

MASTEROPPGAVE

Tittel: Multilingualism – A Buzz Word?

- An investigation into how teachers and students value multilingualism.

Navn: Finn Erlend Abisheganaden Engeseth

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Fakultet for lærerutdanninger og språk
Institutt for språk, litteratur og kultur



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Finn Erlend Abisheganaden Engeseth

Abstract

Multilingualism is an important concept in the Norwegian ESL classrooms. This thesis is an investigation of students' and teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism. Based on a qualitative case study approach, students and teachers are presented through narrative accounts of semi-structured interviews.

The findings in this thesis points towards a significant difference in how multilingualism is perceived. The students in this thesis do not find their mother tongue languages particularly useful, while teachers point out that knowing many languages is an advantage. The difference between these two perspectives is discussed with reference to a theoretical framework that shows some of the complexity of multilingualism as a concept. Part of this framework is the concept of monolingualism and its impact on language teaching. The teachers who are interviewed in this thesis display a positive attitude towards multilingualism, but there is a question as to whether or not the monolingual language model still prevails in Norwegian classrooms.

PART I

1.0 Introduction

In this thesis the issue of how students value their own multilingualism is explored. In addition, attitudes towards multilingualism are investigated through interviews with teachers of English. This study has led to the conclusion that for multilingualism to become an educational language model, there is much work that has to be done through promoting language learning in general, immigrant languages in particular and last but least, change the ways in which one uses a native speaking model as an aim for how to teach languages.

Multilingualism, or Third Language Acquisition (TLA), has proved to be valuable as a way to draw English language teaching onto a much bigger canvas. Even though Second Language Acquisition (SLA) often covers all language learning after a first (L1) and a second language, (L2), the term multilingualism is used to underline the fact that there are more than two languages involved (Gass, 2013, p.485).

It is important for this thesis to not merely discuss multilingualism as idea, but also to discuss how students who are already multilingual regard their linguistic skills. In this there is an interest in how students are encouraged to develop and nurture their languages compared to language educators' attitudes towards multilingualism. There are two main reasons for this.

The first has to do with figuring out which languages students are already familiar with. This is a way of predicting what cognitive language transfers will naturally be made. Also, mapping students' pre-knowledge belongs to the basic repertoire of any teacher. Likewise, it means that there is a need for investigating what teachers know about these processes.

The second reason is what Orhan Agirdag points at in his article "Schools in the multilingual city". Here he points out how developing language policies in Europe has led to a preference for French, English, German and Spanish. These languages are viewed as important and also central for questions relating to integration and citizenship. On the other end of the scale,

other immigrant languages are conceived of as the main obstacle towards achieving this (Agirdag, 2019, p. 67).

In sum, to explore attitudes and values of multilingualism is an investigation into how and why one is multilingual. "How", refers to how the different languages are related to each other and the knowledge attached to language education. Why one is multilingual, is an equally important question, although perhaps a bit more complex. In this thesis, "why" signifies and questions if students and teachers understand why being multilingual is an advantage to benefit from.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The research questions for this thesis are based on two papers. The first paper is the result of a study based on a national survey consisting of 176 teachers of English, in both Primary and Secondary school. In addition, in-depth interviews were done with four teachers. In "English as a third language: Do teachers have the competence to support multilingualism?" (my translation), Dahl and Krulatz suggest that neither teachers nor students in teacher training know enough about how to teach students of different or diverse linguistic backgrounds (Dahl and Krulatz, 2016, p.). They argue that being multilingual equips students with a certain cognitive flexibility and broader capacity for reflection on language than is the case for monolinguals.

However, Dahl and Krulatz suggest that there are signs that being multilingual is not necessarily valued as an asset in Norwegian schools (Dahl and Krulatz, 2016, p. 4). Figures indicate that in Oslo, a city where many children are multilingual, Norwegian is a priority in school, even though this may be to the detriment of the students' mother tongue, according to Dahle and Krulatz. On the other hand, as many as 89% of the teachers that are interviewed in the survey would most likely be interested in being educated on the topic (Dahl and Krulatz, 2016, p. 16).

The second paper is "Metacognition on the subject of language and language learning in a multilingual perspective" (my translation). Here, Åsta Haukås argues that the subject curricula in English, states that students must be able to reflect on how language is learnt,

whether it be L1, L2 or L3 languages. This type of metacognitive language learning involves being able to spot differences and similarities between targeted language and previously learnt language. However, there is little proof that this is the case. Haukås argues that students seldom reflect on how they learn and think about languages (Haukås 2014, p. 1).

There are two research questions in this thesis:

- 1) Do young multilingual students regard their language skills as an asset?
- 2) Do English teachers regard multilingualism as an asset?

Both these questions draw on the idea that multilingualism is important. However, they open to two different investigations as the first question concerns students and the second is directed towards teachers. The reason why students are of interest, is that much of the material offered by Dahl and Krulatz is based on what teachers think. In addition, there are indications that there is a priority of Norwegian over other languages in schools, in particular in Oslo. To further establish the validity of this claim one has to explore what students in Oslo think about the languages they know. It should be noted that this does not contradict the findings of Dahl and Krulatz. Their main claim is still that teachers lack the competence to teach students of multilingual backgrounds. Students cannot be expected to know what formal competence their teachers possess. What they can have an opinion about, however, is their own experience as multilinguals in a Norwegian school, in Oslo.

One aspect which is not covered in Dahl and Krulatz, is what teachers actually do. Even if many teachers in Dahls and Krulatz's article state insufficient knowledge regarding teaching multilingual students, one can assume prior experience with students of multilingual backgrounds. Research question number two focuses on how teachers assess their own classroom practices in relation to multilingualism. Haukås suggests several classroom strategies that are beneficial when training metacognitive proficiency (Haukås 2014, p. 5). It will be possible to compare these strategies to what teachers do and what they think is feasible when working with multilingual students. However, she points out that in general, much of the research that has been done in this field is based on research amongst older,

university students and so one cannot necessarily assume that this will apply to younger students (Haukås 2014, p. 5).

One important factor is the English Language Subject. As mentioned in the introduction, the students that are interviewed have learnt English as a third language and the teachers are English teachers. In Norway, the English Language Subject is taught as an L2, however, to many, it is an L3. What will be shown in the following section is how English has strong traditions as a second language but that the development of the last years has welcomed other languages as well.

1.2 Structure

This thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part of the thesis presents the research questions alongside different perspectives from which to understand English in Norway. This involves the advance of the English language subject and documents that have influenced recent developments.

The second part consist of a theoretical approach to the *concept and idea* of multilingualism. As is already clear, the concept of multilingualism is elusive, thus the different theoretical ideas need to be discussed before moving on to questions concerning method. The method in this paper will be presented as a way of limiting and narrowing down the subject. This involves discussing choices that have been made in relation to approach.

Part three consists of interviews and findings. There are separate summaries after interviews with students and teachers with a general discussion of what the findings show at the end. The discussion will point towards the conclusion, which marks the end of part three.

2.0 English in Norwegian schools

2.1 Early curricula

English has been part of the Curricula in Norwegian schools for many years. In 1964, English is described as a practical subject that is useful in terms of education, work or future relations (Forsøksrådet for skoleverket, 1964, p. 184). The Subject Curriculum of 1974 states that English is a mandatory subject, compulsory from the 4th grade. English is here described as a foreign language, with German as an elective L2 (Norges Kirke- og undervisningsdepartement, 1974, p. 147).

Thirteen years later, a revised curriculum states that one of the aims in English is to “develop an interest in foreign languages” (Noregs Kyrkje- og undervisningdepartement, 1987, p. 204). In the revised curriculum, there were early signs of metacognition: “To help students understand and accept problems that may occur when using a language other than the mother tongue”. Another feature was the emphasis on the importance of a mother tongue and definite aims for minority languages (Noregs Kyrkje- og undervisningsdepartement, 1987, pp. 181-182).

The English Subject Curricula of 1997 states that language learning involves an opening towards other cultures (Kirke-, undervisnings- og forskningsdepartementet, & Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter, 1996, p. 223). Here, English is presented as incorporating the skills of the mother tongue blended with previous experiences from other languages and cultures. The sentence: “It is natural for Norwegian students to learn English as their first foreign language” shows the positioning of English as an L2 (Kirke-, undervisnings- og forskningsdepartementet, & Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter, 1996, p. 223).

2.2 The Knowledge Promotion 2006

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training was presented in 2006. It is often referred to as the “The Knowledge Promotion”, or K06. The K06 establishes that learning a language is a process where one must consider the connections between English, the mother tongue and other languages. More specifically this addresses the subject of English, where: “identifying similarities and differences between

English and one's own mother tongue is important and is to be used when learning language" (Kunnskapsdepartementet & Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006, p. 93).

During its developmental stage, K06 was a turn towards mandatory language training. The background for this was pressure from both the European Union and the European Council to introduce a second, foreign language in addition to English (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007, p. 8)

When K06 was formally introduced, however, two new language subjects were offered. English and Norwegian in depth learning was presented as equivalent alternatives to German, French and Spanish. Growing concerns that language subjects would become too theoretical resulted in this positioning of English in-depth. What is interesting to note is that at this point, there are two English subjects in Norway. One is the compulsory subject, which might be understood as a Second language class (ESL), and the other is English as an alternative to foreign languages, under the name of English in-depth.

