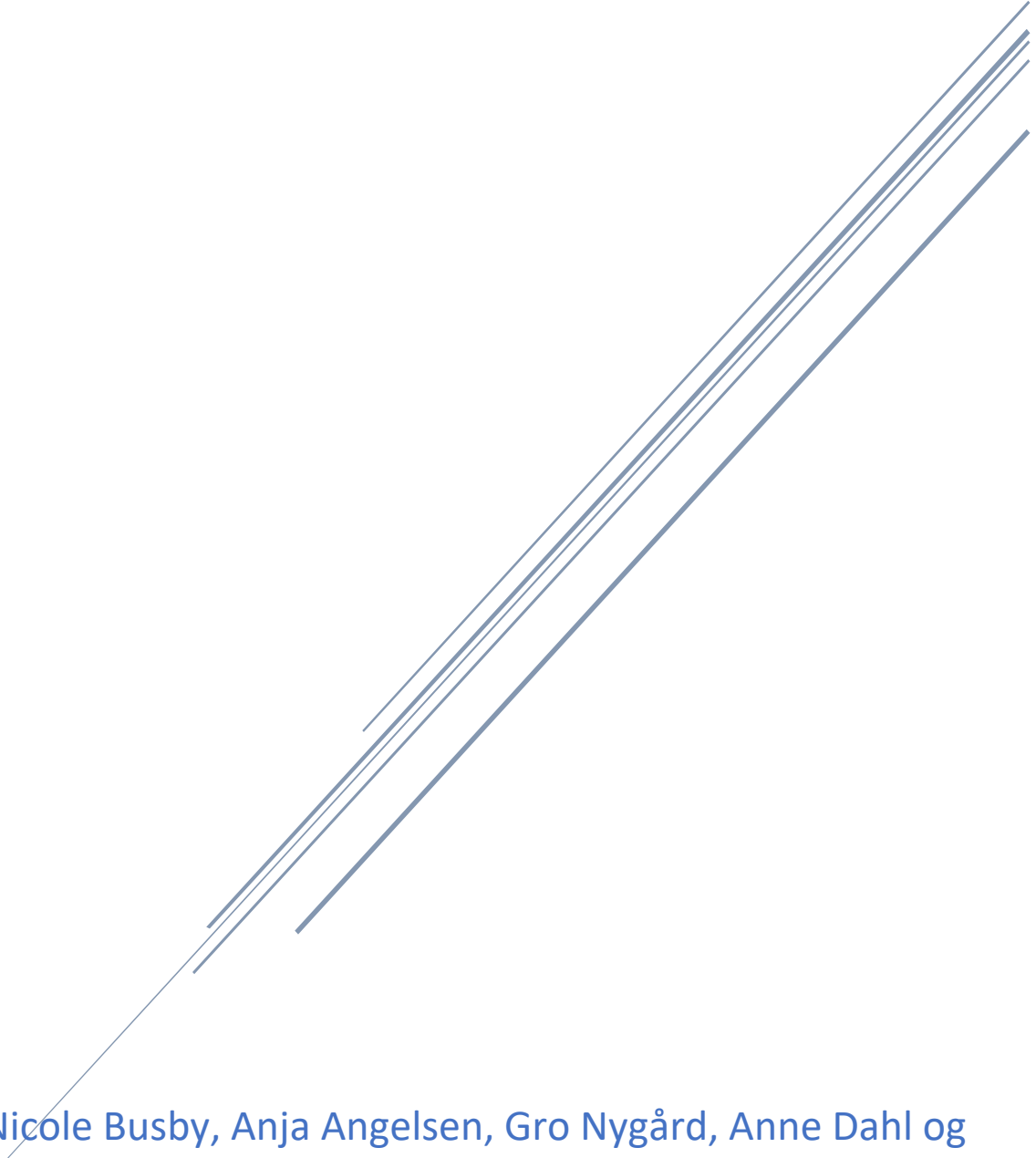


EXPERIENCES OF NORWEGIAN AND ENGLISH AMONG INTERNATIONAL STAFF AT NTNU



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Experiences of Norwegian and English among international staff at NTNU

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Main points

- 92% of permanent employees and 69% of temporary employees report having taken Norwegian language courses. Nevertheless, only 54% of permanent employees state that they feel they know enough Norwegian to do their job well.
- 36% of permanent employees report having taken courses equivalent to at least B2 level in Norwegian. Of these, 25% report that they still did not feel that they knew enough Norwegian to do their job well.
- We see mixed responses as to whether staff feel supported in learning Norwegian.
- Almost half report avoiding meetings if they know they will be in Norwegian.
- Many say that they choose to use English because of time pressure.
- Most staff agree that Norwegian is important for career development in Norway.
- The biggest challenges reported for understanding Norwegian are linked to informal spoken language and unfamiliar dialects.

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1. Background

Language policy and language use in the Higher Education sector can involve many complex issues, and different objectives can sometimes appear to be in opposition. On the one hand, Norwegian academia must be internationally oriented in order to maintain research and teaching to a high standard. Norwegian universities must therefore also attract international employees, and all employees must be able to use English as a working language in many contexts. On the other hand, Norwegian students are mainly being trained for careers within Norway, and equipping students with the language they will need for this means that university staff must use Norwegian as (one of) their working language(s). Universities have a responsibility for maintaining and developing the Norwegian language in general and Norwegian professional and academic language in particular, and for many native speakers of Norwegian, learning and working in Norwegian is also advantageous. In order to achieve a good balance between all of these objectives, it is important to develop appropriate guidelines for language use and language learning in the HE sector to give all employees the opportunity to use both Norwegian and English as working languages and to be able to choose the most appropriate language for a given situation.

One approach to ensuring that Norwegian remains the teaching and working language in Norwegian universities and colleges is to lay down requirements for Norwegian competence for international employees, both in terms of how quickly they must learn the language, and to what level. Nevertheless, some have expressed concern that English is becoming the de facto working language in many areas and that many international employees are not comfortable in Norwegian after many years in Norway. The reasons for and the consequences of this shift in language choice are topics of much discussion and debate.

However, there is little systematic knowledge about international employees' own experiences of language policy, language learning, and language use in Norwegian academia. The study we describe in this report aims to contribute to closing this knowledge gap. The survey was carried out by the research group VocLex at the Department of Language and Literature at NTNU.

2. The current study

The purpose of the study was to investigate language practices, attitudes, and experiences among international employees at NTNU. Where previous studies have mainly looked at the use of Norwegian and English in teaching and supervision, this survey also investigated other workplace situations including everyday working life and the importance of language for inclusion and career development.

The survey was distributed to all employees at NTNU via a message on NTNU's intranet, Innsida. It was specified that the survey was aimed at international employees, loosely defined as those who did not grow up in Norway. The message was posted once and there was no follow-up or reminder message. All information was provided in English, including the questionnaire itself. The survey was conducted using an online form, and was anonymous. The questionnaire was adaptive, where the appearance of certain questions depended on answers to previous questions. The study is registered with SIKT.

Below, we present results from 317 employees in academic positions with a non-Scandinavian language as their native language. This included 114 permanent and 199 temporary employees, as well as 4 who answered "other/not sure" to the question about whether they held a permanent or

temporary position¹. There were respondents in both permanent and temporary positions from all of NTNU's eight faculties and the Science Museum. Table 1 shows an overview of the number of respondents in permanent and temporary positions, broken down by gender.

Table 1: Respondents (N = 317) in permanent and temporary academic positions, divided by gender.

	Permanent	Temporary	Other / not sure	Total
Female	43	103	3	149
Male	62	90	1	153
Other/prefer not to say	9	6		15
Total	114	199	4	317

The participants in the study were between 23 and 72 years old, and had lived in Norway for different amounts of time. Table 2 shows the average age and average number of years in Norway² for permanent and temporary employees.

Table 2: Average age and average number of years in Norway for permanent and temporary employees.

