UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Teacher Education

The English teacher in the Sámi speaking classroom

A study examining the multilingual classroom as seen in Finnmark, with a special focus on our indigenous population.

Candidate number 7

Master's thesis in GLU 5-10, LER-3912, May 2024

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Foreword

This master's thesis is written as a concluding assignment for the Primary School Teacher Education year 5-10 at the Arctic University of Norway (UiT). The project has been challenging, but also exciting and educational.

There are several who deserve a special thank you, and I would like to thank everyone who has supported and contributed to the project. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Stefan Holander, for all the help along the way towards a completed master's thesis.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank the teachers at the four participating schools for taking the time to participate in the project during an otherwise busy workday. The project would not have been possible to realize without them!

Summary

This master's thesis explores the multilingual teaching situation as seen in Norway's northernmost county Finnmark, with a special focus on Sámi-speaking classrooms. The study aims to investigate how English teachers consider their bilingual Sámi-Norwegian students' backgrounds in their teaching, and what challenges they face.

The study is based on qualitative interviews with four English teachers who teaches in Finnmark and have knowledge of the Sámi language and culture. Methodologically, the study is classified as a qualitative case study where each teacher's experiences and knowledge are examined in depth.

The analysis of the data shows that teachers have varying degrees of positive and negative attitudes towards multilingualism, but a general attitude that this is an important topic that they wish they had more knowledge about. Nevertheless, the teachers consider their students' bilingual backgrounds in their teaching by integrating cultural topics in teaching, language, cultural celebrations, and simply by being aware of and familiarizing themselves with the students' cultural backgrounds, thereby adapting their teaching to their various needs.

Regarding the challenges the teachers face, they report a lack of motivation among students, a lack of adapted resources that reflect and support multilingualism, and the complexity of teaching in a multilingual environment.

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation and background

In the world today, English has the status of a lingua franca – a language used worldwide by people who do not understand each other's mother tongue. It is emphasized in the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, called 'Kunnskapsløftet', that it is particularly important that students learn to speak English at a satisfactory level, to be able to communicate with others all over the world (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, *The subject's relevance and central values*). English is regarded as one of the three core subjects in Norwegian schools, which also underscores the importance of the subject. The subject is heavily emphasized both for its practical significance and for its role in preparing students for a globalized world.

As a result of globalization and migration, the cultural and linguistic landscape is changing in schools worldwide. Languages and cultures come together in one place, which means that the teachers must be innovative in order to facilitate the best possible learning for the students. At the same time, new pedagogical imperatives demand that teachers make what is to be learned meaningful and comprehensible, and that arrangements are made for students with different abilities to participate actively in exploring and having a dialogue about what is to be learned.

The number of multilingual pupils in primary school increases, and the competence of the individual teacher must therefore be increased to keep pace with developments. In Norway, one of the minority groups are the Sámi, who also speak their own language, Sámi. The Sámi are the only minority group in Norway classified as indigenous. I addition to our indigenous population, in 2016, 15.3 percent of children of primary school age had an immigrant background. This is an increase of 4% since 2011, but the proportion varies greatly, and there are schools in Norway where minority children constitute 95 % (Steinkellner, A., 2017). This development is unlikely to stop anytime soon, and it is therefore important that teachers are equipped to handle it in the best possible way

The terms minority and majority are often used in the context of immigration and grouping people in society – in other words, we cannot have a minority unless we have a majority, and vice versa. Although there are schools where up to 95% have an immigrant background, they are still referred to as a minority in the big picture – which can be explained by the fact that

these students are a minority in a national context. This also applies to two of the schools I have visited during my work with this thesis, where the Sámi are a majority locally, but certainly a minority in a national context.

The minorities found in schools, and how many they are, vary from place to place. It might be useful to consider the important difference between English classrooms in, say Oslo, where multilingualism is often tied to immigrant minorities, with Norwegian as the hegemonic language and lingua franca, and in Finnmark, where the language diversity is heavily affected by the Sámi resurgence and the policies intended to safeguard the Sámi languages.

Oslo can be seen as a great melting pot of different languages and cultures from all continents, but in Finnmark, which is the base of my area of research, the Sámi population make up a significant part of the population, and Sámi students therefore will be a much larger percentage at school than in most other parts of the country. While Sámi is a minority language in many places here as well, it is also the dominant language in some areas, which creates slightly different multicultural and multilingual situations than seen anywhere else in our country.

1.2 Research question

The thought process behind this study was set in motion when my thoughts wandered to the multicultural situation we find ourselves in here in Finnmark, where we not only have many minorities gathered, but also an indigenous people to consider to a greater extent than anywhere else in the country.

Part of my focus when I chose this theme was to have a look at the multicultural classroom as seen in Finnmark, as well as I wanted my research to enable me to learn more about the Sámi-dominated classroom, especially with respect to English teaching, investigating if the English learning situation may be experienced different in Sámi-dominated classrooms, and what linguistic and socio-cultural issues this might bring. The project aims to examine the adaptations and considerations the English teacher makes in this multilingual classroom, and to have a look at what factors they believe can have an influence on learning in the English subject at school, as both a foreign language subject and a subject providing knowledge of culture and society. This might have to do with factors such as social and cultural conditions, but I also expected the teachers to have an opinion on the linguistic challenges they face when teaching English in a Sámi-language classroom, such as cross-linguistic particularities.

Based on this, I have come to the following research questions:

In what ways do English teachers in Finnmark take into account the bilingual Sámi-Norwegian background of their students in their teaching, and what challenges do they face?

This project aims to shed light on the current state of multilingualism in school and initiate thought processes among current and future teachers on how we can best facilitate linguistic minorities. This can hopefully be useful beyond classrooms with Sámi speaking students and be related to many other minority groups in today's school in similar situations.

My data is not gathered from students or observations of practices and results in the classroom, but from the reflections and experiences of practicing teachers, who are involved in teaching multicultural and multilingual English classes daily. My selection of informants consisted of four Sámi-speaking teachers who teach English, two from the coast of Finnmark and two from the interior. The original plan was to combine the teacher interviews with observation in their classrooms, but I soon found that this was difficult to implement due to various reasons. Therefore, the decision was made to set out to investigate what they experience through interviews.

1.3 Multilinguality and the English subject in past and present curricula

In order to get a general sense of the English subject's role and relevance in school, it is useful to have a look at the development of the English subject in a historical perspective, and how The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (hereafter referred to as UDIR) has described the English subject over the years. The curricula in Norway have undergone several revisions over the years, aimed at adapting to both pedagogical shifts and societal needs.

In 1936, English was introduced as a subject in the compulsory public school (Schools Act of 1936). This curriculum emphasized providing students in Norwegian schools with a basic understanding and competence in the English language. The introduction of English as a subject in compulsory education served as the natural starting point for discussions on the subject of English and its further development. In the curriculum from 1987(M-87) the focus began to shift towards more communicative competencies in English. The goal was not just to learn grammar and vocabulary but also to use the language in real-life situations. M-87 was a breakthrough in Norwegian school history because it highlighted the importance of

bilingualism: The goal then was for Sámi and other minorities to develop a functional bilingualism, i.e. they would be equally good in their mother tongue and in Norwegian (Spernes, 2012, p. 40). Although this did not mention English specifically, these changes in attitudes toward bi- and multilinguality would not just influence how we understand language learning in general but also how our students learn English.

In 2006, the Knowledge Promotion reform was introduced, with a strong emphasis on basic skills in all subjects, including English. The focus was on reading, writing, oral skills, and the use of English in various contexts. Digital competence was also highlighted. In 2013, the Ministry of Education set the so-called Subject Renewal process in motion by installing a committee with the purpose of reviewing and assessing the subjects in primary and secondary education and training in terms of the requirements for competences in future working life and society. Its mandate was to assess and report on what pupils will need to learn in school in a perspective of 20 to 30 years. The committee emphasized that the world is constantly changing, and that this is something the school must keep pace with, to best equip the students for the future (Regjeringen, 2015).

Norway is part of the international migration picture, where the immigrant proportion of the population appears to be increasing. This contributes to a growth in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in Norwegian society (Regjeringen, 2015, p. 21). It is therefore interesting to take a closer look at what they write regarding multilingualism and the multicultural society:

> The need for advanced competence in languages and communication and the ability to master several languages become even more important due to the globalization and internationalization of society, working life and business and industry. Pupils with bilingual or multilingual competence are a resource for Norwegian culture and society, and they should be given the opportunity to develop their linguistic competence. This applies to pupils with Sámi, Finnish/Kven language backgrounds, as well as pupils with other minority-language backgrounds (Regjeringen, 2015, p. 26).

Here, multilingual students are recognized as a valuable resource for Norwegian culture and society. Emphasis is placed on the fact that these students, whether they come from Sámi, Finnish/Kven, or other minority language backgrounds, should be given opportunities to develop their linguistic competence. The committee also argued that 'in-depth learning' is

essential for students to be able to handle complex issues and develop critical thinking, creativity and the ability to learn throughout life. This involves a transition from traditional regurgitation of facts to a more engaging and exploratory approach to learning that promotes understanding and application of knowledge.

The most recent curricula, and what we follow to this day is LK20 (UDIR, 2020). The latest revision places even greater emphasis on in-depth learning and interdisciplinary themes. English as a subject is intended to contribute to students' digital judgement and understanding of English as a global lingua franca. There is a focus on critical thinking, creative processes, and the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. As we can see from this development, there has been a clear evolution from viewing English as a purely academic subject to recognizing its role as a key to global communication and understanding. This is reflected in how the subject has been increasingly integrated into interdisciplinary projects and themes, and how technology and digital tools have become essential resources in language learning.

In LK-20, the reformed curriculum that came out of the long process called 'The Subject Renewal', there was an increased focus on strengthening the development of students' in-depth learning and understanding. Democracy and citizenship, sustainable development and public health and coping with life are to provide interdisciplinary topics across school subjects for which they are relevant. Such interdisciplinary subject areas are part of the reform's favoring of in-depth learning, combined with a strong focus on student participation. Several of the competence aims from LK-06 have been combined, giving teachers and pupils greater freedom in the classroom. In the language subjects, increased oral communication is valued, a continuation from the more recent previous curricular reforms (UDIR, 2020, *Curriculum for English*).

The Norwegian Directorate of Education has also drawn up separate curricula that are equivalent and parallel curricula for Sámi-speaking students in the Sámi areas. In the non-Sámi areas, students who have the right to education in Sámi follow the curriculum in Sámi as a first or second language, but they receive tuition in other subjects according to the national Norwegian curricula.

The language spoken by most people, and thus the majority language in Norway, is Norwegian. Nevertheless, Norwegian and Sámi are considered equal languages in Norway,

and this is legally anchored in the Sámi Act of 1987, which recognizes Sámi as an official language in Norway (Sameloven, 1987). The purpose of the law is to facilitate the preservation and development of the Sámi language and culture. As the Sámi have the status of an indigenous people in Norway, the language has stronger protection in the legislation than other minority languages, and all Sámi pupils in primary and upper secondary school have the right to education in Sámi, regardless of where in the country they live (Regjeringen, 2022).

This statutory right is reflected several places in the curriculum, such as in the general part where it emphasizes that education should recognize and value cultural and linguistic diversity. Sámi, as a language and cultural expression, is specifically mentioned as an important part of this diversity. LK-20 contains separate curricula for Sámi as a first and second language. These plans specify how Sámi should be taught, what competence goals should be achieved, and how the teaching should be adapted to different student groups, including those learning Sámi as a new language. Sámi culture and history are also included in interdisciplinary themes and projects in schools, where the goal is to increase understanding and respect for Sámi as an integral part of Norwegian culture and history.

As we now have examined the Sámi's statutory right to education in and on Sámi, and clarified the importance of this, it is natural to think that although Sámi is not directly integrated into the English curriculum, Sámi content and perspectives can be incorporated into English instruction through interdisciplinary approaches and themes that enhance understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity. This aligns with what is written under 'The subject's relevance and central values' in ENG-01-04:

> English is a central subject for cultural understanding, communication, education and identity development. The subject must give students a basis for communicating with others locally and globally, regardless of cultural and linguistic background (UDIR, 2020, *The subject's relevance and central values*).

This emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing cultural diversity, and means that the subject goes beyond communicating as and with native speakers of English, which would have been the implicit ideal in the past, and which often assumed clearer and more limited norms for correct language use. The curriculum further states that:

Through work with the subject, all students must become confident users of English so that they can use English to learn, communicate and bond with others. Knowledge of and an exploratory approach to language, communication patterns, ways of life, mindsets and social conditions opens up new perspectives on the world and ourselves. The subject should contribute to developing students' understanding that their perception of the world is culture dependent. This can open up more ways of interpreting the world, help to create curiosity and commitment, and help to prevent prejudice (UDIR, 2020, *Curriculum for English*).

As we can understand from the Directorate's descriptions of the English subject, it is a subject that carries a great responsibility by being a culture-bearing subject. The significance of the English subject in fostering cultural understanding among students extends beyond the mere acquisition of linguistic skills. By engaging with diverse texts, media, and communication practices from various English-speaking contexts, students are equipped with the tools to navigate and appreciate the complexities of global cultures. This exposure enables learners to develop empathy and a nuanced perspective towards different ways of life, beliefs, and traditions, thereby cultivating a more inclusive worldview. Furthermore, English as a global lingua franca serves as a bridge, connecting students to international discourses, enabling them to participate actively and critically in global dialogues.

1.4 A very different recent past

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, multilingualism has not always been seen as an advantage, neither in Norway nor elsewhere. Just a century ago, monolingualism was thought of as an absolute virtue. This conception led to a dark chapter in Norwegian history, as measures were set in motion to assimilate an entire people. Today, LK20 makes sure that speaking several languages is understood as something positive, when it explicitly states that: 'The pupils shall experience that the ability to speak several languages is an asset at school and in society in general' (UDIR, 2020, *The subject's relevance and central values*). The fact that the word 'asset' is used specifically might underline that being multilingual is something that students should benefit from. This is, as I shall explain, a fairly recent idea.

The 18th and 19th century were characterized by a strong assimilation policy in Norway, where it was forbidden to teach in Sámi in schools, and pupils were also not allowed to use Sámi language at all. The pupils were sent to boarding school to suppress their language and identity. As a result of this the Sámi lost both their language and culture for a long time, and

to this day continue to struggle with taking it back. Several of the Sámi languages are now lost forever, and all of them are listed as endangered. Although the Sámi are now working hard to take back what was once lost, there are many who still feel ashamed of their own language and culture. There is also a rather wide gap in Sámi proficiency between the areas in the interior and the more comprehensively assimilated coastal Sámi areas.

