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The representation of foreign language education and multilingualism in the Flemish press

A mixed-methods content analysis

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Naam: Elien Prophète

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About a year ago, I imagined I would be writing these acknowledgements looking back on an incredible year full of opportunities and moments to remember. Today, it seems that I was partially right: it has been an incredible year, albeit not exactly as I (or anyone else) expected. During the past year, I was given the chance to work on a number of really cool projects. However, the COVID-19 virus also affected many of the plans I had for the second semester. Not only did it put an early end to my Flanders Classics internship, it also left me with no other choice than to cancel the eye-tracking experiment I was planning to carry out in May and to start all over with a new dissertation topic.

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Abstract

Doorheen de jaren zijn de potentiële effecten van massamedia uitvoerig onderzocht. Hoewel er talrijke standpunten zijn ingenomen ten opzichte van de bewering dat media de publieke opinie en beleidsvormingsprocessen kunnen beïnvloeden, blijft de algemene overtuiging dat massamedia heel wat invloed hebben. Daarom is het van belang om na te gaan hoe de nieuwsmedia bepaalde kwesties presenteren. Deze studie spitst zich specifiek toe op het domein van het taalonderwijs. Er wordt nagegaan hoe vreemdetalenonderwijs en meertaligheid in de Vlaamse pers weergegeven worden.

Een *mixed-methods* inhoudsanalyse werd uitgevoerd op een corpus van 141 nieuwsartikels, die afkomstig waren van vier papieren Vlaamse kranten. Aan de hand van een kwantitatieve analyse konden de voornaamste kenmerken en de overheersende toon van de artikels bepaald worden. Ook werd er speciale aandacht gegeven aan de representatie van verschillende talen in het corpus. Door middel van een bijkomende thematische analyse konden de belangrijkste thema's in de nieuwsartikels onderscheiden worden.

De resultaten toonden aan dat het grootste deel van de artikels verslag uitbracht over regulier dagonderwijs op voorschools, lager of secundair niveau. De kranten focusten hoofdzakelijk op immersie-onderwijs en het gebruik van thuistaal op school, terwijl ze vooral politici, schooldirecteurs en experten citeerden. Wat de toon van de artikels betreft, kon een vrij evenwichtige representatie vastgesteld worden. De populaire kranten bleken wat uitgesprokener te rapporteren, iets negatiever maar ook veel positiever. De meest prominente talen in het corpus waren NT2, Frans en Engels. De weergave van het Engels was opvallend positiever dan de andere twee talen. De representatie van de Franse taal bleek het meest negatief.

Ten slotte konden door middel van een thematische analyse tien terugkerende thema's in het corpus geïdentificeerd worden. Het corpus werd bovendien aan de hand van Ruiz' (1984) oriëntaties ten opzichte van taal doorgelicht. Daaruit kon vastgesteld worden dat het *language-as-resource*-perspectief in het grootste deel van de artikels ingenomen werd, waarbij zowel de economische als sociale voordelen van meertaligheid benadrukt werden. Desondanks bleek ook dat de contrasterende *language-as-problem*-dimensie vrij dominant in het corpus aanwezig was.

Preface

"Community question keeps trilingual school closed", *Het Laatste Nieuws* reported on 25 July 2017. Whether we are aware of it or not, a headline such as this has the ability to influence our thoughts and opinions about certain matters. Moreover, this specific example might even affect the ideologies we adopt towards languages. Media effects of this kind have been studied for over a century (Macnamara, 2005, p. 1). Numerous studies have examined the impact of the mass media on public attitude, as well as on policy-making. Although many different ideas and conceptual frameworks have been proposed throughout the years, the general conviction remains that mass media are major sources of influence (Curran, 2002, p. 158). As a result, it is important to investigate how exactly the news media portray certain issues.

Mass media effects may occur with respect to general political issues such as elections, but they also play a role in more specific matters, such as the development of language (education) policy. To date, the media representations of language education and related issues have been explored from a wide range of distinct angles. However, the majority of those studies have been conducted in the Anglosphere, especially in Australia and Canada. The case of Belgium, which is highly interesting because of the country's unique constitutional, socio-political and linguistic context, has only rarely been investigated.

The current study aims to address this lack of research by examining the portrayal of foreign language education and multilingualism in a corpus of 141 Flemish newspaper articles. A quantitative content analysis was performed in order to define the main characteristics and the tone of the corpus articles. Furthermore, a complementary qualitative thematic analysis resulted in the identification of the recurrent topics in the newspaper articles.

The first part of this dissertation comprises an overview of the main conceptual frameworks on which this investigation builds. As this study draws on insights originating from the realms of mass media effects and language policy and planning, an introduction to both academic fields will be given. In the second chapter, the methodology adopted in this investigation will be presented. The main research questions, as well as the corpus compilation process and the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis will be outlined. In part three, the findings of the analysis will be described. Finally, part four discusses the main outcomes of the investigation by means of Ruiz's (1984) orientations towards language planning.

1.   Theoretical overview

The theoretical framework of this investigation has been divided into three main parts. The first section of this chapter is concerned with media effects theory. A concise overview of the history of media effects research will be provided and the importance of media influence on public attitudes and policy-making will be pointed out. The second part comprises an introduction to the main concepts and key theories within the academic field of language policy and planning. Finally, the third section focusses on earlier studies related to media representations of language education and multilingualism.

1.1   Mass media effects

1.1.1   Media effects theory

The potential effects of mass media on public opinion and policy-making have been a matter of interest to researchers for over a century (Macnamara, 2005, p. 1). Given the considerable power mass media may exert over society, numerous studies on media effects have been carried out and various theoretical frameworks have been proposed throughout the years (Macnamara, 2003). During the first half of the 20th century, early contributors to the field assumed direct media effects on audiences and compared mass media impact with a "hypodermic injection" (Macnamara, 2003, p. 2). Communication was seen as a simple process in which a message was transmitted from sender to receiver, as visualized in Shannon and Weaver's (1949) renowned communication model. The receiver in this model is considered a passive actor, not able to resist the information conveyed in the message and thus very susceptible to "the powerful propaganda tools" the mass media constitute (Macnamara, 2003, p. 2).

In the late 1950s and 1960s, however, views towards the effects of media changed. The allegedly direct impact of mass media was increasingly questioned and a new line of thinking was developed in which media effects were drastically curtailed (Macnamara, 2003, p. 2). Klapper, for instance, argued that mass media do not directly affect audience attitudes, as they are "more likely to reinforce existing attitudes than change them or create new attitudes" (1960, cited in Macnamara, 2003, p. 2). Other scholars suggested that mass media effects should be analysed from a different point of view. They adopted a uses-and-gratifications perspective, assuming that media are used to fulfil basic human needs (p. 3). Instead of investigating how mass media influence the public, uses-and-gratifications theoreticians believe it to be more relevant to start from the question why the public makes use of the media (p. 3).

Limited effects theory did not remain dominant for a long period of time, as it was soon countered by the adherents of political economy thinking, who considered the media part of the prevailing political and economic structures in society and stressed the profound effects of mass media again (Macnamara, 2003, pp. 3-4). One of the key theories within this framework, and by extent within the realm of media effects in general, is agenda-setting. Agenda-setting theory states that mass media have the ability to influence public opinion, not necessarily by "telling people what to think", but by "telling […] readers what to think *about*" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). By determining how much emphasis is put on certain news items

and how exactly particular issues are presented, news media define what should be considered important and thus "set" the public agenda (Soroka et al., 2012, p. 1).

The roots of agenda-setting theory lies in research on the effects of political news coverage on voting behaviour (Soroka et al., 2012, p. 2). Pioneering work was carried out by McCombs and Shaw (1972), who conducted interviews with voters during the 1968 presidential election in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. McCombs and Shaw (1972) asked participants to list what they thought were the most important campaign issues at the moment, regardless of what the presidential candidates were saying (p. 178). Simultaneously, the researchers performed a content analysis on the political news coverage published or broadcast by the main news channels consulted by the respondents (p. 178). The results of the interviews and content analysis were compared and a high degree of correspondence could be observed between the central issues identified by the participants and the most salient topics in the news coverage. Consequently, McCombs and Shaw (1972) argued that the outcomes of their research serve as evidence for the agenda-setting theory. McCombs and Shaw's (1972) pilot study generated a widespread interest into agenda-setting research, resulting in hundreds of similar studies (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009, p. 2). To date, agenda-setting effects have been investigated from a wide range of perspectives, in many different geographical and historical contexts and with regard to a variety of public issues, leading to a vast body of evidence supporting the claim that mass media affect the public agenda (p. 2).

Agenda-setting theory is not only concerned with media effects on public opinion. Throughout the years, many studies have also focussed on the media's role in policy development processes (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009, p. 2). Cobb and Elder's (1972/1983, cited in Soroka et al., 2012, p. 2) contribution is considered of key importance in this area, as it is often described as the policy-equivalent to McCombs and Shaw's (1972) study. Cobb and Elder were the first to suggest that mass media can shape the policy agenda (1972/1983, cited in Soroka et al., 2012, p. 2). Their ideas have been drawn on by many other scholars, some of them stating that policy-related agenda-setting effects also occur on an individual level, meaning that the media have impact on individual policy-makers just as they shape the opinions of regular citizens (e.g. Eilders, 2001; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; both cited in Soroka et al., 2012, p. 3). In general, it is believed that mass media may not be the only factor influencing the policy agenda, but that they should be considered a major contributor (Soroka et al., 2012, p. 2).

Although agenda-setting theory has been very influential in the media effects field, it was later superseded during the "ethnographic turn" (Macnamara, 2003, p. 5). Adopting new approaches based on social and cultural studies, communication researchers rejected the idea of far-reaching media effects again, stating that the critical aspect of communication is not the message itself, but the way in which receivers decode and interpret a message (p. 5). Meaning, they argued, is not what a sender passes on, but the construct created by the audience based on a received message (p. 5). Therefore, instead of the media, the receiver should be seen as the most powerful actor in mass communication processes (p. 6). Contemporary media effects theory builds on this idea of allocating audiences a central role in communication, as it acknowledges the impact of mass media on public attitudes but argues that "interpretations and perceptions are influenced by a multiplicity of factors such as race, nationality,

ethnicity, social background, education, gender, sexuality, religion and inter-relationships such as family, peers and occupation or work ground, as well as media content" (Macnamara, 2003, p. 7).