	Mean age	Years in Norway
Other/not sure	54.5	7
Permanent	44.5	8.2
Temporary	32.1	3.6
Total	36.9	5.4

The participants in the survey report a total of 54 different first languages (mother tongue). European languages are among those most frequently stated as a first language, while a large number of languages are stated by only one participant. Figure 1 shows the number of participants for each of the ten languages that were most frequently reported as a first language.

¹ A total of 364 employees responded to the survey. 9 respondents reported Swedish or Danish as their mother tongue. As Scandinavian languages are treated equally in the HE sector, these were not included in the data presented here. 30 of the participants were administrative employees, while 8 participants did not state whether they had an academic or administrative position. Since the focus of this report is academic staff, these participants were also omitted from the data.

² The average number of years in Norway is calculated over a total of 279 participants. Participants who indicated "less than a year" (n=27, of which 2 permanent and 25 temporary employees) or "more than 20 years" (n=11, of which 9 permanent employees and 2 uncertain) were omitted.

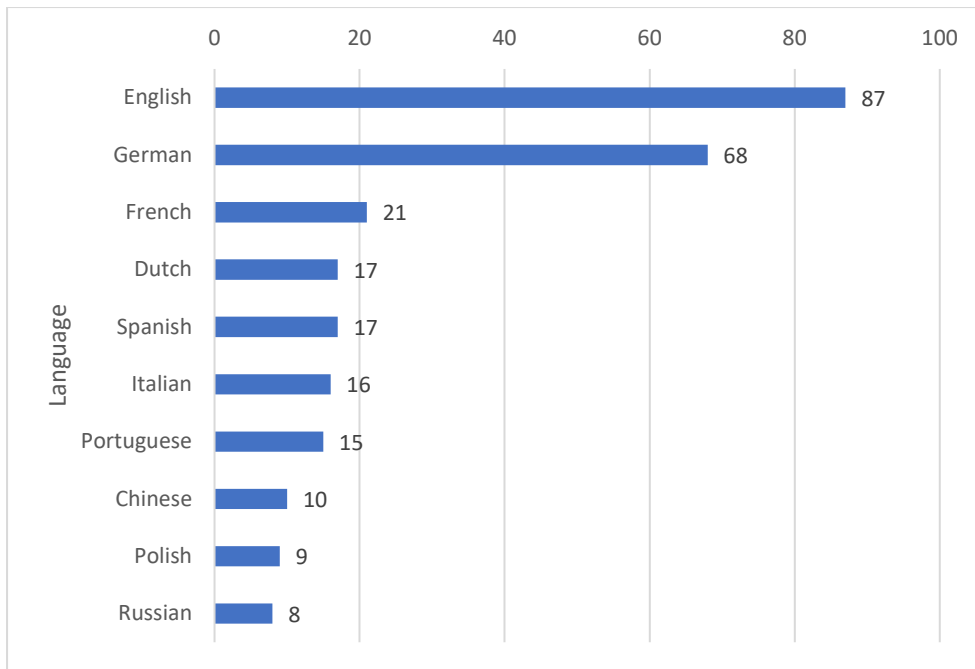


Figure 1: Number of respondents in the 10 most common first languages represented in the survey.

3. Findings

3.1 Do international staff take Norwegian courses?

The vast majority of participants report having undertaken some sort of formal training in Norwegian as a second language. Among permanent staff, only 8% report that they had not taken any formal training in Norwegian, and some of these had recently arrived in Norway. This percentage is higher for temporary staff (31%), although it is worth noting that many temporary staff who responded had been in Norway for only a short time.

92% of permanent employees and 69% of temporary employees report having taken Norwegian courses.

The Norwegian for foreigners (NFUT) courses at NTNU are the most commonly taken courses, with 67% of permanent staff and 56% of temporary staff reporting that they had taken these courses. Participants also report taking other types of training in Norwegian, including private courses they paid for themselves (43 participants), private courses paid by NTNU (30), courses organized by participants' faculty or department at NTNU (16), and private tutoring (18). Some staff report having taken both NFUT and other courses outside NTNU. The percentage of temporary and permanent staff who report having attended the different types of courses can be seen in Figure 2.

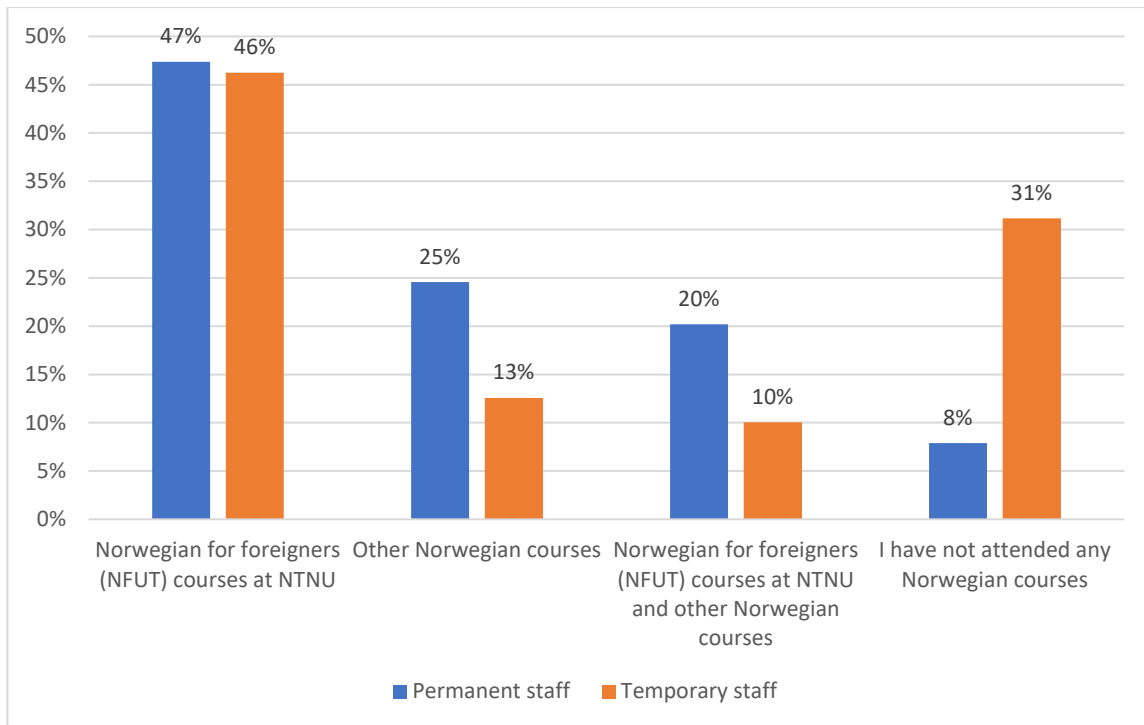


Figure 2: Type of Norwegian course attended by permanent (n = 114) temporary (n = 199) staff.

Figure 3 shows the highest level of NFUT courses taken by permanent and temporary staff. Level 3 corresponds to B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and is the level required for permanent staff. The percentage of permanent staff who report having taken levels 3 and 4 was higher than for temporary staff, although it should be noted that the permanent staff had been working at NTNU for an average of 5 years longer than the temporary staff, meaning temporary staff may have had less time to take courses. Many report taking other types of Norwegian courses of varying levels, so these are grouped together in the figure as 'other Norwegian courses'.

