

Building Inclusive Language Classroom Spaces through Multilingual Writing Practices for Newly-Arrived Students in Norway

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Abstract

This paper presents an action research project that aimed to increase opportunities for multilingual literacy engagement and identity investment for newly-arrived immigrant students in Norway. A language teacher and a researcher jointly developed a cross-curricular, multilingual module focusing on identity texts written in three languages: English, Norwegian, and each student's home language. Fourteen adolescent students speaking 15 different home languages participated. To assess the effectiveness of the multilingual pedagogical practices, the data collected included a language use questionnaire, student reflection logs, students' identity texts, lesson plans, and the teacher's notes and reflections. The results suggest that explicit emphasis on including all languages in students' linguistic repertoires can help build inclusive classroom spaces and foster learners' multilingual identities.

Keywords: multilingual practice; inclusive classrooms; immigrant learners; identity texts

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Introduction

According to Cenoz and Gorter (2013), English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction “has traditionally been associated with teaching practices that encourage the isolation of English from the other languages in the student’s repertoire and in the school’s curriculum” (p. 591). Even in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, the English-only ideology is often the dominant one, and teachers do not draw on learners’ pre-existing knowledge of other languages (Hall & Cook, 2012; Sampson, 2012). Such practices result in legitimization of monolingualism as the norm for language instruction and learning in schools (García, 2009; Gort, 2015) and contradict the Council of Europe’s stipulation to support learners’ plurilingualism through the teaching of English (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 30).

Monolingual approaches to language instruction have dominated language teaching practices for decades, enforcing strict separation of language systems. Increasingly, however, both researchers and practitioners recognize the benefits of creating spaces for learners’ home languages (HLs) in the classroom (e.g., Mattioli, 2004). Drawing on Cook’s (1991, 1995) notion of *multicompetence*, multilingual approaches to language teaching stress multilinguals’ unique and complex ability to use various linguistic resources available to them. Rather than treating language systems as separate, language teachers can thus help learners draw on their HLs as a valuable resource, a practice associated with benefits such as facilitated language learning, increased motivation, and self-confidence of the learners (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Macaro, 2000).

How schools and individual teachers position themselves towards the languages spoken by the students impacts the complex ways in which students construct their identities

and develop cognitively and emotionally. Linguistically diverse students whose HLs differ from the majority language of the school are usually at a higher risk of academic underachievement than majority language students (Cummins, Hu, Markus, & Montero, 2015). However, if students' HLs are supported and included in daily practices at school, this risk can be ameliorated. As Coste argues, "modern schools have to acknowledge, accept and promote a plurality of languages and cultures, not only for practical operational reasons but moreover in response to general aims relating to the future of societies and their members" (2014, p. 24). The same presupposition is shared by García and Flores (2012), who insist that to ensure equal, meaningful participation in education and society for all students, students' diverse language practices need to be included and supported through classroom pedagogies.

Recognizing the importance of promoting multilingual teaching practices in an EFL class for newly-arrived adolescent students in Norway, a teacher at *Språksenteret for intensiv norskopplæring i Osloskolen* (the Center for Intensive Norwegian Language Learning in Oslo Schools) and a researcher/teacher educator from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) undertook an action research project in a linguistically diverse classroom. As a part of the curriculum, the students took grade-level appropriate classes in English and other content areas such as mathematics, social studies, and science, which are taught in Norwegian. The project aimed to implement a pedagogy of inclusiveness and linguistic diversity in order to promote multilingualism and foster the students' multilingual identities. Following an assessment of students' linguistic profiles and language use, the school-university partners created a teaching unit titled "Being young." The module was delivered over a course of four weeks, during which students analyzed identity text samples and engaged in the writing and publishing process of multilingual texts on the theme "Being young" in three languages: Norwegian, English, and a HL.

This paper reports on the implementation of the identity text project at Oslo Schools.

We present the teacher's and the students' reflections on the relevance and usefulness of the module, illustrate the outcomes with examples of student writing, and discuss the implications for EFL teaching through multilingual pedagogies that foster language development and support students' multilingual identities by drawing on students' linguistic and cultural resources.

Teacher Preparedness to Work with Multilingual Students

Research suggests that language teachers are not sufficiently prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students and could benefit from “explicit assistance to learn about effective, appropriately differentiated instruction” (Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013, p. 170). In particular, teachers working with minority language students at the secondary school level need support to develop pedagogies that best serve the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students (Elfers et al., 2013; Webster & Valeo, 2011). Teachers have been found to have insufficient cultural and linguistic knowledge, understanding of language acquisition processes, and ability to implement learning and teaching strategies that promote multilingual development (Šurkalović, 2014; Téllez & Waxman, 2006; Valentine, 2006). Findings from a study with multilingual adolescent students in Norway (Iversen, 2017) also indicate that teachers rarely explicitly encourage the use of students' full linguistic repertoires and that they ignore students' HLs in classroom practices. At the same time, as Fielding and Harbon (2013) assert, “[I]anguage teachers are ideally placed to be able to offer opportunities to young learners to both learn a new language in school programs and build on students' developing, or already developed, expertise as users of more than one language” (p. 528).