Not until the middle of the 19th century were Sámi language and culture recognized in Norwegian legislation, and decades later the Sámi people received formal apologies from the Norwegian government. I am not going to elaborate on this topic any further, but I think it is important to mention it in connection with the current multicultural situation in Norway. While the Sámi experience can to some extent be transferred to other minority groups, the rights of indigenous peoples have in recent years been the focus of increasing attention both internationally and in Norway. A number of statutory provisions and international conventions that carry important implications for Sámi rights have been adopted. This is to help to guarantee that unique aspects of the Sámi culture, such as language and way of life, are protected and developed in keeping with the terms established by the Sámi population itself (Regjeringen, 2019). These developments are what have prepared the ground for the larger role played by Sámi language and culture in the new curriculum.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Multiculturalism

The term multiculturalism is based on the idea that all cultures within a society are of value and should be respected and celebrated. Multiculturalism challenges assimilation and supports the idea that individuals can maintain their cultural features while fully participating in the broader society they are a part of. In practice, multiculturalism seeks to promote equal opportunities for individuals from all cultural backgrounds (Hauge, 2014).

Multiculturalism is especially relevant in today's situation in schools, where different cultures and languages meet and coexist like never before. Therefore, Norwegian schools strive to include cultural diversity as a part of their curricula. This involves incorporating various cultural perspectives in subjects like history and social studies and including literature and art from diverse cultures in the curriculum. Schools in Norway also celebrate cultural diversity, often through cultural days or festivals where students and teachers can share their culture and language with the rest of the school. As we can see from Norwegian curricula, our schools aim to teach students the importance of equality and respect for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background.

The opposite of a culturally inclusive school may be a tendency in educational systems where there is an assumption that all students are or should be culturally alike, described by Geneva Gay as the 'homogeneity syndrome' (Gay, 2018, p. 28). Traditionally, the Norwegian education system was designed around a homogeneous cultural model that reflected the values and norms of the majority population. Over time, the situation in Norway has changed, through both immigration from other countries and a greater focus on our indigenous population, which gradually increased cultural diversity. During this development, it became clear that the existing educational policy did not fully address the needs of a diverse student, so reforms were initiated to include multicultural perspectives in the curricula, marking a shift from a 'homogeneous' to a more 'heterogeneous' approach to education. Inspired by international trends and research on multiculturalism and pedagogy, including the work of scholars like Geneva Gay, Norwegian schools have become more aware of the importance of being culturally responsive.

2.1.1 Culturally responsive teaching

Gay is one of the leading advocates for culturally responsive teaching, a pedagogical framework and set of practices designed to make education more relevant and accessible to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay, 2018, p. 37).

A key aspect of culturally responsive teaching highlighted in her work is recognizing cultural diversity as a resource. This involves using students' cultural backgrounds and experiences in teaching to enhance learning and instruction. Another factor she argues for is curricula that reflect diversity, and cultural competence among teachers. This involves understanding different cultural perspectives and communication styles. She also points out that culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to adapt their teaching methods to meet the varying needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. Finally, she emphasizes the importance of building strong, supportive relationships between teachers and students, and among the students. An inclusive learning environment where students feel seen, valued, and respected is essential for promoting a good learning environment (Gay, 2018).

2.2 Bilingualism and multilingualism in Norway and abroad

2.2.1 Bilingualism

Bilingualism is described as the ability to use two languages (Krulatz, Dahl & Flognfeldt, 2018, s. 53). Bilingualism is an extremely common phenomenon in the world. In the multicultural society we live in today, children often have parents who have different dominant languages, i.e. different mother tongues. It will therefore be natural to teach the child both languages from an early age, so the child becomes functionally bilingual. In many countries it is a necessity to know more than one language in order to function in the society – take Sri Lanka as an example; there is two official languages, Tamil and Sinhala, in addition to frequently used minority languages such as Veddah (Krulatz et al., 2018, p. 54).

The situation in Norway can be compared to the situation seen in Sri Lanka, where as a Sámi-speaking monolingual you would have struggles with functioning in society, especially outside Sámi administrative areas, as one cannot expect to be understood outside the Sámi speaking environments. This means that Norwegian language skills are a necessity for the

Sámi, in everything from everyday tasks to bigger things such as attending college, travelling or getting a job – even though knowledge of the Sámi language in addition is often seen as a big advantage. Therefore, most Sámi children also learn Norwegian as their L2. In the later years knowledge of English has become more and more important, and to be completely monolingual is seen as rare.

2.2.2 Multilingualism

Multiculturalism and multilingualism are closely intertwined concepts, connected by language being a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. There are several definitions of multilingualism, one of them given by the European Commission: 'the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives' (Katsarova, 2022, p. 2). Krulatz et al. on the other hand describes multilingualism as 'the ability to use more than two languages' (2018, p. 53).

Multiculturalism promotes the preservation and respect of diverse cultural identities, which naturally includes the languages spoken by different cultural groups. Supporting multilingualism helps in the preservation of languages and, by extension, the cultures associated with these languages. This is especially important in multicultural societies where the dominance of one language might undermine others. Preserving languages through formal education and media can help maintain the vitality of diverse cultures within a society. Not to mention, multilingual skills are highly valued in the global world, and it is considered that it opens doors for better economic and social opportunities.

Nowadays, multilingualism is a very common phenomenon. This is to be expected, considering that there are 7151 known living languages in the world and about 200 independent countries (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2022). It is not only the fact that there are more languages than countries but also that the number of speakers of the different languages are unevenly distributed, meaning that those who speak smaller languages need to speak other languages in their daily life. Multilinguals can be speakers of a minority indigenous language (e.g., Navajo in the United States, Maori in New Zealand, or Sámi in Norway) who need to learn the majority language. In other cases, multilinguals are immigrants who speak their first language(s) as well as the language(s) of their host countries.

2.2.3 The multilingual and multicultural classroom

When we approach the phenomenon of 'the multilingual classroom' we should distinguish between two key aspects: the difference between the bi- or multilinguality of individual pupils, and the multilingual composition of the classroom itself, in the sense that it contains pupils from different backgrounds, some bilingual, some multilingual and possibly some monolingual students.

Schools that have minority language students are often referred to as multicultural by teachers and school leaders. The presence of minority language pupils is sufficient to evoke the idea of the multicultural school, and the more minority language pupils, the more multicultural the school is (Hauge, 2014). The term multicultural is often used descriptively; simply to inform that part of the student base in a school are linguistic minorities and does not say whether the school acknowledges their minority students in positive and productive ways.

Hauge (2014, p. 24) distinguishes between two different understandings of the multicultural school; a descriptive and problem-oriented one and a resource-oriented and action-based one, that I will hereafter refer to as the problem-oriented understanding and the resource-oriented understanding. Hauge argues that the problem-oriented understanding works toward assimilating and marginalizing cultural and linguistic differences. This direction sees diversity as a problem. A school that has a problem-oriented relationship to being multicultural will point out the existence of minority language students. One identifies some pupils that have a 'foreign' feature (not a Nordic appearance, for example), and on this basis would argue that the school is multicultural. These students stand alone in being 'different', as the rest of the school is based on an ideology of similarity that in this way excludes several groups of students (Hauge, 2014).

In many schools, it is perceived as a problem that the pupil's competence is not adapted to the school's program, which is the case for many minority language students. The minority pupils lack relevant skills, and compensatory measures are implemented so that the pupil is adapted to the majority language learners. An example of this can be seen in Norway's law of special education (Opplæringslova, §2-8) which holds multilingual pupils entitled to mother tongue instruction and bilingual instruction only insofar as it is 'necessary' - such instruction is thus dependent on inadequate Norwegian language skills and only intended as support until the Norwegian is good enough for 'normal' monolingual instruction, or to fit in with the majority language learners.

On the other hand, we find the resource-oriented understanding; here the teachers focus on the students' needs, experiences and competencies, and see this as an opportunity for cultural and linguistic reflection. They allow multiculturality to characterize everyday school life and are eager to recognize inequality and otherness. The students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are seen as valuable, and teachers use the different perspectives, experiences, and languages in the student group to broaden the perspective of all students in the class. They do not take measures specifically aimed at minority language speakers but focus instead on ordinary measures aimed at the school as a whole. They allow all students to take part in multiculturalism and let this permeate everyday life – not just on special occasions (Hauge, 2014).

2.2.4 The multilingual turn

The 'multilingual turn' in school refers to a shift towards valuing and incorporating multiple languages and cultures in education, in line with what Hauge (2014) refers to as the 'resource-oriented' view of the multicultural classroom. This shift involves moving away from traditional approaches that primarily focus on monolingual strategies, towards methods that value and integrate students' home languages and cultural backgrounds into the curriculum. It recognizes the linguistic and cultural diversity of students and seeks to promote multilingualism and intercultural competence. The multilingual turn can be defined as the way multilingualism as a social and cognitive phenomenon is now finding its way into the classroom: knowing many languages is recognized as an asset (Krulatz et al., 2018, p. 124).

This approach recognizes the importance of students' home languages and cultures and seeks to use them as a resource in the classroom. The multilingual turn also promotes the teaching of additional languages beyond the dominant language of instruction and encourages the development of a pluralistic approach to language education. This is particularly important as an antidote to the language socialization that many minority children go through when they internalize the message that school is a majority-language zone only (Krulatz et al., 2018, p. 124).

In a multilingual classroom, students come from different linguistic backgrounds, and the teacher recognizes and values the diversity of languages and cultures represented in the classroom. The goal is to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that recognizes and builds on the linguistic and cultural resources of all students. There is encouragement for the use of innovative teaching methods that build on student's existing

linguistic repertoires, such as 'code-switching', where the teacher switches between languages to facilitate understanding, or 'translanguaging', where students are encouraged to use all their languages to learn and communicate (Celic & Seltzer, 2012). Students may also work in small groups or pairs to support language development and peer learning.

2.3   The importance of a multilingual classroom

An article written by Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä (2021) explores English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and the teachers' point of view on teaching migrant students with a multilingual background in a mainstream classroom. The study was conducted in Finland, a country with two national languages and a growing immigrant population. In the article it is written that the expanded linguistic repertoire of the students should influence how foreign languages, in this case English, are taught in the classrooms. However, the authors find that neither teaching materials, teachers nor teacher education have reacted much to these changes: English is still taught mostly in Finnish and with the assumption that the students' linguistic background is homogeneous.

Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä interviewed seven teachers who reflected on their experiences around their multilingual students. The teachers' perception was somewhat controversial because they did not want to draw attention to the linguistic background of the student, even though they had noticed that the multilingual students had greater linguistic awareness than their fellow students. Some key findings include that the teachers had not reflected on multilingualism's role in classrooms, and some underlying prejudices were identified. Although teachers recognized that multilingual learners had higher language awareness compared to other students, there was reluctance to highlight students' linguistic backgrounds in teaching.

The study revealed a need to more actively include multilingualism in teaching materials and teacher education. Many teachers supported multilingual learners by using visual aids and encouraging language comparisons as part of a translanguaging approach, but the researchers recommend that teacher training and pedagogical materials should include a greater focus on multilingualism, to better utilize the linguistic resources of all students. Further, the research indicates that existing teaching materials often do not support a multilingual approach, which can leave teachers feeling unprepared or lacking the necessary tools to effectively handle linguistic diversity. The article concludes that the teacher has a lot of power when it comes to the development of the multilingual classroom, and that the students will benefit from

increased focus and more competence around multilingualism (Pitkänen-Huhta & Mäntylä, 2021).

2.4 Language acquisition

2.4.1 Second and Third Language Acquisition

Learning a new language is a complex and dynamic process. Within this process, it is common to distinguish between second language acquisition and third language acquisition. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the process by which people learn a second language, also called L2. As an English teacher in primary school, you will often encounter students who learn their L2, namely English, but many students master several languages from an early age because they speak another home language in addition to, or instead of, Norwegian. This also applies to the Sámi-speaking students, and means they have knowledge of at least three languages and are to be considered multilingual. As I will explain further, according to research, this may mean that they have an advantage when it comes to learning additional languages.

In an article written by Haukås (2014), metacognition is a central theme. Metacognition is described as an awareness of one's own and others' cognitive processes and products related to learning and thinking. As a subcategory of metacognition, metalinguistic awareness refers to the ability to reflect on language as an object in itself, to think about language structures, and to critically evaluate linguistic phenomena. This type of awareness involves an understanding of language functions and form, as well as the ability to analyze and discuss linguistic elements with a meta-linguistic approach (Haukås, 2014, p. 3). Metalinguistic awareness develops gradually, and students who speak multiple languages or are learning new languages often have higher metalinguistic awareness because they navigate between different linguistic systems, which can help them develop a deeper understanding of how languages function in general.

Based on previous research, Haukås (2014, p. 9) describes three different types of competencies that language teachers must possess: advanced language competence, analytical linguistic knowledge, and language pedagogical knowledge. These three approaches emphasize the importance of teachers not only mastering the language they teach but also having the ability to reflect on and convey linguistic knowledge in ways that support students' learning and development.

2.4.2 A DST model of multilingualism and the Role of Metalinguistic Awareness

Another article worth mentioning regarding the characteristics of multilingual development is Ulrike Jessner's state-of-the-art article written in 2008 where she explains that several studies on multilingualism have shown that there are qualitative differences between second and third language learning and that these can be related to an increased level of metalinguistic awareness.

Jessner (2008) states that over the last few years, research on L3 acquisition or multilingualism has been increasingly intensified with the main goal of describing multilingual phenomena in order to investigate differences and similarities between L2 and L3 acquisition. One of the most important questions in the field is related to the status of the L2 in L3 use and acquisition. Crosslinguistic influence in a multilingual system not only takes place from the L1 to the L2 and vice versa. Further influence has been detected from the L1 to the L3 and from the L2 to the L3 and vice versa. This expansion of transfer possibilities demonstrates that multilingual acquisition is a far more complex process than SLA.

Jessner emphasizes that learning a L3 is different from learning a L2, and that theories of second language acquisition are not directly applicable in all contexts. When students start learning a third language, they possess a more developed metalinguistic awareness than when they began learning their second language. For instance, they have an enhanced awareness of the similarities and differences between languages and have also utilized various language learning strategies that can be transferred from learning L2 to L3.

