic to halfheartedly keep it updated. These examples indicate that there appears to be some resistance when it comes to double work due to the language change.

Social ties that are broken can lead to resistance because the office community may disappear, and contact can be lost with long-time coworkers

As it relates to TechO, this can be a challenge if employees are forced to speak English. As EI4 explains, forcing employees who are perhaps more introverted or not as confident to speak English can be a challenge as they may become limited by it. These employees may not speak up or have the opportunity to communicate their message because they do not want to speak English. It is evident that forced English can have a negative effect on the natural relations that are formed with long-time coworkers. Although all informants appeared comfortable speaking English, it is clear that many value and perhaps prefer speaking their native language in social contexts. Forced language change can also lead to the suppression of informal small talk, which is important for fostering a collegial work environment (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). EI4 agrees with this and does not think the Norwegian language should be fully phased out. EI1 supports this by stating that completely changing the language will probably not work.

The prospect of personal loss can cause resistance because jobs may disappear or a change to a flat organization may result in fewer opportunities for promotion

As TechO continues to grow and reach more international employees and customers, it is likely that employees' working lives will continue to transition towards primarily communicating in English. Instead of being limited by this, EI6 believes that their good English skills will rather provide more opportunities. On the other hand, EI4 explains that employees may not be able to give the message they want if they lack the vocabulary and have uncertainty related to speaking

English. If employees find themselves in this situation, this may result in fewer opportunities for promotion and cause resistance.

External actors wanting stability can lead to resistance, as they may lose their way into the organization

Findings indicate that TechO believes they have good and close relations with their Scandinavian customers. These customers are used to communicating with TechO in their native language, and a change to English can affect this stability. As described by EI3, TechO once tried to change the automatic calling voice to English, and it was not well received by customers. This change affected the perceived values of TechO as a Norwegian organization. Two informants point out that it is important to consider the existing customers for the change to become a success. For EI6, it is important to keep the Norwegian values and provide the same level of support to their customers. Keeping the original values and maintaining stability appear to be important factors for TechO to avoid resistance from existing customers.

6.2.2 Language Corridor

Challenges regarding the change to English can be viewed by applying the language corridor as a framework. Hurmerinta et al. (2015) describe how the decision-makers' skills in multiple languages may encourage or prevent recognition of international opportunities. This framework will be applied on an individual level to understand if the linguistic skills of employees have an effect on the opportunities that are recognized within TechO. This is exemplified in the findings when two informants claim that their good English skills create new opportunities for them. On the other hand, challenges may arise if the linguistic skills of employees prevent them from seeing opportunities in the organization. For instance, EI2 explains that if s/he is used to talking about a subject in Norwegian, it may be more difficult to talk about it in English, which appears to limit potential opportunities from being seen.

The above findings indicate that there is a connection between seeing new opportunities and one's individual English skills in TechO. One can argue that in order to take advantage of one's full potential, the employee must first step into the language corridor. The prerequisites for doing this are a common perception of a need for change and understanding the vision and strategy of the organization (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). Communication is key in this process to enable cooperation among employees (Kotter, 1995), and to allow them to evolve in the language corridor.

These findings indicate that the informants have good English skills and are comfortable communicating in English. However, even with good language skills, one can argue that the informants do not see all the benefits with the change to English, as they have not yet taken a step into the language corridor. Translating documents to English provides an example of this. EI4 points out that employees continue to produce internal documentation in their native language and continue to get reminders to translate the documentation to English. However, they may not be aware of which documents should be translated. They do not have the proper understanding concerning why a given document needs to be translated and how the translated version can benefit the vision and strategy of the organization. If employees are able to envision new opportunities when doing this language work, it can in turn enable a better understanding of the needs and possibilities while walking in this new corridor.

As previously discussed, both a common perception of the need to change as well as communication about the change are keys to enable an employee’s language corridor, thereby making it possible to envision new opportunities with the change to English. If an employee has this underlying understanding, this may open up their language corridor to see what needs to be done to facilitate the change. It is evident that within TechO there is a common perception of the need for change, however a common understanding of the vision and strategy is missing due to a lack of communication. One can therefore argue that the language corridor has not been fully enabled for the employees in TechO, meaning they are not able to see and embrace all of their opportunities. This presents a challenge for the employees in TechO.