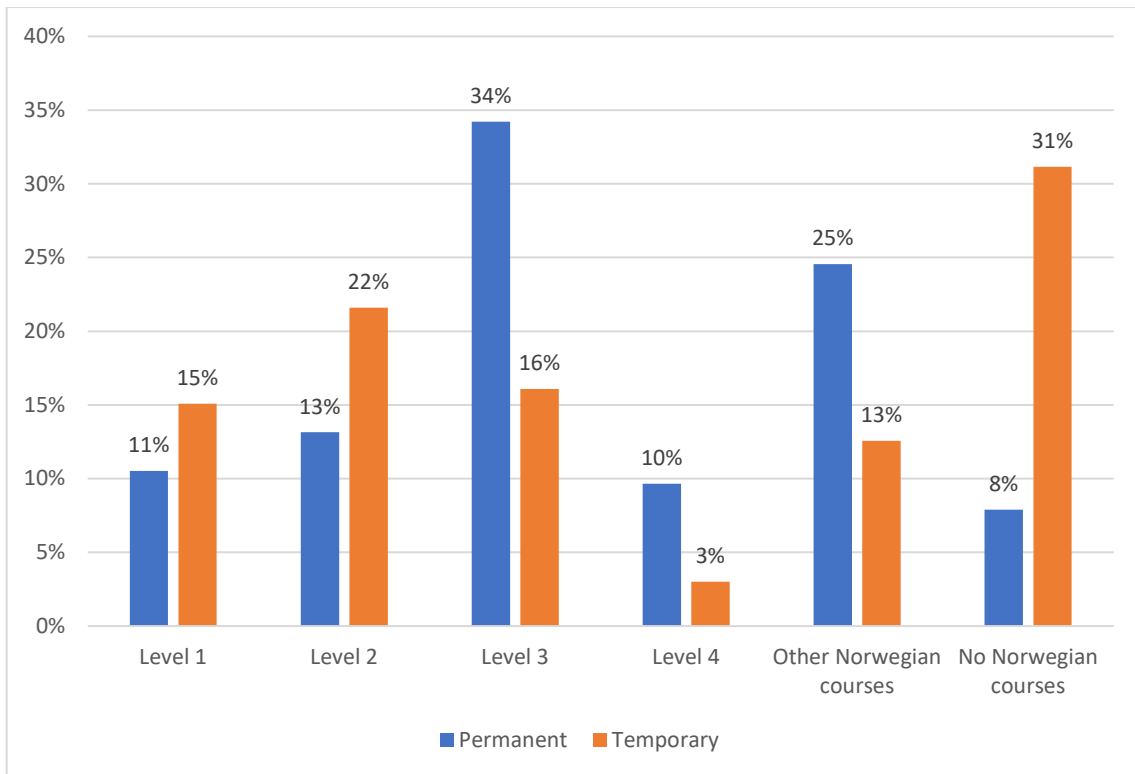


Figure 3: Highest level of Norwegian courses taken by permanent (n = 114) and temporary (n = 199) staff.

3.2 Feeling comfortable in Norwegian

The majority of participants (74%) report feeling that Norwegian is necessary for their work, but only 57% of those who feel they need Norwegian report feeling that they know enough to do their jobs well. Table 3 shows the number of participants who feel that they know enough Norwegian to do their job well. Among permanent staff, 54% said they feel comfortable with their level of Norwegian and 35% say they do not really or do not at all feel that they know enough Norwegian for their work. It should be noted that the amount of Norwegian needed for work likely differs between individuals (see section 3.3).

Table 3: Responses from permanent (n = 113) and temporary (n = 199) staff to the question “Do you feel that you know enough Norwegian to be able to do your job well?” (blank answer excluded).

	Permanent	Temporary
Yes, definitely	18 %	10 %
Yes, generally	36 %	26 %
Not really	27 %	21 %
Not at all	8 %	10 %
I don't feel that I need to use Norwegian in my job	11 %	34 %

Participants were asked how long it took them to feel that they knew enough Norwegian for work. Figure 4 shows reports from permanent staff who had lived in Norway for at least 3 years about how long it took to learn enough Norwegian for work. Only 29% of participants report that it had taken 3

years or less to learn enough Norwegian for work, some report that it took longer than 10 years, and 42% report that they do not yet feel that they know enough Norwegian.

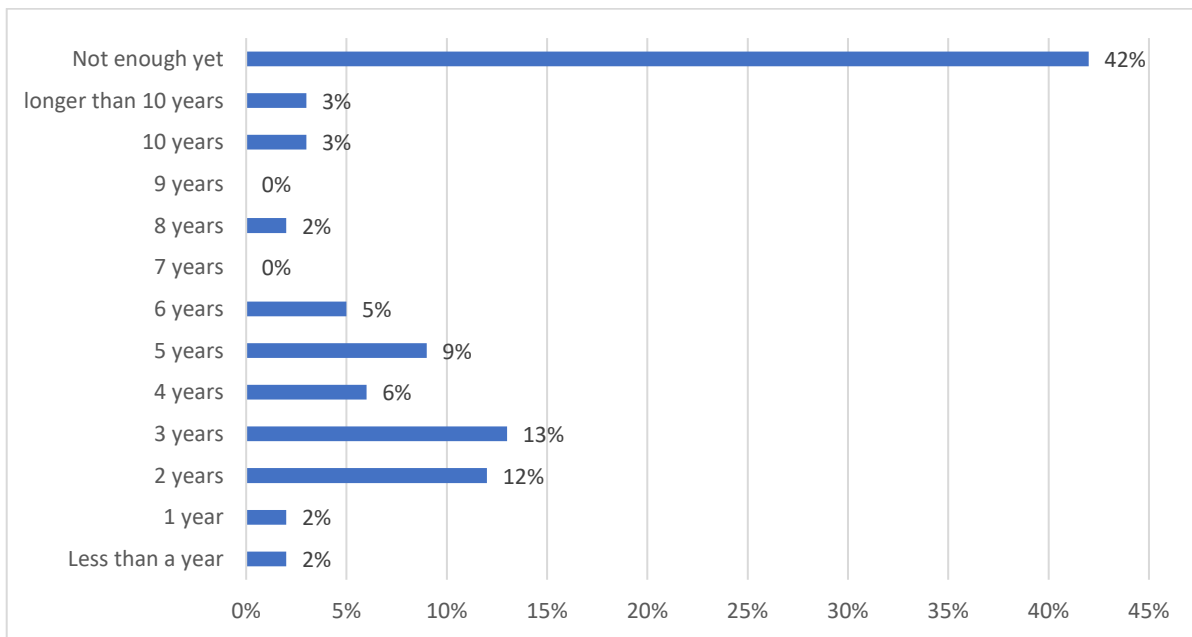


Figure 4: Responses from permanent academic staff who had lived in Norway for at least 3 years (n = 99, blank answer excluded) to the question “How long did it take before you felt that your Norwegian was good enough for what you needed work-wise?”.

36% of employees report having taken courses equivalent to at least B2 level in Norwegian. Of these, 25% report that they still did not feel that they know enough Norwegian to do their job well.

When asked about their highest formal qualification in Norwegian, 114 participants (36%)³ report having completed NFUT level 3, that they have B2 level or higher Norwegian skills, or that they had completed the Bergenstest (B2/C1). Of those who report having achieved this level of Norwegian, 25% still report not feeling they know enough Norwegian to do their job well.

3.3 Language practices in different situations

Respondents were asked to report which languages were used in various contexts that were listed in the survey. Figure 5 shows the answers from all participants, while Figure 6 shows the answers only from the permanent employees. We see that the proportion of Norwegian use is higher in the latter group.

Among all employees, meetings at department level or higher are reported as the situations where Norwegian is used most and 48% of participants report that Norwegian is usually, always, or almost

³ It should be noted that the number of participants who have B2 or higher level in Norwegian is likely higher than shown by these figures since many participants reported that it had been a long time since they had undergone formal training or testing in Norwegian (and their language proficiency had likely improved since).

always used in this context (see Figure 5). Norwegian is also widely used in lunchrooms and in informal contexts, and many report that Norwegian and English are used equally in these contexts.

In general, we see that English is used more than Norwegian, especially for communication with other academic staff. For respondents who consider the question relevant to them (i.e. do not answer 'not applicable'), English is the language more commonly used in supervision of master's or PhD students (79% use more English than Norwegian), in research groups (82% use more English), and in teaching (75% use more English). The proportion of teachers who state that they usually, always, or almost always teach in Norwegian is 14%.