A few studies have specifically investigated Norwegian pre- and in-service teachers' attitudes towards and knowledge about multilingualism (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Haukås, 2016; Kulbrandstad, 2007; Šurkalović, 2014; Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016). These studies found that while most teachers and students express positive views of multilingualism, they

are often unsure about how to include and promote multilingualism in their classrooms. Many teachers also feel that they need more knowledge about multilingualism and how to integrate it into their own teaching (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016). Language teachers working with multilingual students therefore need support and opportunities for professional development to be able to address this knowledge gap and become better equipped to serve the needs of the multilingual populations they educate.

Improving the quality of and access to education for students with immigrant and refugee background has been identified as a critical goal for many educational programs, and the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training has issued explicit initiatives such as *Kompetanse for Mangfold* (Competence for Diversity) to improve teachers' qualifications to work with minority background students. However, these efforts tend to place sole emphasis on the development of proficiency in Norwegian, with little or no attention being given to students' HLs and to English (Dahl, Krulatz, & Torgersen, 2018; Krulatz, Steen-Olsen, & Torgersen, 2017; Lødding, 2015).

Multilingualism in Norwegian Schools

Although historically, the vast majority of Norway's population has spoken Norwegian, linguistic minorities have always been present within Norway's borders, including the Sami, Kven and Romani populations. In the last decade, due to a steady increase in the number of immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2018), Norwegian schools have undergone a substantial transition from being predominantly monolingual to what can be characterized as linguistically superdiverse. Today, as many as 17% of students within the Norwegian school system speak a language different than Norwegian at home, while many schools in greater urban areas have a clear majority of students with a non-Norwegian HL (Statistics Norway, 2018).

Generally, Norwegian classrooms have so far been dominated by a language ideology promoting the Norwegian language as the only language of instruction (Dewilde, 2017; Engen & Lied, 2011). This monolingual ideology is supported by key policy documents influencing Norwegian education. The policy documents stress the importance of Norwegian as a common language for everyone residing in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006; White paper no. 23, 2008; White paper no. 35, 2008), while multilingual perspectives on teaching and learning are often ignored or given limited attention (Hvistendahl, 2009). This stands in contrast to the Norwegian National Curriculum's aim for differentiated instruction for all students (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), which emphasizes the use of students' HLs and the need to adapt teaching approaches to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

The monolingual ideology also seems to influence the instruction of English in Norwegian schools. Although the National Curriculum for English states that students should make use of their HLs in learning English, research suggests that this does not happen to a satisfactory degree (Burner & Carlsen, 2017). In fact, studies have so far indicated that most students with a multilingual background are not provided with the necessary support to exploit their complex linguistic repertoire in the English classroom. Rather, their linguistic backgrounds often seem to be ignored (Iversen, 2017). In some classrooms and schools, languages besides English and Norwegian are even prohibited (Iversen, 2017; Flognfeldt & Šurkalović, 2016).

Multilingual Pedagogies

During the past few decades, education has experienced a multilingual turn (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Conteh & Meier, 2014), which has provided teachers with theoretical arguments and methodological approaches to teaching languages in ways that do not separate the various languages in students' linguistic repertoires. In this article, we do not argue for

one particular perspective on language instruction, but rather show how a more flexible and inclusive approach to language teaching can be implemented in a multilingual classroom.

This section presents various theoretical and methodological approaches to multilingual teaching, which can contribute to a more inclusive pedagogy for multilingual students.

Opposing language teaching approaches that perpetuate the monolingual principle, that espouse the exclusion from the classroom of languages other than the target language, and that use the ideal monolingual native-speaker as a yardstick to measure multilinguals' competence, Cook (1991, 1995) recognized that the knowledge of and the ability to use multiple languages differs from monolingualism in important ways. The term *multicompetence* (Cook, 1991, 1995) refers to the knowledge of several languages present in one mind and the complex, fluid, and creative ways in which these languages interact and are used. Instead of keeping a multilingual's languages separate, the construct of multicompetence creates a space for the implementation of multilingual pedagogies which "[recognize] and [build on] the dynamic and complex language practices that are prevalent in multilingual contexts" (García & Flores, 2012, p. 239). A related term, *translanguaging* captures how multilinguals employ their language resources to create meaning in flexible and context-appropriate ways and utilize one linguistic repertoire rather than compartmentalized lexicons and grammars (García & Wei, 2013). It has been proposed that in order to optimize multilinguals' learning, it is crucial to employ strategies that draw on translanguaging through explicitly encouraging learners to employ all languages at their disposal and thus optimizing transfer between languages (Cummins, 2005; Hornberger, 2005). Such practices should be enacted in carefully planned ways because they affect the process of student identity formation as well as students' perceived value of the languages present in the classroom.