6.2.3 Collaborative Practice

The findings show that communication regarding the language change is a challenge in TechO. This will be assessed more closely in light of the communication dimension in the framework for collaborative practice. Communication consists of the two collaborative practices information-sharing and sensemaking that are meant to facilitate collaboration (Schuh et al., 2014).

These findings indicate that certain information is communicated well, but not all necessary information is conveyed to everyone in the organization. Communication appears to be scattered among employees, and they could have the necessary information if they consulted each other. It is evident through the interviews that the change to English has not been explicitly communicated to the entire organization. It appears that the desired state of the organization is unclear to several informants due to lack of communication. The informants see that changes to English are taking place, but many do know how to adapt to the changes. Informants have their own understanding of why TechO is changing the language of operations to English, but this understanding is not centralized in the organization. This is where a change agent would be key to facilitating this change in TechO.

The first task for a change agent in TechO would be to create meaning for oneself in the current situation (Jacobsen, 2018), meaning the language change to English. Next, this understanding must be communicated to the employees so they can start their own sensemaking processes (Jacobsen, 2018). By sharing information and enabling sensemaking, communication is facilitated within the organization (Schuh et al., 2014). This has the potential to make the desired state of the organization clearer for the employees. Sensemaking is the ongoing process that then turns circumstances into words that then guides action (Weick et al., 2005). Communication is crucial to successfully put plans into practice, and to achieve organizational goals (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019).

6.3 The Effect on Working Lives

This section will discuss the third research question:

> *RQ3: How has the language change affected the working lives of the employees in the organization?*

The question is limited to the aspect of productivity in TechO. The framework for collaborative practice can therefore be applied to discuss how the dimensions of communication, coordination, and cooperation affect productivity in the organization. Each dimension consists of two collaborative practices that are meant to facilitate collaboration, which is key to increasing overall productivity within organizations (Schuh et al., 2014). These three dimensions will be discussed separately in light of the findings.

6.3.1 Communication

Communication enables information-sharing and sensemaking (Schuh et al., 2014). This has been identified as a challenge within TechO as changes are not widely communicated in the organization, including the change to English.

Information-Sharing

In connection with information-sharing, four informants think the change to English could have been communicated differently. Two informants do not know how to relate to the change, as there is a lack of communication. This is expected to have an impact on work processes, and thus efficiency. EI4 explains that the change could have been communicated with some simple measures that employees can relate to. Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2019) describe research-based measures as a prerequisite for successful change. Special emphasis should be placed on measures that contribute to enable change among employees, such as participation, partaking in goal setting, as well as the development of individuals and groups in order to manage change (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2019). EI4 also thinks that a framework should be laid out for what should not be translated to English. Nadler (1981) points out that the aspects that will not change during an organizational change process must be identified and communicated to employees.

EI4 explains that a working group could be set up consisting of one person from each department. This working group could map the current situation and create a plan for where the organization wants to go. Kotter (1995) describes a powerful guiding coalition as a factor to facilitate successful change. During the first year of change, this group can consist of three to five people that work together to develop a shared assessment of the organizations' problems and opportunities (Kotter, 1995). This can be viewed as a step towards facilitating communication and making work processes more effective, which would have a positive impact on productivity in the organization.

Sensemaking

Sensemaking is the process of interpreting information in order to understand complex situations (Schuh et al., 2014). Jacobsen (2018) points out that the change leader's first task is to create an understanding for themselves before communicating this to the rest of the organization so they can start their own sensemaking processes. This is key to create a perceived need for change and is a prerequisite for successful change (Jacobsen 2018; Jacobsen &

Thorsvik, 2019). Findings indicate that the informants have created their own understanding independent of this aforementioned process, despite the lack of communication regarding the change. It is evident that the understanding of several informants involves seeing English as a tool for an effective workday. This is emphasized by Wenger (1999) who points out that organizations over time create a shared repertoire of resources to negotiate meaning, including routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, or actions that have become a shared practice. It seems that employees are in the process of creating a shared repertoire that consists of a way of doing things when it comes to English. Many informants understand that English facilitates standardization, and thus eliminates extra work as some tasks do not need to be completed in several languages. In light of this, it is evident that English has had a positive effect on the working lives of TechO employees. A shared repertoire allows an organization to coordinate its members, activities, and practices in a way that enables effective and efficient communication (Komori-Glatz, 2018). As established by Schuh et al. (2014), communication facilitates collaboration, which is key for productivity.

