

Title: Teaching and learning in Nordic schools from a multilingual perspective

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An abstract describing the entire symposium

The Nordic countries' that today are a multilingual region, have a shared language policy that states:

Multilingualism provides the basis for skills, creativity, perspective, and international contacts to an extent that is impossible in monolingual societies. Developing it requires a unified, long-range, and effective language-policy effort (p.92).

The policy also stipulates that all Nordic residents who are of foreign origin have the right to acquire both spoken and written skills in a language essential to society so that they can participate in the society as well as preserve and develop their mother tongue or their national minority language (Nordiska ministerrådet, 2007).

The Nordic countries share many similar features, e.g. in terms of history, educational and welfare system but there are as well differences within the countries that affect policies and have consequences for developments in each country.

Björklund et al. (2013) state that as:

a societal and individual phenomenon, multilingualism and multiculturalism in the Nordic countries are by no means a recent development, but today we encounter a qualitatively different version of multilingualism. The numbers of immigrants are increasing, the languages and cultures present are no longer only indigenous and finally the new minority languages are not found in geographically limited enclaves (p.2).

This changed situation has called for the importance for schools and teacher education to have well-planned language learning strategies. Though the trends are similar in the Nordic countries, language and integration policies, language learning practices and research on multilingualism and multilingual education have taken various routes and the focus might therefore not be the same.

In this symposium we will focus on how policies and actions on multilingual education have developed in the Nordic countries (paper 1). We then move on to explore (paper 2) Quality teaching for linguistically diverse students in Nordic lower secondary classrooms. In paper 3 the focus is on Plurilingual ducation – Language awareness across ducational levels. The presentation in paper 4 - Arabic L1 speaking pupils' argumentation skills in L2 Finnish on grades 4 to 6 - raises the classical question about the connection between L1 and L2, and the contribution of L1 to learning the language of instruction and learning in general. Finally, paper 5 - Teachers' views on multilingualism from the perspective of two national languages - explores teachers' perceptions of multilingualism within Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools in Finland from the perspective of the language use by teachers and students.

Paper 1: Second Language and Mother Tongue Education for Immigrant Children in Nordic Educational Policies: Search for a Common Nordic Dimension

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Abstract

Nordic education leans on values of social justice, equity, and inclusion, and the treatment of second languages and mother tongues can be seen as a test of how well these Nordic values are implemented. While second language instruction is a tool to provide students with immigrant backgrounds with equal access to education, and mother tongue instruction is a recognized human right, local circumstances influence how the instruction is organized and provided. This presentation investigates if and how a common Nordic dimension underlies existing policies in L2 and L1 instruction in the five Nordic countries. Our research question is: What do policy documents in the five Nordic countries say about a) second language (L2) instruction and b) immigrant mother tongue (L1) instruction? The theoretical foundation of this paper presentation lies in the research fields of language policies (Spolsky, 2005) and social justice (Cleave, 2020; Piller, 2020).

The current Nordic Language Policy was approved in 2006 (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2007) and thus marked the beginning of a common vision of the Nordic countries as a multilingual region. We collected thus the most recent policy documents, all introduced after the year 2007,

for the document analysis. The documents used to analyze the policies of each Nordic country included policy reports, legislation, curricula, and external evaluation reports related to schools. To analyze the documents and answer the research questions, we used document analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 27).

Our results show that there is a common Nordic dimension regarding L2 and L1 instruction, demonstrated through an explicit ambition to provide opportunities for the education of immigrant students in L2 and L1. However, there are differences between the Nordic countries in their commitment to principles of social justice, and how the policies are implemented. Regarding L2 instruction, the major difference emerges as a continuum: from an autonomous subject to additional support to a mainstream language subject. At the other end of the continuum is Denmark, with a mandatory test in L1 Danish subject and unspecified policies in L2 Danish instruction, and Iceland with underdeveloped L2 instruction and support. The language policies in Denmark, Iceland, and Norway articulate L2 instruction as a temporary support for students who are not yet sufficiently proficient in the majority language. These three countries view L2 instruction as a bridge to the national language curricula, thus implicitly imposing the “monolingual ethos” (Ellis et al., 2010) paradigm and the mainstream language as a linguistic norm, although the concept of a “native-like speaker” as a prototype (Seidlhofer, 2022) is culturally marked (Pawley & Syder, 2014). Although the policies in Sweden and Finland grant L2 students the same access to further education, Kalalahti et al. (2017) argue that studying in the L2 syllabus in Finland may lead to lower expectations after compulsory school, a tendency that has been criticized as othering (Kurki et al., 2018). However, neither Sweden nor Finland restricts the switch between L2 and the mainstream language subject.

