Multilingualism in Belgium and Switzerland

-A comparative analysis of the two countries' linguistic conflicts
and the significance of language to national identity

Maria Bech Espersen
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Thesis counsellor: Kathrine Ravn Jørgensen,
Department of International Culture and Communication Studies
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Resumé

Flersprogethed i Belgien og Schweiz – en komparativ analyse af de to landes sprogkonflikter og sprogets betydning for den nationale identitet

Belgien og Schweiz er interessante lande at sammenligne, da de begge er flersprogede føderalstater, men samtidig er meget forskellige. Efter det seneste belgiske parlamentsvalg i juni 2010 tog det de valgte politikere halvandet år at danne en koalitionsregering. Grunden til den langvarige regeringskrise var, at det belgiske politiske landskab er særdeles fragmenteret, da hvert politisk parti er delt i to søsterpartier – et flamsktalende og et fransktalende. Dette komplicerede partisystem bunder i den sproglige konflikt, som længe har eksisteret mellem Flandern og Vallonien, og som har ført til en debat om, hvorvidt Belgien er ved at gå i opløsning. Schweiz er til gengæld ikke præget af de store sproglige konflikter på trods af kulturelle og politiske forskelle mellem sprogsamfundene. Den største trussel mod flersprogetheden i Schweiz er det engelske sprogs øgede status, da det for tiden debatteres, hvorvidt det er vigtigere at lære engelsk som første fremmedsprog, end det er at lære et andet af Schweiz' fire nationalsprog.

For flersprogede lande som Belgien og Schweiz er det nødvendigt, at staten udfærdiger en sprogpolitik og implementerer denne ved hjælp af sprogplanlægning (opdelt i status-, tilegnelses- og korpusplanlægning). Den største forskel på Belgien og Schweiz ses i statusplanlægningen i de to lande. I Belgien havde kun ét sprog status, og derfor blev også kun fransk anerkendt som det eneste officielle sprog ved Belgiens grundlæggelse i 1830. Først i 1898 fik flamsk status som officielt sprog, men i praksis blev flamsk ikke anerkendt før i 1963, hvor de belgiske sproggrænser blev etablerede. Denne langvarige ulige status mellem fransk og flamsk er hovedårsagen til den sproglige konflikt i Belgien i dag. I Schweiz derimod fik de tre hovedsprog samme status som officielle sprog ved dannelsen af den schweiziske stat i 1848. Dog modtog det mindste sprog i Schweiz, rætoromansk, ikke status som hverken nationalt eller officielt sprog før meget senere. Alligevel har det betydet så meget, at de andre tre sprog blev anerkendt på samme tid, og at intet sprog derfor fik lov at opnå større status end de andre, at det i dag er grunden til, at Schweiz ikke oplever store sproglige konflikter. Statusplanlægningen har også betydet, at tilegnelsesplanlægningen i Schweiz har haft fokus på alle nationalsprogene - og ikke kun ét. Alle elever skulle lære mindst et andet

nationalsprog, og først herefter skulle de undervises i engelsk. Dette har dog ændret sig, da kanton Zürich har valgt at indføre engelsk som det første fremmedsprog i skolerne. I Belgien var tilegnelsesplanlægningen, som var påvirket af statusplanlægningen, endnu en grund til, at der var en ulige balance mellem flamsk og fransk. I Belgien kunne man først i 1930 studere på universitetet på flamsk. Indtil da var det kun muligt at læse en videregående uddannelse på prestigesproget fransk, hvilket medførte lav social mobilitet blandt flamlænderne, der oftest kun kunne tale flamsk.

Af de tre teorier om national identitet, konstruktivisme, essentialisme og etnosymbolisme, er det konstruktivisme, der bedst kan forklare Belgiens nationsdannelse. Da den fransktalende belgiske elite konstruerede den belgiske stat, valgte den fransk som det eneste officielle sprog på trods af, at flamsk blev talt af majoriteten af befolkningen. Eliten valgte fransk, datidens lingua franca, på grund af dets prestige og valgte dermed ikke tage hensyn til lavstatussproget flamsk. Konstruktivismen forklarer dette ved, at sprog kun er et redskab uden betydning for den nationale identitet. Derimod er det den etnosymbolske teori, der bedst kan forklare den schweiziske nationsdannelse, da den schweiziske elite valgte at tage hensyn til de allerede eksisterende sprog og valgte både tysk, fransk og italiensk som officielle sprog. Dette er i tråd med etnosymbolismen, som hævder, at et nationalt fællesskab ikke kan konstrueres fra oven, men i stedet bygger på en befolkning, der igennem længere tid har udviklet fælles træk, sprog og erindringer. Man kan ikke ignorere fortiden, men i stedet bygge en moderne nation op omkring de nationale myter og sprog, der allerede findes. I modsætning til konstruktivisterne betragter etnosymbolisterne sprog som en vigtig faktor for nationsdannelse.

De to vidt forskellige tilgange til nationsdannelse, sprogets betydning for den nationale identitet og sprogplanlægning har resulteret i de to meget forskellige situationer i Belgien og Schweiz i dag.

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1. Introduction

As a Dane born and raised in Denmark - a monolingual country which never had to encounter any problems with multilingualism, different language communities or linguistic conflicts - it is very interesting to look at multilingual countries whose citizens live side by side while speaking completely different languages. The question of multilingualism raises practical issues that would never be a problem in Denmark, for example: How does it work in practice when all official documents from the state must be in several languages? How do the television companies broadcast news in different languages? How do the politicians communicate in the parliament? And how does the state make sure that its citizens are able to speak together? These questions all revolve around the issue of language policy, whose main purpose is to protect and promote equality between languages. Language policies are normally implemented by the government through language planning. However, the language planning can differ a lot from country to country.

Two very interesting European multilingual countries are Belgium and Switzerland. Both countries have more than two official languages, both have official language policies and both are federal states, but that is also how far it goes with the similarities. In the case of Belgium, the Belgians have experienced many problems and conflicts regarding the cooperation - or lack of - between the different language communities. Especially the two regions Flanders and Wallonia have big problems with working together, which is caused by issues rooted deeply in the Belgian history. Also the recent government crisis in Belgium was caused by the Belgian language conflict because Belgium has no national parties but only regional parties, divided according to the two main languages French and Flemish. The two distinct party systems are the reason why it took the politicians elected in the general election in June 2010 one year and a half to form a coalition government. The parties, which are divided according to the language groups, are simply not able to agree on linguistic matters. However, in Switzerland, the situation is

very different: the four official languages in Switzerland, German, French, Italian and Romansh, never had any obvious conflicts with each other. There are of course political and cultural differences between the different language communities in Switzerland - the French-speaking part is for example much more pro-EU than the more traditional German-speaking part - but the differences are not as serious as in Belgium where they have resulted in an outright crisis. However, the recognition of the smallest Swiss language, Romansh, came very late, and multilingualism in Switzerland is a hotly debated topic at the moment, as the current debate revolves around the issue of English as lingua franca, and how big a role English should play in Swiss society and in schools. The debate about the role of English has kick-started a discussion about the relationship between the Swiss national languages and has made the Swiss people question the importance of learning a national language compared to the importance of learning English. Nonetheless, this rather new debate has not created a language conflict like in Belgium.

Therefore, it is very interesting to look at these two countries as their approaches to multilingualism and language policies have been very different and because they have now resulted in two very different situations: Belgium with its recent government crisis which was rooted in the linguistic conflict and Switzerland which apparently has avoided any major conflicts created by multilingualism. On the basis of the three main types of language planning (status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning), this thesis will look at which types of language planning are applied in Belgium and in Switzerland and whether these have an effect on the current situation in the two countries now. Furthermore, the thesis will look at if, and how, language has an influence on the national identity. Moreover, the thesis will look at which theories on national identity can best be applied to Belgium and Switzerland and explain the nation-state building in the two countries.

1.1 Research question and hypothesis

The problematic nature of multilingualism mentioned above and the situations in Belgium and Switzerland lead to the following research question:

How can the recent government crisis in Belgium, which was rooted in the language conflict, be explained in contrast to Switzerland's apparently non-existent language problems and peaceful co-existence of the different languages, and what is the role of the government language policies and their effect on the national identities in the two countries?

This leads to the following hypothesis:

The reason why multilingualism has caused a conflict in Belgium and not in Switzerland is due to the different language policies that have been introduced and implemented in the two countries and due to the fact that Switzerland, from the beginning, acknowledged all four languages whereas Belgium only acknowledged the language of the elite, namely French.

1.2 Methodology and structure

The approach to answering the question above will be through a theoretical framework in the form of various theoretical approaches and through empirical case material from Belgium and Switzerland. The theoretical framework will look at multilingual nation-states, national identity and language conflicts, as these topics are central to the research question. The main theories chosen are essentialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism. The three theories are chosen because they have very different approaches to nation building, national identity and the importance of language to national identity. It will therefore be interesting to see if any of them can be used as valid explanations in the cases of Belgium and Switzerland. The thesis will mainly focus on these theories' approach to the importance of language - both to national identity and also in the process of nation building.

Language planning and language rights are also given significant attention in this thesis. The kind of language rights a state chooses to give to its citizens is

crucial to the administration of the multilingual state. Therefore, this thesis will look at whether the territoriality principle, personality principle or a combination of the two, have been applied in Belgium and Switzerland. Moreover, language planning is important to this thesis because it shows the position of government bodies on language and thereby the importance that is placed on it from official side. Therefore, much of the empirical material is drawn from the Belgian and Swiss Constitutions, official acts and laws, and governmental statements.

The empirical material used in this thesis consists of various sources that relate to the history of Belgium and Switzerland, their foundations, the choice of official languages and the status of the languages. Furthermore, also recent and current debates on the political scene and in the media will be analysed, such as the government crisis in Belgium and the discussion about the role of English in Swiss schools. These sources all help to describe the role language plays in relation to national identity in the two countries and help emphasise the similarities and differences between them.

The thesis is structured in two theoretical chapters; the first concerned with the theories on national identity, essentialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism, and how these three theories describe the importance of language to national identity, while the second theoretical chapter is concerned with language rights and the three types of language planning. The theoretical part is followed by empirical chapters, of which the first illustrate the case of Belgium and the second Switzerland. The two chapters comprise a description of the two multilingual and federal nation-states which are the empirical cases on which this thesis will be based. The chapters will account for the history of the two nations, including the foundation of the nation-states, their constitution, their official languages and their current political situation. Hereafter, the thesis will analyse the two countries separately in the view of the theory and compare them at the end of the analysis. The last chapter will discuss the complex issue of the electoral district Brussels-Halle-

Vilvoorde in Belgium, which is an example of the current language conflict in Belgium.

The comparative method for the analysis has been chosen in order to illustrate the issue of multilingualism and the problems that may occur in multilingual states more comprehensively. By comparing two federal multilingual nation-states, an unambiguous picture of multilingual states is avoided as another perspective is being given. Furthermore, the comparative method can help clarify the fact that federal multilingual states, despite common characteristics, can be very different.

1.3 Terminology and delimitation

An important thing to clarify in this thesis is the terminology used concerning the Flemings and their language Flemish. Even though many linguists argue that it would be wrong to speak of Flemish as a separate language (as Flemish does not exist as a unitary language, but as a conglomerate of dialects of Dutch (Beheydt, 1995)), this thesis will, however, actively and exclusively use the term Flemish and not Dutch. This is a deliberate choice in order to emphasise the difference between the Dutch and the Flemings and to recognise Flanders as an independent region with its own language. Furthermore, in the vast majority of the references applied in this thesis, the term Flemish is also being used. The only place in the thesis, where the relationship between Flemish and Dutch will be discussed is in the chapter about corpus planning in Belgium.

Furthermore, the role of the Belgian minority language German will not be analysed in this thesis. The attention will be on the relationship between Flemish and French as they are the dominant languages in Belgium and as their relationship is especially problematic.

2. Language and national identity

The reason why it is so interesting to look at the importance of language is that language is so closely connected with national identity. Language does not only have an instrumental role in society as a means of communication, it also has a particularly symbolic role as a marker of identity. As British linguist Clare Mar-Molinero writes:

> "*How else can we explain the fact that although humans communicate through language, they have allowed the creation of endless barriers by sustaining thousands of mutually incomprehensible modes of communication?*" (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 3).

By all logic, it would make more sense if one *lingua franca*[1] had emerged as the only way to communicate. The answer to why there are then so many different languages in the world – also even within one nation-state – must lie in an innate need and desire to protect differences across groups and communities (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 3). Mar-Molinero says about these groups:

> "*Such communities are described in many different ways – ethnic groups, tribes, regions, nations, states, etc. – but, over the past two hundred years at least, the most common unit into which the globe is divided is that of 'nation', 'state' or 'nation-state'.* (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 3).

In all these definitions the nation, or shared community, is recognised as having certain common characteristics. These may, but need not necessarily include some or all of the following: A common language, race, religion, cultural traditions, history, law and territory (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 5).

It is therefore hardly surprising that the relationship between language and nationalism and the construction of national identity is so important. Klavs Odgaard Christensen, Ph.D. in European Studies, also writes about the importance of language to national identity as well as the two-sided function

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[1] Universal language – the most widespread second language in many countries, for which reason it is being used as a bridge language many places in the world as a bridge language many places in the world

of language: he describes language as a communication tool used for communication and understanding between people, but states that language also has a second function; it is identity-creating because language constitutes and affects our identity, including national identity, and therefore has a vital cultural and societal function (Christensen, 2004: 9).

Thus, language has a big influence on national identity, but just how big a role language plays in nation-state formation is still debated. The three main theories on national identity - essentialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism - all have different views on what national identity is, how it came into existence, what the main national symbols are and most importantly, which role language plays in national identity. The three theories will be presented in the theoretical chapter below. After the presentation of the different theories, the subsequent chapter will discuss the three theories' view on language.

2.1. Essentialism

Essentialism, also known as perennialism, is the idea that a group of people have an ethnic relationship and a common historic and cultural background which gives them a national identity, and which makes them different from other groups of people (i.e. nations). According to essentialists, a nation is a natural, preordained entity, existing since time immemorial, possessing its particular attributes, including its own history, myths, culture and language (Wright, 2000: 15). This idea about a common background emerged early and long before the modern nation-states. The essentialist claim is that some nations can even trace their origins back to the Middle Ages, or in rare cases, ancient times (Smith, 2003: 74). Moreover, essentialism is a static view marked by continuity; there is a common understanding that the nation has existed since time immemorial and will continue to exist without big changes. Therefore, essentialism has its emphasis on continuity and any change to this continuity is explained by the slow rhythm of the collective, cultural identity (Smith, 2003: 74).

Furthermore, the essentialist idea of a nation is based on ethnicity, which means that it is the right of blood (Latin: *jus sanguinis*) that makes you a member of a nation. *Jus sanguinis* is a social policy by which citizenship is not determined by place of birth but by having parents who are citizens of the nation. This is also referred to as the 'blood and belonging' tradition (Wright, 2000: 14).

According to essentialism, the sources of nations and nationalism should not be found in the ideas of the elite, as seen in the constructivist idea, but in the ethnic communities' cultural phenomena such as language, customs and traditions (Smith, 2003: 137). Nations are not modern, man-made artefacts; their sources - language, traditions etc. - are instead immemorial (Smith, 2003: 137). Many of the early theorists and defenders of essentialism were German. The German Romantics argued that it was the *Volk* with its common roots and pre-existing characteristics – language, culture, religion and history – which created the nation (Wright, 2000: 15).

Language is very important to the essentialists and according to Adrian Hastings, a key advocate of this theory, it is the common language – and especially the written language – which makes a nation (Hastings, 1997: 3; Smith, 2003: 137-138). Hastings describes an ethnicity as a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language, whereas a nation is far more than that. A nation is a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity as it is formed from one or more ethnicities and possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people together with the control of specific territory and it is also identified by a literature of its own (Hastings, 1997: 3). Together with a national history of the people, an ancestral language is seen to be a prime requirement of nation-building (Wright, 2000: 17). Language is therefore a part of us and it gives us a continuous affiliation with a certain group – it defines who we are.

2.2 Constructivism

Constructivism, also known as modernism, became a dominant theory on nationalism in the 1960s and was used to describe the nationalism which was created in the 19th century when the European countries started taking the shape of the nation-states that we know today. The central element in the constructivist theory is that the nation is constructed by the elite. The nation is therefore a social construct (Smith, 2003: 111). At first, the *nation-state* is constructed and hereafter the *nation* emerges. Contrary to the essentialist idea, nations do not become states; rather states become nations, in that way reducing the importance of cultural heritage in nationalism. According to the constructivists, it was the elite within economics, culture and politics who created nationalism. The elite did this by creating rights which gave the population a sense of belonging to the state. In addition to that, national symbols were created such as national days, flags and national hymns which the population could identify themselves with (Smith, 2003: 114). Thus, the nation is built on man-made artefacts (Smith, 2003: 112). This means that the national traditions, which the populations feel attached to today, have been invented in order to unite the population. According to Eric Hobsbawm, one of the main contributors to the constructivist theory, the population is actually a victim of deliberate social manipulation (Smith, 2003: 114). Additionally, the constructivist view on nationalism is very dynamic: the nation-state is constantly changing and adapting to society. Therefore, the constructivist theory also argues that something which has been constructed, i.e. symbols, texts and nations, can be removed again and replaced by something else (Smith, 2003: 111-112).