1.1.2 Media effects on language education policy development

In the history of media effects theory, the influence of mass media has been investigated from many distinct angles and supported by numerous theories with different perspectives on the strength of media impact and the role of the audience (Macnamara, 2003). Despite the wide diversity of views and the complexity of media effects, the general conviction remains that "the media are important agencies of influence" (Curran, 2002, p. 158). The research presented above has shown that mass media may have their impact on general political contexts (e.g. elections), but media effects can also occur with respect to more specific matters, such as language and education policy issues. Waller (2012), for instance, gives an account of how news media coverage has played a significant role in the decision to close the Northern Territory's bilingual education programme for indigenous Australians. Claiming that schools offering bilingual programmes scored lower on national tests, the Territory Education Minister announced in 2008 that from then on, the first four hours of the school day had to be taught in English (Disbray, 2014). Waller (2012) describes how the Australian news media shaped the public discussion and policy-making process leading to this decision by discerning five media overlays, including the representation of Indigenous Australians in the press. Tollefson (2015) scrutinized the news coverage of "two cases in which the mass media play an important role in delimiting particular policy alternatives in multilingual contexts" (p. 133). Analysing press reporting on language of instruction debates in Hong Kong and Arizona, Tollefson (2015) identified a number of recurrent ideological frames and the policy agendas implicitly represented in the media coverage. Many other scholars concentrating on the relationship between media and education policy acknowledge the major influence of the media on policy development processes as well (Fields, 2005; Lingard & Rawolle, 2004; Rawolle, 2010; Stack, 2006; Thomson, 2004).

As there is accumulated evidence that the media have considerable impact on public opinion and policy-making, it is of key importance to understand how exactly particular issues are presented in the press. This dissertation is specifically concerned with the media representations of language education. Before we turn to earlier investigations on the media portrayal of language-related issues, the following section will focus on the linguistic subdiscipline of language policy and planning.

1.2 Language policy and planning

1.2.1 Introducing the field

Within the academic field of applied linguistics, language policy and planning (LPP) is the subfield specifically concerned with the planning, implementation and evaluation of language policies (Takala & Sajavaara, 2000, p. 129). Although the practice of language regulation is "as old as human civilization" (e.g. the Romans already imposed their own linguistic rules in conquered territories), LPP is a relatively young scholarly discipline (Kaplan, 2013, p. 1). It emerged in the years following the Second World War, a historical period marked by the independence of many (former) European colonies (p. 1). Accordingly, the first language planners, who called themselves *language engineers*, primarily aimed to address the

language problems which arose in the newly established nations in Asia and Africa (p. 2). During this first phase in the history of LPP, there was a widespread belief that language planning could contribute to the development and modernization of the new nations. Language planners were optimistic, asserting that their work could facilitate "economic and social progress" (Kaplan, 2013, p. 2-3). In later stages, the focus of LPP shifted away from the post-colonial states. In the 1970s, it was generally acknowledged that linguistic problems occurred in non-developing countries too and that the scope of LPP should be broadened to "macro" or "state-level" language issues "in polities worldwide" (Kaplan, 2013, p. 3). Since the 1990s, LPP theory also attends to language problems in "micro situations", such as "communities, schools, organizations and companies" (Kaplan, 2013, p. 3).

Throughout the years, many scholars have attempted to define language policy and planning (e.g. Brecht & Walton, 1993; Cooper, 1989; McGroarty, 1997; Rubin & Jernudd, 1971; Tauli, 1984; all cited in Lo Bianco, 2010). However, a standard definition has not been agreed on (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 144). This may have to do with the lack of clarity with respect to the terminology used in the LPP field. Kaplan (2013), for instance, points out that, although the terms *language planning* and *language policy* are often used in similar contexts and sometimes even considered interchangeable, the two concepts are in fact "two quite distinct aspects of the systemised language change process" (p. 2). Kaplan (2013) defines language planning as "an activity, most visibly undertaken by government […], intended to promote systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers" (p. 2). *Language policy*, on the other hand, should be seen as the result of language planning activities and has been defined as "a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in society, group or system" (Kaplan, 2013, p. 2).

As work on language policy and language planning topics started to converge more and more in the 1990s, scholars began to adopt the designation *language policy and planning* to refer to the academic discipline (Hornberger, 2006, p. 25). However, this does not imply that there is general agreement on the relationship between language policy and language planning. The two concepts may be highly correlated, but it remains a topic of dispute how exactly they relate to one another (p. 25). For example, whereas Kaplan (2013) claims that policy can be viewed as the outcome of planning, Fettes (1997) states that "a great deal of language policy-making goes on in a haphazard or uncoordinated way, far removed from the language planning ideal" (p. 14). Hornberger (2006) concludes that *language policy and planning* is a "useful" designation, because it reminds us of the inextricable connection between both terms and the ongoing discussion about the nature of their interrelationship (p. 2).

1.2.2 Language policy and planning types

In most contemporary language policy and planning typologies, three types of activities are recognized: corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning (e.g. Hornberger, 2006; Siiner et al., 2018). The first step in the establishment of this typology was taken by Kloss in 1969, as he made a distinction between corpus and status planning. According to Kloss (1969), corpus planning focusses on the form of language (p. 81). More specifically, this type of language planning comprises aspects such as the development of a writing system, the standardization of a language's spelling or the expansion of its vocabulary (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 145). As corpus planning is closely linked to the field of linguistics, the

activity is usually undertaken by professionals with linguistic expertise. This is in contrast to the other types of LPP, which are normally in the hands of politicians and government officials (p. 145). Status planning, the second LPP type in Kloss's (1969) dichotomy, is concerned with the role a language plays in society. By means of laws and other legal regulations, a language's standing can be enhanced if it is allocated certain public functions (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 143). For instance, a language can be appointed as language of instruction or as official language in a given community (p. 43).

It was not until the end of the 1980s that the third type of language planning was defined. In 1989, Cooper declared it necessary to create a third LPP pillar, which would complement corpus and status planning (pp. 33–34). This new LPP type, acquisition planning, is not concerned with the form or use of language, but with its users (Siiner et al., 2018, p. 2). Acquisition planning relates to the way in which a language is distributed by means of education, both in formal and informal settings (p. 1). It is an activity which aims to enable and encourage language learning in a society (Hornberger, 2006, p. 6), also defined by Cooper as the "organized efforts to promote the learning of a language" (1989, p. 157). Having provided an overview of the origins and main categories of language policy and planning, we will now take a closer look at one particularly influential LPP theory.

1.2.3 Ruiz's orientations

One of the most prominent theoretical frameworks within the LPP field was established by Richard Ruiz in 1984. Given that Ruiz considers the way in which languages are perceived in society, his ideas may primarily be linked to the activity of status planning. Nevertheless, as Ruiz's theory is directly applicable to education contexts, it is argued here that there is a strong connection with acquisition planning too. Ruiz (1984) claims that our reflections on the role of language in society are influenced by certain beliefs, which we are often not aware of. However, in order to carry out proper language planning and policy analyses, it is important to discover and signify those underlying values (p. 16). Therefore, Ruiz proposes a classification comprising three orientations to language planning, which are defined as "complex[es] of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society" (1984, p. 16). According to Ruiz, language can either be seen as a *problem*, a *right* or a *resource*. In the following pages, the three orientations and their impact on LPP work will be further discussed.

1.2.2.1 Language-as-problem

In Ruiz's (1984) first orientation, language is considered a problem. It is important to point out here that Ruiz's notion of "a problem" should not be mistaken for the societal problems in post-colonial states which the first contributors to the LPP field aimed to address (p. 18). While identifying and formulating solutions to language problems remains one of the main objectives of LPP, this practical approach does not necessarily coincide with Ruiz's language-as-problem orientation (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 32). What Ruiz's (1984) problem-dimension does characterize is a strong favouritism towards monolingualism in a majority language. Minority languages are held as a threat against a society's main language and often (falsely) linked with social problems such as poverty, poor educational achievement and handicap (p. 16). Similarly, proficiency in minority languages is rather viewed as a disability than as an asset. Adherents of the problem-orientation are convinced that societal multilingualism leads to "a

lack of social cohesiveness", as they argue that members of distinct language communities are not able to agree on social and political matters (p. 21). As a result, problem-oriented policies aim to solve language problems in an assimilationist manner, by restraining or even eradicating societal multilingualism (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 34).

Language learning programmes may form part of such language policies (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 34). They are usually designed for speakers of minority languages, in order for them to acquire the dominant majority language. Although the name of certain problem-oriented educational programmes may seem to indicate that they strive for individual multilingualism (e.g. Ruiz (1984, pp. 18-19) refers to the United States' *Bilingual* Education Act of 1968), problem-oriented language courses are in fact subtractive in nature, meaning that they only focus on the transition from minority to majority language, whilst disregarding the maintenance of a learner's first language (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 34). Problem-oriented language education programmes may be offered in the form of intensive second language courses in the dominant language or by means of immersion education (in the most extreme cases even without extra language learning support) (p. 34).

1.2.2.2 Language-as-right

From the viewpoint of Ruiz's (1984) second orientation, speaking one's own language is regarded as a "basic human right" (p. 22). The dimension is strongly linked with issues such as discrimination and social inequality, as it states that a lack of language rights leads to the inhibition of personal freedom. Language rights are considered the key to society, because they give access to all aspects of civic life, including education, media, healthcare, employment, jurisprudence and voting (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 33). According to Hult and Hornberger (2016), not all linguistic rights are equally powerful (pp. 35-36). They make a distinction between *positive* and *negative* language rights, whereby the former can be seen as the stronger form. Positive language rights explicitly permit one to use one's own language when appealing to public services, whereas negative rights only grant one the right not to be discriminated on the basis of language (pp. 35–36)**.** Furthermore, Hult and Hornberger (2016) note that language rights can occur in various shapes, ranging from prohibition, toleration and permission to promotion (p. 37).

Language-as-right educational programmes too exist in a variety of forms, depending on the strength, shape and implementation of the linguistic policies they result from (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 37). Strikingly, it seems that right-oriented programmes may coincide with problem-oriented approaches. For instance, Hult and Hornberger (2016) refer to the bilingual education programmes offered in the United States which are in nature problem-oriented because of their transitional focus. However, Hult and Hornberger (2016) argue that those programmes can be linked to the right-orientation as well, as they "facilitate equal access to education by way of providing linguistic support", either by means of second language courses or immersion education (p. 37). Although the bilingual programmes primarily aim at the acquisition of English, particularly with a view to academic achievement, this does not necessarily imply that they are not tolerant of minority languages (p. 37). Nevertheless, the authors admit that those programmes "do not establish education as a mechanism for developing life-long bi-/multilingualism as would the strongest form of promotional language rights" (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 37).