This latter point opens a discussion on names and content that is beyond the scope of this thesis. What further complicates matters, is that it is difficult to determine if English in-depth is or should be an L2 or an L3. There is a significant difference between ESL and English as a foreign language (EFL).

2.3 The Ludvigsen Committee

In 2013, a committee was formed in Norway to assess what type of competence future students and workforce would need. The report underlines the importance of mastering several languages. The report explicitly states that:

Pupils with bilingual or multilingual competence are a resource for Norwegian culture and society, and they should be given the opportunity to develop their linguistic competence. This applies to pupils with Sami, Finnish/Kven language backgrounds, as well as pupils with other minority-language backgrounds. (NOU 2015: 8, p. 24)

Not only does this underline the importance of language learning, but there is a significant value attached to being bi- or multi-lingual. Furthermore, as the quote shows, the report explicitly mentions people with minority-language backgrounds. Although linguistic competence is not defined here, it nevertheless signals equality of both minority and majority languages.

2.4 The Knowledge Promotion 2020

During the fall of 2020, The Ministry of Education and Research started the implementation of a new subject curriculum, underlining the interdisciplinary nature of all subjects. For the subject of English, its central values include cultural understanding, communication both globally and locally, “regardless of cultural and linguistic background” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020).

There is a very clear cultural profile in that pupils shall develop “an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns”. In addition, the K20 explicitly states that: “The pupils shall experience that the ability to speak several languages is an asset at school and in society in general” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020). That fact that the word “asset” is used specifically, underlines that being multilingual is something that students should benefit from. The English subject has moved from being a foreign language to an L2 and more importantly, it is a language which opens to other languages.

In this respect it is interesting to have a closer look at Oslo. The languages that are offered in school in addition to English, are French, German and Spanish, and in addition “other languages”. Although Spanish is by far the most popular of the foreign languages, it is not offered at all schools. What is interesting to note is that of the total 16615 pupils in Oslo that were assigned for a foreign language in year 8 - 10, including English in-depth, only 107

pupils were listed with “other languages”. Of these there were 47 pupils who did Mandarin and the remaining 60 did Urdu in one school in the Eastern part of Oslo¹.

In other words, the languages students can choose between in Lower Secondary School in Oslo, are all European languages, bar the one school that offers Urdu. This means that whatever knowledge students of minority backgrounds possess of their own language, it will not be from a public school.

2.5 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

A last point in the development of discussing multilingualism is the CEFR. The CEFR was issued in 2001 and meant to establish a scaffold for looking at what is essentially going on when we learn languages. Offering a more hands-on approach as to what happens in the classroom it also recognizes that citizens of the EU, and potential aspiring membership countries, must learn several languages (Figueras, 2012, p. 478).

As a non-member state of the EU, Norway has nevertheless been influenced by the common framework. Previous attempts at promoting foreign languages have been seen in the advancement of languages in Primary school and in trying to make foreign languages mandatory in Secondary Schools in Norway (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007, p. 32). Also, a language portfolio has been developed in an attempt to describe and assess the different proficiency levels of the different languages that pupils speak and a receptive skills reading comprehension program has also been developed (Haukås, 2014, p. 8).

¹ Note: This is information drawn from “Grunnskolens Informasjonssystem” (GSI) which is run by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

(<https://gsi.udir.no/app#!/view/units/collectionset/1/collection/88/unit/826/>)

PART II

3.0 Theoretical framework

The documents described in the previous chapter show how language in general and English in particular have grown to become a matter of importance in Norway. What will be presented in this chapter, is how language is acquired. Even if there has been a turn towards noticing the value of multilingual competence, this does not in itself say anything about what it is.

One of the more intriguing aspects of multilingualism, is that it seemingly involves more or less all types of language acquisition. Much of the literature on this matter automatically involves Second Language Acquisition, (SLA), bilingualism and plurilingualism. To investigate all these concepts is a task that is too exhaustive for this thesis. What will be introduced however, are some of the key concepts and ideas which have led to the concept of multilingualism.

3.1 What is multilingualism?

Defining multilingualism is difficult (Jessner, 2008, p. 20). As noted in the introduction, multilingualism may refer to the learning of an L3. However, the problem in using multilingualism as a way of only referring to an L3, is the immediacy and the ways in which the languages involved are related to one another. If one is learning an L3, one has also learnt or is learning an L2 and also an L1. In this sense, multilingualism may refer to any type of language learning after learning an L1. Multilingualism discusses the difference in learning L2, L3 or more languages based on what happens in terms of language acquisition (Herdina & Jessner, 2002 p. 18). Multilingualism offers a dynamic understanding of language and what being a language user involves. The user is assessed based on the process of learning, thus the issue of language acquisition is one of degree (Gass, 2013, p. 479).

Hammerberg offers an additional perspective of time in relation to multilingualism. There are languages that speakers learn over a longer period of time and there are languages that

occur more instantaneously, what he labels a macro and a micro perspective (Hammerberg, 2017, p. 3). L3 would specifically be related to micro time processes (Hammerberg, 2017, p. 10). According to Hammerberg, the language of the native speaker is the L1 and therefore L2 is the first language one has to consciously internalize. To many, an L3 is an additional language, often related to school, and a language that may only be in use for a shorter period of time.

Thus, using “multilingual” as a way in which to say that someone speaks many languages, is not very helpful, because it does not say anything about how one speaks these languages. Multilingualism could be used to talk about students who are bilingual, but have learnt, or are learning, an L3 in school. It can refer to children who have an L1 and have learnt an L2 in school, but who migrate to another country and must now learn the native language as a third language (Gass, 2013, p. 485). In a Norwegian context, students who speak Norwegian as an L1 learn English as an L2 and do French, Spanish or German as an L3, are multilingual.

However, for children of immigrants who speak another language than Norwegian at home, the native Norwegian language will be their L2 and English an L3. Furthermore, if these children do use the different languages in different settings, they may not necessarily relate these languages to one another. The idea that they are naturally brought up speaking different languages in different settings does not mean that they consciously and cognitively relate the languages to each other. In this thesis, the respondents are what Wei terms early bilingual in that they have grown up speaking two languages simultaneously but are multilingual in that they are learning English as an L3 (Gass, 2013, p. 480). In addition, some do Spanish and French as their L4.

Li claims that for children who are early bilingual, it is not obvious what language is L1 or L2. However, for children who acquire languages successively, there is a clear difference between L1 and L2 (Grosjean & Li, 2013, p. 145). Grosjean argues a “Complimentary Principle”, where different languages must be understood according to how they are used for different purposes (Grosjean & Li, 2013, p. 12). The idea is that a bilingual or a trilingual person would use the different languages where suitable, but that there is a difference as to how the multilingual construction is acquired. This means that even if the students are early

bilingual and that it may be difficult to distinguish L1 and L2, they are also successive language learners, in that their L3 language is added later on.

3.2 Monolingual versus multilingual acquisition

There are many different models for explaining how one learns languages. What many of these have in common though, is that they are based on “monolingual norms” (Jessner, 2008, p. 20). A monolingual norm would imply that learning a new language is a matter of learning the rules for how this language is practiced and using the native speaker as a linguistic model.

There are several arguments for why language teaching must turn away from a monolingual tradition to a more dynamic understanding of how linguistic interrelations work. Cummins argues that monolingualism in L2 learning is a threat to L1. His argument is based on the connection between communicative, or task-based, language learning and a native speaking-based pedagogy. This pedagogy holds monolingualism as an aim (Cummins, 2009, p. 318).

Jessner argues that to make sense of how a student learns and uses language, one must understand that a student may have multiple identities, different motives and learning environments. In short, a multilingual language model needs a type of flexibility and dynamic perception, close to what may be identified as a holistic approach (Jessner, 2008, p. 25)

One example that shows this complexity of multilingualism is the dynamic model of multilingualism (DMM) suggested by Herdina and Jessner (Jessner, 2008, p. 26). The idea is to cover the many different elements that go into multilingual proficiency (MP). It is an attempt to bring out the play between psycholinguistics systems (LS) and sociolinguistic, or crosslinguistic, interaction (CLIN) connected to a multilingualism factor (M-factor).

$$\text{LS}_1 + \text{LS}_2 + \text{LS}_3 + \text{LS}_n + \text{CLIN} + \text{M-factor} = \text{Multilingual Proficiency}$$

This model holds a wide range of possible descriptions of multilingualism. Jessner describes LS as open systems that function only if maintained. There are several languages involved and crosslinguistic interaction means that they are interacting, not merely influencing each other. The M-factor is important because it states that the cognition involved is not based on a monolingualistic account of language but a multilingual account, where the M-factor thus also signifies metacognitive awareness.

3.3 Multilingualism in the English classroom

The reason why multilingualism is such a difficult concept to pin down is related to several factors. It is a dynamic process which involves a numerous set of language components coupled with a multitude of social and cultural considerations. A development towards a multilingual classroom has become more common during the last couple of years and Jessner mentions cross language approach, corresponding terms, contrast and explicit language instruction as some of the methods that are used (Jessner, 2008, pp. 38 –41).

However, multilingualism is not an asset if it is not encouraged. Haukås argues that students must become aware of their linguistic knowledge and how they can take advantage of this when learning language (Haukås, 2016, p.7). Theoretically speaking, this applies to all languages that are learnt. Jessner however, points out that English as a lingua franca “could and should function as a kind of ice breaker” in terms of creating linguistic diversity (Jessner, 2008, p. 42). By this she means that the English language can spark an interest in both linguistic diversity and multicultural awareness in a way in which other languages cannot.