Constructivism is a theory in strong contrast to essentialism. In constructivism, which is a form of civic nationalism, citizenship is a right for all. One becomes a citizen by the right of soil (Latin: *jus soli*), i.e. by being born within the state boundaries, or by acquiring citizenship after immigration. It is an inclusive form of nationalism, in contrast to the exclusiveness of the *jus sanguinis* of the essentialism (Wright, 2000: 18).

The constructivist idea goes against the Romantic essentialist idea of pre-existing national characteristics because the constructivists claim that language, history and other national characteristics have been constructed in order to fit into a political state – and to make its population feel united. Also language is a social construct. Hobsbawm asserts that, contrary to essentialist myth, a people's language is not the basis of national consciousness but a cultural artefact (Hobsbawm, 1990: 111). According to Hobsbawm, many of the traditions which we think of as very ancient in their origin were actually invented comparatively recently. The invented traditions seek to encourage certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1). Constructivist Benedict Anderson even takes it further and talks about nations as *imagined communities*:

> *"(I)t is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communication."* (Anderson, 1991: 6)

One of the other main contributors to constructivism, Ernest Gellner, claims that it is in fact capitalism which required a form of nationalism which could exist within the frames of the new industrialised society which arose after the industrialisation. In the new era of capitalistic nation building, language and culture bound people together and set the foundation for a national identity. Gellner explains the importance of culture to the society:

> *"So the economy needs both the new type of central culture and the central state; the culture needs the state; and the state probably needs the homogeneous cultural branding of its flock (...). In brief, the mutual relationship of a modern culture and state is something quite new, and springs, inevitably, from the requirements of a modern economy."* (Gellner, 1983: 140).

2.3 Ethno-symbolism

The ethno-symbolic approach to nationalism was introduced by Anthony D. Smith. This paradigm is a synthesis of the traditionalist view of essentialism and the modernist view of constructivism, but is probably closest to essentialism. According to Smith, nations are neither continuously immemorial nor exclusively new, nor are they products of modernisation, and therefore Smith seeks to find a paradigm that can include this duality (Smith, 2003: 87). Thus, ethno-symbolism moves its analytical focus from external political, economical or socio-biological factors to cultural factors such as symbols, recollections, myths, values and traditions (Smith, 2003: 86).

Smith defines a nation as a population who share a historical territory, common myths and recollections, a common political culture and common rights. Smith claims that nationalism is actually a recent, modern phenomenon, but that the modern nations have been built around myths and recollections which can be dated back to the ancient times, and thereby ethno-symbolism links the consequences of modernity with an understanding of the continuing role played by cultural ties and ethnic identities (*ethnies*), which originated in pre-modern epochs (May, 2001: 71). According to ethno-symbolism, a national community is not a political construction. Instead a national community has grown from a population which has developed common traits and a common, collective memory through a longer period of time which Smith refers to as *la longue durée* (Smith, 2003: 86, 35). With *la longue durée*, Smith refers to the importance of tracing the origin of the nations over a long period of time and not only tie their existence to a particular period of history or to the process of modernisation (Smith, 1999: 10). To form a common nation takes time, and it is not until after a long period of time that the population is conscious of constituting a nation (Smith, 2003: 85). Therefore, according to Smith, the term nationalism is new. It arose at the end of the 18th century in its political sense where the state very actively contributed in creating a national

consciousness within the population through the teaching of national literature and through national symbols and flag days, and where the state would encourage the population to show loyalty and obligation to the mother country. On the other hand, the nation or the ethnic community – a population with the same name, a shared language, shared traditions and recollections and a connection to a specific territory – has existed since ancient times. Smith's theory on the balance between slow change and continuity indicates that national identity is constantly changing, but this is on the basis of the reproduction and new interpretation of symbols, traditions, myths and historical recollections (Smith, 2003: 33).

2.4 The role of language in national identity

The three theories described above all look at the concepts of nations and nationalism very differently. But also the role of language in national identity is perceived very differently depending on the theoretical point of view.

To essentialists, language is a very important factor in national identity. According to the essentialist idea, language is a part of our innate identity and affiliates us with a certain language group. It is deeply embedded in us and cannot be changed; it is a contributory factor in defining who we are. Continuity, which is very important to the essentialists when talking about national identity, is very important to the role of language as well. As the British linguist Sue Wright writes, a language is ancestral (Wright, 2000: 17), i.e. immemorial and inherited, and this continuity of the language is what it so vital to the essentialists. For essentialists, language is a clear national identity marker which, depending on the degree to which you can speak the language, can give or deny you access to the nation. Wright writes that essentialism makes language a mythical and mystical unifier, and only those who share the linguistic world view can participate in the nation (Wright, 2000: 14). Also Hastings notes that language is a very important factor in national identity and writes that a shared, spoken language is what forms an

ethnicity and later a nation when the spoken language becomes a written language, in form of literature (Hastings, 1997: 3, 12).

Constructivists consider the nation and its symbols, including language, social constructs. It means that the nation builders – the elite – can choose to promote or glorify one language to be the official language of the nation, even though the nation would hold many different languages, thereby making the other languages minority languages or even mere dialects. Mar-Molinero explains:

> "(N)ation-state builders may choose to term minority languages as 'dialects' in order to downgrade their status and importance, whilst minority linguistic communities may wish to promote their variety (or dialect) as a separate 'language' to enhance their community's sense of nation." (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 13).

According to the constructivist view, language is just a symbol and does not play a big role in national identity. It is just another cultural construction like national hymns and flag days invented to unite the people. Hobsbawm elaborates this point and stresses that language has no political potential:

> "In short, special cases aside, there is no reason to suppose that language was more than one among several criteria by which people indicated belonging to a human collectivity. And it is absolutely certain that language had as yet no political potential." (Hobsbawm, 1990: 62-63).

Also Gellner stresses the unimportance of language and the big contrast to the Romantic essentialist idea by, rather dismissively, stating that:

> "Changing one's language is not the heart-breaking or soul-destroying business which it is claimed to be in romantic nationalist literature."
> (Gellner, 1994: 60).

However, for constructivist Benedict Anderson, language does play a role in nation building. By writing down languages, making them written languages, language is being standardised. This is a central theme in the work of Anderson whose writing on nationalism gives a very prominent role to

language and in particular to written and above all, print language (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 13); (Anderson, 1991). As mentioned earlier, Anderson talks about imagined communities in which the members of these communities imagine a space which is finite and bounded, thus reinforcing the sense of *us* vs. *them* which is so crucial in the nationalist ideology (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 14). For Anderson, it is above all language, and especially print language, which provides this image of community (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 14).

According to ethno-symbolism, language plays an important role and is an important factor in nation formation. The nation has developed a common language over a longer period of time, and this shared language is important to the national identity. However, in contrast to the essentialists, the ethno-symbolists do not believe that continuity is important to language. Language is imbedded in us and can be traced back to ancient times but the continuity can be broken (Smith, 2003: 84), and the language can get a new meaning. According to ethno-symbolism, nation formation is a reinterpretation of already existing cultural motives and a reconstruction of earlier ethnic bonds and feelings (Smith, 2003: 117). In this new interpretation and reconstruction of the nation, the continuity of national symbols can be broken. Thus, the role of language can change, and the significance of a certain language can be either reduced or enhanced. The ethno-symbolists see language as a symbol. But since a language can change its meaning, it is also important to look at other symbols of collective life and not only language. Language is one out of many symbols which distinguish a nation, e.g. rituals, traditions and hymns.

To conclude, the role of language is sometimes considered important merely by its very existence, by distinguishing one speech community from another. Or its significance is in the way it represents the character and feelings of a community and links this with its past. On the other hand, others consider language as a manipulative tool of the elite, as an essential ingredient in the

deliberate construction of national identity markers (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 17).

2.5 The use of the theories

The different nationalist theories' views on language make it difficult to conclude once and for all just how important language is to national identity. According to essentialism, language is one of the main pillars of national identity and a very important marker of identity. Language is also important to ethno-symbolists because it is a symbol which is constantly reinterpreted over time and carries a lot of associations, but it is not perceived as the only *essential* element in national identity formation. Contrary to these views, the constructivists see language as a tool of the elite only needed for nation building, and in that way, language is unimportant and has almost no significance to national identity. However, the elite still has great power, as it decides which language should be the official, national language and thereby the dominating language in the nation. Nevertheless, despite the constructivist idea of language as only a tool, when discussing national identity in Europe today, national identity is closely associated with language, and this assumption has been accepted to such a degree that it has been labelled a common-sense presumption (Wilken, 2001: 158). The Danish anthropologist Lisanne Wilken (2001) writes that when the constructivists claim that the German Romantics were exaggerating the importance of language, it might as well be the constructivists who were exaggerating the *un*importance of language. Thus, the two theories, constructivism and essentialism, are very far from each other, whereas the ethno-symbolist approach is placed in the middle and is a mix of the two.

The thesis will use these different theoretical approaches on nationalism, language and national identity to see how they can or cannot be applied to the empirical material in this thesis. The theories will be used to explain the nation formation and the current linguistic and political situations in Belgium and Switzerland. Furthermore, the theories will be used to examine if

language plays an important part of the national identities in Belgium and Switzerland. As it often proves, it can be difficult to apply only one theory to practical, empirical cases. However, the thesis will use each theory to try to explain the empirical cases and thereby find out which theory has the best explanatory efficacy.

3. Multilingual nation-states

The motive for nation-state formation is to create a cultural and linguistic entity which can unite its people, and within constructivism there is a prevailing idea of unity in nation-state formation, i.e. an idea of *one language, one nation, one state.* For constructivists, to create a national sense of belonging is easier if the elite decides on one official language and thereby bases the nation-state on this one language, even though the nation may entail several languages, and therefore this monolingual ideology made by the elite was put forward as the most ideal way to construct a nation-state (Christensen, 2004: 45). However, Christensen asserts that the idea that a homogeneous nation-state with linguistic and cultural conformity is the best foundation for a harmonic and efficient society is a *myth* (Christensen, 2004: 45). According to Christensen, the principle of linguistic homogeneity, which results in monolingualism, is not the only alternative in nation-state formation: an officially declared multilingualism can be just as nationally integrating and identity creating (Christensen, 2004: 8). However, it is important that the state and its population recognise multilingualism and its advantages.

Nevertheless, in countries with several official languages, there will always be a dominating language (the *majority* language) and one or more weak languages (the *minority* languages). Multilingual countries will always be asymmetrical, i.e. one language will always be given more priority. Different factors decide whether it is a majority or minority language: It can depend on the number of people who speak the language, the status of the language or the socio-economic situation in the country (Christensen, 2004: 72).

3.1 Language contact and language conflict

In a multilingual nation-state there is a possibility that language conflicts can arise. According to Hans Peter Nelde, a Belgian-German Professor of linguistics, language may be one of the root causes of an inter-ethnic conflict, or it may be the symbol of a conflict (Nelde, 1995: 65, 69). According to Nelde's Law, which Nelde's hypothesis has been referred to, there can be no language contact without language conflict. We have yet to find a symmetrical bilingual situation, Nelde claims (Nelde, 1995: 68). When several language communities share common territory and are in close contact with each other, it can set off a tense relationship between the language communities which in some cases can lead to a conflict, typically because one language is connected with more power and prestige than the other language(s). Even so, it is also important to remain critical of the concept of language conflict, as it is not because a nation-state is multilingual that language conflicts arise. Language conflicts are a result and a consequence of other forms of conflicts in the nation-state (Christensen, 2004: 73). According to Nelde, language has a symbolic nature and is usually a secondary symbol for the underlying primary causes of conflict, such as history, religion and politics (Nelde, 1995: 69). However, saying that language is a secondary symbol does not imply that it is not important, rather it means that the language complaint is the overt sign of a number of other reasons for discontent – social, economic, cultural etc. (Nelde, 1995: 69). Secondly, Nelde asserts, language is a potent rallying call: the climax of a political language conflict is reached when all conflict factors are combined in a single symbol, namely language, and disputes in very different areas (politics, economics, education etc.) all appear under the banner *language conflict* (Nelde, 1995: 70). Thus, Nelde explains how the politicians can choose to take advantage of the symbol of language conflict:

> "*In such cases, politicians and economic leaders may choose to highlight the language conflict, disregarding the actual underlying causes, and thus continue to inflame 'from above' the conflict which has arisen 'from below',*

with the result that language assumes much more importance than it had at the outset of the conflict." (Nelde, 1995: 70).

This emphasis on language as being *the* problem obscures the more deeply rooted, suppressed problems in the areas of politics and economics. However, this idea to gather all the conflict factors under the symbol of language makes it easier for a nation to stand together (against another language), and not least it makes it easier for the politicians to take a stand on.

3.2 Language rights

A multilingual state is by many monolingual countries considered a country where the inhabitants speak more than one language, i.e. are multilingual, but in fact it means that the languages exist *side by side*, and often the inhabitants are only capable of speaking the language of their own language community. In order to be able to administratively control several official languages and to avoid conflicts among the language communities, it is necessary for the politicians to introduce language borders and language policies. In order to have a fair language policy and to give language rights to the inhabitants of the nation-state, it is important to implement a combination of the personality and territoriality principles of language rights (Christensen, 2004: 75). The *personality* principle is the principle that citizens should enjoy the same set of language rights no matter where they are in the country. The opposing principle is the *territoriality* principle: That language rights should vary from region to region according to the local majority languages. In the first principle, language rights follow *persons* wherever in the state they may choose to live. In the second, they depend on what part of the *territory* of that state persons find themselves in (Patten & Kymlicka, 2003: 29). The territoriality principle typically involves an attempt to divide a multilingual state into a series of unilingual regions in which only the local majority language is being used in a variety of public contexts. More precisely, the territoriality principle is a principle of collective language protection which ensures that a minority language, which is being spoken in

a specific region of the state, will not disappear or become extinct, despite the majority language(s) gaining more ground (Christensen, 2004: 75). But at the same time the main assumption of the territoriality principle is that unilingualism is superior to multilingualism, Denise Réaume, Professor of Law with speciality in language rights, argues (Réaume, 2003: 278). Réaume asserts that unilingualism prioritises convenience and efficiency because unilingualism in one region or state maximises ease of communication and therefore contributes to efficiency in commercial affairs and the administration of government. It keeps costs down and productivity high (Réaume, 2003: 279). So according to the territoriality principle, the purpose of language is only as a means of communication, and its convenience and efficiency can be measured. On the contrary, the personality principle cannot be assessed according to costs and benefits. Instead, language is treated as a personal entitlement: it should follow the individuals wherever they are and whatever the circumstances. This approach places the personality principle within a human rights framework (Réaume, 2003: 284).

Canada is a good example of a country that follows, to a considerable degree, the personality principle. Federal government services are made available in either English or French anywhere in the country, and parents have a right to send their children to public school in their own language (subject to the condition that there be a minimum level of demand) (Patten & Kymlicka, 2003: 29). Belgium and Switzerland, by contrast, are good examples of countries that follow the territoriality principle. With some exceptions, the two main provinces of Belgium – Wallonia and Flanders – are unilingual in French and Flemish respectively, whereas the capital Brussels is officially bilingual. In Switzerland, most decisions regarding language are made at the cantonal level, and most cantons operate unilingually in the language of their own local majority (Patten & Kymlicka, 2003: 30). However, there are also cantons with two or three official languages, but generally both Switzerland and Belgium follow the territoriality principle, which will be analysed in depth later in this thesis.

3.3. Language policy and planning

Historically, the academic discipline of language planning is dated back to the 1960s, and the principal trigger for this particular timing was the situation that arose in relation to the general decolonisation and, thereby, the widespread need in many parts of the developing world to plan and construct post-colonial states and their own national identities (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 77). Over the next 20 years, the focus of language policy and planning was the socio-political and economic consequences of language policies, e.g. languages having high or low status (Ricento, 2000: 202). In the last 20 years, the main focus has been on the loss of language domain to English and the loss of minority languages (Ricento, 2000: 204).

Sue Wright describes language policy and planning as a way to examine how the elites use language to define a group and encourage solidarity and consensus within it (Wright, 2004: 13). Furthermore, language policy and planning can analyse: *"...how the permeability of language borders is regulated (...) and how language plays a critical role in exclusion and disadvantage. It can investigate whether the group that is denied the opportunity to use its own language in key domains is denied a fundamental human right."* (Wright, 2004: 13). This fundamental human right, which Wright writes about, was also mentioned earlier by Réaume as a key element in the personality principle.

On the whole, the necessary legislation that turns language rights into reality has to be enacted at the level of national governments. Certain rights can be enshrined by international law, but the day-to-day structuring of public life is normally only affected by laws at the level of sovereign states. The specific areas where the nation-state can develop language policies and draw up legislation may include matters such as choice of official language, language requirements for citizenship, use of official or native language in court, the right to use the official or native language for instruction in schools, in the army, in the workplace, by religious bodies etc. Finally, there are policies that aim to help or hinder language maintenance or shift (Mar-Molinero, 2000:

73-74). Above all, government policies will directly apply to official and public use of language(s), but indirectly these will also have an effect on non-official and private use (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 74).

