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**Learning Norwegian in Norwegian to become Norwegian?**

**A study on the monolingual strategy for refugees learning Norwegian at Voksenopplæringen  
and how it affects their prospects for integration into society**

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*Master's thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation – SVF-3901*

*May 2021*



## Abstract

Refugees in Norway are the group that experiences discrimination and social exclusion the most. The reason is insufficient language skills, regardless that they are provided with favourable possibilities for learning Norwegian with up to 3000 hours on a full-time basis and monetary support during this period devoted just for learning a language. However, the problem is that the percentage of those who reach higher levels of proficiency in Norwegian is low, participation in work or education is lower than is expected after participation in the course, the median income among refugees is significantly lower than among the rest of the population, and as a result, integrational interventions do not bring the desired results .

Teaching Norwegian as a second language to adult immigrants is still a developing field that is steadily being researched, usually following poor outcomes, for further developments and improvements in the field.

However, what has been neglected to be researched in-depth and explained before, is namely the monolingual strategy of teaching, which includes learning a language in the language of learning, a language that students do not yet understand, which can be a hindrance for learning and further integration. Still, a different approach was always impractical and hardly possible to employ.

Nonetheless, the 10 qualitative interviews conducted with those who were entitled to the course and have already completed it showed that monolingual strategy was beneficial for learning a language, enculturation, adaptation, and had a favourable effect on assisting in refugees' integrational process. But improper allocation of students to groups made students unequal in the learning process, which was a hindrance to learning and as a result – graduation with insufficient language skills, which is a problem accessing a labour market and social activities. This, in turn, had an impact on their prospects to interact with the Norwegians and further integration, because namely interaction with Norwegian people and understanding their world views were identified as an “integration” by most of the participants.

**Keywords:** Monolingual strategy for learning Norwegian; Norwegian language course in Voksneopplæring; Language and integration among refugees in Norway; language and integration; language tuition for refugees.



## Acknowledgement

I want to thank the Arctic University of Norway for being entitled to a master's degree in Peace and Conflict Transformation and all the staff of the department that assisted me during my study period. I'm thankful for all the workshops, encouragements, and the data collection support that I was provided while working on my thesis.

I would like to pay special regard and express my deepest gratitude for invaluable assistance to my supervisor Christine Smith-Simonsen who helped me choose the right direction, provided guidance, and offered suggestions throughout the whole year as I was working on the project.

I would like to thank the participants in my research, who were in touch and who referred candidates for my research to me.

I want to express my gratitude to my groupmate, Marija Stancic, for proofreading my thesis.

Finally, I wish to thank everyone for any word of encouragement said to me during the writing process.

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# 1 Chapter: Introduction

## 1.1 Introducing the topic

Teaching Norwegian as a second language is a still developing field. Today, language competence among immigrants is high on the political agenda. The current action plan (2019-2022) is called “Integration through knowledge”, where the primary focus is directed towards teaching immigrants the Norwegian language because it is seen as the key to further education, employment, integration, and contribution to a sustainable society (“Integration through knowledge”, 2019).

However, the government does not take responsibility for teaching the Norwegian language to all immigrants in Norway. It takes responsibility for refugees only because refugees are the only type of immigrants who move unwillingly and upon receiving asylum in Norway they are obliged to attend a language course as a part of an Introduction program, that was specially designed to assist them in the process of reconstructing their lives in Norway, so later they can participate and contribute to their new society. That is why they were chosen as a focus group in this research.

Learning the language is the first step and the main factor in determining how successfully refugees will integrate. Success in achieving good language skills is vital for securing the social order and peaceful coexistence of different cultural groups. Good language competence leads to peace, while poor language competence leads to marginalization and segregation of different immigrant groups, potentially conflicts on cultural grounds, increased criminal activity and instabilities.

The government provides refugees with a safe and welcoming environment so they can re-establish themselves in a new country. Immigration authorities and policy makers developed integrational programs, making efforts to reform public services to eliminate any possible kind of discrimination against immigrants and the resources they bring, as well as arrange educational programs to teach refugees the Norwegian language, give knowledge about the country and its culture (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008).

Thus, a peaceful yet diverse Norwegian society would require a new understanding of what it means to be Norwegian and a restructuring of society from a relatively homogeneous country to a diverse one (St.meld.nr. 49, 2003). The term “diversity” aims to describe not just the



composition of the country but also the inclusion of diverse groups into society (Thorud, 2020). This covers diversity in social and cultural background, religion, functional ability, gender and sexual orientation, and all possible differences between people, including the reasons why they move to the country - for work and education, family and adoption, or as a way to escape war and conflict (Andressen et al., 2014).

However, discrimination towards refugees is still apparent in the Norwegian society. Though contemporary views on what it means to be Norwegian have changed, and today, speaking Norwegian language is condition number one to be viewed as a Norwegian. In other words, poor language skills are the main reason for discrimination (Eriksen, 2013).

Language programs from previous years have not been as successful as planned. This failure called for more research to identify problems and potential solutions; an increased amount of hours that are provided for learning a language, introducing higher requirements for teachers' competence, and introducing mandatory exams and language fluency conditions for obtaining a permanent residency as motivational factors to learn were all suggested and tested. However, the percentage of people who manage to reach higher levels of fluency in Norwegian language has not considerably increased. Numbers show that the percentage of those who achieve an intermediate language level is relatively low and participation in employment and salaries are considerably lower than that of the rest of the population; the percentage of those who experience discrimination and exclusion is high. The reason most commonly provided is insufficient language level (Eriksen, 2013; Mallows, 2014; Djuve & Kavli, 2018; Innst. 190 S., 2019-2020; Brekke et al., 2020). This raises the question of why so few refugees manage to reach an intermediate level of Norwegian language if the possibilities and conditions for learning the language are improved.

What has not been investigated in depth before is the monolingual strategy that is adopted in Norway for teaching Norwegian. This strategy means that refugees have to learn the Norwegian language in Norwegian, a language that they do not understand, which can be an obstacle for learning the language and for further integration. In choosing this learning strategy, the question of "what is more beneficial" does not seem to be as relevant as "what is practical and possible". The monolingual strategy of learning has always been a priority for teaching in Norway for practical and economic reasons. It is physically impossible to ensure that a native speaker of the refugees' own language teach Norwegian language to all migrants due to the variety of

languages and local dialects the refugees speak. Having bilingual teachers for some groups and not others would contradict Norwegian values of equality and create discrimination (Mallows, 2014; Lurfaldet et al., 6:2020).

## 1.2 Problem statement

Language is a crucial component for stability, security and peace in society. If refugees in Norway fail to learn the majority language, this could have serious consequences for the society at large.

Refugees are provided with an Introduction program specially designed for them, which includes a course of Norwegian language in an Adult Educational Center, in the municipality where they have been resettled (in this research, the original name in Norwegian will be used – *Voksenoppl ring*). The municipality provides refugees with 600 hours of language and social studies education, 550 of which are dedicated to learning the Norwegian language.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is used in Norway, both for planning the teaching curriculum and for evaluating students' knowledge. The framework includes 3 stages of measurements: A1-A2 (basic user); B1-B2 (Independent user); C1-C2 advanced user; in which level B1 is considered a threshold level and is described as: "a user can understand the main points in a standard text and talk about familiar topics related to everyday activity", such as work, school, leisure. B2 proficiency is described as: "can understand the main content of complex texts about both concrete and professional discussions within their own subject area" ("Det felles europeiske rammeverket for spr k laering, undervisning, vurdering", n.d.). The analogous framework that is based on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) in the United States (US) identifies B1 as limited working proficiency and B2 as professional working proficiency (Corporate Finance Institute, 2019).

Participants who are unable to reach the higher language competency levels B1 or B2 within the allotted 600 hours may extend their language education to up to 3000 hours of instruction in total; however, those who fail to reach level B2 within 600 hours are only taught up to level B1 in their extended study time (LOV-2003-07-04-80, §17). The language education that is provided for them is conducted on a full-time basis and they obtain introductory monetary benefits for attending the school and learning the language. The amount of introductory benefits

is equal to twice the basic social welfare amount. Participants under the age of 25 receive 2/3 of the benefit (LOV-2003-07-04-80, §8).

There were 32,206 people who completed education in Voksenopplæring between 2010 and 2018. One year after completing the introduction program, only approximately 50% of them are working and approximately 10% are pursuing further education; this is less than the desirable goal of 70% who are in work or education one year after completing the program. Between 2014 and 2017 fewer than 5% of participants managed to pass professional working proficiency (B2 level). The highest percentage pass level A2 - 45%, followed by 30% using the language at a B1 level. Among those who work seven years after completing the introduction program, only 24% managed to earn 300,000 NOK (that is considered a median income) or more before tax (Innst. 190 S., 2019-2020). Norwegian Official Report to the government presents that there is already a growing risk of inequality on financial grounds. When these inequalities are reinforced with cultural differences, this can undermine unity, trust, and the social model's legitimacy if Norway does not improve its abilities to integrate refugees from the countries outside the European Union (NOU, 2:2017).

Given that only about 35% of people manage to pass B1 and B2 levels, that are sufficient for further education and work, the question arises whether the monolingual strategy itself is a possible obstacle for learning as refugees find themselves in an unfamiliar learning environment and struggle to learn when they do not understand instructions and explanations. As a result of failing to learn the language, they then fail to integrate socially, are unable to participate in society and struggle when it comes to entering the employment market as most employers demand higher levels of Norwegian language – B2 or C1.

### 1.3 Research questions

The study focuses on addressing the following overarching research question: Does the monolingual strategy for refugees learning Norwegian at Voksenopplæringen affect their prospects for integration?

In addressing this issue, the thesis will explore the following sub-questions:

- i. How are the students motivated to learn Norwegian upon entering Voksenopplæringen?
- ii. How does the composition of classes impact the learning environment?

- iii. How does language competence affect integration into Norwegian society?

#### 1.4 Research objectives, scope and relevance

Norway, as a party to both the 1967 Protocol relating the status of refugees and the 1951 Refugee Convention, accepts refugees and assists in their integration. This necessitates aligning legislations and policies to the emergent socio-cultural differences in the country. Accepting refugees is a life-saving effort and incorporating them into Norwegian society is vital for maintaining social order and helping them to become contributors to the economy and development of the country, which is a goal of the current integration strategy (2019-2022) “Integration through knowledge” – to increase labour participation and societal participation in general.

This study highlights the link between language learning by monolingual strategy and integration among refugees. The research provides deep insight into the impact of the monolingual strategy specifically on language learning outcomes and their relevance for the integration process.

First of all, it is necessary to determine whether and how participants are willing to learn and integrate, or if they go to school because it is their duty. Motivation is an important issue to concentrate on because it is a key component, determining how devoted participants will be to achieving their goals. Secondly, it is necessary to understand participants’ wellbeing in the school and class, which includes relationships with teachers and classmates and the composition of the classes whether gathering people from different countries, cultures, languages spoken, ages and backgrounds has an influence on an individual’s wellbeing and learning process in class in general. By combining these two objectives, it will be possible to understand whether there are impediments in the school that cause poor learning outcomes.

Finally, it is necessary to establish a connection between the monolingual language learning strategy, in which learning and teaching language is the same, and the impact of learning a language this way on integration, firstly identifying what integration actually means to each individual participant and how language competence affects their everyday lives in Norway and integration in general.

The findings can contribute to the understanding of the reasons behind such low rates of achievements of higher levels of fluency in Norwegian and whether learning a language monolingually is beneficial for refugees as a part of the integration process.

### 1.5 Relevance to peace studies

Immigration can increase the possibility of conflicts in host countries that arise as a result of the social exclusion of immigrants or migrants' failure to integrate into society. When accepting refugees, the state is obliged to develop an adequate integrational strategy, failure of which might fuel ethnic, racial and/or religious tensions. In line with the integration requirements, immigrants must learn the majority language that makes them competitive in the labour market and allows them to contribute to society. Failure in mastering the majority language might also fuel anti-immigrant sentiments and hate against abusers of the welfare system, especially when failure of speaking a language is augmented with cultural and religious differences. The main goal behind the integrational policies is to ensure social order, security, and integrity.

The ability to speak the language of the host community is the most crucial element of integration. Language gives immigrants living in the new community, resilience and paves the way for access to education, employment, leisure activities, and a possibility to build social relationships with the local population (Medeiros, 2017). However, even during the language learning process, there might appear linguistic intolerance and discrimination among the local population.

Providing refugees with language training and teaching can be considered a core measure to prevent conflict and negative consequences. It is important for refugees to understand their hosts and their cultural norms and thereby promote peaceful coexistence. Lack of language skills leads to exclusion and inequality, leading to the fragmentation of society and clashes between the refugees and the host population through increased hate, racism, and violence. Language acts as a unifying factor among people with diverse ethnicities. Language and integration are very interconnected and link peaceful cultural and interpersonal relations. Voksenoppl ring, in this context, serves as an organization from which refugees start their process of integration. It guarantees them a safe room for talking and being included, creates a sense of belonging, and serves as a transitional period that gives them time and encouragement to adapt to a new and unknown culture smoothly.

Successful integration is assumed to be an outcome of a successfully learnt language. Insufficient mastery of the spoken language derails the process of integration and, in the long run, destabilizes the harmony between refugees and the local host community.

## 1.6 Outline of the chapters

The research is divided into 5 chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, presents the problem statement and research questions, and frames the research and its relevance to peace studies. The second chapter is dedicated to determining methods for the research, data sources and justifying the choice of methods, as well as presenting the process for the selection of informants, accounts ethical considerations and discusses limitations and delimitations of the research. The third chapter presents relevant to the research area literature; informs about the situation in the domain as of today, its historical development and studies that have been conducted in this field. Also, discusses the theoretical framework relevant to the research topic and establishes the link between the theoretical framework and the study findings. The fourth chapter consists of the findings and analysis of data obtained from fieldwork as well as the link between the theory and the findings. The fifth chapter comprises of the conclusions of the results obtained in the course of work on the main issues and the summary for the work conducted. It also proposes recommendations for practitioners and future researchers in the field.

## 2 Chapter: Research Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative study that examines whether the monolingual strategy, which is being practiced in Norway, hinders learning the Norwegian language, and subsequently integration; for refugees who attended a language course in Voksenopplæringen as a part of their Introduction program in the period of 2015-2020. This topic is important to investigate because it will lead to a deeper understanding of the problems relating to the integration of people with an asylum background in Norway.

The study is based on primary sources, such as official reports from the Norwegian government/governmental organizations, legislative acts, and statistics, while information about the background and context to the research question is gathered from secondary sources, like master theses from Norwegian universities, scholarly articles, reviews and other scientific publications. The secondary literature was also used to discuss existing knowledge and different perspectives in previous research on the question, as well as to support researcher's own findings.

Reports and statistical data were used to inform about the situation surrounding the research question; aligning them with research conducted in this field made it possible to identify a research gap and formulate a problem statement.

This chapter also outlines the rationale for using the qualitative method of thematic analysis as a data evaluation framework. It describes the study procedures, sampling, data collection and analysis. In addition, it discusses assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research as well as accounting for ethical considerations in the research process.