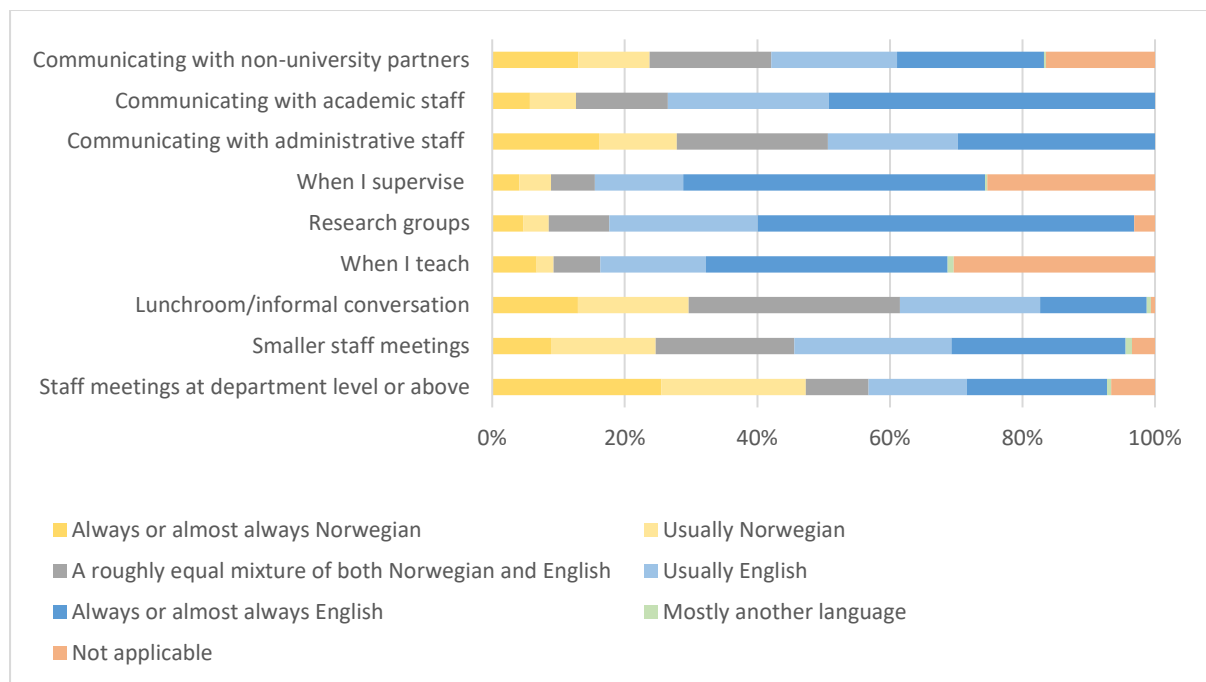


Figure 5: Responses from all participants (n = 313 – 317, blank answers excluded) to the question “In which language are the following activities conducted in your workplace?”.

When we look only at the responses from the employees in permanent positions, we see a different pattern of language use compared to the responses from all employees (see Figure 6). The proportion stating that Norwegian is usually, always, or almost always used increases across all language situations. The tendency is particularly clear for communication with administrative staff. The proportion of respondents who report that Norwegian is usually, always, or almost always used in this context is 48% among permanent employees, compared to 28% among the entire group.

English is generally used more than Norwegian, also among permanent employees. The language situations where English is used most are in the supervision of master's or PhD students, in research groups, and in teaching.

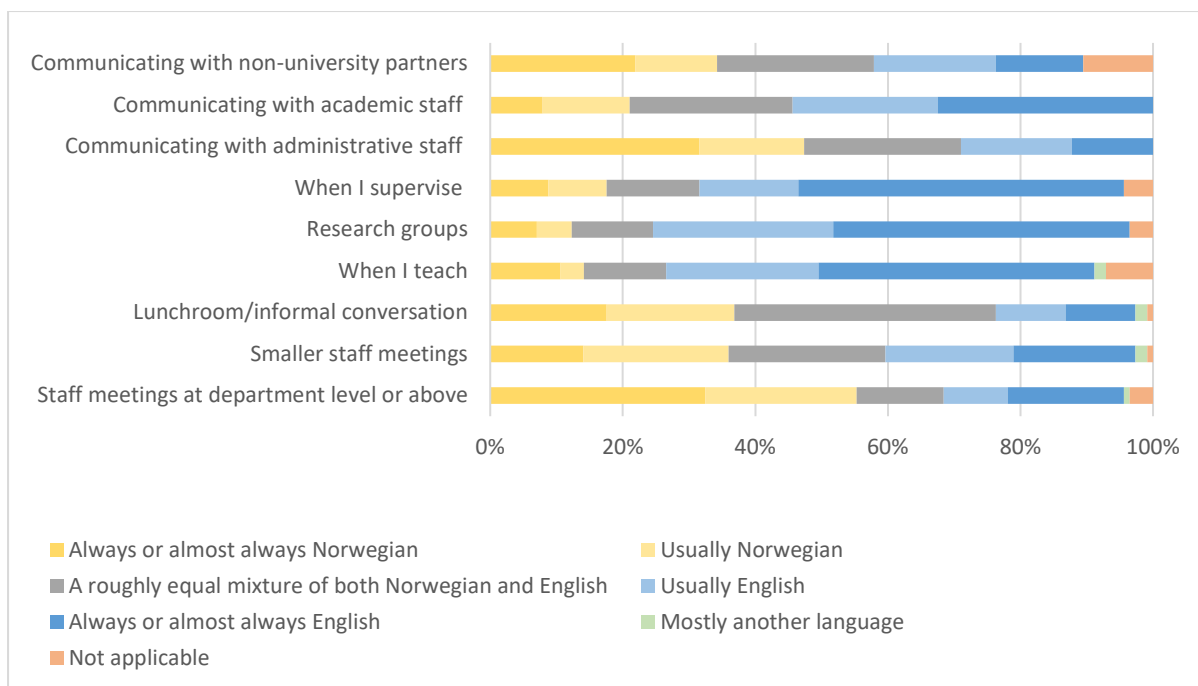


Figure 6: Responses from permanent staff only (n = 113 – 114, blank answers excluded) to the question “In which language are the following activities conducted in your workplace?”.

What determines the choice of language?

When asked whether the choice of language in formal meetings depends on who is present, 58% of all employees answered that this was to a large extent a decisive factor, 24% stated that it was relevant to a certain extent and 18% thought it had little or no importance.

The survey also contained open-ended questions about language use in meetings and whether the participants had other comments on language practice at their workplace. As the quotes below illustrate, the answers to these questions show a great diversity of linguistic practices at NTNU and indicate that there are different norms around which languages are used in meetings. Some say that the use of Norwegian is common in large meetings and that often the language of both spoken and written presentations is Norwegian. Others state that English is a natural choice at meetings. The choice of language can of course also depend on the proportion of international employees in a workplace.

“There are huge differences between departments. I’ve worked in [several] departments at NTNU and each had their own habits in terms of languages.”

“Norwegian will be used at more essential meetings at a higher level. [H]owever, this is very exclusionary towards new academic staff including professors who have just started their positions.”

“In one setting, we use English when non-Norwegian speakers are present. In larger staff meetings the rule is that either the presentation or the powerpoint must be in English, but it happens quite often that both are in Norwegian.”

“I am the only foreigner in my fagseksjon, and everything is conducted in Norwegian. Almost everyone I meet would prefer to speak Norwegian with me.”

“The work environment is international. There is no real option to have a language choice other than English since not everyone can speak Norwegian.”

3.4 Support and motivation for language learning

As Figure 7 shows, there was some variation in the participants' experience of support and motivation for learning Norwegian.