Examples of multilingual pedagogies include practices such as *co-languaging*, *translanguaging*, and *preview-view-review* (García & Flores, 2012). Co-languaging, which is

particularly relevant in contexts where students of various linguistic profiles are gathered in one classroom, is a strategy in which different languages are utilized side-by-side. Class activities are performed in more than one language, and students can choose the language they want to use for learning. Translanguaging as an educational practice entails deliberate switches between the language of input and the language of output, including translation between languages. For instance, students read a story in one language and retell it in another language. Preview-view-review, on the other hand, encourages the use of different languages sequentially, with different languages being assigned different functions. For example, preview activities, during which students' schemata are activated, are conducted in the students' dominant language, whereas the core of the lesson and review activities utilize another language or languages.

In this study, we used the concept of identity texts as a resource for multilingual pedagogy. Identity texts, defined as spoken, written, musical, dramatic, or multimodal texts in contexts where multiple languages and cultures are present in the classroom (Cummins et al., 2005), allow teachers to encourage cross-language transfer, literacy engagement, and identity development. They are positive statements that students write about themselves, and they include dual-language biographical posters or stories in students' HLs, which can then be translated into other languages. Thus, identity texts can be enacted as a co-languaging strategy in classrooms where many various languages are spoken and where, through identity texts, students can be encouraged to employ the different languages in their linguistic repertoires. The practice underscores the importance of integrating learners' prior knowledge, critical literacy, and active learning in an effort to optimize academic engagement and cognitive development (Cummins, 2001; Cummins, 2006). Identity texts were selected for this project because ample theoretical and empirical evidence shows that their use in the classroom promotes literacy engagement and academic achievement for minority language students

(Cummins et al., 2015). Former research suggests that employing identity texts fosters literacy development and enhances learning opportunities by increasing learners' sense of belonging and responsibility (Bernhard et al., 2006). It also foregrounds learners' cultural knowledge and linguistic abilities as important resources to be drawn upon in academic contexts and positions learners as experts in their respective HLs (Cummins et al., 2005).

Research Objectives

Previous research in Norwegian schools found that English teachers lack formal qualifications, skills, and knowledge about language acquisition and multilingualism, and feel inadequately prepared to teach in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016; Šurkalović, 2014). Even though translation between Norwegian and English is a common teaching practice, it is often chosen because teachers feel insecure about their own English language skills or because they want to ensure that students understand everything that is said in class rather than as an explicit measure to promote translanguaging in the classroom (Neokleous & Krulatz, 2018). Research also shows that no languages other than Norwegian and English are used in the instruction of English in Norway (Brevik & Rindal, 2018). While initiatives have been undertaken to provide in-service English teachers with professional development opportunities focusing on multilingual classrooms, they have been found to be insufficiently structured and ad-hoc, and have not necessarily led to teachers' incorporating multilingual teaching practices that embrace students' HLs (Krulatz, Steen-Olsen, & Torgersen, 2017).

Recognizing the urgency of implementing multilingual pedagogies in Norwegian EFL classrooms to promote multilingualism and foster students' multilingual identities, and following the multilingual pedagogical principles listed by García and Flores (2012, p. 243), the objectives of the action research project presented here were to:

- 1) Implement instruction that builds upon students' existing cultural and linguistic

resources through explicit acknowledgment and inclusion of students' HLs.

- 2) Increase the relevance of Norwegian and English language lessons and maximize multilingual students' identity investment.
- 3) Expand multilingual competence through explicit focus on disciplinary and academic language, specifically, on the structure of academic texts.

Materials and Methods

Background and Setting

This action research project was conducted at the Center for Intensive Norwegian Language Learning in Oslo Schools, a high school in Oslo, Norway, which serves recently-arrived immigrant students in grades 5–10 from all over the capital city. The majority of the students come from eastern and southern Europe, while there are also groups from Somalia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, as well as other African and Asian countries. The students at the Center have been assessed to have an educational background corresponding to Norwegian education, which is a requirement for admission to the six-month intensive course in Norwegian.

The Center follows the Norwegian National Curriculum, but it has also developed a local curriculum to address the specific needs of its student population. The curriculum for English consists of various modules developed to meet key learning goals in the national curriculum. These modules focus on global English, being young, and multiculturalism, among other topics.

Aiming to improve the quality of English and Norwegian language instruction to better serve the needs of newly arrived adolescent students in Norway, this action research project was undertaken with a group of fourteen students. Action research is defined as “a systematic, documented inquiry into one aspect of teaching [conducted] to gain

understanding of teaching and learning within one's classroom and to use that knowledge to increase teaching efficacy/student learning" (Chamot, Barnhard, & Dirstine, 1998, p. 1).

Action research provides a basis for the teacher to decide which instructional practices to abandon, retain, or modify (Mackey & Gass, 2016). The action research cycle (Elliot, 1991) in the project described here consisted of the following stages: reflection on and analysis of multilingual students' behaviors and needs, consultation of current literature on multilingual pedagogies, identification of areas for improvement, implementation of modified pedagogical practices, and repeated reflection on the outcomes.