### 2.2 Method and Design

The purpose of the study is to provide an explanatory account of the refugees' experiences, attitudes and feelings towards a monolingual strategy and its effectiveness within the Norwegian language course in Voksenopplæringen as a part of an introduction program in relation to their integration into the society. The explanatory research method is suitable for this study because the phenomena have not been well researched before. It allows the exploration of the research question in a way that leads to understanding the origins, formations, and driving

forces of the refugees' experiences as well as explanations of the underlying causes (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This study explores the impacts of the monolingual strategy and additional obstacles to learning and the integration process, identifying and explaining causes revealed by the participants.

The method applied for capturing these experiences is individual qualitative interviews. Semi-structured interviews are characterized by a questioning guide used in the same order in all the interviews conducted (Crimson et al., 2006). The semi-structured interviews are suitable for reflecting on the bigger picture of the research questions and illuminating the diverse participant perceptions, attitudes and experiences. Ten interviews were conducted. The questioning guide consisted of 15 questions, with each interview session taking between 30 and 40 minutes. The interviewing process took different timeframes with those participants who were familiar with the researcher from before. They revealed much more profound insights and more reflections than those who were not acquainted with the researcher. These participants strictly and concisely replied to the questions that were asked and were afraid when they thought their answers moved away from the question, but when they were moving away from the questions, important information was revealed. Participants who were familiar with the researcher from before emphasized that they were available for contact any time if needed, while other participants were not available after the interview. After the first interviews, some participants contacted the researcher as they thought more about what was asked and what they replied and wanted to change or clarify their answers. Thus, the question guide was proposed to be sent to the participants in advance, so they can reflect on their experiences and provide more reliable answers. However, not all participants who received a question guide in advance read the questions and cogitated on their answers before the interview.

The interview guide is attached in the appendix.

The study was conducted among former participants in a Norwegian language course that is a part of the Introduction program of Adult Educational Center, i.e. Voksenopplæringen in Tromsø who finished the course and passed the exam between 2015 and 2020. The research focussed on 10 participants across different ages, academic qualifications, cultures and motivations to learn a language.



Their stay in Norway was five years on average, including their time of living in an asylum reception centre waiting for The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to process their application for a residence permit in Norway, which constituted one year on average.

The study used purposive sampling criteria, which means that participants were chosen according to preselected criteria relevant to the research question (Mack, 2005). Another type of purposive sampling implemented in this research was snowball sampling - the participants who have already taken part in the research referred other people they knew who were suitable for the research (Mack, 2005).

The sampling criteria for participation in the project were as follows:

- 1) hold a residence permit in Norway on a humanitarian basis or seeking an asylum in Norway – be a refugee;
- 2) having had a right and a duty for an introductory program and Norwegian language course at Voksenopplæring;
- 3) having completed the Norwegian course that is a part of that program in the period 2015-2020.

The snowball sampling approach was practical since, due to lockdown and restrictive measures, it was impossible to access participants by other means because places where participants could be found, were closed.

The fieldwork was conducted in Tromsø, and thus all the participants were graduates of Voksenopplæringen in Tromsø.

Each interview was conducted privately on neutral territory in a suitable preselected venue and time. Some of the interviews were conducted over the phone. However, talking over the phone did not turn out to be an effective method as compared to direct contact and face to face interviews, because facial expressions and gestures were being used as additional means of communicating, as interviews were conducted in a language foreign to both participants and the researcher. Some participants were too limited in their language skills. Online video conferencing was deployed to capture the emotions, feelings, reactions, and visual information. Participant relocation and the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions increased the need for online video conferencing and interviewing. Even though the fieldwork was conducted outside of the quarantine period, the restriction measures were still imposed and some of the participants did not feel safe interacting with people outside of their immediate environment.

Though each interview conducted followed the question guide, new information and new ideas were revealed. Thus, there was a need to contact previous participants to ask additional questions and confirm previous interview responses. The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with the participants' permission and quick notes were taken during the interview.

#### 2.2.1 Trustworthiness and credibility

It is not easy to measure the study's trustworthiness, as the research focuses on the participants' experiences and perspectives. However, the validation process requires a more in-depth insight that necessitates procedures to build rigour in the data. It was proposed to the participants that they validate the data themselves by listening to the interview recording or reading the interview transcript; they were then asked to give feedback on whether the information they provided is correctly understood and change it if they disagree with something. However, most participants did not want to listen to the recording or read the transcript, saying that they consider that information they provided is understood correctly.

As data relied exclusively on the participants, it was essential to understand their perspective, the way they understand it, understand how they make sense the way they do and include the experience from the previous interviews (that participants do not want to listen to the recordings again). This led to asking for more clarifications and explanations during the interview process. Once the interview was finished, participants' responses were summarized, restated and repeated, so participants could verify the information they provided and affirm that it was understood is correctly.

The study could also be affected by what participants chose to tell. For example, if they disliked something in the school, they tended to relate only the negative side of their experiences. That is why it was also necessary to ask about the groupmates they studied with, the teacher, benefits of the course, etc, to understand whether it was a negative experience just for them, or for everyone, whether everything was negative, or just something that tainted the rest of the experience.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

The main focus of the data and analysis process was interpreting the content of stories and personal experiences shared by the participants based on the research question and findings of other researchers.

The study holds to the ontological conviction that participants create their meanings of what they have experienced and that their meanings are unique, which frames their perspectives upon their realities. The research's goal is to understand the participants accounts of their lived social realities. Meanings of life events are not constant or fixed; they evolve, being influenced by subsequent circumstances and events (Neubauer et al., 2019). To connect these circumstances and events together, a flexible approach of thematic analysis was utilized. However, this flexibility can also be disadvantageous because it can lead to a lack of coherence between themes (Holloway & Todres, 2003). The coherence between themes is increased by applying explicit epistemological positions that support study claims. Another disadvantage is that thematic analysis is quite subjective and is based on the researcher's judgment, and thus can miss various data, particularly those not related to research questions.

The conceptual framework for analysing the interviews thematically was built upon the theoretical model of Braun and Clarke (2006), where thematic analysis entails identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data obtained. The rationale for using thematic analysis is that this approach produces insightful analysis, making it possible to answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were approached in an inductive "bottom-up" approach aligned to research questions. First, they were approached as codes and later developed into themes representing the research question.

The first step to preparing the data for analysis was translating it into English and transcribing the interviews. The interviews were transcribed using an intelligent type technique to interpret, clean up grammar and filter words. Interviews were conducted in languages that were not native to the participants and were often not spoken well. Hence, this type of transcription was imperative to understand the responses.

The analysis was conducted in a constructionist way in order to see how the data are developing reality. Based on the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006), the following steps were then employed:

- 1) Familiarization with data, which included understanding and learning the data.
- 2) Pattern and coding identifying. As the interviews came from only 10 participants, coding was done manually, and not with the use of software such as NVivo that could assist in a coding process because doing the coding manually enabled full awareness

of all the data and thus was more conducive to a more qualitative coding while trying to code through NVivo proved not to capture the meaning of the phrases correctly.

- 3) Theme development.
- 4) Reviewing themes, comparing findings from the interviews with those that were discovered by other researchers found through literature review and including these insights into the analysis.
- 5) Defining themes.
- 6) Interpretation and writing the report.

Through each stage of the analyses is listed as sequential, the process was quite iterative.

## 2.4 Reflexivity

To produce a genuine analysis, it is crucial to be self-aware, evaluate one's role throughout the research and persistently analyse how own beliefs or convictions can impact participants' answers or data analysis. It was therefore essential to reflect on the position of the researcher throughout the interview process, reading through the transcripts and conducting the analysis of one's own actions.

This research began with the assumption that the monolingual strategy might be an obstacle for learning and further integration, as the researcher had a similar experience when attending the same course in the same school – Voksenopplæringen Tromsø – for a short time. These experiences could influence the way the questions were posed to the participants and thus the information the participants provided.

However, being an insider proved to be beneficial as it allowed for the formulation of more relevant questions that those who would not be familiar with the subtleties of participation in the Norwegian course might not have thought of. It also provided better access to the participants and inspired trust from them. Thus, richer data was obtained.

To mitigate all possible influences that the researcher could bring on participants or analysis, the participants' perspectives from their angles was stressed in order to understand why they think the way they do.

The researcher also employed journaling. After each interview, the mood and environment in which the interview was conducted were described in a diary.

During the interviews, the researcher tried to act neutral and make participants feel that they are the source of knowledge that they provide. The researcher did not show any reactions to the participants' answers because any particular reaction to the information provided can change what they choose to tell.

After each interview, remarks regarding the process, new information, and potential confusions and questions were noted in the diary. This led to analysing each interview separately before analysing them all together to understand the perspective of each of the participants individually first.

## 2.5 Ethical Considerations

The fieldwork began after the research project was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). Participation in the research was entirely based on the respondents' consent to take part in the study. Participants received and signed the letter of consent with the study description and the contact information of the NSD, the researcher and the supervisor. Privacy and confidentiality of the respondents' information were ensured by concealing the identities and restricting access to the collected data. Participants were also informed that their personal data would not be mentioned in the research and data shared would be anonymized. Also, responders were informed that they had a right to voluntarily withdraw from the research all the information they shared at any time if they change their mind regarding participation in the project for any reason. The anonymity of the participants was strictly respected. Data were saved on an encrypted USB drive and stored in a locker with a key. All the data and recordings gained while conducting the interviews will be deleted as soon as the thesis is submitted. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants.

## 2.6 Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions are issues and ideas taken for granted as truth and are out of the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). The study is based on semi-structured interviews, where participants had all control over the content and data they have provided. It is assumed that participants had a genuine desire to participate in this study and provided honest reflections on their experiences. The study was also conducted on the assumption that the participant selection was valid and guided by strict adherence to the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were based on the

assumption that they bring together individuals with relevant experiences required for the study and that participants did not lie about inclusion criteria.

Limitations are possible weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control and are closely associated with the chosen research design and other factors contributing to implementing it (Price & Murnan, 2004). The most significant limitation in this research is a language issue. Even though all participants have already finished their Norwegian language course, some still experience problems expressing their thoughts. Besides, some participants explicitly reported that they had problems with finding appropriate words to express their thoughts. Also, some of the participants struggled to understand the questions and an explanation of the questions was necessary for them. If they could discuss questions in their native language, they could possibly provide richer data and more profound insights on issues discussed.

The study participants were mainly male. The study includes only one female participant. During the recruitment process, females were not found among the graduates of the school.

The current COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictive and quarantine measures could have an influence on how participants reflect on their integration and learning process. However, their experiences are still important in understanding issues of integration and factors that promote it.

Delimitations are boundaries or limits that the researcher sets to make it more feasible to achieve the study's aims and objectives; factors that are not included in the investigation (Simon, 2011).

The interviews of refugees-graduates of Voksenopplæring were delimited to only one Voksenopplæringen in Tromsø. During the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple lockdowns and restrictions, concentrating the research within one city's borders was a feasible and reasonable solution. Data saturation was attained at the 10th participant delimiting the research to a maximum of ten participants. The inclusion criteria for the study delimited the participants to refugees and asylum seekers only.

Refugees' challenges in learning Norwegian and integration, organizational issues and challenges of Voksenopplæring will be presented and discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## 3 Chapter: Language and integration: background and theoretical underpinnings

### 3.1 Introduction

The language program, as a part of the integrational program for refugees, is created by Norwegian policymakers and government officials who most often do not have experience with learning a language in a new society and attempting to integrate there. There is a high number of studies that have been conducted on the work of Voksenopplæringen; teachers' competence, organizational issues of the Introduction program and Norwegian language courses are well-researched topics that are being examined steadily for planning governmental programs and improvements in the field of integration and inclusion. Topics mostly included teachers' experiences and the perceptions of Voksenopplæringen on what interventions are correct and how they should be done, how migrants should be taught (Høie, 2017; Langøien et al., 2020), how effective these interventions are (Lerfaldet et al., 6:2020), teachers' and schools' challenges regarding teaching Norwegian, and what teachers consider would be suitable and effective (Kassah 2012; Teig, 2018) while research was rarely conducted among those who receive these services on what is actually effective or would be effective for them. It is emphasized in multiple resources that refugees' needs most often are neglected.

There is a need for further studies on what effects the interventions and teaching methods have on immigrants (Langøien, et al., 2020). Previous research has failed to explain the effectiveness of the monolingual language learning strategy used in Voksenopplæringen in the context of integration of immigrants into society. However, it has highlighted that learning Norwegian with a minority language-speaking teacher guarantees better results in learning accomplishments but is not a priority in schools and is impractical due to financial and human resource restrictions (Lerfaldet et al., 6:2020).

The chapter gives an overview of the development of language teaching practices for adult immigrants, presents challenges existing in Voksenopplæringen that impact the learning process, and describes problems related to integration and language. The chapter also presents previous findings within the field related to the research questions. It additionally provides a theoretical framework on which the study findings are envisioned.

### 3.2 Theoretical Framework

A heterogeneous society is faced with acculturation challenges which call for a restructuring of society. These can be explained based on John Berry's integrational strategy (1997) which emphasizes that attaining an integration can only be possible in multicultural societies where preconditions for it are established in advance. This also applies to Norway as a diverse society where governmental work and policies are aimed at inclusion of migrants, equality, and prevention of discrimination. However, according to John Berry's social-psychological model (1997), the strategy and extent of integration is based on the desires of immigrants. These include:

- Assimilation – when an individual does not want to maintain their culture and adapts to the majority group in the new country.
- Separation – when an individual wants to keep their culture and does not want to integrate with the majority group of a new country.
- Marginalization – when an individual does not want to keep their culture, but at the same time does not want to take on a new culture.
- Integration – balance between own culture and at the same time adopting features of the new society (Berry, 1997).

Importantly, desires of migrants to integrate are also dependent on the emotional aspects of acculturation. Acculturation is identified as a process of cultural and psychological change in entering a new society when immigrants learn a language and a culture of the host society. Following acculturation is adaptation which refers to individual psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction (Sam & Berry, 2010). Success in learning a language plays a part in acculturation and adaptation which means it can determine migrants' wellbeing and life satisfaction by influencing to what extent they will want, and importantly, be able to integrate.

#### 3.2.1 Hartmut Esser's Intergenerational Theory of Integration

Harmut Esser's intergenerational theory aims to explain the process faced by the first generation of migrants, as second-generation migrants can experience different integrational experiences due to assimilation. It explains the series of stages migrants go through on arrival in the new country and the integration in mainstream society which lead to them ceasing to be a separate and disadvantaged section of the community. Esser's model reflects on the social mechanisms that promote the integration process and also considers the exceptions in the regular process. Esser's intergenerational theory of integration focuses on migrants' decisions, with the local



population serving as the background figures that affect the incorporation into the society (Esser, 2006). For instance, the influence of natives can be reflected in discrimination in employment opportunities. Despite the impact of the local population as the major contributors to the swift and peaceful integration of migrants into the society, the intergenerational integration model is based on the actions of the immigrants themselves. The theory can be defined as a model of migrants' attitudes and strategies (Eve, 2010).

