

# Multilingualism in Oslo

## LUCIDE city report



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## 1. Introduction

This report explores the languages present and spoken in the city of Oslo. Part of the LUCIDE project (*Languages in Urban Communities – Integration and Diversity for Europe*<sup>1</sup>), the reports' authors seek to capture some of the good practice and associated challenges related to the increasingly diverse population of the city. Oslo is the capital city of the Kingdom of Norway, with a city population of some 600,000 inhabitants and a greater metropolitan population of approximately 1.5 million within a total national population of 5 million. Norwegian has two official written standard varieties, *Bokmål* (used by most 'Osloites'), and *Nynorsk*. Other autochthonous languages are mostly spoken in the north of Norway, although may be heard in Oslo. These include the *Sámi* languages and *Kven*. Norway's neighbouring languages are also audible in the city, particularly Finnish and Swedish. Inward migration since the mid-1990s has led to increased population diversity, particularly in Oslo and its environs. This has been accompanied by public debate about migration policy, integration strategies and the concomitant increase in membership of anti-immigration groups. The English language is distinctly visible and audible in Oslo, one of our interviewees (Interview 7) describes that she is "bilingual in the way that all Norwegians are bilingual in Norwegian and English, but not more than that". Given Oslo's geographic location, climate and lack of colonial past, it is not a city that has known large-scale migration. Indeed, Norway was, until very recently, a country of net emigration. However, Oslo is now a visibly diverse city, home to large numbers of migrants and is proportionally one of the biggest receivers of asylum seekers in Europe. In Oslo, this diversity is represented by speakers of at least 120 language varieties; almost 15% of Norway's population speak a first language other than Norwegian and national minority languages.

In this report, we share examples of good practice as well as some first-hand accounts from respondents from different spheres of life in the city to help illuminate contemporary multilingualism and plurilingualism in Oslo. As the aims of the LUCIDE network are to depict how communication occurs in multilingual cities and to develop ideas about how to manage such multilingual communities, we are interested in the real-life complexities faced by individuals. We start with some historical background of language diversity in Oslo, before moving to the contemporary situation and a presentation of the aims of the LUCIDE network's fieldwork in Oslo. The remainder of the report presents the five key city spheres delineated by our network of researchers, and explores multilingualism and plurilingualism within Oslo's education system, the economic sector, public sector, the private sphere and within its urban spaces. We do not pretend to have compiled a definitive report on multilingualism and plurilingualism in Oslo, but we do hope that this report will allow its readers to learn about a range of good practice in supporting multilingual language use in the city. As one of our interviewees notes (Interview 12), "It doesn't help to have good intentions if there is no practice".

Before moving on, a brief note on terminology for readers. In this report, we use the term 'multilingualism' to refer to the presence of different languages in Oslo, which is sometimes described in other literature as societal multilingualism or language diversity. Whilst there may be many languages present in given area, it does not necessarily follow that all residents speak those languages. We use the term 'plurilingualism' to refer to an individual's capacity to use more than one language, which is sometimes described elsewhere as 'individual multilingualism'. Where we refer specifically to the use of two languages, we use the term 'bilingualism'; otherwise, plurilingualism refers to the capacity to use two or more languages. Finally, we use the terms 'home language instruction' and 'mother tongue instruction' interchangeably, referring to formal language programmes which are designed to develop proficiency in a speaker's first language (L1 or mother tongue).

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1 [www.urbanlanguages.eu](http://www.urbanlanguages.eu)



Figure 1: Oslo city centre viewed from the Akershus Fortress

## 2. Short history of language diversity in Oslo

The main language spoken in Oslo is Norwegian, a standardised variety that emerged historically from the *Språkstriden* (Norwegian language struggle). This movement stemmed from Norwegian nationalism against centuries of Danish rule. Danish, the language of the rulers, had begun to replace Norwegian in the cities and in political, judicial and religious institutions. Denmark-Norway ended in 1814 (when Norway was ceded to Sweden, a union that lasted until 1905). The adoption of Norwegian orthography for the Dano-Norwegian language (known as *koiné* and mainly spoken by urban elites) gave rise to *Riksmål*, which would subsequently become *Bokmål*. Literally meaning “book language”, *Bokmål* is today the preferred written standard for the majority of Norwegians, including in Oslo. The second written standard, *Nynorsk* (“new Norwegian”), was developed during the nineteenth century. As an alternative to the Danish-influenced language, it was based on the spoken language of rural Norwegians at that time. It continues to be used mainly in western parts of Norway. Following Norwegian independence in the early part of the twentieth century, both standards were developed further. Attempts were made to unify them into a common form known as *Samnorsk*. This policy met with little success and has since been abandoned. Nonetheless, we can say that Norway has a long history of language policy and planning in terms of “parallelingualism” – an accommodation of two standards which takes on extra meanings with the spread of English in more contemporary contexts (Ljosland, 2014; see the section below on multilingualism and plurilingualism in education). The Norwegian Language Council was established in 1974 as the consultative body on language affairs for the Norwegian state. It was replaced in 2005 by the Language Council of Norway (*Språkrådet*) which continues to work on terminology in both Norwegian standards. The Council also acknowledges the spread of English in Norway, particularly in business and in higher education<sup>2</sup>.

During the period of nineteenth-century national romanticism, the “idea” of Norway was based on ethnicity of which language was a central aspect. Attempts were made to “Norwegianize” Norway’s historical minorities (the Sámi and Kven) from the centre of power in Oslo, although these minorities lived far from that centre (Lane, 2011). A ban on the use of Norway’s minority languages in schools was lifted as recently as 1959. With the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the 1990s, Norway now recognises and is obliged to protect and promote the Sámi Languages, Kven, Romani and Romanes. Jewish migrants from eastern Europe arrived in Norway in the early part of the twentieth century. And from mid-century, Norway received refugees from Hungary (1950s), Chile and Vietnam (1970s), the Balkan countries (1990s), and more recently from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. Until the 1960s, Norway was a country of net emigration. In the 1960s and 1970s, Norway received migrant workers from Turkey, Morocco and Pakistan to make up for labour shortages. The immigration of low-skilled workers has been restricted since then. Today, population growth in Oslo is attributed to immigration. Beginning in 1967, Norway experienced a substantial increase in immigration due to the country’s industry and new requirements for labour which attracted many young men to the country. As a result and continuing until 2010, these workers were able to bring their families with them on the basis of family reunion and major immigrant groups represented were from Pakistan, Vietnam, Somalia, Iran and Iraq (Özerk, 2013).

The first Norwegian language classes to address the needs of foreign pupils were organized at local level and supported by government funding (Kerchner & Özerk, 2014). Beginning in the 1970s and continuing through until the 1990s, students from a minority background were also provided with mother tongue lessons at varying capacities. Bilingual education was provided for the largest immigrant language groups present in Norway at the time – Urdu, Turkish, Arabic, Indian, Vietnamese, and Spanish. A new national curriculum was published in 1987 (KUD, Ministry of Church and Education, 1987). It stipulated the importance of ‘functional bilingualism’, an additive approach to learning Norwegian in addition to supporting children’s first languages, rather than a subtractive approach. However, a change in the political climate in the 1990s meant a change in priorities in educational policy, where the teaching of mother tongues in Oslo schools was gradually seen as a hindrance to the acquisition of Norwegian. A policy shift saw minority language support solely in terms of transitioning pupils to the mainstream Norwegian classroom rapidly and without concern for preservation of minority languages. By 1994, mother tongue instruction was virtually non-existent and any bilingual instruction was viewed as transitional in nature, a step towards Norwegian language dominance. In 1999, a new curriculum was announced where mother tongue instruction was stipulated as a right for those who spoke a minority language as their first language. The amount of language support that pupils were entitled to depended on their individual proficiency in Norwegian. Evidence that LM students were performing at levels below those of native Norwegian speakers in many areas prompted a further curricular change in 2006. A subsequent revised policy plan

2 <https://www.sprakradet.no/Toppmeny/Om-oss/>

entitled *Equal Education in Practice!* was published in 2007<sup>3</sup>. This supports mother tongue provision, but again only for students who lack sufficient proficiency in Norwegian to survive in the mainstream classroom – our respondents point out the weaknesses in this system and ambiguities resulting in a lack of implementation. As discussed below, multilingualism in the context of migration and education in Oslo is a topic of regular and heightened public debate (OECD, 2009).

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3 <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/laerestrategie.pdf>



### 3. Contemporary perspectives



Figure 2: Approaching the city of Oslo by ferry

Together with Swedish and Danish, Norwegian is part of a Scandinavian dialect continuum. That is to say, these languages are more or less mutually intelligible to their speakers. In addition to Norwegian, a Germanic language derived from Old Norse, Norway's linguistic minorities include its Sámi-speaking population, the Kven-speaking population, and a small population of Norwegian travellers who speak a variety derived from Norwegian and Romani. Population statistics of 'national minorities' are not registered by ethnicity, which creates difficulties in accurately establishing population size. The Norwegian authorities are currently preparing for Norwegian Sign Language (NSL) to become an official language.

As outlined above, migration from 1995 onwards increased steadily: by 2011, more than 10% of the national population were first-generation migrants. As Norway is part of the Schengen group of countries, although not a member of the European Union, temporary migration is common, and there are sizeable populations of Swedish (at least 34,000) and Polish nationals (at least 60,000) who regularly live and work in Norway periodically without permanently settling (Statistics Norway, 2014). Table 1 below contains emigration and immigration of foreign citizens from 1961 onwards by decade, along with data from 2013. In 1961, the net migration of foreign citizens was 816. In 2013, this has increased to 40,073.

Year	Immigration, total	Emigration, total	Net migration, total	Foreign citizens, immigration	Foreign citizens, emigration
1961	11426	10610	816	7215	5173
1971	19297	12682	6615	10895	5228
1981	19698	14522	5176	13061	7252
1991	26283	18238	8045	16074	8357
2001	34264	26309	7955	25412	15216
2011	79498	32466	47032	70759	22883
<b>2013</b>	<b>75789</b>	<b>35716</b>	<b>40073</b>	<b>66934</b>	<b>25036</b>

Table 1: Norwegian foreign immigration and emigration (Statistics Norway, 2014)

On 1 January 2014, Norway was home to 633,100 immigrants from 221 different countries, and 126,100 children born to immigrant parents (Statistics Norway, 2014). Polish and Lithuanian nationals are the two groups with the highest net migration to Norway. These two groups contribution to approximately half the net migration of migrants to Norway with European citizenship. In 2012/13, the ten groups with the highest net migration were Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Latvia, Eritrea, Germany, Somalia, Afghanistan, the Philippines and Iceland. For European migrants, employment is the most important reason for immigration. Refugees from Eritrea and Somalia are, respectively, the third and fourth largest groups.

Country of nationality of immigrants	Total as of 1 January 2014
Poland	84004
Sweden	36369
Lithuania	32917
Somalia	26162
Germany	24336
Iraq	21963
Denmark	19220
Pakistan	18832
Philippines	18056
Russia	16412
Iran	16294
Thailand	15887
United Kingdom	13975
Vietnam	13580
Bosnia-Herzegovina	13315
Afghanistan	12880
Eritrea	12366
Turkey	10939
Romania	10116
Kosovo	9914

Table 2: Top twenty nationalities resident in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2014)

Whilst immigrants are resident in all of Norway's municipalities, Oslo has the both largest population of immigrants and individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents (both in relative terms and absolute figures). At the start of 2014, of the city's 634,500 inhabitants, 151,700 were immigrants and 45,900 were born in Norway to immigrant parents. It is striking to note that these groups combined comprise 31 per cent of the Oslo's entire population. The size of the migrant population in all of the suburbs in Oslo is above the national average of 15 per cent as of 1 January 2014. The suburbs with the highest proportions of immigrants and individuals from migrant backgrounds are Stovner, Søndre Nordstrand and Alna, one in two of the inhabitants in each of these suburbs is from a migrant background. The proportions of individuals from a migrant background in the greater Oslo region is also marked, for instance, the city suburb of Drammen (26%) and Lørenskog (24%). The number of internal migrations shows a great mobility in Norway's population, as demonstrated in Table 3 below. Migrations contributed what Statistics Norway describes as "centralisation of settlement", and on 1 January 2014, 68% of the Norwegian population lived in the 150 most central municipalities. Oslo represents an internal migration loss, with 1,333 more outward migrations from the city to other municipalities than inward migration

Table 3: Selected municipalities, inward, outward and net migration (Statistics Norway, 2014)

2013	Inward Migration	Outward migration	Net Migration	2004-2013
				Net Migration
<b>Oslo municipality</b>	<b>28840</b>	<b>30173</b>	<b>-1333</b>	<b>1173</b>
Stavanger	5784	6627	-843	-5772
Bergen	9795	9899	-104	-462
Trondheim	8426	8207	219	4984
Tromsø	2798	2819	-21	-258

Figure 3: Sign advertising Norwegian language classes, Oslo city centre



The volume entitled *The Global Suburban*<sup>4</sup>, edited by Sharam Alghasi, Elisabeth Eide and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, reports on a longitudinal study of the multicultural suburb of Groruddalen in Oslo. The book, written in Norwegian, presents several stories from Alna, one of the neighbourhoods in Groruddalen. The book's authors are researchers from different academic disciplines, including religion, history, social anthropology, media and pedagogy. Their contributions deal with subjects such as multicultural pre-schools in Oslo, friendship, ethnicity in schools, sport and volunteer work, and young migrant adults' visions for the future.