6.3.2 Coordination

Coordination refers to managing dependencies between activities, which includes administering available resources, aligning activities, and synchronizing tasks (Schuh et al., 2014). Resource pooling and goal-congruence are central to coordination (Schuh et al., 2014). TechO has contractors located throughout Europe that work as technicians in the organization. Two informants reflected on how coordinating with the technicians in English has positively affected their workday. In the past when an issue was discovered in the system, this was documented in Norwegian before it was passed on to the next person that had to interpret the issue and translate the documentation before communicating it to a technician. Now, they have cut a link and conduct everything in English from the start. With the transition to English and with it being the first step in the process, employees are now able to align their activities more easily which increases productivity. As Luo & Shenkar (2006) point out, organizations can improve the coordination between their home country and international divisions with proper language design.

These findings indicate both positive and negative influences on coordination. Two informants explain how technical tools allow for better communication within TechO and thus enable coordination. EI4 points out how TechO has the tools in place to facilitate collaboration because the English language is at the foundation, regardless of location. On the other hand, EI2 points out that coordination could be improved if the communication within TechO improved. These findings are in line with the work done by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999b), who explain that as a result of language affecting communication and information flow within an organization, coordination between functions, processes, employees, and departments are influenced.

Resource Pooling

Resource pooling involves allocating relevant employees, information, and equipment to reach the overall goal, where tasks are assigned and time limits are established (Schuh et al., 2014). One informant provides insight as s/he explains the importance of allocating relevant employees for a specific task. EI3 explains that a task might be given to one employee who can write well, before it is passed on to someone else who does peer review, and then a third person translates it to another language. The language change has enabled employees to utilize resource pooling in a way that makes their workday more effective.

Goal-Congruence

Goal-congruence refers to the shared understanding and agreement concerning the overall goal of the organization (Schuh et al., 2014). It is evident that TechO has an overall business goal to grow and reach new customers beyond Norway and Scandinavia. These findings indicate that TechO has not explicitly communicated a goal with the language change, which can be taken to mean that they do not have a high level of goal congruence. Despite this, the informants have their own understanding of why TechO is changing the language of operations to English. EI6 thinks a common understanding of the overall goal should be established so everyone is on the same page. As Schuh et al. (2014) point out, a high level of goal congruence can increase productivity because the objectives and activities of employees are aligned.

6.3.3 Cooperation

Cooperation involves employees working together to reach the overall goal (Schuh et al., 2014). In this case the overall goal is internationalization whereby the language changes. As previously mentioned, no plan has been officially conveyed to the whole organization. It seems that it is therefore increasingly necessary for leadership to be visibly involved in order to achieve the overall goal. As Schuh et al. (2014) have concluded, leadership's role is to facilitate and encourage cooperative behavior, which leads to better performance of the organization (Schuh et al., 2014). These findings indicate that TechO leadership does not fulfill this role. Nor have they formally assigned any change agents to the task. Cross functional activities and empowerment should involve transferring control from central entities to empower decentralized decision-makers, while simultaneously interconnecting these decision-makers across departments (Schuh et al., 2014). Thus, the role of change agent can be a key factor in facilitating cooperation in TechO.

It is evident that the change to English has made cooperation easier and more effective in TechO. For example, two employees highlight how reporting bugs to the technicians in English has now become an established practice. EI4 points out that cooperation has been made easier with new employees as the tools the new hires get access to are in English. In addition to this, several informants emphasized the value of standardization. This simplifies work processes and makes the workday more efficient. In addition, it allows employees to focus on their primary tasks and contributes to cooperation that targets other value creating activities.

7.0 Conclusion and Future Research

This chapter will provide concluding remarks on the three research questions and the overall problem formulation, before presenting suggestions for future research.

7.1 Research Questions

For clarity, the research questions are first outlined before being reflected upon.