4.0 Method

4.1 Forming an approach

In this thesis, five students and five teachers have been interviewed in a qualitative case study. The former were interviewed because they are multilingual. The latter have been interviewed to investigate what perspectives teachers hold regarding multilingualism.

Qualitative research, unlike quantitative studies, is often more individual, it must allow for more personal and closer contact between researcher and subject and it also requires a certain chemistry between the people involved. In addition, because a case study is specific, it is questionable to what extent one can generalize the findings of such a study.

The reason for choosing to do qualitative research is that it allows for a much richer description of the case or the field of interest. Moreover, it may represent a much more contextual representation than what a quantitative study allows for (McKay, 2006, pp. 71-72). The students and teachers that are interviewed will be presented through a narrative account of a semi-structured interview. The reason for this is to be able to present their thoughts, attitudes and opinions on the questions that they answer in a way that the formal interview does not.

4.2 Uncertain Objectivity?

Hans Georg Gadamer, who later went on to become one of the founding fathers of hermeneutics, writes in his opus magnum that method and truth are not the same. In trying to copy the natural sciences, we may end up understanding human beings through measurements. In order to avoid this, Gadamer argues, it is important to distinguish truth and method, and that being a scientist involves being aware of what one is asking and what one is investigating. It also begs an understanding of the scientists own positioning (Gadamer 1975).

For this thesis, this perspective has been important. Many of the interviewees are known to the researcher. The pupils interviewed for this project, were, or had been my students. Likewise, some of the teachers interviewed are or have been colleagues of mine at some point.

This has been a challenge. Not just to ensure that the subjects are not merely answering what they think one wants to hear, but also that being close to the subject(s) of one's study, is a liability to any objective measurement. The answer to this has been to develop interview guides that have been followed strictly in order to allow for a comparable study. An

interview guide-based approach gives a certain amount of structure and comparability because there is a set of basic questions, yet also the possibility of lingering on certain topics and themes (McKay, 2006, p.52).

The ultimate challenge is being true to the information. Not wanting to manipulate or corrupt any part of the material may seem obvious, yet it could be argued that any interpretation is a distortion of the research material. When doing research that involves young people, interpreting may be more frequent than when interviewing adults. As the theoretical chapter above demonstrates, the field of language acquisition involves a series of interrelated concepts that may be academically valuable yet would be, ironically, pointless to use when talking to the people one is writing about. Questions concerning cross-linguistic influence cannot be asked using this specific term. This again means that being conscious of one's own values and judgements will be important when presenting and interpreting the material and not let one's own opinions have an impact on the interpretation of what the informants actually say (Kvernmo, 2005, p. 66).

4.3 Interview: Forming the guides

When developing the interview guides used for this study, two test interviews were done. The interview guide approach was based partly on Haukås' article, (Haukås 2014) and the interview guides that Mikkelsen (Mikkelsen, 2020) and Ellenes (Ellenes, (2017) designed for their master theses. Both these studies are on multilingualism in Lower Secondary school.

The interview guides were used for two test interviews. What became clear was that in order for the interviews to be possible to compare, the guides had to be followed strictly. This meant that in order to gather the same breadth of information, all questions had to be asked. On the other hand, not all questions would have to be given in the same order. It seemed unlikely that all the informants would be equally opinionated on the same questions. The key would be to compare the information given by the interviewees and at the same time decide what relevance to give this information so as to present the subjects as honestly as possible.

The students' interview guide was slightly altered to be as open as possible and to include several possible aspects. When working with children or young adults as informants, it is important to let them present themselves (Kvernmo, 2005, p. 72). At the same time, their role as informants is as students. So, although many of the questions would be directed towards their linguistic situation, and possibly including family and friends, it is important to make this reflect on their ideas and opinions concerning language learning, preferably in their English classrooms.

None of the questions are directed towards grades or testing. Although studies show that multilingual students surpass monolinguals in many subjects, the point of these interviews does not lie with how students are measured, but what they think of their multilingual situation. If this is something the students or teachers specifically mention as relevant, it will be made note of.

4.4 Choosing interview subjects

The students who volunteered for this study were asked to participate simply on account of their linguistic background. Because the point of this study is to assess multilingualism in different ways, there has been no intention of preference in cultural or social background apart from the respondents being multilingual. As should be clear by now, social and cultural background is relevant, but the main point in this case was to find "average" students with multilingual backgrounds. Although there has been a conscious attempt at balancing gender, this has not been a prerequisite for participating in the study. All the students were born in the year of 2006. They have all attended Primary school in Norway, attend the same Lower Secondary school in Oslo and have parents who are non-ethnic Norwegians.

The teachers who are interviewed have been asked their questions either in person or through various social media platforms. The informants are all teachers of English with several years of teaching in multilingual classrooms. Although nearly all of them teach in schools in Oslo, this was not required. The reason for this is that much of the research on teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism in Norway, as presented in Haukås and Dahl and Krulatz, has been done nationally.

PART III

5.0 Introduction

This section will start off by presenting the individual students through a narrative account of the interviews. This narrative account mirrors the way in which the interview proceeded, providing a rich material, although not necessarily systematically organized. The recipients are presented with fictional names and in random order. The presentation will be followed by a general impression and analysis. What is of interest is common themes but also anomalies, comments and information that could highlight any of the theoretical references mentioned in chapter 3 and of course the research questions.

5.1 Student Interviews:

All of the following interviews were conducted in the same school, within school hours. Most of these interviews lasted for 40 minutes or more. There was no recording and all students had signed, together with their parents, an agreement letter (Appendix C). All the interviews were held in Norwegian. The reason for this is that this is the common language used by the students in school and which relates to both subjects and school routines.

Interview with Mons

Mons identifies Somali as his mother tongue. He speaks Somali at home, with his mother and father, but he tends to speak Norwegian with his siblings. He speaks Norwegian with his friends and thinks and reflects in Norwegian as well. His main language, he admits, is Norwegian, as he can both read and write it. The same goes for English. He cannot, however, read and write Somali. He presents Somali almost as a family language. He does not think about skipping from Norwegian to Somali or vice versa. It is ingrained.

His parents speak Somali with each other, but over the years and in particular after his mother started attending school to learn Norwegian, they will sometimes speak Norwegian together. He has been taught Somali from an early age, as his father wanted him to be able to go back to Somalia and be able to speak with his family there. However, both his parents

have encouraged him to learn Norwegian properly, as it will be the language he will need when he grows up. He has never received formal Somali language training. He was born and raised in Oslo and his father, who speaks Norwegian well, has been in Norway since he was 15. His mother, on the other hand, arrived much later.

He is from Somaliland. In the summer of 2019, the family traveled back and met with his family. He found it very interesting and has inherited some of his father's interest in history. During the interview he presents facts from ancient empires of the region and explains how there are several Somali dialects, some of which are very hard to understand. He seems proud to know this and goes on for quite a while. He conveys the impression that these historical details are important within a family narrative on the Somali nation.

Although he does not know how to read and write Somali, he is planning to learn this so that he can pass a "mother-tongue" language examination in Upper Secondary school. His sister is doing this instead of doing French, Spanish or German. He did make an attempt at learning the language a couple of years ago, but found it too difficult. The visit to Somaliland made an impact and he feels more motivated now. He also explains that it is not uncommon for Norwegians of Somali descent to go back to Somalia and work there and learn the language properly.

Another thing he found amusing about his trip to Somaliland, was how he understood what his Somali-accent sounded like. It became very evident from when he landed, that his Somali sounded a bit stiff. Some of his relatives told him that it sounded a bit posh.

In terms of language training, he has received training in Norwegian and English in school in Norway. He has never received any extra tuition as a non-native speaker. He has, however, undergone Quran training in Somali. He did this in primary school. He was taught how to read the different Arabic letters so that he could read the Quran. He does not, however, understand what the words mean.

He labels himself as multilingual and he thinks that his teachers regard him as such. Having said that, he does not really see any benefits in being multilingual. He has never been asked

to use his mother tongue in school, and he has never been asked to for instance compare English grammar to Somali.

We discuss these points for a while, and he is fairly convinced that doing Norwegian and English is sufficient and that it is important to learn proper Norwegian. He is not sure if it would be a success to include too many languages in school.

Interview with Sanah

Sanah speaks Urdu, Punjabi, English, Norwegian and does Spanish as her foreign language in school. She can read and write all languages except for Punjabi – which she describes as a variation of Urdu, but with “strange words and utterances”.

When asked about listing her mother tongue, she lists both Urdu and Punjabi, the latter mostly because her dad’s family speaks this. Her father came to Norway as a little boy and much of his closest family still live in Norway.

However, she claims Norwegian is her first language. She speaks, reads, writes, thinks and dreams in Norwegian, although she does tend to dream in English as well. She did have an odd dream in Spanish, but this was “probably due to stress”, she says.

Although her parents, in particular her father, has taught her to value the Urdu language, her parents speak Norwegian with each other. She was sent to an Urdu-school in Norway at the age of six or seven , but when her parents realized that her Norwegian was suffering, they decided to let her focus on Norwegian and the Norwegian system. However, when they visited Pakistan, some years ago, she was enrolled in school there during a very long summer vacation.