The literature discussing language policy has almost always discussed language policy and language planning together. However, a distinction can be made between the two; language policy being the decision-making and language planning being the implementation. Language policy reflects decisions and choices which, to be understood, must be put in the ideological and political context in which they are made and by whom they are made. Whereas language planning involves the means by which policy makers expect to put policies into practice (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 74). One of Mar-Molinero's main points is therefore that policy-making is not necessarily planning (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 74). If the policy is not legally binding, but only expressed as statements and principles, there is a possibility that it will not be put into practice (Christensen, 2004: 67).

3.4 Types of language planning

The various models that emerged to give a framework to language planning turned into three different types of language planning: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning.

3.4.1 Status planning

As the name indicates, status planning is to do with the status a language has in a nation. Status planning involves promoting the status of a language by encouraging its use in wider areas and in particular by the public authorities, such as the government and the judiciary. Status planning also seeks to improve people's attitudes towards a language through campaigns as well as the increased use by public figures (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 78). Status planning deals with rights and functions of the language in the society, and it is through laws and regulations that the status of the language is determined. One of the main areas within status planning is the question of whether a language has status as an official language and/or a national language

(Christensen, 2004: 67-68). If a language is only a national language, which is partly the case with Romansh in Switzerland, which will be analysed later in this thesis, it does not mean that the language will be used as a working language in the federal administration or that the political legislation will be translated to the national language (Christensen, 2004: 68). Thus, the political institutions and the employees in the administration are not obliged to use the national language. Therefore, it is important for minority languages to receive status as official languages.

3.4.2 Corpus planning

Corpus planning refers to the form of the language. This includes choice of writing systems and standardised spelling norms. Corpus planning focuses on the standardisation processes which take place during the selection and promotion of official languages. Where varieties and dialects have existed, planners have prescribed the standard norms in grammar, phonology and the lexicon (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 78). In that way, corpus planning is *normative* as the rules for "correct" use of the language is explicated (Christensen, 2004: 69). However, corpus planning is by no means value-free, as is sometimes claimed, and is an example of when covert policy decisions may in fact be taken by the language planners, rather than the government (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 78). In this sense, corpus planning is closely linked with status planning, as corpus planning often follows an agenda from the status planning. Therefore, corpus planning is not ideology-free, and linguistic and stylistic choices are made with a greater plan in mind.

3.4.3 Acquisition planning

The last type of language planning is acquisition planning and is connected to the use and organisation of language in teaching and education (Christensen, 2004: 70). Acquisition planning is a more recent category of language planning which develops aspects of status planning by focusing on how the language can be learnt and acquired. If status planning improves people's attitudes towards the use of language, acquisition planning helps them to learn it through education and use in the media (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 79).

Acquisition planning has to do with the choice of languages that are being taught and for how long, as well as which curriculum and teaching methods should be applied. Acquisition planning sees schools and educational institutions as key players in the preservation of language diversity (Christensen, 2004: 70).

3.4.4 The use of the of different types of language planning

The usefulness of dividing language planning into such categories lies in the fact that it is then possible to identify the bodies or individuals responsible for carrying out these different objectives. A programme of corpus planning will necessitate the participation and leadership of language experts, whereas status planning is more likely to be led by administrators in close contact with politicians, if not actually politicians, whereas acquisition planning is the domain of educators above all (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 79). It is implied in the depiction above that these categories of language planning are separate areas. However, it soon becomes obvious that the different forms of language planning are in fact highly inter-related. For example teaching materials (acquisition planning) require the outcome of standardisation and codification work (corpus planning), while writing systems and terminologies (corpus planning) provide for the new domains and functions promoted by status planning (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 79).

4. The two cases

4.1 Belgium

Belgium is one of the newer countries of Western Europe, having gained its independence less than 200 years ago. For the previous two millennia it was a playground and also a battleground for the great powers of Europe, and virtually every one of them held sway over it at one time or another. After coming under the rule of the Dukes of Burgundy and being under the possession of the Hapsburgs, Belgium was occupied by the Spanish (1519-1713) and the Austrians (1713-1794). Following the French Revolution, Belgium was invaded and annexed by Napoleonic France in 1795. Following the defeat of Napoleon's army at the Battle of Waterloo, Belgium was separated from France and made part of the Netherlands by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In 1830, Belgium won its independence from the Dutch as a result of an uprising of the Belgian people. A constitutional monarchy was established in 1831, with a monarch invited in from the House of Saxe-Coburg Gotha in Germany. The monarch of Belgium today is King Albert II. After the Second World War, Belgium was one of the countries that participated in the establishment of the European Union, whose administrative centre was founded in Brussels. Between 1970 and 1993, the Belgian unitary state evolved towards a federal state where the sovereignty was divided between the federation (national government), regions and communities, each with their own specific responsibilities and powers (Albrechts, 2001: 170).

There is a very clear division between the two main regions in Belgium: Flanders and Wallonia. A clear linguistic frontier runs across Belgium and divides the country into the Flemish-speaking Flanders in the north and the French-speaking Wallonia in the south. To make matters more confusing, Belgium consists all in all of three regions and three language communities, however, they are not alike. Belgium has three official languages and therefore three language communities: Flemish, French and German.

However, four *language areas* exist in Belgium because of the capital city Brussels which is bilingual (French/Flemish), however the majority (85%) are Francophone. Belgium is also divided into three federal regions: Flanders (6.2 mil. inhabitants), Wallonia (3.5 mil.) and Brussels (1 mil.), each receiving more and more autonomy. Bilingual Brussels is geographically situated in Flanders and is the capital city of the region Flanders. Namur is the capital city of Wallonia. 10 million inhabitants live in Belgium: approximately 60% are Flemish-speaking and 40% are Francophone. Less than 1% speak German (70,000).

4.1.1 Choice of official language

The liberals in Belgium led the revolution against the Netherlands in 1830, and consequently they got the political power in the new state of Belgium. The liberals were all French-speaking, and although the Netherlands had tried to introduce Flemish (a dialect of Dutch) as the administrative language in the northern part of Belgium, it could not compensate for centuries of recognition of French as a language of civilisation and culture, and French as the administrative language during the French domination. It was therefore decided that the official language in Belgium should be French. This happened without any significant protests from the Flemings. The Flemish-speakers, who actually made up the largest proportion of the population, therefore had to learn a foreign language if they wanted to understand their employer, doctor, judge, etc. In the 19th century national movements found ground around Europe, and also the Flemish population began to become aware of their situation and demanded Flemish as an administrative and teaching language in Flanders. In 1898 came a decisive reform which officially and formally equalised Flemish and French. In practice, however, Flemish was not recognised as an official language until much later. It was not until the 1960s, when the Belgian language borders were made, that Flemish actually received equal status.

4.1.2 Language borders

The Belgian language borders were created in 1962-63, and it was decided that if a municipality's majority was French-speaking, the status of the municipality and the administrative language would be French - and vice versa. Except for Brussels, all regions and municipalities are still officially monolingual. The language borders became permanent and could not be changed, not even by a new language majority. This has created a big conflict in the suburb of Brussels, Halle-Vilvoorde, where the majority speaks French but as the district is technically situated in Flanders, Flemish politicians want the district to be placed under the Flemish electoral district. Right now bilingual rights exist in Halle-Vilvoorde which means that it is possible to vote for both French-speaking and Flemish-speaking parties. However, by changing the status of the district to Flemish, it would mean that the French-speaking inhabitants, who live in a country where it is mandatory to vote[2], would have to vote for Flemish politicians whom they would not be able to understand. This complicated and problematic issue will be elaborated on later.

4.1.3 Uneven economic balance

Aside from having two different languages, the relationship between Flanders and Wallonia is tense. Especially the Flemings are dissatisfied and feel that they would be better off without Wallonia. This has to do with the amount of money that Flanders transfers to Wallonia each year to support Wallonia economically, because Wallonia is less prosperous than Flanders. It used to be different: up until the 1960s, Wallonia was very successful with coal and steel production. While Wallonia had the coal and minerals, Flanders only had agriculture. However, when the coal industry shrank due to the growing oil business, a great number of Walloons lost their jobs, and the heavy industry was phased out. This also meant a shift in the economic balance between Wallonia and Flanders, as Flanders with its ports could

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[2] Belgium has the oldest existing compulsory voting system, introduced in 1892. People aged 18 or over who do not vote face a moderate fine or, if they fail to vote in at least four elections, they can lose the right to vote for 10 years. Non-voters also face difficulties getting a job in the public sector (Frankal, 2005).

profit from the increasing trade with oil. Today there is a big biotechnical and medical industry in Flanders. Flanders' unemployment level equals only half of that of Wallonia. The southern region continues a difficult transition out of sunset industries (mainly coal and steel), while sunrise industries (chemicals, high-tech, and services) dominate in Flanders (US Bureau of European Affairs, 2011). This has created a gap between the two regions, as Wallonia feels overrun by Flanders. Furthermore, Flanders is dissatisfied by having to transfer money to Wallonia.

4.1.4 Status quo

In late 2011 a solution was finally found to the political government crisis. Since the latest parliamentary election in Belgium on 13 June 2010, the different political parties were not able to form a coalition government. The separatist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) emerged as the largest single grouping from the election, although the French and Flemish Socialists put together had more seats overall. The fractured political landscape left negotiations to form a new government virtually deadlocked, and the country still did not have a government more than a year after the election, which led to a world record in the number of days a country has been without a government after a democratic election (BBC News, 2011). In May 2011 Belgium's King Albert II asked Elio Di Rupo, the frontline person from the French-speaking Socialist party, to make a new attempt - number eight since the election - to form a government. On 5 December 2011, one and a half years after the election, a coalition government was finally formed, but mostly because the parties were under pressure due to large debts on the national budget which called for a political budget-cutting reform which required a government capable of decisive action. The new government consists of no less than 6 parties with Elio di Rupo as new prime minister. He is the first French-speaking prime minister in 32 years (Den danske ambassade i Belgien, 23 December 2011). However, formally the Belgian prime minister is always linguistically neutral. It is far from the first time that Belgium had a government crisis, and it has become a special Belgian

'feature' that the political parties are not able to work together or even form a government after an election because of linguistic differences and the ongoing debate about increasing decentralisation.

4.1.5 Two party systems

The main reason for the world record-setting number of days without a government is the two party systems in Belgium, which are a result of the language laws from the 1960s. Today Belgium has no national parties, only regional parties. Since 1978, when the split-up of the last traditional national party took place, there have been two distinct party systems: a Flemish and a Francophone one. In the Flemish constituencies, only Flemish parties compete for votes, and as a rule they do not present any lists in the Walloon constituencies - and vice versa. Only in the region of Brussels and in the Brussels–Halle–Vilvoorde (Brussels suburb) constituency do these two party systems overlap, and Flemish as well as Francophone parties compete, at least potentially, for the same set of voters (De Winter, Swyngedouw, & Dumont, 2006: 938). Even in bilingual Brussels, all parties presenting candidates are either exclusively Flemish- or French-speaking. There is no single national party left - all parties have been split into two (plus one German-speaking party), and this is also the reason why it is so difficult to form a government coalition.

4.2 Switzerland

Switzerland's existence as a modern federal state dates back to 1848 with the adoption of the Swiss Federal Constitution. Until that time, Switzerland was not a real state, but a confederation: a loose alliance of autonomous cantons whose degree of cooperation with each other varied through time. In its early phases, the Swiss Confederation was an alliance among the valley communities of the central Alps. The original defensive alliance of 1291, which is nowadays commemorated as the birth of the Swiss state, comprised only three cantons, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. In the following century the alliance system was extended with five more cantons, among these the towns of Zurich and Bern. A further period of expansion in the late 15th century saw the admission of five more cantons, among these Fribourg and Basel. These 13 cantons were to constitute the political framework of Switzerland until the collapse of the Old Confederation before the Napoleonic armies in 1798. Linguistic diversity was hardly significant in this early period. The first leagues were alliances of German-speaking territories, and German remained the only official language of the Confederation up to 1798. Of the 13 cantons of the Old Confederation, only Fribourg had any significant French-speaking population (McRae, 1998: 40). In 1798 the revolutionary French government conquered Switzerland and imposed a new unified constitution. Among other changes the new constitution created 8 new cantons or departments on a basis of equality with the old ones, including, among others, Valais and Lugano from the French- and Italian-speaking territories. Both Fribourg and Valais came under the control of their French-speaking majorities. By a decree of 20 September 1798, the laws of the Republic were to be published in the three major Swiss languages. Thus the short-lived Helvetic Republic marked the birth of official plurilingualism and linguistic equality (McRae, 1998: 40). This was, however, overthrown on Napoleon's downfall. The French revolution and the Napoleonic era undoubtedly constitute one of the most important periods of Swiss history, not least from the standpoint of linguistic relations (McRae, 1998: 41). In 1815 the Congress of Vienna fully re-established Swiss independence and

also declared Switzerland's neutrality. The cantons again resumed almost all of their former authority, and German again became the official language of the Confederation. But one crucial achievement of the Revolutionary period remained: the 6 new cantons that were included under Napoleon, among these Vaud and Ticino, remained independent, and to those were now added Geneva, Neuchâtel and Valais. Furthermore, while Fribourg was the only canton in the Old Confederation to have a substantial French-speaking population, now no fewer than six of the nine new cantons did. With the admission of the new cantons, Switzerland acquired territorial boundaries and a basic political structure that remained virtually unchanged until 1979 when canton Jura broke free of canton Bern as an independent canton, and Switzerland came to consist of its present 26 cantons. In the 1840s tensions grew between the large, urban Protestant cantons and the conservative Catholic cantons of central Switzerland, and in 1847 a short civil war, the *Sonderbund War*, broke out. However, the war was mercifully short, and it convinced most Swiss people of the need for unity, and they realised that the cantons would profit more if their economic and religious interests were merged. So in 1848 the Swiss drew up a constitution which provided a central authority while giving the cantons the right to self-govern on local issues. Bern was chosen as the federal capital, mainly because of its geographical position in the middle of the Switzerland and because of its proximity to the French-speaking area. In 1891 the constitution was revised with unusually strong elements of direct democracy which remain unique even today. Furthermore, Switzerland was not invaded during the World Wars and has since then managed to preserve its position as a neutral state.

4.2.1 The languages of Switzerland

Switzerland has 7.8 million inhabitants and 4 national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh; but they vary greatly in the number of speakers. According to numbers from the Swiss census taken in 2000, 63.7% of the total population in Switzerland have German as their main language (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2005: 7), and 19 of Switzerland's 26 cantons

are predominantly German-speaking (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011b). German is mainly spoken in the central and northern part of Switzerland. French is spoken by 20.4% (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2005: 7). French is spoken in the western part of the country called the *Suisse Romande*. Four cantons are only French-speaking: Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel and Vaud, while three cantons are bilingual, Bern, Fribourg and Valais, where both German and French are spoken (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011b). Italian is the main language for 6.5% of the population and is the only official language in the canton Ticino in the south of Switzerland. The fourth national language, Romansh, is spoken by only 0.5% of the Swiss population and is only spoken in the canton Graubünden in the east of Switzerland, which is the only trilingual canton (German, Italian and Romansh) in Switzerland (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011b).

The language rights of the Swiss languages are enshrined in the Swiss constitution. German, French, Italian and Romansh all have the status of national languages, but only the first three are official languages (Swiss Federal Constitution, 18 April 1999: art. 4 and 70). Nevertheless, Romansh is used in official communication with Romansh-speakers, who in turn have the right to use their native language when addressing the central authorities (Swiss Federal Constitution, 18 April 1999: art. 70, para. 1; Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011c).

In contrast to Belgium, Switzerland's parties are not divided by languages. The Swiss parties are national parties which are represented in all four language communities. Furthermore, the Swiss government, which always consists of 7 members, has at all times strived for a balanced representation of the main languages in its composition.[3] Normally, the Swiss government consists of 1 Italian-speaking, 2 French-speaking and 4 German-speaking members.

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[3] According to the Swiss Constitution (article 175, para. 4), care must be taken to ensure that the various geographical and language regions of the country are appropriately represented in the Swiss government.

4.2.2 Dialects

One major linguistic characteristic of Switzerland is the widespread presence of dialects. The most diversified dialects are those of the German Swiss who speak Swiss German which does not represent a single language but a wide range of local and regional dialects (McRae, 1998: 68). The continuing existence of these dialects, and their resistance to standardisation in an era of increasing mobility and communication, emphasise further the particularism of German Switzerland (McRae, 1998: 68). In all areas of German Switzerland, the regional dialects are the usual means of informal oral communication, whereas every child is instructed in standard German in school and uses it as written language. Standard German is also the language of newspapers, magazines and most books. It is also widely used in the media, and also in all official information from the federal state (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011d). People who have learnt only standard German find Swiss German very hard to understand. This is not merely a matter of accent: the grammar and vocabulary are also different (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011d). This poses a problem within Switzerland: French- and Italian-speaking Swiss who learn German at school are taught the standard language and find that they still cannot communicate with their compatriots (McRae, 1998: 73; Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011d).