> *RQ1: Did the organization have a plan for how to change from Norwegian to English as the language of operation?*

TechO is a relatively new SME, the workforce is young, and the employees have good English skills. TechO unofficially started to transition from Norwegian to English a few years ago. It was officially decided in January 2023 that the organization will transition to English within the next two years. This decision was top-down and was communicated to certain employees. Findings indicate that the change has not been communicated to the entirety of the organization. With the lack of communication, it is evident that employees struggle to adapt to the change. Many changes have already occurred with the transition, but employees do not know to what degree the English language is expected to be used. TechO has many international contractors, and it is natural for Norwegian employees to switch to English to communicate with them. Employees have a basic underlying understanding of when to use English, but sometimes need reminders to do so.

Although an understanding of the change is not centralized in the organization, the employees have their own understanding of why it is happening. In addition to this, there is a general agreement that it is necessary for TechO to change the language of operations to English. Whether or not leadership in fact had a plan for this, is difficult to know. Findings indicate that no plan or strategy has been communicated to the employees. However, the employees appear to have an underlying understanding of the need to switch to English. With the natural process that has occurred thus far, it appears that an informal plan is present that guides the language change. Employees see the way the organization is progressing language-wise as they interact with more international employees and customers and adjust accordingly.

The findings indicate that a strict plan or strategy is not necessarily needed for the change to English in TechO. However, to get employees on the level where they can actively facilitate the change, it is evident that communication is key. This includes determining what should, and should not, be transitioned to English, and communicating simple measures for employees to relate to. It is central that the English language is not forced on employees, as they value their native language and want to keep the original values that are associated with TechO.

> *RQ2: What challenges are experienced with the language change from Norwegian to English?*

TechO is in a period of change where neither the decision to change nor a plan for the transition have been communicated to the whole organization. This has created a lot of uncertainty among employees, which has made it challenging for them to adapt. The lack of communication is therefore identified as the main challenge with the change to English. This has hindered the common acknowledgement concerning the desired state of the organization, which entails the widespread use of English.

There does not appear to be a sense of urgency with the change. Employees even need reminders to use the new standard that is in English. Employees continue to predominantly speak their native language during the workday, and view use of English as having a negative effect on routines and habits. However, the employees are comfortable communicating in English, and it is normal to switch back and forth between languages on a daily basis. Regardless of this, a challenge is present in the matter of losing values. It is evident that the employees still value their native language both internally and externally. TechO has not come to this point yet, but it should be noted that forcing English where it is not natural is likely to result in challenges. TechO is small and the employees work closely with each other, and it is important for them to retain their native language internally in the local offices when possible. There is also the potential for the language change to have a negative effect on existing customers. It is important for the employees to keep the good and close relationships they have with their Norwegian customers, so they do not lose their personal touch.

The lack of a change agent appears to be a challenge in TechO. Although there is a perceived need for change in the organization, there is no one to create much of the necessary momentum for change. Findings indicate the importance of ensuring employees are on board with the change, so that the progress is not hampered. It is evident that the lack of a change agent reduces the opportunity of being heard, a factor that is valued by employees.

> *RQ3: How has the language change affected the working lives of the employees in the organization?*

TechO appears to still be in the beginning phases of the transition to English. The organization slowly started to transition towards English a few years ago, but findings show that the language change has not had an enormous impact yet. This is evident as the change has not been conveyed to the entirety of the organization and the employees mainly communicate in their native language during their workday. However, the speed of the change seems to be gaining momentum, and TechO is now starting to reach more coworkers and customers beyond Norway and Scandinavia.

TechO has customers, employees, and suppliers in many different countries. Previously, documents were produced in Norwegian, then translated to English, before having to translate again to the language in question. Following the language change, the new standard is now English. Standardization often simplifies processes and eliminates extra work for employees, as tasks do not need to be completed in several languages. This being the case, standardization makes the workday more efficient. The employees now have a common language, regardless of location.

Employees have cut out a step in many work processes, because English rather than Norwegian is now the first step. This enables employees to coordinate their activities more easily, which increases productivity. In addition, the use of technical tools allows for better communication within the organization and enables coordination between countries. It is easier to cooperate with newly hired employees, as the tools they get access to are in English.

7.2 Overall Problem Formulation

The goal of this research as defined at the beginning of this study, is to shed light on what has been captured in the overall problem formulation in order to facilitate a better understanding of:

What factors affect the implementation of an internationalization strategy whereby the language of operation for an organization changes?