The article proposes a Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) model to understand multilingualism, emphasizing the importance of metalinguistic awareness. The DST model views multilingualism as a dynamic process influenced by various factors such as individual differences, social context, and language learning experiences. Metalinguistic awareness plays a crucial role in multilingual development within this framework. Jessner suggests that metalinguistic awareness can facilitate language learning and contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of multilingual proficiency. This awareness is seen as crucial for navigating and managing multiple languages and is enhanced through multilingual experience. Jessner defines the term as 'the ability to focus on linguistic form and to switch focus between form and meaning' (Jessner, 2008, p. 9).

2.5 The socio-cultural learning perspective

The socio-cultural learning perspective is central in my work with this thesis and has exerted a vast influence on present-day pedagogics as well as the recent reforms in the Norwegian curriculum. The roots of sociocultural theory can be found in the works of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who assumed that learning takes place through the use of language and participation in social practice. An important view within this perspective is that it emphasizes the social framework around our actions - the culture the child lives in determines both what and how the child learns about the world. For Vygotsky, it was the case that people are primarily dependent on their social environment in order to develop and learn. Vygotsky also regarded language as a social phenomenon (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018, p. 70). The socio-cultural learning perspective considers the context in which knowledge arises, and that one must adapt the teaching to the students' assumptions, which is relevant in relation to my research work.

2.5.1 The zone of proximal development

Vygotsky was aware that learning takes place in interaction with others. He describes a learner's 'proximal development zone' as the distance between the current level of development as determined through independent problem solving and the potential level of development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotskij, 1978, p. 86). The proximal development zone is dynamic and changes over time in line with the student's learning development. Within the student's actual developmental level, they can solve problems independently without help of any kind but will not experience development. The potential level of development is, however, what the child manages with the help of an adult or a more experienced peer. This is where a good collaboration with the teacher plays an important role - the teacher can point out critical factors, create structures, ask questions that help further development, remind and help keep work ethic and motivation up. Vygotsky calls the difference between these learning stages the zone of proximal development, and the best learning takes place here (Vygotsky, 2001, p.163). The main point is that what the student manages with a little help and support today shows what they can do on their own tomorrow.

2.5.2 Supportive learning-scaffolding

Based on Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, one might conclude that the students' learning will be very ineffective if they are left to learn on their own. Knowledge

must be constructed in a learning situation in interaction with either a teacher, another adult or a competent fellow student. It is nevertheless important to emphasize that Vygotsky's view of learning is not that students should be 'served' answers but be encouraged to construct the answers themselves through assisting questions or hints. The teachers' job is to support the students' own learning attempts, a method called scaffolding (Bruner, 1985). The scaffolding metaphor is taken from the building trade and refers to the fact that in order to develop you must have a scaffolding (a foundation) that you can build on. For the pupils, this means that they are in the proximal development zone, and receive help to expand their knowledge through learning scaffolding.

2.6 Motivation

As this thesis seeks to examine what challenges the teachers face in their multilingual classrooms, motivation is a major factor that was frequently mentioned by my informants. This is probably not very strange, considering motivation is one of the most important concepts in psychology. Theories concerning motivation attempt to explain why humans behave and think as they do. The notion is also of great importance in language education, and teachers and students commonly use the term to explain what causes success or failure in learning (Guilloteaux and Dornyei, 2008, p. 55).

Motivation is naturally a big part of learning a language. Researchers Lambert and Gardner distinguish between two different concepts of motivation: *integrative motivation* and *instrumental motivation.* Integrative motivation involves the desire to learn the language to integrate into the community that speaks it. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, revolves around the necessity of learning the language for a material or educational benefit: for example, to get a job, or get into advanced study (Gardner, 1991, in; Ur, 2012, p. 10). It may appear self-evident that learning English will be instrumentally motivating given its status as a world language, and its frequent usage in so many areas of life, such as academics, publicity, social media and popular culture, but this is not always the case. Several of the teachers in my own study explain that they often encounter unmotivated students in their teaching, and wonder why this may be.

In a study conducted by Guilloteaux and Dornyei in 2008, they examine the impact of teachers' use of motivational strategies on the motivation levels of language learners in educational settings, based on the belief that the teachers use of motivational strategies is believed to enhance student motivation. The study involved observations of 40 ESOL

classrooms, including over 1,300 students and 27 teachers. The key findings in their study conclude that there is a link between teachers' motivational practices and students' motivation in language learning. Specific teacher behaviors that promote motivation include creating a supportive classroom atmosphere, fostering a sense of autonomy among students, and maintaining an engaging and relevant curriculum.

The article discusses various motivational strategies within the classroom, emphasizing the importance of teachers creating conditions that enhance student motivation. This includes making learning relevant and enjoyable and providing positive feedback. The findings suggest that teacher training programs should include components that educate teachers on effective motivational strategies. This could potentially lead to more engaging and productive learning environments.

The study concludes that motivational teaching practices significantly affect student motivation and that the careful application of these strategies by teachers can substantially enhance the language learning process. We learn that the teacher plays an important role, where the contribution to enhance motivation could be varied and interesting working methods and relevant topics that interest the students (Guilloteaux and Dornyei, 2008).

3 Methodology

In this chapter, I justify my choice of method and analysis, and describe my informants, location, and the interview process. This includes a review of the interview guide and a justification for the various questions included in it. Finally, I review the research ethics, and describe the project's validity and reliability.

My study, in which I interview four different teachers in Finnmark and compare their responses with a focus on exploring and understanding their experiences, can be classified as a qualitative case study. This study involves an in-depth investigation of each individual teacher's knowledge and experiences. 'Comparative case studies', is described by Postholm and Jacobsen (2018, p. 68) as it draws on several cases that are studied and then compared. Such studies also emphasize that the researcher pay special attention to the context of what is being compared (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 69). In this research, the different teachers interviewed will function as different cases.

3.1 Subjects

When I started recruiting informants, I was in good spirits. In my search for informants, an email was sent out with brief information about the project. 'All teachers want to contribute to research on an important topic' was the main idea. However, recruiting would turn out to be more difficult than first assumed. Very few teachers wanted to be informants, many blamed the time crunch – or simply did not respond to the many inquiries made. A natural explanation could be that the relevant informants did not feel that they had enough knowledge about the topic.

My base of informants was somewhat narrow since I was looking for a somewhat specific teacher: an English teacher who preferably has knowledge of the Sámi language and who teaches/has taught Sámi language students. Initially, I wanted to interview six teachers with expertise in the topic I am researching. An information letter was therefore sent to six relevant schools. In the end, I ended up with four informants from four different municipalities in Finnmark and saw no other way out than to say I was satisfied with this selection due to the poor response to my several inquiries.

My four informants are all English teachers which range from recent graduates to what might be called 'veterans' in the profession. What my informants have in common, which was also why they were asked to be informants, is that they all speak Sámi at different levels, they all

work as English teachers in grades 5-10, and have formal teacher training. Three of them also teach Sámi in addition to English, and several teach other language subjects such as Finnish and German. I will from now on refer to the four teachers as teacher 1, 2, 3 and 4, where teachers 1 and 2 work in the interior of Finnmark, and teachers 3 and 4 work in the county's coastal areas.

Only one of my informants has graduated from the most recent teacher education. In 2017, teacher training in Norway went from being four to five years, and by that it became a master's degree. This reform also included changes in the structure of the education itself, moving away from the typical 'general teacher education' where the teacher should have some competence in all the basic subjects and thus be qualified to teach almost anything, to a more specialized education where the student teacher can choose which three subjects they want in their 'portfolio'. This was in line with the so-called 'subject renewal', which had an increased focus on in-depth learning: the new teacher training study ensures that the teacher has a greater and deeper competence in some subjects, compared to more superficial knowledge of all subjects in school.

3.2 Location

To answer my research question, a requirement was that the teachers' classroom consisted of a significant proportion of Sámi-speaking students, as my study had a special focus on the Sámi-speaking classroom. This is easier to find in the northern parts of the country, and therefore the project was naturally stationed in Finnmark. A few inquiries were sent out to other parts of Norway, but with no luck.

In addition to locating schools with a significant proportion of Sámi-speaking students, the school's location itself was of great importance. This is because I wanted to include a selection of teachers from both the interior and the coastal parts of the county. The reason why both types of locations is important to include, if possible, is because Coastal Sámi and inland Sámi represent two distinct cultural groupings among the Sámi in northern Norway.

The differences between the two areas are evident in their traditional livelihoods, language, cultural practices, and social organization. These groups have evolved over centuries, adapting to their unique geographical and environmental conditions. Traditionally, the coastal areas were much more assimilated culturally and linguistically compared to the interior, and the linguistic and cultural situation in these two areas is quite different. My own experience

also indicates that the schools in the interior parts have a denser Sámi-speaking student population, while in the coastal parts there will possibly be greater variations in culture and language. This would, as one assumes, also affect teaching and is therefore an important aspect to include in the research.

3.3 Interview

In this study, I have chosen to conduct a qualitative data collection, in the form of a semi-structured interviews. The semi structured interview is characterized by the researcher's goal being to understand the participants' perspectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, in Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 121). This means the researcher has planned the topic and proposed questions in advance, but the order of the questions being asked is not important. The goal was an open conversation between informant and researcher, where there should be an opportunity to touch on unplanned topics and questions if necessary.

The essence of a semi-structured interview is to obtain the interviewees' description of their lifeworld, where the purpose is to interpret their descriptions of the phenomena in question (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). In a semi-structured interview style, the interview guide serves more as an overview of the topical questions the researcher should include in the questioning of the participants (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018).

Initially, I wanted to use observation of students as well, but after discussion with my informants and supervisor, I moved away from this. The reason I decided to omit the observation was the different data foundation: it was not possible to achieve situations that were comparable due to students in different grade levels and with completely different starting points in relation to topics in English teaching.

3.3.1 Conducting the interviews

After information letters were sent out to the various schools I wanted to visit, I gradually got in touch with teachers who agreed to be my informants. When we arranged a meeting time, I traveled to their location to be able to meet them physically. The reason for this is that I find it easier to conduct an interview by physical presence. One does not have to consider various factors, such as poor internet, and that different impressions will be lost over the internet. In addition, audio recordings of good quality was a requirement as I wanted to be able to transcribe as accurately as possible.

I chose to run a 'test interview' with a peer before the actual interviews with the informants, as I wanted to see how the conversation flowed and whether the questions were natural to ask. When conducting this interview, I discovered that several of the questions might seem similar and needed some explanation along the way. I also saw that to gather the same breadth of information, all questions had to be asked but not necessarily in the same order. It seemed unlikely that all the informants would be equally opinionated on the same questions. The key would be to compare the information given by the interviewees and at the same time decide what relevance to give this information, to present the subjects as honestly as possible.

Before the actual interview started, I refreshed the topic and purpose of the interview. I also reminded them of confidentiality and the right to withdraw and not answer questions if they did not want to. I then asked them to sign the declaration of consent and informed them that the interview was recorded on a Dictaphone.

The informants were familiar with the master's thesis through information letters (see Appendix 1) sent in advance during the recruitment process. All informants were also sent the interview guide in advance so they had the opportunity to prepare if needed. Several of the teachers found some of the questions a bit difficult to answer, and I assured them that it is 'allowed' not to have a complimentary answer to everything. At the end of the interview the informants were asked if there was anything else they would like to add, and if they would like to read and approve of the transcripts before their answers were used further in the study.

3.3.2 Interview guide

When choosing between a focus group interview and single interviews with each informant, the choice landed on single interviews. This is largely due to the process's purely organizational aspects: the informants were located at large geographical distances. I have previously explained why I wanted to conduct the interviews in person, and therefore this was the best solution. By visiting each informant, I also got to have a look at the various schools they teach at, which helped me form a better understanding of the environment surrounding them.

When the interview guide was constructed, the questions were facilitated to fit a semi structured type of interview. This was a conscious choice, as it enables the interviewees to provide more complementary information in their answers; they are not bound to give short and precise answers. Conducting the interview in this manner allowed for spontaneous

follow-up questions when new and interesting ideas about the topic emerged, which were not originally planned. Questions such as 'could you elaborate more on ...?' and 'what do you mean by…?' helped me collect more details about the subjects the informants brought up (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018). The goal was either way a fluid conversation, where my job as an interviewer and moderator was to make sure we touched on all the questions, even though they did not necessarily come in the order I had set them up in.

During the data collection all the questions were presented in Norwegian. This was to ensure that all participants understood the questions and could answer them all, without the possible constraints of using their non-native language. The following interview has been translated to English, for the readers of this study. The interview guide consists of 20 questions divided into 3 different topics, starting off with some general questions which aims to understand the teacher's background and provides context to their responses. Information gathered from Question 1-5 is already addressed in chapter 3.1. The table below gives an overview over all the questions asked during the first part of the interview:

Tabell 1 – Interview questions part 1

Theme	No.	Question
General	1	How long have you worked as a teacher?
	2	What subjects do you teach?
	3	What level do you teach?
	4	How many and which languages do you speak?
	5	What knowledge do you have of the Sámi language?
	6	What skills do you think a good language teacher should possess?
	7	Do you make any adjustments in your teaching when you teach Sámi-speaking versus Norwegian-speaking students? If so, which ones?
	8	What knowledge/competence do you have in language acquisition, particularly aimed at multilingual students?
	9	What would you say are significant differences between second and third language acquisition?
	10	Motivation is a major factor in successful learning in the classroom. In what way do you contribute to increasing the motivation of students during language acquisition?

	11	Can you describe two or three of the most important/common challenges you have encountered as a language teacher?
	12	The Norwegian school is constantly developing and is both multicultural and multilingual. With this comes the multicultural classroom's challenge: are there support structures, resources or forms of competence sharing in this type of situation? Is this situation recognized by the school management and the teachers' college?

This selection of questions is strategically designed to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of language teachers, particularly in the context of teaching in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

Question 6 and 7 seek to identify the perceived qualities and skills essential for effective language teaching. By asking about specific adaptations for Sámi-speaking students, this question explores the informant's responsiveness to the linguistic and cultural needs of different student groups, highlighting inclusive teaching practices.

Question 8 and 9 delves into the teacher's understanding and application of language acquisition theories, especially in the context of multilingual learners, which is crucial for effective language instruction in diverse classrooms.

Question 10 is related to the motivational aspect of language learning, and investigating strategies to enhance motivation addresses the teacher's role in fostering a positive learning environment, especially significant in the challenging context of learning additional languages. As accounted for in chapter 2.6, motivation plays a big role in the language learning process, and the teacher's use of motivational strategies can have a major impact on the students' motivation.

Question 11 and 12 address the institutional support and acknowledgment of the challenges and opportunities presented by multicultural classrooms. It explores the availability of resources, competence development, and whether these needs are recognized at management and policy levels.