Ministry of Education and Research, in the law Prop. 89L 2019-2020 "Law on integration through learning, education and work", emphasizes the importance of giving people an opportunity and responsibility to plan their own education and work as well as map the Norwegian language learning plan on the basis of their educational needs/desires which Voksenoppl ring should use to adapt for them a personalized approach, thus helping immigrants to adapt their Norwegian language learning to the "strategy of integration" they chose for themselves.

Esser's theory of intergenerational integration identifies that learning the language of the host country helps to develop a sense of belonging, reconstruct a life and identity; failure can have negative consequences, such as social distance and discrimination. Unsuccessful integration is, thus, explained by the level of proficiency in the language of the host society (Esser, 2006).

Esser's intergenerational theory of social integration focuses on individuals and relates to the manner in which they are integrated into an existing system and proficiency in the language of the host society is at the core of all further integration (Esser, 2006).

The four levels of integration based on Esser's intergenerational theory of integration include:

- cultururation (refers to language skills, learning cultural norms and rules of behaviour),
- positioning (how a migrant is positioned or rather positions oneself – being given a citizenship, taking on occupation, education, and acquiring employment),
- interaction (establishing social contacts within everyday environment) and
- identification (emotional relationships between individuals and the social system as a whole).

### 3.2.2 Jose Alberto Diaz's Theory of Integration

While Esser's intergenerational theory concentrates on the migrants' own strategy to integrate and John Berry on favourable conditions for it, Jose Alberto Diaz posits that integration is

attained when individuals become working members of the community, adopt its attitudes and behaviours as well as freely participate in community functions (Diaz, 1993).

Like Esser's Intergenerational theory of integration, Diaz's model also advocates for integration through five dimensions which work independently from each other. These are:

- communicative – language skills;
- social – participating in social activities;
- structural – taking on occupation/work;
- personal – satisfaction and success with own life in the host country;
- political – participation in the election and engaging in political parties but also obtaining a new citizenship.

Communicative integration reflects the core challenge in the initial integration efforts as it is required for other dimensions of integration.

### 3.3 Background: Immigration, asylum seekers, and challenges to integration

Norway used to be described as a homogeneous country. Though minorities have always lived on its territory, Norway tried to “Norwegianize” them. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Norway was following an Assimilation policy towards the Sami people, aimed at forcefully making them culturally equal to the Norwegian majority and depriving them of their lifestyle, which threatened their extinction. It took a century to shift from assimilation to recognition (Shchukina et al., 2018). A few decades later, due to the rise in immigration, Norway became the country with the fastest-growing population in Europe. Multiculturalism in a relatively homogeneous society also started to increase due to this (Kulbrandstad, 2017).

In previous centuries, migration tended to be directed out of Norway, but with the oil industry's development from the late 1960s onwards, the situation has changed. From 1967, to make up for the shortage of workers, Norwegian companies employed male labour from particularly such countries as Pakistan, Morocco, Turkey, and India. However, already in 1975 the Norwegian government recognized the necessity of working on integrational issues before accepting more migrants and halted migration except for refugees and family members of those who already resided in Norway. Since 1985, migration to Norway on a refugee basis has increased (Kulbrandstad, 2017). Consequently, the Ministry of Local Government and Labour launched the project "Migration Statistics" in 1991 to address the issue of increased migration

to Norway (Lofthus, 1998) and seek new ways to handle migration and treat foreigners. The government's earlier policy of forced assimilation is now seen as a restrictive approach that limits individual freedoms and fundamental human rights in a liberal democratic country. Learning a language was considered the main and critical element of social inclusion and integration because language learning is a social activity and goes hand in hand with adopting a new culture and the ability to participate in society (Capstick, n.d.).

The White Paper of 1997-1998, nr 42, (Melding til Stortinget) represents drafts of governmental structures' official informational documents. The drafts were an analytical report in specific areas submitted to the Norwegian parliament for further discussion and law making. This is the first paper that focused more on integrational issues than on controlling and restricting migration, as White Papers of previous years (Kulbrandstad, 2017). The White Paper for 2003-2004 nr. 49, named "Diversity through inclusion and participation", overtly called the government to establish new ways of being Norwegian and reduce differentiation between "us" and "them" (between the Norwegian population and immigrants) (St.meld.nr. 49, 2004). The principal proposition was a strict statement that immigrants must learn the Norwegian language and that language training must be an obligation for newcomers while municipalities have a duty to provide them with such training. This proposition came into force in September 2005, and rules for learning the Norwegian language and social sciences (samfunnskap) were incorporated into The Act on an Introduction Program and Norwegian Language Training for Newly Arrived Immigrants (the Introduction Act).

According to Statistics Norway (2021b), by 9th March 2020, there were 790,497 registered immigrants in Norway; their children born in Norway bring the number up to 979,254 This is out of a total population estimated at 5 367 580 as of 1st January 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2021a). According to Statista Research Department (2020), yearly migration to Norway ranges between the 79,498 people immigrated in 2011 as the record high and 52 153 people in 2019 as a recent low. So, in only a few decades, from a relatively homogeneous country, Norway became culturally and ethnically diverse.

Among migrants, refugees draw special interest, as they comprise half of the total migrant population and significantly contribute to the overall population growth. They are also more likely to stay in the country than those who come for work and study because they acclimatise to the host country by the time political and safety conditions in their home countries stabilise;

along with that, refugees face the most challenge to integrate into the new society (Lofthus, 1998) and they are the only type of migrants that immigrate unwillingly.

According to the 1951 Convention, a refugee is defined as "*someone unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion*" (UNHCR, 2010, p.3). Based on the provisions of Article 14 of the UN declaration of Human Rights, seeking asylum is recognized as a universal human right (UNHCR, 2010). Consequently, providing refugees with asylum is an obligation under international and humanitarian law. Refugees are the most marginalized, discriminated and unintegrated group in society. Thus, in accepting refugees, countries must provide them with means of subsistence and possibilities for integration. Norway does so by requiring that refugees participate in the "introduction scheme". This scheme is regulated by the Introduction Act, where language tuition is a starting point of the program. The purpose of the introduction program is to help newly arrived immigrants integrate, namely: facilitate that asylum seekers quickly become acquainted with the Norwegian language, culture and social life, start working and are financially independent (LOV-2003-07-04-80, §1 ).

To measure integration and integrational issues, Norway uses indicators and domains of measurements that have been developed by the Council of Europe, which include:

- (a) access to the labour market; participation in professional, skilled and self-employed sectors, unemployment and employment rates, earning rates and working hours;
- (b) access to housing, which includes proportions in public, rented, self-owned housing, quality, and overcrowding;
- (c) proportions of those who obtain social security benefits, maternity benefits, pensions;
- (d) participation in education;
- (e) participation in the political process and decision making (Council of Europe, n.d.)

Efforts of refugees to integrate, learn a language and be financially independent might not be enough. They must be accepted by the local population as well. Besides providing refugees with integrational programs, it is also necessary to adapt public services for them, such as admission to the labour market, educational programs, housing, etc (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008). To reinforce refugees' and migrants' opportunities to integrate, Norway implements various

action plans to secure immigrants' inclusion and assist their merging into society. Some of the efforts implemented include Action Plans against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion (2016-2020); Integration and Social Inclusion of the Immigrant Population and Goals for Social Inclusion for equal opportunities, inclusion, and diversity (2016-2020), and the Action Plan against Discrimination and Hatred towards Muslims (2020 - onward). The government has set goals in promoting the integration process by advocating for the contribution of all the people residing in the country in the development of society and resource generation. It is expected that everyone who is living in Norway works or studies and becomes a taxpayer (Kulbrandstad, 2017).

Integration is a mutual effort; hence integrational policy implies that the individual immigrant contributes and participates in the society and, in turn, the society ensures that everyone gets an opportunity to contribute and participate in development and projects in the country, as outlined in the Report for Norway to The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Expert Group on Migration for Norway (Thorud, 2020). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2013) conducted research "Immigration and National Identity in Norway", which emphasized the significance of citizenship and commitment to the society's common good and called the state to prioritize citizenship roles and participation in social development efforts regardless of ethnic background. He raises issues that vast numbers of immigrants experience discrimination in different spheres such as finding a job, enrolling in university, buying or renting housing and even daily in access to a restaurant or a night club, and indicated that discrimination is the most common cause of unemployment among immigrants (Eriksen, 2013; Midtbøen, 2019).

Unemployment rates among immigrants in Norway are pretty high, with the unemployment rates before the pandemic at an average of 32.9% (Statistics Norway, 2021c). According to Eriksen (2013), language problems and insufficient qualifications are the main reasons for discrimination and, subsequently, access to work. In support, Brekke et al. (2020), in a report by the Norwegian Institute for Social Research, proved that discrimination is an actual problem in Norwegian society and refer to discrimination as the obstacle to integration.

The question is, what is considered to be integration? Resolution 1437 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly defines it as:

*"The concept of integration aims at ensuring social cohesion through accommodation of diversity understood as a two-way process. Immigrants have to accept the laws and*

*basic values of European societies and, on the other hand, host societies have to respect immigrants' dignity and distinct identity and to take them into account when elaborating domestic policies." (Rec 1437, 2005).*

Integration, then, refers to the creation of common grounds and possibilities for comfortable living together and respecting each other.

Discrimination affects the process of integration into the Norwegian community. The study results on the integration barometer 2020 indicated the impact of discrimination on integration and the social constructs that foster segregation of immigrants. According to Brekke et al. (2020), 60% of Norwegians believe that discrimination is a core challenge to integration, while 84% believe that discrimination against immigrants occurs in employment (Brekke et al., 2020). This shows that the Norwegian population is aware of the existing discrimination faced by immigrants. According to research on what is necessary to be viewed by Norwegians as "well-integrated", 95% included the ability to speak Norwegian among other conditions such as being employed and paying taxes; 47% consider the integration policy quite bad, and 62% assume that there are going to be conflicts between different religious groups, like Christians and Muslims, which is the second-largest and fastest growing religion in Norway in 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2020b), having shown an increase in followers of 90% for the last ten years (Garza, 2019).

Brekke et al. (2020) in the report "Attitudes to immigration, integration and diversity in Norway" detailed the parameters that set the standard for inclusion in Norwegian society. The study indicated that if immigrants speak Norwegian and are employed, they were considered well-integrated, regardless of their origin. In comparison, Brekke et al. (2020) stated that if immigrants from Somalia and Sweden fail to meet the integration criteria, Somalis will be viewed as less integrated than Swedes. Thus, learning the Norwegian language is a primary starting point in the integration process and a measure to achieve integration according to a Directorate for Lifelong Learning Skills Norway (2016).

### 3.4 Voksenopplæringen and the language learning program

Following the principle of language as a foundation for achieving integration, the state has developed a special integration program called "The Norwegian Introduction Program" (NIP) designed for refugees, which was launched in 2003. The program consists of language and job training and social studies courses and is designed to strengthen refugee opportunities to enter

the job market. Since its introduction, it has undergone several amendments, such as increasing studying hours and an added obligation to take a language test. These amendments aimed to strengthen refugees' motivation for participation in the program, particularly: an obligation to achieve level A2 (from 2017; B1 from 2021) from a language exam to obtain a permanent residence permit. However, neither participants' transition to employment nor methods for language teaching were evaluated (Djuve & Kavli, 2018).

Norway has delegated responsibilities for implementing the integration of refugees to different bodies, leaving the structuring and efficiency of the program to the municipalities' integration work. Among these bodies are *Visma Flyktning*, an organization that is responsible for resettlement and integration of refugees in municipalities and *Voksenopplæring*, a school, which refugees attend to obtain Norwegian language and social studies training, but also which provides them with the tests in these two programs upon the completion of the courses (Moafi, 2018).

In addition to governmental organizations that provide language courses, there are also volunteer organizations, such as the Red Cross, that provide migrants with language training. Training in the Red Cross is not structured and doesn't follow a curriculum, but is aimed at increasing speaking skills. Farnaz Nazir Chauhdry (2016) conducted a study of immigrants' integration experiences through language learning at the Red Cross. The Red Cross language training program for immigrants is organized by volunteers and participation there is voluntarily too, unlike *Voksenopplæringen* where participation in the Norwegian course is a duty for refugees. This implies that people who practice language at the Red Cross are motivated and determined in their goals. The findings have identified that the lack of language skills affects mental health in migrants, as they are not able to communicate and feel as if they do not belong in the society. However, through Norwegian language training they gained, apart from better language skills, higher self-confidence, an established network (though with the minority group), and more skills for employment. Participants in the study emphasized that the main purpose of learning the language of the host country was to get a job in order to integrate, which is also the purpose of the language course in *Voksenopplæringen*. Though the language strategy for learning the language was not mentioned, it was clear that language skills significantly contributed to improving mental health and gaining self-confidence and self-efficacy. However, it is still unclear how being employed and having a network with the minorities contributed to their individual integration in the Norwegian society.

Voksenopplæringen has a broad spectrum of educational programs, but for the purposes of this research, it is only important that refugees get tuition in the Norwegian language that falls under Norwegian Introduction Program (NIP). Rules for learning Norwegian and social sciences (samfunnskap) were incorporated into the Introduction Act, which named the learning of Norwegian as a duty and a right. The duty applies to refugees between 18 and 55 years (LOV-2003-07-04-80, §2). The obligation is to complete 550 hours of language tuition, and if necessary prolong the studying by up to 3000 hours of language education free of charge. Education must be completed in the first three years after being granted a residence permit. The program aims to help newcomers start working, get further in education, and facilitate social integration (LOV-2003-07-04-80, §17; §1).

According to the law LOV-2020-11-06-127-§30, at the start of the course, a school must take into consideration the educational background, profession, work experience, time of living in Norway, plans for the future, level of proficiency in Norwegian, knowledge of other foreign languages and basic digital skills of the participants. Teachers use this information to adapt training to each individual in the best possible way and design an individual integration plan for the participants. This plan also includes a prediction of how many hours a person should take to achieve certain levels. The integration plan is meant to make education more relevant and motivating for the participants as their desires to work or study will be more emphasized than participation in the programs and during the study more emphasis will be put on topics relevant for the job or further education they are seeking (LOV-2020-11-06-127).

Voksenopplæring provides six hours of education four times per week for Norwegian language. Beside the language course, 50 hours of social studies, an informational course about the country, are provided in students' native language or a language they understand well. The course is available in 23 languages (LOV-2003-07-04-80; "Samfunnskunnskap - Kompetanse Norge," n.d.) Voksenopplæring is also responsible for the courses and groups' organisation, development of content and pedagogical approaches related to teaching migrants (Sbertoli & Arnesen, 2014).

However, the language tuition is conducted exclusively in Norwegian despite bringing together adult people from diverse countries speaking different languages, which raises the question of the efficiency of the monolingual teaching approach in adulthood given the disparities in cultures, previous learning experience, abilities and comprehension. According to the law,



refugees can get bilingual support during their studies as their native language can be too distant from Norwegian and too challenging to grasp monolingually. However, there is a gap between how the policy is intended to be in theory and how it is being implemented in practice. Due to difficulties that arise in different municipalities, such as a lack of teachers or too many participants, a compromise was established and interpretation of the law is left to the individual municipal school authorities (Mallows, 2014).