1.2.2.3 Language-as-resource

The main goal of Ruiz's 1984 contribution was the proposal of the third orientation as an alternative to the other two dimensions (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 38). Up until the 1980s, language-as-problem and language-as-right had been the ideologies most frequently adopted in LPP publications (Ruiz, 1984, p. 15). Ruiz, however, does not consider any of them a suitable approach to think about language in society. He received critique for not supporting the right-orientation (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 42), but argued that such an approach leads to conflict, as confrontation forms a fundamental aspect of the legal process (Ruiz, 1984, p. 24). Instead, Ruiz advocates for an ideology in which language is regarded as a resource:

> "A closer look at the idea of language-as-resource could reveal some promise for alleviating some of the conflicts emerging out of the other two orientations: it can have a direct impact on enhancing the language status of subordinate languages; it can help to ease tensions between majority and minority communities; it can serve as a more consistent way of viewing the role of non-English languages in U.S. society; and it highlights the importance of cooperative language planning." (Ruiz, 1984, p. 26)

Adherents of the resource-orientation believe that ethnic and linguistic diversity form part of national unity and that they even fortify a nation (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 33). Multilingualism is considered a valuable resource – not only for speakers of minority languages, but for all members of the community (p. 33). According to Ruiz (1984), linguistic knowledge can hold an added value in a variety of ways. First, language skills are claimed to be very useful on a national level, and in particular to national institutions with transnational concerns, such as the Foreign Office, the military or national security (p. 27). National economies can benefit from widespread linguistic proficiency too, as contact with different languages and consequently, potential language barriers, are inevitable in international business contexts. Second, Ruiz considers speaking multiple languages a valuable resource on a personal level, as studies have shown the positive effects of individual multilingualism on cognitive skills (Ruiz, 1984, p. 28; Jessner-Schmid, 2015). Furthermore, the social value of societal multilingualism cannot be disregarded, as interaction with people with distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds can broaden one's spectrum and be an opportunity to learn to cope with different ideas and opinions (Ruiz, 1984, p. 28).

The language-as-resource orientation both concentrates on the development of new linguistic skills and the preservation and maintenance of existing language potential (Ruiz, 1984, p. 26). In terms of education, this idea can be brought into practice by means of additive language learning programmes, in which the new language does not displace but rather complements the learner's first language (Cenoz, 2013, pp. 5–6; Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 33). Hult and Hornberger (2016) distinguish between a stronger and weaker form of additive language learning. The former refers to programmes truly enhancing the development of individual bi- or multilingualism by explicitly focussing on additive learning. Such programmes may be specifically designed for speakers of minority languages, but may be aimed at the linguistic majority community as well (p. 41). The latter, however, relates to programmes developed for majority language speakers only, supporting them in their acquisition of a major second

language such as Arabic, Chinese, French or Spanish (p. 41). In this case, the linguistic potential of minority language speakers is overlooked.

1.2.2.4 Practical applications of Ruiz's orientations

More than 30 years after the publication of Ruiz's 1984 essay, the orientations to language planning are still highly relevant and Ruiz's ideas still serve as a source of inspiration to many LPP researchers (e.g. Amorós-Negre, 2017; De Jong et al., 2016; Escamilla, 2016; Macías, 2016). The success of the orientations probably lies in the fact that they can easily be applied to practical issues, using them as a tool to analyse language policy. Hult and Hornberger (2016), note that policy-makers may benefit from the orientations, because they have the potential to guide them "in serving the needs of linguistic minorities and fostering sustainable societal multilingualism" (pp. 42-43). For scholarly purposes too, Ruiz's framework has proved its usefulness. The dimensions are particularly suitable for discourse analyses of language policy related texts such as policy documents and media reports (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 43), as Horner (2011) and Mason and Hajek (2018) have already carried out.

1.3   Media representations of language education

1.3.1   Earlier work

As outlined in the first part of this theoretical overview, there is general agreement among communication scientists that news media have the ability to exert influence over society by shaping public opinion and affecting policy development processes. These media effects can occur with respect to general political matters such as elections, but they also play an important role in more specific issues such as language (education) policy debates (Mason & Hajek, 2018, 2019). As the news media have impact on public attitudes towards language and on language policy-making, it is of major importance to investigate how language and language education are depicted in the press.

As education has become one of the key areas of news coverage (Hargreaves et al., 2007, p. 61), a vast amount of studies have been dedicated to the representation of various education issues in the news media (Shine, 2018). For instance, Blackmore and Thomson (2004) analysed how school principals are portrayed in the Australian and British press. Baroutsis and Lingard (2017) carried out a framing analysis on the news coverage of the Australian PISA results. Shine (2015) and Shine and O'Donoghue (2013) focussed on the depiction of teachers and the teaching profession in Australian newspaper articles respectively reporting on teacher shortage and the introduction of standardised testing. Research on the media representations of language education, however, has long remained scarce (Mason & Hajek, 2018, p. 2). One of the first studies addressing the topic was conducted by Mason and Poyatos Matas (2016), who performed a mixed-methods content analysis on a corpus of print newspaper articles about language teacher supply. The articles were all published in the "Anglobubble", that is, either in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom or the United States (2016, p. 446). The results of the investigation suggested that language teacher shortage was framed as a serious issue, but news coverage was found to be rather superficial, as the majority of articles briefly mentioned the problem but lacked a more profound discussion (p. 459).

Mason and Hajek (2018, 2019) too explored the media representations of language education. In the context of their 2018 study, the duo analysed 261 Australian print newspaper articles using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The authors determined the newspaper articles' tone, investigated a number of quantitative content elements and identified the key themes in the corpus in order to establish a full picture of the media portrayal of language education. The findings indicated a rather balanced representation in terms of tone (p. 6), but the recurrent corpus themes included many concerns about several aspects of the Australian language education system (p. 9). Drawing on Ruiz's (1984) orientations of language planning, Mason and Hajek (2018) deduced from the study's outcomes that in the Australian press, language and multilingualism are mainly regarded as a problem and an economic resource, but not as a right or a social resource (p. 1). Mason and Hajek's 2019 contribution follows from the 2018 study, adopting similar methods but exclusively focussing on articles about language education in the tertiary setting. The mixed-methods content analysis revealed that Australian news coverage on higher language education was "extremely limited, […] generally superficial in depth, narrow in scope, and negative in tone" (Mason & Hajek, 2019, p. 179).

Lanvers and Coleman (2017) performed a critical discourse analysis on British newspaper articles reporting on the language learning crisis in the UK. Recurrent news topics identified during the analysis ranged from education policies and teaching issues to national implications of the crisis (e.g. impact on the business sector) and actors responsible for the crisis (p. 21). A rather negative portrayal of language education could be observed, as only the regional English print media regularly reported in a positive tone on language learning initiatives (p. 21). Another interesting study on language education representations in English- and French-Canadian newspapers was conducted by Vessey (2017). By means of a corpus-assisted discourse analysis, Vessey (2017) could discern a clear difference in the language ideologies underlying the news coverage provided by French and English newspapers (p. 158). Whereas the English-Canadian newspapers devoted much attention to language education issues and considered public schools as "the primary means by which Canadians can gain equal access to social resources", French-Canadian newspapers only rarely reported on language education (p. 158). The few articles relating to the topic were all concerned with immigrants' acquisition of the French language (p. 158).

Other studies dealt with language ideologies in (media) discourses on multilingualism. Horner (2011), for instance, explored how multilingualism and related debates on citizenship and education are portrayed in the Luxembourgish press. By means of Ruiz's (1984) orientations, Horner (2011) identified the main ideological views in the news coverage. A marked discrepancy in news reporting was found, as the contrasting language-as-problem and language-as-resource orientations were both prominent across the analysed texts (p. 491). While individual multilingualism was presented as a valuable resource, linguistic diversity at a societal level was depicted as a problem (p. 506). Similar results were observed by Hambye and Richards (2012), who examined language ideologies in a corpus of French-Canadian and French-Belgian public discourse, including policy documents, institutional texts and media coverage (p. 167). Both in the Canadian and Belgian texts, bilingualism and multilingualism were regularly considered a resource and economic asset (p. 182). Nevertheless, the need to protect the

dominant mother tongue (i.c. French) against the threat of other national, international or immigrant languages was implicitly stressed in many texts (p. 182), suggesting un underlying problem-oriented attitude as well.

1.3.2   The case of Belgium

As set out above, the bulk of previous research concerned with the media portrayal of language education and multilingualism has been carried out in the Anglosphere, predominantly in Australia and Canada. Little attention has been paid to media depictions of language and language education in the European press. In a Belgian context, only two relevant investigations have been conducted. The first, Hambye and Richards's (2012) contribution (see supra), only focusses on French-Belgian texts. Although the study sheds light on the dominant language ideologies in Walloon public discourse, it is not exclusively dedicated to language representations in media discourse. The second investigation is a master's dissertation written by Gerrit Calis in 2015. He conducted a framing analysis on a corpus consisting of 118 Flemish newspaper articles reporting on how Flemish schools deal with pupils' foreign home languages. Drawing on the standing structure-agency debate in social sciences, Calis (2015) aimed to define the most dominant approach to language in the corpus. The structure perspective appeared to be very salient in the corpus, meaning that language was seen as an institutionalized system with strict rules and that language learning was represented as the activity of intentionally studying a language's vocabulary and grammar (p. 3). The agency approach, which considers language the result of human interaction and regards language learning as a chaotic and organic process, was less prominent (p. 3). Although Calis (2015) provides some preliminary insights on language attitudes in the Flemish press, a full account of the way in which language, multilingualism and language education are portrayed is still missing.

A thorough investigation into the media representations of language in the Flemish or Belgian press would nonetheless be very interesting given Belgium's extraordinary constitutional, socio-political and linguistic situation. Belgium is a multilingual country with three official languages: Dutch, French and German. Being a federal state, the country is composed of three Regions (i.e. Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and three Communities (i.e. the Dutch-, French- and German-speaking Community). The Regions are charged with territorial matters such as transport and environment, while the Communities oversee personal matters, including healthcare and education (Mettewie & Van Mensel, 2020). To outsiders, the different Belgian linguistic communities today seem to coexist in a peaceful way. As a result, Belgium has often been praised for successfully solving language conflicts (Vogl & Hüning, 2010, p. 228). However, this view should be heavily nuanced, as "non-violent conflict between the language communities […] has been part of public life in Belgium for decades" (Vogl & Hüning, 2010, p. 228). The Belgian society is strongly divided based on linguistic differences between the Dutch-speaking north and the French-speaking south, but also because of the major differences in economic strength between both regions (p. 228).

Language has long been a cause of dispute in Belgium and today still has a symbolic role (Mettewie & Van Mensel, 2020, p. 2). The historical events leading to the present-day situation, such as the Flemish Movement's struggle for the legal recognition of Dutch and the reversing economic relation between

Flanders and Wallonia still have their impact on language education in the distinct communities (p. 2). As education constitutes one of the Community responsibilities, there are three education systems in Belgium, corresponding to the Dutch-, French- and German-speaking Community (p. 3). The systems are based on the principle of territoriality, meaning that, for instance, all schools in Dutch-speaking areas fall under the Dutch education system and use Dutch as main language of instruction (p. 3). Brussels, the bilingual Belgian capital, forms an exception to this principle, as the French and Dutch education system both operate in the city (p. 3). The three systems have the same general structure comprising nursery school, primary and secondary education and all offer regular foreign language education and immersion education. Nevertheless, they all have their own specific character, "reflecting each Community's socio-political priorities, baring traces of their history" (Mettewie & Van Mensel, 2020, p. 15). For instance, the Dutch-speaking community has long been very reluctant about introducing immersion education in the form of Content and Learning Integrated Learning (CLIL). Whereas CLIL was already launched in Wallonia in 1998, Flemish teachers could only give their first CLIL lessons in 2014. In Flanders, CLIL education is still subject to many more restrictions than in the other communities, which can still be attributed to "a fear of a new Frenchification of Dutch-medium education" (Mettewie & Van Mensel, 2020, p. 11). The eagerness to introduce immersion education in Wallonia, on the other hand, might be explained by the higher unemployment rates in the south of the country and the greater demand for multilingual competence that follows from this situation (p. 14).