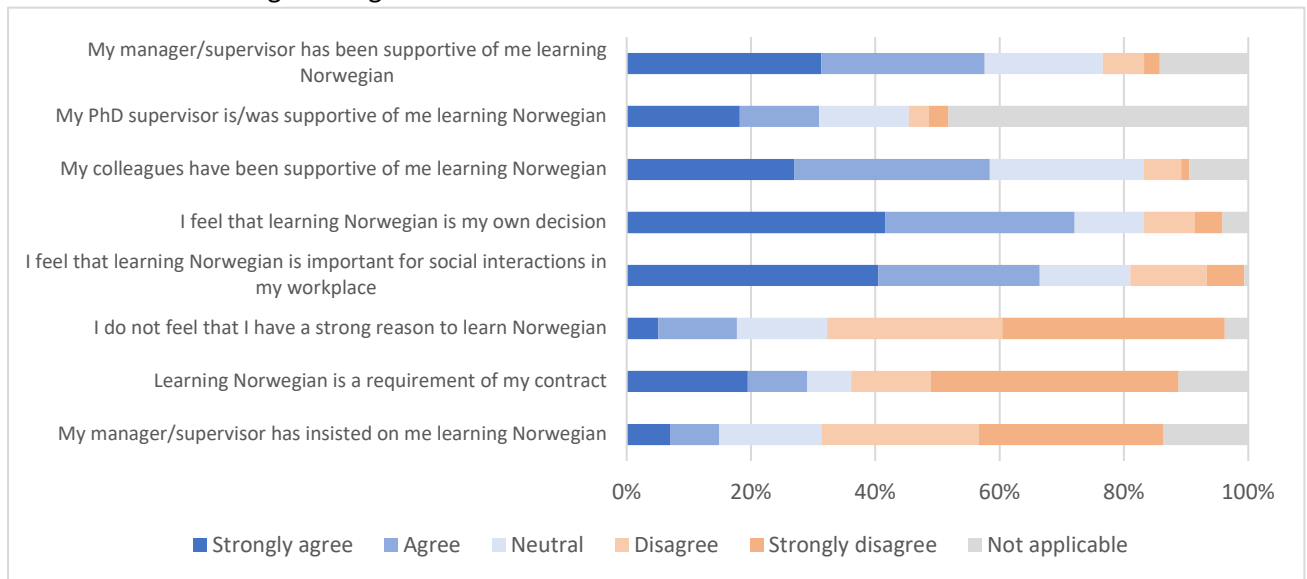


Figure 7: Responses from all participants (n = 313 – 316, blank answers excluded) to statements about support and motivation for language learning.

Among all respondents, 58% agree or strongly agree that their manager/supervisor has been supportive of them learning Norwegian. Of those who considered this question relevant to their experience (i.e. did not answer ‘not applicable’), 60% report feeling support from their PhD supervisor.

The majority, 58%, also feel that their colleagues are supportive of them learning Norwegian. Here, support is slightly lower among permanent employees who have been in Norway for three years or more (51% versus 71% among those who have been in Norway for fewer than three years), and higher among temporary employees (62%).

The group that experiences the strongest support for learning Norwegian are those who have been in Norway for fewer than three years.

Just under 10% of all respondents experience not receiving support from their manager, with roughly equal distribution between permanent and temporary employees. Those who report experiencing the greatest degree of support were permanent employees who had been in Norway for less than 3 years, although they were also the least likely to report feeling that learning Norwegian was their own choice (Figure 8).

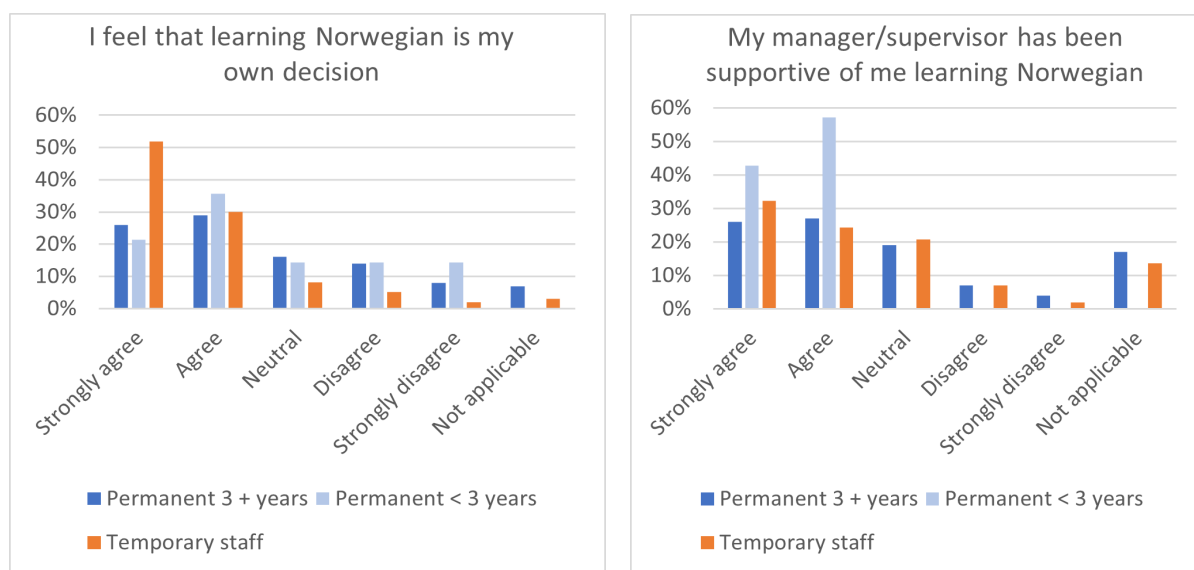


Figure 8: Comparison of level of motivation and level of support from manager/supervisor among permanent staff who had lived in Norway for less than three years (n = 14), permanent staff who had lived in Norway for three years or more (n = 100), and temporary staff (n = 199).

Overall, the results indicate that the motivation to learn Norwegian is quite strong in all groups. Among all respondents, 30% state that they have a contractual obligation to learn Norwegian. The proportion among temporary employees is lower, only 7%, while the proportion among permanent employees is 66%. Of the permanent employees, 12% state that learning Norwegian is not a requirement of their contract. Of all respondents, 72% report feeling that it is their own choice to learn Norwegian, but the proportion is much lower for permanent employees (55%). A minority of 26% report feeling pressure from a manager to learn Norwegian, while only 18% feel that they do not have a good reason to learn Norwegian. A large proportion (66%) agree or strongly agree that it is important to know Norwegian for social interactions at work.

Participants were also asked about their own and their colleagues' (perceived) behaviour regarding language usage (see Figure 9). Responses to all the suggested statements were mixed, but more than half of the participants report being motivated and actively trying to improve their Norwegian skills. Yet, a much smaller percentage report actively trying to use Norwegian with their colleagues.

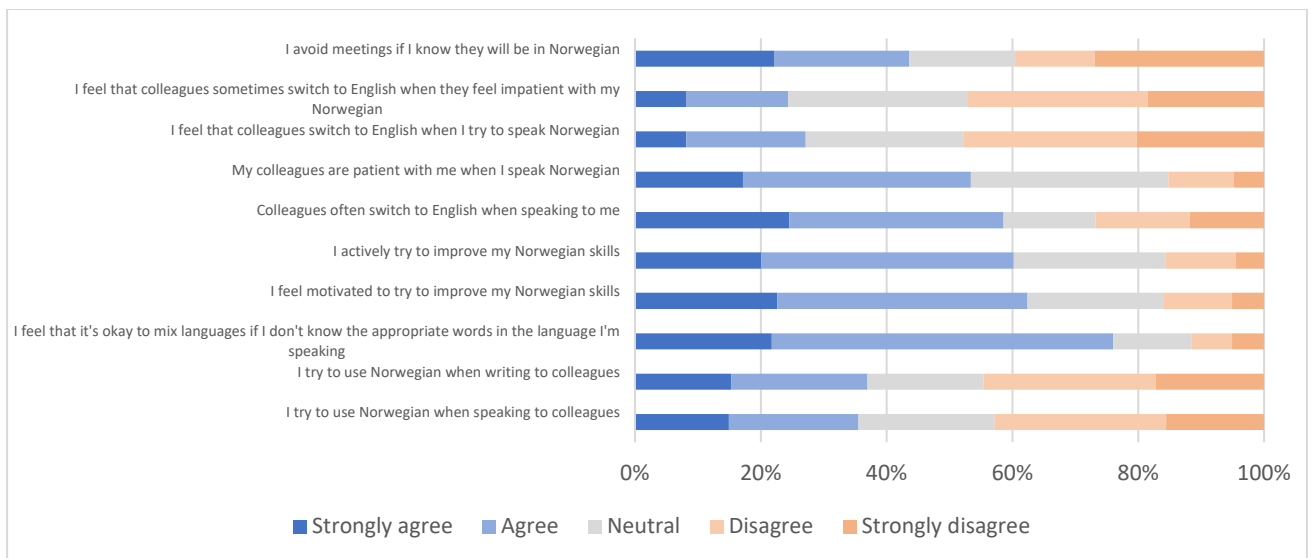


Figure 9: Responses from all participants (n = 313 – 315, blank answers excluded) to statements about motivation and language behaviours.