The first selection of questions is followed up by four questions regarding the culture aspect of their teaching. This set of questions aims to delve into how the English teachers incorporate and respond to the cultural diversity within their classrooms, particularly in the

context of language learning. Each question is designed to explore different aspects of cultural integration and awareness in teaching practices. Collectively, these questions aim to shed light on the significance of cultural considerations in language teaching, highlighting the role of teachers in embracing cultural diversity to enhance educational practices and student learning experiences. The questions asked is shown below in table 2:

Tabell 2 - Interview questions part 2

Culture	13	Do you take the pupils' culture (worldview, linguistic identity, social relations etc.) into account in the teaching? If so, in what way?
	14	Do you spend time getting an idea of the students' cultural identity?
	15	What experiences/perceptions do you have regarding cultural differences during language learning in the classroom?
	16	How can you use the students' culture to your advantage in the classroom?

The final set of questions regards Sámi and English structure of language: similarities and differences, linguistic phenomena, etc. The questions are designed to explore the intricacies of teaching English to speakers of Sámi, a language that belongs to the Uralic family, distinctively different from the Indo-European family to which English belongs. Language is a significant part of cultural aspects, and these questions are not posed strictly to learn more about the linguistic differences between the two languages, but rather to investigate whether this is something that teachers are aware of and accommodate in their teaching practices. By addressing these aspects, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic education practices. The final questions are shown below in table 3:

Tabell 3 - Interview questions part 3

Language	17	Can you name any significant differences in the language structure of Sámi and English?
	18	The English language contains forms and functions that are significantly different from the Uralic language family to which Sámi belongs. What challenges does this bring?
	19	Do the Sámi-speaking students (and other minority-language students) have any common 'problem areas' during language acquisition? (For example, prepositions, cases, etc.)

	20	Can you name something from Sámi language structure (could be vocabulary, terms, expressions, metaphors, etc.) that has transfer value to English? Do you have examples to the contrary?

3.3.3 Interview analysis

After each interview was completed, I immediately sat down to transcribe and anonymize the interviews. This is to keep each interview fresh in mind during each transcription. I also wrote down important observations made during each interview, such as whether there was a topic the informant was particularly passionate about, or on the other hand more uncertain about.

I quickly realized that I did not want to use coding in the process of analyzing the data, and instead I opted for a qualitative content analysis, but without coding. This analysis method can be used to study opinions in text data (Fauskanger & Mosvold, 2014, p. 1). The reason I settled on this somewhat unconventional method of analysis was that I noticed that in a study based on only four informants and thus a manageable amount of data material, I had the opportunity to delve deeply into each individual's responses and therefore did not feel the need to use codes in my analysis work. I aimed to analyze the interviews not merely in terms of the raw text, but also in light of their broader contexts - such as the location and the student group of each informant.

Even without coding, I approached the analysis systematically. This involved methodically reading, notating and reflection on the data material. In my case, this involved identifying key themes where I focused on specific words and themes that stand out in the data material based on my research question. This is to ensure that the analysis was still thorough and reliable. Analysis of the data enabled me to identify patterns in the responses of my informants, which constitute the discussion topics in Chapter 5. A detailed review of the main findings of the analysis will be covered in Chapter 4.

3.4 Research ethics

Qualitative research sets special ethical requirements. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, ethical issues are important not only in the fieldwork, but throughout the whole research process (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, in Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 74). A key principle of research ethics is that participation should be voluntary, and that no one should be pressured into participating. The informants must also be able to withdraw from participation at any time, without this having any negative consequences. All informants should be

confident that they will be anonymized, and that the information cannot be transferred back to them, and that the information will only be used in this study and subsequently destroyed.

As for my project, an application was sent to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). It was approved and follows their guidelines for research. According to their guidelines, the interview required written consent, signed by each informant before the interview began. The collected data is stored electronically on an external hard drive during the research work, and then destroyed. My participants were well informed about the project and its purpose in advance. Each informant can opt out of participating and withdraw from the survey at any time. It must be noted that the number of participants in the interviews is low, and the results of the qualitative analysis therefore cannot be generalized. Further research may be supplemented by additional interview participants.

3.5 Validity and reliability of the study

The validity of the study can be assessed based on whether the project answers the research question and whether it represents the reality studied (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018). In other words, if the research leads to results that offer answers to what is being researched, the method can be considered valid.

As for my study, the thesis is chosen with the ulterior motive in that the topic is relevant in today's society, and that the findings can prove instructive not only within the Sámi-language classroom but in multilingual and multicultural classrooms in general. As for my data collection I have chosen qualitative interviews where the aim was to gather information about qualified teachers' experience within the multilingual and multicultural classroom, with a particular focus on the multilingual situation in Finnmark.

The questions in my interview guide range from general questions about the teacher and their background, to more specific questions regarding culture and language. Although the study intends to have a main focus on the Sámi population, the idea behind it is that the questions (and results) should also be relevant in the context of other multicultural and multilingual classrooms. The questions used to gather information were constructed to answer what I intended to research.

A fundamental question underneath all research and its validity is how reliable data is. In the language of research, this is referred to as reliability, which means how reliable a topic or subject is. 'Test-retest', repeating a study at a different time and then seeing if the results are

the same, is seen as the ultimate test of reliability (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 222). A qualitative study such as my own will be difficult to replicate, and it is therefore impossible to know whether the result of the study would have been the same at a different time.

From a broad perspective, this is a small study with a limited selection of informants – and it is therefore not given that the result of the study would have been the same if conducted at a different time with other informants. However, there are other aspects of reliability that can confirm the reliability of this study: if we change the goal from being able to reproduce the results to achieving a confirmable and authentic understanding of the informants' experiences. With this in mind, I tried to make the interviews as similar as possible in relation to what questions being asked and when, and what follow-up questions being used.

Another aspect worth mentioning about reliability in my study is how the interviews are analyzed and that this process should be transparent from beginning to end. A so-called 'member-check' (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018) was offered to the informants after the interviews have been completed and transcribed, where the informants are offered to read through the transcriptions and approve it before the answers are used further in the research. This is to ensure that no answers are misinterpreted or presented in the wrong way.

4 Presentation of results

This chapter presents the key findings of my study. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the results, I have concluded that the most natural course of action would be to present the findings in the same order as in the interview guide. I would like to emphasize that this is not a reproduction of the interviews in their entirety, but an extract of quotes that I have selected as a basis for further discussion in chapter 5.

Topic 1 - attitudes to language and culture in a classroom context
A presentation of my informants and their background as teachers are described in more detail in chapter 3.1. When all the formalities were taken care of, and I had formed a picture of the teacher whom I was interviewing, my next question was as follows: '*What skills do you think a good language teacher should possess?'*. The teachers emphasize strong competence in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as we can see from this answer:

> The teacher should have good competence in the language itself: good pronunciation, sufficient knowledge regarding grammar, and a varied vocabulary. One must also be able to communicate with children and know how to do this in a way so the students feel confident in expressing themselves in English or the language they are learning.

Teacher 1 describes what can be seen as the very foundation of a language teacher; good linguistic competence. Teacher 2 emphasizes the value of formal education in language teaching, which can offer theoretical insight and knowledge of practical teaching strategies:

> A good language teacher should have an education because you get the theoretical part which is important during language acquisition. You also learn tips and tricks that you can use in the classroom. Formal education means more in-depth knowledge, plus a better ability and foundation to vary the teaching beyond just using textbooks and ready-made teaching plans.

In addition to what already mentioned, Teacher 4 underline the ability to be adept in various aspects of language, beyond just grammar: setting ambitious goals, promoting the language positively, and having a good understanding of the students' mother tongue as we can see from his answer:

A good language teacher should have hairy goals and high ambitions for their students. You must be able to move away from the traditional way of learning languages, for example the classic 'point to all the things in this room that start with A'. A good language teacher is also one who understands how the student's mother tongue and target language are connected. A basic understanding of the student's mother tongue will help you as a language teacher to know how to organize the teaching and which areas should be kept an extra eye on.

There are thus many aspects associated with being a good language teacher, and it is not enough to 'just' speak the language fluently—my informants are quite clear that good pedagogical knowledge, a fair amount of courage and drive, and preferably a solid education should be the minimum requirements for being a good language teacher.

Now that we have established what qualities my informants think a good language teacher should possess, I move on to the next question: '*Do you make any adjustments in your teaching when you teach Sámi-speaking versus Norwegian-speaking students? If so, which ones?*'. What is common to all the teachers in this question is that none of them feel a particular need to make any major changes to their teaching practices to accommodate the Sámi-speaking students. The two teachers from the inland say that the biggest change they make lies in the use of the auxiliary language:

> Teacher 1: I cannot think of any major adjustments I make in the Norwegian versus the Sámi class, apart from the obvious: Sámi is the auxiliary language in the Sámi class and Norwegian in the Norwegian class. This is completely natural, as the language the students prefer is used where possible.

The two teachers from the coastal parts do not feel the need to make any major adjustments. In their English classes, Sámi students are mixed with Norwegian students without special adjustments. This also means that they do not use Sámi in English teaching because they have a larger range of pupils in their class, who speak several different languages. Teacher 4 notes that:

> I do not feel that I need to pay extra attention to Sámi students in my teaching. On a general term, the students today hear so much English on a regular basis due to social media and gaming that they are steady language users from early on.

The fact that students today spend a lot of time on the internet, especially on social media and gaming, means that they often have a good basic knowledge and familiarity with the English language from an early age. Teachers should use this to their advantage, recognizing all the opportunities it presents for creating varied, relevant and engaging teaching.

One might also imagine that, especially as a language teacher, there is a felt need to have a somewhat specialized competence in multilingualism, and therefore I pose the question: *'what competence do you have in multilingualism?'*. Surprisingly, only one teacher has received formal training in the areas of language acquisition and multilinguality. The others, however, do not feel that their knowledge is sufficient. Teacher 1 replied:

> I am a recent graduate, so the skills I have are limited and the little I know comes from my education. I have a master's degree in English, but nevertheless during my education it has been about the academic aspect and little about language acquisition. In other words: a lot of grammar teaching and reading books - mostly just academically oriented. Therefore, the teacher is probably a little 'left to themselves' when you graduate and google is therefore your best friend!

Several of the other informants gave evidence of similar experiences and appeared to wish for a greater focus on this in their previous education, since it is, after all, quite an important part of being a language teacher. Teacher 2 also bemoans the lack of instruction in language acquisition in teacher training:

> I do not recall having learned much about language acquisition during my education. I am a trained generalist teacher and therefore do not have a 'specialty' like the new teachers do. Therefore, I have studied Sámi as a foreign language in university. In addition, I have a lot of self-acquired skills through learning several languages as an adult. The basic education, what all general teachers undertake, should contain more about pedagogy in language teaching. I have for several years considered taking further education in English, as I believe I have not had sufficient competence to transmit this language on to the students, especially not on a higher level.

Teacher 4, like teacher 2, had a desire to develop his knowledge within the topic of multilingualism, and has therefore on his own initiative taken several courses in adulthood in addition to his regular teacher job. He has also taken several courses in Sámi to increase his knowledge of the language, but emphasizes that he is far from an expert:

> I have recently taken 30 study credits at *blank* where second language pedagogy was a topic. I almost feel like I am left with more questions than answers. It is easy to raise awareness around various issues, but it is not always as easy to find a solution to these issues. My competence beyond this is limited and mostly self-acquired. It is worth mentioning that I am also very aware of multilingualism at home, and my kids have been functionally bilingual from an early age.

Nevertheless, all informants agree that they would like there to be a greater focus on language acquisition during their education. To summarize, Teacher 1 acknowledges limited formal education focused on language acquisition, relying more on self-learning and the help found on the internet. Teacher 2 does not recall specific training in language pedagogy, suggesting a need for more focused education in this area. Teacher 3 remembers little about language pedagogy from his training, indicating a gap in the educational program, and Teacher 4 has recent education in second language pedagogy but feels it left him with more questions than answers, stressing the importance of a high standard of linguistic competence and challenging academic language use. Common to all is that they call for, and want, greater competence and a greater focus on this in the profession. They see the importance of sufficient competence within the topic, where one of the teachers has even studied the topic on his own to acquire more competence.

Another factor that teachers must consider is the students' motivation. As we know, when students are motivated, they are more likely to actively participate in learning activities, practice, and take the initiative to learn outside the classroom. Therefore, I pose the question *'in what way do you contribute to increasing the motivation of students during third language acquisition?'*. Once again, several of the teachers mentions the importance of social media:

> The students are very exposed to English on social media such as YouTube, Instagram, Tiktok etc. and I think that this is a major factor as to why the students want to learn English. The access to English and Sámi content on the internet is very

different, and I can see that the student's motivation to learn Sámi disappears because there is little to no content that appeals to the youth, especially on TV and social media. There is also a lack of proper dictionaries and generally up-to-date teaching aids, which makes it even harder.

From Teacher 1's answer, we can understand that social media plays a significant role in motivating students to learn English, or other languages. Social media provides students daily access to English-language content from around the world. Another aspect is that students can often engage in real conversations in English, providing valuable practical practice. Not to mention that there is around-the-clock access to varied and customized content, an aspect that Teacher 3 sees the value in:

Varied tasks are key! And that you are good at alternating between oral and written tasks. Varied learning content keeps the students focused, and if you additionally use relevant topics that engage the students, you will have a very good starting point.

While some are driven by intrinsic motivation through seeing the benefits of the lessons themselves, Teacher 2 emphasizes that not all her students are driven by such internal forces. Therefore, she employs techniques that functions as rewards to motivate students through the classes:

It is very successful with games and role play. I often set aside some time towards the end of the lessons, as a 'carrot', where we do such fun things. The great thing about these activities is that students often use the language when playing without thinking about it, and with theme-based games we also get to use and learn vocabulary that do not appear in an everyday context.

Games and practical tasks may engage students and stimulate language use in a fun context. But regardless of how much a teacher facilitates motivated students, a familiar problem is precisely unmotivated students, and the teachers mention this as a big challenge. Therefore, I ask my next question: *'Can you describe two or three of the most important/common challenges you have encountered as a language teacher?'.* The teachers report challenges with varying levels of student motivation and proficiency. Teacher 2 sets words on what she thinks is the biggest challenge of them all:

The biggest challenge is probably recognized in all subjects, and it is definitely unmotivated students. They do not want to do anything 'extra', and do not see the point in learning English - or they are already so familiar with the using English under gaming that their ordinary English lessons is not exciting anymore.