Paper 2: Quality teaching for linguistically diverse students in Nordic lower secondary classrooms

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Abstract

This study, still ongoing at the time of the writing of this abstract, is conducted by a Nordic research group called QuiCC (Quality in Culturally Diverse Classrooms), which is a part of the Nordic research center QUINT (Quality in Nordic Teaching). This study aims to explore the quality in L1 teaching in lower secondary classrooms in the five Nordic countries, from the perspective of the needs of multilingual students. More specifically we investigate if and how the teaching offers explicit scaffolding (support structures), or language support for the students in L1 classes in all Nordic countries. Theoretical frameworks for the current study include Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective and the role of scaffolding in language instruction (Wood et al. 1976) as well as the theory about language awareness (Hélot et al., 2018) and powerful knowledge (Gericke et al., 2018)

The data is collected within the LISA Nordic project (Linking Instruction and Student Achievement). Observation data from ten lower secondary classrooms in the five Nordic countries were collected in the L1-subject and four consecutive lessons in each class were recorded in 2018-2022. The data were analyzed using the PLATO tool, which includes 12 elements of instruction based on research describing effective instruction in the Language Arts subject (Cohen & Grossman, 2016). To identify sequences of instruction that can be considered particularly important in linguistically heterogeneous classrooms we analyze two of the PLATO elements more in depth: Modeling and Use of Models (MOD) and Accommodations for Language Learning (ALL), more precisely segments that got 3 and 3 on PLATO. Preliminary results show that some of the teachers use model texts to support the students in completing writing tasks (MOD), e.g. in the Swedish and Danish classrooms but modelling hardly appears in the Finnish and Icelandic data. There are also instances where teachers provide supportive materials for language learning and highlight academic and subject-related language in the instruction (ALL) and for that the lessons are coded on a higher level of PLATO (3 and 4). However, even though the elements coded 3 and 4 are considered to be at the higher end of the quality spectrum in PLATO, we don't necessarily find that all the teaching that occurs is conducive to language learning. Rather, we see a great range of different practices within these scores and while some of the forms of modeling documented may constitute quality for linguistically diverse students, others may not. In our paper, we aim to highlight the different aspects of teaching within these categories that in fact promote affordances for language learning and language awareness.

Paper 3: Plurilingual Education – Language Awareness Across Educational Levels

Name of contributors:

Line Krogager Andersen, University of Southern Denmark (presenting)

Petra Daryai-Hansen, University of Copenhagen
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Abstract

This is a presentation of the overall findings of the research project Plurilingual Education – Language Awareness Across Educational Levels (PE-LAL, Daryai-Hansen et al., 2023). Based on a short introduction of the project, its qualitative design, methodology and context for the study, we present a model of learners' LA across educational levels in the context of plurilingual education, developed on the basis of an abductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) combining previous research and empirical findings from the PE-LAL project. Drawing on Candelier et al. (2010), the model defines the context of plurilingual education as a continuum consisting of three pluralistic approaches to languages and a transversal dimension focusing on learners' language resources including first languages beyond the language(s) of schooling. Language Awareness is defined on the basis of van Lier (1998, 2004), as practical language awareness (PLA), metalinguistic awareness (MLA) and critical language awareness (CLA) that can be directed towards nine language levels.

The project included an extensive collection of empirical data, including 123 hours of classroom observations documented by fieldnotes and 82 hours of audio recordings of teaching and group work. This presentation zooms in specifically on classroom data from the secondary level, presenting a wide range of examples of the different forms of language awareness described in the abductively developed model. The findings indicate that PLA, MLA and CLA can be developed by students across educational levels and that the learners' LA with age reflects a complexification manifested through the LA articulation and the linguistic levels in focus. On the basis of these findings, the presentation reflects on the link between the forms of language awareness manifested by students and the characteristics of the teaching observed in terms of the plurilingual education, teaching activities, classroom discourse and learner engagement.

Finally, the presentation considers these aspects in the light of the QUINT conceptualisations of quality in Nordic teaching, especially with a focus on quality in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Paper 4: Arabic L1 speaking pupils' argumentation skills in L2 Finnish on grades 3 to 5

Name of contributor: Maria Ahlholm, University of Helsinki

Abstract

This presentation discusses the classical question about the connection between L1 and L2, and the contribution of L1 to learning the language of instruction and learning in general. I will show examples of an ongoing study about Arabic speaking pupils as L1 and L2 learners. Arabic has

become the fourth biggest mother tongue in Finnish comprehensive schools, with 9075 pupils registered as Arabic L1 speakers (Vipunen 2023). The percentage of Arabic speakers of all pupils is 1,5% speakers, and Russian 1,9% speakers. The division between the two main languages is Swedish 5,2% and Finnish 82,3% of all pupils.