4.2.3 English in Switzerland

Foreigners outside of Switzerland often assume that the fact that there are four national languages in Switzerland means that every Swiss speaks all four languages, or at least three. However, the reality is very different. The Swiss can certainly be proud of their linguistic proficiency, and many understand the other languages of their fellow countrymen very well. However, proficiency in the national languages is decreasing in favour of English, and many people only speak their mother tongue and English and then a second national language (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign

Affairs, 2011a). It is up to each canton to make its own decision about which language will be taught, and Zurich's education minister provoked a national debate in 2000 by announcing that his canton intended to make English the first foreign language, rather than French (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011a). Opponents see this decision as a threat to the unity of Switzerland.[4]

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[4] This issue will be touched upon later in this thesis.

5. Analysis of Belgium

The following chapter will, on the basis of the theories put forward in this thesis, analyse the situation in Belgium; both the historic past and the foundation of Belgium as well as the language policies, the language conflict and the recent government crisis. Thus, this chapter will look at how the theories on nationalism, the different types of language planning and the territoriality and personality principles can be used to explain the situation in Belgium.

Firstly, the chapter will look further into the conflicts in Belgium between the two regions Wallonia and Flanders. Afterwards the Belgian language laws from the 1960s will be examined more closely in light of the territoriality and personality principles. Language planning in Belgium will be analysed, followed by the case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde which will be elaborated and analysed. Hereafter Belgium's history, nation formation and current language conflict will be analysed using the theories on nationalism. Lastly the thesis will look at the lack of a Belgian identity.

5.1 The language conflict

The recent government crisis in Belgium is rooted in the language conflict between Wallonia and Flanders. As mentioned earlier, there are also political and socio-economic reasons behind the conflict because of the shift in the economic balance between Wallonia and Flanders and because of the two distinct party systems. However, the main reason for the crisis is the clear language divide between Wallonia and Flanders. A divide so clear that many observers argue that Belgium might as well split up into two separate countries. Today Flemish is the majority language in Belgium, but from 1830, when Belgium won its independence, and up until the language borders were created in the 1960s, French was the majority language in Belgium. Even though Flemish was made an official language and given formal legal equality with French in 1898, it did not receive full recognition until the 1960s (McRae, 1986: 25). This lack of recognition has resulted in the Flemings

holding a heartfelt grudge against the Walloons which still exists today and is the main cause to the language conflict.

5.1.1 The Flemish movement

The uneven status between French and Flemish made the Flemings feel neglected. The use and knowledge of French was taken for granted as it was used in all official administration. During the First World War, Flemish soldiers were put under the control of French-speaking officers, whose orders they did not understand, which led to catastrophic misunderstandings (Feilberg, 1987: 119) and (Daley, 2010). These experiences and the feeling that their culture and language were not being recognised, combined with the fact that the Flemings had become more aware of their situation, started the so-called Flemish Movement as a backlash to the French dominance. The Flemish Movement was fighting for Flemish not just to become an official language, but also to be recognised in practice and used as much as French. But it was a long battle, and the Flemings did not automatically and immediately gain the recognition and status that they were craving for. Beginning shortly after the independence, the Flemish-speaking part of the population experienced a long, slow, multi-faceted improvement of their position in Belgian society that in certain aspects continued well into the 1970s (McRae, 1986: 22).

As no Flemish identity already existed, the Flemish Movement gave the Flemings an ethnic identity based on two central values: the common language and the common 'great past'. The Flemish Movement, which had language at the heart of its struggle, thereby fostered a Flemish national consciousness (Beheydt, 1995: 51). Especially one book "The Lion of Flanders" from 1938 contributed to the creation of the Flemish identity. This book about the 'great past' of the Flemish people made the Flemish conscious of the higher value of being a Fleming (Beheydt, 1995: 56). Thus, the Flemish Movement turned into a pressure group for Flemish emancipation and for linguistic and cultural recognition in Belgium, and the Flemings attained their

goal in a peaceful and democratic way. Today Flanders is an acknowledged community and region within Belgium (Beheydt, 1995: 56). However, the mentality of the struggle persists strongly, and the Flemish Movement in the broad sense remains a potent force in contemporary Belgian life. Its consequences not only for language policy but for the very structure of the state itself can hardly be underestimated (McRae, 1986: 23). This could also be seen from the results of the latest parliamentary election in 2010 where the pro-Flemish and separatist party New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) received the most votes.

5.2 Language rights in Belgium

A big victory, if only a symbolic one, for the Flemish Movement occurred when the so-called Equality Law was introduced in 1898 (O'Neill, 2000: 116). This law was based on the *personality* principle and meant that every citizen was free to choose the language in which he or she was to be educated or to be heard by the administration, justice etc. (Beheydt, 1995: 51). However, one of the biggest triumphs for the Flemings was when the language boundaries were fixed by law in 1963. Following the *territoriality* principle the country was divided into an officially unilingual Flemish-speaking area (Flanders), an officially French-speaking area (Wallonia) and an officially German-speaking area. Brussels became an officially bilingual island in the otherwise unilingual Flemish territory. Although the language laws of the 1960s apparently settled the language question, not all problems were solved, and soon strong Flemish demands for full cultural autonomy and Walloon demands for economic autonomy (this was while the Walloon economy was still strong) were expressed (Beheydt, 1995: 52). These demands resulted in Belgium becoming a federal state in 1993. The reason why there is no single national party left and why all parties have been split into two, is also linguistic: the language conflict between the Flemings and the Walloons led to many voters supporting radical language parties, and the traditional parties reacted to this development by splitting into two independent parties, a French- and a Flemish-speaking, in 1978.

As can be seen from the points above, the two different principles on language rights, the territoriality and personality principle, have both been used over the history of time in Belgium. With the introduction of the Equality Law, the personality principle was being emphasised; the right to use the mother tongue would follow persons wherever in the state they would choose to live (Beheydt, 1995: 51). In this way, every individual person could still choose which language to use. However, as described earlier, in order to protect itself, a minority language will often choose the territoriality principle because this will ensure that the minority language will not disappear or become extinct (Christensen, 2004: 75). Therefore, towards the end of the 19th century the Flemish Movement leaders adopted the territorial principle as their new guideline and strove for a monolingual Flanders. This new stand from the Flemish movement was not surprising as gaining control over a specific territory is one the few possibilities for a minority language to defend itself (Beheydt, 1995: 51). Thus, it is understandable that the dominant Francophone group was initially fiercely opposed to this territorial principle. The French-speaking upper class in Flanders in particular was afraid of being minorised by Flemish upstarts. However, in 1963 the language laws were established based on the territoriality principle, which means that the official language today varies from region to region according to the local majority language. Belgians lose their right to speak their mother tongue unless they are situated in the region where their mother tongue is being spoken, e.g. a Fleming has no right to exercise Flemish in communication with the official administration and justice in Wallonia. It is therefore possible to conclude that Belgium's language rights are based on the territoriality principle, and that this principle has played a vital role for the Flemish Movement and for the Flemings in order to finally have Flemish recognised on the same terms as French. This linguistic division based on the territoriality principle led to the Belgian national parties being split into two which led to the political crisis. The issue of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde is also a clear example of the kind of problems that may occur when following the territoriality principle.

According to Réaume when using the territoriality principle, language is regarded only as a means of communication and as an efficient, low-cost and convenient way to administrate the national languages (Réaume, 2003: 279). However, this is not true in the case of Belgium, as the territoriality principle has been a very important factor for the Flemings to actually have their language recognised as something more than just a means of communication, but in fact as a significant language with a Flemish history and identity. For the Flemings, the territoriality principle was a way – perhaps the only way – to preserve their language. However, Réaume also argues that the main assumption of the territoriality principle is that unilingualism is better than multilingualism, which proves right in the case of Belgium. By using the territoriality principle, specific Belgian territories are made unilingual which thereby rejects the idea of multilingual territories (except for the multilingual region of Brussels). It can therefore be claimed that with the language laws of 1963, Belgium has decided that the unilingual way is the way to go. No Belgian national language exists, and there are hardly any bilingual Belgians since every language community is monolingual, and only one region is bilingual. Multilingualism is perhaps both too difficult to administrate, but also a principle which is difficult to control. If Belgium would support multilingualism and follow the personality principle, the citizens and their right to use their mother tongue would be more respected; however, it would be difficult to ensure that the status quo of the languages would be as it is today: French would perhaps lose ground since it is today no longer regarded as the universal and prestigious language it once was, or maybe the small German minority in Belgium would completely disappear because there would not be any territory borders to protect it anymore. Thus, it makes sense that Belgium has chosen to follow the territoriality principle as it is the best way to protect all three official languages. That is also why it is possible for Belgium to be a multilingual state despite the fact that the different language communities in Belgium are all monolingual.

5.3 The case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde

As mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons for the Belgian government crisis, which remained unsolved for more than a year, is the problematic issue involving the electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, situated in the suburbs of Brussels. When the language laws were established in 1963, a special regulation had to be elaborated to settle the linguistic problems of the Brussels area. As a political compromise and as a concession to the linguistic minorities along the language border and on the periphery of the Brussels area, 27 municipalities were provided with so-called 'language facilities'. In these municipalities, speakers of a language other than the official language receive different degrees of bilingual services. There are 21 municipalities with language facilities for Francophones (most notably the 6 French-dominant municipalities on Brussels' periphery that are situated in the electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde), 4 municipalities with language facilities for speakers of Flemish and 2 with language facilities for speakers of German (O'Donnell & Toebosch, 2008: 168). The language facilities in the Flemish municipalities close to Brussels mean that administrative contact continues to be possible in French and Flemish and that, at primary level, education in the mother tongue can be provided (Beheydt, 1995: 52). The language facilities imply that the Francophones in Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, even though they live in Flemish-speaking Flanders, are treated as a part of Brussels in national elections and in some judicial matters (Miller, 2010). Today in most of the Flemish language facility municipalities, there is a Francophone majority, because Brussels is expanding and many French-speaking Belgians move to the suburbs, and the language facilities, once considered a temporary measure, now contribute to the 'Frenchification' of the Brussels area (Beheydt, 1995: 52). The Flemings harbour a special grievance about the city of Brussels, for it was once predominantly Flemish, and some Flemings still hope it may yet be the capital of an independent state of Flanders. However, demographic change means that 80% of its inhabitants are now French-speakers, and this has made the Flemings all the more determined to insist on the use of Flemish in the Flemish areas around the

city (The Economist, 28 September 2002). The reason why this has become such a big political issue is the fact that the French-speaking majority in Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde vote for Brussels candidates from the French-speaking parties. The voting rights dispute in the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde district is so complicated that virtually no one understands it. Essentially, however, it gives French-speaking voters in the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde district in Flanders the ability to vote for French-speaking parties on the ballot in Brussels. This goes against the linguistic territoriality principle defended by most Flemish political parties. Historically driven by the fight against the 'Frenchification' of Flanders and in particular of Brussels, the Flemish parties consider that the borders of electoral districts should match those of the language regions, and that Francophones living in the Flemish region should integrate by speaking Flemish. French-speaking parties, on the other hand, defend the personality principle, and consider the Francophones in Flanders as a minority which should be protected and which is part of the French-speaking community. They want the electoral link between Francophones in Brussels and in the periphery to remain (Sinardet, 2008: 1019). No similar agreement exists for Flemings living in French-speaking areas, so the issue gnaws at the Flemish (Daley, 2010). The unresolved dispute continues to be a big issue in Belgian domestic politics.[5]

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[5] The issue of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde will be further discussed at the end of the thesis.

5.4 Language planning in Belgium

The language practices of Belgium have changed a lot since its independence in 1830; from freedom to constraint, from *laisser faire* to language planning (McRae, 1986: 149)**.**

5.4.1 Status planning

The Equality Law of 1898 was the first sign of status planning in Belgium. It was language policy put into practice by using language planning, because this law changed the status of the Flemish language as it was made an official language on the same terms as French. Being recognised as an official language was a very important step for the minority language Flemish. In order to receive recognition as a language, it is important that the public authorities make laws that support the minority language. In this case the Belgian politicians made an attempt to improve and secure the status of Flemish through status planning.

In order to understand why the Flemish language was so oppressed and the French language so elevated, it is important to look at the status of French in the 19th century, around the time when Belgium became an independent state. A process of 'Frenchification' of the area that would later become Belgium took place in the 17th and 18th century, when French had become the universal language of intellectual and cultivated communication throughout Europe (McRae, 1986: 294). Therefore, French was the *lingua franca* of the 19th century; it was a widespread language used internationally by diplomats and politicians, whereas there was no prestige in talking Flemish. Therefore, during the independence of Belgium in 1830, French became the official language of Belgium because the powerful elite spoke French. Furthermore, when the piece of land, known today as Belgium, was incorporated into France during the Napoleonic Wars, it was highly influenced by France and French culture. This influence stayed in Belgium and had a great impact on why French was named the official language. Furthermore, it is important to notice that after the revolution against the Netherlands in 1830, the Belgians

wanted to distance themselves from the Dutch, which was, of course, another reason to make French the official language as it dissociated them from the Netherlands and the power they had over Belgium until its independence. The new Belgian government led by French-speaking liberals introduced French as the official language without significant protests from the Flemish-speaking Flemings. This is due to the fact that they were mostly poor farmers and illiterates, whereas the bourgeoisie and elite of Belgium were French-speaking. Even the Flemish elite spoke French (Beheydt, 1995: 50). This led to a great neglect of the Flemish language despite the fact that the Flemings were the demographic majority in Belgium. In fact, the Flemings are the only oppressed linguistic majority in Europe, and despite the fact that Flemish was and is spoken by the majority in Belgium, literature has often referred to "the Flemish-speaking minority in Belgium" (Nelde, 1995: 81). The Flemings were not a demographic, but a political, sociological and psychological minority in Belgium (McRae, 1986). As mentioned earlier, multilingual countries will always be asymmetrical, and in the case of Belgium, it is remarkable that the dominating language, the majority language, was French even though in terms of population it was, and is, a minority language. In 1898, Flemish was made the second official language. However this did not actually change the status of Flemish. It was not until the 1960s, when the language borders were constituted, that Flemish actually received equal status. At the same time, French lost its status as *lingua franca* to English. Today, in general, French culture has lost a lot of the prestige it used to carry. The outcome is that many Flemish students now prefer English to French as their second language (O'Donnell & Toebosch, 2008: 164).

When the Belgian government established the language laws in 1963, it was an example of status planning, as this initiative from the Belgian politicians improved the status of the Flemish language and finally gave full recognition to the Flemish-speaking people. However, for the Flemings, the long wait to have their language accepted has created hostility among the Flemings towards the French-speakers in Wallonia.

5.4.2 Acquisition planning

The Equality Law of 1898 is also an example of acquisition planning as this law, based on the personality principle, decided that the Belgians could decide in which language he or she wished to be educated. However, the law did not exactly guarantee that both language groups could choose freely which language to be taught in. Only in primary education was it possible to be taught in Flemish. Therefore, the Equality Law, important though it was, did not immediately turn Flemish into a full-fledged national language. The largely Francophone establishment continued to use French as the only standard language, also in Flanders (Beheydt, 1995: 51). The fact that it was only possible to be taught in Flemish during primary education and not during secondary and tertiary level meant that students who only spoke Flemish could not attend university (Beheydt, 1995: 51). Only if Flemish students learnt French or came from a family who spoke French (usually the only Flemings who spoke French would come from the upper class of society), would they be able to go to university. This meant that social mobility was very poor in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, as Flemings from the working or middle class would not be able to obtain a university degree due to their lack of French skills. A great victory for the Flemish Movement was the Dutchification of Ghent University in 1930, followed in 1932 by a series of language laws concerning the use of the mother tongue in primary and secondary education in accordance with the new principle 'language of territory – language of education'(Beheydt, 1995: 52).

This again proves that also acquisition planning was asymmetrical from the beginning and did not leave the same opportunities for the Flemish-speaking as for the French-speaking. Due to the lower status of Flemish, the right to also use Flemish in education – all the way to university level and not only in primary school – was much delayed and gave French the position as the dominating language in education.

5.4.3 Corpus planning

Both Flemish and Belgian French have minor differences in vocabulary and semantic nuances from the varieties spoken in the Netherlands and France respectively. However, both languages follow the dictionaries of the original languages.