Participants

Fourteen students—9 males and 5 females—participated in the project. The students were between 12 and 16 years old, and they had attended the Center for Intensive Norwegian Language Learning in Oslo Schools for between two weeks and five months, or for two and a half months on average, at the time of the project. The students reported the following HLs: Vietnamese (2), Somali (2), Romanian (1), Romanian and Russian (1), Cebuano and English (2), Turkish (1), Tagalog and Visayan (1), Arabic (1), Bosnian and Serbian (1), Greek (1), Polish (1) and Albanian (1)². Based on the teacher's evaluation, their Norwegian language skills can be described as ranging from upper beginner to intermediate, and their English language skills as ranging from lower intermediate to advanced. While all the students were required to take the module, their participation in the data collection process was voluntary. Necessary consent forms were obtained, and all names used in this article are pseudonyms to protect students' privacy.

² One of the students reported two HLs.

Procedure and Sources of Data

The teacher of Norwegian and English who decided to conduct the project in his class in collaboration with a language teacher trainer and researcher from NTNU is a fully certified public schools teacher in Norway. He holds a Master's degree in language education, and his MA thesis focused on the use of minority students' HLs in the classroom. The teacher is therefore highly aware of the needs of these students and well versed in current issues in multilingualism and pedagogical approaches appropriate for multilingual classrooms. Aiming to provide the highest quality education for his students, he engaged in a reflective action research project inviting the NTNU faculty member as a consultant.

As a first step in the project, to examine the students' perceptions of their multilingual and multicultural identities, and to determine to what degree and in what contexts they employ the various languages in their linguistic repertoires, the Language Use Questionnaire, adapted from Fielding and Harbon (2013), was used. The original questionnaire was translated into Norwegian, and some items were modified to better match the context of the project. For instance, because it was anticipated that the students in this class likely did not grow up watching DVDs and videos, "Watching DVDs, videos or TV" was replaced with "Watching movies or TV." The questionnaire allowed us to collect information about the extent to which the students use the various languages in their linguistic repertoires, namely their HL(s), Norwegian, English, and other languages, outside of school; what roles these various languages play in the students' lives; what attitudes the students have to the countries and cultures associated with the different languages; and how they feel about being multilingual.

As the next step in the project, we agreed upon the theme for the upcoming module and the learning objectives. One of the key topics in the local curricula in both English and Norwegian at the Center is 'Being Young,' which is also covered in the Norwegian textbook the students use. This module was developed to meet the learning goals from both the

Norwegian and the English curriculum, as well as objectives related to the students' HLs. The learning goals specified for the module aimed to develop the students' ability to:

- 1) Write a trilingual identity text in which they compare being young in their country and being young in Norway.
- 2) Revise and edit their text based on feedback from the teacher.
- 3) Publish their texts digitally on the school blog.

The module lasted four and a half weeks and consisted of eight 45-minute sessions and nine 75-minute sessions, which added up to 17 hours and 15 minutes of instruction. Students participated in various activities ranging from teacher-centered lectures to pair and group work, whole class discussions, and individual writing sessions. Process writing was used as the main guiding principle for the written assignment, and it included reading sample texts, brainstorming and organizing ideas, drafting various parts of the text, rewriting and editing, and publishing. The class worked on structuring the texts with introductions, main parts, and endings, as well as writing coherent paragraphs with strong topic sentences. The learners submitted three drafts of their texts to the teacher, who commented on their writing in Norwegian and English. At all stages in the process, the students were explicitly encouraged to draw on their linguistic resources in all languages they knew, to consult bilingual dictionaries, to use online translation tools such as Google Translate critically, and to serve as a linguistic resource for each other.

The project started out by an analysis of two examples of identity texts, written by the teacher and the NTNU consultant, which served as models for the students' own texts. Through group work and class discussions, the class identified important features of identity texts. The teacher also gave the learners some tips on good translation practices. For each draft, the students could start out by writing in the language they preferred, and were then given time to translate the texts into the remaining two languages. The teacher encouraged the

students to include parents, siblings, and other speakers of their HLs in the process of writing or translating the identity text in the HL.

The first draft, which comprised of the introduction to the text in three languages, received feedback on content. The teacher provided comments such as “Good to start with a question,” “Don’t give the answer in the introduction,” and “Remember the topic: Being young in Norway vs. your home country.” The comments were bilingual: in English and Norwegian. The teacher’s comments on the second draft focused on structure, for instance “You need to structure your text better. Each paragraph should have one topic and start with a topic sentence,” “Can you introduce what you will write about in the rest of the text here?” and “You have topic sentences, but check if the rest of the paragraph supports the topic sentence.” Again, he provided comments in both Norwegian and English.