4 See the website for further details <http://www.sv.uio.no/sai/forskning/prosjekter/alna/>

## 4. The LUCIDE network

This section outlines the objectives and research activities of the LUCIDE network. LUCIDE (*Languages in Urban Communities: Integration and Diversity for Europe*) is composed of university and civic partners from thirteen European cities<sup>5</sup>, along with research teams from Ottawa and Melbourne. The aims of our network are to depict how communication occurs in multilingual cities and to develop ideas about how to manage multilingual citizen communities. In LUCIDE's research activities, we are therefore interested in the real-life complexities faced by individuals in various spheres and aspects of city life. The five overarching topics we have set out to explore are:

- 1 *Good practice in the provision of language learning opportunities for immigrants:* How do immigrants learn the language of the host country and how are they helped to maintain their own languages? What happens in schools and also in adult education?
- 2 *Social inclusion:* How do cities support social inclusion through linguistic support in social services, health etc. and what kind of training is desirable in these areas? What happens about translation and interpreting?
- 3 *Neighbouring languages:* How do cities provide for communication and cultural exchange with “neighbouring languages”? What do we mean by neighbouring languages in a city context?
- 4 *Intercultural dialogue:* How do cities promote intercultural dialogue and understanding by celebrating community cultures in common spaces? What is the culture of a multilingual city?
- 5 *New patterns of migration:* Do particular challenges confront cities in countries that have traditionally been countries of emigration but are now receiving many immigrants? How do they respond to this changed perspective and what is the impact on civil society?

Our approach to researching multilingualism and plurilingualism in our cities considers language in its communicative processes and practice rather than from a more static perspective (e.g. counting people/languages). These communicative processes and practices may be understood within a typology of language use:

- Symbolic/representational use of language (bottom-up, realities of everyday life – how we use language to send messages)
- Transactional/communicative (e.g. pragmatic use/unofficial acceptance of ML/PL by authorities on the ground, for communicative efficiency)
- Authoritative/directive (official, uni-directional, tends towards monolingualism)

Our network is involved in secondary data collection and primary data collection. These two phases of data collection were designed to feed into the content development of our network: *inter alia*, its seminars, workshops and city reports. We present these two phases of our research activities below.

### Secondary data collection

LUCIDE partners conducted meta-surveys of recent secondary data on multilingualism/plurilingualism in the network's cities. The aim of this phase of our research was to help create a multiplicity of up-to-date narratives on the multi/plurilingual realities of the cities in our network, referring to data related to multilingual practices, processes and products in local contexts, and to develop original research questions for the next phase of primary research. As well as the more traditional academic or policy documents on multilingualism, we were also interested in examples of multilingualism. These varied in each sphere, but included artefacts (printed/visual/digital) which illustrated the multilingual reality of the city, like websites, advertising campaigns, public or private documents (biographies, diaries, official correspondence). When surveying pre-existing data, we took a broad rather than a narrow approach when deciding what could be included in the first phase of our research. In this phase of our research activities, we focused on recent data, published

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5 London, Osijek, Athens, Sofia, Dublin, Madrid, Hamburg, Utrecht, Rome, Limassol, Strasbourg, Oslo, Varna.

in 2010 and onwards, or the most recent possible, in order to ensure that we created up-to-date and fresh narratives of languages in each city, and to help formulate valid research questions for the primary data collection phase. In collecting secondary data, we distinguished between:

(a) data *on/about* multilingualism/plurilingualism (censuses, academic reports, civic studies, etc., employing a wide variety of methodologies). These tended to be narrative documents, although are not necessarily official or academic.

(b) manifestations/examples *of* multilingualism/plurilingualism present in (or available from) each city. These visual examples were found in printed images and graphic design, TV/film, computer/software design, Internet, digital multimedia, advertising in all media, fine art and photography, fashion, architecture, design, and urban design.

Five key spheres were delineated in order to provide for comprehensive and systematic exploration of how languages are encountered, used and learned in city life. These spheres included the public sphere, economic life, the private lives of citizens, and urban spaces or the 'cityscape'. It was decided to examine education as an individual sphere, given the focus of our network on language learning, although often it falls within the public remit.

Reporting templates were deployed in order to simplify data recording and sharing in each of the spheres. These templates captured concise information from data *on/about* multilingualism and plurilingualism (narrative studies/reports etc.), and examples of multilingualism and plurilingualism. Templates collected information on (a) bibliographic information, content overview, methodology and key outcomes of empirical studies and research reports, and (b) on the authors/creators of examples and artefacts, a description of the example and its place of creation/observation. Secondary data was collected and shared via an online city survey. The data generated from this phase of the network's research activities was employed to generate overarching research questions for the primary data collection phase (semi-structured interviews), and to feed into the content development of LUCIDE's reports, seminars, workshops and city reports. This phase of secondary research yielded a considerable quantity of data which allowed us to generate a relevant set of research questions arising from the key areas identified in a content analysis of the recent studies and examples provided by city partners. We articulated the following research hypotheses, on language visibility (audibility), affordances and challenges:

## **1. Visibility**

- We hypothesize that some languages are more visible than others in city life, and that this visibility/invisibility is meaningful (Which languages are most/least visible/invisible? Why? How do we figure out which languages are invisible?)
- We hypothesize that sometimes, when languages are visible, the visibility operates at a symbolic level. This symbolism is seen and understood by some, and largely ignored by others. Languages which are highly visible may not be the languages in which the various transactions and policies of city life are enacted.

## **2. Affordances at the level of governance/policy**

- We hypothesize that when cities want to encourage multilingualism/plurilingualism, meaningful linguistic diversity (projects, examples of languages in use) will emerge (e.g. diversity of public library projects)

## **3. Challenges/obstacles**

- We hypothesize that costs/inconvenience/lack of political will/prejudices can inhibit good communication between people in multilingual cities.
- We hypothesize that there is sometimes a mismatch between policy (as it is 'promised') and practice or daily reality, e.g. in health service interpretation provision

We hypothesize that language is sometimes understood to represent cultural/economic capital; we also hypothesize that there may be contradictions in some cases (e.g. an indigenous language which is important culturally but may not seem to be important economically, or vice versa).

## **Primary data collection**

In the second phase of our research, we sought to question city respondents about the reality of multi/plurilingualism in their city, about language policy/practice, visibility, affordances and challenges. A qualitative research design was deemed the most appropriate model, given the diversity of research sites, and the importance of gathering input from key stakeholders. A semi-standardised research design based on stakeholder interviewers was created to support primary data collection in each partner city. This phase involved the targeted questioning of selected individuals in the different spheres. Five interviews were administered via email, with one participant from the public sphere, three participants from the educational sphere, and one participant from the private sphere. We were unable to schedule a meeting with a participant from the urban spaces sphere. Seven interviews were conducted in person, all within the educational sphere and focussing on home language instruction (described as mother tongue education). All data were collected during the period January-June 2014. Context and background questions were included and adapted as necessary. Semi-structured interviews generally involve a set of questions that the researcher plans to ask, but they also allow for flexibility if new topics come up during conversation. The nature of semi-structured interviews (rather than fully structured interviews) is that researchers tend not to approach the interviewee with prepared, detailed questions in a strict order. Whilst a semi-standardised list of questions was provided for research teams, researchers could select to omit questions, adapt questions, change the order of questions, and talk about new issues during the interview. Email interviews were conducted where it was impossible to schedule a meeting with participants who had expressed interest in the project. A training pack on conducting semi-structured interviews was provided for all interviewers in the network, including useful strategies for successful interviewing and guidelines on ethical research.

Informed consent was gained from all interviewees, given in the knowledge of the possible consequences of participating in the research. Participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time, and did not need to give a reason, without any negative consequences for them. A short information leaflet and a letter of invitation for potential respondents were provided for participants, in order to give them time to think over whether they would like to participate or not. Empirical research that involves human subjects is subject to ethical scrutiny. LUCIDE partners committed to ensuring that their city project meets the standards for ethical research as set out by their own university/national bodies. Whilst the type of research involved in our project does not carry a high level of risk for participants, it was nevertheless important to ensure that the tenets of ethical research were fully adhered to: that a researcher should respect the people who provide the data (for example, their right to privacy), and avoid doing them any harm in the process of collecting, analysing and publishing data (for example, causing any disruptions or stress). As the Norwegian research institute within the LUCIDE network was unable to complete the planned data collection, this reported was completed by the Dublin LUCIDE research team with input from Norwegian colleagues. The project was granted ethical approval by the academic institution of the principal investigator (Research Ethics Committee of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin).

## 4.1 Multilingualism and plurilingualism in education

The educational sphere represents a range of different languages in Norway, with different statuses in legislation and in educational curricula. This section examines foreign language learning, the language needs of migrant children and the provision of Norwegian for adult migrants. It also looks at the higher education. Education in Norway is mandatory with children aged 6-13 attending primary school and those aged 13-14 lower secondary school. Upper secondary education is optional for 16-19 year olds. Norwegian *Bokmål* is the main language of instruction in schools in Oslo, and students are also obliged to learn Norwegian *Nynorsk*. One of our interviewees noted that this can cause resentment among some young people as they argue “that there is little value in learning a language they don’t use” (Interview 1). English is compulsory from the 1st grade and other modern foreign languages (German, French, Spanish, Russian) are offered in secondary education. Students can choose between a modern foreign language or in-depth study of English or Norwegian.

Many large cities in Norway have linguistically diverse school districts. In Oslo, 29% of the total school population speak a first language other than Norwegian and national minority languages (Sámi, Kven/Finnish, Roma) (~170,206) (Ózark, 2013). About 33.5% of children in Oslo schools have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sámi. However, because this population is not represented by a dominant minority language, but instead represents some 120 to 150 language varieties, it poses a major challenge in terms of equal education for all regardless of cultural or linguistic background. The question of suitable education for this new population of language minority children in schools has been addressed by educational policy. The topic of how best to serve linguistic minority students in schools has seen the spectrum swing widely in terms of adequate support, both extremes of which have proven to be dependent upon political change, societal views and adherence to or ignorance of relevant educational research in this domain.

The *Languages Open Doors* strategy (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2007) sought improved skills in more foreign languages throughout education. Indeed, one of our interviewees agrees that a greater diversity of languages should be on offer in Oslo’s schools: “I think it would be a benefit if children could choose between more languages to learn in school, including Urdu, Arabic and Polish” (Interview 4). The aforementioned Strategy recognises that “plurilingualism is an asset in a globalised world” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007, p. 5) and calls for *inter alia* improved quality in foreign language teaching, increased recruitment for teachers and knowledge about the demand for foreign language competence. The following are named as the main partners in these endeavours: The Norwegian Centre for Foreign Languages in Education, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, the National Institute for Adult Learning, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and the Network for Competence Development.