Another problem informants often face, is the issues with students' self-esteem and confidence in their language abilities. Due to this, some students are reluctant to participate, affecting the dynamics of classroom activities and discussions. As we know, oral participation in class is crucial especially in language learning. For teacher 3, this is a common struggle:

I often encounter students who refuse to speak - they feel insecure, not good enough, or simply not motivated enough to put in the effort. Most of my students do not feel confident enough to talk freely 'on the spot'. We had to solve this issue by offering the students to use the voice recording option on their computer instead.

Several of the teachers are familiar with this struggle, as we can see from Teacher 2's answer:

At our school, we struggle a lot with the fact that the students are not confident in learning English - I do not know if it is due to the Sámi language or because of other reasons. They do not think they are good enough and are very self-critical. That is perhaps the biggest challenge in English teaching: motivating these students. The language barrier is clearly present for several of my students, and we work weekly to break this barrier.

Creating an environment where students dare to speak English aloud in class requires an approach that builds safety and confidence. There are several strategies that teachers can use to facilitate this, which I will discuss later on in the final chapter.

So far, we have accounted for the teachers' thoughts regarding what qualities a good language teacher should possess, whether the teachers make any adjustments in their teaching related to the variety of different languages present in their classroom, what measures they take to motivate their students and what challenges they face.

As we have seen so far, all the teachers face challenges when it comes to the multilingual classroom, and they often agree on the various topics they find challenging. Therefore, I am also wondering what support the teachers receive from their support system, i.e. the school management and the teacher colleague, and my question is as follows: *'The Norwegian school is constantly developing and is both multicultural and multilingual. With this comes the "problem" with a multicultural classroom: are there support structures, resources or forms of competence sharing when it comes to this type of situation? Is this situation recognized by the school management and the teachers' college?'*

My general understanding is that the teachers are mostly left on their own to handle the challenges and learn as they go. Teacher 4 thinks that the topic should be discussed in greater detail within his school:

> The very idea of a multilingual and multicultural school is present, and something most schools in Norway can be categorized as. There is a lot of talk about including everyone and taking everyone's culture into account, but do we really do that? You can say that we as a school are multicultural - but are we really that in the true sense of the word? It is something that should be discussed more in the school organization, as I think it is important to consider the students' linguistic and cultural background as it is a large part of the students' identity.

As we can see from this answer, Teacher 4 is somewhat critical of whether schools do enough to truly include everyone, emphasizing that while most schools can be categorized as both multilingual and multicultural, this comes with certain responsibilities. Teacher 1 on the other hand, does not feel that she is in a situation where she needs support in this particular case:

> In my class, we exclusively teach Sámi-speaking students, so our classroom is not very multicultural. Students from other countries are typically enrolled in the Norwegian parallel class - we believe these students benefit more from learning Norwegian, as it is uncertain whether they will remain in this Sámi village permanently. Currently, global situations like the influx of Ukrainian refugees are prompting discussions about the best ways to inclusively accommodate everyone, also at our school. There may be resources available to address these issues, but I must

admit I am not well-informed about them, as they do not directly impact the class I teach.

Based on this response, it is apparent that there is not much discussion regarding this topic within the faculty, such as during professional development days or through common meetings at Teacher 1's school. This raises the question of whether this type of development work should involve all teachers, regardless of what classes they teach, considering they all work at a school that aims to provide the best for all students. Teachers 1 and 4's answers indicate that there is a general agreement on the importance of recognizing and utilizing students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, although the practical implementation varies among teachers and schools.

Topic 2 - Culture

English as a subject often implies cultural knowledge, both because knowledge of culture and society has long been part of the subject's curriculum, and because language itself is a cultural phenomenon where we express and understand the meaning of words and sentences according to who we are socially and culturally. The demography of the four different schools I have visited is different in ethnic, linguistic and cultural terms; in two of the schools Norwegian, Sámi and students of other ethnicities are mixed (Teacher 3 and 4), in one school there is a Sámi class and a Norwegian class (Teacher 2), and in the last school, the class consists primarily of Sámi students (Teacher 1).

The next question asked was *'Do you consider the students' culture (worldview, linguistic identity, social relations, etc.) in your teaching? If so, in what way?'*, and was intended to help me assess if and, if so, to what extent, the teachers actively related to the students' and their lifeworlds insofar as they are culturally determined. When it comes to culture in the various schools I visited, there are notably different practices; in two of the schools, I perceived a great focus on maintaining a unified and distinct Sámi culture, as a measure to preserve this in a Sámi municipality. Teacher 1 explains it this way:

> We are a Sámi-oriented school. We have slaughter days, we go to the reindeer fence, and we have a regular language week in connection with the Sámi National Day on the 7th of February. There is a lot from the Sámi culture that is used in our English lessons, for example we talk about experiences and stereotypes a lot, and discuss different perceptions of the Sámi.

I can also recognize this 'Sámi focus' in what Teacher 2 answers to the question:

> Yes, I do consider the students' culture, every day and in every subject! Here in Sápmi (Sámi area in North Norway), it is easy to blend into the crowd since many shares' similar cultural traits. Therefore, it is crucial to help students take pride in their unique cultural characteristics. I find that integrating themes related to the Sámi culture across various subjects—like faith, geography, and biology—greatly motivates students. I make it a point to highlight Sámi culture whenever possible!

We can see from teacher 1 and 2's responses that their view of culture mostly revolves around the Sámi culture and that the culture is fully incorporated in their teaching. Teacher 1 also explains that the very strong focus on Sámi culture sometimes leads to a forgetfulness of their Norwegian pupils and their needs:

> I like to use the students' culture and background in English teaching, this can also be found in a competence aim in the English curriculum that deals with culture in different countries. One can link our indigenous population to indigenous peoples in other countries, especially for example in England and the United States. We are a bilingual municipality, but I would say that there is clearly most focus on the Sámi here. For example, none of my students knew what the national dish in Norway is when I asked them about it – they are very blinded by the Sámi culture and ways of living. The few Norwegian students are sometimes overlooked; for instance, during school-meetings, Sámi is spoken exclusively, often neglecting to accommodate our Norwegian speakers.

We can understand from Teacher 1 and 2 that their school has a main focus on the Sámi culture and language. This was also my impression when I visited the schools in question – I was met by the raised Sámi flag, the signs and posters were all in Sámi and the primary language used and heard was Sámi. The teachers view their classrooms largely in binary terms, in the difference between the Sámi and Norwegian cultures, while the teachers in the coastal community shows a wider conception of other cultural and linguistic differences as well. Teacher 4 shows a genuine interest in the student's point of view, regardless of what language and culture they belong to:

> Yes, I consider the students culture in the sense that I ask both about linguistic structures and how the students would express this in their own languages. I often

inquire about words and sentence construction because I want to develop a basic understanding of the students' languages so that I can keep it in mind in future learning situations. When I use the students' culture in teaching, it is often very unstructured and random. Since we live in a small community, I like to ask about the students' own viewpoints, and I compare the familiar with the unknown, which I find interesting because I genuinely care and wish to learn.

As we can see from Teacher 4's response, there is also some understanding that classroom culture also involves students' different language skills and the inclusion of different languages in the classroom. Whereas Teachers 1 and 2 describes an environment dominated by the Sámi culture, Teachers 3 and 4 naturally describe a different kind of multicultural situation, because their localities are less dominated by Sámi language and culture. The kind of school we find in the coastal parts of Finnmark may have conditions that are familiar to school's further south, with a much wider variety of different cultures and languages present. Teacher 3, which teaches at the biggest school among my selection, paints a somewhat special picture of their school culture:

> Our school is a melting pot of nearly every culture and language you can imagine. What's special is that, despite originating from so many different cultures, we observe that many of our students are influenced by a common culture. Even though we have a dedicated Sámi class at our school, these students too are influenced by this common culture—perhaps in hopes of fitting in.

In Teacher 3's town, this common culture is so dominant that many of the students who comes from other cultures are also influenced by it. They set aside some of their own cultural traits, and the teacher suggests that this may be because they want to fit in. I see a similar phenomenon in Teacher 4's answer, where he describes an own kind of culture originated in a small community:

> When you live in a small, isolated community like we do here, we kind of create our own culture. Typical for our culture is fishing, hunting, and outdoor life – with unabashed, hospitable people who are happy to chat with and about their neighbors. We are simple and honest people!

Culture as described in both Teacher 3 and 4's scenarios might mean something more than just a linguistically and ethically determined explanation of culture. In this scenario, culture

could be understood as a dynamic, evolving set of shared practices, values, and interests that transcend traditional linguistic and ethnic boundaries. This may involve shared behaviors and social norms such as dress codes and social interactions and the desire to be part of a community or group and therefore adopting the dominant cultural practices of that group.

Teacher 4 further describes how people to some extent share a common culture shaped more by their place and way of life than by people's origins or ethnic identity – sort of a common culture due to their place and way of living, rather than where they originally originated from:

> Sámi, Norwegians, Filipinos, Finnish, Swedes, Germans, etc. live together – and none of our cultures stands stronger than any other, we just kind of co-exist and complement each other.

Topic 3 – language

Having discussed both the teachers' general perception of culture and how they accommodate and utilize the diverse cultures and languages of their students in their classrooms, I now turn to the final topic of the interview: language.

In order to find out whether teachers have an idea of what separates second and third language acquisition, I asked: '*What would you say are significant differences between second and third language acquisition?*'
Their answers suggest that the teachers are not aware of these processes in general, and have not had such an awareness from formal training, but they understand some of it from experience in the classroom. Even their sometimes-considerable practice as language teachers does not seem to have made them think of any important difference between 2nd and 3rd language learning. Teacher 2 answered:

> From what I have seen this year, I do not see any big differences when it comes to the English subject. Again, the students are exposed to English a lot in everyday life, so you may not notice such a big difference. However, I think that it is an advantage to know several languages, without being able to put my finger on exactly what those advantages really are.

It is interesting to hear Teacher 2 comment on the fact that she believes it is an advantage to know several languages, but at the same time being honest about the fact that she does not have enough knowledge on the topic to actually answer to what these advantages are. This

may suggest that multilingualism is something that is promoted in positive terms, but in which there is a lack of complementary competence. Teacher 3 thinks the two language-learning processes are quite similar:

> I think the process when learning a second and a third language is quite similar, but I think that you often know the second language better than the third language, and then the language learning process also changes accordingly: the level must be adapted to how much the students know, which is often not a lot. I also think that the third language is a language you hear less than number one and two, for example the students I have in my Sámi class only hear the language in the two Sámi lessons they have a week, which is often not sufficient to learn a language. When you learn a third language, you have more auxiliary languages than those who learn a second language, and it can quickly become confusing at the beginning when you find that words and sentences get jumbled up!

Teacher 3's observation about learning a third language as opposed to a second language reflects many of the challenges and dynamics that language teachers and students face, for example in connection to language proficiency where instruction must be adjusted to accommodate the students' lower prior knowledge. The teacher also points out a crucial issue regarding exposure; a lack of sufficient interaction with, and usage of the third language can significantly slow down language acquisition. The teachers' approach to adjusting the level of instruction based on students' prior knowledge is crucial for effectively supporting their learning. This underscores the need for tailored educational strategies that can support less exposed languages. The teacher also comments that as a multilingual you have more auxiliary languages to consider than the bilinguals, and then underlines that this might be a challenge for the students as well, in form of confusion and mix-ups between the languages the student already knows and the language they are learning.

The views expressed by Teacher 3 corresponds well with existing research in the field of language acquisition and educational psychology. Teacher 3 emphasizes that in language learning, the difficulty level must be adapted to each students' needs. This can be associated with Vygotsky's line of thought, where in the zone of proximal development the teacher needs to adapt the teaching to the students' different needs in order for them to develop. Research on multilingualism suggests that learning multiple languages can increase cognitive flexibility and awareness of linguistic structures, but it also introduces challenges such as increased

cognitive load and potential for language interference (Bialystok, 2009). This can manifest as confusion or mix-ups, as also mentioned by Teacher 3.

Teacher 4 mentioned earlier in the interview that he wants to 'develop a careful understanding of the students' language so that he can keep that in mind in later learning situations.' This may suggest that the teachers reflect and keep in mind that the student's other languages may possibly influence and play a role in the students' further acquisition of new languages. The next question is as follows: '*Can you name any significant differences in the language structure of Sámi and English?'*.

The four teachers are all aware of several features of the Sámi language that are very different from the English language, and summarize it down to three main points: verbs, cases, and prepositions. When this question was asked, was all of the teachers mentioned that Sámi is largely what they call a 'verb language', by which they mean a highly inflected language. Sámi is classified as a verb-focused language for several reasons, for example Sámi verbs exhibit complex morphology. Verbs are inflected for tense, mood, person, and number, and can also incorporate negation directly into the verb form. In many Sámi sentences, the verb or predicate is the core of the sentence, with much of the grammatical information being conveyed through the verb. Teacher 2 explained it as follows:

> Sámi is a typical verb language. By this I mean that the verbs affect syntax and morphology. The verbs are inflected in many different ways, for example in both the present and the past tense and in singular and plural, and it is often the verb that is focused on in a sentence in Sámi.

To justify her view, she also brought up an example that shows the difference in question:
In English: They came yesterday.
Sámi: Ikte boađiiga (Directly translated to English: "yesterday came they" – the verb is conjugated in the plural past tense).
As we can see from the example above, Sámi has a higher degree of morphological complexity, with many grammatical features directly integrated in the verb. English, as opposed to the Sámi language belongs to the Germanic language family, has a much simpler verb conjugation system.

The differences in verb conjugation and grammatical structure between Sámi and English can impact how a Sámi student learns English. The different linguistic structures may require an

adjustment to a new way thinking when learning English. Due to the high degree of inflection in Sámi, Sámi students might unintentionally apply their already familiar verb structures when speaking English. For instance, they might mix up tenses or use the incorrect verb form in the third person. Teacher 4 has noticed this distinction between Sámi and English in his classes:

> What I observe in my teaching is that English is easy when it comes to verb conjugation, but Sámi is very different and much more complex. Then the question arises as to how much should one focus on being grammatically correct? Where do we put the list? This must of course be adapted to each individual student and their prerequisites for learning.

The question the teacher raises of how much to focus on grammatical correctness is important, especially in the early stages of language learning. For many language teachers, there is a balance between promoting grammatical correctness and encouraging fluent communication. It may be appropriate to start with a stronger focus on communicative skills, and then gradually increase the focus on grammar as the students' competence develops. Too much focus on correcting the students can have a negative effect and be counterproductive, and in the worst case make the students hesitant to use the language.