As the final draft, the students were expected to hand in three parallel identity texts in three languages. This time, the teachers’ comments also focused on grammar and spelling in English and Norwegian as well as contents and structure. During the fourth and final week of the project, the students read each other’s texts and critiqued them. Finally, the students uploaded their revised texts, including drawings and pictures they had made or selected, to the school blog.

As the module was being delivered, the students completed three reflection logs; they could choose to write the logs in either Norwegian or English. For each entry in the reflection log, they were given a specific prompt. In the first reflection, which was completed at the onset of the project, the students were asked to discuss the different languages they used at home and at school. In the second reflection, which they wrote mid-way through the project, they were prompted to specify how they felt about using three different languages for the identity text assignment. Finally, in the last reflection, which was written after the completion of the project, the students were asked to discuss what they had learned during the project. A

total of 36 log entries were collected, as some students were absent on the days when the logs were written.

Throughout the module, the teacher kept notes relating to the lesson plans and the use of materials, conducted unstructured observations and wrote down his reflections on the module delivery. He focused specifically on the students' use of HLs as compared with English and Norwegian, any struggles that emerged in the process of completing the trilingual text assignment, as well as pedagogical practices that appeared to work well.

Results

Students' Language Use

The Language Use Questionnaire, administered during the first session of the module, asked the students about the contexts and the purposes for which they use the languages they know and are learning, how important these languages are for them, and how they feel about multilingualism and being multilingual. In the first question, the students were asked to indicate which language(s) they used in the following situations: reading a book by themselves, working on a piece of their own writing, talking with parents, talking with siblings, talking with friends, thinking about things, asking for something in a store, watching movies or TV, listening to music, listening to stories at home, playing games with friends, and playing games with parents. For each situation, students could choose multiple languages. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of situations in which students employ their HLs, English and Norwegian. HL and English were reported to be used in three times as many situations as Norwegian.

[Figure 1 near here]

Three specific activities, namely speaking with parents, speaking with friends, thinking, and writing, were selected to illustrate learners' language use in more detail (Figure

2). HL was the most frequent language reported as used with parents. Five students also reported using English, while only three reported using Norwegian for that purpose. A similar pattern was found for thinking, with HL being the most frequently used language, and Norwegian being used by the fewest students for this purpose. On the contrary, English appears to be the preferred language of communication with friends and writing, followed by HL and Norwegian.

[Figure 2 near here]

The students were also asked to rank the importance of the three languages and the perceived value of multilingualism on the following scale: very important (4), important (3), neither important nor unimportant (2), not very important (1), not important at all (0). The average perceived importance of each of the languages and of multilingualism is illustrated in Figure 3.

[Figure 3 near here]

In sum, at the onset of the project, all students appeared to use their respective HLs and English in a wide range of contexts, while Norwegian was reported to be used in a more limited number of situations. HLs were opted for more frequently when speaking with parents and thinking, whereas English was more often selected for speaking with friends and writing. Although the students agreed that multilingualism is important, both Norwegian and English were perceived as more important than HLs. Therefore, the goal of the teacher became to increase the perceived value of students' HLs by explicitly including these languages in the classroom, and at the same time, to boost the students' skills and confidence in their use of Norwegian.

Trilingual Texts

Identity texts were selected for two main reasons: they are a pedagogical practice that can strengthen students' multilingual identities through the explicit inclusion of HLs in literacy

tasks in the classroom, and they can foster the development of academic literacy skills in Norwegian and in English, as well as in the students' HLs. To help the learners engage in critical and creative use of their linguistic repertoires, and to prompt them to “embrace their languaging practices in multiple languages as a whole” (Gilmetdinova & Burdick, 2016, p. 78), translanguaging and co-languaging practices were encouraged. The students were allowed to select their language of preference for the original text, and were then asked to translate the text into the other two languages. The students were also encouraged to mix languages, and to consult each other and their family members regarding the use of their HLs.

While the teacher was not able to provide feedback on the writing in HLs, he prompted the students to code-switch within the Norwegian and the English texts—for instance, to include some words, phrases, and even sentences from the texts in the HLs in the other two texts—and praised the students who did so. This was done to strengthen the students' sense of ownership and expertise in their HLs. The teacher wrote comments such as, “Kan du bruke noe arabisk i de andre tekstene også?” (Can you use some Arabic in the other texts, too?) and “god bruk av Somali” (good use of Somali). Thus, the teacher aimed to recognize the languages the students use at home and to validate their place in the classroom discourse. Figure 4 presents a sample first draft with the teacher's comments.