Dutch was declared the official language of the Flemish community by a decree of December 1973. This official choice has been further institutionalised by a language union treaty signed between Flanders, Belgium and the Netherlands on September 9th 1980. This Language Union has as its primary goal the development of a common language policy for Dutch in the Netherlands and in Flanders. There are, however, differences between Flemish Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch. In general, one could say that the difference between Flemish and Dutch is comparable to the difference between American English and British English. The most striking difference is in pronunciation. Yet this difference in articulation does not hamper mutual understanding (Beheydt, 1995: 49). There are some lexical differences between the two variants too, but due to the media and education, the common standard variants are becoming more generalised. The Flemings and the Dutch accept the same dictionary, *Van Dale*, and the same grammar, *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst*, as the common norm for their language. Although this norm is not officially imposed in Flanders, it seems to be largely accepted by the language community. The *Van Dale* dictionary is used as the supreme arbieter in education, and the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* is taken as the guide for grammar books in schools. However, all this does not mean that standard Dutch is spoken in all circumstances. On the contrary, local dialects are still widely in use, especially in Flanders. As a result of French having been the only official language in Belgium for a long period, the dialects of Flanders borrowed liberally from French, and even today the Flemish spoken and written in Flanders has not yet entirely shaken off the effects of interference from French (Beheydt, 1995: 49).

Just like Dutch and Flemish are very similar, Belgian French is very close to French French and usually follows the norm of official French as advised by *L'Académie Francaise*, the official French authority on the French language who publishes the official French dictionary, *Dictionnaire de l'Academie Francaise.* There are slight differences in pronunciation and in vocabulary (so-called 'belgicismes'), but in general the French community in Belgium follows the French model in its language policy. Also its most respected grammar, *Grévisse,* follows the French norms and the *Larousse* and the *Robert*, in that order, are considered the authoritative dictionaries (Beheydt, 1995: 49).

The Belgian corpus planning shows that both Flemish and Belgian French are close to Dutch and French respectively, but that there also dialectal differences, and that Flemish has been influenced by the long period when French was the sovereign language in Belgium.

5.5 The construction of the Belgian nation-state

The state and the formation of a nation-state can be explained through the three different theories on national identity: constructivism, essentialism and ethno-symbolism. When Belgium was made independent in 1830, a national identity was created by the political elite. The foundation of Belgium and the Belgian nation-state can therefore be explained by the constructivist theory. The political elite decided that French should be made the only official language of Belgium and also tried to construct a Belgian national identity in order to unite the Belgian people (O'Neill, 2000: 115). The state formation in the 19th century was marked by the idea of union, with one official language for the whole state, and it was then up to the elite to choose the official, national language. In Belgium the political elite chose French as the official language and thereby decided that the Belgian identity would be marked by French language and culture (O'Neill, 2000: 115). Constructivism therefore plays a big role when it comes to deciding the importance of a given language

for the national identity. By choosing French as the official language of Belgium, the elite made French a very important language, whereas Flemish remained a low-status language with no significance. The uneven status between these two languages was therefore caused by the elite. The Belgian elite had the power to decide which language should be the majority language, and thereby also the power to decide that Flemish should be a minority language or even just a 'dialect' (Mar-Molinero, 2000: 13).

As described earlier, the constructivists do not regard language as important to national identity but only as a tool to unite the nation. According to the constructivists, language is only a political construct with no political potential, and therefore language is not regarded as being significant. The Belgian nation-builders, the elite, did not put any emphasis on the importance of language, as the elite only chose one language and was not concerned that not all languages of Belgium (including Flemish and German) were made official languages. The Belgian elite thereby underrated the significance of making only one language the official language. The importance of language, and the identity and associations that follow with a language, was completely underestimated by the elite, and as it turned out later in Belgian history, the significance of language to national identity is in fact very important. The fact that Flemish was neglected for such a long time is the reason for the cultural and linguistic divide which exists in Belgium today. This means that the languages in Belgium are much more than just symbols and are definitely politically charged, which could also be seen in the recent political crisis. Therefore, in the case of Belgium, the theory of constructivism has failed when saying that language is merely a constructed unifier with no political potential. The construction of the Belgian nation-state can definitely be explained by constructivism as it was the elite who solely decided the official language and created national symbols like the Belgian flag and the national hymn and thereby tried to create a national identity. However, the Belgian elite forgot to take into consideration the importance of language to national identity, and the fact that the significance

of a language can change over a period of time and that when a language is being neglected, it does have a major effect on the people whose language is being ignored.

Thus, constructivism can explain the formation of the nation-state Belgium in the 19th century, the power of the political elite and the choice of French as official language, whereas it cannot explain the fact that language is now politically and culturally charged, as the constructivists have underrated the importance of language as an identity marker. Therefore, when trying to explain the current linguistic divide, the recent political crisis and the Flemish battle for recognition, the theory of constructivism fails.

5.5.1 The Flemish Movement – a constructivist movement?

Nonetheless, another example of constructivism is when the Flemish Movement established a Flemish identity in order to unite the Flemish people to stand together against the French-speaking political elite. As described earlier, they created a Flemish identity based especially on the Flemish language and the 'great past' of the Flemings (Beheydt, 1995: 51). The political movement, the Flemish Movement, constructed a Flemish identity in order to create a sense of belonging, but also to be able to force through a political agenda. In the beginning, the Flemish Movement merely wanted recognition of the Flemish language; however, over time the Flemish Movement widened its ambitions to demand complete cultural parity. It was no longer only about a demand for language recognition but also a claim to identity rooted in ethnicity. This led to the emergence of a new Flemish ethnic identity, which for the first time could be separated from Belgian identity, although to a certain extent it still formed a part of it (O'Neill, 2000: 116). The current language divide and crisis in Belgium – the *problématique belge* – stems from this creation of and shift in the Flemish identity (O'Neill, 2000: 116). The construction of a Flemish identity by the Flemish Movement is a clear example of constructivism: to unite the Flemish people and to fulfil a political goal. Yet, the Flemish Movement cannot only be analysed from a

constructivist point of view: unlike the French-speaking Belgian elite, the Flemish Movement did not underrate the importance of language as an identity marker, and this can instead be explained by the theories of essentialism and ethno-symbolism. Flemish became a clear identity marker for the Flemings, as the Flemish language evokes feelings of the Flemish history and culture. Thus, the Flemings re-invented the Flemish language as more than "just" a language, but as a language with an identity. Especially for the Flemings, language is a very important indicator of their identity, and the motto of the Flemish Movement has been and still is: "Our language reflects our culture, and our community must in turn be recognised through autonomy if not independence" (Wakely, 2002: 180-181). This indicates that the Flemish language is much more than a language, it also represents the whole Flemish culture, which was for a long time neglected, and it has led to identity being increasingly associated with language (Wakely, 2002: 181). Moreover, Flemish was seen, and used as, a clear contrast to French, and it became clear that the Flemings were everything that the Walloons were not. The two cultures could not be compared, and the Flemings had a long, historic past and strive for an independence to be proud of. Thus, language is also used for separating "us" from "them" as it can be seen between the Flemings and the Walloons.

As Michael O'Neill, Professor in Politics and European Integration, also mentions above (O'Neill, 2000: 116), the Flemish identity was based on ethnicity, which means that even though the Flemish Movement constructed the Flemish identity and made people aware of their Flemish identity, it was still an identity which was rooted in a history and a language that had already existed for a long time. The theory of essentialism can explain this; there is a Flemish *essence* which has existed since time immemorial, and this Flemish *soul* is to be found in all Flemings who all belong to the same nation. The Flemings and their identity cannot and should not be neglected because the Flemish language and culture, which have existed for a long time, belong to the Flemings and constitute them as a group. As explained earlier, the

essentialist emphasis is on ethnicity: only Flemings who can speak Flemish and have been a part of and know their history and culture can be a part of the Flemish identity. Nonetheless, the theory of ethno-symbolism is probably the theory which can best explain the creation of the Flemish identity. The Flemings have, over a longer period of time, developed a national community which is based on language, common history and recollections, but which has only recently actually taken the form of common national identity. Anthony D. Smith asserts that nations are a recent phenomenon but that the history, myths and language have existed for a long time. This also explains the emergence of the Flemish identity: earlier in 1830 when Belgium was made independent and French made the only official language, there were no big protests or uprisings from the Flemish; instead they accepted French, because the strategy of the elite to superimpose French on Flemish worked well, and the Francophone culture was embraced by the Flemish in public life and civil society alike (O'Neill, 2000: 115). But the Flemish also accepted French because there was no alternative identity. There was not yet a Flemish identity which could unite the Flemings. Certainly there were tensions from the beginning and also particular opposition to the law which established French as the sole official language, but it was not until 1840, when the Flemish Movement started the campaign for recognition of their language that a new feeling of being Flemish arose (O'Neill, 2000: 115). Afterwards, it also became a campaign for Flemish identity and culture, and this is where the Flemings started feeling particularly Flemish and being proud of their past, language and culture. Thus, the Flemish Movement and rise of the Flemish national identity in the 19th century is a great example of ethno-symbolism, and how the past of the Flemings suddenly takes on a new meaning and becomes part of a Flemish identity.

5.5.2 The elite neglected the importance of language

As described above, language is a very important factor for national identity and nation building. However, the French-speaking Belgian elite did not realise this when they constructed the Belgian state and identity. Over time,

language developed into being a very important feature in Belgium, and the mistake that the Belgian elite made by only recognising French as the official language is actually now the reason for the language conflict in Belgium. There is a Flemish past which has been ignored completely by the elite and only recognised all too late. The ethnic culture, which lies in all Flemings, has been ignored, and the constructivist elite has by no means considered the essentialist idea: that there was a pre-existing Flemish identity which should have also been taken into consideration. The theory of ethno-symbolism explains the case of Belgium very well, as this is an example of neglect of the Flemish community, which went from being a community based on language and myths, to developing into a nation with a common national identity. In that way, the Flemish language took on a new significance from being a low-status language and obtained a new status as a language which the Flemings fight for, are united in, and proud of.

Nevertheless, what is striking about the Belgian situation is its apparent lack of fit with the standard models of nationalism theory (van den Abbeele, 2001: 511). There is no single theory on nationalism which can explain the case of Belgium exactly, and the analysis above has used all three theories to analyse the case of Belgium. However, the theory of constructivism can most aptly explain the case of Belgium, its nation building and why only one language was chosen as official language. On the other hand, the theory of ethno-symbolism explains why the Belgian elite, who followed the constructivist idea, failed to make Belgium a stable and cohesive nation. Ethno-symbolism namely explains how a language is more than a tool but also contains history, myths and an identity, and the theory therefore explains the rise of the language conflict in Belgium.

Consequently, the ideal way to construct the Belgian identity was not to construct it based on only one language community and thereby excluding the two other language communities. The constructivists tend to ignore the past; however, in the case of Belgium it turned out to be an untenable

solution, even a mistake. The Belgian elite would have done a better job by constructing a nation-state but at the same time remembering and recognising the existing language communities and their historic past, and in that way also following the ideas of essentialism and especially ethno-symbolism, which offers a good combination of essentialist features united in a new, national identity.

5.6 The lack of a Belgian identity

The increased regionalisation giving more autonomy to the regions makes it hard for the political elite to continue constructing and maintaining a Belgian identity (D'Haenens, 2001: 73). Also the shift in the economic balance served to intensify the issue of linguistic and cultural parity. A steady decline in heavy industry in Wallonia brought economic restructuring to Flanders which encouraged a new regional prosperity and with it the political self-confidence to assert a renewed sense of ethnic identity. Conversely, the decline in the industry brought uncertainty to Wallonia and reactivated a long dormant sense of Walloon nationalism. Both sides of the widening cultural divide mobilised, either in pursuit or in defence of their own advantage, adding to a climate which is downgrading the idea of 'Belgian-ness' (O'Neill, 2000: 117).

The issue of 'Belgian-ness' is a much debated issue today because many commentators argue that there is in fact not a Belgian identity. According to Georges van den Abbeele, a Belgium scholar of French literature and philosophy, there is no apparent homogeneity that binds Belgium's citizens with a strong sense of communal identity based on national belonging, as there is no common language, ethnicity or shared history (van den Abbeele, 2001: 511). Moreover, Belgium is often called a state without a nation (*état sans nation*) (Wakely, 2002: 180), which in this case means a state without a *Belgian* nation, because Belgium does in fact have nations, they are just regional, and they identify as either Walloon or Flemish. And as long as there is not an even balance between the Walloons and the Flemings, neither

economically, nor socially and politically, the two nations will be unable to regard Belgian diversity and multiculturalism as something particularly Belgian which they can be proud of.

Even though the Belgian elite tried to construct a Belgian identity by creating different national symbols such as a flag, a constitution and a national hymn, the construction could not surpass the dominating and significant role of language (i.e. French and Flemish), and since there is no Belgian language, the elite has not been able to create a Belgian national feeling which can dominate the Walloon and Flemish national feelings. Furthermore, as the Belgian history is not very old, the Belgians, as a nation, do not have a long, historic past to be proud of. Only after 1830, when Belgium became an independent country, could it start building a common national identity. This, some claim, is also a reason as to why there is no great sense of Belgian national identity. In fact, the German-speaking Belgians, who only constitute 1% of the Belgian population, are often called 'the last Belgians' as they do not cultivate a separate identity but strongly support Belgian unity (Beheydt, 1995: 59). Moreover, if a national Belgian identity does exist, it is regional first and foremost - and then national: The Belgians feel either Walloon-Belgian or Flemish-Belgian. However, this is mainly a Flemish viewpoint: according to figures from a 2003 survey "Identification with Belgium and the region in Flanders and Wallonia", the number of Flemings who feel more Flemish than Belgian (23.9%) is much higher than the number of Walloons who feel more Walloon than Belgian (8.3%) (Billiet, Maddens, & Frognier, 2006: 916). Figures from a similar survey from 2007 paint the same picture: 26.9% of the Flemings feel more Flemish than Belgian, whereas only 6% of the Walloons feel more Walloon than Belgian. Instead, the number of Walloons who feel more Belgian than Walloon (22.9%), or who consider themselves only as Belgians (32.7%) is considerably higher than the number of Flemings who feel more Belgian than Flemish (17.9%) or who consider themselves only as Belgian (12.8%). The survey concludes that in Flanders there has been an increase of feeling only Flemish or more Flemish since 1995, whereas in

Wallonia there has been an increase of feeling only or more Belgian in the same period of time (Billiet, 2010). This lack of a strong, common, national identity has also been used as an argument for dividing Belgium. There is, evidently, a bigger wish from Flanders to be independent from Wallonia than vice-versa, and the Flemish nationalistic party, Vlaams Belang[6] (*Flemish Interest*), makes use of this Flemish national feeling to capture votes for their party as their main goal is to protect the Flemish language and culture (Vlaams Belang, 2011).

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[6] Vlaams Belang is a conservative and right-wing party that advocates independence for Flanders and a very strict immigration policy in order for the Flemish people to protect their language and culture. Vlaams Belang is a successor of the party Vlaams Blok which after a trial in 2004 was ruled as being racist.

6. Analysis of Switzerland

Switzerland is often portrayed as one of the most unique state constructions in European history and quoted as a success story for its handling of linguistic and cultural diversity. Moreover, most outsiders think of Switzerland as a peaceful and stable nation where the four national language regions coexist peacefully in a state where language conflicts, as seen for example in Belgium, do not seem to dominate the political agenda (Christensen, 2003: 29). There is a fair amount of truth in this description, but a closer look at the history of Switzerland reveals that in various periods there have been religious, cultural and linguistic tensions. An example is the *Sonderbund War* between the Catholics and Protestants before the construction of the Swiss federation in 1848. Furthermore, Switzerland has witnessed the emergence of a communication rift, the so-called *Röstigraben*, which originally was linked to the difficulties the Swiss have in talking with each other, but also refers to a kind of mental and cultural gap between mainly the German- and French-speaking regions on important political issues (Christensen, 2003: 30). The most illustrative example of this divide, *Röstigraben*, was the national referendum in 1992 concerning the question of whether Switzerland should join the European Economic Area. The outcome of the referendum showed a clear split between the German- and the French-speaking parts of the country, because a majority of voters in the French-speaking community voted yes, whereas the majority of the German-speaking Swiss outside Basel and Zürich, the two biggest German-speaking cities, voted no. The French-speaking community is thus more positive towards the EU and also more open to immigration and government foreign policy proposals, while in issues concerning the armed forces they reject government proposals more often than the German-speaking voters (Linder, 2010: 28; Eidgenössische Kommission für Migrationsfragen, 2011: 9). The tensions between the religious and linguistic communities in Switzerland have actually also resulted in a split. It concerned the Jura region, which was once the northern part of Switzerland's second largest canton Bern. In a struggle of more than 40 years which included riots and violence, the Jura minority - French-speaking and

Catholic - who felt discriminated against by Bern - German-speaking and Protestant - fought for separation from canton Bern and for autonomy (Linder, 2010: 29). In 1978 the split was made official when the Swiss people voted in favour of it, and the Jura region became an independent canton.

So Switzerland of course has also had problems and divides. However, as the Jura problem was settled, and because the political differences are merely differences, it has not resulted in an actual conflict as seen in Belgium. In order to understand the fairly peaceful coexistence between the language communities, this chapter will analyse the Swiss history, the language rights and language planning, and which role multilingualism plays in Swiss national identity. First, the analysis will look at language rights in Switzerland, hereafter the language planning in Switzerland will be analysed and last the Swiss national identity will be analysed according to the theories on national identity. Furthermore, the importance of language to Swiss identity and the role that language played during the foundation of the Swiss federal state will also be analysed.