The data consist of Arabic L1 classroom videos (<https://migdia.fi/en/>) and videos of L2 Finnish storytelling interviews. In this presentation, the main emphasis is on the interviews, and the classroom data serve as the background for the study - enabling observations about the pupils' L1 competencies and identification as Arabic speakers. The focus group pupils attend two schools in Helsinki district, and Arabic as a "student's own Mother Tongue" classroom in one of the schools. Ten students from grades 3–5 were selected to a storytelling interview in their L2, Finnish. They were shown pictures describing safety risks in everyday situations in traffic, with fire, in outdoor games. The interviews followed a simple protocol: participants were first asked to describe what they saw, and second, explain what is risky in the picture, and third, give arguments why they thought so. The interviewer gave clues for argumentation only when necessary. The data gives access to the participants' argumentation skills in their L2, Finnish, particularly the use of connectors and causative verbs, and production of precise vocabulary. It is also possible to make comparisons between the participants' answers. The research question is *what kind of variation exists in the pupils' L2 argumentation skills*. In the analysis, some reasons for the variation are explained through background data.

The research question is *what kind of variation exists in the pupils' L2 argumentation skills*. In the analysis, the reasons for the variation are explained through background data. The preliminary findings are discussed leaning on the recent study on minoritized pupils' multilingualism (e.g. Cummins 2021). The presentation contributes to discussion and re-formulation of the expected connection between L1 and L2.

Paper 5: Teachers' views on multilingualism from the perspective of two national languages.

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Abstract

This paper explores teachers' perceptions of multilingualism within Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools in Finland from the perspective of the language use by teachers and

students. Although multilingualism in a society is rather a universal norm than an exception (the Douglas Fir Group, 2016), the school institution has globally a persistent tradition for monolingualism (Gogolin, 1994; Piller, 2016). Thus, even for a multilingual society, the language of instruction has a significant symbolic value, and the schools stay formally monolingual, even though informally, a variety of languages is used side by side and overlapping. The case of the Finnish educational system with the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, is an example of a bilingual structure based upon two parallel educational system from pre-school through to university.

The linguistic diversity in Finnish schools is slowly growing, although the degree of multilingualism is still lower than in the other Nordic countries (see Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023). Particularly noteworthy are the disparities between Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools: 9.2% of students in Finnish medium schools come from families speaking a language other than Finnish or Swedish, in contrast to the 4% in Swedish medium schools.

This paper directs attention to the multilingual turn from the perspective of two official languages that have strong legal protection, even though one of the languages has a considerable majority position. The research questions guiding this investigation are:

1. How do teachers in Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools perceive multilingualism as reflected in the perspective of the teachers' language use?
2. How do teachers in Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools perceive multilingualism from the perspective of teachers' guidance of the students' language use?

Adopting the framework of linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas et al., 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2010, 2013) and the concept of sustainable translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017), our sample comprises 2,865 teachers in 833 schools, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The results reveal that the linguistic variety appears to be broader in Finnish medium schools, whereas in Swedish medium schools, the variability mainly concerns the two national languages. Given their minority status, Swedish language schools assume a dual role: safeguarding the use of students' school language, i.e., the minority language, and adapting to the growing linguistic diversity (see also From, 2020). The study underscores the significance of embracing sustainable translanguaging, that is, to support the use of minority language(s) as an essential part of linguistically responsive teaching. This means that the understanding in schools with a language in a minority position as the language of instruction in other words obviously clashes with both the fact that multilingualism has now attained a broader meaning than in the past and runs counter to the perspective on multilingualism in research and in policy documents. The study proposes a pressing need

to encourage further discussion about what it means to educate newcomers for integration through the smaller language.