In sum, Belgium's unique linguistic and constitutional context forms a case *par excellence* for the analysis of language representations and ideologies in the press. The present study aims to address this matter by providing an account of the media portrayal of foreign language education and multilingualism in four Flemish print newspapers.

2.   Methodology

2.1   Research questions

Drawing on Mason and Hajek's (2018) work, this dissertation seeks to explore how foreign language education and multilingualism are portrayed in the Flemish press. In order to define the goals of this investigation more specifically, the following research questions were formulated:

How are foreign language education and multilingualism represented in the Flemish written press?

- *RQ1: What are the main characteristics of the Flemish newspaper articles reporting on foreign language education and multilingualism?*
- *RQ2: What is the dominant tone of the Flemish newspaper articles reporting on foreign language education and multilingualism?*
- *RQ3: What is the relationship between different languages and the tone used to portray them?*
- *RQ4: What are the recurrent themes in the Flemish newspaper articles reporting on foreign language education and multilingualism?*

First, this investigation aims to provide an overview of the main characteristics of the newspaper articles forming part of the corpus. In this first part of the analysis, content elements such as education level, type of education, cited sources, references to language policy and specific terminology will be discussed. The second research question refers to the tone adopted in the corpus. Analyses will reveal whether the newspaper articles are written from a rather positive, negative or neutral point of view and how their tone relates to different newspaper formats. Furthermore, this study is specifically concerned with the portrayal of different languages in the corpus. As a third research goal, it will be investigated whether any differences in tone can be found in accordance with references to distinct languages. Fourth and finally, this thesis seeks to establish an overview of the main themes recurring most frequently in the corpus articles. In the following pages, the corpus compilation process and the methods adopted during this investigation will be described in detail.

2.2   Corpus compilation

The corpus analysed in this study consists of 141 newspaper articles reporting on foreign language education or multilingualism within a broad educational context. The articles were published between 2015 and 2019 and appeared in either *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *Het Laatste Nieuws* or *Het Nieuwsblad*, the two broadsheets and two tabloids with the widest circulation in Flanders (Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2019, p. 201). The decision was made to include both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, as it might be interesting to see how foreign language education and multilingualism are represented in different types of newspapers. Although the distinction between broadsheets and tabloids is considered too reductive by certain scholars (e.g. Van Gorp, 2018, p.163), this study will make use of this dichotomy, as it is commonly used and generally accepted in scholarly literature (De Bens & Raeymaeckers, 2010, p. 245). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the dissimilarity between the two formats is not as sharp in Flanders as it is in other European countries such as Britain or Germany. For

instance, whereas the difference between *The Sun* and *The Times* is unmistakable, the Flemish tabloid *Het Nieuwsblad* and the Flemish broadsheet *De Standaard* bear much more resemblance to one another than the former does to *The Sun* and the latter to *The Times* (Van Gorp, 2018, p. 164). Consequent to profound media concentration, Flemish broadsheet and tabloid newspapers owned by the same publisher sometimes even print (nearly) identical articles (Van Gorp, 2018, p. 165; Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2019, p. 64). By opting for the four newspapers mentioned above, the two most important newspaper publishing companies in Flanders (i.e. DPG Media and Mediahuis) are equally represented.

The articles encompassed in the corpus all stem from the print editions of the four Flemish newspapers. Although newspaper circulation has been on the decline for years (e.g. Pew Research Center, 2019; Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2019, pp. 199-200), the influence of print media cannot be underestimated. Statistics by the Reuters Institute (2019, p. 72), for instance, show that 39% of the Belgian population still use print newspapers as a source of news, which equals the number of Belgian citizens using social media as a source of news (i.e. 40%). Furthermore, as "the indexation of print-based articles is more systematic and has a longer history" (Mason & Hajek, 2018, pp. 3-4), opting for print articles enables a more efficient corpus compilation process, by means of online databases.

The corpus of this investigation was compiled via GoPress Academic, an online archive containing most Belgian print newspapers and magazines, as well as a range of international newspapers. Articles were sought using the Dutch counterparts of search terms such as "language + education", "foreign language + school", "multilingual + education" and "foreign language + learn". By means of the advanced search tool, the results were filtered on publication date and newspaper. Articles were then selected based on their main topic, only including texts essentially reporting on foreign language education or multilingualism within a broad educational context. Opinion pieces were excluded from the corpus. Finally, the corpus was scanned for identical articles appearing in different newspapers, which were only incorporated once.

Once the final corpus was compiled, the formal characteristics of the newspaper articles were coded. Each article was labelled according to its publication date, newspaper title, newspaper format (i.e. broadsheet or tabloid), focus (i.e. regional or national), word length and page number. Formal characteristics are relevant to this investigation, as they are assumed to influence the reader's perception of the importance of an article (Cissel, 2012, p. 71; Van Gorp, 2018, pp. 166-167). For instance, Cissel (2012) states that "a news story on the front page and 900 words long can be perceived as more important to its reader than one buried in the middle of the publication and written with only 200 words" (p. 71). Articles published in multiple newspapers were given the label of both newspapers and, if applicable, of both formats and focusses. Word count and page number were based on the original article.

The corpus articles were fairly evenly spread across the five-year data collection period (n = 24 ~ n = 32 per year). As shown in Table 1 (p. 21), the bulk of the articles (n = 99) originate from the tabloid titles *Het Laatste Nieuws* and *Het Nieuwsblad*. About a fifth (n = 31) was published in one of the broadsheets and a minority (7.80%, n = 11) was printed in two different newspapers. More than half of the corpus

articles (60%, n = 85) appeared in the regional section, the remaining 40% (n = 55) having a national focus. One article was given both the regional and national label.

Table 1: Number of corpus articles per newspaper title

Newspaper title	n	%
De Morgen	10	7.09
De Standaard	21	14.89
Het Laatste Nieuws	56	39.72
Het Nieuwsblad	43	30.50
De Morgen and *Het Laatste Nieuws*	2	1.42
De Standaard and *Het Laatste Nieuws*	9	6.38
Total	**141**	**100**

Table 2 gives an overview of the length and page numbers of the corpus articles. It can be seen from the table that most articles are considered short (μ = 354 words). As for the position in the newspaper, about a quarter of the articles was published on the first five pages. Only a small minority appeared on the front page. However, it must be pointed out that these data might be slightly distorted. In 2016, *Het Nieuwsblad* changed its page numbering system, beginning at page 1 again in the regional section. As the other newspapers do not make use of a separate page numbering system for regional news, the results may be biased. Following Cissel's (2012) theory, it can be deduced from these formal characteristics that foreign language education and multilingualism are portrayed as matters of a lesser importance.

Table 2: Length and page number of the corpus articles

Length*	n	%	Page number**	n	%
Short	85	60.28	Front page	5	3.55
Medium	54	38.30	p. 2-5	35	24.82
Long	2	1.42	p. 6+	101	71.63
Total	**141**	**100**	**Total**	**141**	**100**

Notes: The classifications in this table are based on Cissel (2012, p. 71). *Short indicates 0-400 words, medium 400-800 words and long over 800 words. **For articles longer than a single page, the first page of the article was used.

2.3   Method of analysis

Similar to Mason and Hajek (2018), this investigation was conducted by means of a mixed-methods content analysis. Content analysis is a commonly used scientific method to investigate the content of texts, images and other materials. It is defined by Krippendorff (2019, p. 24) as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." Content analyses are often carried out in the context of journalism studies, as they can shed light not only on the work of journalists, but also on the way in which society perceives certain matters (Koetsenruijter & Van Hout, 2014, pp. 163-165). In the latter case, the news media are considered "a mirror of society" (p. 165).

Although some authors insist that content analysis should only be carried out quantitatively (e.g. Berelson, 1952, pp. 17-18), it is widely accepted that both quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods are suitable for academic research (Koetsenruijter & Van Hout, 2014; Krippendorff, 2019). In order to provide an in-depth view of the way in which foreign language education and multilingualism

are represented in the Flemish press, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed in this study.

2.3.1 Quantitative analyses

2.3.1.1 Content elements

In the first part of the investigation, the content of the newspaper articles was analysed quantitatively. A coding schedule was developed, which included the following six content elements: level of education, type of education, cited sources, references to language policy, terminology and references to languages. The full coding schedule was added to the appendix of this dissertation (p. 46).

By means of lexical searches, the corpus articles were analysed and coded. First, the level of education was determined for each article. The labels, ranging from preschool to adult education, were purely based on age. For instance, an article about 8-year-old children participating in an extracurricular reading project were given the label 'primary education'. Second, articles were coded according to the type of education they refer to: regular (daytime) education, education for newcomers (OKAN[1]), extracurricular activities (e.g. summer camps or after-school activities), learning through (online) media and home language and multilingual parenting. Attention was also paid to the sources cited by journalists, by identifying all direct and indirect citations in the newspaper articles. Furthermore, references to specific language policies and issues were labelled, such as immersion education (including CLIL[2] and multilingual schools), the use of home language at school, the attainment targets and education for newcomers (OKAN). Fifth, the specific terminology used to describe foreign language education and multilingualism was categorized and finally, all languages explicitly mentioned in the newspaper articles were classified. As this investigation focusses on the representation of foreign language education, references to Dutch were only coded if they appeared in a foreign language learning context. Once the analysis was completed, the data were gathered in Microsoft Excel and further processed in SPSS 26 (see section 2.3.1.3, p. 23).

2.3.1.2 Tone

The second part of the quantitative analysis was concerned with the tone of the corpus articles. In order to determine whether the articles were written from a rather positive, negative or neutral point of view, the following definitions were drawn up:

- **Positive tone:** *Foreign language education and multilingualism are portrayed in a generally positive light or from a generally sympathetic point of view, so that advocates and supporters of foreign language education and multilingualism would be pleased to see the article.*

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[1] In Flanders, special education is provided for under-aged newcomers whose proficiency of Dutch is not high enough to be educated in. This is called 'OKAN' or 'onthaalonderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers'. For about a year, newcomers take special classes to learn Dutch. Afterwards, they enter the regular education system, while still receiving extra support. (Vlaamse overheid, n.d.)

[2] CLIL or Content and Language Integrated Learning is the most common form of immersion education in Flanders. It is a method during which pupils are taught a non-language-related subject in another language (e.g. geography in French or history in English). Since 2014, all Flemish secondary schools are allowed to offer CLIL, but only for 20% of pupils' curriculum. (Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, n.d.)

- *Negative tone: Foreign language education and multilingualism are portrayed in a generally negative light or in a non-sympathetic manner, so that advocates and supporters of foreign language education and multilingualism would be disappointed or upset to see the article.*

- *Neutral tone: Foreign language education and multilingualism are portrayed using both positive and negative tones that sufficiently balance each other out, or the news article is neither strongly positive nor strongly negative.*

The definitions are based on examples provided by Boydstun et al. (2013) and Mason and Hajek (2018), but were adapted for the specific purposes of this investigation.