A total of 53% agree that colleagues were patient with them when they try to speak Norwegian, while only 15% disagree. Almost half, 44%, report avoiding meetings if they know they will be in Norwegian.

Almost half report avoiding meetings if they know they will be in Norwegian.

Some employees report a lack of motivation to learn Norwegian, which seems to be linked to a discrepancy between expectations and realistic goals. Interestingly, some point out that English can also be a challenge for international employees.

“Feeling demotivated by discrepancy between expectations and realities of language acquisition.”

“Would be nice to have more openness towards language mistakes, mixing languages, flexible use, switching back and forth instead of having to keep to either Norwegian or English[.] It is also important to remember 'English-speaking' colleagues often don't have English as native language and may struggle with English as foreign language in the same way as 'Norwegian-speaking' colleagues.”

3.5 Importance of Norwegian for leadership roles and career development

To understand more about the choices that international employees make about taking on leadership positions (e.g. section coordinator or study program board member), we looked at the 100 respondents who state that they have permanent positions and have been at NTNU for at least three years, as it is less likely that temporary employees or relatively new hires would take on such positions regardless of language background. In this group, 62% state that they have taken on some leadership roles. Among those who have not, the vast majority state that they have not been asked

to do so. Only four participants report that they have been asked to take on such roles but had declined. See Figure 10.

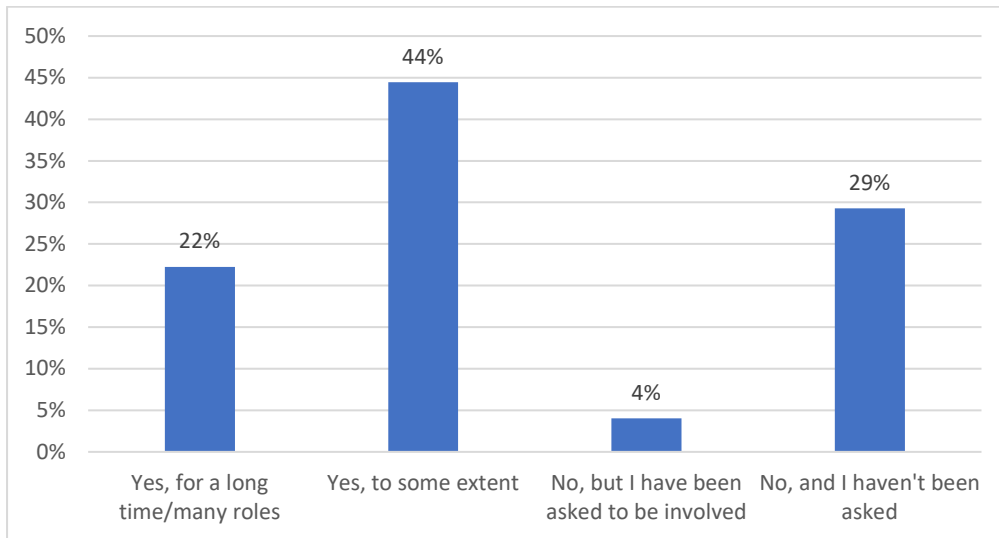


Figure 10: Responses from permanent staff living 3 or more years in Norway (n = 99, blank answer excluded) to the question “Are you or have you been involved in formal administrative or leadership roles in your workplace (e.g. section coordinator, study program board member or leader, member of study program evaluation committees, etc.)?”.

When asked whether language was a factor in the decision to take on leadership roles, a majority, including many who had held leadership roles, answer that language was a factor to some or a large extent when they considered taking on such roles (Figure 11). Among the very few who had been asked to take such roles but had not done so, only one (out of four) answered that language was not a factor.

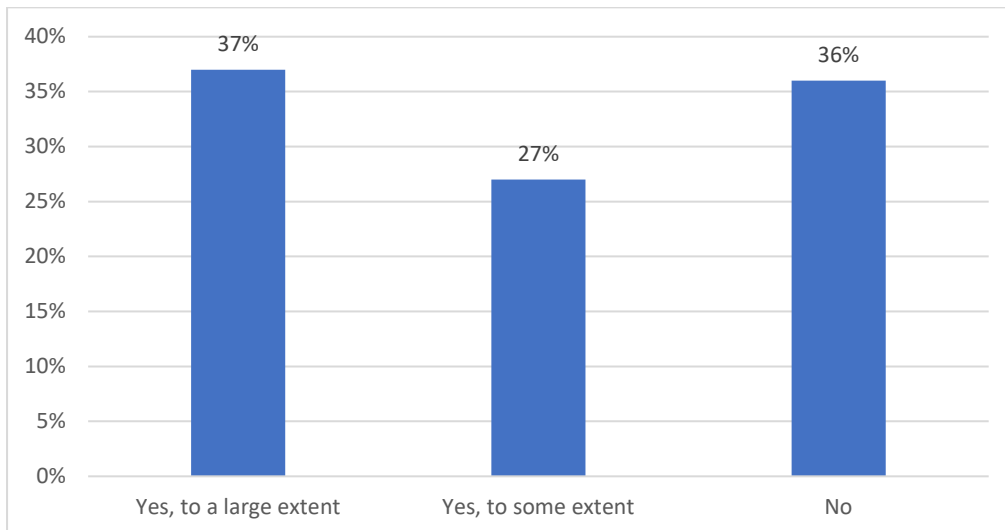


Figure 11: Responses from permanent staff living 3 or more years in Norway (n = 100) to the question "Is language a factor for you when deciding whether to be involved in leadership roles?".

An overwhelming majority of 92% in this group agree or strongly agree that knowledge of Norwegian is necessary to obtain leadership roles at NTNU (Figure 12).

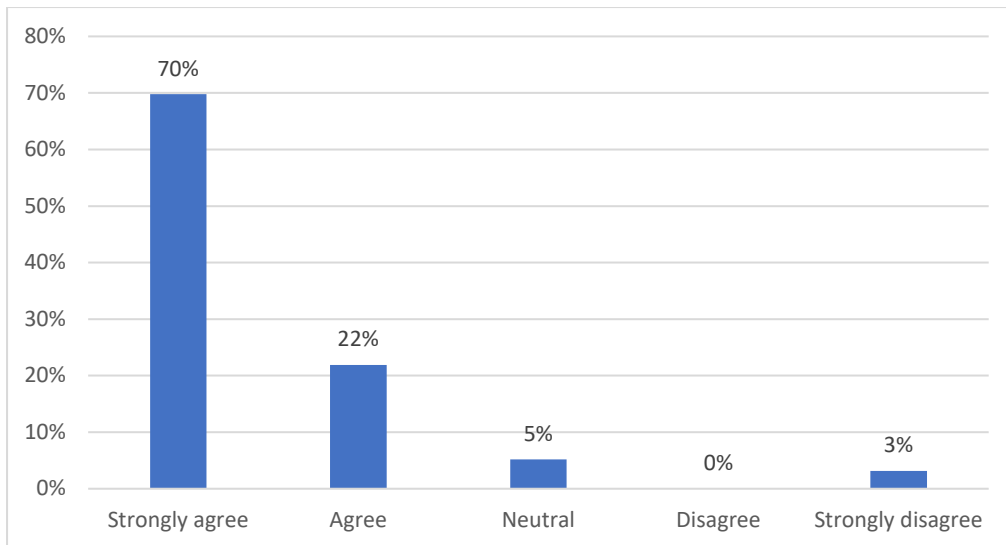


Figure 12: Responses from permanent staff living 3 or more years in Norway (n = 96, blank answers excluded) to the statement "I feel that knowing Norwegian is important for obtaining leadership roles in my university".