She is sure she would be able to get through school in Pakistan, at least through Lower Secondary. She feels that her parents have been strict when learning her Urdu and have corrected her when necessary. Also, she thinks that the fact that her parents, in particular her mother, had been in Norway for a short period of time, made it feel as if the Urdu and Pakistani “heritage” was closer. This, she thinks, made it more urgent for her parents to

teach her Urdu. She has two younger brothers, none of whom have had to undergo Urdu training, with the result that they do not understand that much, or “hardly anything at all”.

She has noticed a change when speaking in Urdu, however. Where she once would simply skip from Norwegian to Urdu with ease, she now translates from Norwegian to Urdu, that is, she thinks about what she wants to say in Norwegian first. So, in many ways, she felt more bilingual when she was younger.

She does not read a lot in Urdu, but she is capable, she reads a lot in general, both in Norwegian and in English. She speaks English with some of her relatives in Canada, Norwegian with her parents, and with her friends, Urdu with some of her distant relatives and also at weddings and formal Pakistani occasions. She describes the latter as quite “strange”, because she will speak Urdu with people her age, even though they both know that they speak Norwegian.

She has also attended Quran school. She has learnt the Arab alphabet and can read the Quran but does not know what the words mean. She can write some words but does not feel adept at all in Arabic. She has attended Quran since the 3rd grade and still attends, but more periodically, and only when she has to read the Quran.

She has never had any extra language tuition in school. She has attended Norwegian school since the 1st grade. She has had one teacher who spoke Urdu and who would occasionally mention Urdu words and make comparisons between Norwegian and Urdu. She has never had any other language training in school besides Norwegian, English and Spanish. She can recall one lesson where they discussed “mother tongue languages”/other languages.

She identifies as multilingual. She does not like the term “minority language speaker” nor immigrant language, because she does not feel Pakistani. She regards languages as an asset in general and thinks that her English has benefitted from knowing different languages both because she has had Urdu training and that there are many English words in Urdu.

She goes on to talk about the status of languages, and it is clear that she does not feel that Urdu has any particular high status as a language. Even some of her relatives tell her that learning Urdu is not really necessary, she should focus on English. However, some of her “aunties”² find it strange if people of Pakistani descent do not speak Urdu. She also points out that it would have been much easier in terms of school, if she spoke French instead of Urdu. As she points out: “It is not as if I have ever had any teacher come up to me and say: Oh, so you speak Urdu, things will be just fine”.

[Interview with Rawan](#)

The student has been informed of terms and conditions and says that her parents told her to say that coming to Norway was not easy. Her parents hail from the northern parts of Kurdistan. She was born there but arrived in Norway when she was 4 years old. The family lived in Western Norway before they eventually settled in Oslo, when she was 6 years old. She spent 2 years, from 4 -6 in kindergarten in Western Norway, where she learnt Norwegian. Her mother told her the other day that she spoke Norwegian with a slight dialect before she switched to speaking a more Oslo based dialect.

Her parents speak the Kurdish dialect, Sorani which is predominant for the region. Because her parents went to school in Kurdistan, they know Arabic and she can to a certain extent, understand the Arab letters, but this is mostly due to her training at a Kurdish school (in Norway), which she attended for approximately 3 months, before it was closed due to Covid- 19. Her parents speak Kurdish to both her and her sister, but she normally replies in Norwegian.

“Norwegian is my mother tongue”, she states, “but sometimes I think that perhaps English is taking over”. When she arrived in Western Norway, she attended a kindergarten where no one else spoke Kurdish, thus, she had to learn Norwegian. Even though her parents wished that she spoke more Kurdish, she felt that she had to learn Norwegian, even if it meant that she had to “relegate”¹ her native language at the time. She describes learning Norwegian as

² “Aunties” is a term used for women of a certain age who for various reasons are attached to the family household.

“uncomfortable” and that there was a certain pressure in kindergarten to learn the language. She didn’t feel welcome in Norway.

Today she still speaks Norwegian to her parents but manages to speak Kurdish with her relatives and extended family, although she prefers English. She can speak but not read Kurdish, or rather, if Kurdish is written with Latin letters, she can read, but does not think that she can write Kurdish.

She says that she dreams and thinks in English and Norwegian. She can’t really distinguish when and how, but these are her closest languages at the moment. She has no friends that she speaks with in Kurdish, but sometimes she speaks English with her friends, and also uses quite some time speaking online or chatting in English. She still feels that Norwegian is her mother tongue, or at least 1st language, but mostly because she lives here. She doesn’t necessarily feel that she is Norwegian, and if she were to move to Britain, for instance, she would probably feel that English would be her native language.

She started learning English when she started school in Oslo. She was not very good to start with but got a real “kick” from watching YouTube in the 4th grade. She then started reading more and more and eventually became very good at it. She feels as if she speaks fluently and writes with ease. In year 8, she started learning French. She finds it ok, but struggles with understanding, so she watches French children’s programs on YouTube.

In school they do not speak about who speaks what languages, but she knows that there are some people in her class or in her year, that are from Kurdistan, although she doesn’t speak with them. Some of them are from a different region and speak a different dialect, Sorani. There are 2-3 main Kurdish languages or dialects, and they are alle fairly dissimilar.

She regards herself as being multilingual. She also perceives her standard of Norwegian as better than many of the people she is in class with. She likes languages and enjoys the fact that she now can communicate with many different people – “to get friends”. “Speaking many languages is cool”, she says. This is why she in particular values her English skills, as it is a world language, unlike Norwegian. She also prefers learning in English.

She does not compare the languages she knows, at least not consciously. She tends to learn what they sound like and is not very concerned with rules of grammar. She does not find that there is any particular focus on being multilingual in school or any particular language

focus at all. She regards English as a valuable resource, because she can use it. She does, however, admit that some of her teachers use comparisons between Norwegian and English to point out differences and in particular how her Norwegian teacher spoke about how many translate from English to Norwegian, when they write Norwegian.

[Interview with Marte](#)

Marte says that on presenting the letter of consent for conducting interviews, her mother automatically responded, “of course knowing several languages is an advantage”. The student is, however, not that sure.

In terms of background, she says that it is complicated. Her parents are from North - Macedonia. This is a country with several language intertwined. Her mother speaks Turkish and Albanian. Her father speaks Albanian. They both speak Macedonian. What the interviewee calls their “grown up language”. She speaks both Turkish and Albanian but not Macedonian. She can, however, decipher the Macedonian letters, that are somewhat similar to Greek and thus she can read words, but does not understand what they mean.

She uses both Turkish and Albanian frequently. She speaks Albanian at home, as her father does not speak Turkish. She frequently speaks Turkish with her mother and her mother’s side of the family, often via Skype. Although her parents speak Macedonian when they want to keep things secret (their “grown up language”), the daily family household language is Albanian. She also speaks Albanian with her siblings and cousins.

The latter is however, often mixed with Norwegian. Norwegian is an important language, and she says that she dreams and thinks in both Albanian and Norwegian. Norwegian is the dominant language she uses in school, at handball practice or partakes in other spare time activities.

She was born in Norway and attended kindergarten at an early age. On being asked about kindergarten she says that many of the women who worked there did not speak Norwegian properly. Although she feels confident in Norwegian, she has realized later on that it may not be as good as she thought. During the last year she has spent more time with native Norwegian speakers (fellow students whose parents are Norwegian), and she has started to notice a change in how she herself speaks depending on whom she spends time with. If she

hangs around her friends from primary school, she will automatically use more slang and "Kebab" Norwegian³. If she spends time with her more recent friends, who only speak Norwegian, she has noticed that her wording and variation becomes better.

In addition, from years 1 to 6, she attended an Albanian cultural center on weekends, where she among other things learnt to read the Quran. She can to a certain extent read the letters, but she does not understand what the Arab words mean.

She started learning English during the first year of school and this is the language that she herself feels most unsure about. She claims she could have attended school and been taught in both Albanian, Turkish and Norwegian, but not in English. Even if she feels her knowledge of English has improved, English is difficult, and she can't really see how she can use this language.

She does not know exactly what languages are spoken in class or among her schoolmates, but she finds it odd that people are not able to speak their mother tongue. Students in class do, however, discuss cultural background and language. She herself does not identify as Norwegian, but she is not sure if she is Albanian or Turkish.

"It is an identity crisis", she laughs.

She regards herself as being multilingual but does not regard this as a resource. She claims that she can't understand what use she can make of these languages. She does, however, notice how she invariably compares the different languages, in particular in school. She often translates from English to Albanian and then into Norwegian or, she uses grammar terms, such as S-V-O, to identify these in the different languages. She finds this interesting and structurally valuable.

She also points out that all these languages are confusing and that it ruins her Norwegian. She is quite adamant that being multilingual does not matter if you do not speak the language of the country in which you reside. So, if she is to have any use of all her languages, she must be a versatile user of Norwegian.

³ Kebab Norwegian is a multiethnolect which originated in the Eastern parts of Oslo.

Interview with Abdur

Abdur speaks Norwegian, English and Urdu and thinks in Norwegian. His parents speak Norwegian but mostly Urdu or Punjabi. He was born and raised in Norway. He does not think he is very fluent in Urdu. When he speaks Urdu, he translates from Norwegian. He would list his languages in the following way:

1. Norwegian
2. English
3. Urdu

He has family in the USA and in Canada and speaks with them regularly. He has also done Qu'ran readings from 2nd to 5th grade. He started up again during the pandemic, but this time via Skype. He can read Arab but does not understand the words.