In addition to the tone of the article in general, the tone of each article's headline was defined, as the influence of headlines cannot be underestimated. Not only have eye-tracking studies shown that headlines are looked at longer, because of their size and place at the top of the article (Leckner, 2012), other investigations indicate that they can even affect readers' perception of an article. For instance, Ecker et al. (2014) conclude that "headlines constrain further information processing, biasing readers toward a specific interpretation" (p. 323).

The definitions were also used to provide an answer to the third research question, which is concerned with the relationship between references to different languages and the tone used to portray them. All individual references to the three most common languages in the corpus (i.e. Dutch as a foreign language, French and English) were coded and given a label according to their tone.

2.3.1.3 Statistical processing

The analyses relating to the tone of the articles, headlines and references to languages were conducted by a single coder (i.e. the author of this dissertation). However, in order to measure the reliability of those analyses, the article and headline tones of 10% of the corpus were determined by a second, independent coder (i.e. a fellow student). The 14 articles were randomly selected and individually analysed. The data were then congregated and Cohen's kappa was calculated by means of the SPSS 26 software package. Applying Landis and Koch's (1977) framework for the interpretation of kappa statistics, a "moderate agreement" ($κ = 0.563$, $p = 0.001$) could be found for the newspaper headlines. For the articles as a whole, only a "fair" degree of interrater agreement could be observed ($κ = 0.344$). This result, however, was not significant ($p = 0.055$). In case of non-agreement, the labels given by the author of this dissertation were selected for further analysis.

The data of all quantitative analyses were first inputted into Microsoft Excel and later processed in SPSS 26, following Baarda et al. (2014) and Field (2009). In accordance with the research questions, either frequency or contingency tables were compiled. Where necessary (and possible), expected frequencies were calculated and chi-square tests were performed, in order to probe the relationship between categorical variables. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

2.3.2   Qualitative analysis

Complementary to the quantitative analyses described above, a qualitative analysis was performed. As one of the research goals of this investigation consists of revealing the recurring themes in the corpus, a thematic analysis was carried out. Thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) as

"a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a six-step process for conducting thematic analysis. The authors point out that thematic analysis should be seen as a "recursive process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86), which contrasts with the linear process that characterizes quantitative analysis (Koetsenruijter & Van Hout, 2014, p. 159).

Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step guide was followed in this investigation. In the first phase, the researcher should become acquainted with the data by reading them at least once and noting down preliminary ideas (p. 87). This phase took place during earlier stages of the investigation, that is, whilst carrying out the quantitative analyses. Next, in the second phase, the data were coded. Interesting text features were given a label in order to organise the data "into meaningful groups" (p. 88). The coding process was carried out by means of the NVivo 12 software. Third, the codes were organized and structured with the purpose of finding connections between them and establishing themes and subthemes (p. 89). These initial themes were carefully re-examined in the fourth stage of the analysis, both in relation to the labelled text passages, as well as to the data set as a whole (p. 91). For instance, if there was not enough data to base the theme on or if the theme did not prove to be representative for the entire data set, it was either adapted, incorporated into another theme or rejected. In the fifth phase, the themes and subthemes were once more carefully scrutinized, in order to 'define and refine' them (p. 92). The ultimate structure of the themes, subthemes and codes was determined and their final names were decided upon. Lastly, in the sixth phase of the analysis, the results were reported on, whilst providing plenty of concrete examples from the corpus.

3.   Results

This dissertation aims to shed light on the representation of foreign language education and multilingualism in the Flemish press. In order to do so, a mixed-methods content analysis was carried out on a corpus consisting of 141 newspaper articles. The results of the analysis will be presented in the following section. Corresponding to the four research questions, the chapter was divided into four subsections: main characteristics, tone, references to languages and common themes.

3.1   Main characteristics

The first research question of this investigation is concerned with the main characteristics of the newspaper articles encompassed in the corpus. The results regarding the type and level of education referred to in the articles are presented in Table 3. It can be seen from the table that the majority of articles report on regular daytime education. About a fifth is concerned with extracurricular activities, such as after-school reading projects or summer camps. As for the level of education, most articles focus on secondary education, followed by primary education and preschool.

Table 3: References to type and level of education

Type of education	n	%	Level of education	n	%
Regular (daytime) education	101	72.7	Preschool	43	32.3
Education for newcomers (OKAN)	9	6.5	Primary school	58	43.6
Extracurricular activities	29	20.9	Secondary school	72	54.1
Learning through (online) media	5	3.6	Tertiary education	10	7.5
Home language and multilingual parenting	16	11.5	Adult education	10	7.5

Furthermore, the sources of information cited by journalists were coded. Figure 1 shows that the most prominent voices in the corpus are those of politicians (46.5%, n = 60) and school principals (41.1%, n = 53). Experts and scholars take the third place, being cited in just over a quarter of the articles (n = 35). 14% of the cited sources did not fall into one of the previously defined categories. They include, among others, intergovernmental organizations (i.c. the OECD), teacher trainers, spokespeople and business executives.

Figure 1: Sources cited in the corpus
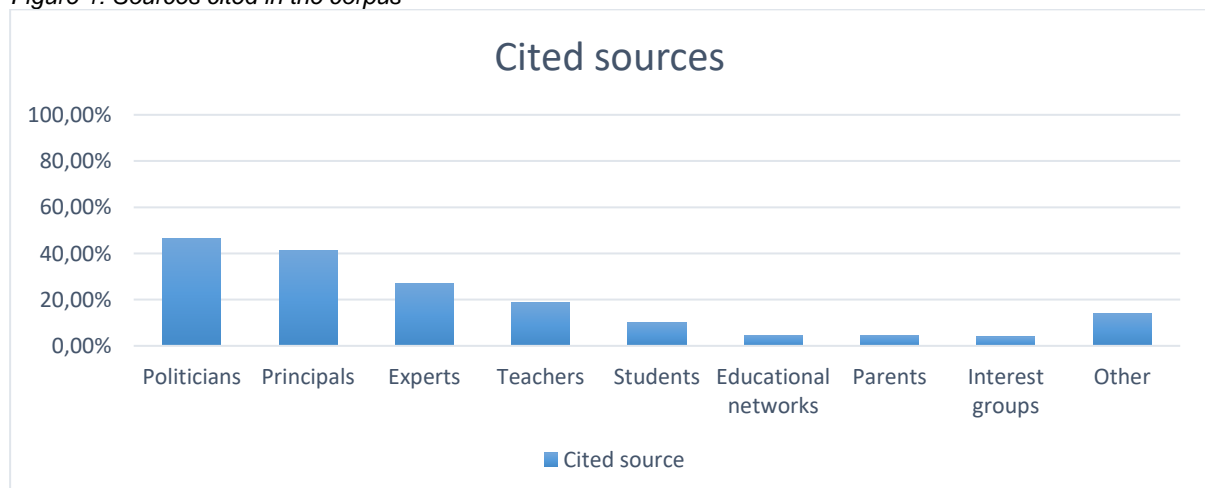
Unsurprisingly, the corpus contains a number of references to specific language policy, developed by either the government, the educational networks or individual schools. Figure 2 gives an overview of those references. As can be seen in Figure X, the policy issue most frequently touched on is immersion education (59.2%, n = 42). This category comprises all types of immersion education, as well as multilingual schools, but mainly consists of references to CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which is the most common form of immersion education in Flanders. The use of home language at school also received considerable attention, as a third of the corpus articles (n = 24) focussed on this issue. The attainment targets (7.0%, n = 5) and education for newcomers (4.2%, n = 3) were mentioned less often.

Figure 2: References to language policy
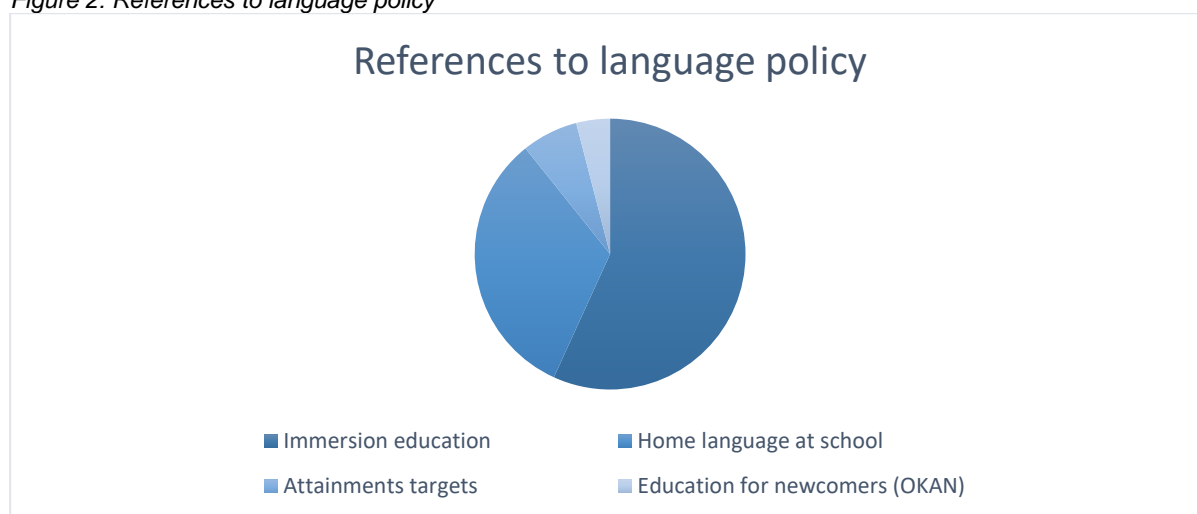
Another content element investigated in the quantitative part of the study is the terminology used to report on foreign language education and multilingualism. During the analysis, terms were lemmatized and clustered. As can be seen in Table 4, the most popular term used by journalists (and by the sources they quote) appears to be *multilingual(ism)*, followed by (variations on) *other language*. Other frequently used terms are *foreign language*, *mother tongue*, *second language* and *home language*.