Among all respondents, regardless of their time at NTNU, an overwhelming majority of 88% agree or strongly agree that knowing Norwegian is important for career development in Norway (Figure 13). Agreement is strongest among the temporary employees, where 60% said they strongly agree with the statement, while only 5% disagree.

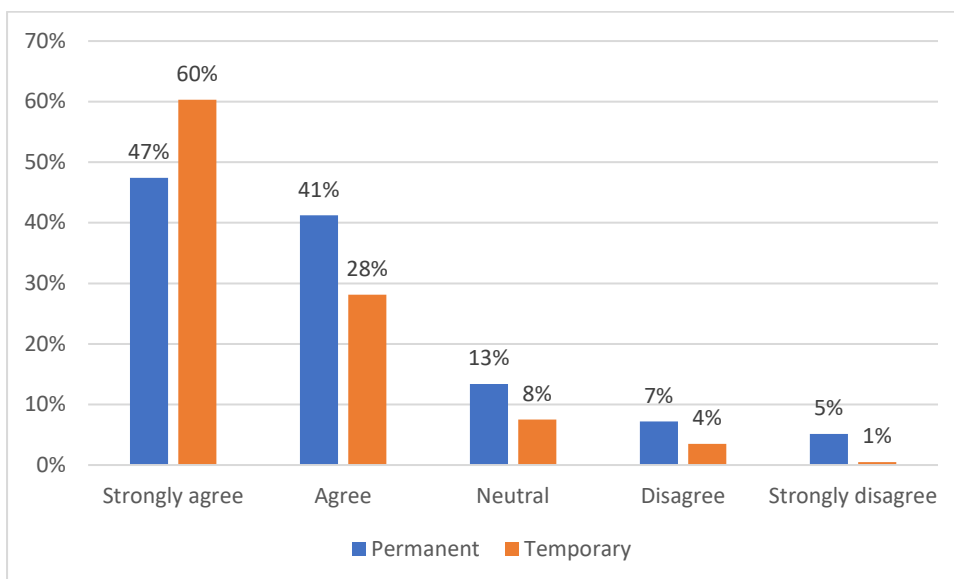


Figure 13: Responses from permanent (n = 96) and temporary (n = 199) staff to the statement "I feel that knowing Norwegian is important for career progression in Norway" (blank answers excluded).

A majority of 81% of permanent and 80% of temporary academic staff also agree or strongly agree that they feel that not knowing Norwegian would be an hinderance to career development at a Norwegian university (Figure 14).

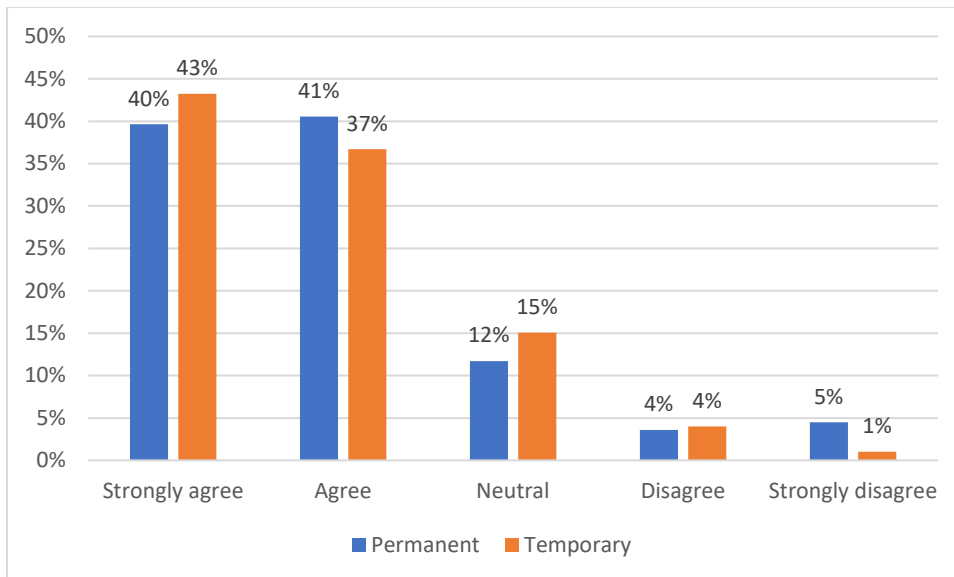


Figure 14: Responses from permanent (n = 111) and temporary (n = 199) staff to the statement "I feel that not knowing Norwegian well would be a hindrance to career development in Norwegian universities" (blank answers excluded).

There are different opinions about the importance of Norwegian competence. Some refer to expectations of Norwegian competence as an obstacle to research-related career development, while others express feeling that it excludes employees from leadership roles.

"I am unable to take on any leadership roles in the department or take on responsibilities where I have to read a lot of material in Norwegian or sit in Norwegian meetings and understand issues of importance in great detail."

"In contrast to knowledge of Norwegian being helpful for career development, I rather feel it to be an active hindrance. Career progression is almost exclusively based on research, where knowledge of Norwegian is irrelevant."

"I had to quit some research groups because their meetings were in [N]orwegian."

Several employees comment that NTNU's language practices can be perceived as discriminatory and exclusionary.

"While I totally endorse learning Norwegian etc., it means de facto that foreigners will remain second-rank citizens of the academic community many years after their arrival at NTNU."

"I feel incompetent that in every conversation I have to start with "is it ok if I do it in English?"

"[W]hen departmental and faculty meetings are only held in Norwegian, many foreign staff feel excluded. And I personally believe this is one of the many reasons that onboarding at NTNU suffers, leading to many foreigners quitting their job after couple of years."

"I do believe it is important to learn the local language, but people should be able to do it at their own pace. Most administrative meetings in my department are held in Norwegian, which makes me feel excluded. Since everyone speaks English, choosing Norwegian is essentially choosing to exclude those that can't (yet) speak it."

3.6 What has helped with learning Norwegian?

Employees who feel that they have sufficient knowledge of Norwegian for use in the workplace report different approaches that helped them to learn Norwegian well enough. Four activities/approaches stand out:

- Enough input (through reading, watching film/TV, listening to the radio/podcast, etc.)
- Using Norwegian at work (in meetings and informal contexts) and outside work (with friends, in leisure activities/volunteer work with Norwegians)
- Norwegian courses (language courses inside and outside the university, Duolingo, and others)
- Having studied in Norwegian (either in primary, secondary or higher education)

Many emphasize relationships outside work, such as speaking Norwegian with friends, partners, children, the children's school, and other situations, as crucial to success. Many also highlight measures at work, such as language cafes and social gatherings with adapted language, as good contributions to language learning. Several also emphasize that organized courses have worked well, and request more flexible courses offered through the workplace.

"Practice and positive encouragement not pressure"

"To have access to free [N]orwegian course every semester without having to wait months/years."

3.7 What is challenging about Norwegian?

We asked the participants what they felt contributed to difficulties when they have problems understanding Norwegian, with a number of proposed answer options. The answers clearly show that respondents felt that understanding spoken language is the most difficult, and unfamiliar dialects and fast speech are the most commonly reported sources of difficulty. The participants state fewer problems with formal than informal spoken language. Figure 15 shows the percentage of responses for each alternative. As we can see, some participants chose the answer "Not Applicable" for each option, indicating that it did not apply to them. This number is particularly high for

understanding Swedish or Danish, which may indicate that some do not encounter these languages in the workplace.

