



## Abstract

This dissertation investigates how minority students experience equality of opportunity in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, discussing the affect of policies, practices and attitudes concerning minority languages in the EFL classroom – as perceived by the minority students themselves. This dissertation draws on research and theory from third language acquisition, minority education and critical pedagogy in the analysis of the conditions for minority students in the EFL classroom.

Minority students make up an increasing percentage of the total number of students in Norwegian primary and secondary education. This multilingual reality also demands a multilingual approach to language teaching. The curriculum gives every student the right to differentiated instruction in all subjects, and the English curriculum states that the students should make use of their mother tongue in the language learning.

International research has confirmed the advantages bilingual students have in the acquisition of foreign languages compared to their monolingual peers. However, research conducted among immigrant students in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden has very mixed different results; some finding that immigrant students have lower scores than the majority population. This is also confirmed in several European reports and in the grades minority students receives in English in Norwegian schools.

Based on qualitative interviews with minority students and relevant policy documents, this dissertation has three main findings. First, the students' bilingual background has not received much attention in the EFL classroom. Rather, their complex linguistic backgrounds have often seemed to be invisible to the teacher. Second, there seem to have been a strong sentiment of equality as sameness dominating the EFL classrooms, where the students expressed that they had no received any differentiated instruction aimed at their linguistic background. Third, there was a great variety in the degree of metalinguistic awareness among the students. Although all of the participants had a bilingual background, not all had yet become aware of the advantages associated with bilingualism in the learning of a new language.

## Samandrag

Denne masteroppgåva undersøker korleis minoritetslever opplever like moglegheiter i engelskundervisninga, ved å diskutere effekten av politikk, praksisar og haldningar til minoritetsspråk i engelskklasserommet – slik desse vert oppfatta av minoritetslevane. Analysen av tilhøva for minoritetslevar i engelskklasserommet tar utgangspunkt i forskning og teori innan tredjespråklæring, fleirkulturell pedagogikk og kritisk pedagogikk.

Minoritetslevar utgjer ein aukande del av den totale studentmassen i norsk grunn- og vidaregåande opplæring. Denne fleirspråklege verkelegheita krevjar òg ein fleirspråkleg tilnærming til språkundervisning. Læreplanen gir alle elevar retten til tilpassa opplæring i alle fag, og læreplanen i engelsk seier at elevane skal ta deira morsmål i bruk i språklæringa.

Internasjonal forskning har stadfesta fordelane tospråklege elevar har i læringa av framandspråk samanlikna med deira einspråklege medelevar. Derimot har forskning utført blant innvandrarelevar i Belgia, Nederland og Sverige hatt særskilt blanda resultat. Somme fant at innvandrarelevar har lågare resultat enn majoritetsbefolkninga. Dette er òg stadfesta i fleire europeiske rapportar og i karakterane elevane i norsk skule får i engelsk.

Basert på kvalitative intervju med minoritetslevar og relevante politiske dokument, har denne masteroppgåva tre hovudfunn: For det første at elevanes fleirspråklege bakgrunn ikkje har fått mykje merksemd i engelskundervisninga. I staden kan det synast som om deira komplekse språkbakgrunn har vore usynleg for læraren. For det andre verkar det som om ein sterk kjensle av likskap har dominert engelskundervisninga, kor elevane sa at dei ikkje hadde motteke noko tilpassa opplæring sikta mot deira fleirspråklege bakgrunn. For det tredje var det stor skilnad på graden av metalingvistisk medvit blant elevane. Sjølv om alle deltakarane hadde ei fleirspråkleg bakgrunn, hadde ikkje alle blitt medviten fordelane knytt til fleirspråklegheit ved læring av nye språk.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

A senior professor of education visited a London comprehensive school and discussed with one class the languages they spoke at home. One boy put up his hand and said that his family spoke a French Creole. In an unguarded moment the professor replied ‘That’s nice.’ ‘What’s nice about it?’ asked the boy (Romaine, 1994, p. 191).

As teachers we have been taught to appreciate diversity in our classrooms. Diversity comes in many shapes and forms, as we talk about diversity regarding abilities and appearance, social and economic background, ethnic and religious, and not least linguistic diversity. We have been taught that it enriches our classrooms and we know it is ‘nice’. Nonetheless, it is important that we ask ourselves the same question as this boy asked the senior professor: ‘What’s nice about it?’

Through increased globalisation and immigration, the world has entered our classrooms. Today, children and adolescents from all over the globe meet in Norwegian schools. Statistics from 2013 show that minority students make up 11% of the total number of students in Norwegian primary and secondary education. In some parts of Norway, such as in Oslo, the number can be as high as 40% (St. mld. no. 3, p. 49). This multilingual reality also demands a multilingual approach to language teaching. The curriculum gives every student the right to differentiated instruction in all subjects, and the English curriculum states that the students should make use of their mother tongue in the language learning (LK06, 2013). In order to meet these needs, language teachers need a high degree of language awareness and language competence.

The English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is the venue for a language meeting – but what are the consequences when this language meeting is a meeting between more than two languages? How does the teacher facilitate this encounter when students’ linguistic backgrounds are so diverse, such as those we find in Norwegian classrooms? As teachers, it is our duty to provide each and every student with equality of opportunity in our classrooms. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the conditions of the minority students in the Norwegian EFL classroom, and to investigate whether they experience equality of opportunity, for which the Norwegian curriculum strives (LK06, 2013).



## 1.2. Objectives and Research Question

The research question of this dissertation is: How do minority students experience equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom? In order to reach an understanding of how minority students experience equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom, the following three questions about the role of minority languages in the EFL classroom should be answered:

- a. How do minority students experience the *policies* concerning minority languages in the EFL classroom?
- b. What *practices* concerning minority languages do minority students experience in and related to the EFL classroom?
- c. What *attitudes* towards minority languages do minority students perceive among their teachers?

By asking these three questions, the overarching aim is to assess how these factors affect minority students' opportunities in the EFL classroom. The three factors; *policies*, *practices*, and *attitudes*, were chosen since researchers, such as Phillipson and others, have pointed out that the policies and practices dealing with minority languages can have a negative effect on foreign language learning for minority students (Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003; Phillipson, 1992, p. 2). Moreover, other researchers have stressed the importance of linguistic attitudes in the process of language learning (Brown, 2007; Correa, 2011; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011). The term 'minority student' is applied in this dissertation to refer to those students who have had a different L1 than the official language in the community at large (Selj & Ryen, 2008) and belong to a 'migrant minority', as opposed to a national minority (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004).

The theoretical background will be based on research on L3 acquisition, minority education, and critical pedagogy. The empirical material will be made up of qualitative interviews with ten bilingual minority students in Norwegian upper secondary education. The student biographies obtained from these interviews, together with relevant policy documents concerning minority students, will then be the basis for a phenomenological study of the *practices*, *policies*, and *attitudes* towards minority languages in EFL teaching in Norway.

### 1.3. Key Terms

Before we approach the previous research and literature in this field, it is necessary to clarify some key concepts, which constitute the fundament of this dissertation: *Equality of opportunity*, *bilingualism*, and *practices, policies and attitudes*.

#### 1.3.1. Equality of Opportunity

Considering minority students' diverse linguistic abilities, one could expect this group to perform better than the monolingual majority in Norwegian schools. Nonetheless, minority students score below average in English (SSB, 2014). Hence, a natural question to ask is whether these students experience equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom? Equality of opportunity is a clear aim in the Norwegian National Curriculum (LK06), particularly dealt with in the section 'Core Curriculum', where it states:

The point of departure for schooling is the personal aptitude, social background, and local origin of the pupils themselves. Education must be adapted to the needs of the individual. Greater equality of results can be achieved by differences in the efforts directed towards each individual learner. Breadth of skills is realized by stimulating their unique interests and abilities. Individual distinctiveness generates social diversity - equal ability to participate enriches society (Core Curriculum, 1994).

In addition to equality of *opportunity*, the Norwegian curriculum also strives for equality in *results*. This is achieved through differentiated instruction. When public education first became wide spread in Europe and North America, equality simply consisted in the availability of free education for all children. Later, one realised that only providing all children with free, public education, in fact, did not provide all with equal educational opportunity (Coleman, 1968). Similarly for Norwegian minority students, it is necessary to consider their linguistic background, in order to ensure what we call equality of results. If all students, heedless of their linguistic background are provided with the same English teaching, one cannot say that all students are provided with equality of opportunity (Miller, 1984). Today, the equality of opportunity is measured in the equality of results in education:

When the school assumes the monolingual majority child as the rule against which the bilingual minority child is found to be different, the normal measure of equal treatment does not, in fact, realise the purported principle of equal opportunity (Miller, 1984, p. 200).

Since equality of opportunity is a clear aim in the Norwegian curriculum, minority students have the right to receive equal opportunity through differentiated instruction. In this dissertation, the aim is to explore whether Norwegian schools meet the rights of these students in the EFL classroom.

### **1.3.2. Bilingualism and Minority Students**

It can sometimes be complicated to determine whether the different languages a person uses qualify her for the term ‘bilingual’. When it comes to minority students, one can ask to what extent the student may need to command the L1 and L2 in order to be bilingual. Different researchers have given different answers to these questions, from those who demanded native-like control in both languages in order for the person to be bilingual, to those who only looked for “some” L2 skills in addition to L1 (Romaine, 1989). Others, such as Romaine, see the classification of individual bilingualism to be near to impossible to determine:

In order to study bilingualism we are forced to consider it as something entirely relative because the point at which the speaker of a second language becomes bilingual is either arbitrary or impossible to determine (Romaine, 1989, p. 11).

Moreover, one can also talk about degrees of bilingualism, and distinguish between balanced bilinguals and partial bilinguals. A balanced bilingual is a person who has developed both languages to an advanced level, so that she speaks both the L1 and L2 fluently – and keeps them separate. A partial bilingual has only developed a high level of proficiency in one or none of the languages involved (Kroll & De Groot, 2005).

In this dissertation, Appel and Muysken’s definition of a bilingual individual will be applied: “Somebody who regularly uses two or more languages in alternation is a bilingual” (1987, p. 3). Those who *have used* two or more languages in alternation, will also be included in the term bilingual in this dissertation, in order to cover students who have abandoned one or more of the languages they used to master. By this definition, bilingualism also includes the term ‘multilingualism,’ which indicates the use of more than two languages.

### **1.3.3. Policies, Practices and Attitudes**

In order to examine how minority students experience equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom, it is necessary to determine which factors influence the equality of opportunity for minority students. In this dissertation, the minority students’ experiences are explored through factors such as policies, practices, and attitudes that affect the students in the EFL classroom.

In this dissertation, *policies* are understood as the language policies found in national and supranational political documents directing the teachers’ practices in the classroom, in line with Byram (2008) and Phillipson’s (1992) use of the term. The Norwegian national curriculum, the Norwegian Education Act, as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, will be considered in this dissertation. These documents influence the practices of the teachers in the classrooms and the attitudes these teachers have towards bilingualism, minority languages, and minority education.

The term *Practices* refers to what the teachers do in the EFL classrooms in terms of activities and actions, which can be related to minority students’ bilingualism. In this dissertation, the only source of information about the teachers’ practices is the students. “The teacher’s practices are shaped by personal beliefs and ideologies but do not occur in isolation from broader communal and societal notions” (de Jong, 2011, p. 13). Thus, the practices are influenced by the policies found in formal documents. These practices also express the attitudes teachers have towards bilingualism, minority languages, and minority education.

Finally, *attitudes* refer to teachers’ attitudes towards minority languages as perceived by minority students. Also, teachers’ attitudes are linked to teacher cognition (Phipps & Borg, 2009), which will be discussed in this dissertation. The focus in this dissertation will be on what the students perceive to be their teachers’ attitudes towards bilingualism and minority languages in the context of the EFL classroom.

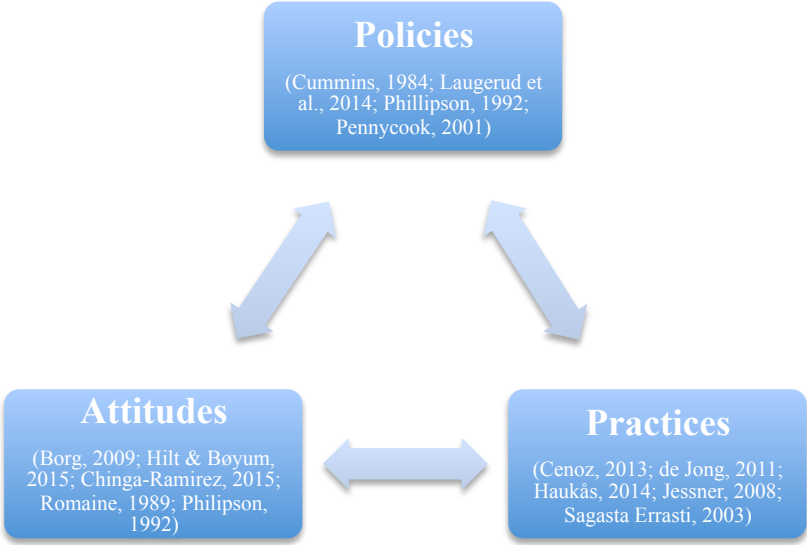


Figure 1: Policies, practices and attitudes.

These three factors, *policies*, *practices* and *attitudes*, represent three levels of decision making, which all affect minority students in the EFL classroom; the political, practical and individual. As illustrated in the figure above, these factors are mutually influencing each other; hence, political decisions influence teachers' attitudes, as well as their practices, through curricula and legal documents. However, what teachers actually do in the EFL classroom, also contribute to shape policy makers and general attitudes. For instance, the subtractive practices imposed upon immigrant children in North America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and their subsequent school failure, led teachers to believe bilingualism was harmful for children's cognitive development, and also influenced political decisions at the time (Cummins, 1984). Attitudes are not only shaped through policies and practices, but they also influence these factors. Thus, it is necessary to investigate all three levels, in order to achieve an understanding of how minority students can achieve equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom. When investigating these three factors, the main concern will continuously be the students' perspective and how these factors affect their opportunities in the EFL classroom.

#### **1.4. Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. First, an introduction, where the research question and key terms have been presented. Following this chapter, there is a presentation of relevant previous research on third language (L3) learning, from the perspectives of bilingualism, minority education and on the Norwegian context. Thereafter, the theory chapter presents three relevant perspectives for EFL learning for minority students: L3 learning, minority education, and critical pedagogy. In the fourth chapter, the methodology is presented together with the background of the chosen methodology, as well as some methodological challenges. Chapter five analyses the data, individual student biographies obtained through the interviews. These will be analysed and discussed in chapter six. The final chapter will provide some concluding remarks based on the discussion and relevant theory previously presented, as well as some directions for further research.

## 2. Previous Research

For the past decades, substantial relevant research has been conducted within the fields of bilingualism and L3 learning. However, there has still not been much written on English as a foreign language (EFL) learning for minority students. Rather, the focus has often been on third language acquisition in bilingual regions, such as in Basque Country, Catalonia, Switzerland (Cenoz, 2013; Lasagabaster, 1998; Sagasta Errasti, 2003). Nonetheless, in this section research relevant for this study on bilingualism and L3 learning, L3 learning for minority students and relevant research from a Norwegian context, is presented. The main focus will be on the latter, since this has the greatest relevance for this dissertation.

### 2.1. Bilingualism and Language Learning

The field of bilingualism has been widely researched for more than a century (Romaine, 1989). In the earliest years of research on bilingualism, most researchers thought the brain had a limited space for language, and therefore limited capacity for more languages (Jensen in Cummins, 1984, p. 33), and, in fact, most studies also indicated that bilinguals had a clear academic disadvantage:

Most of the studies done before the 1960s indicated that monolingual children were up to three years ahead of bilingual children in various skills relating to verbal and non-verbal intelligence (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000).

However, this research did not consider the socio-economical and socio-educational context in which the bilingual students lived and were tested under. This changed radically with the study by Peal and Lambert, which was published in 1962. They concluded that bilingualism led to:

A mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, and a more diversified set of mental abilities (...) There is no question about the fact that he [the bilingual] is superior intellectually (Peal and Lambert in Romaine, 1989, p. 103).

Following this publication, more research confirmed Peal and Lambert's findings; since then one has found bilingualism to be a clear advantage, specifically when it comes to language acquisition (Cenoz, 2013; Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003; Jessner, 2008; Komorowska, 2011; Kroll & De Groot, 2005; Sagasta Errasti, 2003). Cummins has stated that the research "strongly suggests that programs that aim to develop a high level of proficiency in two languages provide greater potential for all children" (1984, p. 55). Albert and Obler have even

claimed that, “bilinguals mature earlier than monolinguals both in terms of cerebral lateralization for language and in acquiring skills for linguistic abstraction” (1978, p. 248). Furthermore, research has shown that bilingual and monolingual students are different and acquire languages differently. However, the differences become even clearer when the bilingual’s level of language proficiency in her languages is considered:

Studies that have included at least some version of the child’s level of proficiency have usually found it to be a significant determiner of performance. The effects of proficiency range from finding bilingual advantages only for fully balanced bilinguals, or a greater advantage for fully bilinguals, to disadvantages for partial bilinguals. This is essentially the pattern predicted by Cummins’ threshold hypothesis, in which he sets out a minimal level of bilingual competence to avoid deficit and a higher level to enjoy advantages (Bialystok, 2001, p. 144).

Furthermore, research conducted by Sagasta Errasti in Spanish Basque Country shows that students who had developed a high degree of bilingualism in Spanish and Basque also displayed a higher competence in English as an L3. Those who had only developed a partial bilingualism had a less clear advantage (Sagasta Errasti, 2003). Already in 1934 Vygotsky claimed that higher language proficiency facilitates further language acquisition: “success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 195). This was also confirmed by Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas, who showed that students with a proficient bilingualism had better academic performance than those who had only developed a partial bilingualism (Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas in Cummins, 1984, p. 52).

## **2.2. Minority Students’ L3 Learning**

Although “differences between second language acquisition (SLA) and TLA [third language acquisition] have been neglected in SLA research and in studies of bilingualism” (Cenoz, 2013, p. 71), there has been a growing interest in the field of L3 learning throughout the past decade (Carvalho & da Silva, 2006; Cenoz, 2013; Falk & Bardel, 2010; Jessner, 2008; Llama, Cardoso, & Collins, 2010). However, the focus of this research has mainly been on the transfer from the background languages (L1 and L2) on the L3. Nonetheless, this research has contributed to important knowledge about the challenges bilingual students might encounter when learning an L3, but mostly on the great advantages bilingual students have when learning an L3. Even more relevant for this dissertation, is the research on immigrant minority students.

In a review of the research on the field of L3 learning, Cenoz shows that research from Switzerland, Canada, and Spain has confirmed that bilingual students have clear benefits in the learning of an L3. She goes on to claim that research on immigrant minority children tend to confirm these findings (Cenoz, 2013). However, most of the research she refers to from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden, does not, in fact, confirm that bilinguals have an advantage in the learning of an L3. On the contrary, the results are quite mixed, with a majority finding no significant difference between the immigrant students and the monolingual students, and some find that the immigrant students have lower scores. She partly admits this, and goes on to explain the ambiguous results by stating that “it is important to remember that immigrant learners may also be at a disadvantage because of their socioeconomic status or other social and cultural factors” (Cenoz, 2013, p. 75).