Table 4: Terminology used in the corpus

English terminology (translated)	Dutch terminology (original)	n	%
Multilingual(ism)	Meertalig(heid)	85	63.0
Other language	Andere taal/anderstalig	79	58.5
Foreign language	Vreemde taal	44	32.6
Mother tongue	Moedertaal	34	25.2
Second language/bilingual	Tweede taal/tweetalig	28	20.7
Home language	Thuistaal	27	20.0
Language of instruction	Onderwijstaal	15	11.1
Own language	Eigen taal	13	9.6
First language/monolingual	Eerste taal/eentalig	11	8.1
Third language/trilingual	Derde taal/drietalig	6	4.4
New language	Nieuwe taal	4	3.0

3.2 Tone

The second research question relates to the dominant tone in the corpus. By means of the definitions described in the methodology section (pp. 22-23), each article and each headline was coded as either positive, negative or neutral (see Figure 3). As the overall majority of articles were labelled as either positive (48.23%, n = 68) or neutral (40.43%, n = 57), foreign language education and multilingualism appear to be portrayed in a generally positive way. The data relating to the headlines' tone, however, establish a more balanced picture. Two thirds of the headlines (n = 85) were found to be neutral, for example 'When the math teacher speaks French', 'Language lessons during the Easter break' and 'Minister Hilde Crevits approves of lessons in foreign language'[3]. 20% (n = 28) could be labelled as positive, including titles such as '"Aesthetics in German? It's a double win"', 'More friends if foreign mother tongue is allowed' and 'Parents association awarded for promoting languages'[4]. The remaining fifth of the headlines (n = 28) were considered negative, for instance 'KTA Gito Groenkouter: "Home language in class not a good idea"', 'Children are flunking French, but so is the teacher' and 'Nervousness about attainment targets increases: "Lower language proficiency levels imminent"'[5].

Figure 3: Tone of the corpus articles and titles
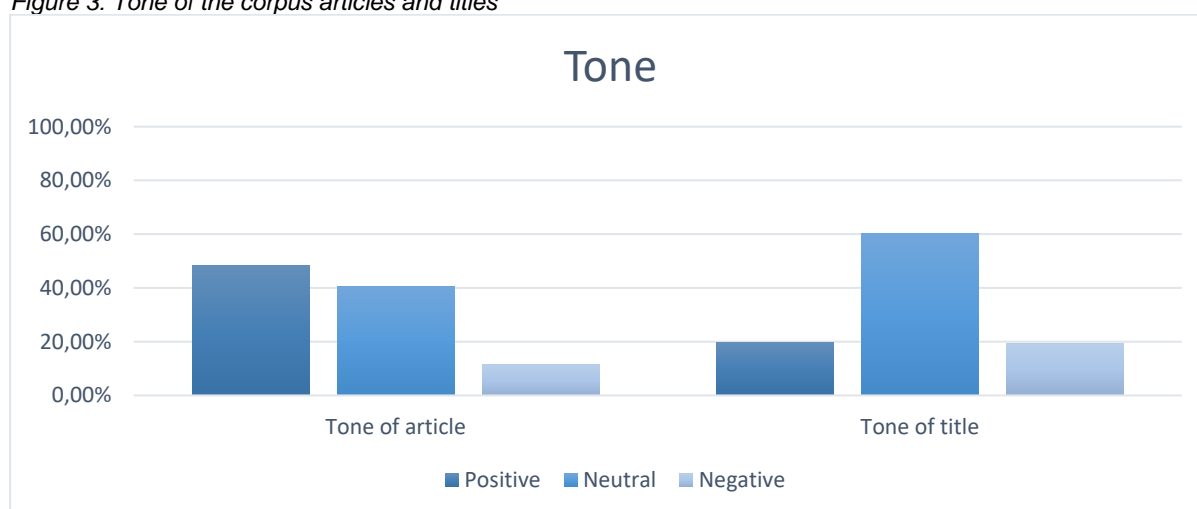
This investigation also aimed to explore how the articles' tone relate to different newspaper formats. The findings (see Table 5, p. 28) show that broadsheet newspapers adopt a rather neutral stance, with two thirds of the broadsheet articles being labelled as neutral. The tabloids, on the other hand, appear to take a more pronounced point of view, with slightly more negative articles but many more positive cases too. However, it must be taken into account that these data only indicate tendencies within the sample corpus analysed in this study. As 33% of the cells had an expected frequency below 5, it was not

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[3] The original Dutch versions of the neutral headlines are: 'Als de leraar wiskunde Frans spreekt', 'Taalles tijdens de paasvakantie' and 'Minister Hilde Crevits stemt in met lessen in vreemde taal'.

[4] The original Dutch versions of the positive headlines are: '"Esthetica in het Duits? Dubbele winst"', 'Meer vriendjes als vreemde moedertaal mag' and 'Oudercomité bekroond voor promoten talen'.

[5] The original Dutch versions of the negative headlines are: 'KTA Gito Groenkouter: "Thuistaal in klas geen goed idee", 'Kinderen gebuisd voor Frans, maar de juf ook' and 'Nervositeit over eindtermen neemt toe: "Lager niveau talen dreigt"'.

possible to perform a chi-square test (Field, 2009, p. 692). Therefore, care should be taken when interpreting these results.

Table 5: Tone of the corpus articles per newspaper format

			TONE			
			Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
NEWSPAPER FORMAT	**Broadsheet**	Count	10	19	2	31
		Expected count	15.0	12.5	3.5	31.0
		% within newspaper format	**32.3**	**61.3**	**6.5**	**100**
	Tabloid	Count	53	34	12	99
		Expected count	47.7	40.0	11.2	99.0
		% within newspaper format	**53.5**	**34.3**	**12.1**	**100**
	Broadsheet and tabloid	Count	5	4	2	11
		Expected count	5.3	4.4	1.2	11.0
		% within newspaper format	**45.5**	**36.4**	**18.2**	**100**

3.3   References to languages

The third research question is concerned with the different languages in the newspaper articles. Table 6 provides an overview of the languages and language families mentioned in the corpus. It should be noted that only explicit references to specific languages were coded. As can be seen from the table, the most prominent languages in the four Flemish newspapers are Dutch as a foreign language (59.1%, n = 75), French (58.3%, n = 74) and English (44.9%, n = 57). About a fifth of the articles referred to non-European languages, including Turkish, Arabic, Nepalese and Moroccan.

Table 6: References to specific languages

Language	n	%
Dutch as a foreign language (NT2)	75	59.1
French	74	58.3
English	57	44.9
German	19	15.0
Other Germanic languages	5	3.9
Other Romance languages	19	15.0
Classical languages	1	0.8
Slavic languages	12	9.4
Other European languages	1	0.8
Non-European languages	26	20.5

In order to investigate the relationship between different languages and the tone used in the corpus, another quantitative analysis was carried out. All references to the three most recurrent languages in the corpus were coded and labelled according to their tone, that is to say, to the tone of the references themselves (and not to the tone of the articles). The results (see Table 7, p. 29) indicate a significant association between language and tone, χ^2 (4) = 20.34, $p < 0.001$. As shown in the table, references to English were demonstrably more positive than references to the other two languages, with three quarters being labelled positively. Although the majority of references to French are positive (44.6%, n = 33), French has the highest number of negative references (18.9%, n = 14). The portrayal of Dutch as a foreign language is less pronounced, as about half of the references are coded as neutral.

Table 7: Tone of references to Dutch as a foreign language, French and English

			Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
		TONE				
LANGUAGE	**Dutch as a foreign language (NT2)**	Count	29	36	10	75
		Expected count	37.9	27.7	9.5	75.0
		% within language	**38.7**	**48.0**	**13.3**	**100**
	French	Count	33	27	14	74
		Expected count	37.4	27.3	9.3	74.0
		% within language	**44.6**	**36.5**	**18.9**	**100**
	English	Count	42	13	2	57
		Expected count	28.8	21.0	7.2	57.0
		% within language	**73.7**	**22.8**	**3.5**	**100**

3.4 Common themes

In the previous sections, the quantitative results of the content analysis have been presented. In the following pages, however, we will shift the focus onto the qualitative part of this investigation. The next part of this chapter corresponds to the fourth research question, which is concerned with the common themes in the corpus. By means of a thematic analysis, ten recurring themes could be identified, which are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Recurrent themes in the corpus

COMMON THEMES

1. Multilingualism is an asset
2. Multilingualism is a challenge
3. Content and Language Integrated Learning
4. The multilingual situation in Brussels
5. The declining interest in languages
6. Concerns about the decreasing French proficiency levels
7. Language learning through multimedia
8. Education for newcomers
9. Home languages at school
10. Multilingual upbringing

3.4.1 Multilingualism is an asset

"Multilingualism is an asset" (*Dutch: "meertaligheid is een troef"*) is probably the most frequently quoted sentence in the entire corpus. Politicians, school principals, scholars – all main actors in the area of foreign language education gladly emphasize how beneficial the knowledge of multiple languages can be to an individual. According to the newspaper articles, there are four main reasons why multilingualism should be considered an asset. First, being proficient in a number of languages is alleged to give employees a major advantage on the job market. Multilingual employees are in great demand throughout the entire country and in Brussels, the bilingual Belgian capital, more than half of the job vacancies require proficiency in two languages. One interviewee even recounted how she found a job in Barcelona, purely because of her language skills. Second, knowledge of foreign languages is considered to be an asset for anyone who aspires to pursue academic studies. Especially a good command of English is believed to be indispensable in higher education, as "lectures are often given in

English", "English is still gaining ground as a research language" and "many students apply for Erasmus exchange programmes or internships abroad". Third, on the cognitive level, multilingualism appears to have a very positive impact as well. Journalists often refer to a research project which revealed that children's IQ had risen considerably after being bilingually educated for a year. Other scholars assert that multilingual children are better at "planning", "multitasking and information processing", "focussing" and "distinguishing between important and less important matters". Further in life, a multilingually trained brain would also be better protected against cognitive diseases. For instance, the first signs of Alzheimer generally occur five years later with speakers of multiple languages. Finally, the newspaper articles describe how learning foreign languages can boost one's personal, social and cultural development. Many school principals claim that they want their pupils to become "world citizens" by introducing them "not only to new languages, but also to the culture and history of the country in question". Others argue that speaking multiple languages makes one "stronger in life", as it "opens doors to others", prepares one to live in a multicultural society and learns one how to appropriately communicate with different people in distinct situations.

3.4.2 Multilingualism is a challenge

Although multilingualism clearly has its benefits, it can pose a real challenge to society as well. The newspaper articles often refer to the pluralistic and multilingual reality we live in today and to the way in which this linguistic diversity can form obstacles. For instance, multilingualism can be very challenging for teachers. In primary education, newcomers who are not proficient in Dutch yet are sometimes placed in regular class groups. That leaves teachers with a difficult task, having to teach the entire group and pay attention to the special needs of the newcomers at the same time. In secondary schools, newcomers are usually taught in a smaller, separate group in order for them to learn Dutch. Although these special courses are entirely dedicated to newcomers, teachers sometimes seem to struggle with the lack of appropriate course materials (e.g. materials for illiterate teenagers) and the substantially increasing number of (often illiterate) pupils in their classes. The CLIL-project, during which pupils are taught a non-language-related subject in a foreign language, is also reported to demand much effort from teachers. CLIL subjects can only be taught by teachers with an excellent command (i.e. minimum CEFR C1) of a particular foreign language. Before they can start to teach, teachers have to pass an official exam. As there are no specific CLIL course materials available, teachers have to write or translate their own course materials, which can, according to interviewees, be very strenuous. "You need to be an idealist to take up this project", one CLIL teacher claimed. "I barely have spare time left, but I know our pupils will benefit from these courses." A small number of teachers also denounced the lack of support and specific training for CLIL teachers. Despite the obstacles, however, most CLIL teachers appear to be very motivated, looking forward to a new adventure and willing to take the challenge.