He has never received any formal 1st language training and has attended the same school his entire life. He regards himself as belonging to a minority language group and thinks his teachers mostly regard him as such.

He cannot recall ever being asked to use his mother tongue in any language class and does not really think that he has any advantages because he speaks another language. As he says: "If you are not proficient in Norwegian, it does not help".

He has been to the student counselor who has, however, pointed out that being multilingual, is a possible, future advantage. He seems a bit skeptical but acknowledges that this may be a point, but as he sees things now, it does not seem to create more opportunities. He does not think that Urdu has any status, except maybe within the Pakistani community, but even here, he is not sure that they are proud of their language, something he claims that one should be.

5.2 Summary and discussion of the interviews

In general, there are many things that these students have in common. They all claim Norwegian as their first language, but they also make the distinction between an L1, (or a dominant language as Marte puts it), and a mother tongue. They are able to differentiate between the languages that they speak and they have all attended or undergone some form of Quran related tutoring.

That the students claim Norwegian as L1 points towards a complex, linguistic and cultural situation. The way in which they position Norwegian, seems to be based on the notion that Norwegian is an asset, both culturally and in terms of use. However, because these students are bilingual, Norwegian has at some point, established itself as more important than the other language which they grew up speaking, alongside Norwegian.

Yet, even if claiming Norwegian as their L1, the students do not necessarily identify as Norwegian and they have seemingly little or no faith in their capability as multilinguals. When talking about their own culture, the answers are more varied. Some say that they are proud of their own culture, and language, yet others say that they are not sure, as in the last interview with Abdur who thinks that one should be proud of one's language, but maybe not sure as to why.

Of the five interviewees, there are only two who state that they do either Spanish or French, which may indicate that the others do English in depth. However, most list English as an important language in which they are able to read and write, something not all of them know how to do in their mother tongue. It is interesting to notice how to some, English is "taking over" or at least positioning itself as a dominant language within a multilingual setting. Abdur, who has relatives in Canada, speaks English together with them, and not Urdu. This is not surprising and points towards English as a Lingua Franca, as mentioned in 3.3. Some think and dream in English. In the interview with Rawan, she even points out that if she were to move to Britain, English would probably be her L1.

Another common feature is that they have all done Quran training. The way this training has been organized varies from student to student. Some have been taught through Skype, others, such as Marte, received Quran training at an Albanian Cultural center, or Rawan who went to a Kurdish school. It is not clear to what extent this teaching was done in their mother tongue and how much emphasis there was on Arabic. Most of them state that they know how to read the Arabic letters, so it is evident that they must have spent time both memorizing and focusing on the alphabet. However, none of them are Arabic speakers, so it is difficult to say to what extent this has added to a multilingual repertoire. Yet, training in Arabic should be noted as an effort at learning and may have added knowledge about, for instance, the difference between SVO and SOV languages.

5.3 Multilingualism among students

5.3.1 Language transfers

It seems reasonable to conclude that there is multilingual awareness among the interviewees. They all compare the languages they speak. They manage to list languages according to frequency of use or importance. There is mention of differences in Somali accents and Kurdish dialects, Greek letters and Arab reading. This linguistic knowledge involves some type of cognitive effort where linguistic understanding works simultaneously.

The Multilingual Proficiency model which was explained in Chapter 3.2, can be put to use here. There are several languages involved, and there is undoubtedly an M-factor present in that there is an awareness of the different languages related to cultural and social backgrounds. Not all, however, disclose what type of crosslinguistic interaction there actually is. Marte notes that she tends to use more slang and cross-over words when she hangs out with her “old” friends. She also admits to speaking Albanian mixed with Norwegian with her siblings.

Grosjean claims that there is evidence that when communicating with other bilinguals, code switching and borrowing is common (Grosjean, p. 18). By code switching Grosjean means the alternating between languages that are common between bilinguals, whereas borrowing is the act of including other words into one language. On a general level, one could imagine

that the students, who are interviewed and who admit to speaking either English with their Norwegian friends or answering their parents in Norwegian even if spoken to in another language, are prone to both code switching and borrowing on a daily basis.

The interviewees do not seem to be conscious about their linguistic repertoire. In fact, it seems mostly habitual. However, that young Norwegians of Pakistani background chose to speak Urdu together at weddings, (which Sanah describes), is worth noticing. Even if they all speak Norwegian, and many as their L1, the code switching is arguably due to a cultural setting. This points to another feature of multilingualism which may be connected to identity.

Fisher discusses the difference between linguistic and multilingual identity as a difference between a fluid and a fixed identity (Fischer in Haukås, 2021, p. 406). The idea that identity is fluid relates to how one identifies oneself in the moment but also how others identify you. A formal occasion such as a Pakistani wedding, could be interpreted as a moment where there is a need to ascertain a specific linguistic identity. Fischer's identity concept does not seem to distinguish between a personal or a collective notion of identity. Sanah describes this linguistic setting as "strange", and thus it may be argued that this is something which is simply done due to the circumstances.

There are three observations during the interviews that are noteworthy. The first is, as already mentioned, how matter-of-factly they talk about their language backgrounds. The second is that many give the impression that they distinguish between languages at home and languages outside of home. The third observation is how interested they were in these questions. It was clear that some had never spoken about topics relating to languages nor had they assessed them in this way before.

It is however depressing to realize that although these students possess knowledge and language skills, they see no apparent point or value in being multilingual. Some are frank in that there is no point, while some simply state that it has never been an issue, they have never been asked about their linguistic background. Marte is bluntly honest and admits that "all these languages are just confusing".

This, of course is a huge blow to proponents of the multilingual idea, but one which one perhaps must acknowledge. On the other hand, Rawan states that she likes languages, but even she does not find there to be any language focus in school. On the other end of the scale is the fact that more or less all of them think Norwegian is an important language. This is, of course, only natural and in many respects correct, but could it be that they have been imbued with the idea of the importance of Norwegian for so long that they have simply integrated this as part of their language awareness, and so suppress their wider range of language skills/linguistic repertoire?

5.3.2 Bilingualism and English as L3

According to the macro and micro perspective of Hammerberg, being multilingual involves a more fluid approach than listing languages in succession (Hammerberg, 2017, p. 4). This does not mean that the cognitive systems that have been established previously, are deleted, but that different contexts produce different needs. So for instance, if Rawan were to move to Britain at some point in her life, she would in all probability exchange Norwegian with English.

Grosjean claims that bilingual children activate both languages when processing information, even if given in only one language (Grosjean & Li, 2016, p. 32). He describes bilingual language processing as a mental effort whereby one language is activated, but where the other follows along. The result according to Grosjean, is that the L1 is so close that it is almost indistinguishable from the L2. The students that are interviewed here may claim that Norwegian is their L1, but many describe their L2 as a family language or as the language they speak at home. It seems reasonable to assume that the connectedness between L1 and L2 is close.

In itself, this bilingual situation is not problematic. What is of interest, however, is what happens when English is introduced in school. If one goes by Grosjean's claim that L1 and L2 are indistinguishable, English will be introduced as an L3, but as the point of reference is Norwegian, only one of the students' languages is activated and so the other language tags

along. Grosjean points out that it is possible to reduce the activation of the other language, almost to the point of neutralization. One of the main determining factors seems to be whether or not a bilingual or monolingual mode is encouraged (Grosjean & Li, 2016, p. 36).

Sanah makes an interesting observation when she notices a loss of bilingualism. What she has observed is that when she was younger, she would be better at code switching, in this case, between Norwegian and Urdu. This makes sense if one assumes that bilingualism has not been encouraged and that English and Norwegian are only related to each other. Abdur, who has already admitted that he translates from Norwegian whenever he speaks Urdu, placed Urdu as an L3, even if English is the third language he learnt.

5.3.3 Monolingualism

Marte finds languages, including English, confusing and points out two very interesting observations. One is that she did not learn to speak proper Norwegian in kindergarten. The other is that she has made a conscious effort to improve her Norwegian language through befriending native Norwegian speakers. The importance of early language training seems to be something many can agree on, but what is peculiar, is how she relates to this and what she believes that the consequences are. Furthermore, it may be that she thinks that there is a straight line between her lacking kindergarten years and how she regards her Norwegian of today.

It may be assumed that Marte has an idea of Norwegian in a more “pure” form. That is, a language devoid of slang and cross-over words, and where native speakers of Norwegian are perceived as more flawless than her own. To what extent this reflects a monolingual ideal is not possible to determine, but it seems evident that Marte’s idea of Norwegian does not run through a bilingual, or multilingual, lens, thus all those languages “are confusing”.

It is impossible to predict the implications of being multilingual in a school setting. However, for Marte and the other students that are interviewed, it seems that the motivation for learning language is somewhat divided between those who manage to include a new language and those who do not. A central question applicable for both is, however, what

does this do to one's own perception of language? If all language training that one receives in school is only centered around languages that one does not speak at home, then how does one value one's language skills?

5.4 Teacher interviews

5.4.1 Physical interviews

Interview with Gøran

"By multilingual I understand someone who can speak different languages depending on the situation", Gøran says. However, he admits that he is open for other interpretations, because it is a difficult definition. "It can also be a 2nd language", but he thinks that it should somehow involve a sort of fluency, not merely knowledge.

Gøran speaks Tagalog, which is the main language in the Philippines, and Waray, one of the main dialects on the Mindanao islands. He learnt English in school but points out that as the Philippines used to be, and still is, under heavy American influence, English is practiced frequently by many Filipinos.