Based on Cenoz’ statement, it therefore seems as if one could expect and should accept minority students’ poor results, due to their socioeconomic status. Other researchers have provided other answers to why not all bilingual students seem to succeed. Moore has concluded that: “Multilingualism is not an asset per se, when children are not encouraged in the school situation to rely on their different languages and language knowledge as positive resources” (Moore, 2006). Therefore, it could seem to remain an open question whether one should accept immigrant minorities’ academic failure due to their socioeconomic status, or if one should improve the school situation for this group.

### **2.3. Norwegian Context**

To date, most research on minority students in Norwegian schools has dealt with the learning of their mother tongue or Norwegian as an L2. Generally speaking, the research within this field has concluded that it is vital for minority students to develop their L1 in order to effectively learn Norwegian as an L2 (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004; Haukås, 2014; Selj & Ryen, 2008). There has also been some research conducted concerning L3 learning. However, this has often covered the teaching of German, Spanish and French to majority students (See Olsbu, 2014). This research focuses on the teaching of a ‘second foreign language’ to a group who are not bilingual. Hence, the learning process is different than for bilingual students learning English as an L3.

However, there are four particular studies that have somewhat dealt with the learning of EFL for minority students; the first is an M.A. dissertation by Ness from 2008, the second a is a



case study conducted by Šurkalović among English teachers in training at Oslo and Akershus University College in 2014. The third is a study by Dahl and Krulatz based on a survey among English teachers from all over the country, and the fourth is an action research project by Krulatz and Torgersen, both published in 2016.

The M.A. dissertation was based on a case study of the challenges facing minority students learning English as an L3 in Norwegian primary school. Ness concluded that the main obstacles for minority students in the learning of English were the missing integration in the community, the learning of Norwegian and transfer from their L1. Ness claimed that her findings indicated that the learning of Norwegian as an L2 could be an important aid in the learning of English as an L3. Therefore, the dissertation pointed to introductory programmes in Norwegian as an important contribution to minority students' learning of English as an L3.

Moreover, the dissertation claimed that improving the training of English teachers, and general integration of minority students in the local community, were other important factors in facilitating minority students' learning of English as an L3 (Ness, 2008). However, this study took mostly the teachers' perspectives on the challenges facing minority students; only teachers, councillors, and head teachers at three schools were interviewed. The dissertation's theoretical background focuses on cross-linguistic transfer and linguistic proximity, and therefore concludes that Norwegian can be a support for non-European minorities in the learning of English as an L3, pointing to results where highly proficient learners of Norwegian also perform better in English (Ness, 2008).

The second study, by Šurkalović, investigated whether English teachers in training possessed the sufficient knowledge about the linguistic diversity in Norwegian classrooms to give minority students adequate differentiated instruction in English as an L3. Although she found that 85% of the teachers in training thought it was necessary to have knowledge about languages beyond Norwegian and English, their general knowledge about the linguistic diversity in Norway was lacking. Moreover, she found that the students generally had little awareness about the role of minority languages in the context of language teaching (Šurkalović, 2014).

The third study, by Dahl and Krulatz, investigated the knowledge English teachers had about teaching English to minority students, their educational background related to this issue, as well as their motivation to learn more. They found, similarly to Šurkalović, that the teachers

generally did not consider themselves to be well prepared or equipped for handling the linguistic diversity in their English classrooms. However, the vast majority would like to receive more training in this field. In many aspects, this survey supports the findings presented in Šurkalović' study (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016).

Krulatz and Torgersen (2016) carried through a qualitative action research project at two schools with a linguistically and culturally diverse student group. Through interviews with teachers and parents, as well as classroom observation, Krulatz and Torgersen investigated English teachers' awareness of the advantages associated with bilingualism and how their classroom practices supported the students' bilingualism. They concluded that:

English teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse students feel unprepared to face the challenges brought about by the new classroom demographics. The teachers we have been working with are fully aware of the gaps in their knowledge and skills and are motivated to improve their classroom practices (Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016, p. 66).

This project concluded that teachers were aware of the advantages associated with bilingualism. However, this was not clearly reflected in their classroom practices.

Findings from the studies above were also confirmed in a small study investigating the socio-educational context for minority students in the English classroom, conducted as a part of my bachelor dissertation (Iversen, 2014). These findings indicated that the teachers at the school that was investigated, did “not value, exploit, encourage or support the students' bilingualism, and the development of it” (Iversen, 2014, p. 21). Most teachers saw bilingualism mainly as a challenge, and can therefore be said to support the findings by Ness, Šurkalović, Dahl and Krulatz. Although the research that has been conducted on the situation of minority students' learning of English as an L3 is not extensive, the study on the English teachers and teachers in training indicates that most teachers are not well prepared for the linguistically diverse classrooms. This finding is confirmed in the M.A. dissertation from 2008 and my own study from 2014 (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Iversen, 2014; Ness, 2008; Šurkalović, 2014).

Nonetheless, the research has so far only taken the teachers' perspective on the minority students' situation, while the students have been silent. Thus, there is an argument for introducing the perspectives of how the students themselves perceive their situation, to find out if their experiences align with the research presented above: Are the challenges minority students face in the EFL classroom connected to the lack of awareness and knowledge among

the teachers, as Šurkalović shows? Are they connected to lack of integration in the community at large, and a need for better Norwegian training, as Ness claims? Or do these students see other challenges that research within this field has yet to confront?

### 3. Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, I will present three perspectives on English as a foreign language (EFL) learning for minority students, which can help us better understand the realities of this group in the EFL classroom. First, I will consider EFL learning for minority students in light of theory on bilingualism and L3 acquisition. Second, I will present general theory on minority education. Third, I will see EFL learning from a critical pedagogical perspective.

#### 3.1. L3 Learning and Teaching

In this section, we will consider foreign language learning from the perspective of L3 learning and teaching, which is the learning of any language after L1 and L2. In the Norwegian context, this normally means learning English as an L2, and later German/French/Spanish as an additional L3. However, for minority students, English is often their L3. I define English as minority students' L3, even when they have started to learn English before they learned Norwegian L2. This is because L2 is the dominant language of the society they live in.

##### 3.1.1. Bilingualism

In the introduction, the use of the term 'bilingual' was defined for the purpose of this dissertation. Appel and Muysken's definition of bilingualism was then applied, which states that "[S]omebody who regularly uses two or more languages in alternation is a bilingual" (Appel & Muysken, 1987, p. 3). In this dissertation, individuals who have used two or more languages in alternation, but who no longer do so, are also considered to be bilingual. In this section, bilingualism in the context of language learning will be considered.

As mentioned earlier, we can also discuss balanced and partial bilingualism (Kroll & De Groot, 2005). A balanced bilingual is an individual who has developed equal proficiency in two languages, while a partial bilingual has only developed high proficiency in one of the languages. Moreover, one can also divide bilingualism into two groups: Additive and subtractive bilingualism. The different circumstances under which individuals become bilingual, will affect their bilingualism. Additive bilingualism takes place when an additional language is introduced to an individual. This additional language does not replace, but instead complements the individual's L1. The opposite is the case with subtractive bilingualism, when the L2 replaces the L1. This is often in a context where the L1 has a low status and the L2 has a high status. Such a situation may also lead to a loss of identity and a feeling of

shame connected to their L1 and the family's cultural heritage (de Jong, 2011). The status of the L1 is therefore highly influential in order to develop a balanced and highly functional bilingualism, which in turn benefits the student in the learning of English as an L3 (Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003).

The bilingual individual's competence in the different languages will typically change and develop over time and vary between different domains – depending on the experiences the bilingual individual goes through. For instance, minority students can have a highly developed vocabulary in one language for family situations, a highly advanced vocabulary in another language for academic purposes. Romaine defines a domain as “an abstraction which refers to a sphere of activity representing a combination of different times, settings, and role relationships” (Romaine, 1989, p. 29). Research has shown that different domains carry different expectations for language use. Three variables that determine the domain are topic, listener, and language (Romaine, 1989). For the students in this dissertation, three domains are discussed: home/family, school/work, and friends.

Researchers have found that “[t]he proficiency that the child develops in each language [...] is a specific response to a set of needs and circumstances” (Bialystok, 2001). Which means that the bilingual individual will apply different languages to different settings, and that the different languages carry different meaning, status and values. Romaine states that:

Competence may (...) encompass a range of skills, some of which may not be equally developed, in a number of languages and varieties. The fact that speakers select different languages and varieties for use in different situations shows that not all languages/varieties are equal or regarded as equally appropriate or adequate for use in all speech events (Romaine, 1989, p. 29).

For instance, many of these students will have a highly developed vocabulary to talk about home and family-related topics in their L1, an advanced vocabulary to discuss science, literature, and art, in their L2, and often a precise vocabulary concerning specific topics relevant to the L3 (de Jong, 2011; Romaine, 1989).

Cummins developed the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model, also known as the interdependence hypothesis, already in the 1970s. This hypothesis is based on the “well-supported finding that the continued development of bilingual children's two languages during schooling is associated with positive educational and linguistic consequences” (Cummins, 2000, p. 175). This led Cummins to conclude that “academic language proficiency

transfer across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their L1 will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in L2” (Cummins, 2000, p. 173). The so-called ‘double iceberg’ was an illustration of the relationship between the language-specific competence in L1, the language-specific competence in L2, and the common underlying proficiency.

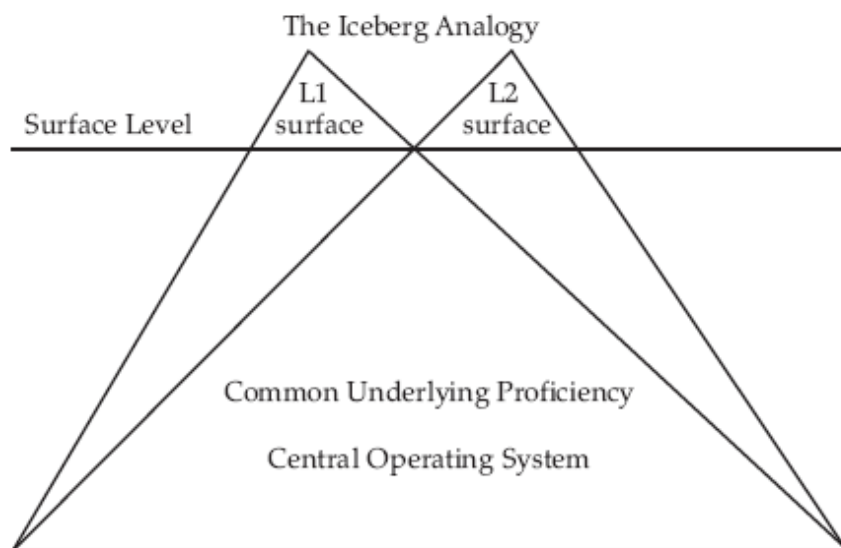
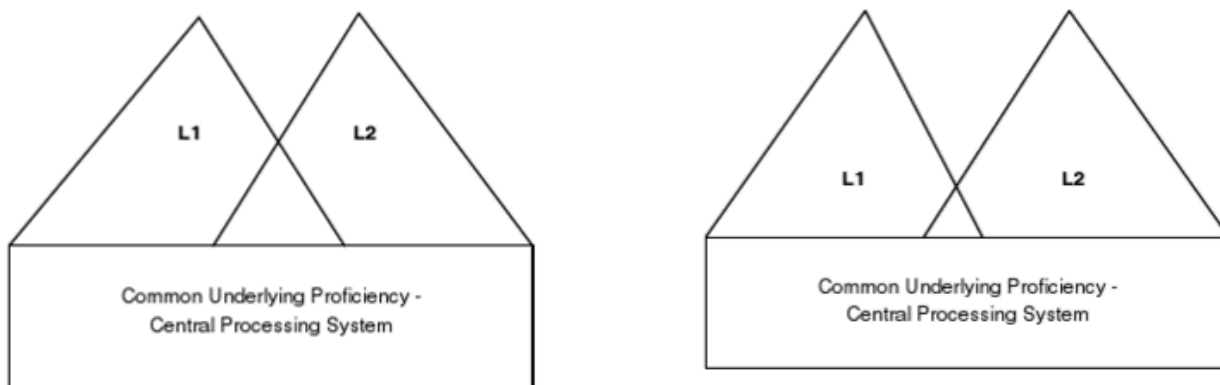


Figure 2: The Iceberg Analogy

This model stands in opposition to a Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) view, where languages are seen as completely independent systems, which function separate from each other. Such a view leads to the assumption that bilingualism can be confusing and academically damaging (Cummins, 1984).

However, some researchers have found the double iceberg to oversimplify the complex processes it tries to describe (Francis, 2011). Based on recent research, Francis has presented a modified version of Cummins’ CUP-model, in order to better represent the mutual influence between the L1, the L2, and other cognitive skills. According to this model, the CUP is not language-bound. Francis uses discourse ability, text comprehension, and general language-processing skills as examples of such non-language-bound skills. Such skills can be learned either in the L1, the L2 or by non-linguistic means. There is no longer talk about “transfer,” since these skills belong to the CUP, not one of the languages. The only fundamental language-bound skill is speech, according to Francis (2011).



**Figure 3: Linguistic Overlap**

Another implication of Francis’ revised model is that “some languages ‘overlap’ more than others in the domains that represent language-specific features (e.g., Spanish and Italian, more so; Italian and Hungarian, less so)” (Francis, 2011, p. 57). Hence, the support one can retrieve from one language when learning another depends on the linguistic similarity between the two languages. As we will see in the next section, this also finds support in research on L3 learning.

### **3.1.2. Research on L3 Learning and Teaching**

When bilingual students learn a third language, we use the term L3 learning. Most researchers use the terms L1, L2 and L3 to describe the chronology of the acquisition of the languages. The problem here is that many bilingual people have acquired some or all of the languages simultaneously. Therefore, it is better to apply these terms based on the different domains in which the languages have importance. Hence, in this dissertation the term L1 will be applied for the language used at home in the person’s early childhood, by the person’s parents and siblings. L2 will be used about the official language of the community, used in kindergarten, school, and in the public life at large. L3 will be used about “any non-native language acquired after the L2, i.e., from the third language and onwards” (Falk & Bardel, 2010, p. 187). The term “background language” will be applied to all previously acquired languages up to the L3 (Rast, 2010). The term “minority student” is then applied to those students who have had a different L1 than what has official status in the community at large (Selj & Ryen, 2008).

As it has become increasingly clear that bilingualism carries many advantages with it (Cenoz, 2013; Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003; Jessner, 2008; Komorowska, 2011; Kroll & De Groot, 2005; Sagasta Errasti, 2003), in addition, researchers have in recent years started to investigate the advantages that come with even more than two languages. A number of positive social, cultural, as well as cognitive advantages have been discovered, but first and foremost it has been ascertained that the “acquisition of a third language awakens and deepens interest in other languages, cultures and countries, creating more multicultural and global citizens” (Clyne, 1997 in Tamara Mesaros, 2008, p. 7). This is not a new idea, as Vygotsky said that being able to express the same thought in different languages would enable the child to “see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness to linguistic operations” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 110).

As previously mentioned, one also knows that the learning of different languages are not independent processes, but rather, highly interconnected. Cummins’ CUP model demonstrates how bilingual students benefit from language learning in all languages, and that acquisition in one language can benefit the other, because there exists *a common underlying proficiency* (1984, p. 33). Later, this hypothesis has been referred to as the “interdependence hypothesis” (Cummins, 1991, 2000). A similar idea to Cummins’ hypothesis was presented in Vygotsky’s book *Thought and Language* already in 1934. Here, Vygotsky stated that:

The child can transfer to the new language the system of meanings he already possesses in his own. The reverse is also true – a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 196).

Research on L3 learning supports that one can expand Cummins’ model and Vygotsky’s claims to also include an L3. In this way, students who already have developed a highly proficient bilingualism will benefit when they are learning an L3, and by implication, their knowledge of their L1 and L2 will increase. Therefore, Cenoz affirms that, “L3 learners can relate new structures, new vocabulary or new ways of expressing communicative functions to the two languages they already know” (Cenoz, 2013, p. 71).

Although the study of L3 acquisition has experienced a growing interest in the past decade, it is still a rather new field of research. Most research has mainly concerned itself with cross-linguistic influence on areas such as vocabulary and syntax (Falk & Bardel, 2010). When it comes to the pedagogical aspect of L3 teaching, there is still a great need for more research.



A number of factors contributing to cross-linguistic influence have been discussed, such as language distance/proximity, recency, proficiency, order of acquisition, and the L2 status (Carvalho & da Silva, 2006; Falk & Bardel, 2010). Research conducted on Finnish-Swedish bilinguals learning English, and Igbo-English bilinguals learning French, indicate that the language proximity seems to be the most significant when it comes to cross-linguistic influence. The bilinguals in this study seemed to apply the languages closest related to the L3 (Swedish/English), not the language they had learned first (Finnish/Igbo), due to language proximity (Carvalho & da Silva, 2006). For minority students, this means that when Kurdish-Norwegian bilinguals learn English, it is more likely that they will transfer from Norwegian when they learn English, although Kurdish might be their L1. This is also in accordance with Francis' revised CUP model (2011). Another reason for the transfer from the L2 to the L3, might be that if the L2 is acquired in a formal setting, the students have acquired more metalinguistic knowledge about the L2 and also a higher degree of awareness about the learning process. Therefore, it is natural for them to apply the metalinguistic knowledge and the learning strategies they used when learning the L2 in the L3 acquisition process (Falk & Bardel, 2010).

Others have stressed the importance of status, when researching cross-linguistic influence:

Non-native languages tend to fall under the category 'foreign languages' in the mind of the learner, which creates a cognitive association among them. Since the mother tongue does not sound foreign, it is excluded from the association, and it becomes easier for the speaker to block it when accessing language (Llama et al., 2010, p. 40).

This leads to a favourable status for the L2. Hence, this has led other researchers to conclude that L2 status, together with language distance, are the most prominent factors when it comes to cross-linguistic influence (Llama et al., 2010).

To date, the research that has been conducted on L3 acquisition, has clearly pointed out that the knowledge the students have about their background languages clearly influence the learning process of new languages (Rast, 2010). Considering the research conducted on L3 acquisition, it seems clear that minority students' L1 will not constitute any obstacle for their L3 English learning, since bilingual students tend to draw on all of their previous linguistic knowledge in order to understand input and produce output in the L3 (Rast, 2010).

Another important factor, in addition to the student's background languages, is the teacher's language awareness. Haukås (2014) describes three components of teacher language awareness. The teacher has to:

- a. Be a proficient speaker in order to provide the students with adapted input and function as a model.
- b. Have analytic knowledge about language in order to provide adequate explanations and examples.
- c. Have knowledge about language acquisition and how to facilitate for students' metacognition and linguistic development.

Research on foreign language teaching has proven that metacognition and learning strategies are key components in order to learn a language successfully (Haukås, 2014), and Haukås has therefore presented these three components as important to a successful language teaching. The last point, metacognition, is exactly one of the aspects where researchers agree that bilingual students have an advantage. Hence, to have teachers with competence in further developing these skills, could be a great asset to minority students' language learning.

### **3.1.3. The Context of Norwegian Education**

Norway is a multilingual country at its core. The state is based upon two nations, the Norwegian and the Sámi, whose languages are official. In addition, the state recognises three languages as official minority languages, namely Kven, Romanes and Romani. Together with Norwegian and Sámi, these are languages with a long history within the boarder of Norway. However, the linguistic situation of Norway has drastically changed over the last decades.

Since 1970, the number of immigrants to Norway has increased, even more so since 2006, when the European Union and the Schengen Area expanded eastward, opening up extensive immigration from Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and Lithuania (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015a). This has drastically changed Norwegian society, including its education sector, and also affected the development of policies on this issue.