The second difference between Sámi and English mentioned was cases. The Sámi language consists of many different inflections of nouns. A case in Sámi is an inflectional form of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, which marks the function of the word in the sentence. Teacher 2 says:

> Conjugations of nouns, verbs and adjectives are probably the biggest difference. Cases, that is. I think it is easier to use Norwegian examples when English teaching instead of Sámi, as Sámi has such advanced grammar that it rarely makes a good example anyway. It is difficult to translate directly from Sámi to English and vice versa, so the Norwegian students probably have an advantage there.

The teacher here comments that she prefers to use Norwegian words as an example where necessary, as the Sámi version does not always translate directly into English. In her case, she thinks that Norwegian has greater transfer value to English. Because Norwegian and English share several linguistic features, including syntactic structures and similarities in vocabulary, it may be easier for students to draw parallels and transfer knowledge between these two

languages compared to from Sámi to English. This is often due to the seven different cases in the Sámi language, which function as various endings that are added to nouns to indicate form and meaning. Another aspect pointed out by Teacher 3, is that indefinite and definite articles (a/an and the) in English are replaced by cases, which makes it a little extra difficult for the Sámi students, as it will also be for Russian and Ukrainian students.

In connection with the fact that the Sámi language sometimes uses cases instead of prepositions, this is also mentioned as a common problem area for the Sámi students during their language acquisition. Prepositions play a crucial role in how cases are used and understood in the language, and it might be confusing when transferring this into other languages that do not use the same system. Teacher 1 explains it this way:

> I see this struggle in both Norwegian and English in the whole village actually, and that is the prepositions 'on', 'in' and 'at'. The students struggle a lot with choosing the right prepositions, I often hear 'at Kautokeino(Sámi village)' instead of 'in Kautokeino'. What the reason for this is, is difficult to say, but it is natural to believe that it is because the words in/on are not found in the Sámi language in the same way as in English. In Sámi we have a case called locative which is added to the word making it sound like this: Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino) - Guovdageaidnus (meaning in/on/from Kautokeino).

The linguistic differences described in this chapter are not the main focus of my approach; rather, my interest lies chiefly in the extent to which teachers appear aware or concerned with them in terms of their teaching and the students' learning. The points mentioned by my informants reflect some of the issues Sámi students face when learning English, and I believe it can be useful as a teacher to be aware of these points. With a basic understanding of the language spoken by the students, the teacher can relate to the challenges the students face and in this way tailor their teaching to suit the student group.

Summary

With this, I wish to summarize some of the key findings:

- Several informants highlighted the value of being able to adapt the teaching to the individual needs and backgrounds of the students, emphasizing the importance of creativity, varied working methods, and student participation to increase motivation among the students.
- The teachers emphasized how they integrate Sámi culture and language into teaching to strengthen students' cultural identity and motivation.
- The results show a willingness and understanding of multilingual education, but also an uncertainty around this topic that may indicate the need for more comprehensive training and/or competence development.
- The interview shows that the use of culture and language in teaching varies significantly between different teachers, depending on their personal background, location, teaching context, and the needs and prerequisites of the students.

The interview highlights several challenges teachers face:

- **Professional development and support:** Some of the teachers express concerns about insufficient training and support for teachers. This includes the need for further education and professional development in language pedagogy and multicultural teaching.
- **Motivational issues:** Teachers identify a lack of motivation among students as a significant challenge.
- **Lack of adapted resources:** Teachers report a lack of teaching materials that are specifically adapted for Sámi-speaking students.
- **Complexity of multilingualism:** Teachers point to challenges related to teaching in a multilingual environment where students learn both their second and third languages. This includes how to handle different language levels in the classroom and how to effectively integrate students' multilingual backgrounds into teaching.

5 Discussion

In this final chapter, I will discuss important findings from the analysis in relation to relevant theory.

5.1 'Google is your best friend'

Today's school is in many ways colored by a long, monological history. Multilingualism has been put on the agenda in recent years, and for many teachers this is a major challenge and a brand-new way of thinking. This applies to my teacher informants as well, who call for a greater focus on this in their education and daily work. This development in school is described by researchers as the multilingual turn. In many educational settings, the number of multilingual students is rising, and to keep pace with this development, national curricula have been revised. For instance, the core curriculum in Norway includes multilingualism as one of its five basic skills (UDIR, 2020, *basic skills*). Additionally, it considers the existing linguistic repertoires of the learners as an integrated set of beneficial resources for language learning (Krulatz, Georgios & Lorenz, 2023).

The core curriculum revision aims to incorporate multilingualism as a fundamental aspect of education, reflecting a gradual shift away from strictly monolingual practices. Norwegian schools have a desire to support multilingualism, as all school students learn English from 1st grade. Nevertheless, we still see some monolingual traditions in the Norwegian school, where the multilingual student is seen as an exception instead of the norm, that needs special adaptation (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016, p. 2). Even with a desire to be a good teacher, adapting to an ever-changing classroom is challenging. Kramsch describes it this way:

> Pity the language teacher in our multilingual times! Between the monolingual institution that pays their salaries and the multilingual students that fill their classrooms, between the expectations of a national community that dreams of diversity, equity and inclusion and the realities of an economic world order based on cut-throat competition and survival of the fittest, between monolingual professionalism and multilingual epistemologies – today's language teacher is in need of sympathetic support and new insights to face the current 'multilingual turn' in pedagogic theory and practice (Kramsch, 2022, p. 467).

Perhaps this says something about how today's language teachers feel: a great deal of frustration and confusion mixed with a desire to be the best teacher for their students. We can

see from the informants' responses that several of the teachers call for a greater focus on linguistic pedagogy in teacher education. My informants emphasize that there is not enough competence acquired through simply learning languages – a good teacher should also be aware of linguistic structures in both the target language and auxiliary languages, have good knowledge of how to teach language properly, and know how to embrace the multicultural classroom.

Equipping all teachers with the competence necessary for teaching multilingual students is a challenge. This does not necessarily involve learning more languages, but a way of teaching where all teachers incorporate a form of multilingual didactics, encouraging the individual student to include the languages he or she knows. The change towards a multilingual classroom cannot be done without the teachers, but it is a challenge to support this development without sufficient expertise. In the classroom, teachers often decide to what degree they want to implement existing language policies; as a result, their actions can either support or suppress the multilingual practices of their students (Hornberger and Johnson, 2007).

It is not only in Norway that the multilingual situation is evolving – this applies to large parts of the world. Pitkänen-Huhta & Mäntylä (2021) have conducted a study in our neighboring country Finland that can be linked to the multilingual situation as seen in Norway: the study revealed a need to more actively include multilingualism in teaching materials and teacher education. The Finnish teachers interviewed in the study supported multilingual learners to some extent, but the researchers recommend that teacher training and pedagogical materials should include a greater focus on multilingualism, to better utilize the linguistic resources of all students in teaching. This could include strategies for how teachers can integrate multiple languages in teaching and how they can use multilingual students' skills to enrich the whole class's learning.

Further, the research indicates that existing teaching materials often do not support a multilingual approach, which can leave teachers feeling unprepared or lacking the necessary tools to effectively handle linguistic diversity. It should be a given that when The Norwegian Directory of Education decides to introduce new curricula that all teachers are required to use, there will also be new and updated learning resources in form of textbooks and other necessary tools available for all teachers to use. This is not the case for the teachers in the

Finnish study, something I also recognize in my own study, where Teacher 1 addresses this exact issue:

> The students are very exposed to English on social media such as YouTube, Instagram, Tiktok etc. and I think that this is a major factor as to why the students want to learn English. The access to English and Sámi content on the internet is very different, and I can see that the student's motivation to learn Sámi disappears because there is little to no content that appeals to the youth, especially on TV and social media. There is also a lack of proper dictionaries and generally up-to-date teaching aids, which makes the teaching even harder.

From the teacher's response, we clearly see the need for and importance of updated resources for use in schools, especially considering students today always have access to updated material on the internet. To make what to be learned at school meaningful and relevant, it will be even more important for the students that we can offer learning-content that the students view as rewarding and meaningful, and that they see the relevance to what is happening in society today. Just as in the Finnish context, there may be a need in Norway to develop and adapt teaching materials that reflect and support multilingualism. Materials that include Sámi, Norwegian, and English can promote a deeper understanding and respect for Sámi language and culture, while also enhancing the English learning process.

Although the full potential of multilingualism was not fully recognized by the teachers in the Finnish study, they did use some methods to support multilingual learners, including leveraging students' linguistic resources through translanguaging, which involve integrating multiple languages in the learning process, where students are encouraged to use all their linguistic resources to enhance learning. This included comparing words or grammatical structures across languages they knew, which can help bridge languages and improve understanding (Krulatz et al. 2018, p. 138). Techniques such as this could be particularly valuable in the education of Sámi students, but only one of my informants' states that he consciously uses the principles of translanguaging in his teaching. Translanguaging can help students make connections between Sámi, Norwegian, and English, thereby improving their linguistic skills and understanding across subjects.

The conclusion of the Finnish study points to the need to strengthen teachers' understanding and use of multilingual strategies in EFL classrooms and expand educational resources to

reflect a multilingual approach. This would not only better support multilingual students but also enrich the learning environment for all students. The findings from the study also show that while there is increasing awareness of the importance of multilingualism in education, there are still significant challenges related to how this can be implemented in practice. Some teachers were unsure how best to integrate multilingualism in teaching, indicating a need for more training and resources on this topic. In other words, the teachers do not feel that they have sufficient competence or experience. This is also something that makes apparent in my study, where even the Norwegian 5-year teacher education does not give the teacher sufficient competence:

> I have a master's degree in English, but nevertheless during my education it has been about the academic aspect and little about language acquisition. In other words: a lot of grammar teaching and reading books - mostly just academically oriented. Therefore, the teacher is probably a little 'left to themselves' when you graduate and Google is therefore your best friend!

Although Google and other resources available on the internet are often good aids, it can be frustrating to feel that their knowledge acquired over a five-year educational period is not sufficient to accommodate the recent development in schools. Especially when the topic in question is so current that one would think it would have a larger place in today's teacher education. Multilingualism is seen as a resource that could enhance engagement and learning for all students, but this requires conscious effort and strategy from teachers – the only problem is that effort and strategy cannot be applied unless the teacher possesses the competence necessary.

Based on my teachers' answers, I can state that there is a clear need for access to professional development that focuses on multilingualism in school for English teachers in Norway. This is one of the challenges they face in their everyday work, and the findings in my study can be seen in the context of a study conducted by Dahl & Krulatz in 2016, where the quantitative results of the study reveal that 80% of informants do not have formal education or training that prepares them to work with multilingual students. This specifically includes training in multilingualism. The teachers reported a significant need for further knowledge and access to relevant resources to effectively manage multilingual classrooms, specifically mentioning the need for knowledge of teaching strategies for multilingual classrooms, access to adapted

educational resources, and theoretical knowledge about multilingualism (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016).

5.2 'It is crucial to help students take pride in their unique cultural characteristics'

Cultures are fluid and heterogeneous, and often change from place to place. This also applies to the Sámi culture. Within the Sámi culture as seen in Finnmark, it is common to distinguish between two different groups of Sámi: the Coastal or Sea Sámi and interior/reindeer herder-Sámi. Seen from the teacher perspective, it may be important to be aware of these two ways of being Sámi, and how the inland and coast can often be different in terms of Sámi cultural and linguistic identity. This is important for several reasons, for example, by being able to exhibit cultural sensitivity: Recognizing and respecting students' diverse backgrounds is fundamental in inclusive pedagogy, and a teacher who is aware of this diversity can better tailor their teaching to reflect and appreciate the cultural heritage of all their students.

Another factor discovered by Pitkänen-Huhta & Mäntylä (2021) in their study was the tendency among teachers not to want to highlight students' linguistic or cultural backgrounds in school settings. This reflects a tension between wanting to treat all students equally, and on the other hand recognizing the unique multilingual competence some students bring. I also recognize this inner conflict in one of my informants when he states that:

> I think it is important to turn things around a bit, and think about whether students who have a different culture and language want to 'stand out'? It is important to let the initiative come from the students themselves, if they want to talk about their own experiences. I can use individual students as an example, but only if I am sure that I think it is ok.

What Teacher 3 is saying here, is that to draw attention to someone's Sámi identity and language, one should often be familiar with the student and whether they want this attention, since this may, in a sense, be to 'out' them as individuals, which it is not self-evident that they would want. In Norway, where Sámi students are an important minority group, it is crucial to recognize and integrate their linguistic and cultural identities in schooling. This can strengthen students' self-image and contribute to better academic performances by creating a more inclusive and representative learning environment. Although integrating students' culture and language into education is highly important, there is also another factor that

comes into play, as seen from the statement above: students are often in a vulnerable position where they not all want to be seen as different. On the contrary, they may prefer to blend into a larger community – such as the culture described that exists at the school he teaches in. Therefore, as teacher 3 emphasizes, it is important to know the student well enough to understand whether he or she finds it acceptable.

The four teachers in my study all agree that they all spend time getting an idea of the student's cultural identity; some of the teachers have made this a conscious choice in their teaching, while others feel that it comes naturally through spending time with the students and showing interest in their daily lives. The teachers also describe the importance of this, mentioning that by knowing the students' backgrounds they can build good teacher-student relationships, and that one of the most important things you can do as a teacher is to see each individual student.

Through their responses, we can see that the teachers unconsciously use several of Gay's principles in their teaching practice. As accounted for in chapter 2.1.1, she emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing students' cultural identities as a central part of the learning process, and the teachers in my study who actively spend time understanding students' cultural identities are following this principle by acknowledging that students' backgrounds are essential for shaping their learning experiences and academic performance.

Seeing each student, as mentioned by my informants, is also a crucial aspect of culturally responsive teaching. The principles of adapted education are often deeply integrated within the teacher, and by being aware of and sensitive to their students' cultural backgrounds, the teacher can naturally adapt their teaching style to meet students' needs. This adaptation can be intuitive, especially among experienced teachers. This approach emphasizes recognizing and utilizing each student's cultural background and identity as a resource in the classroom (Gay, 2018). Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that although my informants spend time getting to know their students and their backgrounds, none of them feel a particular need to make any major changes to their teaching practices to accommodate the Sámi-speaking students.