The Office of the Auditor General of Norway, a state auditor of the Government of Norway and direct subordinate of the Parliament of Norway, investigated the work done by bodies responsible for the integration of immigrants through their academic and employment achievements upon completing the integrational programs. They revealed that immigrants do not achieve the expected results after completing the introduction program. According to the integration program, municipalities are obliged to design an individual integration plan, but municipalities do not contribute enough to ensure migrants' possibilities for qualifications in the work market in the long run. Only in 8 out of 55 researched municipalities did all participants get a personalized program in 2017-2018. The survey showed that it is difficult for the municipalities to set up teaching in a way that is adapted to every individual, including their different motivations to learn a language. After participation in the program, the Norwegian language level is low, which has negative consequences for participants in their future settlement, particularly employment (Innst. 190 S, 2019-2020).

#### 3.4.1 Personalized approach

Didactics for teaching and personalized approach also map the goal of learning the language and ways to achieve this goal, leaving space for self-learning and independence in the learning process. This strategy is used to prepare students for further education and work because it requires a high independence level. Makafui Charlotte Kassah (2012) expressed doubts about such an approach because people from other countries are not familiar with such a learning method, especially those who come from authoritarian societies. They perceive such a strategy of self-learning as a shock and they often cannot take responsibility for their learning, which can also be a reason they fail to learn a language. Students who are used to consistent guidance and control over their learning and achievements and the "being taught everything they need to know" practice might find themselves at a loss and be disappointed. They might get too relaxed, learn slackly or not know what to learn when there are no clear indications on it.

### 3.5 Development of the field: teaching Norwegian as a second language

Until 1998 there was no structural differentiation in national plans for teaching Norwegian language to migrants. Back then, language training of adult migrants was a completely new discipline with a considerable percentage of illiterate adults. Migrants that could not master the Latin alphabet in most cases were considered to be illiterate (Mallows, 2014). Alphabetization was also conducted in Norwegian. Adults who were actually educated and even spoke several languages within a different alphabetic system were not familiar with the Latin alphabet and had difficulty learning a completely new alphabet in a language they did not understand and by this logic were considered illiterate. A report on whether the Norwegian language should be taught to refugees with higher education in universities instead of municipalities indicated that the term “good general education” is still not defined precisely and that there is variation in how municipalities categorize people with higher education. Refugees with higher degrees were sometimes categorized lower because they did not speak English (Staver et al., 2019).

Progress in this field has been slow. However, when progress happened, it was often initiated by poor program outcomes and the need to find new approaches and teaching models. The new curriculum was introduced in 2012 and focused on differentiating literacy training for essential Norwegian language acquisition and language training as interdependent fields. It is an impracticable task to learn a language without using the written word as a tool for learning (Sbertoli & Arnesen, 2014).

There have been many studies and debates on whether it is effective to support teaching in the mother tongue; however, learning through the majority language has always been a priority because of practical and economic reasons.

### 3.6 Requirements for teachers that teach Norwegian language to immigrants

It is almost impossible to provide qualified teachers for different linguistic groups, some of which counted only very few people. Implementing bilingual teaching for most migrants and not having such a proposition for the minority would have been against universal rights and values the Norwegian policy is based on. Another problem was finding qualified teachers – there are too few mother tongue teachers who have the necessary qualifications. Previously unqualified teachers were used as assistants which created a notion of "second rate" teachers, which was again against universal rights that are the core of Norwegian values (Mallows, 2014).

Most teachers were specialists in Norwegian language with little or no knowledge in literacy training and teaching Norwegian as a second language (Mallows, 2014). This question systematically arises on the political agenda. *Melding til Stortinget*. nr. 16 (2016) sounded an alarm that less than 50% of those who teach Norwegian have the competence to teach Norwegian as a second language or other relevant specialization. The year after, Astrid Teig (2017) researched adult educational centres deeper, highlighting that some of the teachers did not have a qualification in Norwegian as a second language. They were not educated as teachers for adults but were educated as schoolteachers so it was not surprising, as results of interviews also showed, that teachers did not comprehend what “formative assessment” was (the process of evaluating a student’s comprehension) though in the interviews, the teachers stated that they always could evaluate and understand if a student understood them or not. Students confessed in the interviews that the teachers did not ask them if they understood or not and the students themselves did not pose questions when they did not understand. Students mentioned that they only started to understand what teachers were saying after reaching the B1-B2 level.

It is easy to point the finger at teachers or schools that employ teachers who do not have relevant qualifications as the ones to blame for the students’ low competence. Nevertheless, the question of the teachers’ competence will not be evaluated and considered in this research because it is assumed that nobody is to blame for the human resource problem and lack of people who take the relevant education to pursue a career in this field. It is better to have a teacher who at least specializes in the Norwegian language or has knowledge about teaching practices than not to have a teacher at all, which would be an even more significant problem.

### 3.6.1 Scaffolding

To compensate for the lack of teachers, a strategy of using adult learners who are more advanced in Norwegian language as assistants to the Norwegian teacher in the initial literacy class was tested. It first started in autumn 2011 at Nygård School in Bergen, and it had such good results that it is now gradually being adopted and spread to other schools and municipalities (Mallows, 2014). This approach comes from a constructivist tradition and is called “scaffolding”; it has been widely discussed in scientific circles and is known to have very positive outcomes. It includes a more advanced student helping less advanced students in achieving their learning goals (Wood et al., 1976). Students find themselves in a socially constructed environment, so they have to construct knowledge on their own actively. Scaffolding assists in constructing new knowledge because then it becomes collaborative learning (Walqui, 2002).

Alver and Dregelid (2016) conducted a qualitative "test-project" called "«Vi kan lære som vanlige folk» - Morsmålsstøttet undervisning" ("We can learn like ordinary people" – mother tongue supported teaching) that emphasized that in Norwegian language education for adult minority speakers, bilingual education has had little or no room. Their experimental project was conducted on adult immigrants with little or no educational background with 4-6 hours per week of education with support in their native language from their groupmates who advanced in learning Norwegian further than them. The authors emphasized the main problem as a teacher and a student often being unable to communicate with each other at the beginning of the course and point out the mismatch between teachers' views on prioritization of different sub-goals of learning and what students called their most essential needs. Their research results show that using a native language to learn Norwegian was effective and necessary for individuals with limited educational backgrounds. However, Alver and Dregelid (2016) failed to highlight the impact of learning Norwegian on individuals with higher language level or educational backgrounds and they did not mention the languages spoken among participants. For a person with a high education who might speak several languages within a different alphabetic system, it might be as challenging to learn a language as for those who have never been to school, as neither have access to the written word as a tool for learning. As mentioned before, regardless of education, a person is considered illiterate if they cannot write in the Latin alphabet, on which the Norwegian language is based.

Scaffolding or native language support was seen in a wholly different and even contradictory way in the results of research conducted by Nahimana (2015). His research showed that native language support was an obstacle for some students' progress in Norwegian and some of them changed to the group where they did not have an opportunity to speak their native language; when this was done, their language competence developed faster.

### 3.7 Construction of knowledge

It is empirically verified that the first and other spoken languages should be considered while learning a new language in adulthood. In adulthood, knowledge is not mechanically acquired but is actively constructed within the learning environment (Liu & Matthews, 2005).

In applying the constructivist perspective, Windschitl (2002) suggests that to encourage meaning learning, a teacher should help students elaborate on existing knowledge or restructure

their current knowledge. In his theory on constructivism, Jean Piaget particularized this suggestion, concluding that new knowledge is constructed from old knowledge, that knowledge is constructed by transforming, organizing, and reorganizing previous knowledge. The theory is supported and adjusted by Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism which states that knowledge is the construction of human beings due to its relationship with the environment (Woolfolk, 2010). All these shreds of evidence refer to the necessity to address the support of the native language in teaching and learning a new language. Curriculum and literacy theorist Jim Cummins, an expert in bilingual education, has developed a threshold hypothesis (2001) which implies that a certain minimum "threshold" level of proficiency must be reached in a target language before a learner can use it as a language of instruction in school (Petrovic & Olmstead, 2001). It is necessary first to achieve a certain proficiency in a target language to gain access to the curriculum. According to this hypothesis, when students cannot gain access to the learning materials because they do not understand them, they fail to progress academically and linguistically (Allman, 2019).

### 3.8 Benefits of studying a language with bilingual teachers

Lerfaldet et al. (6:2020) researched four different Adult Educational Centers to find what factors are essential for quality in Norwegian language teaching and emphasized the advantages of the possibility to study a language with a teacher who teaches in a native language as well as expressing teachers' agreement on the importance of having access to multilingualism. However, bilingual support was not a priority at the schools which researchers visited. Among the advantages of using bilingual support, the researchers identified that bilingual teachers/mother-tongue teachers/language helpers/mother-tongue assistants make it more possible for the participants to use the knowledge they already have to build on it new knowledge. They are also important role models for the participants, meaning that they can serve as a better example for students than those who teach their native language, which they obtained unconsciously in childhood. Bilingual teachers create more security for the participants when they are able to use a native language or a language they speak well if misunderstandings arise and ensure that participants understand instructions related to learning activities, which contributes to more effective teaching.

### 3.9 Learning culture through language

To learn a language appropriately, learners must be aware of the cultural aspects of the community where the target language is being used. Learning a language is impossible without awareness of its cultural context (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Genc and Bada (2005) argued that learning a language is inaccurate and incomplete without studying the culture. Alhassan and Bawa (2012) point out the importance of learning the culture while learning the language as a means of reducing the potential for conflict. The researchers regard learning culture through language learning as a tool for dismissing ethnocentric views that new immigrants might possess. An aspect of culture learning plays as a transformational engagement to decenter learners from their culture-based assumptions and develop an intercultural identity (Liddicoat, 2005, cited in Alhassan & Bawa, 2012). In *Voksenopplæringen*, learning culture is incorporated in language learning and learning materials consist of texts about the country and the culture adapted to the learners' language level. A Norwegian teacher in this context also plays as the students' first representative of a new culture and a teacher of culture that facilitates students' understanding of themselves within a new culture and helps to shape a new perception of oneself and relationship with others (Alhassan & Bawa, 2012).

The same research found that limited cultural knowledge might make those newly arrived to a country consider the people of the new country strange which leads them to evolve negative attitudes toward both the new language and their culture. Many students who learn a language in a monolingual environment are more prone to making inappropriate and premature judgments about their culture and the culture they are learning. This can also be an argument for the benefits of bilingual teachers, who could help reduce ethnocentric views and play a role model in the first stages of learning and integration processes at the beginning of migrants' studies.

Culture learning as a part of language learning might also have a favourable effect on students' motivation (Alhassan & Bawa, 2012). It increases the students' curiosity about the society, which in turn increases the motivation for obtaining the language of this culture. Research into adult immigrants' learning experiences in a Norwegian school in Ski municipality on what role learning culture played in language learning from participants' point of view found that embedding culture in language learning had a very positive effect on learning achievements and even helped better to understand the grammar and structure of the new language.

This falls under the perspective of constructivism, which also focuses on seeing an act of learning as enculturation. In this tradition, it is believed that enculturation is happening through appropriate knowledge that is based on the existent understanding through interaction with the learning environment. This approach comprises two ideas: learners are active in constructing their own knowledge and social interactions are essential in this knowledge-construction process (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Thus, language learning and acquiring a new culture go hand in hand with one another, which can be used to justify the monolingual approach in Voksenopplæringen, where students learn language through social interactions and through learning about the culture and the country.

### 3.10 Group division

Wellbeing in the school and the suitable allocation of students are also significant factors of how successful students will be in their learning process.

There is no single strategy of how to allocate students to the groups for a number of reasons not the least of which is the variety and diversity of people who are eligible for the Norwegian language course. Still, information such as educational background, languages spoken, age, and level of Norwegian language is asked when planning student groups, an activity which is left to each school to the extent it is possible.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the starting point for learning a language should be the circumstances of individual learners, such as learning experiences or family situations and real needs and capacities, but not a level of proficiency. Otherwise, putting people who are unequal in the aspects of their linguistic and cultural abilities and competencies in one group might result in new forms of discrimination (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008).

Makafui Charlotte Kassah (2012) is one of the researchers who examined the problems of dividing students into groups. Due to limited resources in Voksenopplæringen and municipalities, groups were often made too big with over 25 people with vast age differences, various backgrounds, and differing language levels, which resulted in teachers' inability to fulfil the conditions of didactics properly and follow an individual approach. According to the interviews with teachers, they would prefer more homogeneity in the groups as, according to their observations, motivational factors and eagerness to learn differ among younger and older

students. The author also raised the problem that due to high heterogeneity in the groups and not enough time dedicated to language learning, about half of those who take exams fail.

Kassah published the research in 2012 and attempted to explain low achievements on language exams from previous years with large heterogeneous groups and too little time dedicated to learning: in 2010, 61 out of 9680 participants who took the test passed B1 writing, and 92 out of 9625 B1 speaking; 52 out of 4830 passed B2 writing and B2 speaking 78 out of 4834 (Kassah, 2012). In 2012, only 250 hours went toward learning Norwegian, but since 2015 this number has been raised to 550 with a possibility to prolong. The time has been increased, but the number of students who achieve an independent level did not increase significantly.

Lerfaldet et al. (6:2020) in their findings also point to the problem of limited financing that resulted in heterogeneous groups, namely: large groups with a significant level difference within the group; participants had different academic and cognitive prerequisites for participating in learning processes, different lengths of stay in Norway, and different experiences within a language learning context. This problem still exists and negatively influences the quality of teaching offered to individuals; however, opportunities to offer training in smaller and more homogeneous groups is beyond the control of educational centres. The state's financial subsidy for Norwegian language training is based on the number of residents in the municipality who have a right to Norwegian classes, regardless of the number of teaching hours offered to them. Surveys showed a great variation in the municipalities' financial balances: for some municipalities, the state's financial support is not sufficient, while other municipalities profit from it ("Godt no(rs)k? -om språk og integrering", 2011).

### 3.11 Personal and classroom motivation

According to Robert Gardner (1985), advancing in learning a language greatly depends on motivation. He suggested a "socio-educational model of second language acquisition", which consists of the following variables: a combination of efforts + desire to achieve the goal of learning the language + favourable attitudes towards language learning. He suggests that motivation has a direct effect on achievement and distinguishes two types of motivation in a learning process:

1. classroom learning motivation – motivation in the classroom environment and language studying process, which assumes that the teacher, the atmosphere in the class, the



curriculum, and the facilities as well as personal characteristics can influence the student's learning motivation; and

2. language learning motivation – general motivation that is divided into two categories:

1) integrative – a desire to integrate into the target community through learning a language; and

2) instrumental motivation – the desire to get a degree, higher salary, etc.

According to this, no division of students might hinder learning for a specific group of students, at least not on the basis of their motivational factors. It is assumed that those who are instrumentally motivated – to get a degree, particular job, or a higher salary – would put in more effort and progress faster. Those who are instrumentally motivated, without a particular goal for future use of the language or a simple goal of just passing an exam to obtain a permanent residence permit, would hinder fast progression and development for students with set goals. It could be reasonable to divide groups by factors of their motivation rather than educational background or age.