This thesis specifically targets SMEs in Norway, where a substantial percentage of the population speak English. Correspondingly, the employees in the organizations are likely to have good English skills. This study is limited to one fairly new SME in the IT industry. The employees are both young and have good English skills. These characteristics may very be similar to other SMEs in Norway that operate within the IT industry, but perhaps not in others with different demographic and/or organizational profiles.

The findings of this research provide insight into organizations with the characteristics specified above, but also provide some general insights that can be considered in different contexts regarding internationalization, language transitions, and SMEs. The factors identified in this study are primarily divided in three areas: 1) a plan for the change, 2) the role of a change agent, and 3) understanding resistance. The key tool in the overall process is communication, which permeates all these factors. The top leadership plays an important role in the initial communication of the change to create a common understanding. When change is rooted in leadership, this can create motivation and consensus in the ongoing process. Further details of the three factors are described below.

A *well-defined plan* facilitates an internationalization strategy whereby the language of operation changes. This research indicates that an organization like TechO, with the aforementioned characteristics, appears to have an informal plan that makes changes occur naturally. Without a communicated plan for the language change, employees appear to have their own underlying understanding of where the organization is heading and adapt accordingly. However, the change process eventually creates uncertainty among the employees because of the lack of an explicit plan. A formal plan is therefore a necessary tool to combat these challenges and facilitate the change process. If TechO had a plan, it may have resulted in an even greater understanding of the internationalization process that was ongoing amongst staff, and thus, created a more efficient transition from Norwegian to English.

This research suggests that assigning a *change agent* plays a central role in the implementation of an internationalization strategy. It is imperative to do so in order to maintain the necessary momentum for the change. Half-hearted efforts impede the process and result in unanswered questions regarding how one should adapt to the change. The change agent can be one or more key employees in the organization that work to facilitate the language change and does not necessarily need to be a top leader. However, it is evident that the change agent must have support from leadership during the whole process. The change agent is central to communicating simple measures for employees to relate to. This includes conveying a plan for what should not be transitioned to English.

Resistance can negatively affect the internationalization strategy when the language changes. It is therefore essential not to underestimate the inherent resistance that lies within employees as they are challenged to change their established practices and habits, regardless of how important the change is for the organization. Although employees may have good English language skills, this study indicates that employees indeed value their native language. It is therefore advantageous to involve the employees in the change process, because forcing a new language on employees can lead to resistance. Communication is identified as the key tool to mitigate resistance, and it is also essential to pave the way for collaborative measures that facilitate the change to English.

7.3 Future Research

This study is limited to the beginning phase of an internationalization strategy whereby the language changes from Norwegian to English. Suggestions for future research include exploring the initial phase of the language transition where changes have not yet occurred. The research could also be conducted over a longer period of time to investigate all of the phases of the change process.

The informants in this study are young and have good English skills. Future work should therefore be expanded to include other industries that are not so heavily influenced by English, where a wider age distribution may be evident. Future research could also concentrate on the cultural aspect of the language change. This would provide valuable information in order to understand how one's culture affects the implementation process.

Changing the language of operations has proven to be a long process where employees gradually adapt to the new language. Consequently, another approach is to observe the employees over a specific and long period of time to examine how they adapt to the change. Findings from qualitative interviews can also be tested quantitatively in other organizations or sectors to see if the same findings exist in a larger population. A mixed-methods design could be explored to investigate additional research approaches and whether they could lead to heightened knowledge and increased validity of the results (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

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Appendix 1: Information Letter and Consent Form

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet mitt?

Mitt navn er Elisabeth Kinnari og jeg skriver en masteroppgave på studiet endringsledelse ved Universitetet i Stavanger. Dette skrivet er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i forskningsprosjektet mitt hvor formålet er å finne ut hvilke faktorer som bidrar til en vellykket endring av språk internt i en organisasjon. Min foreløpige problemstilling er: *«The role of language in a Norwegian SME: Identification of contributing factors that facilitate a successful language change from Norwegian to English»*. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål:
I dette forskningsprosjektet er formålet å utforske rollen av engelsk i en norsk SMB (små/mellomstor bedrift). Hovedmålet er å identifisere faktorer som bidrar til en vellykket endring av språk fra norsk til engelsk. Spørsmålene vil blant annet omhandle kultur, utfordringer med en overgang fra norsk til engelsk, og positive og negative sider med endringen. Jeg ønsker å snakke med deg for å kartlegge dine tanker og erfaringer om temaet.