Sámi, Kven, Romani and Romanes peoples have an established right to education in their respective languages. Traditionally, the autochthonous languages have not been spoken to a great extent in Oslo, but the city now has a sizable Sámi population, for instance. The Norwegian government reports that some primary and secondary school pupils in Oslo receive tuition in North Sámi, organised by Kampen school (Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs, 2011, p. 48). In its monitoring, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has nonetheless asked for the situation of Sámi education in Oslo to be clarified (Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe, 2012, p. 29). The experts also note that 28 children attend a Sámi kindergarten in Oslo (*ibid.*). For deaf pupils whose first language is Norwegian Sign Language (NSL), there is a NSL syllabus.

An external report on migrant education in Norway 2009 claims that more than 120 languages are spoken in Oslo schools (OECD, 2009). In any case, we know that Oslo’s school population is multilingual, largely on account of immigration. The OECD notes that educational outcomes for immigrant children are weaker than those of their native peers. Although Norway has undertaken a number of measures to improve migrant education, the OECD suggests priority should be given to improving the capacity of the education system to be more responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity. All teachers – not just language teachers – should be facilitated to carry out language assessments in order to adapt their teaching to the specific (linguistic) needs of all children (*ibid.*, p. 7). Mother tongue validation is also raised as point of priority for pupils who arrive at a later stage of their schooling (*ibid.*, p. 8).

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is concerned with internationalisation in higher education. It acknowledges that higher and further education in Norway has become increasingly international: from 2004 to 2011

the international student population increased by 67%<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, there is an even larger number of Norwegian students who go to study abroad; mostly to Denmark, Poland, the UK, the USA and Australia. In 2012 the University of Oslo identified 'internationalisation' as a key focus, part of which included the creation of a language centre. The University of Oslo's *Strategy 2020*<sup>7</sup> also refers to investment in language skills in research, instruction and administration. A consequence of the internationalisation of higher education is the increased use of English in various programmes to attract international students. This has led to concerns in Norway about "domain loss" where Norwegian is perceived to be losing out to English (Ljosland 2014). This represents another aspect of "parallelingualism" in Norway where both Norwegian and English are the languages of higher education (ibid). One of our interviewees from the University of Oslo reported: "In my experience, all open seminars and lectures start with the question: 'Does everybody here understand Norwegian?'" and if not, the proceedings continue in English" (Interview 1). She also notes that English is increasingly the language of academic conferences (rather than Scandinavian languages) and research dissemination.

The Scandinavian language/dialect continuum means that students at the University of Oslo may sit exams in Norwegian, Swedish or Danish. During the course of our interviews it came to our attention that it is not possible to study Sámi or Kven at the University of Oslo. One of our respondents finds this "strange" when we consider that, say, Celtic languages are taught there – "Although it is possible to study these languages at other universities in Norway, it is interesting that the largest university, in an area where it is considered that the most amount of Sámi people live, does not offer education in this language" (Interview 1). MultiLing – the Centre for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan<sup>8</sup> – is a Norwegian Centre of Excellence at the University of Oslo. Hosted by the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, it addresses challenges and potentials in multilingualism for the individual, the family and society. Its central research themes are language competence, practices and management across the lifespan.

Since 2005, Norway has provided an 'introductory programme' for new migrants. It is mandatory for new immigrants aged 18 to 55. The Introduction Act of 2005 created statutory entitlement to and obligation for migrants to learn Norwegian, dependent on the legal conditions of residence for the individual migrant. Most participants are between 26 and 35 years old. Each learner receives a 'salary' during the time they spend participating in the introduction programme, designed as an alternative to social assistance. The programme combines Norwegian language classes with social studies, and is aimed at improving migrants' chances of participating actively in employment and society at large. An innovative aspect of this programme is that the component described as its language training, where learners spend part of the week in the workplace in order to obtain 'hands-on' language practice. According to Statistics Norway (2014), for the latest year of available statistics on the programme's completion (2011), the highest number of participants in the programme came from Eritrea, followed by Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Ethiopia. The centre located in Oslo has the largest number of participants. The *Municipality of Oslo Education Authority* is the official provider of adult education in the city, including the introductory programme, through the five regional centres of Oslo Adult Education. It is Norway's largest provider of Norwegian courses for migrants.

It appears that there is some tension between national and city governance in the area of migrant education. The City of Oslo works within a framework of government policy, including a Discrimination Act which requires all of Norway's municipalities to make "active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination based on ethnicity" (City of Oslo, 2012). However, the authors of the report on the city's strategy in this area refer to how the Norwegian government's goal of controlled immigration, and the elimination of the right to free tuition for migrant workers as laid out in the Introduction Act of 2005, renders the integration process "a municipal task". The report stresses that payment system for tuition for some migrant groups has a strong impact on migrant workers in particular. In a delicately worded opinion, the report states that, "The City of Oslo finds that the government in this area have reduced their efforts", resulting in the fact that the city is "in turn dependent upon the efforts made by businesses, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations assisting immigrants who have come to Oslo to work or study" (ibid.).

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6 <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/documents/bills-and-white-papers/reports-to-the-storting/2012-2013/meld-st-18-20122013-2/4.html?id=723553>

7 <http://www.uio.no/english/about/strategy/Strategy2020-English.pdf>

8 <http://www.hf.uio.no/multiling/english/>



The National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO, *Nasjonalt senter for flerkulturell oppl ring*) provides training for teachers working with minority children, advice and counselling for school staff and leadership, and competence-building programmes for day-care centre owners, school owners, school administrators and teachers, university colleges and universities. It hosts the *Tema Morsm l* website, an example of good practice referred to by six of our twelve interviewees. The website provides resources for plurilingual language learning in eight languages.



Figure 4: Resource website for plurilingual learners

## 4.2 Multilingualism and plurilingualism in the public sphere

This section considers examples and challenges of multilingualism within Oslo's city authorities, including public transport, broadcasting and healthcare. Many of the resources in such areas are available either in Norwegian or in Norwegian and English. Some printed information is available in the city's other languages.

The website of the city of Oslo is predominantly Norwegian, although some information is provided in English. Clicking the icon for English language takes readers back to a welcome screen where they can proceed to browse basic information on politics, environment, traffic and parking, immigrants, health, kindergartens, international cooperation and traders' licences. Apart from English, no other languages are provided for readers.

OSLO.KOMMUNE.NO | TJENESTER | SKJEMAER | BYDELER | ETATER OG FORETAK | POLITIKK | LEDIGE STILLINGER

OSLO KOMMUNE

**Barn og unge**  
Barnehager i Oslo | Barnevern | Helsestasjoner | Søke barnehageplass | Skolehelsetjeneste | Vis flere...

**Bygg og eiendom**  
Bestille kart | Byggesak | Byggesak over disk | Gårds- og bruksnummer | Søknadsskjema | Reguleringskart | Vis flere...

**Helse og velferd**  
Eldre/pensjonist | Legevakten | Psykisk helse | Oslohelse | Vis flere...

**Kultur, fritid og idrett**  
Bibliotek | Kulturtilskudd | Turkart | Svømmehaller | Vis flere...

**Miljø, renovasjon og avfall**  
Enøkttilskudd | Gjenbruksstasjoner | Kildesortering | Miljøportalen | Rusken | Støy | Vis flere...

**Samferdsel og parkering**  
Brøyting og strøing | Klage på P-gebyr | Melde inn feil og mangler | Piggdekkgebyr | Betaling for parkering | Vis flere...

**Skole og utdanning**  
Aktivitetskolen (SFO) | Ferie og fridager | Skoler i Oslo | Vis flere...

► **Alle tjenester** | ► **Oslo kommune fra A-Å**

► **Bystyret**  
► Ordføreren

► **Byrådet**  
► Byrådslederen

► Søk i politiske saker

**Politisk kalender**  
18. august  
Kl. 14:00  
Møte i forretningsutvalget  
Sted: Rådhuset  
Vis alle møter ►

► **Om Oslo kommune**  
► Anskaffelser  
► Budsjett  
► Bydelsoversikt  
► Oslostatistikken  
► Plankunngjøring  
► Postjournal  
► Varsling

**Gratis konsert på St. Hanshaugen**  
Torsdag 21. august spiller blant andre Cecilie Skaslien og Prøysencabaret Lars Klevstrand på St. Hanshaugen. Arrangementet er gratis, og starter 18.30. (18.08.14)  
Programmet for konserten ►

**Foreslå kandidater til tre seniorpriser!**  
Oslo kommune inviterer alle til å foreslå kandidater til tre nye seniorpriser. Prisene skal stimulere til nytenkning og løfte frem gode tiltak for å vise frem det beste fra eldreomsorgen. (13.08.14)  
Mer om prisene ►

Abonner på nyheter fra denne siden ► | Flere nyheter ►

**Badeplasser i Oslo**  
Temperatur | Vannkvalitet

**Svømmehaller og bad**

**VisitOSLO.com**  
Tourist in Oslo | Turist i Oslo

**Ledige stillinger**

**Turtips for Oslo**

**Oslo kommune**  
Rådhuset  
0037 Oslo  
Kontaktinformasjon Oslo kommune  
Personvernerklæring

**Nettstedskart**  
Kommunens nettsted

Ansvarlig redaktør: Kommunikasjonssjef Else Merete Guntveit  
Redaktør: Fagsjef Bente M. D. Bastiansen

**Én kommune - ett telefonnummer**  
02 180  
Eller søk etter ansattes direkttelefonnummer

Figure 5: City of Oslo website, Norwegian language version

The Unit for Diversity and integration (EMI) within the Department of Education and Culture is responsible for issues related to diversity and integration city-wide. Top-level information is available in English on the unit's website<sup>9</sup>, but it is difficult to access more detailed information (such as the unit's activities) without reading competence in Norwegian.

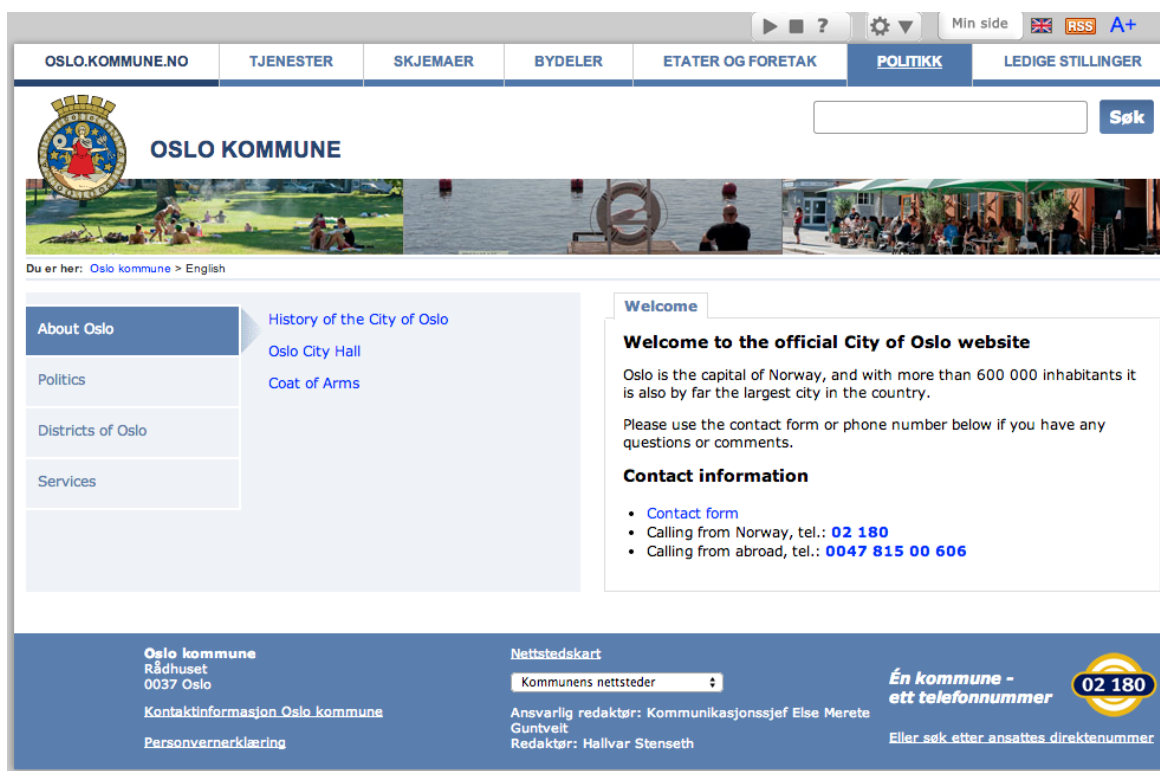


Figure 6: City of Oslo website, English language version

The Oslo Extra Large publicity campaign (OXLO) (City of Oslo, 2012) has its roots in a racially motivated murder committed in 2001. The city began a high-level campaign to cultivate and promote cultural diversity, recognizing the equality of all citizens and promoting commitment to tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. The OXLO campaign became part of the city's planning strategy (Oslo Towards 2025), and is now a long-term awareness-raising campaign designed to foster tolerance in Oslo through working closely with citizens and by municipal activities. In 2005, Oslo introduced some city-wide measures to address city government hiring criteria, to improve political participation and to support cooperation among agencies, local government and other service providers in dealing with matters related to migration. The campaign an e-zine (the OXLO Bulletin) and a city website concerts, exhibitions and festivals featuring artists from minority backgrounds. There is an annual OXLO prize to recognize in anti-racism activities.