Common to the two inland schools is that they have classes that consist of primarily Sámi-speaking students. These teachers mentioned that the only adaptation they can think of is the use of auxiliary language - naturally, Sámi is used as a support language in the Sámi class, and Norwegian in the Norwegian class. They both also mentioned that the main language used in their English teaching is indeed English, and therefore they do not feel that it is

necessary to make any other adjustments. Teacher 4 also do not recognize a need to make any special adjustments:

> I do not feel that I need to pay extra attention to the Sámi students in my teaching. On a general basis, the students today, whether they are Norwegian or Sámi, hear so much English due to social media that they are steady language users that are on a much higher level than what I was in High School. I feel that the students we have now are quite 'distant' from the Sámi culture, if you can put it that way.

The school he works at has the lowest percentage of Sámi students among my informants. He is left with the impression that the Sámi students at his school do not have a particularly strong connection to their culture. This is likely the case for many Sámi students, not just at this school but also at other schools around the country. There could be many reasons for this, but many might draw a line back to the Norwegianization process where many Sámi lost significant parts of their culture. He also mentions that in his location, there is sort of a common culture where many may put their own cultural traits aside to take part in a culture especially common in this area. His students may not receive the cultural input at home necessary to establish a steady cultural identity, or they feel conflicted as to whether they should embrace their own culture or 'blend into the crowd'. Therefore, these students have great value of the culture perspective seen at school.

For all students, but perhaps especially for those described by Teacher 4, it will be of great significance whether the teacher takes the pupils' background into account in their teaching, which is exactly what question 13 aims to examine. There is a wide variation in the responses, but all teachers emphasize incorporating Sámi culture and language into their teaching. This includes celebrating Sámi National Day, incorporating Sámi language(s) where it is natural, and engaging in cultural activities like visiting the reindeer fence, slaughter days as a part of science education, or the use of Sámi craft – 'duodji' - in arts and craft. This reflects a clear recognition and appreciation of Sámi culture within the school environment, but it is also a very standardized celebration of the Sámi. Teacher 4 underscores my impression with this comment:

> I think that it often becomes so mechanical and contrived, such as for example when we all learn the phrase 'good day' in Sámi, or that everyone must sing the Sámi national anthem while the flag is raised on 7th of February. At the same time, I

understand that it is difficult to know how, and to what extent one should use culture and other languages in teaching.

From this response, I understand that he finds it challenging to know where and when to provide cultural input in a natural way. He states that in situations where the Sámi are celebrated, the activities feel 'mechanical and contrived'. The teacher's description of how cultural elements are used in a mechanical way reflects a common concern around the fact that when cultural practices or languages are introduced without depth or context, it can be perceived as superficial or purely symbolic. This can undermine the entire purpose of cultural integration. The teacher is aware of the need for authenticity in how culture is integrated into teaching and thinks that their celebration of the Sámi in this case becomes somewhat stereotypical.

As accounted for in chapter 2.2.3, Hauge's explanation of a resource-oriented understanding of a multicultural school emphasizes that measures should not be specifically aimed at minority language speakers, but at the school as a whole. A resource-oriented view allows all students to take part in multiculturalism and let this permeate everyday life—not just on special occasions. As we can understand from this, for the activities not to feel contrived, the opposite would be activities that feel sort of organic, real, or meaningful. To ensure this, a more pervasive approach where these activities are visible more often and in more natural situations would be preferable. For example, multicultural content should be integrated into all subjects and activities, not just on special occasions. Students should be given an active role in this, where they are in the 'driver's seat', and come up with suggestions on how they wish to work on these themes and how they should be integrated into the various subjects.

It seems to be more straightforward to draw on Sámi culture and language in teaching in the schools of Teachers 1 and 2, where most of the students are of Sámi heritage, as well as many of the teachers and the surrounding environment. Teacher 2 does not think that it is hard to integrate Sámi culture in her teaching, which can be seen in the context of the more monogamous Sámi culture she is surrounded by:

> Yes, I do consider the students' culture, every day and in every subject! Here in Sápmi (referring to Sámi area in northern Norway), it is easy to blend into the crowd since many shares similar cultural traits. Therefore, it is crucial to help students take pride in their unique cultural characteristics. I find that integrating themes related to the Sámi

culture across various subjects—like faith, geography, and biology—greatly motivates students. I make it a point to highlight Sámi culture whenever possible!

The fact that this Sámi teacher finds it easy to integrate Sámi culture into teaching may be due to several factors that make her situation somewhat unique, especially compared to teachers 3 and 4. In her case, several factors are at play, including that she works in Sápmi, an area with a strong Sámi presence and cultural identity. This provides a natural context where Sámi culture is already an integral part of the daily lives of many students. In areas with a strong Sámi presence, there may also be greater community support and perhaps it is even a requirement that Sámi culture is integrated into the school.

She also highlights the significance of helping students take pride in their unique cultural characteristics, referring to that in her area many shares similar cultural traits. However, when the situation is reversed, as it often is in the classrooms of Teachers 3 and 4, the general ambience is one in which Sámi identities are mostly hidden. In this scenario, teachers might benefit from solid competence in the topic, as well as thorough knowledge of their students and their backgrounds.

Another aspect of a resource-oriented understanding of a multicultural school is that teachers need training and resources to handle multicultural content in a sensitive and effective manner— in many cases this must be actively worked on through professional development which can help teachers become more comfortable and competent in teaching and discussing multicultural topics. This should not be the responsibility of individual teachers alone, and a common understanding of how this should be handled across subjects and grades should be predetermined by the entire teaching staff and enforced by all with the help of school management. Hauge (2014, p. 288) emphasizes that 'It is the responsibility of school leaders to create a learning environment that recognizes diversity and contributes to validating the knowledge of all students' (own translation).

This is why I was curious to know if my informants felt that they have the proper support system when dealing with the possibilities, and in some cases challenges, the multicultural classroom brings. Teacher 4 answered:

> The very idea of a multilingual and multicultural school is present, and something most schools in Norway can be categorized as. There is a lot of talk about including everyone and taking everyone's culture into account, but do we really do that? You can

say that we as a school are multicultural - but are we really that in the true sense of the word? It is something that should be discussed more in the school organization, as I think it is important to consider the students' linguistic and cultural background as it is a large part of the students' identity.

Hauge explains that 'schools that have students who are speakers of minority languages are often referred to as multicultural by teachers and school leaders. This functions as a kind of characterization and is probably used because it is supposed to tell something about the school. The term 'multicultural' is often used descriptively; simply to inform that a part of the student base at the school consists of linguistic minorities. Their presence alone is enough to evoke the notion of the multicultural school' (Hauge, 2014, p. 21, own translation). This is probably what Teacher 4 is referring to in his response – that all schools that have minority language students can in this way refer to their own school as multicultural. This tells something about the school and is used as a characterization, where the mere presence of these students is enough to use it.

When the teacher asks, 'are we really multicultural in the true sense of the word?' he is possibly seeking a deeper meaning of the word than just a characterization – perhaps an understanding that the school he works at operates from the measures a school must take for multicultural and multilingual children to receive the best possible education. Hauge refers to this as a resource-oriented understanding of the term multicultural. He also wants a greater focus on precisely this at his school, and that it be discussed both among the faculty and the school leadership to ensure a common understanding of how the school should go about this. As part of 'the multilingual turn' in school, schools and educational systems are encouraged to adopt a more inclusive language policy that recognizes and supports multilingualism as part of pedagogical practice.

Based on this, I can conclude that my informants take into account the bilingual Sámi-Norwegian background of their students in their teaching by integrating cultural topics, celebrations, and simply by being aware of and familiarizing themselves with the students' cultural backgrounds, thereby adapting their teaching to their various needs. This primarily concerns the third type of competence that Haukås describes in her work: language pedagogical knowledge (Haukås, 2014). This type of competence focuses on how teachers use their understanding of language and pedagogy to adapt their teaching to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students, which includes the integration of cultural themes,

celebrations, and a general awareness of and approach to the students' cultural and linguistic identities, as described by my informants. They do this in different ways and to varying degrees, which is expected considering their somewhat different situations and conditions. They also describe two distinct situations: in coastal areas, the Sámi students are a minority in a larger majority society characterized by many different cultures, while teachers on the inland describe their students as sometimes so integrated into the Sámi culture that they feel the need to help students take pride in their unique cultural characteristics. In the next chapter, I will focus on the linguistic aspect of culturally responsive teaching.

5.3 'A good language teacher understands how the student's mother tongue and target language are connected'

Teachers' efforts in learning about their students' culture, language and background can contribute to a positive learning environment and a good teacher-student relation. In fact, an inclusive learning environment often starts with this bonding. A key part of this study was to investigate in what ways English teachers in Finnmark consider the bilingual background of their pupils when teaching English, and naturally, a big part of the bilingual background of the students are their previous language knowledge. In this part of my discussion, I highlight my informants ' views regarding the challenges and benefits of multilingual education. Their insights reveal varying degrees of awareness and understanding about how additional languages impact cognitive, social, and cultural learning.

> A good language teacher should have hairy goals and high ambitions for their students. You must be able to move away from the traditional way of learning languages, for example the classic 'point to all the things in this room that start with A'. A good language teacher is also one who understands how the student's mother tongue and target language are connected. A basic understanding of the student's mother tongue will help you as a language teacher to know how to organize the teaching and which areas should be kept an extra eye on.

This quote from Teacher 4 shows that he has a clear understanding of what he considers to be a good language teacher. He criticizes conventional and perhaps outdated methods of language teaching, which can seem unengaging, and instead encourages teachers to rethink how languages are best learned. He also mentions that a good language teacher should understand how a student's mother tongue and the target language are connected. This may include an understanding of both linguistic similarities and differences, which can help in

predicting and addressing common linguistic challenges. Knowledge of the student's mother tongue can also influence the teacher's approach, for example, by choosing to organize the teaching in a way that makes it comprehensible for students with different starting points. This involves a tailored pedagogical approach where the teacher can focus extra on the language areas that may be particularly challenging for students, based on their mother tongues.

As we know, language plays a critical role in shaping one's identity. This is for several reasons, but primarily because language is a key carrier of culture. For Sámi, and other minority language-speakers, their own language functions as a direct link to their ethnic roots and cultural heritage. Therefore, maintaining and developing the language is crucial for preserving this connection and passing it on to future generations. Schools play a significant role in this task, and perhaps especially English teachers, as emphasized by Krulatz et al:

> As language experts, English teachers play an important role in creating a school environment in which multilingual children feel valued and emotionally safe. English teachers have, therefore, a moral responsibility to raise all children's awareness of the importance of respecting and valuing all languages and cultures present in the classroom. This can be done through inviting multilingual children to share their knowledge of language systems other than Norwegian and English by, for example, comparing how these languages are similar or different from Norwegian and English. (Krulatz et al., 2018, p. 108)

The importance of integrating the use of multiple languages in teaching is also reflected in the curriculum. In the curriculum framework, multilingualism is emphasized as a resource, and the curricula encourage the integration of knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity in all subjects, not just language subjects. In the 'overarching part' of the Curriculum (UDIR, 2020, *1.2 Identity and cultural diversity*), it is described how schools should value and utilize multilingual students' language competence both as a learning resource and as part of their cultural identity.

In the curriculum for language subjects, including Norwegian, Sámi, and other foreign languages, there is emphasis on how multilingual skills can enrich students' learning and contribute to better communication skills across cultures. These plans include specific goals and strategies for teaching and promoting multilingualism among students. In the English

curriculum (UDIR, 2020, *ENG 01-04*), emphasis is placed on developing language skills that can be used in an international and multicultural society. The curriculum recognizes the importance of English as a global language of communication and encourages its use in teaching—focusing primarily on developing strong communication skills in English. This aligns with what my teacher informants explain about their focus on using as much English as possible in their classes, and that it functions as the language of instruction.

Some principles in the curriculum can nevertheless indirectly support the use of multilingualism, also in English instruction. For example, the curriculum encourages the exploration and comparison of different cultural expressions, which can include discussions about students' own languages and cultures. This can be used as a start to integrate other languages by comparing words, expressions, and cultural concepts. There are thus plenty of opportunities for cross-linguistic teaching opportunities, and the importance of this is well justified in our curricula and framework. Teacher 1 says that she often uses Sámi *culture* in her teaching and that she finds ways to link this to the competency goals:

> I like to use the students' culture and background in English teaching, this can also be found in a competence aim in the English curriculum that deals with culture in different countries. One can link our indigenous population to indigenous peoples in other countries, especially for example in England and the United States.

Even though she often uses Sámi culture in her teaching, I do not get the impression that this includes the use of multiple languages, but rather the use of Sámi culture as a discussion topic in English. This also applies to Teacher 1, who has stated that she often integrates themes related to the Sámi culture across various subjects. As mentioned, the English curriculum focuses heavily on communicative skills, and in this instance, teachers can use students' multilingual backgrounds as a resource in the classroom, for example by allowing students to explain and discuss topics in both English and their mother tongue, which can enhance both understanding and oral activity. Holander and Høvik emphasize that with the revised curriculum, which now also has a greater focus on Sámi culture, the time is ripe to reflect on the concept of indigenous peoples, and think through how the Sámi can find its natural place in the English subject as well (Holander and Høvik, 2023, p. 299).

Teacher 4 is the only one who mentions that he deliberately asks about the purely linguistic differences between mother tongue and target language. We can see from his answer on page

38 that he links his own competence and interest in the pupils' mother tongue to the integration of culture in his classroom. In an educational setting, all knowledge the students have acquired, both theoretical and experience-based, should be understood as a resource. The essential aspect of valuing the student's knowledge and experiences is that the student must build further knowledge on the competence he or she already has (Spernes, 2012, p. 205). For the students to be helped to utilize their resources and their full potential, the teacher must be familiar with the knowledge and experiences each student brings with them 'in their backpack.'

Teachers' efforts in learning about their students' culture, language and background can contribute to a positive learning environment and a good teacher-student relation. An inclusive learning environment often starts with this bonding. A key part of this study was to investigate to what extent English teachers in Finnmark consider the bilingual background of their pupils when teaching English. It is well supported in previous literature that students' native language skills can be a valuable resource in language learning (see Cummins, 2000, Jessner 2008). Research shows that multilingual students benefit from being able to connect new information to their existing linguistic knowledge. This is why I chose to include questions concerning the purely linguistic side of the Sámi language, as part of the investigations into whether teachers take their students' multilingual backgrounds into account in their teaching – and the student's mother tongue being a large part of these considerations.

The teacher's knowledge of the target group's mother tongue, linguistic structures, and the differences between the mother tongue and the target language would fall under the second aspect of metalinguistic awareness, described by Haukås (2014) as analytical knowledge of language. This aspect involves an understanding and ability to analyze linguistic structures and use this analysis to explain linguistic phenomena. By adopting an analytical approach to language, the teacher can identify and convey similarities and differences in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other linguistic aspects between students' mother tongues and the target language.