He learnt French in school as a 3rd language. He also taught in France before moving to Norway. He learnt Norwegian at a mature age and has taught in different cities and different subjects in Norway. He has no problems speaking Norwegian, but he does speak English with many students who find it just as easy or even enjoyable.

Gøran is an educated teacher, but has never undergone any formal foreign language training though he teaches ESL. He thinks that he is aware of his students' linguistic backgrounds and will often ask students to translate and compare English with their mother tongue. He uses translation frequently and explains that this may have to do with his teaching experience in France, where he taught Business-English at a private school.

In France there were many different linguistic backgrounds. However, because the students were also "clients", there was a certain pressure on teaching and results, and this created

“kind of a linguistic awareness”. Thus, he developed a certain thinking around the relationships between languages.

He points out that he is convinced that multilingual or multicultural backgrounds are an asset, but openly admits that this is never properly discussed, not among teachers he works with, nor in any other ways. This is not because the school does not value the multicultural students, he says. There is simply no incentive for working with this, neither among teachers, nor from administration. There does not seem to be any prejudice or unwillingness, but simply that multilingual language teaching is not spoken about.

Interview with Heba

Heba links her definition of multilingualism with use – “if you use several languages, you are multilingual”. There is a certain “everydayness” connected to being multilingual, so that when saying that you know a certain amount of languages, this does not automatically mean that one is multilingual. If you speak Arab at home, Norwegian at school and English online, you are multilingual, but if you merely know these languages, “it is not the same” as using them every day. “There is something about using the “whole” language,” she adds, rather cryptically.

Heba is not sure if she is actually prepared for being in a multilingual classroom. However, she has taught for many years and feels more confident today, than when she started out. She has also read a bit on the subject of teaching multicultural classes. She has a multilingual home, something that is frequently addressed in the classroom. She seems to use the references to her multilingual background as a way of connecting with her students, and to show that she supports multilingual backgrounds. She thinks it is important that one speaks favorably about being multilingual or multicultural.

Heba is a conscious ESL teacher. But, as she points out, teaching children ESL works with students “who know what they are supposed to know”. Many of them do not possess enough knowledge of English, unfortunately. Even if there are many reasons for this, for

instance that they have only attended school for a few years, and/or that they lack sufficient knowledge in Norwegian, she still thinks that for many, English is an L3 and not an L2.

She is open for letting students use their L1. She finds it particularly useful when working with translation or when doing “brainstorming” activities. She also finds it useful to talk about language and language teaching. In terms of teaching strategies, words and concepts are important, both in L1 and other, targeted languages. She takes care to make use of international varieties and influences on other languages, e.g., Zulu, Dutch and Pakistani/Indian English.

Heba is fortunate in that she also teaches Norwegian. This means that she often correlates word classes, tenses and sentence structure to English. Also, because she teaches Norwegian, she knows what the students' L1s are. She also talks about being multilingual with her students. However, this is difficult to plan for, “because one never knows what will happen in class”, she laughs. She is adamant though when saying that “the way in which a language is learnt, is vital to if you regard it as an asset”.

sShe continues: “Many students seem to have knowledge of one or more languages, but it is hard to see the relevance if you do not use it. The parents influence how one regards language, for instance, reading to and with them gives a different idea of what language is for”.

She would have been interested in learning more about teaching multilingual classrooms as she finds it very interesting but also challenging. In terms of the English colleagues at school, she says: “we do not seem to discuss this a lot, but we do seem to value multilingualism as a resource”.

She also points out that there are no signals from higher up that multilingualism is a field of interest. This does not mean that no one is interested, but that no one seems to address the need for working with multilingual issues.

5.4.2 Online interviews

The following three interviews were all done through using Microsoft Teams. Most of these interviews lasted for 30 minutes or more. There was no recording, and all the interviews were held in Norwegian. I had never previously been in touch with these teachers but made contact through a Facebook group that we are all part of.

Interview with Stine

Stine has taught English for 10 years and has a Master's degree in English from a Russian university. She is currently working in an Upper Secondary school in a neighbouring municipality to Oslo. The school has approximately 650 students, of which 15% have minority backgrounds.

She regards the typical multilingual student as a student that has moved to Norway and who speaks a mother tongue, has Norwegian as an L2 and English as an L3. But, she adds, "there has also, in recent years, been an increase in students who have trouble speaking Norwegian, and thus also have trouble learning English. These are also multilingual kids".

A multilingual student can speak several languages and can switch between them. Stine believes that if you cannot go from one language to the other, you have not undergone systematic learning. That being said, she points out that "a multilingual student does not necessarily have to be fluent". By this she means fluent in the sense of intonation and pronunciation. But, she maintains: "there is a certain level of fluency that must be achieved, nevertheless".

She did part of her teachers training on how to teach language to children with minority backgrounds. But, it was not a big part of the course. She does however feel that she is prepared in the sense that she recognises their cultural differences and makes use of them in her classroom. She asks her students about what languages they speak but does not make distinct use of this information in her classes.

In addition, she teaches “special-needs” classes. Here, she is more conscious of the different linguistic needs of her students. However, she points out that she does not know exactly how to teach children with a minority language background. Again, she stresses that even though she feels capable, she does not have any formal or systematic training. She seldom lets her students use their native languages to explain or to talk about how they learn language. However, she is aware of their differences and tries to differentiate as best as possible.

Although she recognises the need, she does not teach language-learning strategies, nor do her colleagues. She does discuss this with the other teachers, but it does not seem that there is any joint effort “to pull this off”. Also, they do not even sit in the same building as the Norwegian department, which means that they don’t really know what they do, and that they do not benefit from any insight or information regarding their students’ capacity for Norwegian.

She thinks that most of her colleagues think of immigrant students as valuable. She admires them and often finds them more grateful than ethnic Norwegian students in the sense that they appreciate the possibilities that education offers. She also points out that the experiences they have, are valuable in terms of the cultural perspectives they can offer.

Stine herself, sums up what she is thinking about the issues discussed in the interview. She feels capable of teaching immigrant children, but there are two distinct problems. First of all, there is lack of systematic knowledge of teaching strategies and secondly, it seems that the school management lacks the willingness to prioritize this.

[Interview with Stein](#)

Stein works as a teacher in a Primary school in Oslo. He has worked as a teacher for many years. He thinks that he has got quite stereotypical views on multilingualism and is prone to connect multilingualism to immigration.

He thinks that the typical multilingual speaker is born in another country or has parents who are born in another country, and that they do not speak Norwegian at home. He admits that

this would also apply to British or Australian children, as they could technically be described in the same way. After a short moment, he adds that “being multilingual also includes being able to speak more than 2 languages”.

In the area where he lives, approximately 15-20 % of the children he teaches would be multilingual, although this would include children of British or American background, which means that the figure is probably lower. Most of the non-Anglo speaking children are of Pakistani or North-African backgrounds. Many of them were born in Norway but have parents who were not, but they have lived in Norway for a long time.

Stein started studying English as an adult. He is now on his final leg of his Master’s degree in English. He thinks that his recent studies have made him much more aware of the different relations between languages than he was before. Now he also feels more prepared for teaching English, even to children who do not have English as an L2.

He has become more aware of background and linguistic variation than before and knows where all his students “are from”. He also thinks that it is important that the teacher is curious and engages in his students’ background. He has also spoken with his students individually on this topic.

He did his first teachers training many years ago, but he cannot recall that there was much focus on these issues. “There was some mention of bilingualism and “Norwegian for foreigners, as it was so elegantly put”, he says, as he gestures the inverted comma.

Stein reflects a bit on this development. He says: ”The English subject seems to have taken into account that English is now a world language, and this implies that the world does not merely exist of Great Britain and the U.S.”.

When asked about what attitudes he thinks his colleagues have towards multilingualism, he says: “Many would probably say that they are positive towards multilingualism, but this may not necessarily be the case”. He explains that he thinks that many do not have sufficient competence, therefore many are sceptic when actually dealing with multilingual students.

He points out that: "it may be difficult to perceive of [multilingualism as] an asset if you don't understand how it is supposed to be one".

He does not know what the school administration thinks of multilingual pupils. But, he reasons, there is often a type of funding for students with multilingual backgrounds. "Perhaps this makes it a resource?" On an administrative level, there is no incentive to discuss or organise how they work with multilingual students. He refers to "Språkbroen" which was an attempt to include minority children in language classes. But as far as he knows, this is no longer in use. Today, it seems that everyone is supposed to be included, regardless of background.

Interview with Marie

Marie works at a school in Oslo. The school has a 60/40 ratio of multilingual students. She teaches English and French. In addition she teaches Norwegian in a reception - class, which is a class for minority language students who have not been in the country for a long time. Marie is an educated teacher. She has studied education in Russia, which included both French and English university level coursework. However, she explains, she has not studied multilingual didactics or other courses directed specifically towards minority language students.

She has many thoughts on multilingualism. She defines multilingualism as the ability to speak several languages on an everyday basis. She specifically mentions that students who do French, German or Spanish in school cannot be considered as multilingual. The reason she states, is that these students do not use these language every day.

In addition, Marie does not think that one has to speak all languages equally well, or even to be fluent. The most important is that the speaker is exposed to several languages on a daily basis, or at least often. Doing languages in school does not expose you to language very often, and there is a significant difference between knowing of a language and actually using a language.