According to Norway's Fifth State Report to the Council of Europe's Secretariat for the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the National Sámi Competence Centre – mental health care (SANKS) established a regional office in Oslo to provide mental health services for the Sámi population there.

9 <http://www.oslo.mune.no/english/immigrants/>



Figure 7: Bilingual public information sign

Figure 8: Bilingual signage in public transport system

The Norwegian national broadcasting corporation (NRK, *Norsk rikskringkasting*) is committed to strengthening and developing the national languages of Norwegian (Bokmål or Nynorsk) and Sámi, and the government stipulates that 25% of the verbal content of television and radio coverage must be in one of these two language varieties (including local dialects). The prestigious role of English, especially amongst younger Norwegians, means that English appears regularly on television and radio shows. Foreign films and television shows are generally shown in the original version with Norwegian language subtitles, although cartoons and some films for children are dubbed. The radio station *Interfm*<sup>10</sup> broadcasts in Somali, Spanish, Turkish, Albanian, Urdu, Persian Bosnian, English, Filipino, and Azerbaijani.

Oslo's public library service includes a multilingual library service<sup>11</sup>. Described as a 'library for libraries', its books and other media are available in 57 languages. The seven most loaned languages in 2014 were Arabic, Persian, Somali, Spanish, Tigrinya, Chinese, Polish, Russian and Urdu. The Multilingual Library collection includes 50,952 books, 3,548 movies, 2,091 CDs and 137 courses.

10 <http://www.interfm.no/>

11 <http://www.dfb.deichman.no/>

### 4.3 Multilingualism and plurilingualism in economic life

We interpret economic life to include all aspects of working life and income generation, from large multinational companies to small businesses, and from high-skilled professions to manual labour. Signage in this sphere can be large and permanent corporate signs as well as small, temporary and informal signage. Within this sphere, Oslo is visibly multilingual and plurilingual.



Figure 9: Arabic signs in shop window, Tøyengata shops, Grønland

Figure 10: Tamil and English restaurant sign

Oslo provides a range of examples of good practice in this sphere, although lack of proficiency in Norwegian is an obstacle. An article by Fangen and Paasche (2012) refers to inclusion and exclusion in the Norwegian labour market: according to the survey “Young in Oslo”, immigrant youths in Oslo were more than twice as likely to express concern about finding a job than non-immigrant youth. A number of informants referred to language fluency as a penalty factor in the job search, reporting on reactions from (potential) employers such as “you don’t know Norwegian that well” or “can’t you speak Norwegian?” (ibid., p. 618). Just one informant (a Chinese speaker) claimed their language was an asset in Oslo (ibid., p. 614).

The City of Oslo offers some free business start-up courses in several languages for anyone who wants to find out more about starting or growing a business in Norway. According to a report from the City of Oslo (2012), a third of 10,000 new businesses in Oslo in 2010 were started by entrepreneurs with a minority background. The Business Development Division in the Agency for Business Development organizes business start-up courses in Polish, Arabic, Somali, Turkish and English.

The Quo Vadis project is an example of good practice of integrating migrants within in the economic sphere. Quo Vadis is a city-wide initiative for immigrant women and men with limited or no prior education or training. The programme has been in existence since 1991, providing training for women in weaving, sewing, knitting and catering. It has recently expanded into new premises which offers training for male participants in ceramics, woodworking and catering. The products are sold in the Quo Vadis shop on Trondheimsveien.

Figure 11: Quo Vadis website



The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has compiled brochures on upper secondary education and vocational training for minority language applicants and their parents and guardians. These have been written for pupils and their parents or guardians who have recently arrived in Norway, and are distributed by school. The brochures have been published in 18 different languages and are called “What am I going to be?” In addition, the documentation is available in Bokmål, Nynorsk, Sámi and English<sup>12</sup>.

The Alarga Foundation<sup>13</sup> helps companies to attract, retain and develop employees with diverse backgrounds, focusing on the competitive advantages offered by ‘intercultural talent’. They place individuals with large companies such as Telenor, DNB and PwC. Alarga also offers Master’s scholarships for students from minority backgrounds; participants are offered a summer job and a mentor from the partner company.

Oslo’s marketplace shows evidence of the language repertoires of its residents. The photograph below shows a travel agency which advertises currency exchange in Arabic in its external signage in the centre of Oslo.

The next photograph, taken in Grønland, a linguistically rich neighbourhood of Oslo with a high percentage of residents from a migrant background, demonstrates the role of English as a lingua franca in migration settings. This photograph advertises, through the medium of English, an international television service with Pakistani, Indian, Bangla, Afghani, Persian and Punjabi channels.

Figure 12: Alarga Foundation

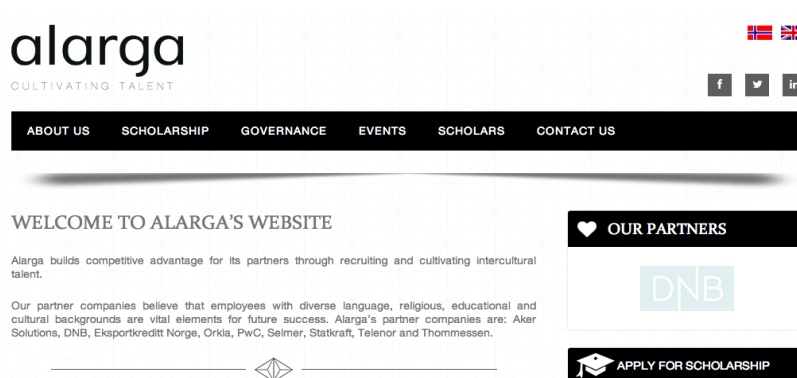


Figure 13: Travel agency in Oslo city centre, currency exchange advertised in Arabic



12 [www.vilbli.no](http://www.vilbli.no)

13 <http://alarga.org/>

Figure 14: English language sign advertising South Asian television



#### 4.4 Multilingualism and plurilingualism in the private sphere

This sphere refers to the language use of individuals in their everyday life, for instance, for social communication, within families and during leisure time. The website [meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) details opportunities for speakers and learners of other languages to get together in Oslo. For instance, the “Spanish Language Practice in Oslo” group organises meet-ups through the site. And the “Expat Café at Henriken” organises tables for speakers of English, Norwegian, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, German and other languages.<sup>14</sup> A number of private language courses are also available in Oslo, including classes in French and German, as well as Norwegian for foreigners. Although the Sámi language lacks visibility in Oslo (see interview 1 below), there is a Sámi theatre in the city. The Nordic Black Theatre is a self-run theatre foundation established in 1992. Its core activity is theatre production but they work with a wide spectrum of partners in a variety of creative arts, including developing young transcultural actors via its theatre school Nordic Black Xpress (NBX).

Although English is a matter of course in many places of work in Oslo, one interviewee notes the social consequences of not speaking Norwegian: “Those that cannot speak Norwegian tend to be socially excluded by their Norwegian colleagues. This is not purposefully done, but socially, Norwegians prefer to speak Norwegian (or Swedish or Danish) amongst each other. They don’t tend to consciously make an effort to accommodate speakers of other languages at this level. Professionally, however, English is used as the preferred language” (Interview 1). Oslo is home to the Nobel Peace Centre which holds a number of temporary and permanent exhibitions on themes of war, peace and conflict resolution from all over the world. Information is provided in Norwegian and English.

Figure 15: Noticeboard in public library

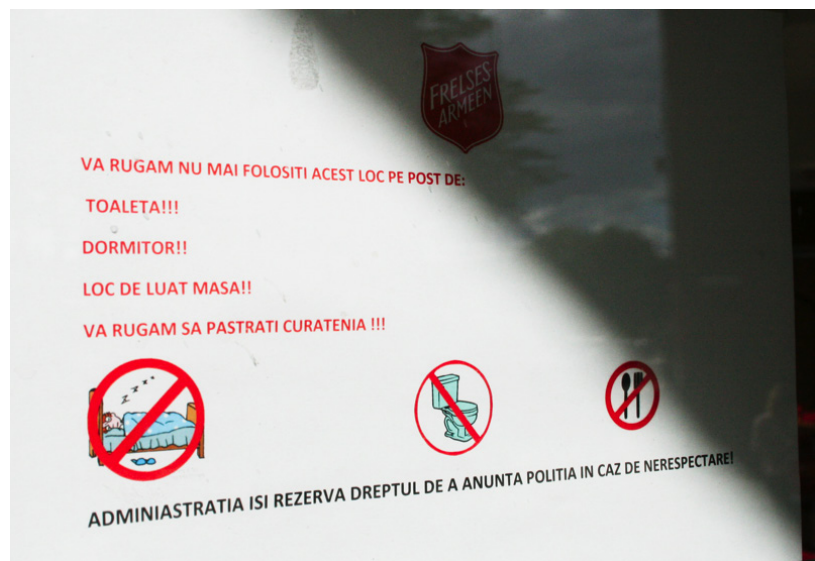


14 See <http://www.meetup.com/cities/no/oslo/language/>



Figure 16: Romanian-language sign outside Salvation Army hostel

A number of Churches offer services in English, such as the American Lutheran Congregation and the Oslo International Church. St. Hallvard and St. Johannes churches conduct masses in Polish, English and Tamil. The photograph below shows a temporary sign outside a Salvation Army homeless hostel in the city which is uniquely in Romanian.



## 4.5 Multilingualism and plurilingualism in urban spaces

Our theme of 'urban spaces' encompasses all publically visible and audible aspects of a city, or what Scollon and Scollon (Scollon & Wong Schollon, 2003) call "discourses in place". This includes the analysis of language in public signage, advertising, official and unofficial street art, instructions and announcements. These visual and audible aspects of multilingualism are the external markers of a city's many languages. Relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to Oslo's changing linguistic landscape, particularly the interface between national language policy and migrant languages. For tourists, Oslo provides signage in a range of major languages (English, neighbouring languages, European languages).



Figure 17: Menu in Norwegian, Spanish and English

Liminal spaces are often sites of particular interest in the study of a linguistic landscape, and in Oslo, texts visible in these sites (in the subway system, on hoardings around building sites and on walls beside train lines and main arteries) confirm the prestige afforded to the English language. Much of the graffiti in Oslo demonstrates influences from the USA and the UK, including music (heavy metal groups, hip hop) and political statements.

Figure 18: Graffiti, east Oslo

The language varieties of first- and second-generation migrants are also visible in Oslo's urban spaces. The noticeboard below is particularly interesting, with three adjacent yet distinct signs. From the left side, the first side is bilingual, in Norwegian and in Arabic. Posted during Ramadan, it explains opportunities to donate according to the practices of *fidya* and *kaffara*. At the bottom of the sign, a slogan in English identifies the "Helping the Needy" charity. The next sign is notice of a forthcoming protest at the Pakistani Embassy in Oslo, following the violence of the 'Model



Town massacre' in the Punjab. The sign is predominantly monolingual, although the slogan 'state terrorism' appears in English. The third sign, a notice from the Ghousia Muslim Society, is almost exclusively in Arabic. At the bottom of the noticeboard, a poster for the Oslo Extra Large publicity campaign (OXLO) is apparent.