In the changing linguistic landscape within the context of the Norwegian education sector, the role of English has also changed. In the same way that students used to meet English with Norwegian as their only reference, a growing number of students meet English with a much more complex linguistic background. The context for the Norwegian student who studied

English in a Norwegian school in the 1970s, is quite different from the Lithuanian-Russian bilingual student who came to Norway at age 7, acquired Norwegian and is now going to commence his English studies. A European report on English teaching from 2002 showed that 4,5% of the student in Norway used a different language at home than Norwegian (Bonnet, 2002, p. 81). Since then, the number has further increased, since statistics from 2013 show that minority students make up 14% of the total number of students in Norwegian primary and secondary education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013). This is a substantial group, and therefore it should have our full attention in the years to come.

Statistics (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015b) further show that minority students perform below average in both written and oral English. The greatest gap can be found between the students born outside Norway and the general population. However, minority students born in Norway also perform below the general population. Statistics Norway stated in 2015 that: “Students with an immigrant background achieve lower average grades than students in general, but the grades also vary greatly within this group”(Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015b). This gap between majority and minority population is greater in Norway than in a number of other countries, according to the OECD (Taguma, Shewbridge, Huttova, & Hoffman, 2009).

The European report on English teaching from 2002 found a similar gap in results in Denmark, and the report concluded: “Pupils from homes in which other languages than Danish are spoken or English/American perform significantly worse compared to others in average” (Bonnet, 2002, p. 114). This was also the conclusion in a report by the Danish Evaluation Institute in 2003 (EVA, 2003). Although the minority students generally perform below the national average in English, the 2002-report points out that “there is considerable variation in the test results for the individual pupils” (Bonnet, 2002, p. 114). Considering the social, cultural and linguistic similarities between Denmark and Norway, the findings from Denmark are also interesting in a Norwegian context.

Since research has shown that bilingualism is not a disadvantage in learning more languages, and that bilinguals draw on all of their prior linguistic knowledge when faced with a new language, the results presented by Statistics Norway and in other reports can be characterized as unexpected. It is therefore important to consider the policies, practices and attitudes regarding the situation of minority students in Norwegian schools, particularly in the EFL classroom, in order to better understand the findings presented above.

## 3.2. Minority Students in Education

In this section, we will consider EFL learning for students with a minority language. There is no clear evidence for a massive failure among minority students in the EFL classroom.

However, as shown, it is clear that minority students perform below average in the EFL classroom. This includes both boys and girls, in oral and written English, and both immigrant students and children of immigrants. This again, is confirmed in European reports on the matter (Bonnet, 2002; EVA, 2003), as well as in some European studies, although these results are somewhat inconclusive (Cenoz, 2013).

Cenoz indicates that these somewhat poor academic achievements are due to socioeconomic factors among the immigrant population. This is also one of the factors that Romaine brings forward. Among other factors, she mentions that there might be a linguistic and cultural mismatch between the home and the school, that minority students are provided with an inferior education, and the attitudes of the majority to the minority and vice versa (Romaine, 1994, p. 194). In this section, we will investigate these three factors in more depth, since these are the factors most relevant to the topic of this dissertation. In addition, research on teacher cognition will be presented, as another perspective on the influence of teachers' attitudes to classroom practices.

### 3.2.1. Linguistic and Cultural Mismatch

Schools are known to promote mainstream, middle-class values and language. This also affects groups, such as working class students (Romaine, 1994). Therefore, the students with the best prerequisites for success in education are teachers' children, since the children will encounter the same values both at home and in school. For other children, for instance minority students, the educational context might appear to be foreign (Wille, 2009), both in cultural terms, but not at least in terms of a linguistic mismatch.

With this knowledge in mind, it is important to create an environment where all ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds can feel included and respected. Therefore, it is concerning that when analysing textbooks and other materials used in Norwegian schools, researchers have found that they have stereotypical representations of immigrants, and often establish an 'us-and-them'-mentality. In the English subject, there is a clear promotion of American and British English and American and British culture, while English as a world language and other 'Englishes' are rarely dealt with (Laugerud, Askeland, & Aamotsbakken,

2014). This gives a narrow representation of English, and does not contribute to include those with a background from cultures where other ‘Englishes’ are present. Moreover, researchers have found that teachers do *not* use other resources in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms than in more homogenous classrooms (Laugerud et al., 2014). This stands in clear contrast to the Education Act’s clear ambition of differentiated learning and does not contribute to an environment where all linguistic minorities feel included and respected. Rather, it seems that minority students who do not easily adapt to the dominant classroom practice are excluded. Instead, research has shown that a disproportional large percentage of minority students receive special education (Laugerud et al., 2014, p. 10).

### 3.2.2. Quality of Education

A key component to identity affirmation is legitimation, for instance through appropriate legislation, which grants linguistic diversity a “visible and valued place in schools” (de Jong, 2011, p. 175). If this is not done, the linguistic diversity will be invisible and inaudible in the EFL classrooms.

In the previous section, it was pointed out how the actions of the teacher can influence the outcomes for minority students. However, the education the minority students are provided with is also heavily influenced by a number of levels of policy making. International policy makers, such as the European Council, are at the highest level of policy making, influencing the policies developed in the individual countries. The European Council has developed The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), which influences language policies across Europe. It sets out to promote what is called ‘plurilingualism’. By this term the Council of Europe mean that a student, who has learned a number of languages

[d]oes not keep the languages and cultures in strictly separate mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4).

The aim is for the learners to build up a common linguistic proficiency, not much unlike what Cummins describes in his CUP hypothesis (Cummins, 1984). This provides language teachers with a great opportunity to explore and exploit the total linguistic repertoire of minority students. The Common European Framework goes on to state that this perspective radically changes the aim of language teaching:

It [language education] is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ‘ideal speaker’ as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5).

Nonetheless, these ideals are a long way from being implemented in the national curricula, and from there, to be implemented in the classrooms. In the case of Norway, the Norwegian Education Act (Opplæringslova) § 2-8, which deals with the education of language minority students, guarantees the right to adapted training in basic Norwegian until their proficiency in Norwegian has reached a level where they can follow the ordinary teaching. This law also guarantees the students’ L1 teaching and bilingual technical training “if necessary” (Lovdata, 2014). On one hand, the curriculum is based on the research that shows that high competence in the student’s L1 is a supporting factor when acquiring Norwegian. For instance, the curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities states the following:

The main goal of the teaching is to strengthen pupils’ qualifications for gaining a command of the Norwegian language [...] (Curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities, p. 1)

On the other hand, it is clear that the L1 teaching is only thought to endorse the acquisition of Norwegian. The idea of a common underlying proficiency seems to be absent, and the plan does not directly encourage a proficient type of bilingualism:

It follows from the premise for mother tongue teaching that the curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities is a transitional plan, one that shall be used only until pupils are able to follow the teaching in accordance with the regular curriculum in Norwegian (Curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities, p. 1).

As one can note that the Norwegian Education Act only partly applies the research on bilingualism, and the importance of a proficient L1, it is no wonder that this also influences the practice in Norwegian schools: The Norwegian Education Act takes the students’ lack of Norwegian-ness as a point of departure, when putting forward the policies concerning minority languages (Laugerud et al., 2014). This view of seeing bilingualism as a handicap, not a resource, has led to a clear overrepresentation of minority student in special education (Laugerud et al., 2014).

However, the national curriculum is not only promoting *one* view of bilingualism. In fact, the national curriculum for the English subject, does to a certain extent recognise the Council of Europe’s aim for plurilingualism, inasmuch that it states that the students should see

“relationships between English, one’s native language and other languages” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012). Furthermore, the students are expected to “evaluate their own language usage and learning needs and to select suitable strategies and working methods” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012). This invites teachers to work with learning strategies that involve more than just Norwegian and English. The curriculum also aims to develop a social sensitivity to “general politeness and awareness of social norms in different situations,” as well as “knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people.” This clearly invites the teachers to explore the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students, without applying a stereotypical “Norwegian” culture as the single reference to compare British or American culture with.

The current policies towards minority languages can be traced back to the 1990s. The curriculum of 1987 viewed functional bilingualism as valuable in itself. However, changes in the following years, removed bilingualism as an aim for the education of minority students. In the current curriculum from 2006, the Knowledge Promotion, minority languages have only an instrumental value, in so far that they promote the learning of Norwegian (Selj & Ryen, 2008). If we consider research on additive and subtractive bilingualism (Romaine, 1989), the aims of Norwegian national curriculum and the Norwegian Education Act might lead to a subtractive bilingualism, as long as the L1 is replaced with Norwegian. According to Romaine, such a policy is a submersion policy, which results in assimilation and subtractive bilingualism (1994).

Romaine claims that policies, such as those presented above, might lead to an inferior education for minority students, compared to what majority students receive (Romaine, 1994). Minority students have other needs, particularly in the EFL classroom, and therefore the curriculum also requires the teachers to provide adapted instruction for each and every student. The education the students in the end receive is closely connected to the national policy towards minority languages. In order to confront the challenges facing school authorities as the classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, a number of different policies have been applied. However,

The traditional policy, either implicitly assumed or explicitly stated, which most nations have pursued with regard to various minority groups who speak a different language, has been eradication of the native language/culture and assimilation into the majority one (Peal & Lambert in Romaine, 1989, p. 104).

This also regards policies of providing L1 teaching to bilingual minority students. Although, at first glance, teaching of L1 seems to promote cultural pluralism and secure minority language rights, so-called L1 teaching programmes are often aiming at improving the students' abilities in majority language, and ease the acquisition of this language. According to Romaine, such policies will, in fact, not lead to an additive bilingualism. On the contrary, when L1 teaching is provided as a transitional programme, this will lead to subtractive bilingualism, submersion and assimilation of the minority students into the majority culture (Romaine, 1989, p. 217). As we will see, this is also the current policy within Norwegian education.

### 3.2.3. Attitudes towards Minority Languages

Many linguists now conclude [...] that negative attitudes towards non-standard speech and bilingualism are more decisive in determining school outcomes than actual linguistic differences themselves (Romaine, 1994, p. 194).

Traditional minority languages are on the rise in Europe, with an increasing support from national states and increasing number of students learning these languages, such as Welsh in Wales, Basque in Basque Country, and Sardinian in Sardinia. On the other hand, the new minority languages struggle to survive. As Cenoz states about the situation in the UK in year 2000:

Community languages do not enjoy much prestige among British mainstream society, and any bilingualism in these languages plus English tends to be taken for granted rather than seen as something to which special merit might be attached (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000).

The social changes following the year 2000, with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 2001, the rise of radical Islam and an increasing scepticism towards immigration in general, cannot have contributed positively towards the attitudes concerning this type of bilingualism.

Research has shown that positive attitudes towards one's L1 have an additive effect on the acquisition of new languages (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000, p. 5). The opposite may be the case for bilingual immigrant students, who are not taught to appreciate their own language and culture, they are instead made to feel ashamed of their parents and their origin (Brown, 2007, p. 118). For them, speaking, for example, Arabic in the Norway is more likely to have negative associations, rather than positive. As a result, parents might be encouraged to speak only the majority language at home and the students might avoid speaking their L1. Thus, the result



will be a limited bilingualism, which, according to the threshold hypothesis, will have negative consequences when acquiring an L3 (Cummins, 1984).

This view can also be supported by research conducted on immigrant children in North America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then, “children were often punished for speaking their first language in school and were made to feel ashamed of their own language and cultural background” (Cummins, 1984, p. 33). Thus, when these children performed poorly at school it was mistakenly interpreted as a result of confusion between the two languages. Based on what we know today, we understand that the immigrant students’ poor academic results were an expression of only a limited developed bilingualism, which according to Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas will have a negative cognitive effect (in Cummins, 1984).

Furthermore, these students might be faced with what researcher Robert Phillipson calls linguicism. Linguicism is a construct used to describe discrimination against a person based on its language, in the same way as sexism refers to discrimination based on gender and racism refers to discrimination based on race (Phillipson, 1992). In fact, researchers have pointed out that a linguistic hierarchy exists in Norway, where the so-called ‘new minority languages’ have the least prestige and the weakest protection according to Norwegian law. This has led some researchers to point out that speakers of minority languages face discrimination in Norwegian schools (Laugerud et al., 2014), or in Phillipson’s term, linguicism. If Norwegian is the only language of reference in the EFL classroom, one could claim that this legitimises the stigmatisation of minority languages in the society and educational sector at large, if not discriminatory in itself.

In contexts where students speak a range of different languages with limited numbers of each, which is often the case in many Norwegian classrooms, this can be a true challenge (de Jong, 2011). But even in these contexts, much can be done to improve the situation for bilingual minority students.

#### **3.2.4. Teacher cognition**

Research on teacher cognition investigates teachers’ thoughts, knowledge and beliefs (Borg, 2009). Teacher cognition also includes teachers’ attitudes towards minority students. It is therefore important to consider the research in this field, in order to better understand how teachers think and how this affects their practices in the classroom.

Although teacher cognition is a fairly recent field of research, Phipps and Borg summarize the most important findings in an article from 2009. They state that the teachers' cognition is already established before they commence their teacher education. It is influenced from previous experiences as learners. Thus, their already established cognition functions as a filter through which they interpret new information, and it can therefore be more important for their classroom practices than their teacher education (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Hence, the attitudes minority students perceive among their teachers are not necessarily attitudes these teachers have acquired through their teacher education. However, Phipps and Borg also state that teachers' cognition is not always visible in their classroom practices, and that their cognition may be influenced by practice, in the same way as practice is influenced by cognition (2009). Thus, one understands that teacher cognition can change and develop over time.

In any given society, different groups have various attitudes towards each other. Attitudes towards a group, such as immigrants, relate to attitudes towards the immigrants' languages, which in turn relates to attitudes towards the individual speakers of those languages (Appel & Muysken, 1987). This close link between attitudes towards language and attitudes towards speakers is also expressed precisely by de Jong: "The status of speakers and hence the status of the language they use play a central role in decisions we make about language and language use in schools" (de Jong, 2011, p. 45). This also relates to teachers.

### **3.3. Critical Perspectives on the Foreign Language Classroom**

Language is not only a means for communication of messages. Groups and individuals also distinguish themselves from others through the use of language, they convey cultural norms and values, and emphasize group feelings and group belonging through language (Canagarajah, 1999). Thus, what language carries in addition to linguistic meaning is also social meaning. This, in turn, means that language users will be evaluated according to the status of and attitudes towards their language(s). For bilingual students, one of their languages will be a minority language, which in most cases mean that they are the weaker part in an unequal status relationship - they belong to a non-dominant group, which is depending upon the majority to acknowledge their rights and requirements. An important aspect of the critical perspective on language learning is to make the students aware of these processes.

### 3.3.1. Critical Pedagogy and Foreign Language Learning

The Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, published *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968. In this book, Freire presents his understanding of the reasons behind the conditions of the impoverished. He saw it as a result of the whole economic, social and political domination over the suppressed (Freire, 1997). Freire's ideas laid the foundation for the critical pedagogy movement, which stresses the critical assessment of society, education and culture, and investigates the deeper meaning behind the “causes, social context, ideology and personal consequences” of different events, experiences and discourses (Freire, 1997).

There are three aspects of language teaching that insights from the field of critical pedagogy contributes to (Shor, 1992, p. 129). First of all, it makes it clear that both language learning and language teaching are political processes, and must be viewed as such by the teacher and the students. It is political because “the dominant social arrangement” is passing down its values to the schools, which again passes these ideas on to the students. It is therefore necessary to raise awareness among teachers and students about where the curriculum comes from and how this system can be challenged. By showing the students that nothing is fixed, including the educational system, and engaging them in looking at society, culture and educational system with critical eyes, the students can also increase their self-image and help them affirm their own cultural identity (Correa, 2011). Sadeghi claims that:

They [SLA theorists] often fail to link language with local socio-cultural, political and linguistic environment and neglect student's needs, objectives and interest. They are often concerned with the what (grammatical and communicative competence) and how (methodology) of teaching, rather than the “why” and “who” of instruction (Sadeghi, 2008).

She goes on to quote Canagarajah who says that:

Methods are not value-free instruments, but cultural and ideological constructs with politico-economic consequences. There is no ‘apolitical neutrality of English’, therefore it is unwise to overlook the issues of power and social inequality that lie behind English teaching and are manifested frequently in the forms of sexism, classism, and racism in classrooms (Sadeghi, 2008, p. 276).

Secondly, critical pedagogy provides the tools students need to confront linguistic discrimination. Furthermore, Correa claims that one can use critical thinking to “understand how powerful language and linguistic choices can be in their [the students'] lives and how they have shaped their community and ethnic identity through history” (Sadeghi, 2008, p.

277). It is the teachers' duty to value and promote everyone's cultural and linguistic background in the classroom.

Thirdly, critical pedagogy aims to empower students. It is a core principle within critical pedagogy that the "students must be able to participate and contribute in the discussion regardless of their second language (L2) abilities and at the same time reject the traditional transmission-oriented and behaviourist model of learning" (Correa, 2011, p. 311). In practice, this means that students learn what they find most meaningful, and the teacher plays the role of a mediator and facilitator creating an additive context for language acquisition. This approach will make the teaching and the learning much more relevant for the students (Correa, 2011, p. 311).

In the case of minority students, it is important that they become aware of the fact that the policies, practices, and attitudes they are facing as a linguistic minority in the EFL classroom are results of political decisions and structures within the educational sector. Through such a raised awareness, the students are enabled to confront potential discrimination, lack of equality, or limited possibilities. Through raised awareness and confrontation, the students may take ownership over their own language learning. In practice, a critical EFL classroom will enable bilingual students to take advantage of their background languages in the learning of an L3, by encouraging and value the use of the their total language proficiency. This can be achieved through *critical language awareness*.

### **3.3.2. Critical Language Awareness and Foreign Language Learning**

The basis of critical language awareness (CLA) is that language use is a social practice, which establishes and maintains power relations in society (Fairclough, 2010). In a school context, the aim of CLA is to empower students to tackle linguistic domination and manipulation, so that they may become agents in their own learning process. A fundamental idea behind CLA is this:

If problems of language and power are to be seriously tackled, they will be tackled by [...] the people who are subject to linguistic forms of domination and manipulation (Fairclough, 2010, p. 533).

This means that the students themselves are to be empowered to face and handle possible oppression, for instance through a critical evaluation of the language and discourses they are exposed to.

The CLA researcher Fairclough has presented three characteristics of critical discourse analysis: First, it is a systematic, transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process. Second, it is more than a commentary to the text; instead it constitutes a systematic analysis of text. Third, it is also normative: It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 10-11). Hence, the CLA represents a critique of wrongs in society or in the educational sector and provides answers to how these wrongs can be corrected. These wrongs are defined by certain normative values and views of how society or the educational system ought to be (Fairclough, 2010). In the case of this dissertation, the educational system ought to provide minority students with equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom, measured through the equality in results with the majority students. Since statistics indicate that this might not be the reality, this dissertation should seek to critically investigate what the conditions are for minority students in the EFL classroom.

For the EFL classroom, Fairclough does not believe it is enough only to teach ‘correct language’ without explaining why such a language is considered to be ‘correct’. He therefore presents a model of language teaching where both purposeful discourse and language awareness are constantly present, and where the teacher makes clear links between language learning and critical perspectives on learning. When students are provided with critical perspectives of what they learn, the students are empowered to make choices in their use of the language (Fairclough, 2010). For instance, the students will be presented with one way of expressing politeness. Yet, instead of claiming that this is the only way of expressing politeness, the teacher will explain the cultural or political connotation this expression has and go on to give alternative examples of expressing politeness. Hence, the students can decide for themselves whether or not they want to follow the given norms within the language. This raises the students’ CLA and enables them to conduct critical discourse analyses.