The way in which she perceives of multilingual students, is that they are able to speak more than two languages. "So", she explains, "students that have parents from Somalia or Pakistan and speak Urdu or Somali, are typically multilingual speakers, whilst my French students are not necessarily multilingual, because they speak Norwegian at home and are not exposed to French on a daily basis".

In general, she feels that she is fairly well prepared for teaching multilingual students. She draws on her experience as a foreign language teacher of French, which she has taught for many years. However, she seems to distinguish between her ESL classes and her other classes, because as she points out: "Norwegian in the reception class is on a very basic level. One is more aware of the immediacy in relating to native or mother-tongue languages."

By this, she seems to mean that the level of language in a reception class is so basic, that it is easier to compare to the other languages that the students are familiar with. In an ESL class, the level of language is higher and comparisons between languages is more complicated and requires a greater degree of skill and knowledge.

When asked, she admits that some of the techniques or ideas that she would use in one of her reception-classes, she would not necessarily use in an English class. For instance, in a reception class, she would let her students use their mother tongue during different exercises, whilst in an English class, she wouldn't. However, she points out that this does not mean that she doesn't think that this is unnecessary. "To learn a language, it is important to be able to draw connections to and with other languages, not only English, even if it is in a Second-Language class".

She is also more conscious about different strategies for learning language in a foreign language class, than in an English class⁴. She, again, points out that English classes are on a much higher level. The content and the discussions are more complex and many of the topics are not in themselves related to language learning. They concern history, geography and societal questions.

⁴ Note that in Norway, English is not considered to be a foreign language.

She thinks of multilingual students as resourceful. But she finds that often, when discussing students of multilingual backgrounds with other teachers, views tend to be a bit negative. When for instance, a student is having problems in a subject or other school related issues, being multilingual is often pointed to as the problem.

Instead, she claims, one ought to understand a student's progress in relation to background, whether he or she has parents who are proficient in languages, and other important factors. In general, what is lacking is a discussion on how to structure the teaching of multilingual students. Yet, her school's administration does not seem to be too concerned about these issues.

5.4.3 Summary: Multilingualism amongst teachers

To summarize, the interviewed teachers are genuinely positive about multilingualism and multilingual students. However, no one seems to know exactly what they are doing in relation to this specific field of interest. There are many good intentions and many of the teachers seem to think along the same lines about these issues. However, only Marie seems to be clear on that being multilingual means that you are exposed to several languages on a daily basis.

They are all clear in their evaluation of language. Languages are important and many are positive to add other languages than English and Norwegian in an English class. None of them mention a monolingual tradition or seem to be aware of its existence, but it is interesting to note that many seem to structure languages according to a very traditional view of the connections between L1, L2, and L3.

Stine and Gøran claim that in order to be multilingual, a sort of fluency is needed. This again, indicates use, as Heba underlines. Exposure to language and fluency and/or usage is not the same. To use a language on a daily basis indicates a regular activity of reception, processing and production. Being exposed to language says little about knowledge and skill. This points to several issues, among them the students' skills in their mother tongue or their language

backgrounds. Even if the teachers who are interviewed claim to have an idea of what language backgrounds the students have, it is of course, much more difficult to say anything about students' proficiency level in their mother tongue.

Several of the interviewed teachers reveal that when the issue of multilingualism is discussed, being multilingual is not necessarily an asset. There may be several reasons for this. Stein mentions that teachers may not have proper knowledge of how to teach multilingual students, whilst Marie notices how multilingualism may be used as a way of explaining why a student is not progressing as desired. When Heba points out that ESL works for those who understand, she might mean that many students should be at a certain level, but in fact, they are not.

It can be more difficult to teach students who speak several languages, many of the students hail from parts of the world where education is unavailable or where school lacks resources. However, all the teachers report that there is no real discussion on these matters, neither amongst teachers themselves, nor are there any incentives from the school administration to discuss teaching multilingual students.

Stein refers to "Språkbroen" (The Language Bridge). "Språkbroen" was an attempt to bridge languages spoken at home with the Norwegian language (Grødum & Hauger, 2014). This is not mentioned by anyone else, neither are similar language initiatives. What is interesting is that this means that at some point attempts have been made to draw on student linguistic backgrounds and connect home language with the languages spoken at school. If this is an obsolete practice will not be investigated here but is worth noticing.

Most of the interviewees have ideas on how and why fronting a multilingual approach is important, and many of these ideas focus on valuing different backgrounds and letting these become a more prominent part of language classes. Some of the didactic principles for language teaching that were suggested as useful in part 3.3, seems to be used in several of the teacher's classroom. Both Gørán and Heba explicitly mention translation or comparison-exercises between English and mother tongue languages. This echoes Jessner's suggestions of a cross language approach, which involves corresponding terms and contrasting language

analysis. In other words, there are signs of a multilingual approach in the way these teachers conduct their classes.

6.0 Findings: Overall summary in relation to research questions

The interviewed students think that knowing many languages is an advantage but are not overly confident that being multilingual will be an advantage for them in the future. The language teachers, on the other hand, seem fairly convinced that knowing many languages, is enriching. Clearly, there is something about teachers' idea of language and the students' perception of language which seems to contradict each other.

What is clear from the teacher interviews, is that there is no structured platform on which to conduct multilingual didactics. None of the teachers have been taught how to teach students of multilingual backgrounds and it is not a subject for discussion on an administrative level. On the other hand, the teachers claim that they know about their students' linguistic background.

The language subjects in schools in Oslo are, in addition to English, German, French and Spanish. The teachers who are interviewed here do not give the impression that these languages are more important than other languages. However, the students do, to a varying degree, not seem to share this opinion.

In the case of the students, the favored language is Norwegian. Even if many of the students are disillusioned as to the worth of being multilingual, it becomes clear that they value their mother tongue. However, it is specifically mother tongue languages that students find not to be an asset.

6.1 Conclusion

In part 1.1 the two research questions for this thesis were presented:

- 1) Do young multilingual students regard their language skills as an asset?

2) Do English teachers regard multilingualism as an asset?

As I have shown, the answer to these questions are that students do not regard their language skills as an asset, whilst teachers are positive towards multilingualism. The conclusion is therefore that there is a discrepancy between students' views of the importance of multilingualism and the teachers' views. As pointed out in chapter 4.1, a study such as this is too specific to make any general claims. However, the interviews nevertheless suggests that there are several reasons for why this difference of opinion occurs.

6.2 Values and assets

In stating that students do not regard their language skills as an asset, this does not mean that they do not attach value to the languages they know. It seems though, that whatever value they place on their mother tongue, this does not resonate within a school setting. Even though the teachers are positive toward multilingualism, the interviews show that positive or not, teaching multilingual students may be more demanding due to their linguistic and cultural background.

Thus, the discrepancy seems to point towards regarding something as an asset and the opportunity to enjoy its inherent value. In the case of the participating students, their mother tongue is part of their upbringing, yet their favored language is Norwegian. This may be a result of the prospects of education and employment, but as the interviews show, there is seemingly no coherent effort to include mother tongue languages into everyday teaching practice either.

Another factor in this equation, is the importance of English as a subject. As discussed in both part 3.2 and part 5.3.2, there is a point to be made in how English is taught. It is important to understand whether or not English is taught in reference to Norwegian or, if English follows a communicative approach, where English is the only language used. Either way, this leads to an isolation of an L1/mother tongue. This means that when these students claim that Norwegian and English is important, there is a question as to whether or not

Norwegian and English has been made important because other options have been removed.

6.3 Monolingual versus multilingual

Much of the information gathered from interviewing teachers points towards a monolingual tradition in Norwegian schools. As pointed out earlier, there is much evidence that Norwegian teachers lack knowledge of multilingualism. Interestingly, the teachers who are interviewed reflect the idea of multilingual didactics, although at a rudimentary level. From the way they assess multilingualism and to how they describe their own teaching practices, it is obvious that many have understood or pay attention to the impact of the students having a multilingual background. However, the teachers admit to a lack of theoretical knowledge, and one can only assume that the attempts at structuring language classes as mentioned in part 5.4.3, are based on general didactic principles and years of experience, more than it is based on knowledge of multilingualism.

Another interesting feature of the teachers' interviews, is that not one of them mentioned the distinction between mono- and multilingualism, nor did anyone suggest that how they taught had ramifications on their students L1. Cummins argues that the monolingual tradition is based on a common-sense approach where the targeted language is approached without any interference from any other language (Cummins, 2009, p. 320). What Cummins criticizes as common-sense, is a critique of claiming that learning L1 is the same as learning L2. The idea is that students who have a clearly defined mother tongue, may have a better grasp of what linguistic possibilities and limitations there are, than students that do not. When the students in this thesis claim that their mother tongues are not an asset, it is because these languages have no defined place within the language classroom.

A monolingual teaching principle in a multilingual classroom implicitly favors one language over other languages. The teachers in this thesis do not intentionally position the languages they teach as more or less important, but it seems possible that their language teaching in general is based on a monolingual principle. Marie mentioned this specifically when she addresses the difference in teaching an ESL class and a reception class, where the proficiency

at a basic level makes it more obvious to use comparisons with mother tongue languages. One can assume that teaching English or other languages at a higher level requires language proficiency where topics and themes are explained solely in the targeted language.

A final observation regarding a monolingual learning principle is that it does not seem to mirror life. The students who are interviewed describe a situation where they move between languages within a domain. So that even if they speak one language with their parents, they might speak another with their siblings. The students report of elements of cross-over language when speaking with friends and are aware of this. At no point does it seem then, that they move within a monolingual sphere, where only language exists.