Figure 19: Noticeboard with Arabic and Norwegian signs



## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This report has explored contemporary multilingualism and plurilingualism within five spheres of city life. As relatively compact capital of a small European country, Oslo has experienced astonishing demolinguiistic changes in the past decade. These changes have been accompanied by, sometimes radical, shifts in policy (for instance, the *volte-face* on mother tongue instruction) as well as by a host of examples of good practice in managing a diverse citizen group. This final section will return to our network's overarching questions, and consider how Oslo responds to its status as a multilingual city.

We turn firstly to the question of identifying good practice in the provision of language learning opportunities for immigrants. How do immigrants learn the language of the host country and how are they helped to maintain their own languages? What happens in schools and also in adult education? Despite a challenging policy context and reversal of support for mother tongue/bilingual education, Oslo demonstrates some examples of good practice in encouraging pupils' plurilingual repertoires, particularly through the *Tema Morsmål* website and through opportunities for training. However, many of the examples are a result of community initiatives, often in the private and economic spheres. The lack of provision of mother tongue instruction and adequate teacher training were strongly criticized by our respondents. Indeed Interviewee 12 noted, "I am a bit surprised that you want to interview teachers in Oslo. Oslo is the city/county in Norway that gives the least support to mother's tongue education and bilingual education".

Oslo clearly faces challenges in terms of social inclusion. The City of Oslo has responded to the increasing diversity of its residents with 'OXLO – Oslo Extra Large', now a long-term awareness-raising campaign designed to foster tolerance and to combat racism and exclusion in the city through working closely with residents and through municipal activities. Interviewee 9, when asked about pertinent issues among minority-language speaking communities, shared the following comment:

I think they're very concerned about their youth. I think they are very concerned about being allowed into society. It's a big scare what happens to especially young men, black male, young black male. I think they're terrified, some of the parents around here because the level of unemployment is so high and young people with Muslim names particularly, and Somalis are targeted very particular and in a bad way. I think that's the scariest bit, that they feel so outside the society.

This is a pressing challenge for all of Oslo's residents. We return below to this point in relation to language use, and how migrant pupils are praised when they are heard speaking Norwegian, but "they very rarely get approval for speaking in Turkish, Somali" (Interviewee 12).

Thirdly, the question of neighbouring languages is relevant in a city like Oslo. Communication in the neighbouring Scandinavian languages of Swedish and Danish is facilitated by their linguistic proximity, and English occupies a particular place in most citizen's repertoires ("where speaking English in addition to Norwegian was described by one of our interviewees (7) as being "bilingual in the way that all Norwegians are bilingual in Norwegian and English, but not more than that"). However, the national minority languages of Sámi and Kven have a lower profile, as many of our interviewees pointed out. One respondent (Interview 1) drew attention to the disparity in policy for Sámi speakers in Oslo:

I know that Oslo is not an area where the Sámi language can be used as an administrative language – as opposed to some other regions in North-Norway – such as Kautokeino and Karasjok. I disagree with this because I think that everyone should have the right to use Sámi (or Kven, Romani or Romanes for that matter) as an administrative language in Norway, no matter where they are living. I also think that children should have a guaranteed right to education in this language, no matter where they live. Otherwise, it would seem to me that most public documentation is available in Norwegian and English. Some websites (for example [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no), governmental departments etc.) are also available in Sámi – but this is a national rather than local matter. The policy is therefore to deal with other linguistic groups by providing them with English-language facilities. This seems appropriate to languages that are not recognized by the European Charter for Regional of Minority Language, but not for those that are.

Finally, new patterns of migration have had an impact on civil society in Oslo. For instance, the issue of ‘gentrification’ is a topic of debate in the city. Interviewee 9, when asked about whether Oslo was embracing its status as a multilingual city, responded:

To some extent yes, but in other respects, no. For example, now we’ve got this general debate of gentrification in city centers, happening all over Europe I suppose and maybe in America as well. People, young white middle class people coming into the old working class areas, which are black communities, white properties, which it is what has happened here. Now they want the council to sell the council houses in the area to be put out on the open market, things like that. I think when it comes to not having a strategy on housing for example, we have a lot of poor people in Oslo and housing isn’t addressed in a sort of anti-racist way. There shouldn’t be so many council houses here, but when they are here, they should be kept up to date and looked after. I think there’s a lot of anti-racist talk, but when it comes to practice, I don’t think it works. But I think there are a lot of really nice neighborhoods around here where they really look after each other and people are very happy. Depends on which level you look at.

A ‘two-tier’ situation in terms of recognition of language competence became apparent through our interviews. One interview (12) described the languages of migrants as a “hidden competence” when asked about whether Oslo’s citizens valued Oslo as a multilingual city:

I think it’s a lack of seeing it as a value. I think it’s politically so much emphasized on the Norwegian, and I agree with what they are saying, that when you immigrate to Norway, you have to learn Norwegian. I’m not saying that is wrong but what I’m saying is wrong is that it’s wrong to think that this emphasizing learning Norwegian should come instead of developing your mother tongue. I’m afraid that in Oslo, a lot of these students in preschool and in the primary school, they are not given praise.

This respondent draws attention to contradictory attitudes towards different types of plurilingualism:

For example, I have grandchildren who are English/Norwegian, bilingual because their father is from Wales, and they are living here, and they are bilingual Norwegian/English. They get a lot of positive feedback and so do their parents, and their grandparents, oh how lucky they are being bilingual so I think neighbors who speak Norwegian and Urdu, how often do they hear oh you are lucky, you are bilingual, you know Urdu and Norwegian, you have a great future. I think it’s very seldom they hear that and it’s a pity. [...] Some people may say now in a speech, like the mayor or somebody, that we are happy about all the languages and if you go out in the street and in the schools and you ask parents and pupils I think they will feel that they get approval when they speak in Norwegian but they very rarely get approval for speaking in Turkish, Somali. It’s kind of a hidden competence.

As we close this report, we hope that you will read on through the Appendix (below) and share the experiences of our interviewees from Oslo and their thoughts on its status as a multilingual city.



Figure 20: Multilingual signage, Pakistani bakery, Grønland

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## Appendices

### Interview 1

#### Educational sphere, responses by email.

Do you think the issue of multilingualism is a sensitive (or delicate) matter in Oslo?

It depends. Most Norwegians, and particularly those living in Oslo, are multilingual. English is spoken and understood here. A lot of English is used in advertising, code-switched with day-to-day spoken Norwegian etc. When looking at multilingualism from this perspective, it is not an issue. However, this may not be recognized as 'multilingualism' by most Norwegians. The term itself is quite loaded, and could be understood to signify 'immigrant languages' in the Norwegian context. In which case, it may be more sensitive or delicate. The Norwegian media constantly publish articles about 'immigrants' and 'immigration'. An example, might include articles highlighting problems with children of 'immigrants' who do not/may not have sufficient Norwegian-language competence when they start school. In this case, multilingualism is linked to 'immigration' and is seen as a problem. I write 'immigration' in inverted commas because my sense is also that 'immigration' is only used to refer to African or Asian immigrants, while European or North-American immigrants are largely not considered or portrayed under this label. Norway also has a number of recognized regional and minority languages, including Sámi, Kven, Romani and Romanes. These languages are generally not mentioned/visible in Oslo. However, multilingualism in the case of these languages would also be a sensitive or delicate matter. My impression is that integration is highly valued in Norwegian society, and therefore belonging to a minority or different group that has values and languages that are different to those of Norwegian society can be problematic, almost to the point of becoming a taboo. Usually, those that speak the languages feel that their language rights are not recognized. The majority of those that don't speak these languages feel ambivalent about this. Others consider it uncomfortable, while still others consider it right. Here multilingualism is again closely linked to multiculturalism, or questions of ethnicity. Oslo is not a big city in terms of area or population and this may account for the fact that, despite its multi-ethnic population, the dominant culture is not inclusive/multicultural.

Nynorsk is also problematic in this context. The teenagers I speak to resent having to learn it in school. Here, ethnicity is not as much of a problem. The point is that the children argue that there is little value in learning a language that they don't use.

We've noticed in our study of different examples of multilingualism that some languages are more visible than others in cities. In your area of work, are there any particularly important or visible languages? Any neglected or less visible ones?

English is particularly important and visible in the university context. In my experience, all open seminars and lectures start with the question: 'Does everybody here understand Norwegian?' and if not, the proceedings continue in English. A number of colleagues have also remarked on the fact that Nordic conferences are conducted more and more often in English rather than in a Scandinavian language. Some comment that this has to do with the greater involvement of people who use Finn-Ugric languages as these are not mutually understandable with Norwegian/Swedish/Danish. English is also valued as a language of international research dissemination. This affects the extent to which my colleagues choose to write in Norwegian when aiming to publish articles about their research. English is often chosen instead of Norwegian, as international publications are worth more in terms of establishing a career, and in terms of disseminating research. Although not directly relevant to my area of work, I find it strange that the University of Oslo offers courses in Celtic languages, while it is not possible to study Sámi or Kven. Although it is possible to study these languages at other universities in Norway, it is interesting that the largest university, in an area where it is considered that the most amount of Sámi people live, does not offer education in this language.

The co-existence of multiple languages in a city brings with it some challenges and choices for the city council and companies, for example in terms of policy decisions. Do you agree with the way that Oslo approaches the issue of multilingualism? Can you give an example of a recent approach that you agree or disagree with?

I'm not aware of Oslo city's specific language policies and how these differentiate from national policies. I know

that Oslo is not an area where the Sámi language can be used as an administrative language – as opposed to some other regions in North-Norway – such as Kautokeino and Karasjok. I disagree with this because I think that everyone should have the right to use Sámi (or Kven, Romani or Romanes for that matter) as an administrative language in Norway, no matter where they are living. I also think that children should have a guaranteed right to education in this language, no matter where they live. Otherwise, it would seem to me that most public documentation is available in Norwegian and English. Some websites (for example [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no), governmental departments etc.) are also available in Sámi – but this is a national rather than local matter. The policy is therefore to deal with other linguistic groups by providing them with English-language facilities. This seems appropriate to languages that are not recognized by the European Charter for Regional of Minority Language, but not for those that are.

In your area of work/expertise, how are translation/interpretation handled? Do you think it is handled well and appropriately?

Translation is a matter of course at the university. In my experience it works well. Most Norwegians speak English and this is the language to which and through which most translation occurs. Translation into other autochthonous minority languages (for example Sámi) is difficult to obtain and can be expensive. I have not worked with interpretation and therefore cannot respond.

Have you recently witnessed difficulties experienced by an individual or group because of a lack of proficiency in Norwegian?

Yes. Some of my colleagues at the university are international students (like myself). Those that cannot speak Norwegian tend to be socially excluded by their Norwegian colleagues. This is not purposefully done, but socially, Norwegians prefer to speak Norwegian (or Swedish or Danish) amongst each other. They don't tend to consciously make an effort to accommodate speakers of other languages at this level. Professionally, however, English is used as the preferred language.

Is there any one language you think deserves a boost in use or in visibility in this city?

Yes. Northern Sámi should definitely be more visible. Kven should also be more visible in public documents and at public events. The same goes for Romani and Romanes (the languages protected under the European Charter). However, in addition, I think that where there are substantial migrant groups in the city, for example those from Pakistan or from Somalia – these languages should also be visible in public offices and documents.

Sometimes, languages are used symbolically, but there isn't really any in-depth provision or the speakers of that language. Have you any experience of this type of symbolic, 'on the surface' language use in your area of work/expertise?

Potentially in the context of Nynorsk, where there is a statutory requirement that 25% of public documents be published in this language. I would not say that minority languages are even used symbolically in Oslo.

If you could change one thing about languages in Oslo, what would it be?

For a start I would like to see greater recognition for the language rights of speakers of minority languages protected by the European Charter in the city, and greater visibility of these languages. I think that it should be possible to use these languages as administrative languages in the city.

What is your role/position, and what type of work do you do?

I am a researcher working at a university in Oslo.

How would you identify your ethnic origin?



I am Irish.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual/bilingual/multilingual?

I am multilingual.

Which languages do you speak or interact with in (a) your personal and (b) work life?

I speak Irish, English, Norwegian, German and French. In my work life I use Norwegian, English and Irish. I also interact with the Northern Sámi language. In my personal life I use all of these languages with the exception of French, and as my husband's family live in Sweden I also interact with that language.