In addition to the difficulties teachers may face, the corpus articles also report, albeit to a lesser extent, on the problems multilingual families might encounter. When two parents have different mother tongues, which may also differ from the children's school language, the linguistic situation in a family can quickly become very complex. Experts recommend to reflect on and discuss the multilingual situation, because it can easily lead to tensions within a family. One scholar, who raised her own children in a multilingual

environment, described her experience as follows: "Bringing up children in a multilingual family was not self-evident, as many people seem to think. It was hard work, for us as parents too."

3.4.3   Content and Language Integrated Learning

One of the more frequent topics in the corpus is Content and Language Integrated Learning. Since its introduction in the Flemish secondary schools in 2014, the CLIL approach has received considerable press coverage. The corpus of this investigation is interspersed with articles relating to the implementation of the new project. Most articles are regionally oriented, focussing on individual schools who have recently introduced CLIL or are about to do so. Although the subjects (e.g. history, mathematics, biology) and the foreign languages which they are taught in (i.e. English, French or German) differ from school to school, the main narrative is the same in every article. School principals and CLIL teachers are usually very proud to offer CLIL education and sometimes even plan to expand the number of CLIL subjects. Pupils seem to be very excited about the project too, indicating that they find the CLIL courses "very pleasant" and that they find it "easier to stay focussed". The discourse on CLIL has a very positive tone, summing up its many benefits. For example, CLIL students would gain more confidence in using foreign languages and they would even master the subject matter better than in regular education forms. To stronger students, CLIL forms an extra challenge, whereas the project would simultaneously motivate their weaker peers, as pupils are not graded on their language use in class. The new approach stimulates teachers to give their lessons in a more active and visual manner, which once again positively influences pupils' educational achievements.

3.4.4   The multilingual situation in Brussels

Another topic that received considerable attention in the corpus is the multilingual situation in Brussels. The Belgian capital is officially bilingual (Dutch and French being its official languages), but in practice more than a hundred different languages are used in the city. The most recent "Taalbarometer", a large-scale investigation into the linguistic situation in the Brussels area, indicated that French, Dutch and English remain the most important languages in the city, but also that the number of other languages spoken in Brussels is on the increase. Remarkably, the position of English in Brussels seems to become more and more dominant, as there are already "twice as many people proficient in English as there are in Dutch". According to other articles, the Brussels citizens' command of French as a second language and, to an even bigger extent, Dutch as a second language appears to be declining. At the same time, the corpus contains many references to initiatives which aim to polish the image of Dutch and encourage citizens to learn the language, such as Dutch football training sessions for children, cultural activities or debate events.

In order to cope with the linguistic diversity in the city, Brussels appointed its first Minister for Multilingualism, Sven Gatz, in 2019. Journalists extensively report on his ambition to raise all Brussels children as trilingual speakers of Dutch, French and English. In order to realise his plan, minister Gatz aims to stimulate the exchange of Dutch and French speaking teachers, promote immersion education and develop bilingual teacher training programmes. Multilingual education in Brussels had already received much press attention before Gatz's appointment. For instance, a number of corpus articles focus on the call by the rectors of the Brussels universities for truly multilingual schools, as opposed to

the monolingual Dutch or French schools in Brussels offering its pupils immersion education for a limited number of subjects. The rectors denounce that the only schools offering multilingual education are "the expensive, inaccessible European schools" and claim that this would "create social exclusion". Although the initial response of the Brussels politicians to their proposal was fairly positive, it is apparent from the newspaper articles that the realisation of multilingual education in Brussels is not self-evident, as it once again touches on the community question, which remains a sensitive political issue in Belgium.

3.4.5 The declining interest in languages

A smaller recurrent theme in the corpus is the declining interest in languages. Journalists describe how the number of enrolments for language degrees at universities and language courses in adult education centres have dropped substantially during the past years. This negative tendency occurred for all classical and modern languages, including "the more popular languages such as English". A number of possible explanations were given. For instance, it is believed that fewer youngsters pursue languages studies in higher education, because their proficiency levels in secondary education are already on the decline. As a result, students would be less motivated to become a linguist. Instead of studying linguistics, students are said to be more inclined to opt for degrees in the so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Adults would be less willing to enrol in language courses at adult education centres, because of their "busy schedules".

3.4.6 Concerns about the decreasing French proficiency levels

"Lecturers are sounding the alarm bell", "the situation is disastrous" and "we find ourselves in a vicious circle" – the portrayal of French language education in the corpus is far from positive. The articles discuss the growing concerns about the French proficiency levels of pupils and students. It is reported that both in primary and secondary education, many pupils do not reach the attainment targets. As a result, many French teacher trainees start their training with an insufficient command of French. Because those few years of higher education often do not suffice for them to catch up, teacher trainers regret to state that "the people who are supposed to teach our children French do not master the language well enough themselves". Other experts claim that teachers are not confident enough to speak French in class, which is detrimental to the pupils' language acquisition.

Teachers and lecturers claim that the alarming situation is the result of the "unjust treatment of French". For instance, they strongly criticize the opportunity the catholic educational network gave their schools to replace one of the French curriculum hours by an extra hour of English. The chief executive of the catholic network responded that this was "not a choice against French" and that "schools had requested this option themselves". Schools were free to decide whether they wanted to make use of the opportunity, but it is reported that the majority of schools have done so. Other articles cover the preparations of the new attainment targets and the concerns teachers already have about them. Many teachers fear that the bar will be lowered, which would "give the signal that language learning is no longer a priority".

3.4.7 Language learning through multimedia

A smaller number of corpus articles describe how language learning does not only result from language education at school, but also from the use of multimedia. Children and youngsters often come into contact with foreign languages (English in particular) when watching tv series and movies, gaming or accessing the internet. This is believed to have a positive impact on their linguistic feeling in general and on their acquisition of specific foreign languages. For instance, journalists refer to a study which has shown that Flemish 10- to 12-year-old children already have acquired more than 3000 English words before their first English lesson at school. Experts are fairly enthusiastic about the casual and entertaining way in which multimedia enable pupils to learn new languages, but emphasize that face-to-face contact and interaction remain "important success factors" in the acquisition of a foreign language.

3.4.8 Education for newcomers

The eighth common theme is concerned with the way in which (under-aged) newcomers with a different mother tongue are integrated within the Flemish education system and, eventually, in society. In the articles about education for newcomers, there is unanimity among the cited sources, which are mainly (local) politicians and school principals, that it is vital for newcomers to learn Dutch. For instance, it is claimed that "insufficient language skills lead to learning deficits" and that "too few migrant children enter higher education, because they already fall behind in primary and secondary school". As a good command of Dutch is only beneficial to newcomers themselves and to society, initiatives supporting newcomers in their acquisition of Dutch are greatly encouraged. The corpus comprises many positive references to playful initiatives undertaken at a local level, such as extracurricular reading projects, Dutch conversation classes at school during lunch break and special summer schools.

On a regional level too, many proposals are made which aim to improve education for newcomers, for instance by the Flemish Minister for Education (i.e. Hilde Crevits and her successor Ben Weyts during the data collection period). Especially minister Weyts's proposals received abundant press attention, but they were also deeply criticized. A number of articles focus on Weyts's idea to introduce Dutch language proficiency tests for children at the end of nursery school. Children who do not meet the language requirements on the test would be placed in so-called "pull-out classes" (*"Dutch: taalbadklassen"*) for one year before starting primary education. The corpus contains many reactions of scholars disapproving of the new policy proposals. For example, experts argue that "children's linguistic development is whimsical" and that "a single test is merely a snapshot". Furthermore, they fear that the gap between native Dutch speakers and newcomers would only widen even more, as newcomers are not exposed to the rich and informal language use of their native Dutch-speaking peers if they are placed in separate classes. Experts also denounce the idea that only one year is enough for newcomers to catch up on everything and assert that further support during primary education is absolutely necessary.

3.4.9 Home languages at school

Not only the education offered to newcomers, but also the use of home languages in class is exhaustively discussed in the corpus. In a 2017 policy statement, the Flemish community educational

network declared to allow the use of home languages at school. This caused great controversy and led to a heated discussion in the Flemish parliament and in the press. Especially the members of NV-A[6] proved to be deeply dissatisfied by the community educational network's policy change. "We put in a great deal of effort to teach newcomers Dutch and integrate them, in order to provide them with chances on the job market and in society. How then can it be a good idea to let children speak their own language at school, where they can learn Dutch?", the N-VA party leader argued. The community educational network stated that their new policy of treating home languages in a more positive way was based on the outcomes of an investigation requested by the Flemish government. Journalists reported on the political debate in their articles presenting many different opinions, both in favour and against the use of home languages at school, by quoting politicians, experts and other parties involved.

The discussion is also illustrated by several corpus articles exploring how Flemish schools (including schools not forming part of the community educational network) cope with pupils' home languages. Only few schools portrayed in the corpus appear to explicitly prohibit the use of other languages than Dutch, but approaches towards home languages differ from school to school. For instance, a number of school principals claim that a ban on home languages is "counterproductive" and that they therefore "actively stimulate the use of Dutch at school" (e.g. by means of banners). Other schools take up a distinct position, focussing more on the use of home languages in class, as this approach is alleged to have "positive effects on the well-being, participation and learning achievements of children with another mother tongue". Home languages may be used in the playground, during group work or during lessons, for example to translate Dutch terms pupils do not understand. Nevertheless, a recurrent narrative throughout the discourse on the use of home languages at school is that "the language of education is and always will be Dutch".

3.4.10 Multilingual upbringing

The final recurrent theme relates to multilingual parenting and upbringing. Given the pluralistic society we live in and the numerous benefits speaking multiple languages entails, many parents aspire to raise their children multilingually. For example, parents may want to teach their children a foreign language themselves by using it at home. Experts cited in the corpus, however, are rather reluctant about this approach and advise parents to only bring up their children in a language they have an excellent command of, ideally their mother tongue. The experts state that children have to be intensely immersed in a rich linguistic environment in order to learn a language, warning that if parents are not proficient enough in a certain language, children may "take over wrong pronunciations or poor grammatical constructions". Parents should also be very consistent in their language use and should therefore thoroughly consider which language they want to use with their children.

As raising children in a multilingual context can be a difficult task, there are many initiatives supporting parents. For instance, the corpus articles refer to many information sessions about multilingual parenting or other projects such as libraries offering children's books in different languages. In addition to the projects aiming specifically at parents, there are also many initiatives taken by schools and nurseries to

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[6] NV-A is a Flemish nationalist, conservative political party that formed part of the Flemish government during the five-year data collection period.

stimulate young children's foreign language acquisition and linguistic feeling. Referring to scholars' assertion that it is better for children to start learning a second language at a young age, schools, nurseries and after-school services aim to commit to children's language acquisition potential, for instance by offering early language initiation lessons (in English or French, but also in other languages such as Afrikaans, Arabic or Turkish), organising after-school language classes or setting up exchange projects between Dutch- and French-speaking schools.