### **3.3.3. Power Structures in the Classroom**

Minority students are dependent on appropriate policies and teachers in order to be included and receive an appropriate education (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015). Policies strongly affect teachers’ practices in the classroom, and therefore also the minority students – and their

situation in the classroom. Thus, it is necessary to describe the role of the teacher in the policy hierarchy.

The reason why the decisions educators make are so vital for minority students is twofold: First, due to the fundamental difference in power and status between the teacher and the student, where practically all power rests with the educator. Second, because these decisions are never neutral or apolitical, but are based on the teacher's values, beliefs, and convictions about linguistic diversity (de Jong, 2011, p. 12): "As educators, all decisions we make, no matter how neutral they may seem, have an impact on the lives and experiences of our students" (Nieto, 2002, p. 43).

The teacher's response to a linguistically diverse classroom is therefore fundamental for whether or not the EFL classroom will be an additive or subtractive context for the minority student. The teacher can approach this issue in three ways: The teacher can choose to

- a) Encourage linguistic diversity,
- b) Tolerate linguistic diversity, or
- c) Prohibit linguistic diversity (de Jong, 2011, p. 13).

Although the teacher is the individual at the frontline, with authority over the educational context for minority students, the teacher is also obligated to teach according to the curriculum, and other binding policy documents. The ultimate authority therefore rests here. However, the response of the teacher to the policy documents will in the end be the decisive factor.

The decisions the teacher makes may seem purely based on pedagogical and professional grounds. However, these are not neutral motives. As mentioned earlier, teachers implement already adopted policies. Through their practice, teachers define which languages are valued and which ones are disvalued, and through this implement policies for the particular classroom (Pennycook, 2001). Pennycook states that "when we allow or disallow the use of one language or another in our classrooms (...) we are making language policy" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 215). The role of the teacher is therefore crucial:

Educational practices are shaped by personal beliefs and ideologies but do not occur in isolation from broader communal and societal notions about language in society (de Jong, 2011, p. 13)

Another important point is teachers' discourse when discussing issues related to linguistic diversity; through their discourse, they also underline which languages are valued and which are devalued: If teachers state that some families do not speak Norwegian or have deficient abilities in Norwegian, etc., one is only focusing on what these families or students do not have, instead of highlighting the languages they in fact possess and uses. Through this, they also communicate that Norwegian is valued, while the L1 is disvalued (de Jong, 2011). Some have claimed that this "contributes to the reproduction of the powerless status of the parents at the same time as it allows the host country to maintain control over the migrants' destiny" (Skutnabb-Kangas in Romaine, 1994, p. 228).

#### **3.3.4. Equality and Inclusion**

Norway has had a public school system that has included all children, since 1889. Although this means that minority students have been officially included in the Norwegian school system for more than 125 years, this does not mean that they have in practice been included (Hilt & Bøyum, 2015). Moreover, the Norwegian school system strives for equality of all students. The Norwegian Education Act states that "the instruction shall be adapted to the abilities and prerequisites of the individual student" (Opplæringslova, 2015), and this is also confirmed in the current curriculum (LK06, 2013). Equality and inclusion can therefore be said to be core values for the Norwegian, as well as other Scandinavian school systems.

Nonetheless, recent research has shown that minority students are excluded from the "equality" of Norwegian and Swedish schools (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015; Hilt & Bøyum, 2015; Möller, 2010). They experience that the social and cultural capital they have is irrelevant in their current school context, and that they are not sufficiently "Norwegian" or "Swedish". One student expresses her frustration in this way:

When I'm in Europe, I'm from Sweden. But when I'm in Sweden, I'm Kurdish [...] Like; with this face I can't say 'I'm Swedish' without 'I'm Kurdish'. If I had like blond hair, maybe I could be Swedish [My own translation] (Möller, 2010, p. 90).

The issue is not the student's lack of social or cultural capital; instead the exclusion is based upon her foreign appearance, in her own experience. There seem to exist a standard which minorities are measured up against (Dahlstedt, 2009), and it seems to be extremely difficult to

adapt to this standard, without complete assimilation (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015). Chinga-Ramirez argues, based on her study of minority students in Norwegian schools, that this is due to the Norwegian ideal of *equality as sameness*, which is linked to Norwegian ethnicity and origin (2015):

Both traditions in Norwegian politics, the legacy of equality in the construction of the society and the ideal of equality as a basis for the welfare state, are Norwegian cultural assertions that may collide with the aim for equality for all [My own translation] (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015, p. 219).

In a Norwegian context, this exclusion becomes clear in the Norwegian Education Act, where it is stated that the “instruction shall be founded on fundamental values in Christian and Humanist heritage and tradition” (Opplæringslova, 2015), which specifically promotes Christian and Humanist values, and excludes Muslim, Hindu, or other faith tradition’s values and traditions from the public school. This view of equality as sameness, has prevented the promotion of multicultural pedagogy and established Norwegian schools as “undifferentiated fellowships, according to Engen (2014). In this context, the minority students are expected to take care of themselves (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015).

When it comes to language, there seem to be a double communication. On one hand, there is a wish to recognize the minority students’ L1 in the English curriculum, when it states that the students should make use of their mother tongue in the language learning. However, Norwegian is the dominant language of instruction, and other languages are in practice not considered to be relevant in the school context. The Swedish researcher Möller, describes the situation for minority students in Sweden in this way:

Multilingualism can be seen as a *no win* situation for the students. They lose if they chose to affirm their mother tongue, which can be interpreted as if ‘they’ are opposing integration. But if students try to embrace the hegemonic culture and language, it can be interpreted as of they distance themselves from their home culture and identity, and thus diverge from the dominant discourse about “the good diversity” [My own translation] (Möller, 2010, p. 101).

### 3.4. Summary

As shown in this chapter, bilingual students could be expected to have a positive disposition for language learning (Cenoz, 2013; Jessner, 2008). Nonetheless, research and statistics from Scandinavia and elsewhere have repeatedly revealed that minority students perform below average in English. In Norway, the sparse research on this phenomenon has so far been concerned with the teachers and their perspectives on this issue (Ness, 2008; Šurkalović,



2014). Therefore, I believe it is time to turn to the minority students themselves, and listen to their experiences from the EFL classroom.

Researchers have claimed that a linguistic hierarchy exists in Norway, where minority languages are at the bottom. Moreover, their legal protection is close to non-existent, which stands in stark contrast to the Education Act's ambition for differentiated instruction (Laugerud et al., 2014). If only one language is promoted, which may be the case for Norwegian as a reference language in the EFL classroom, one is legitimising the discrimination minority languages face in the society at large (Fairclough, 2010).

Hence, I argue that there is need for a critical approach to language teaching in Norwegian EFL classrooms, in order to empower and include minority students in the language learning and provide them with equality of opportunity. By listening to the experiences of minority students, one can develop a clearer image of the conditions they are under and possibly develop a positive practice for minority students in the EFL classroom.

## 4. Methodology

In this chapter, the considerations that have been taken when developing an appropriate research design will be presented. First, the methodological approach implemented will be outlined. Second, I will explain why this particular methodological approach was chosen, and third; describe some of the methodological and ethical challenges this project brought forth.

### 4.1. Research Design

The research question of this dissertation is: How do minority students experience equality of opportunity in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom? In order to answer this, three questions about the role of minority languages in the EFL classroom have been presented:

- a. How do minority students experience the *policies* concerning minority languages in the EFL classroom?
- b. What *practices* concerning minority languages do minority students experience in the EFL classroom?
- c. What *attitudes* towards minority languages do minority students perceive among their teachers?

In order to answer these key questions, I decided to take a phenomenological approach and conduct semi-structured interviews with minority students (Moustakas, 1994). The aim of phenomenology is to “increase the understanding of and insight into others’ lifeworlds” [my own translation] (Johannessen, Tufte, & Christoffersen, 2011, p. 83). The idea is that one has to understand the people, in order to understand the world, since it is people that create meaning of the world (Johannessen et al., 2011). Thus, the aim was to gain insight into the situation for minority students in the EFL classroom, by interviewing them and investigating their personal experiences.

In the following sections, the considerations made in the selection of participants, in approach to the interviews, and in the phenomenological analysis will be presented in separate sections.

#### 4.1.1. Selection of Research Participants

Due to this dissertation’s critical approach to classroom research, the main interest of this project was to describe the experiences of the students, not of the teachers. This rests on an

assumption of the minority students as a non-dominant group, which depends on the majority's acceptance and acknowledgment – a fundamentally unequal status relationship (de Jong, 2011). This has led some researchers to claim that minority students face discrimination in Norwegian schools (Laugerud et al., 2014). So far, most research on minority students in the EFL classroom has approached this issue from a teacher perspective (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016; Ness, 2008; Šurkalović, 2014). Hence, there is a need for research that considers this topic from a student perspective.

The aim was to have a diverse group of participants, both in term of gender, ethnic and linguistic background, as well as location in Norway. I therefore contacted three upper secondary schools in three different Norwegian cities, in order to invite participants with a minority background to the project. This was in order to secure the validity of the research, which I will come back to in the section *4.3. Methodological Challenges*.

I chose to interview students in upper secondary school since one can expect these students to have the longest experience with Norwegian education. Moreover, one can expect students at age 17-18 to be more aware of their own language learning and more sensitive to adequate or inadequate language policies, classroom practices and language attitudes, than what one can expect younger students to be.

The actual selection of participants was conducted by teachers at the upper secondary schools, based on three criteria provided by myself. The criteria were as follows:

- a. The student had to have a bilingual background.
- b. The student had to have a minority background, either as an immigrant her/himself or as a child of immigrants.
- c. The student had to have at least three years of experience in Norwegian schools.

These criteria were based on a need for students with first hand experience of being a bilingual minority student. For the student to have the sufficient experience, I found that the student should at least have spent three years in Norwegian education.

Based on these criteria, the teachers found 12 students that were willing to participate in the research project, six girls and six boys. One student had to withdraw from the project, and a second participant was excluded from the analysis, since the participant's lack of Norwegian and English skills impeded communication and therefore the interview. Thus, I ended up with

ten participants: Six girls and four boys, with backgrounds from four continents. Their linguistic backgrounds are presented below in Table 4:

LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	
AFRICAN LANGUAGES: Primarily Kinyarwanda and Tigrinya*	2 participants
ASIAN LANGUAGES: Primarily Arabic, Farsi, and Vietnamese*	3 participants
EUROPEAN LANGUAGES: Primarily Bulgarian, Chechen, Croatian, Latvian*	4 participants
EUROPEAN LANGUAGE (LATIN-AMERICA): Primarily Spanish*	1 participant

**Table 4: Linguistic distribution of participants**

\*) The term *Primarily* refers to their L1. However, many of the participants spoke more than one language already before they arrived in Norway.

**4.1.2. Interviews**

Semi-structured interview was considered to be the most appropriate method in order to answer the research question. Interviews are the most commonly used method for collecting qualitative data. It is a method easily applicable anywhere and invites for detailed, nuanced and complex descriptions on the subjects’ part (Repstad, 2014). In the case of this dissertation, where the aim was to collect information on the experienced policies, practices, and perceived attitudes of minority students in the EFL classroom, qualitative interview was thus a suitable method. Not only because it invites detailed and nuanced descriptions, but also because the study deals with complex, social phenomena, which hardly can be expressed in a

questionnaire. Any interview situation is also a social interaction, therefore, one can ask the subject to elaborate and expand her answers, to amplify and add more detail (Johannessen et al., 2011).

The basis for a semi-structured interview is the interview guide. Although semi-structured interviews are supposed to have a structure, most practical guides to qualitative interviews stresses the importance of flexible interview guides (Johannessen et al., 2011; Repstad, 2014). Thus, the first step is to identify the core topics for the interview established in the research question and then find the relevant subtopics, to develop the concrete questions based on this. See the appendix to see my complete interview guide.

The interviews were all conducted in private rooms at the different schools. It was important that we were not distracted or disturbed during the interview, so that the students would feel comfortable to share their experiences, without fear of being overheard or interrupted. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The transcribed interviews were then the object of a phenomenological analysis.

#### **4.1.3. Analysis**

A key feature of phenomenological research, is the description of the participants' *Lebenswelt*; their lifeworlds. The personal interpretation of one's condition can form "the base for more abstract, scientific theories about the social world" [my own translation] (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 47). In the case of equality of opportunity for minority students, it is important to reveal the minority students' subjective understand of their own situation and what structures affect their perception of their own situation, in order to understand the context of the EFL classroom for minority students.

The concrete method of analysis was based on the Constant Comparative Method of Analysis, developed by Glasner and Strauss (Postholm, 2010). It has its background from grounded theory; however, it has also been applied in phenomenological studies. In this dissertation, a modified version of this model, presented by Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122), has been used.

In this model, the first step is to "obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon", then, based on a verbatim transcript:

- a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.

- b. Record all relevant statements.
- c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement.
- d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
- e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into *a description of the textures of the experience*. Include verbatim examples.

Based on the individual textual-structural descriptions of all participants' experiences, a representation of the group of participants is constructed. In this, all the individual descriptions are incorporated into one "universal description". In addition, the researcher is also to describe the structures and meanings of her experiences (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122): "The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide comprehensive descriptions of it" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

Following is an excerpt from one transcribed interview:

Q: Okay, so what I'm investigating is English teaching. So, we're going to talk about the English teaching you have received. And my first question is, how do you like English as a subject?

A: That's my favourite subject.

Q: Why is that?

A: It's because... When you're from my country, it's quite hard to come... We took plane, for example. So it was hard... Like for my mum without English, she doesn't know English, right? So, she wouldn't talk to them, she wouldn't ask them if she needed help. So, English helped me a lot. Like, I asked a lot, yeah. It just helped me in different ways. So, yeah...

Q: Okay, and when you consider all the different languages you know, how important is English compared to the other languages?

A: I think it would be the first. It's the most important.

After conducting and transcribing all the interviews, the next phase was to detect all statements relevant to the research question and cluster the invariant statements. Relevant statements were statements considered to address the research question or any of the sub-questions. The relevant statements were categorized into three themes: Policies, practices and attitudes. This was done in a table, as illustrated below. The final phase consisted in summarizing the different statements within the three themes, into an overarching description of the participants' experiences of policies, practices and attitudes.

Policies:	Practices:	Attitudes:
<i>Jeg føler jeg har fått det samme [som de enspråklige elevene].</i>	<i>Nei [ingen lærer har oppfordret meg til å bruke språket for å lære engelsk]. Det er ingen lærer som vet så mye om språket der, heller</i>	<i>Det er bare positivt</i>
<i>Ja, det var bare første til femte, da. [morsmålsopplæring].</i>	<i>Der er ingen ordbok fra kinyarwand til engelsk som jeg har sett.</i>	<i>De satte ikke pris på det, de så ikke på det som en verdi at her har vi ei som kan mange språk og det er bra.</i>

Figure 5: Example of categorization of relevant statements.

## 4.2. Theoretical Framework

Any research design or methodology is based upon a theoretical framework, including ontology and epistemology. In this section, the underlying assumptions that precondition qualitative research will be presented, in order to better understand the methodological choices presented earlier in this chapter.

As already mentioned, a qualitative approach was chosen to investigate the research question.

Qualitative research approaches rest on some fundamental philosophical assumptions.

Therefore, some theorists talk about a *qualitative paradigm*, rather than qualitative theory.

Denzin and Lincoln states:

We speak of the qualitative paradigm on contrast to the quantitative or positivistic paradigm because these paradigms rest squarely on clearly identifiable ‘overarching philosophical systems denoting particular ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies’: ways of being, ways of seeing, ways of doing (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 230).

Among the fundamental assumptions that precondition qualitative research, is firstly the ontological perception that there exist several realities; the reality is too complex and constantly changing to be explained in one overarching theory or model. Secondly, the epistemological notion that the reality is constructed between the researcher and the research participant poses another fundamental assumption behind qualitative research. Thus, the researcher has great interest in the subjects’ perspectives, experiences and understandings. Thirdly, a fundamental assumption behind qualitative research is the fact that all research is subjective. Therefore, the researcher has to be particularly aware of her/his own assumptions

based on prior experience, knowledge and theoretical framework, as well as background and political and religious views (Nilssen, 2012).

### **4.3. Methodological Challenges**

In the process of preparing a research project, there are some important challenges of which one must be aware. Is the study reliable and valid? And does the study present any ethical challenges? Some researchers have claimed that one should not assess qualitative research based on traditional terms, such as reliability and validity (Johannessen et al., 2011).

However, for the purpose of assessing the study's quality, I have decided to use these terms. Therefore, this section considers the quality of the study, based on reliability and validity, in addition to consider some ethical challenges.

#### **4.3.1. Reliability**

Reliability is measured by assessing the collected data, the research design, and how this design has been applied (Johannessen et al., 2011). The research design in this dissertation is based on semi-structured interviews, where the conversation is in focus, and the aim is to produce a phenomenological description of the participants' educational history in Norway. Since nobody can share the exact same background as the researcher and recreate the precise same context for the interviews, the research is highly context dependent, and the analysis of the data depends heavily on the background and experiences of the researcher (Johannessen et al., 2011). As a result, it is a true challenge to assess the reliability of such a research design.

Nevertheless, it is important to demonstrate that the research project is conducted in a scientifically reliable manner. In this dissertation, this was done through transparency in terms of methodological choices and in terms of the context in which the research has taken place (Johannessen et al., 2011). In order to further secure this dissertation's reliability, an interview guide was prepared in advance of the interviews and this can be found in the appendix. Moreover, all students were provided with the same information about the purpose of the research projects through a letter of consent, also available in the appendix. Finally, all interviews were conducted under the same conditions: in a classroom at the school the informant attends, with no others present, except the researcher.



### 4.3.2. Validity

To be able to decide on the research's validity, the research method has to be reliable. A study is valid when one can draw accurate conclusions to the research questions based on the obtained data (Johannessen et al., 2011). When it comes to qualitative research, it has a limitation, as it is often heavily dependent on the context in which the research takes place. Therefore, it can often be challenging to draw definite conclusions, which can be applied to all contexts and situations. In this dissertation, some measures were taken to increase the study's validity. This, however, does not mean that this dissertation claims to describe *all* minority students' experiences in *all* EFL classrooms in Norway. Nonetheless, due to the described measures, this dissertation presents some features relevant to the teaching of EFL to minority students in a Norwegian context.

The measures that were taken in order for the study not to become too local and particular, were first, that participant students were selected from three different upper secondary schools, in three different Norwegian cities. Second, the participants represented a variety of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds: European, American, African and Asian. Third, the participants represented both genders. Fourth, the participants had different family histories, where some had been born abroad and later immigrated to Norway, while others had been born in Norway. Due to this diversity, the information obtained through interviews with these participants must be said to be valid for more contexts and situation than their own particular contexts and situations (Repstad, 2014).

### 4.3.3. Ethical Challenges

The research project involved sensitive information about the participants' ethnic and linguistic background, family history and experiences in Norwegian classrooms. Some participants might therefore have experienced some of the questions as very personal. Hence, it was important that the participants knew exactly in advance what the project was about, what would happen to the information they would give out and for what purpose the project was conducted. All participants received a letter of consent, which included all of this information. The participants that were under 18 had to be approved by their parents in order to be interviewed. To secure that everything was done according to the regulations in Norway, an application of approval of the research project was sent to Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD).