Extended summary (1000 words max, excluding references)

The aim of this symposium is to explore teaching and learning in Nordic schools from a multilingual perspective. **In the first presentation** we investigate whether and how a common Nordic dimension underlies existing policies in L2 and L1 instruction. Nordic countries, which today form a multilingual region, share a language policy that encourages multilingualism as the basis for skills, creativity, perspective, and international contact to an extent that is impossible in monolingual societies. The policy suggests that developing a multilingual society requires a unified, long-range, and effective language policy effort. However, implementation of the Nordic policy and national policies as well as practical work with multilingualism in the educational systems remain a challenge as they are largely subject to national and local measures. We conducted policy document analysis in each of the Nordic countries, such as policy reports, legislation, curricula, and external evaluation reports related to schools. Our results show that there is an overall common Nordic dimension in the Nordic policies regarding L2 and L1 instruction, which is demonstrated through an explicit ambition to provide opportunities for the education of immigrant students, both in the students' L2 and L1. However, our analysis also shows that there are differences regarding the provision of L2 and L1. **The aim of the second presentation** - Quality teaching for linguistically diverse students in Nordic lower secondary classrooms - is to explore quality in L1-teaching in lower secondary classrooms in the five Nordic countries, from a multilingual perspective. We believe that here the research gap is that we do not have a systematic overview of LA practices related to linguistically diverse classrooms in Nordic schools. Thus, we are interested to understand how quality teaching for multilingual students looks like and how quality can be defined in linguistically heterogeneous classrooms? Moreover, we want to explore in what ways Language Art lessons in Nordic schools are supportive for linguistically diverse students (L2) according to the elements Modelling and Accommodation for language learning? Theoretical frameworks include Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective and the role of scaffolding in language instruction as well as theory about language awareness and powerful knowledge. The data is collected within the LISA Nordic project (Linking Instruction and Student Achievement) in ten lower secondary classrooms in the five Nordic countries in the L1-subject (2018-2022). The data were analyzed using the PLATO protocol and as our aim is to identify sequences of instruction that can be considered particularly important in linguistically heterogeneous classrooms, we analyze two of the PLATO elements more in depth: Modeling and Use of Models (MOD) and Accommodations for Language Learning (ALL). Preliminary results show that some of the teachers use model texts to support the students in completing writing tasks and there also

examples where teachers provide supportive materials for language learning and highlight academic and disciplinary language in the instruction (ALL). However, we see a great range of different practices within these scores and while some of the forms of modelling documented may actually constitute quality for linguistically diverse students, others may not.

The **third presentation** reports on the findings from a large research project on Plurilingual Education in the Danish context, funded by the Danish research council (PI: Pera Darya-Hansen). This project empirically explored the contribution of plurilingual education towards students' language awareness at a range of educational levels from Year 1 to Year 11. The project departed from research based knowledge about best practices in plurilingual education and aimed to recreate these through teacher-researcher collaboration and development of teaching materials. The empirical part of the project focused on exploring students' language awareness in this context, and the presentation in this symposium will consider on the findings based on classroom data, and will discuss these in the light of conceptualizations about quality teaching for linguistically diverse students developed by the Quicc-group within the QUINT project.

The **fourth presentation** presents tentative results from an ongoing study about Arabic L1 speakers who were interviewed in L2, Finnish. The interview data are part of a larger classroom research about Arabic as mother tongue teaching in project Migdia, and the classroom videos served as background for the analysis of the interviews. Thus, the data enables observations about the pupils' L1 competencies and identification as Arabic speakers. Even more clearly, the data gives access to the participants' argumentation skills in their L2, Finnish. It is also possible to make comparisons between the participants' answers. The research question is *what kind of variation exists in the pupils' L2 argumentation skills*. In the analysis, some reasons for the variation are explained through background data. The preliminary findings are discussed leaning on the recent study on minoritized pupils' multilingualism. The presentation contributes to discussion and re-formulation of the expected connection between L1 and L2.

The **fifth presentation** explores teachers' perceptions of multilingualism within Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools in Finland from the perspective of the language use by teachers and students. Our sample comprises 2,865 teachers in 833 schools, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The linguistic diversity in Finnish schools is slowly growing: 9.2% of students in Finnish medium schools and 4% in Swedish medium schools come from families speaking a language other than Finnish or Swedish. This paper directs attention to the multilingual turn from the perspective of two official languages that have strong legal protection, even though one of the languages has a considerable majority position. The research questions are: *1. How do teachers in Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools perceive multilingualism as reflected in the perspective of the teachers' language use? 2. How do teachers*

in Finnish medium and Swedish medium schools perceive multilingualism from the perspective of teachers' guidance of the students' language use? The results reveal that the linguistic variety appears to be broader in Finnish medium schools, whereas in Swedish medium schools, the variability mainly concerns the two national languages. Given their minority status, Swedish language schools assume a dual role: safeguarding the use of students' school language, i.e., the minority language, and acknowledging the growing linguistic diversity. The study underscores the significance of embracing sustainable translanguaging, that is, to support the use of minority language(s) as an essential part of linguistically responsive teaching. The study proposes a pressing need to encourage further discussion about what it means to educate newcomers for integration through the smaller language.