Previous researchers failed to investigate participants' motivation for learning a language upon entry in Voksenopplæringen, however, many of them were taking into consideration issues that influenced the classroom learning motivation of the participants.

Myhr (2014) researched the perception of the course in Voksenopplæring schools by young participants and found that there was too little interaction in Norwegian language, except with the teachers. When Norwegian language is the only option for interaction with each other but language competence among students is very low, they cannot use Norwegian as a language of communication and relationship building so they do not learn anything from each other. This also made the course boring for the majority and generally had a negative impact on their motivation and wellbeing in the school.

A study by Patrick Nahimana (2015) on "å lære språk for å skape mening" (to learn a language in order to create meaning) linked student engagement to teachers' involvement, namely: how communication happens between the teacher and students and their social relationship. It described how non-verbal expressions such as poses, facial expression, intonation, and gestures serve as codes that facilitate the exchange of information and communication. The study concentrated on students, how they get knowledge of the Norwegian language, understand "codes", and comprehend "messages" (speech), describing how students are "guessing" what

the teacher says. The research further focused on the communication between students and teachers and their social relationship. However, such a curriculum delivery approach was insufficient for the students' needs and interviews revealed that students found school boring, which negatively impacted their motivation.

Monsen's research (2016), which reviewed master's theses and language didactics from 1985 to 2015, indicated that learning was not meaningful for students because teaching was focused on expressing banalities, all tasks and conversations were about what they did and are and other trite quotidian routines. There were no more findings to report in the study as the research carried out in this field is "scattered and unsystematic", reflecting how adult language learning is not high on the political agenda. However, Monsen did not regard it from the perspective of adult immigrants' integration in Norway, which is high on the agenda today, with language learning as a critical element.

### Summary to the Chapter 3

This chapter focused on detailed representation of the problem and literature relevant to the overarching and sub-questions of the research, challenges relating to the integrational problems caused by language competence, language learning on the course in Voksenopplæringen and legal regulations which control it, and on organization and curriculum in Norwegian and social studies for adult immigrants; demonstrated background information as necessities for introducing this field and improvements in the field of teaching Norwegian as a second language to adult immigrants, also offered a through overview of reports and studies conducted in this field which represent the situation of today augmented with a theoretical framework for the related issues, which will be a part of analysis and discussion in the next chapter.

## 4 Chapter: The monolingual strategy's effect on integrational prospects

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and the analysis of the data obtained from the individual interviewees' responses, supplemented with the literature review and findings of previous researchers. The findings are presented in relation to the research objectives and are structured according to the research questions. The method for analysing the data, thematic analysis, was previously discussed in the methodology chapter.

### 4.2 Category of informants

A limited amount of ten interviews implies that findings cannot be generalized and more research will be required on any specific category of participants. However, ten interviews were enough to fulfil the objectives of this research and answer the research question.

Number of the participant	Country of origin	Age	Educational background	Languages spoken	Motivation to learn a language	Achieved language level	Time of studying
Participant 1	Kurdistan	32	Bachelor's degree	Arabic, Kurdish, English	Continue with education here, become a physio therapist	B2	8 months
Participant 2	Syria	42	School	Arabic, English, Russian	To enter a university and be a journalist	B1	2 semesters
Participant 3	Kurdistan	20	School	Arabic, Kurdish	For general life	B1	1,5 year

Participant 4	Afghanistan	21	Primary school	Dari	For general life	A2	App. 2 years
Participant 5	Syria	59	Medical education	Arabic, Russian, English	For life; probably for working in his profession here.	B1	Appr. 1,5 years
Participant 6	Kurdistan	24	College	Arabic, Kurdish, English	To enter a university, for general life	B1	1 year (2 semesters)
Participant 7	Kurdistan	35	2 years of bachelor; 1 year course in animation and design	Arabic, Kurdish	To work	A2	1 year
Participant 8 <i>(documented health hindrances for learning a language)</i>	Kurdistan	43	Primary school	Arabic, Kurdish	For general life	A2 speaking only	2 years + 3 years language course from NAV
Participant 9	Kurdistan	26	College	Arabic, Kurdish, English	For general life, social life and work	B2 speaking; B1	Appr. 2 semesters

Participant 10	Syria	Mid. 50	School	Arabic	For general life	B1	1,5 years
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#### 4.3 Theme 1: Motivation as a drive to learn a language

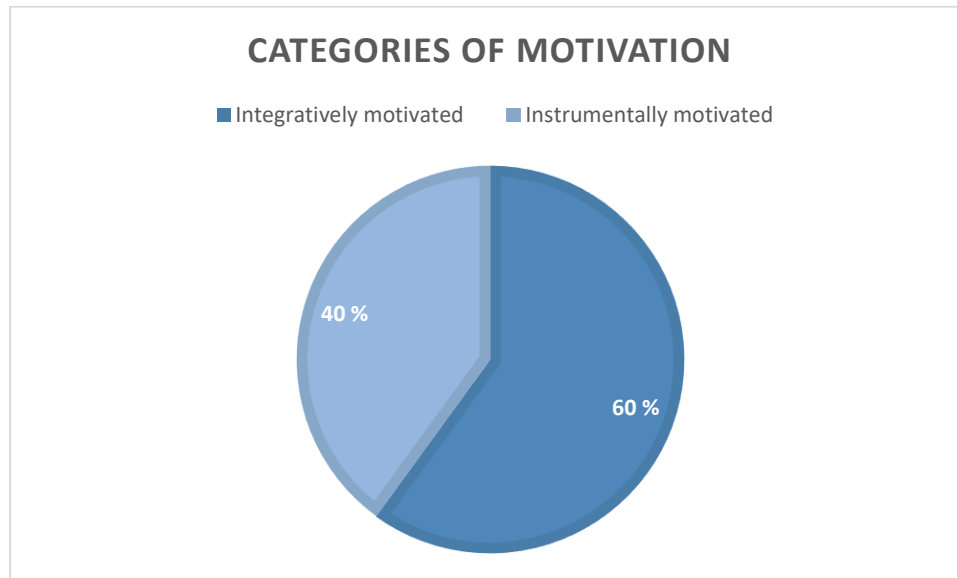
Motivation is the fundamental factor to any activity, and in terms of language learning as a key to integration into society, all the participants were motivated to know the language. However, their motivational factors showed to be indicators only for how much effort and devotion they put into learning a language, how much they work on their own or attend additional language training services, and how fast they want to learn it.

Robert Gardner (1985), in his Socio-Educational model of second language acquisition, separated classroom learning motivation and language learning motivation, arguing that different factors within the classroom environment can influence students' personal learning motivation.

Clashes between motivational factors among students within the group affected students' personal wellbeing in the school, which had a significant impact on their personal motivation (desire) to attend a school. Differences in motivational factors made the course inefficient particularly for those who contrived an integrational strategy for themselves and who needed and wanted this course the most. It was declared by all participants, who had strong desires for their future and wanted to learn a language to fulfil their plans as soon as possible, that they didn't progress in their language skills or received knowledge in the school. They admitted that the course was not effective for them because of their groupmates, who wasn't motivated or as motivated as them.

In Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition, success in classroom learning consists of a combination of efforts, desire to achieve the goal of learning the language, and favourable attitudes towards language learning. Varying motivational factors between students in one group violated this combination of efforts as differently motivated students put different efforts into learning; this can be combined with different desired language level, purpose, and time frames for learning, which resulted in unfavourable attitudes towards each other and a bad environment in the group.

Gardner (1985) divided personal language learning motivation of individuals into 2 types: integrative – general desire to learn a language, and instrumental – to get a degree, higher salary, particular job. Motivational factors for learning the language among participants within this research can also be divided into these two categories and regardless of age, educational background, culture, etc.



Different motivational factors between students within one group make them unequal in the learning process. Students who were motivated instrumentally desired to progress in obtaining language skills fast. They used a lot of additional resources and efforts to learn the language. They usually implemented time frames for themselves, for example: “achieve B1 level by the next admission period to Videregående (High School, in this research will be used in the original Norwegian name); achieve B2 by the next admission to university”. While students who were motivated integratively did not have a goal and did not implement any time frames, tending to procrastinate with learning the language and focusing instead on looking for new orientations in life, having school as a social activity and something to do because they do not know what else to do, where to work, or were not able to find a job.

Clashes between integratively and instrumentally motivated students negatively impacted the learning environment, social relations, and effectiveness of the course, particularly for those students who were motivated instrumentally. Mostly because they tended to form biases and judgments against groupmates who, in their opinion, did not speak as well as them because they were not putting as much effort into learning as them.

Participant 1: *“We had a very bad environment in the group, they were not like me, I was not like them, there were not many that were interested to learn a language. Someone was just going to the school for obtaining money. Someone went to the school just for a joke, someone was forced to go to the school. It was very bad communication in the class, actually, between me and everyone else. In other groups, it was better, but in mine, it was not all that was interested to learn a language.”*

Participant 2: *“These other ones in my group, they go to the school not to learn, they only want to get benefits, they on purpose try to be in the school as long as possible, and they lie, they pretend that they do not understand or they say that they do not know how to write when in reality they can, so they stay in the school longer and do not work”.*

These are fragments from interviews with instrumentally motivated students, who had a particular goal and progressed in learning the language fast, thus quickly achieving higher language skills than anyone else in their group. Instrumentally motivated participants did not show interest in relationship building with their groupmates and viewed the school only as a potential source of more knowledge. They also did not build friendships with their groupmates whose language skills were lower because they were either unable to communicate with each other or instrumentally motivated participants did not see them as a good source for practising language and improving language skills or as a useful social network. Instrumentally motivated students emphasized that they rather learnt Norwegian through language-training in volunteer organizations such as Red Cross, the Library, etc. because there, in their words, they found people who were as motivated and as serious to learn the language as them, which was not the case in the school.

Integratively motivated participants, on the other hand, were also motivated to learn the language, because they realized the importance of speaking it and they tended to take time to get familiar with a new country calmly and comfortably or get rested psychologically after the stress they experienced fleeing from home. They didn't have time frames for themselves, they tended to make friendships with other students in the school and change to the groups where they had friends, usually, those who come from the same country as them; attend and participate in school events.

Some of integratively participants confirmed that they weren't putting so much effort into learning, emphasizing additional factors in their life and environment.

Participant 7: *“a school did its role, it was very good, but that I’m not good in Norwegian, it was because of me, not because of the school. The school did everything. That I didn’t learn - it’s my problem, not the problem of a school. .. Because my wife was not in Norway and I was worried about it, I wanted to be with my wife, if she can’t come here, then I have to move out. I was not so motivated to learn because I didn’t know if my wife can come. I couldn’t concentrate without my wife”*. .. *”but now my wife is here and I’m learning a language ..”*

But instrumentally motivated participants, according to the interviews, didn’t take into consideration the personalities and stories of their groupmates before making judgements about them. Some students who were motivated instrumentally, particularly to start working, liked their group and the school even though motivational factors differed. But they didn’t progress in their language skills in school, and attended a school to *“enjoy time with friends”*.

Makafui Charlotte Kassah (2012), based on the interviews with teachers in Voksenopplæringen, identified that motivational factors between older and younger students differ. However, this can only be partly true. The results of the interviews conducted for this study did not show that young students were more motivated than older ones. The differences between younger and older students that were identified from the interviews are following:

- 1) Young students have a more flexible mind and are open-minded to changes, while older students tend to hold to their viewpoints and lifestyle from before.
- 2) Young students have more opportunities to obtain a profession and become someone, even more so than in their home countries because education is free in Norway while older students often cannot work within their profession in Norway or do not get their education recognized. The only difference here is that young students go through the process of obtaining an education or career for the first time; they continue their lives after moving to Norway. Older students often have to go through this process anew and they might not have the desire to go back to the school desk again.

Mainly older students are only less motivated to start their education and career anew in Norway as they might finish it until they reach retirement age, additionally they also had doubts and stereotypes that they will not be able to learn properly due to their age; but in terms of language learning for life in Norway they were as motivated as young students.



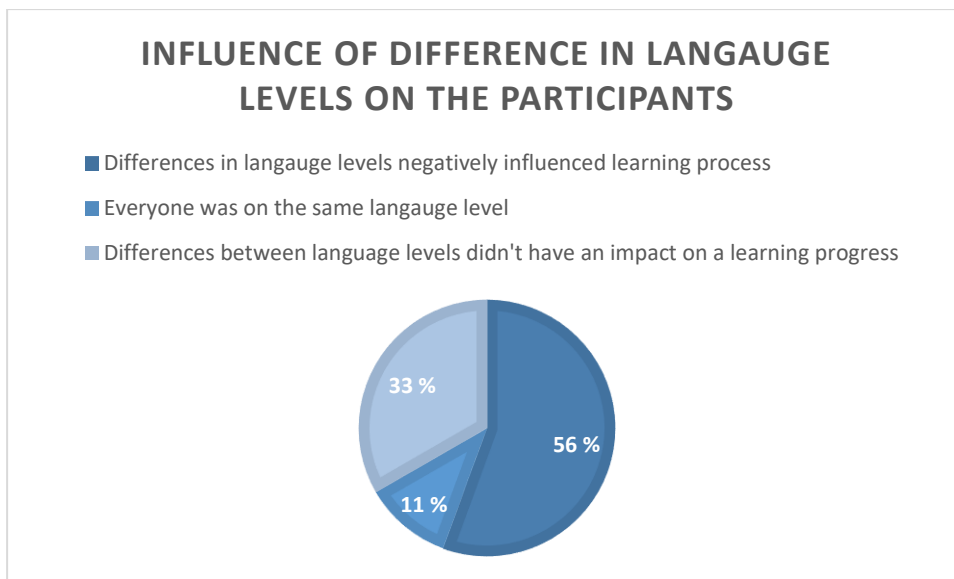
The diversity between motivational factors of students within one group also indicates a failure to make the course relevant and motivating for each individual, which is a purpose of it. During the study, more emphasis should be put on topics relevant to work or education; however, putting the emphasis on a particular topic can make the course more relevant to some participants, which can be discriminating or not relevant to other participants. According to the interviewees, more emphasis was put on topics relevant to students that want to continue in Videregående, which they enter after passing an exam on the B1 level.

Different motivational factors have been identified in the rapport of the Office of the Auditor General (Innst. 190 S, 2019-2020) as one of the main reasons for failure to adapt teaching to every individual which resulted in a low level in the Norwegian language after participation in the program. This indicates that if motivational factors of students within one group differ, it is impossible to adapt teaching to every individual and practice a personalized approach, according to which more focus and accent should be put on topics relevant for future employment or education, because education/employment also comprise different goals. Participants in this research were not separated between those who plan to work, enter Videregående, apply for university, or those who did not know what to do in life and was looking for new direction. But namely these clashes were one of the main reasons for reflecting of the course as “*not useful*” or “*not helping*”.