Dette er et forskningsprosjekt i forbindelse med min masteroppgave ved Universitetet i Stavanger.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Universitetet i Stavanger er den ansvarlige institusjonen for dette forskningsprosjektet. Følgende personer kan kontaktes for eventuelle spørsmål:

Prosjektleder: **Elisabeth Ann Kinnari, e-post: elisabethkinnari@gmail.com, telefon: +47 909 58 857**
Prosjektveileder: **Benjamin Silvester, Institutt for medie- og samfunnsfag, Universitetet i Stavanger – e-post: benjamin.r.silvester@uis.no, telefon: +47 923 11 252**

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du har blitt bedt om å delta i dette forskningsprosjektet fordi du jobber i en bedrift som er i en internasjonaliseringsfase hvor det interne språket skal bli endret fra norsk til engelsk. Jeg ønsker å snakke med 6-8 ansatte i din bedrift fra forskjellige avdelinger med ulik ansiennitet. Jeg anser deg som en relevant deltaker fordi du jobber i bedriften og har kunnskap som kan direkte eller indirekte bidra til å belyse svært relevant forskningsmateriale.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Hvis du velger å delta i dette prosjektet, vil dette innebære å gi et intervju (helst med lydopptak, men ikke en nødvendighet) med Elisabeth Kinnari enten fysisk eller via en kryptert digital plattform. Intervjuet vil være semistrukturert med en varighet på ca én time. Informasjonen du gir vil bli lagret på en sikker måte med tilgang kun tilgjengelig for Elisabeth Kinnari og Benjamin Silvester. Informasjonen du oppgir kan inkluderes i forskningen hvor eventuelle kommentarer vil bli anonymisert. Dersom noe siteres direkte, vil det bli gjort på en måte som sørger for at informasjonen ikke kan brukes til å identifisere deg.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det

vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Lydfilen fra intervjuet, hvis du godtar å bli tatt opp, vil ikke bli delt utover Elisabeth Kinnari og Benjamin Silvester. Elisabeth Kinnari vil være ansvarlig for prosjektet, men Benjamin Silvester vil ha tilgang til personopplysningene og vil overvåke aspekter ved datainnsamling, lagring, administrasjon og tolkning. Digitale transkripsjoner, notater og lydfiler vil bli lagret på en passordbeskyttet datamaskin med kryptert disk, som bare Elisabeth Kinnari vil ha tilgang til. Du vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen da personopplysningene dine vil bli anonymisert.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?
Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 15.06.2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med dine personopplysninger slettes.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Institutt for medie- og samfunnsfag, det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultetet ved Universitetet i Stavanger, har Sikt – Kunnskapssektorens tjenesteleverandør vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Elisabeth Kinnari (e-post: elisabethkinnari@gmail.com, telefon: +47 909 58 857)
- Institutt for medie- og samfunnsfag, det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultetet ved Universitetet i Stavanger, via Benjamin Silvester (e-post: benjamin.r.silvester@uis.no, telefon: +47 923 11 252)
- Vårt personvernombud: Rolf Jegervatn (e-post: personvernombud@uis.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til vurderingen som er gjort av personverntjenestene fra Sikt, kan du ta kontakt via:

- E-post: personverntjenester@sikt.no eller telefon: 73 98 40 40.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Prosjektleder

Elisabeth Kinnari

Prosjektveileder
Benjamin Silvester

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «The role of language in a Norwegian SME: Identification of contributing factors that facilitate a successful language change from Norwegian to English», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju og at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet 15.06.2023.

____
(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Intervjuguide

Kort introduksjon om forskningsprosjektet:

1. Tusen takk for at du er villig til å dele dine tanker og erfaringer med meg. Informasjonen du oppgir i dette intervjuet vil bli anonymisert og det vil ikke være mulig å identifisere deg. Du kan når som helst trekke samtykket uten å oppgi noen grunn.
2. Jeg jobber med en masteroppgave hvor jeg ønsker å finne ut hvilke faktorer som bidrar til en vellykket endring av språk internt i bedriften du jobber i. Hensikten med dette intervjuet er å innhente informasjon om hvordan du opplever å jobbe i denne bedriften og hvilke tanker du har om dette temaet.