What has been the most significant language learning experience for you?

To date, the most significant experience is that I have started to learn Northern Sámi. It is a Finn-Ugric language and therefore quite different from the other Indo-European languages I have learned. It is quite challenging, in contrast to the other languages I have learned which I have always found easy.

## Interview 2

### Private sphere, responses by email.

Do you think the issue of multilingualism is a sensitive (or delicate) matter in Oslo?

No; I think it is not very much in the discussion. So for many people, maybe there is no sense of a problem there.

We've noticed in our study of different examples of multilingualism that some languages are more visible than others in cities. In your area of work, are there any particularly important or visible languages? Any neglected or less visible ones?

Sure. Mostly the use of language is Norwegian (Bokmål) and English. Nynorsk or minorities language do not play any significant role. Except for in the administration.

Have you recently witnessed difficulties experienced by an individual or group because of a lack of proficiency in Norwegian?

Yes. That happens all the time. You hardly get a job without Norwegian language knowledge. depends on the job, of course. But lots of jobs depends on that.

Is there any one language you think deserves a boost in use or in visibility in this city?

Sure, language of immigrants for instance (in Germany you have many signs – for instance in parks – also in Turkish language) this is not the case, I believe, in Norway.

If you could change one thing about languages in Oslo, what would it be?

It should be more experienced that there are many other languages used as well – now you get the impression that Norwegian dominates the communication.

What is your role/position, and what type of work do you do?

University, Social Science.

How would you identify your ethnic origin?

Norwegian.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual/bilingual/multilingual?

Multilingual.

Which languages do you speak or interact with in (a) your personal and (b) work life?

Norwegian, English, German, Arabic.

Would you say that you are a keen language learner?

Yes.

If you have learned other languages, what has been the most significant language learning experience for you?

Language and emotions are very strongly connected.

### Interview 3

#### Educational sphere, responses by email.

Do you think the issue of multilingualism is a sensitive (or delicate) matter in Oslo?

Yes, I do think it's a sensitive, and often discussed matter in Oslo where around 30% of the population has an immigrant background. For example, it's been a sensitive issue for schools in some of the neighborhoods with the highest percentage of immigrants, where there are each year classes that start without any children that have Norwegian as their (only) native language.

We've noticed in our study of different examples of multilingualism that some languages are more visible than others in cities. In your area of work, are there any particularly important or visible languages? Any neglected or less visible ones?

English is highly visible in the cityscape, especially in the commercial sector. Polish is becoming more and more visible due to an increasing immigration from Poland. In the Service Centre for Foreign Workers all written signage, forms and information brochures are available in Norwegian, English and Polish. Not-Western immigrant languages are less visible, often restricted only to the bottom-up section, such as posters, smaller signs on shop windows and hand-written notes on walls.

The co-existence of multiple languages in a city brings with it some challenges and choices for the city council and companies, for example in terms of policy decisions. Do you agree with the way that Oslo approaches the issue of multilingualism? Can you give an example of a recent approach that you agree or disagree with?

I don't always agree with how official organizations in Oslo approach the issue of multilingualism. The choice of language options on official websites often seems to be random (for example, on one of the websites Polish, Russian and Serbian versions are present but not Lithuanian, while the immigration flows from Lithuania is also significant for the city).

In your area of work/expertise, how are translation/interpretation handled? Do you think it is handled well and appropriately?

Mostly yes, although sometimes only the Norwegian version of an important document or official guidelines is available, without an English translation.

Have you recently witnessed difficulties experienced by an individual or group because of a lack of proficiency in Norwegian?

Yes, some of my international colleagues have experienced difficulties in registering for the tax card, with the bank, with the mobile operator etc.

Is there any one language you think deserves a boost in use or in visibility in this city?

Not really.

Sometimes, languages are used symbolically, but there isn't really any in-depth provision for the speakers of that language. Have you any experience of this type of symbolic, 'on the surface' language use in your area of work/expertise?

Yes, for example with the use of French in company names.

If you could change one thing about languages in Oslo, what would it be?

Perhaps a bigger presence of Sámi.

What is your role/position, and what type of work do you do?

Researcher.

How would you identify your ethnic origin?

Half Estonian, half Russian.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual/bilingual/multilingual?

Bilingual.

Which languages do you speak or interact with in (a) your personal and (b) work life?

Estonian, Russian, English, Norwegian, French, German, Dutch.

Would you say that you are a keen language learner?

Yes.

If you have learned other languages, what has been the most significant language learning experience for you?

Can't really say, learning every language has been exciting.

## **Interview 4**

### **Educational sphere, responses by email.**

Do you think that the issue of multilingualism is a sensitive matter in Oslo?

No, I don't think it's a sensitive issue, but lack of proficiency in Norwegian (for adult immigrants who are outside the work force and especially for children who are born or raised in Norway to immigrant parents) is an issue of great concern for politicians and in the public debate. One of the public debates concerns the pros and cons of

mother tongue education. This winter, one such public debate was sparked by two researchers who claimed that bilingualism is only a benefit to children who are resourceful, not to children who have uneducated/illiterate parents.

As far as I know, children in Oslo start learning English at a younger age than they do in the rest of the country, and there has been talk in the City Council about making a second foreign language (in addition to English) required from the fifth grade on. <http://www.osloby.no/nyheter/Vil-gjore-to-fremmedsprak-obligatorisk-fra-5-klasse--7334315.html> with google translate :)

We've noticed in our study of different examples of multilingualism that some languages are more visible than others in the city. In your area of work, are there any particularly important or visible languages? Any neglected or less visible languages?

In my line of work only Norwegian is used. Norway has two written languages. I'm sure the users and proponents of the "smaller" written language feel their written language is neglected. (And rightly so, the City of Oslo has decided to use only the most wide spread of the two languages.) The City also has information to users of services in other languages, to a certain extent, but this is not within my line of work and I don't know much about it.

The co-existence of multiple languages in a city brings with it some challenges and choices for local government and companies, for example in terms of policy decisions. Do you agree with the way that Oslo approaches the issue of multilingualism? Can you give an example of a recent approach that you agree or disagree with?

I don't know enough about the policy decisions to either agree or disagree with them. I know there are several programmes to identify and help children who don't speak much Norwegian before they start school, and that seems like a smart thing. I have a feeling that there are quite a few bilingual children (youths) who leave high school without satisfactory grades, and that their lack of proficiency in Norwegian is perhaps the most important reason why. But I don't know this for certain.

In your area of expertise, how are translation/interpretation handled? Do you think it is handled well and appropriately?

There is very little translation done at my work. Once in a while we need to communicate in English, which we do reasonably well (my section attended an English course a couple of years ago to become more acquainted with "formal" English). We have also purchased translation of a web page into Polish. (In connection to the whistle blower programme; to facilitate the reporting of tips on social dumping.)

Have you recently witnessed difficulties experienced by an individual or group because of a lack of proficiency in Norwegian?

I know very few people who don't speak Norwegian relatively fluently. Perhaps the only one is an elderly Bosnian lawyer who several years ago had to take on a fairly simple clerical job (I assume both because of a lack of proficiency in Norwegian and lack of knowledge of Norwegian laws) and who have remained in that job ever since.

Is there any one language you think deserves a boost in use or in visibility in Oslo?

There is much poorly written Norwegian in the city, so Norwegian grammar could certainly use a boost. As far as other languages go, I think it would be a benefit if children could choose between more languages to learn in school, including Urdu, Arabic and Polish.

If you could change one thing [about languages] in Oslo ...

I think it is very important that children are fluent in Norwegian – that they not only can communicate in a social setting, but also that they understand abstract concepts and the symbols of the language, so they all have a full potential for learning in school. Then if I could change a second thing, I would make a wide selection of languages available for them to choose from as a second language (after English, and with excellent teachers) for those who have an interest in learning more languages. This would also be a way for some to formalize their proficiency in

their first language, which they may not get much credit for today.

What is your role/position, and what type of work do you do?

I work for the City of Oslo.

How would you identify your ethnic origin?

I am Norwegian.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual/bilingual/multilingual?

I consider myself to be monolingual. But when I was young I had English as my “at home” language for 12 years, and did for a while feel bilingual.

Which languages do you speak or interact with in (a) your personal and (b) work life?

a): To a very large extent Norwegian, but I have family and relatives that I have to communicate with in English when I see them.

b): Almost only Norwegian. Study materials for classes I am taking right now are in English, and perhaps once a year or so I have to speak English at work.

Would you say that you are a keen language learner?

I guess not. I have an active interest in language and I try to communicate in clear, concise and correct language in written reports, but this is all in Norwegian.

If you have learned other languages, what has been the most significant language learning experience for you?

I had German for a couple of years in junior high school, and I know just a little bit of Spanish. I guess the most significant learning experience would be the realization that Western European languages have as much in common as they actually do.

## **Interview 5**

### **Educational sphere, face-to-face interview.**

What is your role in relation to mother tongue programmes or immigrant education?

I've no special role in relation to mother tongue programmes. I'm an assistant professor in Norwegian as a second language and I have been working on questions concerning minority pupils for a long time and I also took part in the research some years ago which ended up in a book, called teaching and learning in a multicultural context. It was published in 2004, and in a short chapter in this book we write about mother tongue education, so that's one thing I can mention. We had research in connection with this book and this little chapter which was part of a bigger research programme but it was an additional programme as well and we had case studies at three different schools. And asked the teachers, school leaders, and children about their mother tongue and mother tongue practices. I attended a conference for the Council of Europe at Strasbourg in 2009 and had a brief presentation on the curriculum of Norwegian as a second language and also mentioned the curriculum for the mother tongue classes. And that conference was about languages of schooling and the right to plurilingual and intercultural education. I have also been working for the national centre for multicultural education, if you haven't gotten in contact with them, I think you should, they have a very good homepage. This centre works in tight connection to the education authority and they also have a special section for mother tongue called Tema Morsmål and it's really

good. Here you can find lots of resources, and I think that you should get into contact with at the centre. With my subject and what I'm working with is not so much to do with mother tongue education, but with Norwegian as a second language.

And you're working with immigrant children or at the university here?

At the university with education, we have courses for students who want to teach minority pupils and also for teachers we have additional courses. And I also give courses for example, urban schools, for districts in Norway, and I have contact with the education agency here in Oslo.

There have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students, as well as family oriented early childhood programmes. Do you think that Norway is responding in an effective way to support these new immigrants in their education and language?

No, I think that there are concerns about if you talk especially about mother tongue education. There is very little mother tongue education in Norwegian schools today. As you know, we have an education act that says that pupils whose mother tongue is other than Norwegian or Sámi are entitled to special training in Norwegian until they are proficient enough in Norwegian to follow the regular school teaching. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue teaching, bilingual technical training, or both. That's the law. And I think that it's a strength that we in fact have a legislation that says something about mother tongue education and specific education for minority children, but there are limitations to mother tongue teaching because the law says, 'if necessary'. And it's up to the schools to decide whether the children or whether the child should get the mother tongue education or not. And the great problem is that there is no right to mother tongue education in its own right low proficiency in Norwegian, as its said, are entitled to special training in Norwegian until they are proficient enough in Norwegian to follow the regular school teaching. That means that pupils who have sufficient proficiency in Norwegian, they are not entitled to any special Norwegian education, except what all pupils are entitled to. And then they are not entitled to mother tongue education, so it's only for pupils with low proficiency in Norwegian, meaning that there is very little mother tongue education, very little mother tongue teaching in Norwegian schools. And very often there is no mother tongue education even for pupils with low proficiency in Norwegian but there are quite often, those pupils get bilingual training, yes quite often. If they have low proficiency in Norwegian, many of those pupils have bilingual teaching. But I said very often maybe that was...[too ambitious?], yes. Many schools try to give bilingual teaching but very often in fact, very often in reality, there are lack of bilingual teachers. And nowadays, there are about 150 different mother tongues in Oslo schools and of course it is impossible to give mother tongue education to all those children, or bilingual training. But for big language groups, it should be possible, but as you can also read about the situation, very often (in the chapter I mentioned), the school might have two mother tongue teachers, two bilingual teachers, and then its only by chance if a pupil is lucky enough to have that language then they might get mother tongue or bilingual teaching. But if not, very often they will not get any mother tongue education.