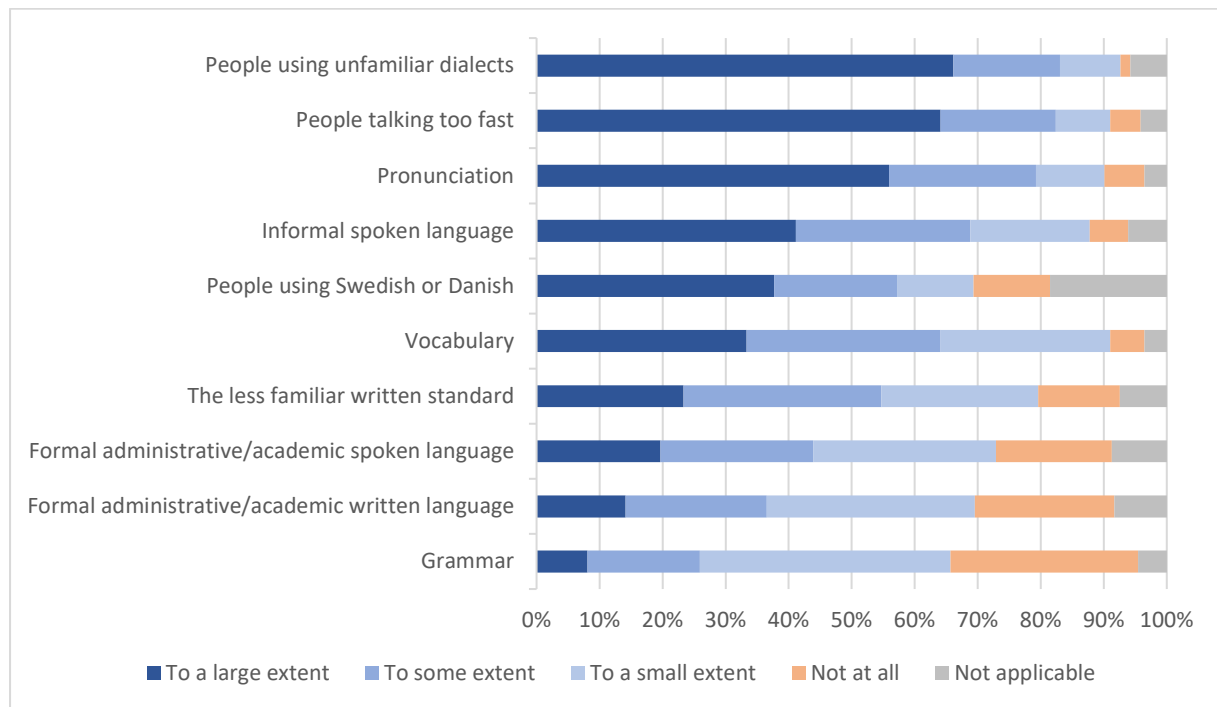


Figure 15: Responses from all participants (n = 309 – 313, blank answers excluded) to the question “If/when you have trouble understanding things in Norwegian, which of the following contribute to this?”.

In open comments the participants gave in the questionnaire, the problem of dialect variation in spoken Norwegian is also mentioned, which is illustrated in the quotes below.

“One of the main issue[s] with language practice in the workplace for me as a foreigner is the fact that people are not using a “standard” Norwegian in the workplace but often use strong dialects and accents, which makes it very difficult to understand even if one feels comfortable with speaking the Norwegian we learn at the level 3 Norwegian course at NTNU”

“Spoken Norwegian is far from being a unified language.”

The two written standards are also mentioned as an example that Norwegian is not one language, and as a challenge. Another participant points out that their Norwegian colleagues do not adapt their language to accommodate to the listener:

“I feel there [is] little effort to try to simplify language when non-fluent speakers are present - it is either normal Norwegian or English.”

In the open comments, participants mention a number of areas where they find it difficult to use Norwegian. The problems reported vary from problems with basic communication in informal lunchtime conversations to challenges related to more specialized professional language, for example related to teaching, research, and communication with industry partners. A common theme of the comments is that speaking Norwegian is particularly challenging. Many say that they prioritise using Norwegian as much as they can, but that this takes them extra time, and that they therefore often choose to use English and automatically translate Norwegian documents and messages due to time pressure.

Many say that they choose to use English because of time pressure.

The comments also testify to divided opinions about the use of Norwegian with new international employees. Some comment that they appreciate colleagues who make it a point to use as much Norwegian as possible with them, while others perceive this to mean that they "refuse to use English" and even that Norwegian is used to inflict shame. As the quotes below show, there are also differences in whether the participants themselves want to encounter Norwegian in the workplace.

"I wouldn't mind to have more exposure to Norwegian at work."

"I think all information aimed at researchers can be in English, and does not [need] to be bilingual. All researchers have enough proficiency in English that they can handle that. It would save a lot of time"

4. Conclusions and recommendations

It is clear that the majority of international staff take formal Norwegian courses and are motivated to learn the language, whether they are permanent staff with a language requirement in their contract, or temporary staff who are not obligated to learn Norwegian. Our findings do not indicate that issues with Norwegian proficiency imply that international staff are unwilling to learn or do not perceive Norwegian as important. The amount of support offered, and the language practices experienced by respondents seems to be quite variable between individuals and workplaces.

One main issue evident in the open comments in the survey, as well as in the quantitative data on how long the participants have been in Norway, is that at any time, most departments at NTNU will have colleagues who have moved to Norway quite recently and cannot be expected to know enough Norwegian to participate in the workplace without the use of English. This creates challenges for language planning.

Another issue seems to be that the required level of Norwegian proficiency, i.e., B2 level, which is also what is expected at the end of Level 3 at NFUT, is not in fact high enough proficiency to fully participate in the workplace in Norwegian. This should not come as a surprise, given both the description of this level in the CEFR framework and the time we know it takes for adults to learn a new language. However, it does highlight the continued responsibility of international employees, their Norwegian and non-Norwegian colleagues, and NTNU as a whole to ensure that learning continues beyond the required courses. B2 level may be a good starting point for the learner to be able to make use of the Norwegian input available in the workplace or elsewhere to further develop

their own Norwegian proficiency but cannot be seen as the endpoint of learning. The work environment needs to include long-term opportunities for practice, tolerance for imperfect language, and flexibility in language use to ensure effective communication and for the learning process to continue beyond the obligatory language courses.

Although all the areas we suggested as possible sources of language difficulties were reported as a problem to a greater or lesser extent by a significant number of participants, it seems that it is the spoken part that is the most difficult, and that it is perceived as a problem that the Norwegian colleagues speak fast and in their own dialects. This is something that all employees at NTNU can be aware of, and Norwegian employees of course also have a responsibility to adapt their language so that they can be understood by their international colleagues.

The open comments indicate that some participants feel that Norwegian is used to some extent deliberately to exclude them, or to inflict shame on them for not knowing Norwegian. It is not unlikely that this was not at all the intention of the Norwegian colleagues, but this highlights the importance of communicating well about language choices and guidelines to avoid misunderstandings on both sides.

Overall, we see from the responses that international staff are generally motivated and taking active steps towards learning Norwegian, but that they experience challenges such as time pressure, language variation, and perhaps unrealistic expectations (from themselves and others) about the speed at which adult second language acquisition can be expected to take place. It is important to recognise that language acquisition can take a long time, and that it is a gradual and incremental process. The complexity inherent to language choices in a university context, and the high stakes this has for education, for career development, for the future of Norwegian as a language in academia, and for creating a safe and inclusive work environment, means that all members of the academic community (both international and Norwegian staff) have a responsibility to be aware of their language choices and how we communicate with each other.