A challenge, which I had not foreseen before the first interviews were conducted, was the impact my own ethnicity would play in the conducting of the interviews. Therefore, I could not understand at first the discrepancy in the students' stories about their languages being invisible and inaudible, and their supposed satisfaction with this practice. Not before I discussed this discrepancy in the students' stories with associate professor Chinga-Ramirez, did I understand that these students might have seen me as a representative of the Norwegian, monolingual majority, and as a teacher I might be considered to represent the Norwegian education system. Therefore, it is likely that many of the students interviewed in this dissertation did not see me as an ally, but as a representative of the system under which they have experienced discrimination and limited opportunities. This might also be a reason why it seemed to be important for many of the participants to express a "loyalty" to Norwegian as language, a lack of interest in their L1, and to express satisfaction with the way the teaching they have received in Norwegian schools.

Although I did not ask any of the participants about their perception of me, I did, in fact, notice an urge to prove their 'Norwegian-ness' on the students' part. Furthermore, when I commenced the analysis of the interviews, this discrepancy between the reality they described and their feelings in connection to it, convinced me that the participants, indeed, saw me as a representation of the monolingual, Norwegian majority. This has clearly impacted how they responded to the questions, and must be considered in the analysis and discussion of the data.

#### **4.4. Summary**

Qualitative research rests on the assumption that one has to understand people in order to understand the world because it is people that create meaning of the world. It also rejects the idea of complete objectivity and neutral research (Johannessen et al., 2011). All research takes place in an ideological and political context, which inevitably will impact the researcher and her research (Fairclough, 2010). Therefore, qualitative research and phenomenology is at its core concerned with the particular and experiences of the individual. Thus, the findings produced through such research will always depend on the context in which the research takes place, and the background and experiences of the researcher (Repstad, 2014).

In a qualitative paradigm, this particularity does not, in fact, undermine the quality of the research. Instead, the particular can contribute to greater understanding of the general, without claiming validity in all situations and contexts. This requires that the researcher is aware of

the challenges which are present in a qualitative research design, and that the researcher strive for a transparency in terms of the methods and context of the research project (Johannessen et al., 2011).

## 5. Data and Analysis

In this chapter the findings from the interviews will be presented. The student biographies represent an essential source of information to describe the socio-educational context for minority students in the EFL classroom. Hence, they provide valuable knowledge about the realities of the diverse EFL classrooms we have in Norway. First, the overall findings from the interviews will be presented, with the topics policies, practices, and attitudes, presented in separate sections. Following the overall findings, the student biographies for the individual participants will be presented, in order to provide insight into their diverse experiences related to policies, practices and attitudes, how these factors have influenced their opportunities, as well as to provide personal examples of the findings previously presented.

### 5.1. Overall findings

The findings presented in the following sections are based on a phenomenological analysis of the interviews. Thus, the aim has been twofold: First, to describe the situation under which the bilingual minority students have received their EFL learning, and second, to point out challenging aspects in this socioeducational context for minority students.

From the interviews with the minority students, there are three main findings. First, the students' bilingual background has not received much attention in the EFL classroom. Rather, their complex linguistic backgrounds have often seemed to be invisible to the teacher; hence, no differentiations have been made to exploit the potential that their backgrounds represent. Second, there seem to have been a strong sentiment of equality dominating the EFL classrooms, where the students expressed that they had been treated equally with those who have a monolingual background. Third, there was a great variety in the degree of metalinguistic awareness among the students. Although all of the participants had a bilingual background, not all had yet become aware of the advantages associated with bilingualism in the learning of a new language. In the next sections, I will present how these findings are expressed through policies, practices, and attitudes.

#### 5.1.1. Policies

When investigating policies, the aim is to describe how policies towards minority languages affect minority students' opportunities in the EFL classroom. It could not be expected that the students had comprehensive knowledge about the policies regulating the EFL classroom.

Thus, it was necessary to interpret their descriptions of the instruction they had received, in order to understand to what degree the aims from the Norwegian Education Act, English curriculum, and Common European Framework reach the classrooms.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages promotes “plurilingualism,” where all the languages the student knows interact and constitute a common linguistic competence (Council of Europe, 2001). Moreover, the Norwegian curriculum for English states that the students should make use of their “native language” in the process of learning English (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012). When interviewing the minority students, I was interested in investigating whether these policies were noticeable to the students in the EFL classroom and how these policies affected their opportunities.

In general, the students could not report any attempts by their teachers to take into consideration their bilingualism in the English teaching. When asked about what role her L1 had had in the English teaching, Jeanette starts laughing before she answers: “There’s no teacher who knows much about my language.” Nor had she ever seen a dictionary for her L1 to English. Except for one student, nobody had experienced that their teachers had encouraged them to make use of their L1 or any other language in the learning of English: “They [the teachers] have never considered that I come from abroad, or where I come from,” says Fatima.

Nonetheless, some of the students do explain that they have used their L1 in the learning of English. For instance Yusuf, who used to translate from English to Arabic:

Arabic was the only language that I could sort of translate to from English. The only solution to be able to understand the word or the sentence was Arabic. It was the only solution to understand the message in English (Yusuf).

Marija explains that when she lived in Croatia for a while, she had to learn German. She then realized her advantage as a speaker of Norwegian, since the languages were so similar. She later applied the same strategy to English, after she saw that “some words are similar to Norwegian, while some words are similar to Croatian.” Thus, it seems that the students have found their own strategies to take advantage of their bilingualism in the EFL classroom, although the teachers seem to be unaware of the issue. Rather, the participants’ bilingual backgrounds seem to become irrelevant to the teachers and become a silent and invisible knowledge, which the teacher will never know anything about.

The curriculum also aims to develop cultural awareness. This is something the participants clearly show to have developed. The participants expressed positive attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity, and displayed a highly developed cultural awareness, as expressed by Hamid:

I'm very happy that I speak many languages, because you also get another way of thinking. It's not only a language; it's culture, history, literature. In Iran I had to learn everything I have learned in Norway, I had to learn literature and history. I'm very happy that I have that information, because now I can understand people from Iran, I can see how they think and when they do irrational things; I can understand them. You can't understand that, since you haven't lived in Iran, and if you see something strange, you can't understand it. And the same goes for Dari, and Norwegian as well. When I read, when I started with Norwegian, when I read comments on Norwegian websites, then you get to know people's way of thinking. You understand why they do what they do [...] When you know the literature and the history of Norway, you also understand people's actions (Hamid).

In contrast to this, the students could not report of any significant interest in their cultural background, and any attempts to exploit this within the context of the EFL classroom.

To summarize, it is difficult to identify the European Framework's aim for a development towards plurilingualism in the minority students' descriptions of the EFL classroom. Nor is it easy to see the curriculum's aim for involving the students' "native language" is met in the practices described by the research participants. Rather, the general impression is that the curriculum and the European Framework's aims for a multilingual language teaching is far from being implemented in most EFL classrooms.

### **5.1.2. Practices**

This dissertation discusses the EFL classroom from the perspective of minority students. Thus, it can be difficult to distinguish between the policies and the practices since these are so interconnected and influence each other. In this section, however, the aim is to describe what actually takes place in the classroom, not what the teacher thought when she planned the lesson. The policies, which regulate some of these practices, have been dealt with in the previous section, and the attitudes that influence the practices will be dealt with in the next section.

The students were asked if the English teaching had been differentiated to their needs as bilingual students. The responses were as follows: "No, not really. I think they've always seen me as a Norwegian. So they haven't differentiated any homework or anything to make it

easier for me” (Mai), “There hasn’t been much differentiation [...] I had the same criteria as the rest of the class” (Fatima), “Not really that much [...] everyone was in the same line, it wasn’t like: ‘oh, she knows five languages, maybe we should take it easy with her.’ It was just the same for everyone.” (Marija). The answers were always the same, the students had not experienced that the teachers had done anything to differentiate the teaching towards their bilingualism. Instead, all students had always been treated equally, without any differentiated instruction. According to the students, they had received the same instruction and been assessed according to the same criteria. This seems to express the dominant understanding of equality as sameness within Norwegian education.

Yusuf explains why he believes the teacher did not differentiate more: “The teacher has 30 students in one class, you know. So, you can’t just focus on one person. I don’t think the teacher would do that.” Hence, Yusuf sees the lack of attention to his bilingual background primarily as a question of time and resources for his teachers, not as a lack of interest.

Three students said that they thought the teachers did think about their bilingual background, but they could not give any examples of how this had been expressed in practices or in other ways been confirmed. In general, students’ background languages do not seem to receive much attention from the teachers. In Gabriel’s class, the majority of the students have a bilingual background. When asked how all these languages are integrated into the teaching, Gabriel replies, “We don’t talk much about other peoples’ languages.” Hamid says that the teachers “have never said anything to me [about being bilingual].” Thus, their linguistic backgrounds have become invisible.

Nonetheless, the students have taken their diverse linguistic backgrounds to use in the EFL classrooms on their own initiative. Some students explain that they have used English-L1 bilingual dictionaries; others have used other students who speak the same language, while some have had the help of their parents to learn English. Many of them have acquired an advanced metalinguistic awareness, and can see how useful a complex linguistic background can be:

So, I used my Norwegian language [to learn German], because I remembered that [Norwegian]. They didn’t speak Norwegian, but I did. And it was so much easier, for example “tie” [No: Slips/Ge: Schlips] was almost the same. So, it was much easier for me... That’s when I realized I could use it in English too.

I think it [learning languages] would've been much, much more difficult if I didn't know Farsi; if I only knew Norwegian or English. (Hamid).

Yes [it is helpful to know many languages]. For example, the English grammar is not the same as the Norwegian, but it's similar. I think it's really similar. For example definite and indefinite article are similar. (Petar).

Most of the time the teachers are unaware of their students' strategies, and the students do not tell their teachers about how they learn English. Nonetheless, there are exceptions. Inara explains that her teacher has expressed that it is positive that she speaks Latvian with a friend in her English class, in order to support each other. On the other hand, Petar reports that the minority students in his class are forbidden from using their L1 in class.

When the students who had experienced this invisibility were asked about how it felt, most students were very vague in their descriptions. "I think it's okay," was one response.

However, Fatima did not think it was "okay":

Well... You grow up with it, so I don't know exactly what to think. But if you think about it, it isn't right. But growing up with those teachers, I didn't think it was a big deal that I knew many languages. But when I think back, I think, 'Wow, I know many languages'.

However, Fatima did not think that it was the school's responsibility to preserve and develop minority students' L1. In her opinion, that is the families' responsibility.

The students do report some positive practices among their English teachers, in addition to the fact that the teacher sometimes provide the minority students with additional attention and support in class, there are also some teachers that use words or phrases from the students' L1s in the classroom. This is something the students have positive reactions towards, and they often smile when they think about their English teachers saying "yes" and "thank you" in their L1.

A couple of students also reported how important it had been for them that the teachers spoke only English in the EFL classroom, instead of Norwegian. They said that it was very confusing to learn English through the medium of Norwegian, when they had not yet learned enough Norwegian to understand what the teacher said. Then, it would be better to conduct the English lessons in English, and Norwegian lessons in Norwegian, without incorporating the different languages in the other subjects. Therefore, they explained that it had been very useful to get a teacher who only spoke English.



Two students, Inara and Petar, who both have Eastern European backgrounds and have lived in Norway for a limited period of time, said that they found the English instruction in Norway to be very different from home. They were not very satisfied with the focus on history and social issues in English speaking countries, while they were used to a heavy focus on language structures and language use. Moreover, Petar was not satisfied with the assessment practices in Norwegian schools. He would like to have more tests, rather than writing essays and holding presentations.

To summarize, most of the students do report that they are satisfied with the English teaching they have received and now receive in Norwegian schools. However, this is contrasted with their very limited experiences of a multilingual English instruction. The experiences the minority students I interviewed described depict an EFL classroom where equality is an important value, and equal treatment of monolingual and bilingual students seem to be the fully accepted norm across all three schools in the three cities included in this dissertation. Even more noteworthy is the fact that this also seems to be accepted by the minority students as well.

### **5.1.3. Attitudes**

When the students are asked about their teachers' attitudes towards bilingualism and minority languages, they often report that the teacher had no attitudes whatsoever or that they had positive attitudes. This could be expressed directly, by telling them that it is positive to know many languages, that all the languages the students know impress them the students know, or they use simple words or phrases from their L1 in the classroom. However, this seems not to be very common, although some students report this. They all seem to think it is positive when the teachers show interest in their linguistic background. Only one student reported that she had experienced racism and directly negative attitudes towards her linguistic background. She claimed that "[t]hey didn't appreciate it. They didn't see it as valuable that they had a girl that could speak many languages and that's good" (Fatima, 18). In addition, she also claimed that she had experienced that her background had affected the grades she received, and she had in some instances complained about this to the teachers.

To investigate what attitudes the minority students were faced with in the EFL classroom, there were two main sources of information. First, the students' direct response to the question, "What attitudes do your English teachers hold towards bilingualism and minority languages?" Second, one might also draw information about the attitudes they are faced with

in the EFL classroom from the attitudes they express themselves, since these attitudes do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they are developed in the intersection between home, school, friends, and society at large. It is therefore noteworthy that many of the students expressed negative attitudes towards their L1. The students were asked about what languages they in general valued the most. The result was this:

<i>What language is the most important to you?</i>	
<i>English</i>	7
<i>Norwegian</i>	1
<i>L1</i>	2

When the students were asked about which languages their parents valued the most, the result was this:

<i>What language is the most important to your parents?</i>	
<i>English</i>	1
<i>Norwegian</i>	2
<i>L1</i>	7

As one can see, the students value English greatly, while their parents value the L1 the most. One student said:

Everyone has a goal in his life, okay? And if you think about Arabic, can it help me reach my goals? So, if the answer is no, it doesn't help you, then you can simply throw it out, behind your back (Yusuf).

Hence, the question is where these quite negative attitudes towards their L1 come from. As already mentioned, these attitudes are shaped by their surroundings. According to their own accounts, their parents do not share the same attitudes. Therefore, these attitudes must come from somewhere else: From friends, teachers or society at large. They might come from

friends, since the students who use their L1 more with friends are also those who report that their L1 is important to them.

There seems to be a general understanding of their L1 as useless in the EFL classroom. A couple of students reported that they often translated from English to Norwegian using their online dictionary, although they had access to an online dictionary in their L1, as well. When asked why, one student reported that it was to improve his Norwegian, while the other student claimed that she was more comfortable with Norwegian than her L1, and that was the reason she used Norwegian.

The school context seems to devalue the students' L1 by not acknowledging and accepting these languages as appropriate for school use. As Yusuf states, the L1 loses its purpose when it cannot be used to acquire an education and a profession. Fatima explains that she has "never experienced it as a big deal to know several languages." If this is correct, such a practice expresses silently that minority languages have no purpose in the EFL classroom. The students also said that they mostly translated from English to Norwegian, if they did not understand a word. They did this, although they had access to an online dictionary in their L1. They claimed they preferred to use Norwegian. On the other hand, both said they had a higher proficiency in their L1 than in Norwegian. This is another expression of a devaluation of minority students' L1s in the EFL classroom.

Another attitude, which is expressed through the interviews, is a clear strife for equality: "I have received the same instruction as monolingual students]" (Jeanette), "Everyone receives the same assignments and everyone is considered the same" (Marija), "Generally, there hasn't been much differentiation [...] I've had the same criteria as everybody else" (Fatima). The students themselves generally accept this striving for equality, and they seem to consider it to be fair. As Inara puts it when she says that she had to give up English this year, "I think it's my own fault. I could've studied more. But I gave up." In her eyes, it was up to her to follow the English teaching, as long as everyone received just the same instruction. If she failed it could not be the fault of the instruction she received; it had to be her own fault.

To summarize, the students express that they have generally not experienced racism or negative attitudes towards bilingualism and minority languages. Nevertheless, the students express rather negative attitudes towards their L1s, particularly in the school context. At the same time the students claim that their parents value the L1 greatly. Therefore, these attitudes

might come from their experiences at school, where their L1s are generally not valued nor encouraged to be used, rather they are being ignored and devalued as resources in the EFL classroom.

## **5.2. Student Biographies**

A key idea in phenomenology is that one has to understand the people in order to understand the world (Johannessen et al., 2011). It was therefore seen as essential in this study to present stories of all of the participants. Only then will the findings presented so far be understood in their context. Therefore, in the following sections, ten student biographies will be presented. These biographies contribute with essential insight into the diverse backgrounds of minority students in Norwegian schools. Moreover, they serve as individual examples to the findings presented above. It is necessary not to see minority students as one uniform group. Rather, they are individuals with diverse experiences and opinions about language learning. Through their stories we get a glimpse of their stories, which are often unknown to the teacher. These stories illustrate how the minority students' opportunities have been influenced by the policies, practices and attitudes they have experienced in the EFL classroom.

On the basis of a phenomenological analysis, four experiences from the EFL classroom will be presented through the biographies: First, how minority students develop metalinguistic awareness through their bilingualism; second, how minority students internalize linguistic attitudes; third, how minority students accept linguistic invisibility, and fourth, how some minority students have received external support from outside school in their process of learning English. Most of the students in this dissertation have experienced all of this. Nonetheless, some experiences are more dominant in some of their histories. Thus, each group of students serve to illustrate only one of these experiences.

All of the students have been provided with pseudonyms and their exact location in Norway is not mentioned. This is in order to make the participants anonymous. Whenever the participants are quoted in the text, these are my own translations from Norwegian, since all interviews, except one, was conducted in Norwegian.

### **5.2.1. Marija, Jeanette and Hamid: Developing a Metalinguistic Awareness**

Research has shown that being bilingual can be an asset in the process of learning new languages. This was also confirmed through some of the interviews in this dissertation. In this

section, I will present Marija from Croatia, Jeanette from Rwanda, and Hamid from Afghanistan, as examples of how their metalinguistic awareness has been developed and experienced.

*Marija* is a 17-year-old upper secondary student, who first came to Norway only a few months old, after moving from Croatia. Since then, the family has moved several times between Norway and Croatia, but she has most of her school background from Norway. Due to this recurring movement between Croatia and Norway, and her ethnically diverse family background, she represents a complex linguistic situation: She reports to speak Bosnian, Croatian, English, German, Norwegian, Serbian, and Slovenian. Of course, Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are very similar languages, previously known as Serbo-Croatian, but there are also clear differences among them. Marija's linguistic diversity is due to the fact that one of her parents is Croatian, while the other is Bosnian. Moreover, her grandmother is Slovenian. She has also many friends from Serbia, who have taught her Serbian. As she has lived in Norway, she has learned Norwegian, but also English, through schooling. In Croatia, German is a mandatory foreign language, thus, she has learned German as well. This is also a language she has practiced as she has worked within tourism in Croatia during her summer holidays.

Today, the different languages have different domains. At home, she speaks Bosnian and Croatian, sometimes in combination and sometimes separated. At school, she speaks Norwegian, while she speaks Norwegian, Croatian, and English with friends. She explains that she speaks English with friends because her group of friends is very multicultural and because she wants to further develop her abilities in English, aiming at a university education in the United States. The upper secondary school she attends also has a large percentage of minority students. Therefore, Croatian and Bosnian can be labelled as her L1, Norwegian as her L2, and English, German, Serbian and Slovenian as her L3s. She states that Norwegian is the language she has the highest proficiency in, followed by Croatian. Then follows Bosnian, Serbian, English, German, and Slovenian, arranged according to her proficiency in the languages.