Even though in the law, it says that they are entitled to it?

It's the resources and also it isn't a strict rule. It says if necessary and also it is a hindrance when there are no teachers available and very often the schools do not put forth enough effort in trying to get bilingual teachers, but of course there are some problems because you need qualified teacher as well, not only people who speak the same language as the child. So I think that there has been done much to give minority pupils better education, better teaching than before. But not when it comes to mother tongue teaching. For example, Oslo has a good bit of contact with most people in the municipality, you have probably seen this, for pupils with, who are entitled to special Norwegian education according to the education act. It's good for that logic, and they really make effort to have better programmes for those students with little knowledge of Norwegian, but not when it comes to mother tongue teaching. On the other hand, I think that its more on the line that the pupil's resources should be taken into consideration, that they should be able to show what they already know, that they should be able to show their competence in other languages than Norwegian and that the schools should try to make visible that they have pupils from different countries with different mother tongues, so in that respect I think it is an improvement, in many schools, not in all schools. But when it comes to special mother tongue education, it has been... and in schools

that have programmes have reduced the programmes now. And also it's a mixed picture because that happens on the one hand and on the other hand, the authorities give resources to for example, those really good internet pages, like Tema Morsmål, the resources are provided by the education authority to promote mother tongue and also to give aids for the teachers to have material they can look into to help their pupils so it's a mixed picture.

So they are being supported in some ways but in some ways the programmes aren't realistic because there aren't many resources?

Yes, yes.

From your own observations, do you think that mother tongue programmes are contributing to immigrant students' academic success in Norwegian schools? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

You can't say that. It is shown in a report, I can try to find the reference for you, that mother tongue education and success for minority children.

The correlation between the two?

Yes. That it seems to be preferable for pupils to have mother tongue education and also special Norske kindergartens. So something like a combination of early Norwegian learning and have some mother tongue education, support the mother tongue seemed to be positive for the pupil's progress.

Was that a study done by an independent researcher?

Yes, Anders Bakken was his name. And he also did international research. There are very few focused on mother tongue education in Norway, Scandinavia.

Do you think the policies that are in place currently are still relevant to Oslo's demographic makeup or that something could be put in its place that better addresses the situation?

The schools have a great deal of freedom. They spent still there are common that there are no mother tongue education. Might be though in the first few years for newcomers. According to the law, it should be possible to have mother tongue education all through school, even through the secondary.

Just as long as they are not proficient in Norwegian?

Yes, yes yes but in practice there are the mother tongue education, I think, from what I know, is for the newcomers, who are quite young.

Do you know of any programmes outside of the school day, for example preschools or extra community classes?

There are extra community classes.

Within the immigrant communities?

Yes.

Do you know anything about the preschool or the early childhood programmes that try to get parents involved as well?

Some kindergartens have bilingual assistants, and NAFO has a special section for kindergartens.

Do you see any pertinent issues among the immigrant communities that are not being addressed in the education policy?

Yeah, but I cant think of anything special just being on the agenda. There is a special board, a parents committee

who have contact with the schools. They select a board and are there. They also have been very occupied with questions concerning mother tongue teaching. The previous leader was a Norwegian who came from India and she was very concerned with mother tongue teaching.

The parents board, is it made up of Norwegian parents or minority parents?

Norwegian parents mostly.

Ok, and they discuss matters of minority kids in Oslo schools still?

Yes. There might be minority parents there, and it's an open election.

In your specific role teaching teachers, do you think that they are being adequately prepared to have minority students in their classrooms? Do you think the teacher education programmes in Oslo are effective?

No. I don't think that they are, that the programme is adequate. I think that they are trying to improve it now, there is a new programme for teacher education, on a national level but as it is today, they have very few of their lessons has something to do with minority children specifically. Very little. Too little.

So potentially some of these teacher candidates could be walking into a school for a new job and have quite a significant number of minority students?

Knowing far too little, yes. Of course, when they have their practice, they will always meet minority students, but I think too many of them, and I've heard it several times, they do not feel prepared enough to meet this multicultural, multilingual situation in schools. On the other hand, there are some courses for teachers trying to give them more competences and I think that they try to include it now in this new programme, but it might be only a few hours which is concerning minority children. The problem is that too many of those employed at teacher colleges do not have these competences themselves, in this area, so that's a great problem.

Because it's a fairly recent area to study?

Yes, but now the director for education tries to improve the teacher qualities and competences and they try to give them responsibility to have contact with the schools and to have programmes and work together in schools to have this multicultural education. There are some efforts, but no specific on mother tongue education.

Do you think mother tongue programmes support a multilingual Oslo?

If they had some mother tongue programmes, they could have done so I think. But it's in fact in reality, there is next to nothing so they can't give any support. But I think while the situation is rather bleak for mother tongue education. As I said before many schools nowadays, many teachers nowadays try to focus on the pupil's background and their resources and that's a benefit for the student to have this attention and the possibility to feel proud of his background, his or her background. And of their mother tongue. If you kind of use it in the education, talking about different languages. That's a resource.

We talked about a few obstacles to mother tongue programmes being successful. Can you think of any other specific obstacles that make it difficult to implement, maybe not throughout Oslo because maybe there's not as much a need over here as there is over there, besides the lack of trained teachers?

I think also a common view and also among too many teachers I think, kind of time on task, meaning that you shouldn't waste your time on the mother tongue, because you need to use all the time on Norwegian. And I mean researchers have said for years, have always said that it's good for the child to use his or her mother tongue, also in school and teaching in the mother tongue. But at the same time, being able to teach Norwegian as well. But politicians don't believe this. So they very often think that you have to use all the time on Norwegian and that has especially been a problem recently in connection to kindergartens, with the small children. There are some



politicians who even say that parents should speak Norwegian to their children all the time. And of course that's a hopeless attitude, as we know. And of course, not all politicians think that but often those kind of opinions, the media kind of loves it. Because it makes the big headlines and I think also that they believe in it because it seems reasonable that you need to use all the time on the language you have to master if you will succeed in a society so they are not evil persons, but they are ignorant.

The fact that Norway has seen it as important to include this in their laws, even if it's not in practice, do you think it shows that Norway does value this language and culture resource that immigrants bring to their country?

Yes, I think they do. I think that the school authorities, they value the multicultural society now it think and try to promote the multicultural society and I think that it is like this even though there is a focus on Norwegian, Norwegian is the key to learning, for life. As it says. So it focuses on Norwegian and very strongly on Norwegian, but they also say that the mother tongue as a resource.

Will these policies disappear if the push for more Norwegian remains?

I think there are no plans now to change the law and as you know, there is a curriculum, both for Norwegian as a second language and for mother tongue, but the curriculum for mother tongue is very little in use I think. It should be interesting now, in 2014, to find out how many schools actually use it to some degree.

And it is up to the school?

It is up to the school board to the school owner, the school owner is the municipality.

So if the principal doesn't want to provide a mother tongue teacher, they don't have to?

No, they don't have to. And Oslo doesn't encourage them to do it either.

Do you think that's a problem?

I think so. You can read the source I told you about. It talks more about the discrepancy between policy and practice and compares with the Sámi. The Sámi people are now entitled to education both in and about their mother tongue. It is possible for Sámi people to have all their education in Sámi now. In some ways, it is easier because it is a small group in a specific area, and there are so many other minority languages now so as I've said before, there can be problems to get enough teachers and have enough class hours to organize it all but it shouldn't be that. It should be more opportunity to use their mother tongue.

In a way, I think that mother tongue is, more or less has become a lost cause. But I think that there should be possible to increase teachers and schools and authorities awareness about mother tongue as a resource for their children and a resource that they should be able to use even if the school are not able or are not willing to support it with specific mother tongue education.

So it should still be available for use in some contexts?

In some contexts, maybe small, so that it is possible for it to be used among the children. That it should be used as a resource for an understanding of languages, differences between languages, talking about languages, and I think that's happening as well. That children's background is more taken into consideration now than it has been.

Are minority languages are now being offered as a foreign language?

Yes, that's important as well because that's also kind of valuing their background. And it's possible to take mother tongue as a foreign language, also when they do not have specific education in the mother tongue in school, they can take it on a private basis and get the mark that way.

Provided by the school?

Provided by the school, they arrange exams in many, many different languages. That's promoting the value of mother tongue. Also some mother tongues are taught as a foreign language instead of the traditional ones which are French, German, and Spanish, so some places you might take another language. So there and as I said, you might take an exam in mother tongue to show that you have proficiency and it counts on the same level as Spanish or French or German.

Is that recent?

No that has been for a long time actually.

Are there any more ways that mother tongues are made visible in schools or is it just teachers' personal beliefs about the importance of inserting it into the curriculum somehow?

There are also competences in the curriculum, the ordinary curriculum saying something about multilingual, multicultural competences, awareness. So there are some combinations about it.

## Interview 6

### Educational sphere, responses by email. Original responses in Norwegian, translated into English.

There have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students, as well as family oriented early childhood programmes (information from the Equal Education in Practice document, 2007-2009). Do you think that Norway has responded in an effective way to support new immigrants in their education and language needs?

*Nei!*

No!

Are the mother tongue programmes realistic at the level of implementation? To your knowledge, are they currently employed in schools?

*Litt usikker på hva du mener. Hvis du mener morsmålsundervisning, så tror jeg det er ingen elever som får det lengre i Oslo. Det gis kun hjelp av tospråklige lærere.*

Not quite sure what you mean. If you mean mother's tongue education, I think there are no students who receive this any more in Oslo. Only help by bilingual teachers is given.

From your own observations, do you think that mother tongue programmes are contributing to immigrant students' academic success in Norwegian schools? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

*Jeg kjenner ikke til morsmålsprogrammer i Oslo. Før var det mange skoler i Oslo som ga morsmålsundervisning til elever som hadde svake eller ingen kunnskaper i norsk, nå er det ingen som får morsmålsundervisning.*

I don't know of mother's tongue programmes in Oslo. There used to be many schools in Oslo that gave mother's tongue education to students who had weak or no skills in Norwegian, now nobody gets it.

What could be done better to ensure that language classes are meeting immigrant students' language/educational needs? (both aiding in developing Norwegian as well as maintaining their native language and cultural identity)

*Elever som har svake eller ingen kunnskap i norsk, bør få hjelp fra morsmålsundervisning. Hvis de kan ord og begreper på morsmålet sitt, blir det lettere å lære hva det heter på norsk. I klasserommet bør det være mye muntlighet. At de skal jobbe mye med muntlighet. Kunne beskrive hva ord og ordtak betyr. Bli lest mye for. Hjemme bør foreldrene lese på morsmålet. Tilrettelegge for aktiviteter der elevene daglig må bruke språket sitt (L2) i samhandling med andre. Språk lærers gjennom å bruke det – sammen med andre som kan/mestrer det. Et systematisk arbeid med for forståelse knyttet til tekster og tema det jobbes med i klassen. Det er nødvendig at læreren knytter sammen det elevene allerede vet, og det de skal lære i faget på skolen.*

Students who have poor or no skills in Norwegian should receive help from mother's tongue education. If they know words and terms in their mother's tongue, it will be a lot easier to learn what it is called in Norwegian. In the classroom there should be a lot of orality. That they are to work a lot with orality. Know what words and sayings mean. Be read to, a lot. At home the parents should read in their mother's tongue. Facilitating for activities where the students daily have to use their language (L2) in interaction with others. Language is learnt by using it – together with others who know/master it. Working systematically with presuppositions relating to texts and themes the class is working on. It is necessary that the teacher ties together what the students already know and what they are to learn in the subject at school.

Are the policies in place relevant (considering the number of languages present in Oslo schools, and the drastic difference in demographics between schools on the East and West sides of the city)?

*Det gis i gjennomsnitt bare en time tospråklig hjelp i uken*

On average only an hour of bilingual help is given per week.

Do mother tongue programmes or bilingual programmes support a multilingual Oslo?