6.1 Language rights in Switzerland

As stated earlier, Switzerland has four national languages, and these are defined in the Swiss Constitution in article 4. However, at the foundation of the Swiss federal state in 1848, only three national languages were enshrined in the Swiss Constitution, namely German, French and Italian. The linguistic provision of the 1848 Constitution was declared in article 109: "The three principal languages spoken in Switzerland, German, French and Italian, are the national languages of the Confederation" (McRae, 1998: 119). The important thing to notice here is that, contrary to Belgium, the three languages were put on an equal footing already at the foundation of the Swiss federal state. However, a fourth language existed, namely Romansh, spoken only in the east of Switzerland by 0.5% of the population, and the Romansh-speaking community also sought recognition of their language. But it was not until 1938, 90 years after the Constitution was written, that an important

constitutional amendment in 1938 added Romansh as a fourth *national* language, but still declared German, French and Italian to be the three *official* languages (McRae, 1998: 119). The distinction between national and official language is an important one. While the recognition of Romansh as a national language definitely has psychological and symbolic importance, the status of being an official language, however, gives certain rights and practises in the federal parliamentary, administrative and judicial spheres (McRae, 1998: 120). The request for Romansh to be recognised as a national language came from the cantonal executive of the canton of Graubünden in 1935 and was requested as an aid to Romansh in its uphill struggle for survival against the inroads of modern communication and tourism, but also as a counter to the then current wave of irredentism in Fascist Italy that had claimed the Romansh dialects as forms of Italian (McRae, 1998: 120). The recognition of Romansh as a national language was seen by some as just a symbolic gesture, especially because Romansh was not a single standardised language but a group of dialects; however as the Romansh-speaking group felt the need for this recognition, the Swiss state supported this appeal (McRae, 1998: 120). The recognition of Romansh as a national language in 1938 also marked the beginning of a period marked by a standstill in language policy-making, as article 116[7] remained unchanged until 1996. In 1996 Romansh was finally made an official language of Switzerland, however not at the same level as the three first languages. Article 116 was revised and formulated into the current article 70 which reads: "The official languages of the Confederation shall be German, French and Italian. Romansh shall also be an official language of the Confederation when communicating with persons who speak Romansh" (Swiss Federal Constitution, 18 April 1999: art. 70, para. 1). This means that Romansh is used in official communication with the Romansh-speaking community, who in turn have the right to use their native language in addressing the central authorities (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011c). However, federal legal texts, for example, will not be

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[7] Article 109 (defining the national languages of Switzerland) was changed into article 116 in 1874.

translated into Romansh. In that way, Romansh is not an official language at the same level as German, French and Italian.

In 1999 further changes were made regarding language rights in the Constitution. Article 70, paragraph 2 defines: "The Cantons shall decide on their official languages. In order to preserve harmony between linguistic communities, the Cantons shall respect the traditional territorial distribution of languages and take account of indigenous linguistic minorities." (Swiss Federal Constitution, 18 April 1999: art. 70, para. 2) This article gives the Swiss cantons the competences to independently and without intervention from the federal state define which languages shall be the official languages in a given canton, while at the same time taking into consideration the linguistic minorities (Christensen, 2004: 126).

Furthermore, the article emphasises that the fundamental linguistic principle in Switzerland is the territoriality principle. As seen above, the territoriality principle even appears in the Swiss Constitution as a written rule in article 70, paragraph 2. Every canton has the right to preserve and defend its own distinctive linguistic character against all outside forces tending to alter or endanger it. However, from the territoriality principle also follows a corresponding obligation of the citizen to adjust to the linguistic environment of the canton. The linguistic freedom of migrants is restricted to the extent that they are expected to acquire for themselves a sufficient knowledge of the local language and to enrol their children in the local schools (McRae, 1998: 122). Persons who move from one language community to another do not have the right to use the personality principle, i.e. use their mother tongue when communicating with the cantonal authorities. This is a clear example of the territoriality principle, and this principle is seen as the primary guarantee for the security of the smaller language groups and the primary foundation for Swiss linguistic peace (McRae, 1998: 122). Following the territoriality principle, the cantons have

become homogenous, monolingual units. Only in the four official bi- and trilingual cantons, Bern, Fribourg, Valais and Graubünden, does the cantonal administration apply more than one of the national languages.

However, even though the territoriality principle may be the main principle used in Switzerland, the personality principle is also being applied, as every Swiss citizen has the right to decide which of the four national languages he or she wishes to use when in contact with the *federal* authorities. The combination of the territoriality and personality principle has been crucial for the preservation of consensus between the language communities and also the reason as to why there is no obvious conflict between the national languages (Christensen, 2004: 116-117). The personality principle ensures that the individual Swiss has a fundamental linguistic right, namely to use their mother tongue when confronted with the federal authorities, whereas the territoriality principle makes sure that the official language of the canton is applied within the canton. The combination of the two principles is an important element in Swiss federalism, which must look after the interests of both the cantons and the federal state. However, as described earlier, the territoriality principle is the main principle of Switzerland, and it also shows the amount of power and autonomy that the cantons possess.

6.1.1 Switzerland is multilingual – but are the Swiss as well?

Even though Switzerland takes pride in the fact that it is a multilingual country, it does not necessarily mean that the Swiss are multilingual. The use of the territoriality principle has resulted in the homogenisation of the different cantons and decreased language contact. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that Switzerland provides a model for the organisation of a multilingual polity since the Swiss solution has been a traditional cultural-linguistic one and has followed the territoriality principle (Wright, 2000: 76). As described earlier, the territoriality principle protects languages and makes sure that the languages can survive within their limited territory. It also ensures a monolingual region and thereby rejects the idea of multilingualism (Réaume,

2003). However, the Swiss are very conscious of the need to be multilingual, and in all schools children are taught at least two national languages. It is a myth, however, that these efforts lead to widespread bi- or tri-lingualism (Linder, 2010: 27). This is because the Swiss live in monolingual cantons where the language borders are very clear, and language contact between the French-, German-, Italian- and Romansh-speakers does not happen very often. Most Swiss people rarely read newspapers or listen to news in a language other than their own, which means that they perceive politics via different media systems. When face to face with a person speaking another language, it is normal, however, to try to communicate in one of the national languages. Traditionally, German-speakers try to speak French to a French-speaker, even if their French is poor. However, today young people are increasingly using English as the *lingua franca* among themselves (Linder, 2010: 27). Yet, the Swiss are actually rather proud of the multilingual aspect of their society, and even though multilingualism requires public expenditure and fiscal redistribution in favour of the minority, this is something which the Swiss are willing to bear (Linder, 2010: 27).

6.2 Language planning in Switzerland

The following paragraphs will look at the status, acquisition and corpus planning in Switzerland. When analysing language planning in Switzerland, it is important to distinguish between the two levels of language planning, namely the federal level and the cantonal level.

6.2.1 Status planning

As described above, the three first Swiss national languages, German, French and Italian, received equal status already at the foundation of the Swiss federal state in 1848. This equality of the languages, which is inscribed in the Constitution, from the beginning of the Swiss state has without doubt limited the rise of linguistic conflicts in Switzerland. Even though German was, and still is, the majority language in Switzerland, it was not chosen as the only official language in 1848. Instead it was made very explicitly clear in the Constitution of 1848 that German, French and Italian were considered to have

equal status and function at the federal level. Having said that, Romansh, the smallest and still the weakest of the four national languages, was completely forgotten and neglected in the period from 1848 until 1938. As described above, Romansh did not receive status as national language until 1938, and had to wait until 1996 to receive status as a (quasi) official language. This late recognition of Romansh reflects the neglect of the very small language minority from the Swiss federal state. It is only within the last 20 years that attention has been paid to the status of Romansh and Italian, the other minority language in Switzerland, from the Swiss federation. This increased political awareness has resulted in a more explicit Swiss language policy due to the important revisions of the Federal Constitution in the 1990s where the former language article 116 was revised and formulated into a new article 70 in order to better protect the Romansh- and Italian-speaking minorities and at the same time avoid language shift or loss (Christensen, 2003: 35; Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011c). Paragraph 5 in article 70 in the Swiss Constitution is a clear example of this increased awareness of the smallest minority languages in Switzerland: "The Confederation shall support measures by the Cantons of Graubünden and Ticino to preserve and promote the Romansh and the Italian languages" (Swiss Federal Constitution, 18 April 1999: art. 70, para. 5). These latest political developments and explicit language policies can be seen as an important change of attitude from the federal government which not only has resulted in more economic support to the smallest minority languages but also in a growing political will to discuss the relationship between the four national language regions more openly (Christensen, 2003: 35). To emphasise this increased awareness of languages, a language law (*Sprachengesetz*) was created by the Swiss federation in 2007 in order to define the official Swiss language policy and to increase the understanding between the language communities. This is again a clear symbol of the Swiss federal state wishing to establish a more explicit language policy. Among others, the language law states that the objective of the language law is to promote multilingualism in Switzerland as a distinctive, national feature, to protect the national unity and to strengthen the language

skills of the individual Swiss in the national languages (Sprachengesetz, 5 October 2007: art. 2). So it seems as if the status of languages in Switzerland has received an increased awareness lately, but this does not mean that the status of languages has been ignored or neglected previously. The four languages are all equal in the Constitution (in spite of the special case of Romansh), and already in 1848 did the three first languages receive official and equal status, and that is a very important and significant feature of the Swiss nation: that the three major languages, German, French and Italian, all received equal status at the same time, namely at the foundation of the Swiss federation. This equality of status paved the way later on for a peaceful coexistence between the national languages of Switzerland.

Another symbolic choice or – exclusion - of languages can be seen in Switzerland's official name, which is the Latin name *Confoederatio Helvetica* ("Swiss Confederation"). In order not to symbolise any connection with any of the four national languages and in order not to emphasise one language before another, the Latin language was chosen as a neutral language. This choice also symbolises a Swiss state which wants to preserve and praise the equality of languages in Switzerland and in that way, as mentioned earlier, make multilingualism and the equality of languages a special feature of Switzerland.

A further example of Swiss status planning is the fact that the Swiss federal courts are not centralised in Bern, but are divided all over Switzerland. The Federal Supreme Court is situated in Lausanne in the western and French-speaking part of Switzerland, while the Federal Insurance Court is located in German-speaking Lucerne in the middle of Switzerland, and the Federal Criminal Court is placed in Bellinzona in the southern and Italian-speaking part, whereas the Federal Administrative Court is situated in St. Gallen in the eastern part of Switzerland. These scattered locations of course entail extra costs and long travel distances, but it is a deliberate choice from the Swiss federal state in order to show consideration for the different cantons and language communities in Switzerland.

6.2.2 Acquisition planning

As described earlier, the Swiss Constitution gives the cantons the power and autonomy to decide which languages shall be the official languages of the cantons. Furthermore, Switzerland's constitution guarantees the autonomy of the 26 Swiss cantons in educational matters. Curriculum structure and content, courses of instruction and the official language of teaching are all determined by cantonal governments. Therefore, 26 distinct educational systems coexist in this relatively small country (Hega, 2001: 206). In a country which is characterised by a strong German-speaking majority, a large French-speaking minority and two smaller minority languages, Italian and Romansh, language instruction has always played an important role, particularly at the secondary school level. All Swiss students are required to learn at least one other language than their native tongue. Traditionally, this language instruction started immediately after the transfer from primary to lower secondary education (Hega, 2001: 213). In 1975, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Education Directors (EDK), the coordinating body of the 26 cantonal ministers of education at the national level, agreed that instruction in at least one foreign language should be obligatory for all Swiss students, and that the first foreign language had to be one of the four national Swiss languages. This was decided in order to strengthen intercultural understanding among the Swiss citizens (Hega, 2001: 215). The EDK recommended that students in German-speaking Switzerland should be instructed in French as a second language, French-speaking students should learn German, Italian-speakers would have to learn either French or German, and Romansh-speakers could be instructed in German, Italian or French as their second language. However, these were only recommendations, and the cantons were and are in their own right to decide which language should be taught as the first foreign language in schools.

Language issues are further complicated by the fact that instruction in German is based on the written standard German, but most German Swiss speak one of the many regional dialects of *Schwyzerdütsch* in their everyday

lives. General instruction in German-speaking cantons is thus often conducted in the regional dialect, particularly in primary schools, making communication with French- and Italian-speakers trained in standard German as their first foreign language even more difficult. (As Romansh is a very small language, most Romansh-speakers speak German or Italian fluently and are thus bilingual and do therefore not encounter the same problem.) In fact, the German-speaking majority is accused of showing little sensitivity regarding their increased use of Swiss German dialects unintelligible for French- and Italian-speakers (Hega, 2001: 215). Another problematic matter related to the issue of standard German versus Swiss German is the fact that the German-speaking cantons consider standard German a foreign language, because Swiss pupils when entering the school system only speak a dialect of German – with a completely different grammar system and vocabulary than standard German – and therefore have to learn the grammatically correct, standard version of the German language, hardly used by German-speaking Swiss in their day-to-day conversations. Consequently, many German-speaking teachers and students consider standard German the actual first foreign language to be taught in school, thus postponing the beginning of instruction of French as a second foreign language and rejecting the proposed idea of early second language teaching (Hega, 2001: 218).

Another much debated topic is the proposal by some German-speaking cantons, most notably Zurich, that the second language should be English rather than French. This proposal is in violation with the EDK recommendations from 1975 which said that the first non-native language should be one of the three national languages. As a response to the proposal of English as a second language from Zurich in 1998, EDK made a new report which recommended that a first foreign language would be introduced at the latest in the second grade of the primary school as a compulsory subject, that a second foreign language would be taught in the fifth grade, and that a third foreign language would be added in seventh grade. The experts, however, did

not want to explicitly stipulate which language should be taught first, but rather leave that decision to the individual cantons. These recommendations will most likely lead to a majority of the cantons choosing English as the first foreign language to be taught (Hega, 2001: 222). This has already happened in Zurich; in 2000 Zurich's education minister announced that his canton intended to make English the first foreign language, rather than French (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011a). The reason to the growing interest in learning English earlier is the increasing use of English in the globalised world, and also for Switzerland's future and survival on the global stage, it is crucial to learn English before French or German. Also the pressure from children's parents and businesses in Switzerland contributes to the wish to teach English as the first foreign language. The decision of canton Zurich to make English the first foreign language provoked a national debate in Switzerland. Supporters argue that English is more useful in the world and say that parents and children are in favour of this decision, and that since motivation is an important ingredient in language learning, pupils are likely to learn English more successfully than French. Opponents see the decision as a threat to the unity of Switzerland and fear that French- and Italian-speakers will be put at a disadvantage because they will still need a good standard of German to rise in their careers within Switzerland (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2011a). It is very understandable why this topic is a much debated issue, because linguistic pluralism is a unique, Swiss feature which has an identity-creating and nationally integrating function (Christensen, 2004: 133). Changing the first foreign language from a Swiss national language to English will ultimately weaken the intercultural understanding in Switzerland.

6.2.3 Corpus planning

Corpus planning is about the standardisation of writing systems in order to promote a "correct" language use. In Switzerland, the standardisation of the minority language Romansh took place in 1982. Romansh used to be an umbrella term which would cover a group of closely related dialects.

However, Romansh was nationally standardised in 1982, and the standardised language is now called *Rumantsch Grischun* ("Romansh of Grisons"). *Grischun* is the Romansh word for Grabünden, the only canton in Switzerland where Romansh is one of the official languages. The standardised Romansh language has been slow to find acceptance in canton Graubünden. The cantonal and national governments have adopted it for government texts and since 2003 for schoolbooks, and the local media use it alongside the traditional spelling. But the opposition to the standardised language claims that the language lacks the emotional appeal of the older dialects, and many of the municipalities in Graubünden, who are responsible for choosing the language of instruction in the public schools, continue to use the local spelling. In 2011 a group, *Pro Idioms*, was founded to lobby for the reintroduction of schoolbooks in the traditional dialects (MacNamee, 6 March 2011).

The languages German, French and Italian all follow the standardised writing systems from Germany, France and Italy respectively. However, in the case of Swiss German, only the written language follows the standard German writing system. The oral language is spoken in several Swiss dialects and does not follow the standardised German writing system. Since Swiss German, unlike Romansh, has never been made into one single standardised language, it has also never become a really strong and dominating majority language and has therefore never actually posed a big threat to the other national languages as a standardised, homogenous Swiss German language otherwise would have (McRae, 1998: 70). Actually, French is the only language group in Switzerland which does not have a 'second' language in the form of a dialect (Charnley, 2002: 194). Italian-speakers speak a local dialect as well as the Lombardy dialect, but the use of dialect in Italian-speaking Switzerland is clearly limited to the private domain, and standard Italian will be used with 'outsiders' (Charnley, 2002: 194).

6.2.4 How has language planning affected the national identity?

Active language planning is the main reason as to why there are no language-related conflicts in Switzerland, as seen for example in Belgium. All three major languages in Switzerland became the official languages of Switzerland at the same time, and apart from the neglect of Romansh, it has meant that no language conflicts have arisen between the national languages. The active status planning from the Swiss federal state has made sure that all languages are equal. No language group feels downgraded, and this has resulted in the absence of interrelated conflicts among the language groups and has also helped the Swiss to embrace multilingualism and see it as a special feature of the Swiss national identity.