[Figure 4 near here]

As a result of this explicit multilingual pedagogy, students not only produced their texts in three languages but also mixed languages within the individual texts. We find numerous examples of translanguaging in the texts. For example, texts in English and Norwegian contain words and expressions from the students' HLs, with or without translation into those languages, but English and Norwegian are also mixed in the texts translated into the HLs. For instance, Fabio used Romanian to introduce the quote that summarizes his central idea, followed by the English translation: “In Romanian we say, *Suntem un produs al*

trecutului, we are a product of our past.” Cael mixed Turkish with Norwegian to illustrate how he used this language for his internal dialogue when he lived in Turkey: “I Tyrkia, jeg snakket noen ganger for meg selv. Jeg snakket om mine følelser hele tiden. Ja sa, *yanliz doğdum yanliz ölücem* hele tiden” (In Turkey, I talked to myself sometimes. I talked about my feelings all the time. I said, *I am alone and I will die alone* all the time). Karen used Polish when she felt that neither the English nor the Norwegian equivalent would express the connotations she had with Polish teachers and her memories of attending a Polish school: “Often *polskie nauczyciele*, teachers, do not care about homework and exams and I got much homework.” At the same time, Norwegian words for which she could not find Polish equivalents were used in the Polish translation of the text: “Mam nadzieję, że w nowej szkole będę miała przyjaciół takich jak w *språkesenteret*” (I hope that at the new school I will have friends like at *språkenteret*). Examples of parallel, vertical use of text in Arabic and English and Arabic and Norwegian were present in Gauhar’s work (Figure 5).

[Figure 5 near here]

Finally, another student, Rue, engaged with the languages at her disposal in playful ways, interweaving Norwegian and English in her texts, so that a reader not knowing one of those languages could rely on the parallel text to grasp the full meaning of the passage, as in the following excerpts:

Norwegian: Det føles som et hjem nå, og vi er alle på vår vei til å nå våre mål jeg ikke kunne ha forestilt se gen bedre levende og bedre utdanning andre steder i verden enn her i Norge, *and I strongly believe that dreams do come true in this land.*

English: It feels like a home now and we all are on our track to achieve our goals. I could not have imagined a better living and better education anywhere else in the world than here in Norway, *and jeg har stor tro på at drømmer kan gå i oppfyllelse i dette landet.*

These examples of translanguaging present in the students' texts suggest that the instruction communicated respect for students' languages and cultures, and that knowledge and skills were transferred among the languages (Cummins et al., 2005).

Students' Reflections

The students wrote three short reflection logs: one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end of the "Being young" module. The logs were written in Norwegian or English, depending on the students' individual choices. In the logs, the students commented on their use of and feelings about the different languages they knew and were learning, as well as reflected on the relative ease and difficulty of simultaneously working with three languages in one academic task. Three central themes emerged from these reflections: the benefits and challenges of multilingualism, pride and shame, and learning about one's identity.

The benefits the learners listed regarding being able to use three different languages included increased opportunities to communicate with other people and to obtain information, being able to translate between languages and to learn how different languages work, and improved self-confidence. Several students mentioned that proficiency in three different languages could be helpful when traveling and communicating with people from other cultures. For instance, Joachim summarized the key benefit for himself: "mer språk, mer mennesker du kan snakke med" (more languages, more people you can speak with). Commenting on her increased self-confidence, Alina wrote, "I have learned that if I wish something and I work on this, I can [. . .]. I have learned that really I am a strong person," while Rue explained that "working with three different languages can make you understand and can make you feel awesome because you can speak, you can tell it in a different language." These statements help clarify the reasons for the perceived importance of multilingualism, which was found in the students' responses to the Language Use Questionnaire.

Nevertheless, despite recognizing these benefits of multilingualism, the students also mentioned some difficulties, most notably, not being able to keep the three languages strictly compartmentalized and separate. Nguyen noted that he mixed up the words in his three languages, Vietnamese, English, and Norwegian, and Rue wrote that she confused and forgot words in her HLs, Visayan and Tagalog, as well as in English and Norwegian. Another perceived challenge was obtaining help when learning different languages. For instance, Alina included the following reflection: “Jeg skriver på fire språk, på engelsk, rumensk er lett, på russisk foreldrene mine kan hjelpe meg, men på norsk nå, dette er vanskelig” (I write in four languages; in English and Romanian it is easy, in Russian my parents can help me, but in Norwegian now, that is difficult).

Comments on both pride and shame were found in the logs. Students were proud of their ability to use different languages proficiently, as well as of being able to communicate in their home language. Alina, for instance, commented on her relationship to Romania and Romanian in the following way: “Jeg liker snakke rumensk, fordi jeg er fra Rumania/Moldova og jeg elsker landet min” (I like [to] speak Romanian, because I am from Romania/Moldova and I love my country). Shame could be caused by either being forced to speak the HL or not being able to speak it. Nguyen, who explained that he prefers to use English with his friends and siblings, commented on his use of Vietnamese in the following way: “I speak Vietnamese with my family or else they’ll go, oh now you know English and don’t want to speak your first language, how disrespectful [. . .]. Vietnamese I would only speak that to not get scolded.” On the contrary, another student, Nihab, wrote, “it is kinda embarrassing to forget your HLs so it’s good to practice it.”