During the interviews, I get the impression that several of the teachers see Sámi as a difficult and complicated language, while the English language seems more straight forward and easy to learn. Several of the informants also mention that Sámi is a typical 'verb language'. As we see from the informants' responses, this implies that the language has a clear system for how words are inflected, and sentences are formed. This means that Sámi, like many other Finno-

Ugric languages, has a rich inflectional system where changes in the form of words signal grammatical functions such as case, tense, person, and so on.

Another example mentioned by my informants is that Sámi has several case forms for nouns, and each case has specific rules for how words are altered to express different grammatical roles such as subject, object, possession, and so forth. As previously mentioned, the purpose of this thesis was not to investigate the various linguistic phenomena of the Sámi language, but rather to examine whether teachers are aware of the linguistic differences and how they possibly work around this in their teaching.

Jessner (2008) argues that metalinguistic awareness is a crucial part of language learning that gives learners of L3 a unique advantage compared to those learning L2. In Norwegian schools, all students learn English from first grade, but Sámi students, or other students who are already bilingual when they start school, will potentially have an advantage in learning English compared to students who only speak Norwegian, according to Jessner's theory. This is because metalinguistic awareness involves an understanding and reflection on the structures and functions of language, which gives multilingual individuals the ability to navigate more effectively between languages. I believe that this advantage is something that teachers must actively use in their teaching, but it requires that the teachers know how and possess the necessary knowledge to be able to use the students' metalinguistic awareness to their advantage.

With this in mind, I chose to pose the question concerning the differences between learning a second language and a third language. This was to see if teachers are aware of the differences, especially considering that it according to well-known researchers should be viewed as an advantage to learn a third language. Their answers suggest that we can understand that the teachers are generally not aware of these processes and have not had such awareness from formal training, but they understand some of it from experience in the classroom. Teacher 2 admits that she believes there might be advantages to knowing multiple languages, even though she cannot pinpoint what those exact advantages are.

This acknowledgment indicates an openness to the idea that learning multiple languages can enrich a student's cognitive, social, and cultural experiences, even if the teacher is not fully able to articulate the precise advantages. Her response also suggests that there might be a gap in formal training for teachers regarding the benefits of multilingual education. This view

opens up many opportunities for development, both at the individual level and at the system level within education. At the individual level, her open stance gives her an opportunity to expand her professional competence and to actively work with this moving forward.

As seen on page 41, Teacher 3 has a slightly different view of this process and sees it as a bit of a challenge. Compared to Teacher 2, who admits to an intuitive understanding of the benefits of multilingualism but lacks concrete knowledge of the details, Teacher 3 offers a more practical and problem-oriented view of the challenges of learning multiple languages. He points out an important factor in language learning: students often have different skill-levels in their second and third languages, and notes that this requires adjustments during the learning process. He also emphasizes the importance of regular and intensive exposure to the language during the learning phase, which again can be linked to the importance of integrating the language more into daily activities and other subjects at school. Finally, he points out that multilingualism can create confusion, especially in the early phases of learning a new language.

High metalinguistic awareness will not only be an advantage for the multilingual students but also for the teachers instructing in these classrooms. Some of the most significant advantages include that teachers with high metalinguistic awareness are more aware of linguistic nuances and how these can be interpreted differently depending on the student's linguistic background. Teachers with this type of awareness are better equipped to identify and understand the specific challenges that multilingual students may face and will also have greater opportunities to adapt their teaching to the various needs present in their class.

Optimizing a learner's full potential can be understood within the framework of Vygotsky's theory of the 'zone of proximal development'. This involves building a robust learning scaffold around students and providing a supportive structure to create beneficial learning experiences (Bruner, 1985). To construct this learning scaffold, the teacher must possess the necessary knowledge to facilitate the student's learning. Particularly in language learning, the teacher's prior knowledge of the student's cultural and linguistic background can be crucial.

In this section, I have explained how language constitutes a large part of students' cultural backgrounds, and as such, should also play a significant role in regular teaching. The English teacher particularly has a responsibility, where the job involves creating a safe learning environment where different cultures and languages are welcomed and should be a regular

feature. Thus, the job of an English teacher is not just to teach a language, but also to function as a cultural ambassador and mediator. I also discuss how metalinguistic awareness can be an advantage for both the student and the teacher, and my informants' answers indicate that they do in fact reflect on the differences in the structures of the languages in question, but do not use these linguistic features as a starting point for discussion in the classroom.

The teachers' responses reveal a varied degree of awareness about the processes involved in language learning and the cultural significance of language in schools. Overall, the responses may indicate a need for better training and support for teachers in multilingual teaching environments, as well as a deeper understanding of how linguistic diversity can enrich teaching and learning.

5.4 'They feel insecure, not good enough, or simply not motivated enough'

Every teacher's dream is motivated students – which unfortunately can be far from reality sometimes. When I asked the teachers what their biggest challenges in the English subject were, their answers were unanimous: unmotivated students. Teacher 2 described it as follows:

> The biggest challenge is probably recognized in all subjects, and it is definitely unmotivated students. They do not want to do anything 'extra', and do not see the point in learning English - or they are already so familiar with the using English under gaming that their ordinary English lessons is not exciting anymore.

According to Teacher 2, this is a known problem recognized in all subjects. It is interesting that she mentions that students accustomed to using English in gaming environments do not find traditional English lessons exciting. Teacher 4 also emphasizes that students today hear so much English on a regular basis due to social media and gaming that they are steady language users. The students in these scenarios might have reached what is referred to as a 'learning plateau' (Mirzaei, Zoghi, & Davatgari Asl, 2017, p. 196) where measures must be made for the student to move forward in their learning process.

The research by Mirzaei, Zoghi, & Davatgari (2017) indicates that the learning plateau is not permanent and can be overcome with methods that consider both learning and teaching-related variables. This includes adapting teaching methods to the specific needs of students and ensuring that learning activities are both challenging and relevant. They also emphasize

that a learning plateau often occurs when students do not feel they are progressing, which may be related to not being sufficiently challenged during instruction.

In a study conducted by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, it was found that teachers' use of motivational strategies had a positive effect on students' motivation in language learning (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2011). This supports the idea that tailored and engaging teaching methods can overcome motivational challenges, especially when students feel competent due to their prior experiences with English through gaming and social media.

When teachers face the challenge of motivating students who seem uninterested or already feel competent in English due to their prior experiences, it may be useful to consider some approaches that can enhance engagement and learning. As a matter of fact, there are some measures my informants take to motivate the students. They mention varied working methods, the use of topics that interest the students, roleplays and games etc. Teacher 2 also explained that games can be a good gateway to using language in a simple and everyday way, and that she adapts the games to deal with a specific topic to ensure a specialized use of vocabulary. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2011) emphasize the importance of teachers using motivational strategies in the classroom, and that this is a deliberate action taken by teachers on the path towards an inclusive learning environment.

The world we live in today is largely influenced by our easy access to internet and therefore exposure to new impulses, languages and cultures. Teacher 1 also stresses that students use English extensively on social media, but unlike Teacher 2, she finds that this contributes to motivation among students rather than making them feel they have already 'learned it all'. On the contrary, her students want to learn English to more fully participate on these virtual platforms, and they experience that what they learn in class can be used in other parts of their lives as well. In this way, the English lessons lead to sort of an integrative motivation, as accounted for in chapter 2.6.

The use of motivational strategies can also help to build stronger relationships between teacher and student, and among the students, and this leading to an inclusive learning environment. This social aspect of learning is important to facilitate safe learning environments. Another challenge several of the teachers mentioned was that even though the students are active language users on the Internet, it is not always easy to ensure that the

students feel confident speaking English in a classroom context. They also question whether their insecurity may be due to the Sámi language, as Teacher 3 expresses here:

> I often encounter students who refuse to speak - they feel insecure, not good enough, or simply not motivated enough to put in the effort. Most of my students do not feel confident enough to talk freely 'on the spot'.

Teacher 2 is also familiar with this, and she questions whether it could be due to the students' Sámi language background, hinting at the possibility of an underlying language barrier being present. In this case, encouraging collaboration and interaction among students might be useful, because encouraging students to work together in pairs or small groups provides opportunities for students to share their ideas and perspectives with each other. Starting in smaller groups can also make it easier for the student to make the leap into finally speaking in front of the whole class – if that is the goal, of course.

In classrooms like those of Teacher 2 and 3, it will be even more important for the teacher to be aware of, and to facilitate culturally responsive teaching practices where you ensure diverse perspectives, cultures and languages are incorporated into the teaching. Creating an inclusive learning environment involves creating a classroom or educational setting where all students feel valued, respected, and supported. Some points that may be important to consider in relation to an inclusive learning environment is to use culturally responsive teaching practices where you incorporate diverse perspectives and cultures into the teaching. This can be done by using materials and resources that reflect the diversity of students, integrating students' languages and cultures into the classroom, and using teaching methods that engage students with different learning styles and preferences (Krulatz et al., 2018).

In other words - if the goal is to have motivated students, an inclusive learning environment is desirable. The teacher must act as a good role model who shows that it is okay to try without being afraid of being ridiculed. According to Gay's theory regarding culturally responsive teaching, the teacher plays a big role in creating an inclusive learning environment that involves valuing and celebrating diversity, promoting a sense of community and belonging, and providing support and accommodations to all students as needed (Gay, 2018).

6 Summary and conclusion

Norway, like many other countries, is experiencing increasing demographic diversity due to migration and globalization. This diversity is reflected in the school system where there is a growing proportion of students with minority backgrounds. This master's thesis explores the multilingual teaching situation as seen in Norway's northernmost county Finnmark, with a special focus on Sámi-speaking classrooms. The study aimed to investigate how English teachers consider their bilingual Sámi-Norwegian students' backgrounds in their teaching, and what challenges they face. The study is based on qualitative interviews with four English teachers who teaches in Finnmark and have knowledge of the Sámi language and culture.

Methodologically, the study is classified as a qualitative case study where each teacher's experiences and knowledge are examined in depth. To address the research question, I conclude that my informants do consider their Sámi-Norwegian students' backgrounds through several adaptations in their teaching. Among the key findings, the informants emphasize the importance of adapting the education to individual needs and the students' multicultural backgrounds, where they mention incorporating both Sámi culture and language to strengthen students' cultural identity and motivation. To increase student motivation, they mention the use of varied and engaging teaching methods.

The study shows that there are differences in the incorporation of Sámi culture and language among my informants. In the interior parts, where a large portion of the students are of Sámi heritage, the cultural aspects are more integrated into the daily teaching than in the coastal areas. In the coastal areas, the cultural elements incorporated in teaching seem fewer and are described by an informant as 'mechanical'. Here, the importance of putting multicultural and multilingual education on the agenda and making it a bigger part of everyday teaching is emphasized.

Regarding the challenges the teachers face, they report lack of motivation among students, a lack of adapted resources that reflect and support multilingualism, and the complexity of teaching in a multilingual environment, including the necessity of knowing one's student group well in order to practice culturally responsive teaching. Not to mention, my informants emphasize the need for a greater focus multiculturality in teacher education, and competence enhancement among already educated teachers.

The thesis promotes a discussion on how future teachers can facilitate linguistic minorities in the classroom, which can be useful not only for classrooms with Sámi-speaking students but also in similar multicultural and multilingual contexts. This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the informant selection is limited to four teachers from different municipalities in Finnmark. Although this provided deep insight into their individual experiences, it limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, data was collected only through interviews. Broader research with a larger database would be useful for future research, where a wider spectrum of teachers from more geographical areas and with different teaching backgrounds could be included.

7 Sources

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Appendix 1 – Approval of project (Sikt)

Sikt

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	**Vurderingstype**	**Dato**
712346	Standard	03.01.2024

Tittel
Masteroppgave - engelsk som tredjespråk

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
UiT Norges Arktiske Universitet / Fakultet for humaniora, samfunnsvitenskap og lærerutdanning / Institutt for lærerutdanning og pedagogikk

Prosjektansvarlig
Stefan Hans Olof Holander

Student

Prosjektperiode
30.01.2023 - 01.07.2024

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige
Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)
Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 01.07.2024.

Meldeskjema ⬈

Kommentar
Personverntjenester har vurdert endringene registrert i meldeskjemaet. Ny prosjektslutt er 01.07.2024. Merk at ved ytterligere forlengelser kan det være nødvendig å informere forskningsdeltakerne.

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 med vedlegg. Behandlingen kan fortsette.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

Appendix 2 – Form of consent

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*Engelsk som tredjespråk i det flerspråklige klasserom*» og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i *intervju*

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

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 4 – Information letter

HENVENDELSE ANG. DELTAKELSE I FORSKNINGSPROSJEKT   **Dato: xx.xx.xxxx**
_____

Hei!

Jeg heter xxx og er lærer-student ved UiT. Jeg skriver en masteroppgave i Engelsk som avslutning på mitt 5-årige studieforløp.

I mitt masterprosjekt undersøker jeg det flerkulturelle klasserommet i Finnmark, og ønsker å ta utgangspunkt i hvordan samiskspråklige elever lærer engelsk. Nøkkelord i dette prosjektet vil være flerspråklighet og det flerkulturelle klasserommet. Den foreløpige problemstillingen er:
 På hvilken måte kan utfordringer og muligheter i det flerkulturelle klasserommet benyttes for å forstå læring av engelsk i samiskspråklige miljø?

I den forbindelse trenger jeg informanter, og håper på at jeg kan få besøke deg på xxx skole en uke det passer. Akkurat du er spurt om å delta i prosjektet mitt fordi du passer de kriteriene jeg ønsker hos mine informanter; du er lærer med godkjent utdanning, du jobber som engelsklærer for klasse med samiskspråklige elever og har gjerne (men ikke et krav) erfaring/kompetanse innenfor flerspråklighet.

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar i et intervju på ca. 1 time. Intervjuet vil være forhåndsplanlagt i den grad at jeg har bestemt hvilke ulike temaer vi må innom i løpet av intervjuet samt planlagt noen spørsmål på forhånd som du må svare på. Jeg har likevel fokus på den åpne samtalen og ønsker at dette skal være en samtale med mulighet for å komme inn på uplanlagte temaer hvis vi finner det hensiktsmessig.
Jeg tar lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet som vil bli transkribert og anonymisert. Du vil selvfølgelig få tilsendt spørsmålene på forhånd hvis du ønsker å forberede deg.

 Håper på positivt svar og at dere vil være med å bidra til forskning på dette viktige temaet!

Mvh.
xxx