Acquisition planning has also contributed to the conflict-free linguistic environment in Switzerland as pupils were, until recently, taught in another Swiss national language as the first foreign language in order to increase the intercultural communication between the language communities and to make the Swiss citizens appreciate the Swiss multilingualism. However, since 2000, when the canton of Zurich decided to make English the first foreign language, there has been a heated debate whether language instruction should be aimed at the globalised world outside of Switzerland or help increase the understanding and communication among the language communities inside Switzerland. This debate can ultimately damage the communication and the good relationship among the language groups.

Also corpus planning has contributed to the linguistic peace in Switzerland, because the Swiss German dialects were never standardised into one single language. Therefore Swiss German has never become a dominating majority language which could pose a threat to the other national languages.

6.3 The construction of the Swiss nation-state

Both the theories of ethno-symbolism and constructivism can explain the foundation of the Swiss nation-state. Before the foundation of the Swiss federal state in 1848, there was no clear national feeling to unite the Swiss people. The people of the cantons represented different languages, ethnic groups and religions and had to be convinced that they should form a common nation. Only the cantons existed and with them smaller sub-nations. What the Swiss elite needed to do was to build a common nation on top of the already existing cantonal nations, as the people of the cantons felt themselves to be only from Zurich, Uri, Geneva or Tessin, with little in common with people from other cantons (Linder, 2010: 14). Therefore, it was important that the political elite in Switzerland constructed a national identity which could unite the Swiss and make them all feel like members of the Swiss state. This process can be explained by the constructivist theory. The Swiss nation-builders not only managed to integrate a loose confederation of cantons into one nation-state, they were also successful in finding and developing a Swiss model which each language community could agree on and accept, and which did not result in the rise of language-related conflicts. The Swiss model was a successful model because it was driven by a common will among the political elite at the federal level not to intervene in the sub-national political structures that had existed in the cantons prior to 1848. This acceptance of local autonomy was an important factor for the foundation of the Swiss state. Since the creation of Switzerland in 1848, the cantons have more or less had the same authority within certain areas such as culture, language and education as they had before 1848 (Christensen, 2003: 32). But besides preserving the cantonal autonomy, what did the Swiss political elite do in order to create a national identity which could unite the Swiss? First of all, the political elite drew up the Constitution, which gave rights to all Swiss, among these rights were autonomy to the cantons and language rights. The Constitution was meant to give the Swiss a sense of belonging to the state. The Swiss national identity is therefore based on the political rights, consensus and direct democracy. Hereafter the Swiss elite needed to construct a common nation, which could

give the Swiss the feeling of a collective, national identity. In order to do so, national symbols were created such as national days, the Swiss Franc, a flag and a national hymn which the population could identify with. Unlike nations such as France, Germany and Italy, Switzerland could not rely on one common culture, language or ethnicity, which were the prevailing bases of European nation-building in the 19th century. The construction of a national, Swiss identity therefore relied on elements such as national symbols, history and myths. For example, the many local battles in the old cantons to defend their independence against invasions were part of a glorious heritage that all Swiss could be proud of (Linder, 2010: 20). Additionally, history shows that the birth of Switzerland goes as far back as to 1291, where a historic alliance between the three first cantons Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden took place. This event is celebrated on the Swiss national day on 1 August, where the Swiss flag is flying, a flag which was also constructed by the elite. The myth of the Swiss birth existed already, but the celebration of it, which takes place on 1 August, was constructed by the Swiss elite in 1889. The date is inspired by the event in 1291 which is said to have taken place in early August. Also the Swiss flag, or at least the main design of the flag with the white cross, had existed since the 14th century and had been used in the Old Confederation, but the actual flag as we know it today and its official status was made official only in 1889 by the Swiss elite. Also legendary and symbolic figures such as William Tell gave life to the idea of a common Swiss culture. Even though some historians today claim that William Tell never existed and that the events in 1291 are fiction, it does not matter from the point of national identification (Linder, 2010: 20).

The way the elite re-used these myths and historic events and constructed them as new, national symbols can be explained using the theory of ethno-symbolism. According to the ethno-symbolist theory, myths and historic events change over time and obtain a new status, which is what happened to the Swiss national symbols. Many of the symbols, like the myth of the birth of Switzerland or the Swiss flag, already existed before 1848, but the elite re-

invented these symbols as new, national symbols in order to construct a common, Swiss national identity. Another example of this is the Swiss Alps. Switzerland is known as the land of the Alps, and many Swiss also take pride in their geographical position and thereby see the Alps as a part of their national identification. However, the Alps were not conveniently constructed at the foundation of Switzerland in 1848 to be a part of the Swiss identity. The Alps existed long before the construction of the Swiss state, which is an example of something that has gained a new significance over time. The Alps have always existed, but the term 'The Land of the Alps' is new and invented by the elite in order unite the Swiss and make them proud of their country and its spectacular nature. The ethno-symbolist theory thereby suggests that when constructing the Swiss nation-state, the elite looked back at what there already was and decided to use the already existing myths and historic events as new symbols. Thus, the myths and symbols were not newly invented in 1848, but were simply re-invented by the elite who used the symbols to unite the Swiss people. In that way, according to the ethno-symbolists, a national community is not a political construct since the national community existed prior to 1848. The national Swiss community did already exist as it had grown from a population which had developed common traits and a common, collective memory through a longer period of time. However, the official foundation of the political Swiss nation-state did not happen until 1848.

6.3.1 The choice of official languages

When it comes to language, the constructivists regard it as a social construct. The nation builders; the elite, can therefore choose which language(s) should be the official language(s) of the nation-state. Contrary to the Belgian elite, the Swiss political elite did not select the majority language as the official and national language. Instead they made it explicit in the Constitution of 1848 that the main languages German, French and Italian were considered to be the three national and official languages with equal status and function at the federal level (Christensen, 2003: 35). In that way, the elite wished to promote multilingualism in Switzerland. As described earlier, the Swiss elite did,

however, ignore the fourth language in Switzerland, Romansh, which did not receive linguistic rights until much later. Yet, the decision of the Swiss political elite to make the three major languages in Switzerland equal at the foundation of the Swiss nation-state has subsequently appeared to be a very wise decision as it has prevented the rise of language-related conflicts in Switzerland. The fact that the elite chose three languages instead of only one can again best be explained by the theory of ethno-symbolism. As mentioned before, the past plays a big role for the ethno-symbolists, and it also did for the Swiss elite. When constructing the Swiss nation-state, the elite did not start over new, but looked back at the past and decided to make (almost) all national languages into official languages. If the past would not have played any role to the Swiss elite, in accordance with the constructivist point of view, then only one language would probably have become the official language in Switzerland. Therefore, the constructivist theory cannot explain the Swiss choice of languages. From the essentialist point of view, the founders of the Swiss state should have made all four languages, including Romansh, the official languages of Switzerland. Furthermore, following the essentialist theory, the Swiss national identity should be rooted in a common Swiss culture and Swiss traditions. But as there is no common Swiss culture, because the cultural and linguistic traditions instead lie in the different language communities (the sub-national identities), the national Swiss identity is not marked by a common culture, but rather the political rights given to the Swiss citizens at the foundation of the Swiss state. The main marker in Swiss identity is therefore not a common Swiss culture – except for some myths and historic events – but political rights and federalism, and therefore the essentialist theory cannot explain the case of Switzerland.

6.3.2 The Swiss founders defied the trend of linguistic homogeneity
When the Swiss political elite decided to promote multilingualism by choosing three official languages, they chose an untypical way which was in contrast with the ideal of '*one people, one language, one state'* of the homogenous nation-state. By doing so, Switzerland resisted the linguistic and cultural

homogenisation which took place in the 19th century Europe (Christensen, 2003: 32). Many European nation builders in the 19th century were of the opinion that the ideal nation was based on cultural and linguistic homogeneity and would therefore construct their nation-state as a homogenous entity with one official language and one culture. This effectively served as a prototype for many states around Europe. However, in the case of Switzerland, the ideal of a homogenous nation was neither seen as necessary nor useful for integrating the four national language regions. Instead, the Swiss nation builders went in another direction by promoting official multilingualism. Therefore, Switzerland is a model cited to prove the possibility of truly multilingual political entities in Europe. It has often been cited as an instance of nation building where a common language has not been absolutely necessary (Wright, 2000: 75). Consequently, the basic idea of the creation of Switzerland was not that there was one language common to all citizens, but rather that there existed the political will to create one national community in spite of differing cultural origins and traditions (Christensen, 2003: 33).

6.3.3 Switzerland – a Willensnation

That there is a political will to be one national community with multiple languages can also be seen in the fact that Switzerland often is described as a *Willensnation*, a nation which has the will to form a collective community and sees its linguistic diversity as a unifying factor (Christensen, 2004: 90). Switzerland is characterised as a politically defined nation rather than a cultural nation because the idea of a common ethnic core, which essentialists claim make a nation, does not seem to have played a decisive role for the forming of a Swiss national identity, rather political principles and nationally declared multilingualism to a large extent symbolise the meaning of defining oneself as a Swiss citizen. However, this does not mean that there is no common Swiss culture, or that a sense of common ancestry, shared historical memories and language have not played a role in the development of the present national identity. However the cultural values such as Swiss traditions and myths seem more present at the cantonal level, whereas

different kinds of civic qualities seem to dominate on the national or federal level. Here political rights serve as a binding power and are essential for the cohesion of the nation (Christensen, 2003: 31). In that way, Switzerland is in many ways a peculiar state. The Swiss national identity is not based on a common language or a common culture, but rather on a common history and myths and on political rights, direct democracy, federalism and not least Switzerland's status as politically neutral (Linder, 2010: 16).

6.4 Multiple Swiss identities

As seen in the case of Belgium, the existence of multiple identities is a common phenomenon in nation-states around the world, especially in federal states. In Switzerland there are multiple identities too, but they are not in competition with each other. At the federal level, a pan-Swiss identity exists that not only unites all four national language groups, but is also an identity based on the political rights described above. At the sub-national level there are several different sub-national identities; in the four national language communities, in the cantons and in the municipalities, as each Swiss citizen feels an attachment and a loyalty to the local canton and local community (Christensen, 2003: 41). So the Swiss enjoy at least two kinds of identity: a multilingual Swiss national identity, linked to the state and its institutions and to an Alpine way of life, and a sub-national identity, which has more of a local or cantonal focus, often linked to the use of the official language(s) of the home canton (Barbour, 2000: 162). Furthermore, the Swiss German dialect not only gives the German-speaking Swiss a sense of attachment to their municipality and their canton, it also serves as an important marker of Swiss identity which distances the German Swiss from the neighbouring states of Germany and Austria (Charnley, 2002: 195). For the other three national languages, dialects do not have the same identifying role as seen in the German-speaking region (Christensen, 2003: 42). As already mentioned, the different identities do not compete with each other, but there is, however, a ranking among the identities: Most people in Switzerland consider themselves

citizens of their home cantons first, and Swiss citizens only second (Hega, 2001: 207).

6.5 Conflicts in Switzerland

As stated earlier, the equal status of the languages has prevented the rise of language-related conflicts like the one in Belgium between Flanders and Wallonia. However, this does not mean that there are not any conflicts in Switzerland. The latest decision from canton Zurich to make English the first foreign language has given the French-, Italian- and Romansh-speaking groups the feeling that the German-speaking cantons are giving higher priority to English at the expense of the other national languages. Secondly, the divide between the German-speaking and the French-speaking regions, known as the *Röstigraben*, also draws attention to the fact that even though the two languages coexist peacefully, there are indeed cultural and political differences between the two groups, and in political referendums these differences are highly visible and can, in the future, potentially start a conflict. Thirdly, the use of Swiss German dialects in conversations makes it very difficult for the Italian- and French-speakers to understand German Swiss because they only learn standard German in school. Fourth, there is a tendency that the minority languages in Switzerland feel that a cleavage exists between the language regions, especially between the minority language regions and the German-speaking region. Clearly, the language issue is seen as more problematic by the linguistic minorities rather than the German-speaking majority of Switzerland (Hega, 2001: 215). However, generally speaking, the current and potential conflicts are minor, and the linguistic peace as well as the absence of major language-related conflicts and also the equality of languages must be emphasised as special and admirable features of the Swiss nation-state.

7. Comparative analysis of Belgium and Switzerland

When comparing the two countries, the most striking difference is that multilingualism has not created a conflict in Switzerland, unlike in Belgium where the language conflict has also spread to the political and economic sphere. In Belgium, the elite chose only one language as an official language, which was the majority language at the time, but not spoken by the majority of the people, whereas the Swiss elite paid attention to the linguistic situation and chose three of the existing languages as official languages. Already from the foundation of the Swiss nation-state, the elite was aware of not creating a conflict between the language communities, but instead constructing a Swiss nation which could unite the different language communities (Christensen, 2004: 89). Thus, the Swiss regard their linguistic diversity as a factor that unites, rather than splits the nation. The Belgian elite, however, did not take the other languages in Belgium into consideration, but only chose French as official language. This decision laid the foundation of the current linguistic conflict in Belgium.

Another difference between the two multilingual countries is that the linguistic border in Belgium between the Flemish and the French part is very old and older than the linguistic borders in Switzerland. This means that since time immemorial there has been a clear divide between Flemish and French in Belgium. While linguistic diversity in Switzerland became politically significant only after the Old Confederation began to expand in the 16th century, it has been a characteristic of the Belgian lands from their earliest history. The Belgian linguistic frontier originated already in Roman times and has varied only slightly since the 11th century (McRae, 1986: 17). The fact that the linguistic border between Flanders and Wallonia has existed for such a long time underlines once again why the current language crisis in Belgium is so deeply-rooted and so difficult to find a solution for.

Moreover, Belgium, unlike Switzerland, has no national parties, but only regional parties that follow the language borders. The two party systems are the reason to the recent and also previous government crises in Belgium. Contrary to Belgium, the linguistic differences in Switzerland do not have any influence on the composition of the political parties. Thus, there are no Swiss parties who favour some cantons at the expense of others.

As described earlier, one of the main factors contributing to the conflict in Belgium is the change in the economic power balance between Wallonia and Flanders. The language communities in Switzerland, on the other hand, have always had an equal distribution of the economic goods. However, the economic balance is changing in favour of the German-speaking areas. Especially the area around Zurich is experiencing economic growth because of Zurich's position as economic centre, whereas the French- and Italian-speaking areas experience a relatively high unemployment rate compared to the German-speaking area (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2012).

A further difference is the role that the majority language plays in the two countries. In Belgium, the majority language French became the only official language because of its prestige and status as *lingua franca*, whereas Flemish was considered the minority language, even though it was, in fact, demographically a majority language. In Switzerland, German, even though it is the majority language, has never posed a threat to the other Swiss languages, among other reasons because there is no homogenous German-speaking bloc as the many types of Swiss-German dialects have split the German-speakers into several small fractions.

Both the theories ethno-symbolism and constructivism can explain the cases of national identity in Belgium and Switzerland. However, Belgium is a clearer example of constructivism than Switzerland because of the fact that the Belgian elite chose only one official language at the foundation of the Belgian state, whereas the Swiss state chose to select the already existing languages as official languages. In that way, Belgium took the constructivist

route and ignored the importance of language and chose the majority language as the official language at the expense of the already existing languages. Thereby, the Belgian elite started from scratch and constructed a state and a nation without looking back at what already existed. This has caused a clear language divide in Belgium today because of the very uneven balance between French and Flemish that arose in the wake of the decision to make French the only official language. While there are also language borders in Switzerland, the divide between the languages is neither as deep nor clear as in Belgium. In general, there is no wish from the different Swiss linguistic communities to become independent as seen in especially the Flemish part of Belgium.

One of the similarities between Belgium and Switzerland is the fact that the language communities in each country have no or only limited language contact. Except for the region of Brussels and the few bilingual and trilingual cantons in Switzerland, the language communities are monolingual and live isolated from the other language communities. In this way, both countries follow the territoriality principle. However, in Switzerland the personality principle is also applied as the Swiss citizens have the right to use their mother tongue when in contact with the federal authorities.

Another similarity is that the increasing use of English as *lingua franca* is an outside threat to both countries. However, in Belgium the biggest threat to the political and linguistic peace is first and foremost the domestic conflict between Flanders and Wallonia and hereafter the increasing use of English. As there are no major conflicts among the language communities in Switzerland, the biggest threat against internal communication and unity is English.

In general, federal states that are also multilingual have difficulties with creating and preserving a national identity, because this will always be in competition with the sub-national identities. In Belgium especially, it has proved particularly difficult to create a Belgian identity. Only very few

symbols and traditions hold the Belgians together, whereas their main sense of belonging is anchored in their regional identity. Very few Belgians – especially Flemings – feel particularly Belgian. In Switzerland, however, the national and the regional identities exist side by side and do not compete with each other. The cantonal or municipal identity encompasses language, culture and traditions, whereas the Swiss identity is rooted in the political rights that come with the Swiss citizenship.