#### 4.4 Theme 2: Impact of composition of classes on the learning process

Motivational factors for learning as well as the current language level of the Norwegian language were among the information that was gathered from the participants to divide them into groups, map an individual plan, and provide them with a personalized approach. However, according to the interviews with participants, most of the students revealed that the majority of students in their group spoke English or another language they had in common (usually Arabic), which might indicate that the school, to the extent it is possible, divides students in a way that gives access to a common language between them or them and a teacher, which provides bilingual support. Participant 6 reacted to the question: “How did you find it to start learning the Norwegian language in Norwegian?” with the following: “*Trust me, it was easy! Almost everyone in my group spoke English! A teacher explained in English, used google translation or googled pictures*”.

Participants further emphasized the vast differences between language levels among students in one group. This was not a problem only for those whose language level was similar to the majority.



From a sociolinguistic perspective, putting people who are unequal in some aspects of their linguistic and cultural abilities and competencies in one group might result in new forms of discrimination because if a student's language skills considerably differ from the rest (whether they are higher or lower), they are not able to communicate with the rest and they are the only person in the group for whom the learning material is not relevant because those who speak worse than anyone else in the group are not able to follow the learning process while those who speak better than anyone else have too little new to learn and find the course boring, which makes them less willing to cooperate with students whose language skills are considerably worse than theirs. Learning is relevant for everyone if everyone in the group is on the same language level and learning is effective if everyone is equally motivated to learn.

Participant 1 complained: *“When I started school, I could already speak very fluently, my level was good, but I did not know grammar. In the school, they evaluated writing for A2 level, but it was too low level for me. I wanted B1 at once, and even teachers asked a main in the school to place me in a group with B1 level, and they said to a main that it is stupid that I’m in A2 group, because I’m much better than that. But the main said no. He said that I can’t take a high level at once, that I must start with A2. That’s why it was so boring for me in school. I felt myself that I can much more than everyone else in the class.”* Participant 2 also claimed: *“I was the*

*best in the group! The best, in Norwegian language*”, but at the time, according to him, there were no groups with a higher level.

Participants 4 and 7 mentioned that they spoke worse than everyone else, and they would have preferred a group that corresponded to their language level. While Participant 7 didn't know if he could change to a lower level, Participant 4 was too shy to ask about it.

Participant 7: *“teaching process was equal, but language levels were different, all of them was better than me. It was a problem for me. I couldn't follow anything”*.

In addition to the language course itself not being relevant for either those who were of higher or those who were of lower competency level than the rest of the group, participants developed negative attitudes due to the differences in language proficiency. While having higher language skills than anyone else in the group might develop negative attitudes to the rest of the groupmates, having worse language skills in the group might lead to developing negative attitudes toward oneself. Participant 4 put it as *“a blow to self-esteem”*.

Disparities in language levels made some participants, whose language skills were considerably better than of the rest suspect that they were being used to help those who spoke worse. Such practice is called “scaffolding” and was previously identified in the research of David Mallows (2014), and according to him, is spreading to all municipalities after successful outcomes in Bergen's Nygård school. There is no verified information from Voksenopplæringen in Tromsø whether they practice scaffolding. However, some participants claimed or mentioned that this was happening in their group when they were studying.

Earlier, there was a practice of having assistants to teachers in the class, which created a notion of “second rate” teachers. The practice of scaffolding can also be quite discriminating and unfair in relation to those students who are being used as helpers to the rest:

- 1) They also came to the school to learn the language and they are supposed to have the same rights and duties as anyone else.
- 2) If their level is higher than everyone else's in the school, they achieved it through their own efforts or outside the school; in the school they now need to convey their knowledge (which they obtained outside the school) to their groupmates without any additional benefits or payments.

The practice of scaffolding can thus create a notion of taking advantage of the most hard-working students who put in the effort to learn the language while the school doesn't play the role of a knowledge provider for them, as it should be.

Those whose groups were comprised of both strong and weak students reported that for collaborative tasks (which took up about half of the school day) teachers didn't divide them into small groups the way that students with better language skills are in one group and students with worse language skills are in another. For collaborative tasks, students were split into groups comprising one, who knows the language better than the rest.

Participant 2 claimed: *"They put strong and weak together on purpose, so strong help those who are weaker"*. He had very negative attitudes to such practices and was outraged about it. He claimed to have been the best in his group in Norwegian language and characterized his group as: *"too childish, who have no interest in learning a language"*, and thus had no interest in helping them and no understating why he would even help them – he had also come to the school to learn. The problem in his group was clashes between motivational factors with the rest and improper allocation according to the language level. According to an integratively motivated groupmate of Participant 2, his group was characterized as *"a group of best friends"* and they were also motivated to learn the language, just differently, which meant they were not in a hurry to learn as fast as possible like Participant 2 was.

Another participant that mentioned scaffolding, Participant 3, had favourable attitudes to such practices. However, his motivational factors and language level were the same as the majority of students in the group: *"It was always motivating if I had to explain something to someone. It motivated me to learn more and better and through explaining something to a groupmate I was learning more."* However, his groupmate, who reported to have lower language skills than anyone else didn't feel comfortable in a such environment, when everyone else speaks and understands better than her.

Students who have the same motivation and the same language level seem, therefore, to have positive attitudes to collective learning and learning from each other; scaffolding between them as a group would only contribute to their social relations and knowledge building.

Some students could not change their group when they found it not relevant for them before a new semester started and had to waste several months being in a group where the language level was not relevant for them, waiting until the next semester to change to a group; while waiting

they progressed through their own efforts too and changing levels stopped being relevant for them.

Some participants reported that there were no available groups for them because of the school's attempts to save money. The limited resources of Voksenopplæring have also previously been identified in the research by Lerfaldet et al. (6:2020) and Kassah (2012), which led to full groups and the inability to provide students with a personalized approach. However, there is no verified information that Voksenopplæring in Tromsø has limited resources although some of the participants mentioned it. In addition, different motivational factors, and different language groups between participants within one group already undermine the possibility of practicing the personalized approach regardless it's a group of 20 or a group of 5.

The interviews show that some of the issues with limited resources can be avoided if students are appropriately allocated to a group from the beginning. Some students who do not feel that their language level is high enough, but at the same time they don't progress in the school, anyway would extend their study time.

As presented by of the Office of the Auditor General (Riksrevisjonen) (2019), only 50% of immigrants work one year after completing the Introduction program and approximately 10% take further education. Furthermore, only 5% managed to pass B2 and 30% managed to pass B1. So, only 35% of people managed to achieve a language level sufficient for work or further education (to note, language level requirement for entry to Videregående/vocational training in Voksenopplæringen is B1). Among those who worked seven years after completing the introduction program, only 24% managed to earn 300 000 kroners or more before tax. The reason for such low performance were insufficient language skills and insufficient level upon graduation of the school.

By law, students can only study for level of working proficiency B2 if they are able to achieve it within 550 hours (over 5-6 months). Six participants were asked if they knew that they could get a course in B2 level if they were able to achieve this level within 550 hours, 4 participants did not know about this option at all, while 2 knew this information but it was not relevant for them. Two out of the 4 who did not know about this were very surprised to find out about it when they were asked the question. A course in B2 would have been relevant, desirable and possible to achieve within 550 hours for them, but they never heard about this opportunity from their advisor or from teachers in the school. Those who knew about this possibility did not get

this information from the school. Furthermore, some of the students were refused entry to higher levels at once; reasoning provided was that they had to start from lower levels, regardless of the language skills they had already obtained themselves. Thus, because of the refusal to enter higher levels at once, they wasted their learning hours, which made it so they were not able to enter B2 within 550 hours, and thus, they procrastinated their study time even longer, they attended the school to get benefits and with the money provided to them during this time which they get for attending the school, they paid for B2 or even C1 level classes in private courses.

This results in wasting the school's resources which can be avoided if students are allowed to choose the desired language level which they want to enter, or change their group without waiting until the end of the semester if they do not find their current group right for them, also making B2 level available for those who are able to and have the desire to achieve it, particularly those who want to enter the job market. This way, studying can be more meaningful for the students, and they will not stay in school longer than it is necessary for them. Also, the possibility of graduation with B2 level can be more motivating for some students to learn faster to be able to finish the course with a level of working proficiency.

As was revealed by participants, teachers and advisors were more motivating and supportive toward entry to Videregående than other goals because the language requirement for that is B1 and students continue studying the Norwegian language there (VG3). Presumably, teachers acted this way because they understand that this gives students the highest chances to master a language and obtain a profession/education, which significantly contributes to their further integration.

Participant 6 told a story where his desires for a job and university education were ignored; in his words, the school "*motivates to quit the course faster and kick out to Videregående*", so when he announced his intention to start in Videregående, an advisor even "*went there together with him as a mom to help him to enter there*". He noted that in the school, they did not motivate students with work or university, but rather encouraged them to enter Videregående.

Participant 1 had a similar experience; before entering the school, he knew what he wanted to do after he learned the language, namely continue his education as a physiotherapist in Norway, but teachers "*pressed him hard*", according to him, not to follow the path he had intended for himself and take on education as a plumber or electrician instead.

This indicates that refugees' own integrational strategies that they planned for themselves were ignored. Even though upon entry they were asked about their plans and desires for the future to map their integrational plan, the program was not laid out the way, that would help them to achieve their plans, which is a goal of it. This fact again argues against performing a personalized approach and fulfilling an individual plan that is designed for each of the students before entry.

#### 4.5 Theme 3: Attitudes toward the monolingual strategy of learning

All students were very satisfied with the monolingual strategy of learning and none of them would choose to learn the language bilingually. However, 6 of the students expressed their desire to have a little bit of bilingual support from a teacher at the beginning of their study. At the same time, half of the students who expressed their desire for bilingual support mentioned that learning a language in the language they do not understand was not an obstacle to learning and was, in fact, very beneficial for them, although in the very beginning they had to learn “*all by themselves*”, which was a difficulty for learning for some of the students, and a reason to desire an extra support.

Participant 6 pointed out: “*a strategy does not matter; limitations or benefits do not depend on a system as much as depend on a teacher and teacher's personal traits and his abilities to teach. It is not even dependent on the qualifications of the teacher. Some people who do not have teacher's education are able to teach and explain much better than those who have*”.

Mallows (2014), St.meld.nr. 16 (2016) and Teig (2017) all emphasized the importance that teachers have a qualification of teaching Norwegian language as a second language. However, teachers' qualifications were not important for the participants in this research; what was important was: teachers' responsiveness, attention, showing the desire to teach.

For some students, particularly those who have an experience of learning a foreign language bilingually, it was puzzling how they would be able to learn this way, but their attitudes towards the monolingual strategy changed as soon as they started to notice progress in learning the language, particularly when they started to understand the language of instruction in the school, which they had to reach by themselves bilingually, mostly through translations. The beginning stage was identified as a limitation of the monolingual strategy by all the participants who managed to reply the question regarding limitations or dislikes about this strategy.

Many of the researchers argued that strategy of self-learning is particularly difficult for those who do not have a long learning experience or have “little education”. Makafui Charlotte Kassah (2012) expressed doubts towards a strategy “all by themselves” or self-learning and called it one of the reasons why students fail to learn a language. According to Kassah’s argument, students come from different societies and particularly those who come from authoritarian society may not be familiar with independence during learning; such strategy can be perceived as a shock. According to this, regardless of whether a person has longer learning experience, if they are not familiar with independent learning, self-learning in the beginning can be as difficult as for the one who has little learning experience.

Participant 5, who has a long learning experience and, in addition, experience in learning foreign languages, however, completely bilingually, reported: *“It is easy to get lost when nobody tells exactly what to do and controls it.. when I was learning Russian, I used that a teacher gives many tasks to do at home and explains how to do it, then checks it, and has a full control of what I do and is fully aware of knowledge I have or lack and she works with it.. I didn’t know how to learn, from where, that it is correct”*.

As soon as participants gained a little bit of knowledge to understand what the teacher meant, they saw many more benefits of learning the language in the language of tuition, the most frequently cited ones being:

- more trust in a Norwegian teacher and certainty that the language being taught is correct;
- the general atmosphere of Norwegian language learning all the time;
- more involvement with the language and the learning process;
- finding out and memorizing words/expressions/grammar from listening to a teacher; memorizing happens naturally and is more qualitative than when students take a list of words and memorize them;
- learning the language faster;
- staying focused on the Norwegian language:

Participant 1: *“If there will be a teacher that speaks another language in addition, it will be difficult to focus on the Norwegian language for me. Even if I were in an environment where there are Kurdish and Arab people, it would be very difficult to focus on the Norwegian language. Also, I think that it is much easier to speak my native language, so I would speak my native language.”*. The same reflections were given by Participants 2, 3 and 9. Participant 3:



*“with a Norwegian teacher, even though you can’t, but you try, but with Kurdish teacher, I wouldn’t even try”.*

- learning the language without a language barrier; students did not have a fear to speak and express themselves, developed an ability to articulate their knowledge, and were able to speak fluently within their level, further developing their knowledge and accumulating vocabulary subconsciously; students are able to understand and memorize words straight from the context (as participant 7 put it: *“I speak fluently like I’m 4 years old, but I’m grown in my language”*);
- getting more attached to the Norwegian language and understanding its peculiarities:

Participant 5: *“a language should fall on your ears, you start to feel the language. There are many words and ways to speak that are exclusively Norwegian and can’t be translated to other languages. With time you start to understand everything intuitively, what it means, how to speak, and start to use it oneself, it should take some time of being, so to say, in the language”.*

- developing the ability to think in Norwegian, construct sentences, and understand without simultaneously translating from the native language:

Participant 10: *“When you learn many words and understand some structure, when you are constantly in Norwegian atmosphere, you just don’t notice how you start to think in Norwegian language. You get used so much, that other languages you know don’t exist for you, it’s strange but I feel very comfortable speaking Norwegian, like my language, even though I don’t speak that well and have an accent.*

Participant 9: *“I did it a mistake when I always was translating everything from English. English contributed a lot in the beginning, but then I tried to treat these languages as completely separate ones. Norwegian is a different way of thinking and expressing things.”*

- eliminating ethnocentric views faster; Genc and Bada (2005) assumed that students learning a language in a monolingual environment are prone to making inappropriate and premature judgments about their culture and the culture they were learning but participants in this research proved the possibility of making premature judgements and at the same time being more able to realize themselves that their judgements were wrong, why, and how.

Participant 9 provided the example of using *“impolite and unintelligent” du* (singular you) as a way of approaching people. When the teacher said that this was normal in Norway, the participant assumed that *“the teacher was impolite too”*, but with time, as he understood the

language better, he realized that Norwegians show politeness in a different way. This indicates that students who ask teachers, whether bilingual or monolingual, about cultural specificities may not believe the answer they are given until they themselves better comprehend why things are different in their new society.

Participant 9: *“Everyone was saying that “DU” is normal in Norwegian language, but I was sure it is not.”*

According to Jean Piaget's theory on constructivism, new knowledge is constructed from old knowledge. People can judge based on what is normal and polite in their culture, the culture they know, their own experiences and views. Only when their language skills are higher, when they have reached a given knowledge threshold (threshold hypothesis by Jim Cummins, 2001), they can get access to understanding why certain things are the way they are in the language and culture they are learning. They can reach this understanding through communication with immediate environment (as by Vygotsky's theory on social constructivism). In this case, the participant did not realize how Norwegians show politeness and manners; if his language skills had been higher at the time when he asked his teacher about this, he would have been able to get a meaningful explanation and reorganize his knowledge or understand it himself when his language skills improve.