4.   Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore how foreign language education and multilingualism are represented in the Flemish press. In order to do so, a mixed-methods content analysis was performed on a corpus of 141 print newspaper articles. In this chapter, the main outcomes of the investigation will be discussed.

4.1   Main findings

4.1.1   Quantitative results

The first goal of this study was to define the main characteristics of the corpus articles. Analysis of the formal characteristics indicated that foreign language education and multilingualism were portrayed as less important matters, as most corpus articles were relatively short and only a minority appeared on the front page. In terms of content, the articles' prime focus lay on regular daytime education at a pre-primary, primary or secondary level. News coverage of language education issues in the tertiary setting was scarce, similar to what Mason and Hajek (2019) observed in the Australian press. The quantitative content analysis showed that politicians, school principals and experts were the most prominent actors throughout the corpus, as they were most frequently cited. Policy topics such as immersion education and the use of home languages at school were extensively covered, while education for newcomers was only discussed in a limited number of articles.

In the second phase of the analysis, the tone of the corpus articles and their headlines was determined. The findings revealed that most articles were written from a generally positive perspective. However, taken together with the more neutral results relating to the headlines' tone, it can be concluded that the overall representation of foreign language learning and multilingualism is rather balanced. This is consistent with earlier findings on language education depictions in the Australian press (Mason & Hajek, 2018, p. 6). Attention was also given to the relationship between different newspaper formats and the tone adopted in the articles. The analysis showed that the broadsheet articles were more inclined towards a neutral form of news coverage. In contrast, the articles originating from the Flemish tabloids took a more pronounced position, slightly more negative but much more positive too. Again, this outcome is in line with Mason and Hajek's (2018) contribution, in which Australian tabloid articles about language education were found more likely to be positive (p. 6).

Third, this investigation was concerned with the representation of different languages in the corpus. The languages most frequently referred to were Dutch as a second language, French and English. This is a logical finding as Dutch, French and English are also the most important languages in the Flemish education system[7]. More remarkable findings emerged from the analysis of the individual references to Dutch as a second language, French and English. The portrayal of English, for instance, proved to be

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[7] In Flanders, Dutch serves as the main language of education. French is a mandatory subject starting in primary education at the age of 10, but it may be offered earlier (starting from the age of 8). In secondary education, English is added to the curriculum of all Flemish pupils. English may already be taught in primary school (starting from the age of 8), but this is not compulsory. (Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, 2017; Vlaamse overheid, n.d.)

significantly more positive than the other two languages. This favourable stance towards English could be attributed to the language's international character as global lingua franca and its voguish image as language of entertainment, pop culture and media. Although the majority of references to French were positive, its depiction was markedly more negative than the other languages, especially in comparison with English. A possible explanation for this outcome may be the major differences in the extent to which the two languages form part of the Flemish culture. Whereas English is omnipresent in Flanders, occurring in advertisements, music, television series and films, contact with the French language in informal contexts is usually very scarce. Furthermore, the negative portrayal of French may also be related to the linguistic conflict that has been dividing Belgium for years. Fear of a new Frenchification of Flemish civic life may result in a more negative attitude towards the French language. Finally, the representation of Dutch as a second language seemed fairly neutral and balanced.

4.1.2 Qualitative results

In the fourth part of this investigation, the focus lay on the common themes in the corpus. By means of a thematic analysis, ten recurrent topics could be identified. When applying Ruiz's (1984) orientations to the results of the qualitative analysis, it becomes apparent that language-as-resource and language-as-problem are the central orientations in the corpus.

Overall, the resource-dimension appears to be the most prominent in the newspaper articles. Proficiency in multiple languages is frequently presented as a desirable goal with economic and social benefits, both on a personal and societal level. The resource-orientation clearly manifests itself in the news coverage of Content and Learning Integrated Learning (CLIL), a programme which aims for the development of pupils' multilingual skills. However, the Flemish version of CLIL education can be considered what Hult and Hornberger (2016, p. 41) call a "weaker form" of additive language learning, as it is not directed at speakers of all languages. In Flanders, the CLIL programme primarily aims to enhance the multilingual skills of speakers of the dominant majority language (i.c. Dutch). Pupils who are not proficient enough in Dutch are recommended to opt for the regular Dutch classes offered parallelly to the CLIL subjects. News reporting on multilingual parenting too is usually written from a resource-perspective. The many initiatives supporting parents in raising their children multilingually (e.g. information sessions, libraries' children's book collections in different languages, etc.) and projects set up by schools and nurseries to stimulate children's linguistic feeling point out that multilingual skills are certainly valued.

In newspaper articles referring to the multilingual situation in Brussels, the resource-orientation is the main underlying language ideology as well. The four Flemish newspapers extensively report on how Brussels appointed its first Minister for Multilingualism, while underlining his ambition to educate all Brussels children as trilingual speakers of Dutch, French and English. The call by the rectors of the Brussels universities for multilingual schools is based on the resource-perspective as well, as it implicitly stresses the economic and social benefits of multilingual proficiency. However, the newspaper articles also imply that the realisation of multilingual schools is a very complicated and politically sensitive matter. Resulting from the still smouldering linguistic conflict between the Dutch- and French-speaking Belgian communities, it seems that the French language is still often seen as a threat in Flanders.

Therefore, it is argued that the Flemish media discourse on multilingualism in Brussels also bears traces of Ruiz's (1984) problem-orientation.

With regard to the use of home languages at school, mixed media representations could be observed. On the one hand, the news articles are regularly written from a language-as-resource point of view, for instance when reporting on the Flemish community education network's 2017 decision to allow the use of home languages at school. The corpus includes several examples of schools dealing with pupils' foreign mother tongues in a positive way. Teachers may take advantage of the multilingual composition of their class, for instance by letting pupils with a different background introduce their peers to their language and culture. On the other hand, negative stances towards the use of home languages at school are also well represented in the corpus, often embodied by right-wing Flemish nationalist politicians. At first sight, their ideas may seem to be expressed from a language-as-right perspective. The right-wing politicians cited in the corpus believe that using Dutch – and only Dutch – at school is the best way for newcomers and children of migrants to learn the Dutch language, which gives them access to all aspects of Flemish society. For instance, the NV-A party leader emphasized that the Flemish government's efforts to teach newcomers Dutch "provides them with chances on the job market and in society". However, their ideas can also be interpreted as opposed to the right-orientation, as pupils are not granted the right to use their own language at school. Within the realm of the school, monolingualism in the dominant language (i.c. Dutch) is valued, a conviction which is strongly related to the problem-dimension (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 33).

Education for newcomers is mostly depicted from a language-as-problem perspective. Especially the policy proposals by the Flemish Minister for Education (i.e. Ben Weyts, NV-A) clearly fall into the problem-category. Weyts proposed to place children who are not proficient enough in Dutch before the start of primary education in so-called pull-out classes, where they receive intensive Dutch language courses for a year. Weyts's plan may at first sight come across as an expression of the language-as-right orientation, offering children Dutch education in order to give them chances in the Flemish education system. "You take away a year, but you give them a life", the minister claimed in the newspaper articles. However, pull-out classes are fundamentally manifestations of the problem-dimension. Not only is speaking a minority language in this context regarded as "a communicative disability to overcome", taking children out of regular classes and placing them in special class groups for newcomers also creates "social divisiveness" as the newcomers are not given the chance to interact and connect with their native Dutch-speaking peers (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 33). Therefore, it is argued that the problem-dimension, sometimes disguised as expression of the language-as-right orientation, is the second dominant language ideology in the corpus, in addition to the language-as-resource dimension.

4.2   Limitations and recommendations for further research

This thesis provides the first in-depth analysis of the representation of language, language education and multilingualism in the Flemish press. It has offered valuable insight into the way in which the Flemish newspapers portray language-related issues. Moreover, it has identified the main language ideologies

underlying the Flemish news coverage. Nevertheless, due to practical and time constraints, this study was subject to a number of limitations.

The main weakness of this investigation lies in the fact that the quantitative and qualitative content analyses were solely carried out by a single coder (i.e. the author of this dissertation). In order to measure the reliability of the quantitative results to a certain extent, a second, independent coder was asked to determine the tone of 14 corpus articles (i.e. 10% of the entire corpus) and their headlines. The results were compared and statistically processed. With regard to the headlines' tone, a "moderate" degree of interrater agreement was found. For the articles as a whole, only a "fair" agreement could be observed, but this result did not prove significant. Consequently, it is advised to interpret the results presented in this dissertation with caution.

A second limitation of this study is that not all quantitative findings could be generalised. The data resulting from the analyses did not always meet the conditions required to perform chi-square tests (e.g. the expected values should be higher than 5 in 80% of the cases (Field, 2009, p. 692)). As no other statistical tests proved suitable for the purposes of this investigation, generalisations could not always be made.

Third, the scope of this study was limited by the restricted number of newspapers forming part of the corpus. The newspaper articles analysed in this study originate from four newspapers: *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *Het Laatste Nieuws* and *Het Nieuwsblad*. Although those titles are the two broadsheets and two tabloids with the widest circulation in Flanders (Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, 2019, p. 201), an even more complete picture of language education portrayals in the Flemish press could be offered if all Flemish newspapers were represented in the corpus.

In spite of its limitations, the current study adds to our understanding of the representation of foreign language education and multilingualism in the Flemish newspapers. Nonetheless, there is still room for further research in this area. For instance, future studies could apply similar methods to a corpus of Walloon and Belgian-German newspaper articles, which would enable a comparison of language education representations and underlying language ideologies in the different Belgian regions. Furthermore, in order to establish a fuller picture of the media representation of language-related topics in Flanders, further investigations could focus on different types of Flemish news media, such as print magazines, online news media or television news programmes.

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Appendix

A. Corpus

The corpus analysed in this dissertation was submitted in a separate document.

B. Coding schedule

Content elements	Codes	
Level of education	Preschool	
	Primary education	
	Secondary education	
	Tertiary education	
	Adult education	
Type of education	Regular (daytime) education	
	Education for newcomers (OKAN)	
	Extracurricular activities	
	Learning through (online) media	
	Home language and multilingual parenting	
Cited sources	Politicians	
	Experts	
	Principals	
	Teachers	
	Students	
	Parents	
	Interest groups	
	Educational networks	
	Other	
References to language policy	Immersion education	
	Home language at school	
	Attainment targets	
	Education for newcomers (OKAN)	
Terminology	First language/ monolingual	Eerste taal/eentalig
	Second language/ bilingual	Tweede taal/tweetalig
	Third language/ trilingual	Derde taal/drietalig
	Multilingual(ism)	Meertalig(heid)
	Other language	Andere taal/anderstalig
	Foreign language	Vreemde taal
	New language	Nieuwe taal
	Mother tongue	Moedertaal
	Home language	Thuistaal
	Own language	Eigen taal
	Language of instruction	Onderwijstaal
References to languages	Dutch as a foreign language (NT2)	
	French	
	English	
	German	
	Other Germanic languages	
	Other Romance languages	
	Classical languages	
	Slavic languages	
	Other European languages	
	Non-European languages	