Bakgrunnsinformasjon:

1. Hvor lenge har du jobbet i bedriften?
2. Hvilken stilling har du?
    a. Hva er ansvarsområdet ditt?

Innledende spørsmål:

1. Hva legger du i ordet «internasjonalisering»?

Endringsledelse:

1. Er du åpen for endring?
2. Er det enkelt eller krevende for deg å gjennomføre en endring?
3. Opplever du at bedriften gjennomfører endringer?
4. Hvordan opplever du endringsvilligheten i bedriften?
5. Opplever du motstand til endring i bedriften?

Kultur:

1. Hvordan opplever du kulturen i bedriften?
2. Tror du en språkendring kommer til å påvirke kulturen?
    a. Hvis ja, hvordan?
    b. Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke?

Strategi:

1. Føler du det er nødvendig for bedriften å endre språket fra norsk til engelsk?
2. Hva opplever du at bedriften gjør eller har gjort gjeldende endringen fra norsk til engelsk?
3. Hvorfor tror du bedriften har besluttet å endre språket fra norsk til engelsk?
    a. Hva mener du er målet med språkendringen?
    b. Føler du at det er en felles forståelse i bedriften om det overordnede målet?
4. Opplever du at de ansvarlige har en strategi for endringen?
5. På hvilken måte mener du at du selv burde være involvert i endringen fra norsk til engelsk?
6. Hva tror du er det viktigste å fokusere på for at språkendringen skal bli vellykket?
7. Hva tror du de største mulighetene er for bedriften ved å endre språket?

Utfordringer:

1. Hva mener du er de største utfordringene med endringen fra norsk til engelsk?
    a. Kortsiktige utfordringer
    b. Langsiktige utfordringer

Engelsk som språk:

1. Fortell litt om hvordan du kommuniserer på jobb i dag i forhold til språk
2. Er du komfortabel med å kommunisere på engelsk?
3. Hva tror du det engelske språket betyr for bedriften i dag?
    a. Hva med i fremtiden?
4. Hvordan påvirker språkendringen hverdagen din?
    a. Hvordan tror du den blir påvirket i fremtiden?
5. Opplever du noen språkbarrierer når du kommuniserer i bedriften?
6. Føler du at engelskkunnskapene dine vil ha noe å si for om du klarer å se nye muligheter eller ikke i motsetning til om alt foregikk på norsk/svensk?
    a. Muligheter for bedriften, deg selv og/eller kundene
7. Tror du at det er en sammenheng mellom engelskkunnskaper og kommunikasjonsevne som igjen vil kunne ha en innvirkning på makt i bedriften?

Samarbeid:

1. Hvordan opplever du samarbeidet med andre for å oppnå det overordnede målet med språkendringen?
2. Hvordan opplever du at ansatte/avdelinger i bedriften koordinerer med hverandre?
3. Hvordan opplever du kommunikasjonen innad i bedriften?
4. Hva tenker du om kommunikasjonen rundt språkendringen?
5. Føler du deg oppdatert på språkendringen?
6. Mener du språkendringen kunne blitt kommunisert annerledes?
    a. Hvordan? Hvorfor?

Avsluttende spørsmål:

1. Er det noe du skulle ønske ble gjort annerledes med endringen fra norsk til engelsk?
2. Gitt innholdet i dette intervjuet, er det noe du føler jeg burde ha spurt deg om eller noe du ønsker å tilføye?

Appendix 3: Approval from Sikt

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number	Assessment type	Date
283878	Standard	17.03.2023

Project title
The role of language in a Norwegian SME: Identification of contributing factors that facilitate a successful language change from Norwegian to English

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
Universitetet i Stavanger / Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet / Institutt for medie- og samfunnsfag

Project leader
Benjamin Silvester

Student
Elisabeth Kinnari

Project period
02.01.2023 - 15.06.2023

Categories of personal data
General

Legal basis
Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 15.06.2023.

Notification Form

Comment
OM VURDERINGEN
Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

DATABEHANDLER
Vi legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. personvernforordningen art. 28 og 29.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
Vi har vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene, men husk at det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke og hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettspørreskjema, videosamtale el.)

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: https://sikt.no/melde-endringar-i-meldeskjema

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!