#### 4.5.1 Learning language through the lens of culture

The language learning curriculum is based on learning about the culture and practical information for life in Norway. Peterson & Coltrane (2003) argued that learning a language is impossible without awareness of its cultural context. In terms of integration, which is the goal of the introduction program, learning the language without cultural aspects would not be meaningful. Learning the language is a social process and it would not be possible to learn it without communicating and practising it with people who speak it – with the Norwegian population. It makes, that language learning, enculturation, and integration all happen through interaction with the learning environment.

Some of the participants shared, that they are coming from homogeneous societies and that they didn't see or communicate with so many foreigners before. Voksenopplæringen in this context can serve as a representation of the Norwegian heterogeneous (multicultural) society, where the monolingual strategy serves as a mean, unifying people from different countries and backgrounds, and as a representation of Norway's ideology of a diverse society in terms of

ethnicity, culture, orientation, etc. Learning the language in such an environment thus teaches respect, tolerance, and equality, which are the Norwegian society's main values.

So, diversity within groups is preferable for participants' integration and development of cultural open-mindedness and cultural plurality. In addition, if the group is ethnically diverse, students will most likely make friends with individuals from different nations over theirs where a mutual language for communication will be Norwegian, which will contribute to their learning. Taking into account that a school divides students into groups where they have access to a common language, they rather make friends with people from the same countries or with people who speak the same language well; which can be considered as a contribution to the segregation of society.

The language learning curriculum is built on learning culture. Through learning grammar and vocabulary, students raise awareness about the new culture and perspective through a durable, persistent language course; they are then able to learn, understand and adapt new perspectives on the world and the values and norms of the new culture. This can be as simple as Participant 3's experience: *"it took time to realize to sort trash in different bags, I've never done it before"*, or as completely life-changing as Participant 10's: *"what is normal in one country can be illegal here: beat children, marry at 10, have several wives, separate women, etc"*.

All dialogue tasks and oral practices are based on discussing issues related to Norway, often comparing it with the country of origin, discussing benefits and limitations of both; through this, students reported that they were able to better understand each culture and find a balance between them which fits their views of the world.

The majority of refugees, particularly in the last five years, came from cultures significantly different to the Norwegian and even European way of life. If they do not want to integrate and prefer to work and communicate with people within the same culture, they will fail to learn the language. However, they will learn the main components of the Norwegian society through the curriculum anyway which could increase their curiosity and raise their desire to become a part of their new society (Alhassan & Bawa, 2012); this could, in turn, motivate them to learn the language.

From a social-psychological point of view, language-learning can be considered the beginning of the formation of a cultural plurality in individuals, which students will develop as they increase their language skills and interact further with their new environment, also in which

ethnic diversity in the group in Voksenopplæringen can assist, where students discuss cultural moments with each other, realize the differences between their own and Norwegian culture, learn about new perspectives and find a balance between these which allows them to “pick the best of both worlds”. Discussing the culture from multiple perspective in a diverse group leads to developing more open-mindedness, while discussing between two cultures, if the group is homogeneous can create prejudices against a new culture.

For example, Participant 4 confessed being married to her brother, and when a teacher announced it's not allowed in Norway, she got angry at a teacher and at Norway as a country. But later, when she discussed this question with Japanese, Philippines and Russian groupmates, she got more awareness about the world and understanding that what is not allowed in Norway is not allowed in most of the countries and it is a norm. One can assume, that if she discussed this question with someone who comes from the same country, she would have not changed her mind or, instead, would have even created more negativity towards Norway.

#### 4.6 Theme 4: Integration

The Report for Norway to the OECD states that “integration is a mutual effort, integration policy implies that the migrant contributes and participates in the society and in turn, the society ensures that everyone gets an opportunity to contribute and participate.” However, the order should be reversed because migrants cannot participate if their possibilities for participation are not ensured from the beginning and integration is possible only in multicultural societies where possibilities for it are ensured in advance (Berry, 1997).

Some participants in this study shared that they wanted to be a part of the society, but the Norwegian population did not accept them. They are rejected in work or housing as soon as they reveal where they are from, no matter how hard they try to get access to the Norwegian society.

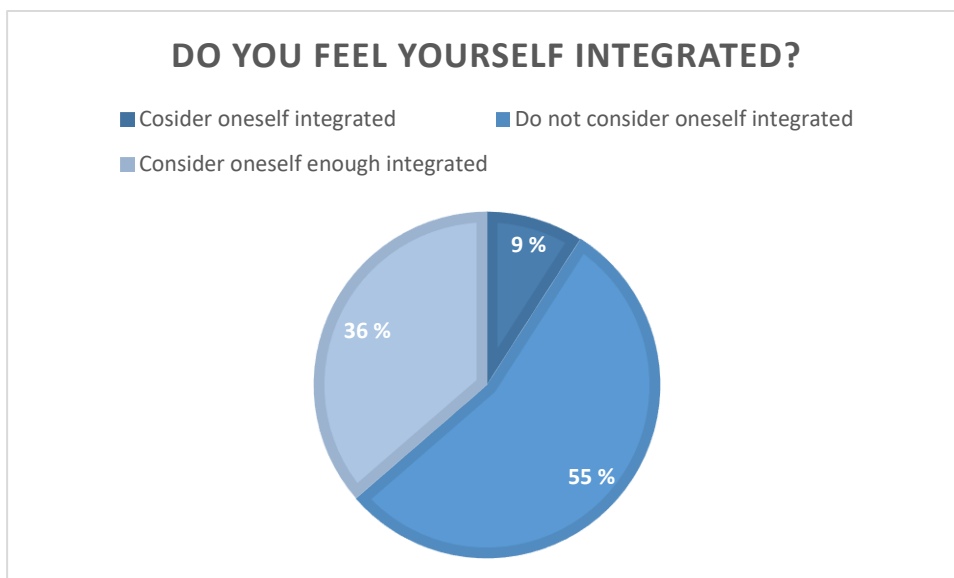
*Participant 2: I changed my name and surname to be more Norwegian-like, but it also didn't help so much. The most difficult is to rent an apartment and get a job, I had such situation when I moved to Kristiansand, I agreed to rent an apartment, so we agreed about everything, then I come he asks where I am from and doesn't rent, and I was all night on the street till in the morning I found where I can temporarily stay. With the job also, they read your resume, your*

*name, then they invite you, look at you, where you are from and that's all, doesn't matter how well you speak and how competent you are."*

Participant 7: *"If I don't write on my head that I speak Norwegian, nobody is going to talk with me. All people see me and don't talk to me."*

Participants do not relate their integration to measurements that are created by different organizations for measuring integration. Rather, these measurements and indicators can serve for ensuring the inclusion of migrants, identifying problems, and working out policies and action plans to make the Norwegian population and organizations accept migrants in their society so they can contribute and take part in society.

#### 4.6.1 What it means to be integrated from the point of view of the participants



As shown in the table, most participants do not consider themselves integrated as integration is a very vague concept and what it means to each of the participants varies. Among those who consider themselves integrated enough are those who relate integration to balancing between adopting Norwegian culture and preserving one's own identity and those who relate it to the extent they are able to realize their potential in life, in which case one can argue that it is possible to not be integrated even into one own's country. There is only one participant, the only female in this research, who considers herself integrated due to the fact that she is married.

The majority of participants believe that integration happens through interaction with Norwegians. Education, work, and social activities are means through which people can meet and interact with Norwegians. Language skills play an auxiliary role, but without speaking

Norwegian, no matter how strongly a person wants to integrate, it will not be possible, while knowing the Norwegian language will help them to get access to Norwegian people. Having solid knowledge of the Norwegian language might diminish discriminations towards them as well.

Participant 9 said that the better his language skills became, the more positive of an attitude he received from Norwegian people: *“I work with customers, and earlier, whenever conflict situation appeared, the more negativity they showed to me, always complained and demanded to “employ someone who can speak a decent language”. Even though I could solve their problem by myself, they still were unsatisfied. Since I speak good, I never experienced such situations. .. That I look differently, dark hair, darker skin – it doesn’t make me a foreigner and someone different from Norwegian people, it makes me unique ... But when I didn’t speak well I felt myself different and a foreigner in the country.”*

The wellbeing of refugees is highly dependent on the attitudes of the local population, because negative attitudes from the local population can affect their desires and strategies to integrate (Esser, 2006) and this can lead migrants, after experiencing negative attitudes and discrimination, to give up, develop negative attitudes to the local population, and make the decision to actively separate themselves.

Communication with Norwegians was identified as crucial to becoming integrated. Participant 6 said: *“I speak perfect Norwegian, but I’m not integrated, we don’t understand each other, not the language – psychologically”*, and provided numerous examples where he tried to explain that he doesn’t comprehend the way Norwegians think and see the world. Only through communication with the local population can migrants learn Norwegians’ point of view and understand the ontology of Norwegian people; by discussing with Norwegians why they think and act the way they do, immigrants see through the lens of Norwegian people, and comprehend them. Only then can immigrants become “culturally plural”.

Motivation is an essential factor in the integration process, particularly for those who are motivated instrumentally to learn a language and create a direction for themselves, a strategy for their integration. Through being allowed to fulfil their plan (such as obtaining the profession they dream about; entering employment in the field they have competence in and that brings them enjoyment; being allowed to open a business or develop their art and earn with their talent in Norway), they can achieve life satisfaction and personal integration and through this

favourable environment, they contribute well to the development of their new society. According to the intergenerational theory of Harmut Esser and according to the participants, language is just a tool; where and how they use this tool helps to develop a sense of belonging and reconstruct a life and an identity. Without speaking the language, this would not be possible, but language will make it possible to effectuate the strategy for a new life that refugees create for themselves.

#### 4.6.2 The impact of the monolingual strategy for learning on integration

The monolingual strategy showed to be effective not just in obtaining a new language but also in getting familiar with and adopting a new culture. Learning Norwegian in the Norwegian language is comparable to looking directly through the lens of Norwegian logic and cultural aspects because language also transfers a logic and overview of the culture, where acquiring characteristics that are intrinsic to Norwegian people happens unconsciously during the language learning itself. Enculturation and adaptation, which are the main starting components of integration, happen simultaneously as learning the target language. It enables people to psychologically and spiritually get familiarized with Norway, its language, culture and people, get used to it, construct a perception of oneself within the new society and develop new social self-consciousness and positioning.

According to the participants who have an experience of learning a language by a different strategy, when learning monolingually, not only did the process of learning happen faster, but the process of adaptation did too, as students combined acclimatization and adaptation with language learning. When learning a language bilingually, on the other hand, students might go through those processes at different times: the process of learning, getting used to a language, getting used to a new environment, the adaptational process of speaking another language in a new environment, acclimatization.

#### Summary to the Chapter 4

Four themes have been identified in the interview data and were structured according to the research questions:

Theme 1 was defined by the first sub-question: how are students motivated to learn Norwegian, where participants responses were discussed and analysed.

Theme 2 was defined and discussed in terms of the composition of classes and its impact on learning environment.

Themes 3 and 4 relate to the overarching research question, where theme 4 is also incorporated with the 3rd sub-question: How does language competence affect integration into Norwegian society.

The summary of findings and conclusion will be presented in the next chapter.



## 5 Chapter: Summary of findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to identify whether learning the Norwegian language monolingually is an obstacle to learning and subsequent integration for refugees. In answering this question, the study has fulfilled the following objectives: determined students' motivation to learn upon entering Voksenopplæringen; highlighted the impacts of the learning environment in the classroom on the learning process; determined the influence of the monolingual strategy on learning and on refugees' integration in the Norwegian society.

The primary method chosen for this study was individual interviews augmented by findings of other researchers' from previous years and statistical data. Data collection consisted of 10 semi-structured interviews with participants selected based on the following conditions: be a refugee and complete the Norwegian language course as part of the Introduction program in Voksenopplæringen Tromsø between 2015 and 2020. All of the participants were graduates of the 2018-2019 years. The method of analysis was qualitative thematic analysis, following the conceptual framework for analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Analysis was approached in a constructionist way that focused on seeing how data develop reality. The conclusions were based on the purpose, research questions, and results of the study.

### 5.2 Summary of findings:

#### How are students motivated to learn Norwegian upon entering Voksenopplæringen?

All students in this research were equally motivated to know the language before entry, but they were motivated differently to learn it. Reasons why they wanted to learn the language varied and this factor determined how they learned the language. Students' motivational factors can be divided into two categories: those who are goal-oriented before entering – for a particular education or job, and those who have not determined what they will do after completing the school before entering.

Those who did not know what they would do after the course tended to learn the language slower while looking for new directions in life. They used their time in the school as an activity in life, social relation-building, and adaptation time. Additional factors in their life, such as missing relatives impacted their learning process and ability to concentrate on the learning

process. Those who were goal-oriented tended to learn the language fast within timeframes they set for themselves; they craved to progress fast, and the majority of these students did not want to make friends among their groupmates and people who spoke the same language because they did not see it as a contribution to progressing in their language skills or as a helpful network.

Clashes between motivational factors within one group created a bad environment for some of those who were goal-oriented and these students tended to form judgements and hostile attitudes to their groupmates for not being as motivated as them and not putting in as much effort into learning as them. As such, differences in motivational factors within the group diminished the effectiveness of the course particularly for goal-oriented students and made the course not as effective as they expected and wished it to be.

#### How does the composition of classes impact the learning environment?

Another factor that had an impact on the learning process was the improper allocation of students to groups according to their language level. All but one participant mentioned that people within their group were on different language levels. It was a problem for students who had either higher or lower level than anyone else. For both, the course was not relevant, as for those who had higher language skills the course was tedious and slow and those who had worse language skills were not able to follow the learning process. At the same time, having higher language skills than anyone else made some students suspect that they are being used by being allocated so on purpose to help students who have lower language skills.

According to the interviews, the allocation of students was often based on a common language – the majority had either English or a native language (Arabic) in common. The allocation of students into groups appears, therefore, to be access to a language students know well, not motivations/goals or Norwegian language level. But these two factors (motivation and Norwegian language level) proved to be decisive in how effective the course would be for the students and how they would feel in the group.

#### How is it learning a language monolingually in Voksenopplæringen?

Learning the language in the language of learning is characterized by independent learning until students start to understand the teacher. Independent learning consisted of translations and learning the basics of the language bilingually, which could later be used to learn more. Once a basic level was reached, the learning became collective and students preferred to keep learning

only in Norwegian, because this was the only way to learn correct meanings and correct language, and translations of the whole phrases lost its sense.

Listening to a Norwegian teacher who adapts their speech to the level of the students greatly developed listening skills, kept students involved and focused, and developed an ability to understand a general context, connecting words students understood and learning directly from the context to memorize better. Through straining themselves and trying to express themselves from the initial stages when they had no choice but to say what they need in Norwegian, students overcame the language barrier, developed their fluency, and learned how to articulate knowledge they already had because they had to avoid words they didn't know when expressing themselves. Because learning materials are built and divided into topics based on social studies and intended to engage students in reflections on their own and the new culture, learning was more meaningful for the students as they were not just able to get familiar with a new perspective, but also learn relevant vocabulary, expressions, and grammar at the same time.