Also, when she speaks with her siblings, she uses Croatian or Bosnian. Her parents value these languages greatly, and encourage the whole family to speak them. For instance, certain family members will not answer if they are spoken to in Norwegian, although they understand what is being said. The whole family spends two to three months in Croatia each year, and

she regularly watches Croatian movies. All in all, she therefore feels that she has enough support for her mother tongues, although she has never received any mother tongue training in Norwegian schools.

English has always been her favourite subject, according to her, since languages have always fascinated her, and often experienced a great sense of achievement when learning new languages. Nonetheless, she states that her motivation has also depended on the teachers she has had. Hence, “bad” English teachers have also discouraged her in the EFL classroom at times. When it comes to how the English teachers have provided her with a differentiated instruction, adapted to her bilingual background, she cannot recall that the teachers ever treated her differently due to her linguistic background. Instead, she claims that everybody was at “the same level,” in other words, being treated equally by the teacher.

This equal treatment of all students, regardless of their linguistic background, seems to have changed somewhat in upper secondary. She states:

There are more multicultural students here, and then... I feel that it's more normal in a way, that people have... diverse backgrounds. And then it's... I feel that the teachers consider it more, which they might not do in other schools.

Although, she cannot provide any examples of how this is practiced in the EFL classroom, except the general support from the teacher, which all students received, she explains that there has been a greater focus on being multicultural and bilingual. The students have been encouraged to voice their opinion and tell their stories, and the teachers facilitate debates on issues regarding multiculturalism. She therefore seems to feel that the teachers understand and respect her background. Moreover, her current English teacher is bilingual himself, which she claims helps her English learning, although he does not treat bilingual students any different from the monolinguals.

Even though she experiences that most teachers have positive attitudes towards bilingualism, she also claims that monolingual teachers do not understand how all the different languages are processed and the challenges this might encompass. According to her, the equal treatment of monolingual and bilingual students in the EFL classroom can therefore have both positive and negative outcomes, since bilinguals, in fact, have other requirements than monolinguals.

When she has learned English, Croatian has been a useful language. This was something she encountered when she returned to Croatia in 2010. Then, she had to begin German as a school

subject, while all the other students had already studied this language for several years. She quickly realized that she had an advantage compared to her Croatian peers, since she already could speak Norwegian:

So, I used my Norwegian language, because I remembered that. They didn't speak Norwegian, but I did. And it was so much easier, for example "tie" [No: Slips/Ge: Schlips] was almost the same. So, it was much easier for me... That's when I realized I could use it in English too.

Marija's experience with learning German as a Norwegian-Croatian bilingual made her aware of the benefits of being bilingual when learning English. She explains how some English words are similar to Croatian, while others are more similar to Norwegian. Hence, both languages have functioned as supporting languages in the learning of English. This is not a strategy her teachers have encouraged her to use, but a strategy she has experienced as useful, despite the lacking support and encouragement from her teachers.

To conclude, Marija is an example of a balanced bilingual student who has developed an advanced metalinguistic awareness through extensive exposure to several languages throughout her childhood. This has contributed to motivate her in the EFL classroom, which in turn has provided her with an important sense of achievement. Although most of her teachers have not been aware of her bilingualism, or at least not provided her with any differentiated instruction due to her bilingualism, she has enjoyed the English subject and succeeded academically. She describe the instruction she has received as "equal" to that of other students, and regards this to be challenging, although not all negative. From one point of view, this equal treatment has been fair, since everybody is treated equally. From another point of view, she is conscious of her specific needs as a bilingual student in the EFL classroom, and aware that these needs have not been appropriately met through the English teaching she has received.

*Jeanette* is a 17-year-old upper secondary student, who came to Norway at age seven, after first having fled from Rwanda through Uganda. When she came to Norway, she started in second grade. She brought with her a complex linguistic background: She already spoke Kinyarwanda, which she calls her mother tongue. In addition, she had also learned the co-official language of Rwanda, French, as well as some Swahili. In Uganda she had acquired some English and yet another language, which she does not recall the name of and which she no longer speaks. At the time of this interview, she attended an upper secondary school in a

larger Norwegian city, where the minority students made up a significant percentage of the student population.

Today, she speaks Kinyarwanda, English, Norwegian, French, and has also learned Norwegian sign language at school. These languages have specific domains where they are used. Jeanette uses Kinyarwanda at home, to communicate with her family and relatives, and has also the specific function as the language of her religion, since they read the Bible in Kinyarwanda in her family. At home, Norwegian is only used to communicate with a younger brother, who does not speak Kinyarwanda fluently. At school, she mainly uses Norwegian. With friends, she speaks English and Norwegian. She claims that the language she is most proficient in is English, although her mother tongue is Kinyarwanda. In the situation of Jeanette, Kinyarwanda is her L1, Norwegian her L2, and English and French her L3s, although she feels that English is the language in which she has the highest proficiency.

In Norway, Norwegian is naturally the most valued language in the society at large, as it is the only official language of Norway and the medium of instruction in Norwegian schools.

However, at home, Jeanette experience Kinyarwanda as the most valued language.

Nonetheless, for Jeanette, English is the most important language:

I think English is important because... It's a lingua franca; the language you will use the most, wherever you are in the world... If I move to Italy, what can I do with Norwegian? Or Sweden, what can I do with my mother tongue over there?

For Jeanette, English has always been a subject she has enjoyed. When she first arrived in Norway and commenced her Norwegian education, English was the only subject where she did not need anyone to translate for her, and where she understood everything the teacher said. As she has grown older, she has retained much self-esteem from the English subject, since it has been a subject where she has experienced academic success, and received good grades.

She states that it is important for her to know many languages, and that she is still trying to learn more, for instance through TV. When she started in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and she could choose a second foreign language to study, she chose French. This was a language she already knew some of, from her childhood in Rwanda. This seems to have further contributed to her interest in languages, since she here experienced academic success and a sense of achievement.



Although the curriculum states that the students should be able to use their mother tongue in the learning of English, the English teaching she has received has, in her own words, been the “same as for the rest”, e.g. monolingual Norwegian students. She could not see that the English teachers she had met through the years had given her any differentiation, except that which any monolingual student would receive, too.

When it comes to the role of her L1 and bilingualism in the English learning, she feels that the teachers have never done anything particularly aimed at her L1 and bilingualism. She says that no teacher has ever encouraged her to make use of her bilingualism in the learning of English. Nevertheless, she defends her teachers by saying that “they don’t know so much about my language, anyways” and “I have never seen a Kinyarwanda-English dictionary”. She goes on to say that she believes that her teachers have been aware of her bilingualism and considered this in their teaching. However, she cannot explain how this has been expressed into action, through any particular activities, assignments, or other practices. She states that: “I feel that they have thought about it, in a way. But I don’t know in what way they thought about it.”

When asked about her experience in learning English, whether she found any languages to support her English learning, she could not see that any language had supported it. Since her parents are not particularly proficient speakers of English, she found that they neither could use their own language, Kinyarwanda, to support her English learning. Instead, she said that she was very young when she started to learn English, so she simply “just learned it”. All in all, she did not seem to see the relevance between Kinyarwanda and English. In her own words, these two languages “don’t crash”. However, her knowledge of English did support her acquisition of Norwegian, according to herself.

The apparent lack of differentiation to her bilingual background does not seem to affect her motivation and excitement over the English subject. She claims that the teachers she has met have had positive attitudes towards bilingualism and expressed that this is beneficial; although this has not influenced the way they have taught English. She explains that her current English teacher is bilingual himself, so she cannot imagine that he holds any negative attitudes towards bilingualism.

To conclude, Jeanette is another example of a balanced bilingual student who seemingly has developed a metalinguistic awareness, and is highly motivated to learn new languages and

develop those she already knows. This appears to be due to her extensive experience in language learning, where she has acquired a number of languages throughout her lifetime. She has enjoyed both the French and English teaching she has received in Norway, and she states that she is content with the instruction. Jeanette is therefore, in most aspects, an academically successful student, who is highly motivated to learn and who sees the benefits language learning carries. Nevertheless, her L1, Kinyarwanda, has had no apparent presence in the language instruction she has received. The teachers might hold positive attitudes towards bilingualism, but these are not carried out in any specific practice that will endorse a bilingual approach to language learning. Neither can she report that her teachers have followed the instruction found in the curriculum, to take the mother tongue in use in the learning of English.

*Hamid* is a 21-year-old upper secondary student, who came to Norway at age 15. Due to war, his family was forced to leave Afghanistan when Hamid was just three years old. They first escaped to Iran, where they lived for several years, before fleeing to Norway. When he first came to Norway, he spoke Dari and Farsi. He attended a one-year course in Norwegian, before he commenced a two-years preparatory programme for upper secondary. He is now in his third and final year of upper secondary.

In Iran, Hamid received some English teaching, although this was very limited and he did not speak much English when he first arrived in Norway. Therefore, he started to learn English after just one year of Norwegian teaching. He describes this as “quite difficult,” since he still did not speak Norwegian fluently and was not very familiar with the Latin alphabet. However, he experienced that Norwegian was a great support for him when he started to learn English. Moreover, he thinks that English has been useful to further develop his Norwegian. Therefore, when he is studying English or Norwegian, he uses the languages to support each other, at the same time as this rests on his Farsi/Dari background:

If I know something in English and I don't know it in Norwegian, I can use English to figure it out. It helped a lot. [...] Rather than using Farsi, I use English and improve both my English and my Norwegian.

He explains that he uses an English-Farsi dictionary on his computer to translate words he does not understand in English:

[When using a] dictionary, I use... If I don't know it in English, I use it to translate to Farsi. If I don't know it in Norwegian or English, I use Farsi. In that way it's really good, and there are many good articles in Farsi online, so that helps as well.

And he confirms that all languages are in use when he is studying English and that it is an advantage that he can compare different languages:

I think it would've been much, much more difficult if I didn't know Farsi, if I only knew Norwegian or English.

When asked about the English teaching he has received, he explains that although his teachers have been aware of his linguistic background, he has never experienced that the English teachers have differentiated the instruction to his needs as a bilingual student. Nonetheless, he is very appreciative of having the opportunity to study in Norway and to learn English. He sees English as the most important language of his future. And he is also very satisfied with the teachers and their methods.

To conclude, Marija, Jeanette and Hamid are examples of students who have developed a metalinguistic awareness, despite the lack of support from their teachers to develop such awareness. What these students have in common is a positive attitude towards the English subject and an understanding of English as an important language for their future. Moreover, Marija and Jeanette seem to have teachers who exhibit positive attitudes towards bilingualism and multiculturalism, thus, facilitating a positive learning environment for bilingual students.

### **5.2.2. Fatima and Inara: Internalizing Linguistic Attitudes**

Another reoccurring theme among the participants was a view of their L1 as inadequate for academic purposes and even a cause of their academic challenges. This stands in contrast to those who have been aware of the advantages related to bilingualism and developed a metalinguistic awareness. Rather, these students see their L1 as separate from their current school situation. The term "internalized" is applied in this context since it seems that these attitudes come from their experiences from the EFL classroom or the society at large, hence, been adapted by the students later in life. In this section, Chechen Fatima and Latvian Inara are examples of students who have internalized these attitudes.

*Fatima* is an 18-year-old upper secondary student, originally from Chechnya, officially a federal subject of Russia. She came to Norway at age two with her mother and siblings, after her father was killed in the war in Chechnya. They first escaped to Denmark, before arriving

in Norway. As a little girl she attended kindergarten, and started school at age 6. At that point she spoke Chechen, Russian, and Norwegian. Not long after she started her education, she was introduced to English, which she today sees as equally important to Norwegian. In lower secondary she also studied Spanish, however she abandoned that in upper secondary, since she attends a vocational school that does not offer any languages beyond Norwegian and English.

Since she came to Norway at such a young age, she feels that she has grown up with all of these languages, and learned them simultaneously. However, she believes Norwegian was an important resource in the learning of English. If one considers the languages she has known from a domain-perspective, it is clear that both Chechen and Russian has an L1 function, since these are her home languages. Norwegian is the language she uses at school, and therefore holds an L2 status. English was learned last and is mainly used with friends outside of school, thus, holds an L3 status.

Although she claims that the English teaching was never differentiated or adapted much to her needs, she has always enjoyed English as a school subject, and it has provided her with a sense of achievement. Fatima explains that she has mostly been in classes where the majority was bilingual, thus, she did not stand out as a bilingual minority student. She indicates that this might be the reason why the teachers never bothered to ask her about her linguistic or cultural background. When it comes to how teachers have treated her, as a minority student, she distinguishes between “good” and “bad” teachers. Good teachers treat her in the same way as they treat monolingual, Norwegian students. Bad teachers have discriminated against her because of her foreign sounding name, and given her bad grades because of it. This has been something she has had to complain about at several occasions.

Being bilingual is the only reality Fatima knows; hence, she does not feel that her bilingualism requires any differentiation in the teacher’s instruction. However, when asked about how it feels that the teachers have never given her bilingualism any attention, she answers:

If you think about it, it isn’t right. But growing up with those teachers, I didn’t think it was a big deal that I knew many languages. But when I think back, I think, ‘Wow, I know many languages’.

Today, she is proud that she is a proficient speaker of a number of languages, and feels fortunate to have grown up to speak English as well as she does today. She has friends and

relatives elsewhere in Europe, and she says that they are jealous of her high proficiency in English. However, she finds it completely natural that Chechen has never received any attention from her teachers, and believes it is only up to minority families to sustain and develop.

*Inara* is an 18-year-old upper secondary student, who came to Norway from Latvia four and a half years ago. After receiving Norwegian instruction for six months, she commenced her Norwegian upper secondary education. Her parents left Latvia to work, and *Inara* and her sister followed some time after. Then, *Inara* spoke some Russian and English in addition to Latvian. She came in the summer holiday, so that her mother could teach her some Norwegian before she started the Norwegian course in the autumn. Then, she realized how useful English could be when learning Norwegian, since a lot of words are similar. Moreover, it was very helpful for her in the communication with the teachers, that she could speak English.

*Inara* speaks mostly Latvian at home, although they sometimes try to speak Norwegian, in order to practice. She speaks mostly English with her friends, since many of her friends have recently arrived in Norway. At school, she uses mostly Norwegian. Hence, Latvian is her L1, Norwegian her L2, and Russian and English her L3s.

For *Inara* it was a very different matter to study English in Latvia and in Norway. The contrast was particularly strong when it comes to the content of the English lessons. While she was used to studying grammar and focusing on how to keep a conversation in English, the lessons in Norway include a wide range of topics, including American politics and social issues in Great Britain. In addition, she finds it difficult to learn both Norwegian and English simultaneously. This has discouraged her, and she has recently applied for a transfer from English to another subject, since she finds it too difficult. When she is asked whether the teacher could have done anything with the way he teaches for her to continue with English, she says no. "I think it's my own fault. I could've studied more. But I gave up."

In the EFL classroom *Inara* cannot see that the teachers have made any considerations of her linguistic background. "I do exactly the same as the others," she says. "It's up to me if I can do it or not, in a way." Although the teachers have told her to ask, if there is anything she does not understand, she says that it is not always enough. "Before I often did that [translated from English to Latvian] because I didn't know many words in English, so I had to translate

on Google or online, sort of.” This is something she still does from time to time. However, now she tries to translate to Norwegian, rather than Latvian. She does this both to improve her Norwegian, but also because she finds it easier to translate to Norwegian than Latvian, according to her. There is also another Latvian girl in her English class, and this has helped. Then, they can support each other using Latvian. This is something the teacher has approved of, and told them to continue to do so. The teacher has also tried to use some simple words and expressions in Latvian, such as “yes” and “thank you.” It seems that she finds this quite amusing.

Fatima and Inara do not consider their L1s as relevant for their current school context. Fatima sees Chechen as a language for family and friends, and do not see why this language should have a place in school. For Inara, her bilingual background has become a hinder for academic success, and she blames herself for her failure in English. Inara has still not developed a balanced bilingualism, which according to Cummins’ threshold hypothesis might limit the advantages associated with bilingualism. This might be another reason why she has not experienced her bilingualism as an asset in the EFL classroom. Both have experienced a school context where their bilingualism has not been much valued, and Fatima even claims to have experienced discrimination due to her background. Based on their experiences, there is no wonder they do not see the advantages of being bilingual in the EFL classroom.

### **5.2.3. Yusuf and Gabriel: Receiving External Support**

When minority students do not receive any differentiation aimed at their bilingual background, they can either resign and internalize the school’s view of minority languages as irrelevant, or they can resist this view and instead exploit the potential of their bilingualism. Some students manage this on their own, as we can see from the examples of Marija, Jeanette and Hamid, while others struggle. In this section, two students who received support from outside school in order to learn English will be presented. The first is Palestinian Yusuf, who had an English speaking mother, and Cuban Gabriel, who had English speakers among his Latin American friends.

*Yusuf* is an 18-year-old upper secondary student, who came to Norway at age nine, after escaping Gaza, Palestine, together with his family. When he came to Norway, he started in an ordinary Norwegian third grade class, without any introductory courses in Norwegian or any mother tongue training. In Palestine, he had not received any English teaching, thus he had to learn both Norwegian and English simultaneously – an experience he describes as

“confusing”. Before, he spoke both Arabic and some Hebrew. At the time of this interview, Yusuf attended an upper secondary school in a larger Norwegian city, where the minority students made up the majority of the student population at the school.

Today, Yusuf speaks Arabic, Norwegian, English, and some Hebrew. These languages have specific domains, where they are being applied. He uses Arabic and (some) Hebrew at home, to speak with his family. Hence, Arabic has a clear L1-function. Norwegian is the language for school, and therefore fills the role of an L2. With friends, he uses both Norwegian and occasionally Arabic. English, on the other hand, does not seem to be used much outside the classroom, and is therefore a typical L3, although he learned this language simultaneously with Norwegian.

Although the first years in Norwegian school were challenging, he learned both English and Norwegian as time went by. Yusuf stresses two significant reasons for his early struggles: First, the number of students in each class was 30-35, which made it impossible for the teacher to meet the needs of all students, according to him. He goes on to even doubt whether or not the teacher wanted to take time to support each student and provide differentiated instruction. In his opinion, the teachers’ only aim was to “complete the lesson, get the message across, nothing more.” Second, he pointed out the extensive use of Norwegian in the English teaching as a serious problem. When everything was in Norwegian, except the assignments they were given, Yusuf struggled to learn English. He describes the situation in this way: “Before [...] I didn’t have a picture of English, I didn’t even know what it was.” Due to the limited use of English in a situation where he was mainly concerned with the learning of Norwegian, Yusuf did not see the necessity of learning English, and therefore, in his own words, “struggled”.

Yusuf was lucky, since both of his parents spoke English. It was therefore his parents, particularly his mother, who helped him learn English. She would sit down with him and use Arabic as the reference for the English learning. He explains the role of Arabic:

Arabic was the only language that I could sort of translate to from English. The only solution to be able to understand the word or the sentence was Arabic. It was the only solution to understand the message in English.

He explains that this was also how he approached English in school. He would constantly lean to Arabic in order to understand English, for instance when he translated words into Arabic.

However, this was not something he had learned from other students in class or his teachers. He cannot recall that the teachers ever said anything related to this practice.

Due to lack of support from his teachers, and what he found to be a very deficient English teaching, Yusuf also lacked motivation for English learning. This led him to “hate” English. This later changed due to two reasons: Improved English teaching and an emerging intrinsic motivation for English learning.