6.4 Multilingualism – More than a buzzword

Multilingualism carries too much weight, both as a concept, theoretical construct and as an educational edifice, to be discarded as a mere buzz word. However, much of what has been presented throughout this thesis gives reason to argue that multilingualism may be taken to be just that. Even if there is significant evidence to argue the benefits of a multilingual approach towards language, there is also much to suggest that the educational structures of today are difficult to overturn. In addition, it may be necessary to investigate how the turn to multilingualism depends on how one perceives the world.

Multilingualism has linguistic, social and cultural impact. As a theoretical construct it challenges and modifies traditional monolingualism and is today integrated in the educational framework for English in Norwegian schools. However, schools in Norway have been teaching languages for decades. German, French and in later years Spanish, are well established languages. What is interesting about this is that these languages do not represent any of the minority language groups in Norway, nor can they be traced to any type of migrant pattern between Norway and France, Spain or Germany. The reason they are foreign languages, is that they, presumably, are important in a global context. However, there exist several thousand languages in the world, and these three are all Western European languages.

An understanding of multilingualism that mainly concerns itself with European languages is labeled as “elite multilingualism” by Kalaja and Pitkaen-Huhta (Kalaja & Pitkaen-Huhta, 2020, p. 341). This term is meant to describe how foreign languages are offered in school at great praise, and with no apparent threat to the home language. Whether or not this applies to a Norwegian context belongs to a future paper, but there is a serious question to be raised, and that is if paying more attention to minority languages would pose a threat to the Norwegian language?

This question is important. Not just because of the educational aspect but because the educational aspects are connected to cultural and political issues. Ultimately however, the main reason for why this is an important question is the possibility that society is missing out on a great resource. What the students in this thesis show is lack of confidence and appreciation of the language skills they possess. In this sense, the findings in this study are indicative of a much bigger picture. A multilingual approach is a way for multilingual children to grant themselves abilities that will open doors in a globalized and multicultural world.

Last but not least, there is the challenge of equipping all teachers with the competence that both Haukås and Dahl and Krulatz argue is necessary for teaching multilingual students. This does not necessarily involve learning more languages, but a way of teaching where all teachers incorporate a form of multilingual didactics, encouraging the individual student to include the languages he or she knows. Jessner claims that it is important that language learning needs to be connected to other languages and notices for instance the common curriculum for languages in Ireland and the attempts at developing systematic grammar material in German – French – English – Latin (Jessner, 2008, pp. 42- 45). Therefore, in order for multilingualism to succeed one could imagine a future language classroom where student progression is tracked according to their linguistic background.

6.5 Globalization: Multilingualism and Education

This reiterates the point above on the importance of the English classroom. The English language classroom is a place where many languages meet. And, as the world’s unquestionable Lingua Franca, English has a much better chance of linking different

languages and making possible metalinguistic awareness that could fuel future language learning. As the M-factor above indicated, there is a resource in the connection between language and culture in that learning about cultures also implies learning about linguistic background.

A second point is of course, that the world has changed, and continues to do so. The reason why curricula are modified is because the old curricula, for various reasons, are no longer suitable. Whether the development of the English subject in Norway is a result of an intentional political process is beyond the scope of this thesis. But what can be pointed at, which the Ludvigsen committee's work is an example of, is that the result of a global process can be witnessed, also in the development of English in the Norwegian school system.

Globalization has favored English. The dominance of global English has led to a range of new questions and concerns, most of which focus on how to teach English. Not only is English found as a common reference, is it also a language that in many ways is very much linked to identity and meta-awareness (Kramsch, 2014, p. 302). The communicative turn that language learning underwent in the 1980's underlined the importance of task-based knowledge, but also commodified language in the sense that the learner can shop around for a multitude of diversity without understanding the cultural and linguistic differences (Kramsch, 2014, p. 302).

7.0 Concluding remarks

In the introduction reference was made to the "how's" and "why's" of multilingualism. What has been underlined in this thesis is that how languages are related to each other and the "know-how" of multilingualism is not sufficiently established in schools. The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3.0 shows that applying multilingualism in a classroom involves breaking away from a monolingual approach towards teaching language.

In order for students and teachers to understand why being multilingual is an advantage, perhaps more work has to be done in terms of showing how classrooms of today are a result of global processes. In doing so, teachers must not only gain knowledge of multilingualism

but be able to understand how and why the English classroom in many ways delineates future language teaching.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Intervjuguide Lærer

1. Flerspråklighet

- a. Hva legger du i tema/begrepet flerspråklighet?
- b. Hvem er den flerspråklige eleven?
- c. Forsøk på å definere flerspråklig eller flerspråklighet?

2. «Egenvurdering»

- a. Hvor godt føler du at du er forberedt til å undervise flerspråklige elever?
- b. I hvilken grad tenker du på din egen engelskundervisning som «andrespråksopplæring»?
- c. Hvordan jobber du med flerspråklige elever?
- d. Hvor ofte lar du elevene dine bruke førstespråket sitt for å snakke om språklæring?
- e. Jobber du bevisst med språkstrategier?
- f. Har du oversikt over elevenes morsmål?
- g. Har du noen formell kompetanse i flerspråklighet/ flerspråklighetsdidaktikk?
(Evt. Ble dette vektlagt i lærerutdanningen din?)
- h. Ville du være interessert i denne type kompetanse?
- i. Tenker du på flerspråklige elever som en ressurs i klassen?

3. Holdninger generelt

- a. Ser engelsklærere på flerspråklighet som en ressurs?
- b. Diskuteres dette med andre språklærere?
- c. Erfaring med flerspråklige elever.

4. Spørsmål vedrørende ledelse og tilrettelegging

- a. Opplever du at ledelsen ved din skole oppfatter flerspråklige elever som en ressurs?

- b. Hvordan opplever du at man utnytter dette i skolen?
- c. Legges det til rette for at flerspråklighet utnyttes eller brukes? (kursing, materiale eller annet).

Appendix B

Intervjuguide elev

Del 1

- Gjennomgang av informasjonsskjema
- Understreke at det er frivillig å delta og at datamaterialet anonymiseres
- Repeter at foresatte har gitt samtykke

Del 2

Spørsmål:

- Kan du fortelle om din språklige bakgrunn?
- Hvilke språk snakker du? Hva er ditt morsmål?
 - Tenkespråk
 - Drømmespråk
 - Stressespråk
- Hvilke språk forstår du? (lese og lytte)
 - Lese og lytte:
- Hvilke språk skriver du?
- Hvor lenge har du snakket de ulike språkene?
 - Relevans: rekkefølge
- Når bruker du de ulike språkene? (hjemme og ute? Med søsken?)
 - Med hvem? (hjemme, venner, skolen osv.)
- Hvilke ulike språk snakkes det i klassen?
- Hvordan snakker dere om at det er ulike språk i klassen?
- Hvilken språklig opplæring har du hatt?
- Har du hatt tospråklig opplæring eller mormålsopplæring?
- Hvilken betydning har det hatt for deg?
- Hvordan opplevde du det?

Del 3

Bevissthet og metabevissthet

- Hvilket begrep bruker du for å forklare at du kan snakke flere språk? (norsk som andrespråk, flerspråklig, tospråklig, minoritetsspråklig)
 - Hvilket begrep bruker lærer/de voksne på skolen?
- Kan du fortelle om en time eller økt hvor du synes språklæringa var god?
- Hvilke muligheter opplever du med å være flerspråklig i engelskundervisninga?
- Hvilke utfordringer opplever du med å være flerspråklig i engelskundervisninga?
- Hvilket språk lærer du best på? (norsk/engelsk/morsmål?)
- Bruk av flere språk i norskopplæringa: Hender det at norsklærer bruker andre språk?
- Er det noen situasjoner i engelsktimene hvor du bruker morsmålet?
- Oppfordrer læreren deg til å bruke morsmålet?
- Hvordan arbeider dere med tekster på ulike språk?

Appendix C

Informasjonsskriv - Masterprosjekt

Elevintervju

Bakgrunn og formål

Jeg skal skrive en masteroppgave i Fremmedspråksdidaktikk ved Høgskolen i Østfold. Tema for oppgaven handler om flerspråklighet, og om eller hvordan flerspråklighet blitt sett på som en ressurs. Jeg vil gjerne intervjuer elever som har flerspråklig bakgrunn og ditt barn har sagt seg villig til å la seg intervju. Intervjuet vil ta omtrent 30 minutter og vil være individuelt. Eleven vil bli spurt om egne opplevelser og erfaringer knyttet til språklig bakgrunn, det å beherske to eller flere språk og om man føler det er noen fordeler knyttet til å kunne flere språk i den norske skolen i dag.

Intervjuet vil IKKE bli registrert ved hjelp av lyd- eller film opptak, det er kun et intervju med notater som skrives for hånd. Det vektes at alt av personidentifiserebare opplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt og intervjuobjektet vil bli fremstilt anonymt. Alle notater slettes etter at skriveprosessen er ferdig.

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du har spørsmål til studien kan du ta kontakt med Finn Engeseth, på telefon 91399895

Samtykke

Jeg har lest og forstått informasjonen over, og gir mitt samtykke til å delta i prosjektet

Sted og dato Signatur elev

Sted og dato Signatur foresatt