Thus, while Belgium and Switzerland have some similarities, they are in the main parts very different. The most crucial difference is seen in the foundation of the nation-states in the 19th century: from the beginning the founders of the Swiss nation-state took the significance of language and multilingualism into account, whereas the Belgian elite chose only the majority language as the official language and thereby laid the grounds for the   current   linguistic   crisis.

8. Discussion

The comparison of Belgium and Switzerland shows that many factors are to be taken into consideration if a nation-state should be successfully multilingual: the choice of official language(s) at the foundation of the nation-state, language planning, and the balance between the territoriality and personality principle. The debate in Belgium about the electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde near Brussels is an example of the complexity of multilingual nation-states, and what problems may occur when the territoriality principle and two party systems are mixed. Thus, the issue of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde raises the discussion of language rights in Belgium.

Interestingly enough, both the Flemings and the Francophones feel that their language rights are being oppressed. There is an assumption, especially in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, that it is not acceptable that more than one language will be spoken in a monolingual region. In Flanders, only Flemish will be accepted. The increasing number of French-speaking inhabitants in the Flemish suburbs of Brussels has been viewed with dismay by Flemish nationalists who have responded with a variety of efforts that have become increasingly confrontational, from anti-immigration legislation to an even stricter interpretation of the language laws (van den Abbeele, 2001: 515). However, the Flemish attempts to limit and eventually eliminate the linguistic facilities led to protests from the French-speaking community and a dramatic intervention by the European Commission of Juridical Matters and Human Rights, who cited the Belgian state for failing to respect the rights of linguistic minorities (van den Abbeele, 2001: 515). However, this characterisation was rejected in advance by the Flemish Parliament in Flanders, which had already stipulated that the term 'national minority' may not be applied to either French or Flemish, regardless of their location in Belgium (van den Abbeele, 2001: 515). So on one side, the French minority in Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde and their right to vote for French-speaking politicians are not being recognised by the Flemings. However, on the other side, in 2003 the Belgian Constitutional Court declared the constituency

Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde unconstitutional, since the Flemings are being discriminated against as they do not have the same language rights elsewhere as the French-speaking have in Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (Daley, 2010). Thus, in the same conflict both the Flemings and the French-speakers are being discriminated. This again shows why this particular conflict seems irresolvable since both parties feel that their language rights are being oppressed. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine a practical solution. As the issue of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral district remains unsolved, the last two federal elections in Belgium have therefore also been called unconstitutional; they have, however, still been recognised.

Originally, the Belgian language laws and language borders were established according to where the linguistic majorities were at that time. Now the Flemish-speaking parties want to split the electoral district, or make a law which abolishes the language facilities in Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, which thereby means that French will be a 'forbidden' language in an actually French-dominated municipality. This issue raises the question of whether the language borders from 1963 can and should be changed. There are, of course, arguments for and against. Originally, in the 1960s it was decided that the language borders would be officially fixed once and for all. However, according to the French-speaking parties the compromise of language facilities also included an agreement that in the future the existing voting and judicial opportunities for the large French-speaking minority around Brussels would be maintained and that the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral and judicial arrondissement would remain unimpaired. The Flemish parties of course deny this, saying that this was never the intention. Most importantly, the language facilities are not enshrined in the constitution, but in law and can be amended by a simple majority. Consequently, bills intending to split the electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde have been put forward many times by Flemish politicians and countered just as many times by the French-speaking minority. It can be argued that changing the language borders of 1963 (by splitting the constituency of Brussels-Halle-

Vilvoorde) due to new linguistic majorities is going against the territoriality principle. The idea of the territoriality principle is namely to establish territorial borders within which a certain language is spoken and also protected. Changing the status of the territory is recognising a new linguistic majority, which undermines the previous language border and the territoriality principle. Furthermore, the language facilities favour the rights of the French-speaking majority in Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde and give them the right to use their mother tongue where they live. In that way, it can be argued that Belgium, at the moment, actually makes use of both the territoriality and personality principle. But how it will look in the future all depends on the outcome (if there will ever be one) of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde conflict and, whether this outcome will benefit the French-speaking majority or the Flemish minority in the controversial electoral district.

In general, as being argued by this thesis, it is not easy to administrate a multilingual nation-state. Even though the idea of a multilingual state where all citizens are multilingual and able to speak all national languages and have the right to address the national and local authorities in their mother tongue (i.e. follow the personality principle) is ideal, it is however, utopian. The cases of Belgium and Switzerland are examples of this. In order to administrate the national languages, it is necessary to follow the territoriality principle, i.e. divide the nation-state into several small territories, in which one or more languages are declared official. This is also crucial in order to preserve the smallest language minorities, such as German in Belgium or Romansh in Switzerland. However, by applying the territoriality principle, the language communities often become monolingual, and the nation-state does not end up as multilingual, but rather as a state with several official languages, but where only the residents within the same language community are able to speak together.

9. Conclusion and future implications for Belgium and Switzerland

Although Belgium and Switzerland are both multilingual federal states, it has become evident through this thesis that there are big differences between the two nation-states. The biggest difference appeared already when the two states were founded. The Belgian elite chose French, the *lingua franca* of that time, as the only official language in Belgium and thereby rejected the existence of Flemish, which was in fact the language spoken by the majority in Belgium. The long-standing neglect of Flemish is the main reason for the linguistic and political conflict between Flanders and Wallonia today. It can be argued that if both languages had received recognition as official languages at the foundation of Belgium in 1830, the situation would have looked different today. However, other factors have also contributed to the conflict: the shift in the economic balance as well as the complicated two party systems which has led to the even more complex and controversial issue of the electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde. All these factors have resulted in numerous government crises in Belgium.

In contrast to Belgium, the Swiss elite chose to make three out of four languages in Switzerland official languages in 1848, which meant that German, French and Italian were declared equal in the Swiss Constitution. Most likely, this recognition of the three languages at the same time and the fact that the Swiss elite did not follow the trend of the 19th century nation builders, "One state, one language", but chose the multilingual model are the reasons as to why no major language conflicts exist in Switzerland today. However, Switzerland recognised their smallest minority language very late. The Romansh-speakers had to wait 90 years to have their language even recognised as a national language and were only just recently, in 1996, recognised as a (quasi) official language. Yet, Switzerland does not experience language problems on the same level as Belgium. Nonetheless, there are minor linguistic problems in Switzerland, for example when the three minority language communities, despite having learnt standard German in school, are struggling to understand the German-speakers

because of their many dialects, and when the French- and Italian-speakers feel increasingly marginalised since the German Swiss prefer English to French as their first foreign language. In comparison with Belgium, whose main problems are domestic, Switzerland's main problem is the 'outside' threat of English as *lingua franca*, which threatens to weaken or damage the intercultural understanding and communication in Switzerland. In general, English as *lingua franca* is a threat to the linguistic environment in both countries. Nonetheless, Switzerland stands stronger as it has a more solid foundation and no major internal conflicts.

Consequently, it can be concluded that language is a very important factor in nation building, as the foundation of the state and the choice of the official language(s) play a much bigger role than one would perhaps imagine at first. Even though the Belgian government has later, through language planning, tried to improve the status of Flemish, it has turned out to be too little, too late. Because no matter which language policies are applied later on, the politicians are not able to change the past. This shows the power the elite has when constructing the nation-state. As it turned out, the construction of the Belgian nation-state with only French as official language was a construction that could not last. Hence, shortly after the foundation of the Belgian state, the Flemish movement started demanding recognition for Flemish, and later on, language laws, language borders and two party systems were introduced to ensure that Flemings and Walloons had equal rights. However, these measures have also brought Belgium in its current position with coalition governments made up by a huge number of parties who cannot seem to agree on anything, and a widening cultural, political, economic and linguistic gap between Flanders and Wallonia. Still today, Belgium is a fragile construction that may not last in the future.

Throughout this thesis, the empirical material has been applied in connection with the theory. Out of the three main theories used, essentialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism, it is constructivism that most aptly

explains Belgian nation-building, because the elite did not consider the pre-existing characteristics of the Belgian lands, but completely disregarded Flemish and chose only the language of the elite as the official language. The elite thereby neglected the importance of language to national identity. However, the current linguistic divide and the Flemish movement's fight for recognition cannot be explained by the constructivist theory, because according to the constructivists, language is merely a constructed tool with no meaning. So the fact that the Flemish movement developed a Flemish identity and fought for the recognition of the Flemish language, and in the end succeeded, can more aptly be explained by ethno-symbolism, which recognises language as one of several important factors for national identity. The fact that Flemish changed status from being a low-status language to an accepted, official language is an example of how a language can change over time and become more significant - and as such an example of the ethno-symbolist theory.

In the Swiss case, it is ethno-symbolism that can best explain the Swiss nation building, because here the importance of language was actually taken into account, and therefore none of the three main languages were neglected, but instead all chosen as official languages. However, constructivism can also partly explain the construction of the Swiss state, as it was built on the Constitution which gave political rights to the Swiss. These political rights and the Swiss neutrality are what the Swiss identity is built on, whereas the more essential characteristics such as culture and language are of much more importance in the sub-national identities.

The situation in Belgium and Switzerland today is the result of language planning. Especially status planning, which has to do with how a language is promoted by for example the government, has had a big effect on both countries. In Switzerland the three major languages received equal status from the beginning, whereas Belgium hesitated for a long time to give Flemish status as an official language. This refusal to recognise Flemish is the

reason for the conflict in Belgium today. Furthermore, also acquisition planning, which has to do with the use of language in education, played a vital role in the two countries: in Belgium, it was for many years impossible to attend university in Flemish which only contributed further to the uneven balance between Flemish and French. In Switzerland, however, all pupils must learn another national language, which increases the linguistic stability in Switzerland. The three different types of language planning are all linked and interdependent. In Belgium, it was status planning especially that changed the corpus and acquisition planning. As Flemish received status as an official language, official Dutch dictionaries were also implemented, and the possibility of studying in Flemish at Belgian universities opened up. In Switzerland, it is acquisition planning which has lately affected the other types of language planning. The debate about, and the implementation of, English as the first foreign language in some cantons has influenced, in particular, status planning because French and Italian especially are at risk of losing status in Switzerland. Therefore, it is within the area of status planning especially that the Swiss politicians must now work on new policies in order to preserve the linguistic peace and communication within Switzerland.

It seems more difficult to predict what will happen to Belgium in the future. For now, the Belgians have a government, but Belgium has most likely not experienced its last government crisis. Furthermore, the increasing desire from the Flemings to be independent, which is seen in the growing support for Flemish nationalist parties, also makes the political situation fragile. However, an actual split seems unrealistic, because how would it be practically possible? One solution could be that Wallonia and Flanders would turn into small independent states, and Brussels would become a state under the EU. Another alternative could also be that Flanders joins the Netherlands, and Wallonia joins France. However, there are certain problems relating to this alternative: As Flanders is mainly Catholic and the Netherlands Protestant, there would be a clash of religions, and it would become a problematic incorporation of Flanders into the Netherlands. The difference in

religions was also the main reason for the revolt against the Netherlands in 1830 which resulted in Belgium's independence. So Flanders joining the Netherlands in the future seems unlikely. Also, whose responsibility would the national debts become? The likelihood is that Belgium will remain as it is, as neither Flanders nor Wallonia have any viable alternatives other than staying together.

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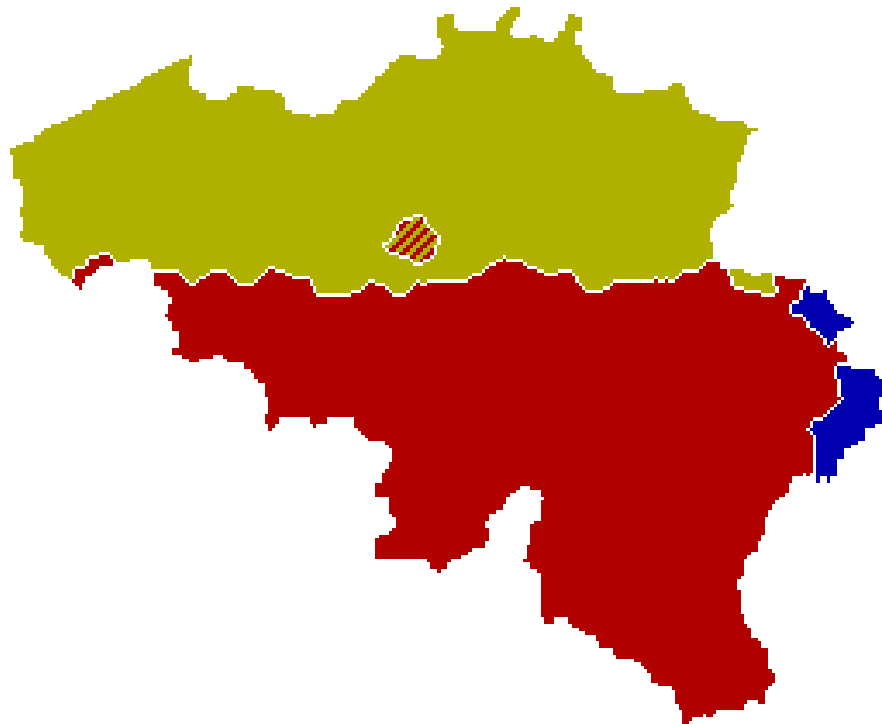# 11. Appendix

Appendix 1

Map of Belgium with its three political regions: Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia
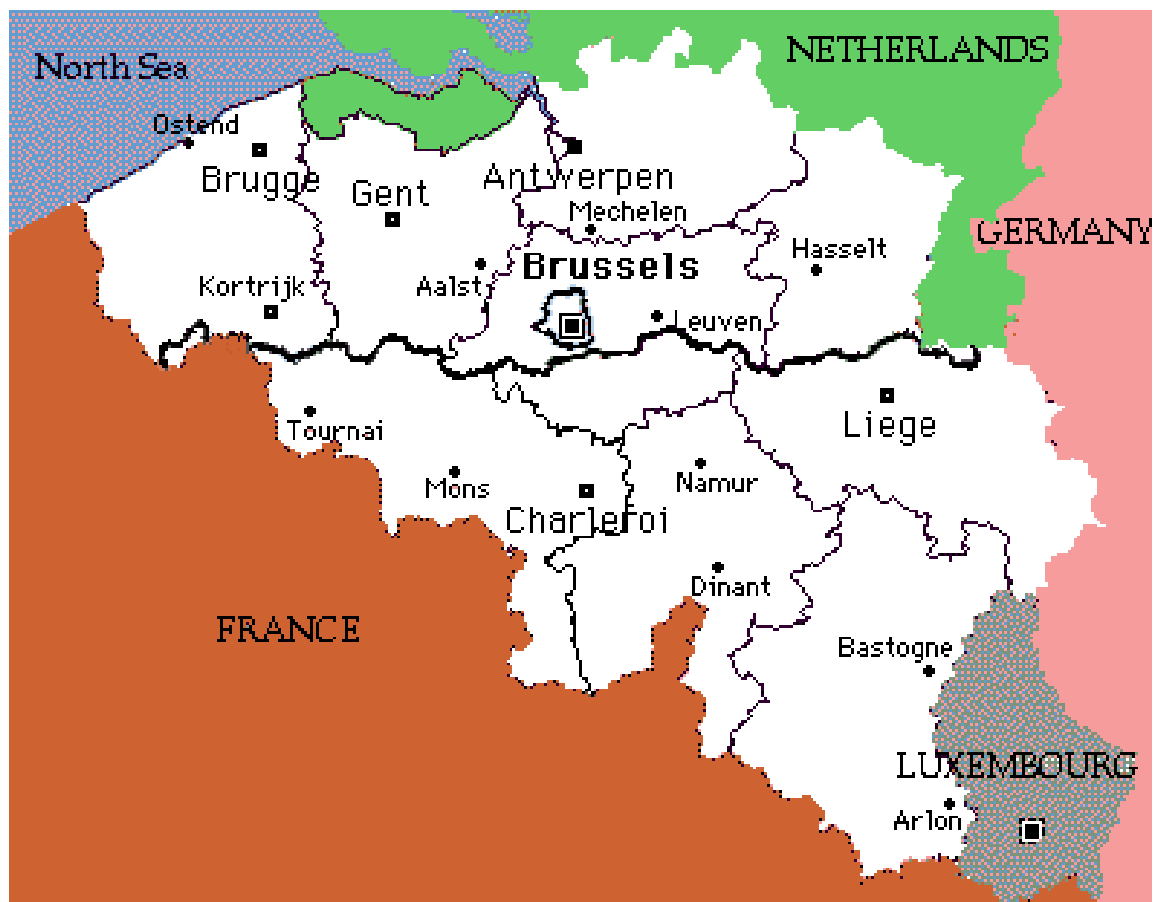
Flanders in the north - Wallonia in the south.

Appendix 2

Map of Belgium with its four language areas: Flemish, French, German and French/Flemish

Yellow: Flemish-speaking
Red: French-speaking
Blue: German-speaking
Shaded area: French- und Flemish-speaking

Appendix 3

Map of Switzerland with its four language communities: German, French, Italian and Romansh

Langues
Languages
Idiomas

deutsch · français · italiano · romontsch/rumantsch