Finally, the logs suggest that the module prompted the students to examine their own identities. Nguyen reflected on how writing about identity had helped him become more cognizant about himself: “The identity text helped me learn some of my identity. How I wrote

my problems down and how I got through it. That was how I understood my identity more [. . .]. It helped me to look back and see who I am.” In a similar vein, Rue wrote: “I have also learned to find myself in making this text, by just simply finding the exact words that can describe what I really feel and what I really am.” Another student, Joachim, stated that the assignment helped him learn how to express his ideas and feelings. The ability to use different languages was also perceived as an empowerment, as evident in the following comment by Fabio: “when I am trying to use Norwegian I’m feeling confident, motivated to learn.”

Teacher Reflections

The teacher took notes during the implementation of the module, and wrote an extensive reflection text once the module had been completed. In the text, he commented on the delivery of the project, the effectiveness of the planned activities and materials used, and the students’ reactions to the project and performance on the main task, i.e., writing the trilingual text. To fulfill the cycle of action research, he also discussed possible implications for his future teaching.

A central theme in the teacher’s reflection was how the students’ attitudes towards the use of different languages in their texts changed over the course of the module. The teacher wrote that although his students’ HLs had always had an important place in his teaching practice, he had never given them an assignment involving writing a full text in their HLs before. He described the students’ reactions when they were first introduced to the assignment in the following way:

The students were at first surprised when I presented the multilingual assignment to them. They said that they had never seen a text written in more than one language before and that they had never written a text like that themselves. However, they soon became enthusiastic about the idea that they could use many languages in one text and engaged with their own multilingual texts.

Another important theme in the teacher's reflection was how the module sparked an interest among the students in their peers' HLs. The teacher wrote that as the students worked on their texts, they asked each other about words and phrases in the different languages used, and proudly explained the grammar or vocabulary of their HLs to those with different HLs:

For the first time, students with a common HL started to discuss vocabulary and grammar in their HL, and students with different HLs started to discuss and compare various features of each others' HLs.

As a result, a classroom community in which various languages had previously been merely present in the background was transformed into an inclusive one in which the students valued and embraced their own and their peers' HLs and cultural diversity.

Finally, the teacher recorded that the module had a positive impact on the students' understanding of language and the relationships among the languages they knew. He commented that in addition to providing the students with an increased confidence, the process of translating the text from one language to another also helped them build a greater metalinguistic awareness. During the writing process, opportunities for the students to compare the three languages often emerged, resulting in the students' observations of differences and similarities between languages they had not noticed before. Moreover, as most of the students had had limited experience with academic writing, the project developed their general knowledge about text structure. Through an examination of the example texts' introductions, paragraphs, and conclusions, and the teacher's comments on these aspects of their identity texts, the students learned how important the universal structure and coherency in a text is—regardless of language:

To work with writing in the classroom through the medium of three languages was an interesting experience for me as a teacher. I think it was just as fascinating for the

students as it was for me to see how easily knowledge about text structure was transferred from one language to the other.

The teacher also reflected on the implications of the project for his future teaching practice. Since he observed the positive impact of the use of different languages on the students' self-confidence and the benefits of working with different languages in the writing process, the teacher stated in his reflections that he would use similar approaches in the future. However, he noted that he could encourage students to use several languages within one text, rather than translating one text into three languages. As the students sometimes included their HLs in a way that made it difficult to follow their texts, the teacher commented that next time, he would also focus more on how to translanguage in a more effective and purposeful way.

Discussion

The goal of this paper was to present the process and the outcomes of an action research project conducted with newly arrived, multilingual students at a specialized school in Oslo, which aimed to improve the quality of pedagogical practices in a language classroom, with a special focus having been given to the following objectives:

- 1) Building upon students' existing cultural and linguistic resources through explicit acknowledgment and inclusion of students' HLs.
- 2) Increasing the relevance of Norwegian and English language lessons and maximizing multilingual students' identity investment.
- 3) Expanding multilingual competence through explicit focus on disciplinary and academic language, specifically, on the structure of academic texts.

Having realized that in his teaching, he did not sufficiently draw on the multilingual resources of his students, a teacher at the Center for Intensive Norwegian Language Learning in Oslo Schools cooperated with a researcher from NTNU to assess his students' language use patterns and to develop an instructional module that supported the development of his

students' multicompetence. The results of the Language Use Questionnaire suggested that the students use HLs and English in a wide range of situations, but at the same time consider Norwegian and English more important than HLs. This is possibly due to the fact that, as some of the students hinted in their reflections, English and Norwegian are more likely to be understood by other people outside of the home context. Therefore, the teacher and the consultant concluded that it would be beneficial to validate the students' HLs and at the same time, use their HLs as a bridge to developing advanced proficiency in Norwegian. Through work with trilingual identity texts, the teacher was able to transform the monolingual English teaching environment of his classroom into a multilingual instructional space that included English, Norwegian, and the multiple HLs of the students.