According to Yusuf, his first English teacher in upper secondary “came straight from New York” and only spoke English. This radically changed his experience from the EFL classroom so far, where Norwegian had had a dominant position. With this new American English teacher Yusuf had to make an effort to communicate with the teacher in English. In Yusuf’s experience this had improved his English learning. Another important factor for Yusuf’s increased motivation in the EFL classroom was that he now knew what he wanted to work with in the future, and could clearly see how English could be useful in that profession. Yusuf wanted to be a nurse, and since English will be an important part of his studies and practice as a nurse, he has to learn English, or else he “can just give up,” as he puts it.

Moreover, he now sees English as a useful language, not only in his professional life, but also in general. “Wherever you are in the world you’ll need it. Whether it is in Somalia or Pakistan, or wherever, you’ll need English. You don’t need Norwegian there.” He also explains how he sees Arabic as a useless language in his current context:

Everyone has a goal in his life, okay? And if you think about Arabic, can it help me reach my goals? So, if the answer is no, it doesn’t help you, then you can simply throw it out, behind your back.

When Yusuf first came to Norway, the message from his parents was very clear: They had not come to Norway to play. Rather, this was their opportunity to create a future for themselves through education. This focus on hard work and creating a better future has clearly impacted Yusuf’s view of what is useful or not. While he came to Norway with only Arabic and some Hebrew, he has later decided to abandon these languages, in order to improve his Norwegian and English, since these are the languages he perceives as valuable in his current context and for his future professional career. To Yusuf, the language of his family and of his culture has therefore lost its value and meaning in the new reality of his current home country.



When it comes to the attitudes, which Yusuf has been faced with, he cannot say that he has ever been faced with negative attitudes. He says that it is a gift to be able to speak many languages, although it can be tough. This is something teachers have expressed to him, although they have not done anything specifically aimed at promoting and supporting his bilingualism.

To conclude, Yusuf seem to fit the stereotype of an immigrant student who academically performs below average, including in English. Despite his bilingual background, the simultaneous learning of Norwegian and English was not immediately a success story. Yusuf presents some explanations for why this: First, the number of students in each class, and second, the extensive use of Norwegian in the EFL classroom. He therefore did not receive enough input in order to develop his English, and did not receive the necessary attention and support from the teacher. Moreover, due to the complete lack of attention to his bilingualism through differentiated instruction and absent mother tongue training, there is no reason to be surprised that the learning of English was a complicated and exhausting process for Yusuf.

However, what might be surprising is how he described that he has relied so heavily on his Arabic in the early stages of learning English. Due to the seeming indifference towards his bilingualism in the EFL classroom, it is interesting to observe how Yusuf and his family has taken the English learning in their own hands, and applied Arabic as a key to learn English.

*Gabriel* is an 18-year-old upper secondary student, who came to Norway at age 12, after living with his grandmother in Cuba since his mother left for Norway when he was an infant. Cuba requires both parents to confirm that children can leave the country, and since Gabriel's father did not want his son to leave, he was separated from his mother for nearly 12 years. Today, he lives with his mother, little brother and stepfather, and attends a vocational upper secondary school, preparing him for a future within healthcare. However, his real aim is to become a musician. He speaks Spanish, Norwegian and English, as well as some Portuguese. He describes Spanish as his mother tongue, and this is also the language he uses at home, both with his parents, who are both Hispanic, and his little brother. His little brother was born in Norway; still, Gabriel thinks it is important that he learns to speak Spanish properly. In school he only speaks Norwegian, although there is another Spanish-speaking students in his class. With his friends he mostly uses Norwegian, while he speaks English if there is somebody who does not understand Norwegian. His best friend has previously spent a couple of years in Portugal, thus, he has taught him some Portuguese, and when they talk they mix both Spanish

and Portuguese. Based on this information, Spanish could be described as Gabriel's L1, Norwegian as his L2, and English and Portuguese as his L3s.

When Gabriel attended school in Cuba, he received very little language instruction, apart from Spanish. He explains that they only had English "once a year, and it was just numbers, 'What's your name?' and 'How old are you?' Just things like that. Nothing else." Therefore, when Gabriel first came to Norway, he could only speak Spanish. He therefore describes his first encounter with Norwegian and English as "hard," and he explains that he was near to give up learning Norwegian. He first attended an introductory school for immigrants, and here the main focus was on Norwegian, although they were also taught some English. In English, the teachers used body language to communicate with him, and he was already falling behind. What changed this challenging situation was that two new boys started in the same class as Gabriel, one was Chilean and the other was Colombian. Both spoke Spanish and English. They helped him overcome the difficulties of learning English. He also started to listen to more music in English, and after a while he improved his English. He describes his experience in this way:

When I was at the introductory school, English wasn't really that interesting. Since I'm in Norway now and the language is Norwegian. So, I was more concerned with Norwegian than English [...] When I started in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I knew Norwegian, so it was much easier for me to learn English. Because now I can speak Norwegian, and I know the terminology in Norwegian, so I could actually understand some.

Today, English is the most important language to him, next to Norwegian. He describes English as an international language, and he listens to music in English, and even writes lyrics in English: "I can speak more English than I can write. And sing, you know. I don't think I could sing or make music in Norwegian," he says. Today his English teacher only speaks English in class, which Gabriel finds very helpful. Previously, the teachers have taught English through the medium of Norwegian.

In the EFL classroom, Gabriel has not experienced that his bilingual background has received much attention. Since he has mostly been in classes where most students are bilingual, he has been treated equally as everybody else, also the few monolingual Norwegian students in his class. Nor have the teachers asked much about his background or seemed to be very interested in the languages he knows: "When it's English, he's [the teacher] concerned about teaching us English. Not other languages."

When it comes to his bilingual background, he seems torn to whether or not this is an advantage or not. Although he states that he believe it is an advantage to be bilingual and that he uses Spanish when learning English, he also claims that his L1, Spanish, is “in the way for” his learning of other languages, particularly when he writes.

Gabriel has become a highly motivated English student since he has realized the necessity and usefulness of English. From an initial stage, where he felt overwhelmed and confused by having to learn both Norwegian and English, he slowly improved his English, through the help of other bilingual students and also by the fact that his Norwegian improved. It is interesting to notice the absence of attention his L1 has received and the lacking faith he has in Spanish, particularly as a language for learning.

To conclude, Yusuf and Gabriel are examples of students who have been able to draw on their complete linguistic background when learning English, due to the support from family and friends, respectively. Although their teachers have not considered their students’ bilingual background when teaching English, Yusuf and Gabriel have been enabled to develop a metalinguistic awareness because of the external support they have received.

#### **5.2.4. Petar, Mai and Saba: Accepting Linguistic Invisibility**

For some minority students it is important to stress their ‘Norwegian-ness’. Despite not rejecting their L1, they strive to integrate in the Norwegian school system, thus, accepting that their L1 is not considered in their English learning. This group expresses that they are satisfied with the instruction with which they have been provided, at the same time as they claim that there has been no differentiation considering their bilingualism in the EFL classroom. In this section, Bulgarian Petar, Norwegian-Vietnamese Mai, and Eritrean Saba, are examples of students who have accepted their linguistic background to be invisible in the EFL classroom.

*Petar* came to Norway after his mother had decided to move from Bulgaria to work. He attended a one-year introductory programme, before studying for two years in a Norwegian upper secondary school. At that point, he spoke Bulgarian and some English. The school he currently attends has only a limited number of minority students.

At home, he speaks Bulgarian and some Norwegian, since his mother must practice. With friends it is mostly Norwegian, although he has one Macedonian friend he can speak

Bulgarian with, and another friend he speaks English to. At school he speaks only Norwegian, and tries to make other minority students do the same. In English lessons he speaks English, and the teacher has actually explicitly forbidden them from speaking their L1 in class, as opposed to what most of the other participants in this dissertation have experienced. He has often been frustrated with other minority students, since many of them tend to speak Arabic or Somali with each other in class and during breaks. He explains that he has often been accused of being racist, when he has told them to speak more Norwegian at school. Although he has been eager to learn Norwegian and adapt to the Norwegian society, he has found it difficult to fit in with the Norwegian students and has an impression that most Norwegian students do not like “foreigners,” as he describes himself. However, teachers have been friendly and understanding.

Most of the minority students at his school take an exam in their L1, rather than in a second foreign language, as the monolingual Norwegian students do. However, since there are no Bulgarian teachers where he lives, he has had to study German instead. Nonetheless, this has not discouraged him at all. He thinks it is easy to learn German, after he had already learned Norwegian: “It is very similar to Norwegian: Much easier than French or Spanish. Those have nothing in common with Norwegian.” He sees it as an advantage that he now has the opportunity to learn even another additional language. His total linguistic competence is an advantage in his English learning: “The English grammar is not the same as the Norwegian, but it’s similar. I think it’s really similar. For example definite and indefinite article are similar.” When he first came to Norway he used to translate from English to Bulgarian. Now, he tries to translate to Norwegian instead.

When it comes to the English teaching he has received in Norway, there are some points he would like to improve. First, he thinks there should be more focus on language use, instead of social issues in the United States and the United Kingdom. Second, he would like to have more tests, instead of presentations and writing essays. Third, he does not think there is much support for minority students. For example, they are not allowed to speak their L1 in the EFL classroom, except for translations.

*Mai* is an 18-year-old upper secondary student and the only participant in this study who is born in Norway. However, her parents were born in Vietnam, and Vietnamese is still the language used at home. In addition to Norwegian and Vietnamese, she has learned both

English and French in school. Vietnamese can be characterized as her L1, Norwegian as her L2, and English and French as her L3s.

She received mother tongue training the first years of primary school, but she explains that since then she has lost much of her Vietnamese. Therefore, she sometimes struggles to find the right words when she speaks with her parents and she prefers to speak Norwegian to her younger brother. She could choose to take an exam in Vietnamese instead of French, but she thinks that would be too difficult for her. Mai says that she thinks it is a shame that she has lost so much of her Vietnamese, and explains that she feels that Vietnamese is a part of her and she would have wanted to be able to represent her heritage better than what she can today.

Mai's interest for English started when she went on a holiday to the United States, when she was about eight years old. Being immersed in English the way she experienced it then, motivated her to learn English. When she came back from her holiday, she asked her English teacher for additional homework, and more challenging exercises. Mai says that the teacher met her needs and provided her with differentiated exercises and homework, so that she could be challenged and advance. Ever since, English has been her favourite subject. Although the teachers met her needs for more challenging work, she thinks the teachers never thought about her bilingual background: "I think they've always seen me as Norwegian. So they haven't differentiated homework or anything for making it easier for me," she says. Mai explains that the additional homework she received in English had nothing to do with her bilingual background, but her own eagerness to learn more English. Her bilingualism has generally been ignored, and not mentioned by any teachers.

*Saba* is an 18-year-old upper secondary student originally from Eritrea, who has lived in Norway since 2012. She was 15 years old when she came to Norway, and at that point she already spoke English, in addition to Tigrinya and Arabic. She found Norwegian to be an easy language to learn, since she had already learned English.

When Saba escaped Eritrea together with her mother and her little sister, she experienced how important it is to know English. Her mother does not speak English; neither did her little sister at the time. Hence, it was Saba's job to handle all communication for the little family on their journey to Norway. When I asked her in what way it helped them, she explained it in a sober manner:

She [her mother] wouldn't talk to them [people they encountered along the way], she wouldn't ask them if she needed help. So, English helped me a lot. Like, I asked a lot, yeah... It just helped me in different ways.

Since then, English has been her favourite subject. After a period at an introductory programme, she started in an ordinary Norwegian class. Here, she struggled with written English, although her oral skills were good, according to her. Her teacher noticed this, and gave her additional support, to help her improve her written skills in English. However, her bilingual background was never given any attention in the EFL classroom. Nonetheless, Saba thinks that she did receive the attention and support she needed in order to further develop her English and cannot see what role Tingrinya could have had in her current school context. Today, she is very pleased with her bilingual situation:

Language is like a gift, and if you go to a different place [...] To know many types of languages, it helps me a lot. And it's a respect if I talk to a person in their own language, it would be like "wow, she got time to learn that", and it's like really, really good.

To conclude, Petar, Mai and Saba have accepted that their L1s do not have a place in their current school context, in the same way as Fatima and Inara had internalized the general understanding of their L1s as unfit for academic purposes. However, Petar, Mai and Saba, have not only accepted their situation, but also express very positive attitudes towards the English instruction they have received. Particularly Petar and Mai also stress how important Norwegian is to them.

### 5.3. Summary

There is one word that is echoed in each interview, and the word is "equal". The students cannot give examples of how they have received any different instruction in English than their monolingual, Norwegian peers. At first glance, this is not problematic to the students. Equality is a core value within the Norwegian society, and the students are content by being treated as equals to their majority, monolingual peers.

One student states that "good teachers" treat them equal to monolingual students, while "bad teachers" discriminate. Most of the participants seemed to be quite satisfied with the fact that the teachers did not differentiate the English teaching to their bilingual background. They claimed that "They [the teachers] don't know anything about my languages" or "I have never seen a dictionary in my own language", and saw that as reasons for why the teacher should

not be expected to encourage them to use other languages in the English teaching or provide them with resources to do so.

When I met these students, what stuck me is how satisfied they are. Not only with school in general, but also the English teaching they have received. They have mostly been content with the teachers and they have experienced that they have been met with respect and treated equal to everybody else. This gives an impression of a school system with little prejudice or xenophobia, but a school system which values equality and inclusion. Nonetheless, one has to ask whether this strife for equality has contributed to provide minority students with equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom? Are Norwegian English teachers losing sight of the individual needs, as well as the potential, which minority students have in the EFL classroom?

## 6. Discussion

“If you think about it, it isn’t right. But growing up with those teachers, I didn’t think it was a big deal that I knew many languages. But when I think back, I think, ‘Wow, I know many languages’.”

- Fatima

In this chapter, the findings presented in the previous chapter will be considered in light of the theoretical perspectives on L3 learning and teaching, multilingual pedagogy, and critical pedagogy, previously considered. The minority students’ equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom will be discussed by investigating the policies, practices, and attitudes the minority students are experiencing.

### 6.1. Policies

In this section, the policies regarding minority students’ English teaching as experienced by the minority students will be discussed in light of research on L3 learning and teaching, multicultural pedagogy, and critical pedagogy. Although this is not a dominant theme in the current curriculum, the policies concerning English teaching in Norway do aim to involve the students’ complex linguistic background in the instruction, as previously presented. This presence in the curriculum is driven by the Common European Framework’s promotion of plurilingualism (2001), which has also influenced the current Norwegian curriculum. Moreover, the Norwegian Education Act guarantees students in Norwegian schools the right to differentiated instruction. Nonetheless, the interviews presented above have also disclosed that it is difficult to find any traces of these ideals in the descriptions brought forward by the participants in this dissertation.

The reasons behind the absence of a plurilingual or multilingual approach to English teaching are very complex. However, I suggest three reasons the curriculum’s aim of native-language-involvement in the English teaching is nowhere to be found in the participants’ descriptions of their classroom experiences: First, because there is no tradition for multicultural pedagogy in Norwegian schools, nor in the curriculum (Aasen, 2012). Therefore, teachers cannot be expected to suddenly approach English teaching differently from the other subjects they teach. Second, Laugerud and others (2014) propose that teachers do not exercise a plurilingual approach to English teaching due to the general low status and lack of legal protection of new minority languages in Norway. Third, due to an education of English



teachers without sufficient focus on minority languages, which does not enable teachers to adopt multilingual approaches to English teaching, as studies by Ness (2008), Šurkalović (2014), Dahl and Krulatz (2016), and Krulatz and Torgersen (2016) might suggest.

Multicultural pedagogy has yet not had a dominant position within Norwegian education (Aasen, 2012). This might be due to the sentiment of equality as sameness, which dominates Norwegian education and has influenced the Norwegian Education Act, which takes the minority students' lack of Norwegian-ness as a point of departure, when deciding which linguistic training these students should receive (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015; Laugerud et al., 2014). This absence of multicultural pedagogy has caused teachers *not* to use other resources in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms than in more homogenous classrooms, researchers have found (Laugerud et al., 2014). Rather than adapting the instruction to the cultural and linguistic diversity, it seems that minority students who do not easily adapt to the egalitarian classroom are excluded, and provided with special education (Laugerud et al., 2014, p. 10). If this is the case, this will not lead to equality of opportunity for minority students in the EFL classroom.

Recent research has, in fact, shown that minority students are excluded from the “equality” of Scandinavian schooling (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015; Hilt & Bøyum, 2015; Möller, 2010). They experience that the social and cultural capital they have is irrelevant in their current school context, and that they are not sufficiently “Norwegian” or “Swedish”. Some researchers have therefore concluded that there seems to exist a standard to which minorities are measured up against (Dahlstedt, 2009), and that it can be difficult for minority students to adapt to this standard, without complete assimilation (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015). This suggests that there is an inadequacy in the dominant perception of equality as sameness, which is also present in Norwegian curriculum and legal documents. For instance, the Norwegian Education Act states that the “instruction shall be founded on fundamental values in Christian and Humanist heritage and tradition” (Opplæringslova, 2015).

Moreover, the limited legal protection and low status of new minority languages have contributed to the absence of multicultural pedagogy in Norwegian schools and in the education of future teachers. Critical pedagogy suggests that due to the low status of minority students, they are dependent on appropriate policies and teachers in order to be included and receive an appropriate education (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015). From the interviews in this study, one can see how policies that limit the role of minority languages in the classroom might

affect teachers' practices, and consequently also minority students. Therefore, if one wants to ensure minority students equal opportunity in the EFL classroom, there is a great responsibility on the policy makers to ensure that minority students receive the rights to receive an English instruction differentiated to their bilingual needs.

Furthermore, there are several recent Norwegian studies, which have suggested that English teachers do not have the necessary training to provide minority students with an instruction aimed at their bilingualism (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016; Šurkalović, 2014). While some teachers are unaware of the needs of linguistically diverse English classrooms, others see the need but do not have the qualifications to meet this need:

English teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse students feel unprepared to face the challenges brought about by the new classroom demographics. The teachers we have been working with are fully aware of the gaps in their knowledge and skills and are motivated to improve their classroom practices (Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016, p. 66).

In the current situation, minority students' bilingual background is ignored and teachers feel unprepared for the multilingual classroom. This calls not only for an improved school curriculum, rather it requires the institutions that educate future English teachers, to seriously consider the importance of multilingual and multicultural English teaching.

## 6.2. Practices

In this section, the practices regarding minority students' English teaching as experienced by minority students will be discussed in light of research on L3 learning and teaching, multicultural pedagogy, and critical pedagogy. Although many of the participants could give extensive examples of how they used their combined linguistic competence in the EFL classroom, they had not experienced that their EFL teachers involved other languages in any way, except Norwegian, in the teaching of English. As long as the English teaching is only aimed at monolingual, ethnic Norwegian students, I argue that we are dealing with a subtractive socioeducational context, which can only be described as an oppressive practice, and an expression of what Phillipson (1992) and Canagarajah (1999) calls "linguistic imperialism".

The analysis showed that most of the students are satisfied with the English teaching they have received and are receiving in Norwegian schools. However, this is contrasted with their very limited experiences of a multilingual English instruction. Rather, the minority students

described an EFL classroom where equality is an important value. To provide monolingual and bilingual students with the same instruction seem to be the fully accepted norm across all three schools in the three cities included in this study. Even more noteworthy is the fact that this also seems to be accepted by the minority students as well.