Self-learning was difficult for students who weren't familiar with independent learning and could not learn on their own until they reached a level when they could understand the teacher. In addition to personal abilities, disparities in motivational factors among students also made them unequal in the learning process. If everyone starts on the same level: 1) goal-oriented students progress faster than everyone else, 2) those who are not able to learn on their own progress slower than anyone else, 3) those who are able to learn on their own but are not goal-oriented progress faster than those who are not able to learn on their own but slower than goal-oriented students. These disparities then negatively impact the learning environment and relationship between groupmates, and in turn affect the effectiveness of the course particularly for those who progressed significantly faster or slower than everyone else.

Improper allocation of students by their language level from the beginning was also common, which made the course less relevant for some students from the beginning. It can be surmised from the interviews that allocating the student to a group where the majority spoke the same native language was the preferred method of division employed by the school.

The interviews showed that students did not quit the course at once when they found it no longer relevant. Instead, they waited for a favourable moment to quit: admission to an educational organization or finding a job; they sometimes attended the course to obtain benefits to be able to pay for a course at a higher level which is relevant for them in a different private school so

they would reach the desired level and be able to move on in their life. This may have been caused by the fact that the highest level of teaching is B1 which is not enough for most jobs or university but is enough for entering Videregående or Vocational training where students continue to study the language and Voksenopplæring did more emphasis for the students to enter namely Videregående and neglected students' actual desires for future. Voksenopplæringen provides a course at the B2 level only if students are able to reach this level within 550 hours, but the students who were able and wanted to reach that level did not know this information. In order to reach the desired B2 level, some of those who could have reached this level within 550 hours go to the school for B1 level and meanwhile pay for B2 in private courses.

So, the monolingual strategy itself was not an obstacle for learning the language for the majority of students, except those who could not learn on their own. The ability and desire for self-learning, different motivational factors and levels of knowledge in the Norwegian language within one group were what failed to make the course effective for everyone, which resulted that some of the students spent their learning hours and graduated with insufficient language skills.

#### How does language competence affect integration into Norwegian society?

The better the language competence is, the more people obtain a feeling of being a part of the society. Good language skills diminish discrimination on language grounds and allow people to “blend” among Norwegians while poor language competence leaves them with a feeling of being foreign and being different. If their competence doesn't improve, they risk to stay in this condition that will alienate them from the society. As was reported by the majority of the participants, they experienced discrimination, and/or exclusion, and/or injustice on the language competence grounds from the majority of the population at different stages of learning, and reported that with the improvement in their language skills, they improved attitudes of Norwegians towards them, and gained their respect and inclusion through improvements in their language skills, after which they developed love for Norway, its culture and people, a sense of belonging to this society and a desire to be a part of it.

Failure to improve language skills, giving up during learning or giving up after because of a failure to achieve learning outcomes on a language course can lead foreigners, after having experienced discrimination and exclusion steadily, to develop negative attitudes back towards

the rest of the population, which can cause them to lose the desire to integrate and decide to separate themselves from the Norwegian population and instead communicate and work with people who speak the same language as them.

Does the monolingual strategy for refugees learning Norwegian at Voksenopplæringen affect their prospects for integration?

All of the students emphasized how beneficial learning a language monolingually was for their psychological and spiritual accustoming and adaptation with an intention to integrate into a new society. Monolingual strategy can be identified as synonymous to obtaining cultural awareness, as learning curriculum and learning activities are aimed at developing cultural plurality, simultaneously with obtaining relevant language knowledge, which ensures students' familiarization and reflections about cultures they know and a new culture, and Voksenopplæringen, is seen as a safe place to transit and adjust to the new environment.

Through learning the language monolingually in Voksenopplæringen, students gained a certain understanding of the Norwegian logic and culture and it served as a representation of the Norwegian society in general, which was the basis to approach what participants identified as "integration" – namely interaction with the Norwegian population, equal opportunities and cooperation, through which they were further able to develop their language and cultural competence, and most importantly, start to understand Norwegians psychologically, their logic and the way and the lens through which they look at the world. These factors are vital for uniting with the Norwegian population and reaching collective wellbeing, then contributing to the development and sustainability of the society. So, employing a monolingual strategy in the school upon arrival facilitates refugees' prospects of integration.

### 5.3 Conclusions

Based on the indicated findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

Learning Norwegian in Norwegian were not an obstacle for learning for students who are able to learn the language on their own in the initial stages of learning. With the progression in language skills by oneself bilingually till reaching a threshold level where students were able to understand the teacher, the monolingual strategy was very beneficial in terms of enculturation, adaptation, acquiring a sense of belonging, and further improvement of language competence.

The hindrance to effectively learning a language and achieving higher language levels in Voksenopplæringen was the improper allocation of students to the groups. Among participants within this research it can be seen that it was preferred by the school to divide people by the languages they speak, so they have an access to a language they know well, which can be regarded as a contribution to segregation of immigrants and failure to create a “Norwegian” environment, as students naturally communicate the language they know well between themselves. In addition, having a majority of compatriots in the group doesn’t contribute to the development of cultural open-mindedness and complicates cultural change, because the environment in the group does not represent Norway as a culturally diverse society; they only reflect about Norwegian culture with compatriots from the perspective of the culture they know well, and thus are also less undergone to changes and are more prone to making prejudices.

Different language levels and different motivational factors among participants in one group made the learning not effective to everyone, and, in addition, created a hostile relationship between participants on these grounds. It is clear, that among such disparities, a personalized approach, which is aimed to make learning relevant for every participant cannot be provided.

As a result, students spend their learning hours or quit the course without obtaining sufficient language competence.

The monolingual strategy proved to be effective not just for language learning, but also for adaptation in a new society, as learning the language this way gave refugees a feeling of being a part of the new society and through a learning program designed with a social studies curriculum they were able to learn how and what it means to be Norwegian. That is why it is so important to have actually effective courses and decent language skills upon graduation.

That students do not get enough knowledge on the course during their studies in Voksenopplæringen has an impact on their opportunities to unite with the Norwegian population and integrate. However, for the most motivated and goal-oriented students, this was not an obstacle. They were receiving most of their knowledge from other bodies that provide language training and Voksenopplæringen did not play a role in their formation.

In school, students learned a lot of practical information about Norway and how Norwegian people are, their culture and values, but because of a lack of language knowledge, they had difficulties with accessing Norwegians and places where they can interact with them, like jobs or social activities, where they could furtherly develop their competences and integrate. Namely

interaction with Norwegian people and understanding the lens through which they see the world were identified as integration.

Participants specifically named poor language skills as the reason for negative attitudes from the local population and the reason for not succeeding in life. Improving language skills led to experiencing more positive attitudes and acceptance from the local population; failing this, immigrants might give up, start to develop negative attitudes to the local society due to their negative experiences, and ultimately decide to separate themselves willingly from the society they live in.

#### 5.4 Recommendations for future practice for language course organizers and policy makers

Problem: different engagement in the learning process in the group.

Recommendation: divide students according to their motivations for learning into goal-oriented, separating those who plan to study and enter the employment; and those who do not know what they will do further in life.

Research has shown that regardless of the age, languages spoken, or educational background of the participants, the motivation for learning the language makes them equally engaged or unengaged in the learning process. Division of students based on their future plans will also ensure a possibility of providing a personalized approach to each individual, applying the same approach to the group as a whole. Equal motivational factors in the group imply that all participants have equal or similar needs and desires, and thus it will make, that an equal approach will be relevant to all the participants in the group.

Problem: ineffective learning due to being in a class of the wrong language level.

Recommendation: before allocating a student into a particular group, along with evaluating the student's knowledge, take into consideration the student's own evaluations of their knowledge and which language level they want to join.

Problem: students who plan to work after completing the course graduate with incomplete knowledge.

Recommendation: introduce a higher level of teaching Norwegian language for those who plan to enter the work market after the course.

It was revealed in the interviews, that students are not allowed or not able to change to the language level which is relevant for them at once. In addition, information about the possibility of studying the language on B2 level if it is possible to achieve within 550 hours is not announced to students. However, there are also students who want to start working and desire to pass B2. They didn't know it is possible to get this course, and instead, they had to prolong their studies in Voksenopplæring to obtain monetary support to pay for the courses which are relevant for them. If this information is announced, there will be more motivated students who will try to learn faster to graduate with a working proficiency B2 level; fewer people will stay in the school longer than they need it; and this way, a school will be able to save its resources and free up a place for other students.

Problem: refugees cannot integrate and cannot improve their language skills without communication with Norwegian people; they do not know how or are afraid to reach them.

Recommendation: as a part of the students' personal integration plan, oblige them to attend social activities of their interest apart from the school where each of them will be among Norwegians (for example, join a sports team, dance club, music band, camping group, etc.).

Ensuring attending social activities once or twice per week as a part of an integrational plan can be done by including it in the monetary benefit, they get for attending the course. For example, it can be done by reducing amount they get per hour in the school and adding it to the amount of hours they spend on additional social activities.

#### 5.5 Recommendations for future research:

1. This study was limited only to one female participant from another culture. However, experiences regarding her integration that she shared considerably differ from the experiences shared by male participants. This calls for more research within the field of integration in Norway among females from the Middle East of different ages and different marital status.
2. This study did not provide the clarifications regarding the question why some participants from the same country, of the same age, educational background, characteristics, and equal



desire to interact with Norwegians manage to unite with the Norwegian population and some are not being accepted by the Norwegians.

3. Some participants of this research mentioned that integration is balancing between throwing something away from their own culture and acquiring something from Norwegian culture. However, further investigation of this question was not in the scope of this research. This calls for more research among refugees who have lived in Norway for a long time and consider themselves integrated. How do older and younger refugees adapt themselves to Norwegian culture?

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## Appendix 1: Interview guide

### Block 1:

- How long did you study in school?
- Did you take language tests? What language level did you achieve?
- Did you take language tests several times? How long did it take to achieve a certain level? Did you get the result you have expected/which language level you was aimed to achieve?
- Do you speak several languages?
- Did you study something? School/university/vocational training?

### Block 2:

- What was your motivation to learn the language?
- Do you think that for the life in Norway is necessary to speak as fluent as Norwegians?
- What level of language is “enough” for you for your life in Norway?
- Did you have any expectations before starting school?
- Did the school meet your expectations?
- How did you find learning Norwegian in the Norwegian language?
- Did you always understand everything that teacher says?
- What do you think are the benefits or limitations of having a teacher who explains Norwegian in your language or a Norwegian teacher that speaks only Norwegian and teaches his native language?
- Did you like your group? Did you feel that everyone in the group corresponded to the same level of language or are equally able to follow the learning process?
- To what extend an Introduction program helped you to integrate into Norwegian society?
- To what extend the information that you were learning during the Social Studies course or language course was useful for you in terms of learning about Norwegian culture?
- A language course was based on a curriculum of Social Studies, how could you characterize this course in terms of learning about Norway?
- What integration is in your opinion? Do you feel yourself integrated?
- How do you think a person can integrate into Norwegian society?
- Do you consider that if a person has good skills in the Norwegian language, a person is integrated?

## Appendix 2: Informasjons- og samtykkesktiv

### Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

«**Learning Norwegian in Norwegian. Impact of the monolingual strategy on effective integration for refugees learning Norwegian in Voksenopplæring** »

«**Å lære norsk på norsk. Virkningen av den enspråklige undervisningsstrategien for effektiv integrering for flyktninger som deltar på norsk kurs i Voksenopplæringen**»

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt og i dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Prosjektet er i form av en masteroppgave ved UIT Norges arktiske universitet, i forbindelse med Masterprogrammet i Peace and Conflict Transformation (MPCT) ved Senter for fredsstudier. Formålet ved prosjektet er å undersøke om enspråklig undervisningsstrategi for å lære norsk er det optimale alternativet for læring, og om dette kan være til hinder for integreringsprosessen.

Tatt i betraktning den lave statistikken for de som har oppnådd B2 nivået etter norsk-kurset Voksenoppkøringen, en mulig antagelse er at en enspråklig undervisningsstrategi ikke fungerer optimalt, og at gjennomføringsprosenten kunne vært høyere med en mer differensiert strategi som tilpasser undervisning i grupper iht kriterier som eksemplvis alder og-, utdanningsbakgrunn, og eventuelt-, også med morsmål støtte.

**Ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet:** UIT Norges Arktiske Universitet'

### Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Følgene:

- Personer som har fått oppholdstillatelse i Norge på humanitær basis (flyktninger) og som dermed hadde rett og plikt å følge norsk kurs på Voksenopplæringen.
- Personer som gjennomførte et norsk kurs i perioden 2015-2020.

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar i semi-strukturerte intervju.- (Vanlig samtale). Det vil ta deg ca. 30 minutter. Spørsmålene vil omhandle dine erfaringer med Voksenopplæringen og dine tanker om læring av norsk og hvordan det påvirker integreringsprosessen.

Jeg vil også be opplysning om din alder og utdannings-bakgrunn. Prosjektet vil ikke gjengi noen gjenkjennbare personopplysninger i oppgaven, alle respondenter vil forbli anonyme.

Jeg vil ta notater under samtalen. Jeg ønsker også å bruke lydopptak dersom du godkjenner dette. Alle eventuelle opptak vil bli slettet ved prosjekslutt.

### Det er frivillig å delta i prosjekteter

Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Det vil ikke påvirke ditt forhold til skolen.

### Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Jeg vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Jeg behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Alle opplysningene vil bli anonymisert med en gang og lagres på forskningsserver til masteroppgaven er fullført. Deretter vil alle opplysningene bli slettet.

### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**

Opplysningene slettes når prosjektet er avsluttet og oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er Juni 2021.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Fram til oppgaven skal innleveres, som etter planen er 15. mai 2021, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra UIT har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Studenten, som gjennomfører prosjektet: Daniella Mahdalchuk, tel. 48242127, e-post: [dma022@uit.no](mailto:dma022@uit.no)
- UIT Norges arktiske universitet ved viledler Christine Smith-Simonsen. Telefon: 77646761; e-post: [christine.smith-simonsen@uit.no](mailto:christine.smith-simonsen@uit.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17

Med vennlig hilsen

Forsker:

Daniella Mahdalchuk

### **Samtykkeerklæring**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Å lære norsk på norsk. Enspråklig undervisningsstrategi for flyktninger som deltar på norsk kurs i Voksenopplæring som et hinder for effektiv integrering». og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i en intervju
- å dele opplysninger om min alder og utdanning
- å dele min erfaring hos Vokenopplæringen.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## Appendix 3: Vurdert sjema fra NSD

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 849968 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet 18.06.2020 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

### DEL PROSJEKTET MED PROSJEKTANSVARLIG

Det er obligatorisk for studenter å dele meldeskjemaet med prosjektansvarlig (veileder). Det gjøres ved å trykke på "Del prosjekt" i meldeskjemaet.

### MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

[nsd.no/personvernombud/meld\\_prosjekt/meld\\_endringer.html](https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html)

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

### TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 01.05.2021.

### LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

### PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

#### DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

#### FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

#### OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)