The examination of the students' trilingual texts, their reflections collected via written logs, and the teacher's own reflection on the lesson plans, materials, and the delivery of the module suggest that the project succeeded, at least to some degree, in fostering students' literacy engagement, affirming their multilingual identities, and promoting a linguistically and culturally inclusive classroom. Thus, the module allowed the teacher to reach the objectives stated at the onset of the project. The teacher implemented instruction that built upon the students' existing cultural and linguistic resources through explicit acknowledgment and inclusion of students' HLs. The students wrote trilingual texts in which they communicated the knowledge of their home countries and connected it to the knowledge of the new country, Norway. Throughout the module, they were explicitly encouraged to draw on their rich linguistic resources, and they engaged in translanguaging practices as they navigated between the three versions of the text. By acknowledging the value of the students' cultural and linguistic knowledge and allowing them to write about a topic of personal importance, the teacher also increased the relevance of Norwegian and English language lessons and created opportunities for the multilingual students to maximize their identity investment. In their

reflection logs, the students noted that the project helped them reflect on who they are, and some commented on the sense of pride associated with the ability to use three different languages for an academic task they tackled during the project. Finally, the module aimed to support the students' multilingual competence through an explicit focus on disciplinary and academic language, specifically, on the structure of academic texts. Many of the students noted that the trilingual writing process enabled them to better understand the process of writing an academic text, and some concluded that they would like to continue writing texts in different languages in the future.

This action research project was inspired by the previous work of scholars and educators who employed identity texts to foster identity investment, literacy engagement, and academic achievement (Bernhard et al., 2006; Cummins et al., 2005; Cummins et al., 2015). As Celic and Seltzer (2011) and Cummins et al. (2015) argue, in educational contexts where bilingual education is impossible to implement, teachers can still engage students' multilingual repertoires "to scaffold meaning, connect to students' lives, affirm their identities, and enhance awareness of how academic language works" (Cummins et al., 2015, p. 564). Although teachers often fear that attempting multilingual pedagogies without a personal proficiency in students' HLs is not possible to implement, our and similar projects show that the opposite is true. Creating multilingual classroom spaces that draw on students' background knowledge and aim to strengthen their multilingual identities supports students in realizing that they are capable of becoming multilingual and multiliterate, engaging in higher order thinking skills, generating new knowledge, and creating academic work in which they can take pride (Cummins et al., 2015, p. 565).

As the project presented here employed the principles of action research (Chamot, Barnhardt, & Dirstine, 1998; Elliot, 1991; Mackey & Gass, 2016), our conclusions are not generalizable. Action research is undertaken by teachers who want to better understand their

classrooms in order to “[improve] the conditions, efficiency, and ease of learning” (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 269). The conclusions we reached were based on the teacher’s formative assessment and intuitions, and the students’ self-reports. It is also not possible to exclude both the teacher’s and the consultant’s bias towards the selected pedagogical practice: we simply wanted it to work for our purposes. Not unlikely, another approach would have worked equally well, just like this approach may not be equally successful with another group of students.

Nevertheless, we believe that our project has had some merit. In Norway, only a limited number of students with a different HL than Norwegian receive any type of bilingual instruction or HL training (Dewilde & Kulbrandstad, 2016). In a context in which many schools struggle to find bilingual teachers and HL teachers, or experience reluctance on part of their local government to finance bilingual teachers and HL teachers, inclusive multilingual pedagogies can provide necessary support for linguistically diverse students. Through assignments that aim to involve students’ multicompetence, and when the teacher has knowledge about multilingual approaches to language teaching, students can further develop their multi-linguistic skills. With the engagement of parents and peers sharing the same language, many students may receive further support to achieve high proficiency in their HL, as well as in Norwegian and English. Future projects could focus on expanding multilingual teaching practices to other contexts, for instance in public schools in smaller communities that serve immigrant and refugee students, and involve teacher teams, in particular majority second language teachers and teachers of English as a foreign language, in collaborative activities aimed at promoting multilingualism at schools and in communities.

According to García and Flores (2012), multilingual skills such as translation, language switching, and bilingual design of information are becoming increasingly important in today’s world (p. 240). The module examined in this paper helped the teacher value and

validate each student's language and culture and as well as empower the students themselves to see their own and each other's languages and cultures in positive ways and to appreciate their multilingualism as a valuable resource. While the teacher who conducted this project is determined to continue and expand the inclusion of his students' languages and cultural backgrounds in his classroom practices, it is crucial to involve other teachers "in challenging language hierarchies through instruction that creates an interpersonal space where identities are asserted" (Kiramba, 2017, p. 128). We hope that through sharing the experiences we described in this paper, we will inspire them to do so.

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Figure 1. Percentage of situations in which students employ HL, English, and Norwegian.

Figure 2: Students' average use of HL, Norwegian, and English in selected activities.

Figure 3: Reported importance of HL, Norwegian, English, and multilingualism.

Figure 4: Sample trilingual first draft in English, Norwegian, and Somali with the teacher's comments.

Figure 5: Parallel use of Arabic and English and Arabic and Norwegian