According to theory on L3 acquisition, one should activate all of the student's linguistic competence, also known as the common underlying proficiency (CUP), in the process of learning new languages (Cummins, 1991; Francis, 2011). In L3 acquisition theory, linguistic competences are not seen as language-bound, meaning, belonging to one specific language. Rather, the CUP includes skills that can be exploited in any language the individual knows. Francis names discourse ability, text comprehension, and general language-processing skills, as examples of competences belonging to the CUP (Francis, 2011). Since these skills can be learned either in the L1, the L2 or by non-linguistic means, Norwegian English teachers can, in fact, enable their students to exploit their complete linguistic repertoire in the English learning, although the teacher does not know the student's L1. For the teacher to enable the students to exploit their CUP, it is necessary to have knowledge about language acquisition and how to facilitate for students' metacognition and linguistic development (Haukås, 2014). Therefore, metacognition and learning strategies should be key components of any English instruction aimed at bilingual students.

However, none of the students report to ever have been encouraged to use their L1 in the process of learning English. Nonetheless, one student received this support from his mother, another from bilingual friends. Others realised the potential through their own experiences with language learning, without telling their teachers. These were students who developed a metalinguistic competence. Unfortunately, not all participants in this dissertation developed such a competence. Some accepted the teachers' practice of using only Norwegian as a reference in the EFL classroom, and would be reluctant to use their L1. For instance, a couple of students reported that they preferred to translate from English to Norwegian, and not their L1, although they also claimed that they spoke their L1 better than they spoke Norwegian. If these students had received English instruction aimed at exploiting their CUP and developing a metalinguistic awareness, one could expect these students to experience a greater sense of opportunity in the EFL classroom. Instead, the reported practices ignore their potential to a great extent, hence, limiting their opportunities.

Moreover, the teacher should have comprehensive knowledge about multicultural pedagogy, as described by Aasen (2012) and Laugerud (2014). In multicultural pedagogy, an important feature is to affirm bilingual students' identities (de Jong, 2011). This can be done through activities that invite all voices and experiences to be heard, such as collaborative teaching, shared knowledge construction, portfolio assessment. The choice of materials is also essential and affects the students' opportunities in the classroom. Materials should not misrepresent minorities, rather it should reflect minority students' experiences and heritage (de Jong, 2011). Whether or not the teachers of the students participating in this dissertation apply such activities to their classrooms have not been investigated in this dissertation. Still, the minority students interviewed in this dissertation reported that very little was done to meet their needs as bilingual learners of English and their linguistic and cultural backgrounds did generally receive little attention, according to themselves.

Furthermore, multicultural pedagogy sees language learning also as culture learning. Therefore, language classrooms are also spaces of culture meetings. The students not only learn about a foreign language, they also learn about a foreign culture. They encounter a culture foreign from their own (Phillipson, 1992). While our majority students are born and raised in monolingual families, where all share the same cultural and often also social background, our minority students have for a long time, maybe their whole life, been going in and out of different cultures. There is their heritage culture at home, and the majority culture at school. This can be challenging for the individual, but it is an increasingly valuable skill. In the globalized world we live in, culture meetings have become a daily encounter for many of us, and the minority students are professionals. This experience should be valued, and exploited in the language classrooms. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be adequately considered in practices and textbooks (Laugerud et al., 2014), which can lead to a further development of mismatch between majority and minority cultures in education. Nonetheless, the experience of learning many languages, can also create a greater cross-cultural understanding among minority students, as one of the participants, Hamid, explains:

I'm very happy that I speak many languages, because you also get another way of thinking. It's not only a language; it's a culture, history, literature. In Iran I had to learn everything I have learned in Norway, I had to learn literature and history. I'm very happy that I have that information, because now I can understand people from Iran, I can see how they think and when they do irrational things, I can understand them. You can't understand that, since you haven't lived in Iran, and if you see something strange, you can't understand it. And the same goes for Dari, and Norwegian as well. When I read, when I started with Norwegian, when I read

comments on Norwegian websites, then you get to know people's way of thinking. You understand why they do what they do [...] When you know the literature and the history of Norway, you also understand people's actions.

So far, different practices that will increase minority students' equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom have been presented. Still, if the students report that they are satisfied, is there a need for a more multilingual approach to English teaching?

First, one can not be sure that the minority students did in fact report their actual feeling toward the English instruction they had received in Norwegian schools, as long as the interviewer was a white, monolingual Norwegian English teacher, as previously discussed in chapter 4.3.3. To the participants, I might have represented the very same system which had ignored their bilingualism for years and expressed that all students should be treated the same, without regard to linguistic background. Second, to provide minority students with differentiated instruction is a right this group has, and should therefore not be ignored, even when the students themselves are content with the instruction. Third, the research is very clear on the benefits associated with bilingualism in language learning and on the disadvantages associated of being a minority student in the EFL classroom. This paradox has to be addressed, even if the minority students in this dissertation do not demand this. This last point is closely related to Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy (1997).

Since it seems that minority students are faced with a classroom practice, which takes Norwegian as the sole point of departure for teaching English, students have to be made aware of the injustice and inadequacy in such and similar practices. If this is to happen, they will need a teacher with an understanding of critical pedagogy and critical language awareness, as suggested by Correa (2011) Fairclough (2010), and Sadeghi (2008), among others. Only when the students are enabled to critically analyse their context, will they experience *true* equality with their monolingual peers. This is what true critical and multilingual English teaching will aim to achieve.

The students have to be provided with the tools needed to confront linguistic discrimination, or linguicism. Correa claims that one can use critical thinking to "understand how powerful language and linguistic choices can be in their [the students'] lives and how they have shaped their community and ethnic identity through history" (Sadeghi, 2008, p. 277). Moreover, it is important that they become aware of the fact that the policies, practices, and attitudes they are facing as a linguistic minority in the EFL classroom are results of political decisions and

structures within the educational sector. Through such a raised awareness, the students will be enabled to confront potential discrimination, lack of equality, or limited possibilities.

In practice, a critical EFL classroom will enable bilingual students to take advantage of their background languages in the learning of English, by encouraging and valuing the use of their total language proficiency. In Fairclough's vocabulary, this is called critical language awareness, and this has to be a key feature of any multilingual approach to English teaching.

### 6.3. Attitudes

Teachers' attitudes are important factors in creating an inclusive classroom environment, which can lead to equality of opportunity for all students. De Jong states that "educational practices are shaped by personal beliefs and ideologies" (2011, p. 13), this is also supported by research on teacher cognition (Borg, 2009; Phipps & Borg, 2009).

Over all, the participants reported positive attitudes towards bilingualism among their teachers and only one participant had experienced what she characterized as racism. Nonetheless, the participants could only provide a very limited number of examples of how these positive attitudes were expressed. Moreover, the interviews also revealed that the students did not value their L1s to the same degree as they reported their parents did. It was also a returning point that the students did not see how their L1s held any academic relevance. Based on these findings, I argue that the students have developed such an understanding based on their experiences in the EFL classroom. As the students have not experienced that their diverse linguistic background has been acknowledged, supported or exploited by the EFL teacher, but rather has been ignored, at least for all academic purposes, the students seem to have concluded that their L1 is of little value in their current context. For most of the students, this did not lead to a complete rejection of their L1 altogether, however, the majority seemed to feel obligated to stress the importance of English and Norwegian, at the cost of their L1. In this section, these attitudes regarding minority students' English teaching will be discussed in light of research on L3 learning and teaching, multicultural pedagogy, and critical pedagogy.

In research on language acquisition, positive attitudes towards one's L1 have shown to have a positive effect on the acquisition of new languages (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000). Romaine states that negative attitudes towards bilingualism can be more decisive than the linguistic difference between the languages itself (1994). Hence, when minority students disqualify their L1 for academic purposes, this can contribute to a subtractive factor in the learning of

English. Considering Cummins' CUP theory (Cummins, 2000; Francis, 2011), one can see how such a devaluation of the L1 and an understanding of the L1 to be inadequate for academic purposes, can hinder the exploitation of the total linguistic competence, rather than promoting an extensive linguistic and metalinguistic awareness.

Through the interviews it also became clear that the participants had internalized an understanding of equality as sameness, as described by Chinga-Ramirez (2015). This led the participants to accept that their bilingualism was silenced and made invisible in the EFL classroom. Although these attitudes might not have been explicitly expressed, they are implied in the classroom practices. Chinga-Ramirez explains such internalization in this way:

The minority population in Norway is also coloured by the general notion about a public school that is equal for all and that judge the students fairly according to the students' individual qualifications and competence [my own translation] (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015, p. 217).

Since this understanding is the dominant perception of the school system in the Norwegian society, the students accept that teachers ignore their diverse linguistic backgrounds in the classroom, and treat all student the same, without regard of their right to differentiated instruction. However, it is also necessary to consider that the students who participated in this dissertation might have displayed more positive attitudes than what they in reality hold.

According to multicultural pedagogy, rather than pursuing an egalitarian school culture, where all students are provided with the same instruction, one should provide all students with differentiated instruction, and make room for a pluralistic and diverse school context. In a context where cultural and linguistic diversity is the norm and an integrated part of the every-day life in the classroom, minority students will feel included and accepted (Aasen, 2012). Thus, instead of providing minority students with special education or additional classes, the multicultural and multilingual perspective should be a part of everything that happens in class. This will to a much greater extent support the curriculum's aim for greater equality in results for all students – including minority students.

From a critical perspective, the decisions teachers make in the classroom are seen as clear political decisions. Pennycook states that “when we allow or disallow the use of one language or another in our classrooms (...) we are making language policy” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 215). On the grounds of their attitudes, teachers will apply practices, which will define what languages are valued and which are devalued. Therefore, when minority students report that

their L1 is not very important to them, compared to Norwegian and English, this can be understood as a reflection of the attitudes they have met in school and in society at large, where minority languages hold a low status (Laugerud et al., 2014). If the minority students perceive that their L1 is disvalued in the school context, they are left in a no win position:

Multilingualism can be seen as a *no win* situation for the students. They lose if they chose to affirm their mother tongue, which can be interpreted as if ‘they’ are opposing integration. But if students try to embrace the hegemonic culture and language, it can be interpreted as if they distance themselves from their home culture and identity, and thus diverge from the dominant discourse about “the good diversity” [My own translation] (Möller, 2010, p. 101).

Only one student in this study reported to have faced any form of racist attitudes among her teachers. Nonetheless, far from all had experienced positive attitudes. Since other studies have shown that many teachers do have knowledge about the advantages associated with bilingualism (Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016), it is important that these teachers express this to their students, and hence affirm their bilingual identities and acknowledge this as a resource in the classroom.

#### 6.4. Summary

This dissertation has shown so far that the legal documents regulating Norwegian English teaching do not provide teachers with sufficient incentives to apply a multilingual approach to English teaching. This is due to an understanding of equality as sameness within Norwegian education, lack of multicultural pedagogy, and an inadequate teachers training, which do not prepare English teachers for linguistic diverse classrooms. Hence, the practices described by the participants in this dissertation, do not develop a metalinguistic awareness among the students. Rather, their bilingual backgrounds have generally been invisible in the teachers’ classroom practices. This lack of acknowledgement has in turn led the students to internalize an understanding of their L1 as unfit for academic purposes. Moreover, they have internalized an understanding of equality as sameness, thus accept that their diverse bilingual background is being silenced and made invisible in the EFL classroom.



## 7. Conclusion

In the following sections, the final conclusion to this study's research question: How do minority students experience equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom, will be answered, based on the findings presented in the previous chapter. Finally, some directions to further research on bilingual minority students' situation in the EFL classroom will be provided.

### 7.1. Equality of Opportunity for Minority Students in the EFL Classroom

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how minority students experience equality of opportunity in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. This question has been investigated by considering three important factors in the students' experience in the EFL classroom: policies, practices, and attitudes.

Based on the qualitative interviews with minority students and other research presented, this dissertation has three main findings. First, the students' bilingual background has not received much attention in the EFL classroom. Rather, their complex linguistic backgrounds have often seemed to be invisible to the teacher; hence, no differentiations have been made to exploit the potential that their backgrounds represent. Second, there seems to have been a strong sentiment of equality as sameness dominating the EFL classrooms, where the students expressed that they had been treated equally to those who have a monolingual background, with no differentiated instruction. Thus, the participants in this dissertation had internalized this understanding of equality as sameness. They had accepted that as long as they received the same instruction as their monolingual peers, they should be satisfied. One of the participants expressed that she could only blame herself if she could not keep up with the rest of the class, although the teacher had not made any attempts to differentiate the instruction to her bilingual background. Furthermore, when some students reported that they preferred to use Norwegian dictionaries in the EFL classroom, this might be due to an understanding of their L1 as inappropriate or inadequate for academic purposes. This is also reflected in the students' general attitudes towards their L1s. Thus, one can conclude that there is a serious failure in incorporating the curriculum's aim for native-language-involvement in the English teaching. Third, there was a great variety in the degree of metalinguistic awareness among the students. Although all of the participants had a bilingual background, not all had yet become aware of the advantages associated with bilingualism in the learning of a new language. Hence, their bilingualism can therefore not be characterized as additive

Therefore, the conclusion is that minority students do not experience equality of opportunity in the EFL classroom because their linguistic background, in general, does not receive the necessary attention for this group to thrive. It should not be acceptable to simply cite socioeconomic reasons for the current underperformance of minority students in the EFL classroom. Rather, one should recognise that current policies, practices, and attitudes do not support minority students' English learning, it impedes it.

Since both the Norwegian Education Act and the curriculum aim at providing equality of opportunity for all students in Norwegian education – also for minority students, one will have to consider what the research has suggested: That students can and should draw on their combined linguistic proficiency when learning new languages. This notion should also be reflected in official policy documents. There should be an aim to develop a multilingual approach to English teaching, which acknowledges and affirms students' diverse backgrounds and identities. Moreover, the curriculum should intend to exploit the linguistic awareness these students encompass in the learning of new languages. With a clear message to teachers and institutions that educate future teachers, to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism in their classrooms, one can expect a change in the current situation. However, for this to happen, there is a need for a revised curriculum, which considers that we live in a globalized world, where culture meetings have become a daily and where diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are valued and exploited. If this is not done, it can lead to an increasing mismatch between majority and minority cultures within Norwegian education.

This work is urgent due to two reasons. First, for pedagogical purposes: Although we cannot say that there is a massive failure in English among minority students, they do perform below average. This calls for a new approach to EFL teaching for minority students. Second, for moral and ethical reasons, to provide minority students with differentiated instruction is a question of tolerance and respect – tolerance and respect of these students' identities and languages.

## **7.2. Directions to further research**

The lack of research on EFL teaching for minority students might be due to the fact that research on equality of opportunity and education, do not consider EFL teaching, and that researchers on EFL do not consider equality of opportunity – particularly for minority students. This might be due to a perception of pedagogy, and language teaching in particular,

to be apolitical and neutral fields of research. However, this is not the case. Language teaching can not be seen isolated from “the historical, political and intellectual roots of the language pedagogy profession” (Appel & Muysken, 1987, p. 3).

Therefore, I believe there is a need for more, comprehensive research on the relationship between policies regarding minority students and teacher practices in the EFL classroom, and in Norwegian education at large. How does the current political and academic discourses that have developed over the past decades impact teacher practices and the socio-educational context for minority students?

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## Appendix

### Interview Guide – Norwegian

Rammesetting:

- Samtykkeskjema: prosjektet
- Hva jeg er interessert i: Deres meninger og opplevelser.
- Eventuelle spørsmål

Egne erfaringer:

- Familiebakgrunn i hjemlandet og her?
- Hva er din språkbakgrunn?
  - Hvilke språk kan du?
  - Hvilke språk bruker dere hjemme/venner/friminutt?
  - Hvilket språk snakker du best?
  - Hvilke språk oppfatter du verdsettes mest hjemme?
- Hvilken språkopplæring har du mottatt?
  - Hvilke språk har du lært på skolen?
  - Har du fått morsmålsopplæring?
  - Hvilke utbytte har følte du at du fikk av denne?
  - Hvilken støtte til å lære morsmålet har du ellers hatt? (TV, reise, besøk)
- Engelskundervisningen
  - Hvordan har du trivdes i engelskundervisningen?
  - Hvordan har du likt engelskfaget i forhold til andre fag?
  - Hvor viktig er engelsk i forhold til de andre språkene du kan? Hvorfor?

Nøkkelspørsmål:

- På hvilken måte opplever du at undervisningen har vært tilpasset/lagt til rette for deg/din situasjon, særlig med tanke på din flerspråklighet (Policy)?
  - På hvilken måte har du opplevd engelskundervisningen som tilpasset/lagt til rette for deg som flerspråklig?
  - Hvorfor tror du ikke det har blitt lagt til rette for deg?
- På hvilken måte oppfatter du at lærerne i engelsk har tatt hensyn til at du er flerspråklig? (Praksis)
  - Har læreren lagt til rette for at du kan utnytte din flerspråklighet på noen måte? – Hvordan?
  - Har du på noen måte blitt behandlet annerledes pga. din flerspråklighet i engelskundervisningen? – Hvordan?
  - Har du fått mulighet til å utnytte ditt morsmål i engelskundervisningen? – Hvordan? Hvorfor ikke?

- Hvilke holdninger oppfatter du at lærerne i engelsk og fremmedspråk har hatt til flerspråklighet? (Holdninger)
  - På hvilken måte har lærerne uttrykt noe positivt/negativt omkring flerspråklighet/minoritetsspråk i forbindelse med språklæringen? – Hva?
  - Har du merket hvilke holdninger lærerne har hatt til flerspråklighet?

Oppsummering:

- Oppsummere funn, er det riktig forstått?

## Letter of consent – Norwegian

### Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet:

### ”Hvordan opplever minoritetslever like muligheter i engelskundervisningen?”

#### Bakgrunn og hensikt

Dette er en forespørsel til deg om å delta i et intervju i forbindelse med en masteroppgave om minoritetslever og minoritetsspråks rolle i engelskundervisningen som en del av min masterutdanning i engelsk- og fremmedspråksdidaktikk. Du er valgt ut på bakgrunn av din erfaring som minoritetsspråklig elev på videregående skole.

#### Hva innebærer deltakelsen?

Intervjuet utføres som en del av et masterprosjekt, der målet er å skrive en masteroppgave om minoritetslever og minoritetsspråks rolle i engelskundervisningen. Et utvalg informanter vil bli intervjuet. Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp for deretter å bli skrevet ned (transkribert) og analysert. Opptakene vil bli slettet etter at prosjektet er ferdigstilt.

Fokus i dette prosjektet er på dine personlige erfaringer med og oppfatninger om minoritetslever og minoritetsspråks rolle i engelskundervisningen.

#### Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du sier ja til å delta kan du senere, når som helst og uten å oppgi grunn, trekke tilbake ditt samtykke. Informasjonen som du oppgir om dine erfaringer og oppfatninger skal kun brukes slik som beskrevet. Opplysningene om deg vil bli

behandlet konfidensielt. Alle opplysningene vil bli behandlet uten navn eller andre gjenkjennelige opplysninger. Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Det er kun studenten knyttet til prosjektet som vil ha adgang til de opplysningene du oppgir og det vil ikke være mulig å identifisere deg videre i masteroppgaven.

Ved ytterlige spørsmål, kontakt Jonas Iversen på 909 35 958 eller [jonasive@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:jonasive@stud.ntnu.no).

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*Forskerens underskrift*

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*Informantens underskrift*