*Utdanningsetaten (ledelsen) i Oslo sier at elevene "raskest mulig" skal lære seg norsk. Noen språk har høy status i Norge, andre har liten status. Elever med morsmål fra afrika, midt-østen og asia har lav status.*

The Education agency (the leadership) says that the students "as quickly as possible" are to learn Norwegian. Some languages have high status in Norway and some have low status. Students with mother's tongue languages from Africa, the Middle East and Asia have low status.

What is a pertinent issue among these minority-language speaking communities that is not being addressed in education policy?

*Det er elever som bare er i norske språkmiljøer når de er på skolen. Etter skoletid er de kun sammen med barn som snakker det samme morsmålet. Elevene bør delta på ukentlige aktiviteter etter skoletid. For eksempel fotball, sjakk, svømming... Men ofte er dette en økonomisk utfordring for foreldre med mange barn.*

There are students who only are in Norwegian language environments when they are at school. After school they are only together with children who speak the same mother's tongue. The students should participate in weekly activities after school. For instance football, chess, swimming... But often this is an economic challenge for parents with many children.

What do you think about the bilingual education programmes and the possibility for students to take their native tongue as a foreign language? Norwegian as a second language? Do all of these programmes work together effectively?

*Dette er under utprøving at studenter kan ta morsmål som fremmedspråk. Jeg synes dette er veldig spennende og tror det kan høyne statusen til språkene. Den foreløpige observeringen er at flere av de elevene som velger morsmål som fremmedspråk sliter. De har sterke kunnskaper i morsmålet muntlig, men sliter skriftlig.*

It is being tested that students can take their mother's tongue as a foreign language [not sure if this is correctly translated – we call any language taught in school but Norwegian (English, French etc.) a foreign language] I think

this is very exciting and believe it can raise the status of the languages. The preliminary observation is that several of the students who choose their mother's tongue as a foreign language are struggling. They have good oral skills, but are struggling with writing.

Have you experienced the reactions of immigrant parents to any of the above mentioned programmes?

*Nei. Dette er en gruppe som krever lite. Men de blir veldig glade og tillitsfulle hvis de møter en tospråklig lærer på skolen. Og enda bedre blir det hvis den læreren snakker samme språk som dem selv.*

**No.** This is a group who demands little. But they are very happy and trusting if they meet a bilingual teacher in school. And even better if the teacher speaks the same language as they do.

As an educator, did you feel prepared to address immigrant students' needs in your school/classroom? Why or why not?

*Nei. Jeg jobber med nyankomne elever (ny i Norge) og det er et stort behov for tospråklige lærere/ morsmåslærere i skolen.*

**No.** I work with recently arrived students (new in Norway) and there is a great need for bilingual teachers/mother's tongue teachers in school.

What are the specific obstacles you see that prohibit schools or others from providing mother tongue instruction for all students who request it?

*Hindringer kan være om politikerne vil bruke penger på dette (Økonomi) og om det finnes kvalifiserte tospråklige lærere/ morsmåslærere.*

Obstacles can be whether politicians want to spend money on this (economy) and whether there are qualified bilingual/mother's tongue teachers.

What is your role/position, and what type of work do you do?

*Jeg jobber i en innføringsklasse i Oslo. I klassen er det 12 elever og de fleste er fra Somalia og har ikke gått på skole før.*

I work in an introduction class in Oslo. In the class there are 12 students and most are from Somalia and have not gone to school before.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual/bilingual/plurilingual?

*Nei.*

**No**

Which languages do you speak or interact with in (a) your personal and (b) work life?

*Norsk.*

**Norwegian**

Anything I haven't asked and you would like to add?

*Jeg er litt forundret over at du vil intervju lærere i Oslo. Oslo er den by/ kommune i Norge som gir minst støtte til morsmålsopplæring/ tospråklig læring. I vårt naboland Sverige har elever krav på morsmålsopplæring hvis det er 5 eller flere elever med samme morsmål. Dette gjelder også adopsjonsbarn. I Sverige gir de også fjernundervisning i morsmål til utkantstrøkene. Lykke til med oppgaven!*

I am a bit surprised that you want to interview teachers in Oslo. Oslo is the city/county in Norway that gives the least support to mother's tongue education/bilingual education. In our neighbouring country Sweden students are entitled to mother's tongue education if there are 5 or more students with the same mother's tongue. This also goes for adopted children. In Sweden they also give remote mother's tongue education in rural areas.

## **Interview 7**

### **Educational sphere, face-to-face interview.**

What is your background with mother tongue and/or teaching?

I mostly worked with more older people like immigrants between 16 and 20 years old and they are not having any mother tongue teaching. And I've been working a year in primary school with younger kids and at that school we had a special programme with bilingual education so they learned to read and write in their mother tongue at the same time as Norwegian. But this system is now, it was illegal in a way, so it is no longer so.

How long ago was that?

It was 2008, so it was some years ago. It's not legal to divide pupils into groups of ethnicity based on their, what do you call it, based on like this is how it should be forever, what's the English word? Yeah because then they had to go in the class with only Urdu speaking pupils or Somali speaking and that's, they found out that that was not legal because you cannot divide pupils in that way. Like you cannot have only girl's classes or only boy's classes, not only Somali classes or not only Urdu classes.

So it faded out?

Yes it faded out because of that. But they, it was a special school because like 90% of the pupils were, had Norwegian as a second language, so it was special in that kind and then they wanted to teach the children in a way that was based on research and that you learn to read and write in your mother tongue. So that's the thing that pupils that come to the Norwegian school when they are older than 7 years old, they will not get any special mother tongue because then they are just supposed to assimilate in the class. Oh no, sorry, they will not, the opposite way, like if they start when they are 6, they should just assimilate into the class. But if they are 7 years or older, they go to special class, it's called mottaksklasse, it's like introduction to Norwegian.

Is that what you taught?

Yes, it's like Norwegian as a second language. Yeah, but I was mostly in the regular classes so I was not specifically in that class.

Were you a support in the mainstream class for language minority students?

Yeah

Are all minority language students are entitled to mother language instruction?

They are if the teachers think they should. It's based on their competence, so the teacher can say, 'ok I want you to, or this pupil needs mother tongue teaching'. And then the teacher can say to the principal that we need some resources here to get this mother tongue, to let the pupil have mother tongue teaching but then it's not in the law in a way, it's not. It's just, and then the principal say no, I don't think so because we don't have money, so it's just based on, it's not standing anywhere that they should have it, it's just that they can have it if they need it.

But it's not guaranteed?

It's not guaranteed, so then they have no really rights or they don't have this right to have it and then you cannot say that they need to have it because its yeah.

Is it kind of pointless to have the section that says they're entitled to it if it's actually not guaranteed?

I don't think because at least it opens a way for the schools that want their students to have a mother tongue teaching but it's also very dependent on the knowledge of the teachers and of the principals and in the schools, it's very much things happening, and they are going to learn very different things so it's also like I think many people in the schools think that if they have mother tongue, they don't learn Norwegian, its excluding more Norwegian in a way, so yeah. So it's very much depending on the principal or the head of the school to decide actually.

Ok, we'll get to these questions now. I read about programmes that are being put in place in regards to immigration in the recent years, there have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students, as well as family oriented early childhood programmes. Do you think that Norway is responding in an effective way to support these new immigrants in their education and language?

Uh I think there's a lot of differences in Norway and also just in Oslo, like Oslo is the biggest city and most of the immigrants come here and live here. But it's very divided so at the eastern part, you have schools with like 98% Norwegian as a second language children and in the western part, at some schools you have no one. So I think that's a bit problematic for both sites and for everybody and what's happening is that people with Norwegian as a first language, they move to the schools where there is not so many immigrants because they don't want their children to be a part of that. So in that case I think there are some challenges because it should be a better mix in a way between the... So I think something should be done yeah, both about the separation and about the system in a way because I think they are connected, because if there had been a better a more similar system to the schools, then it would not have been so much up to the principal or to the head of the school, then it would be the same and every school so then the students could just come into the school and be a part of a system.

What is your impression of mother tongue programmes that are currently in place?

I think they are very different from school to school and its very up to the principal or head of the school, what they think and also there's a lack of teachers that are capable of teaching in mother tongue, and some of the teachers, they don't have any pedagogical education so it's also been like this thinking about if you know the language then you can teach it, and also in the last years, it has been more like they don't want mother tongue teachers but they want bilingual teachers that can be a bridge for the child from their mother tongue to Norwegian. But that's also very different from school, depending on the teachers and their personality in a way and also, how they are organized. There are many times where they just take the pupils out of their ordinary class and they have mother tongue or bilingual education with them and then they miss what the other pupils learn because they are going to have their special language class. And also, I know it's been a problem that mother tongue and bilingual teachers they have not been integrated with the other teachers, so they are like part of the side of the other teachers, and often they are working at many schools at the same time because there may not be enough for them to do at one school so they may need to move around and that's also a bit problematic for them because they will not be a part of the school community and they feel that they grab the children and take them out of the class

When they take them out of the class, do you they cover the material that the other students in the class are learning during that time?

I think that's also very up to the teacher and up to the cooperation between the teachers. I know in some schools they have very good cooperation and they have this working very close and working with like let's have a main subject of the month and then they work with it from different angles and then they complement each other. All the different teachers on different languages. I think that's the exception, the normal thing is that this isn't true.

From your own observations, do you think that mother tongue programmes are contributing to immigrant students' academic success in Norwegian schools? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

I think so, but from my, I know a lot of course from what I've read. But if you want to know from my own experience, I've experienced pupils that get a better self-esteem, if they know what's happening and if also they communicate better with their teacher if they know the same language, but I have not worked long enough at the school with these programmes that I can see the results but I definitely think that it's an advantage, but I think that many of the teachers and the principals, also they don't have, they don't know anything about language learning actually they just think that ok, if they are going to learn mother tongue, then they won't learn Norwegian. So um yeah from my own experience, I cannot say much about the academics because I haven't worked as much.

Are the programmes realistic at the level of implementation?

It depends on the principal's ideology and it also depends on where the school is Oslo, Bergen, which city, because they often have their own policies. Cities have their own, I know most about Oslo but they have several years ago they took away Norwegian as a second language, because they thought that that would not make students better at Norwegian because that would put them in a box, like a bad box, that was the bad Norwegian box. That was also because the Norwegian as a second language was organized like if you had one parent from another country, then you were entitled to go into this class, but the case is that its depending on what your mother tongue is not where your parents are from so they didn't separate from that, so then there were many people with Norwegian as a first language that came to the classes because they were just looking at the ethnicity, not at the languages.

Is Norwegian as a second language back in schools now?

Not in Oslo. It's called Special Norwegian, so in a way its Norwegian as a second language but they call it another thing and its more strict in a way who can go into that term because they say that the normal teaching is for everybody so the teacher should be able to teach all the students in the class even if one speaks hardly any Norwegian and one speak yeah.

So are they looking at a kind of immersion model now?

Yeah.

What could be done better at the implementation level to assure that they are meeting immigrant students' language needs?

I think one of the main things is that it should be like fixed in advance like this is the system and this is how it works so everyone knew how it worked. And then you also need teacher resources like you need to educate more teachers that can teach in their mother tongue and or like bilingual teachers.

In terms of programmes that should be offered?

I think that there are benefits from having Norwegian as a second language because its and its difficult for a teachers to meet all the students needs when they are such different levels and also its difficult when you have students with special needs and it's very easy to put them in the same category so then you need to clarify what is what to yeah I think that you need more standards for what's going on because my impression is that it's very much up to each school, but also I think that it's not just the school its also the politics, like the economy and the yeah like I said the teacher resources that are available because if you don't get the mother tongue teacher who speaks the language but need it you have a pupil who speaks it and you need it, you cannot be offered.

These programmes – are they both in the public schools and community centers or is it just public school programme?

That's actually interesting because it's officially just in schools but there are some language groups that offer their own education, teaching and the Tamils have been very active in that way, they have schools every Saturday for the children who speak Tamil and they are from Sri Lanka. And they have very they are very active in teaching grammar and yeah about language and also more and more Somali groups are offering, they call it help with your homework, so they offer pupils to come to these places and they will help them and speak Somali, they speak in their mother

tongue. I'm not sure if they make real mother tongue classes, but maybe they also have. I think it's a need that they've seen, the language community, and then they offer these. I think mainly its help with homework, at least with the Somali, but the Tamil is more organized language class.

What is a pertinent issue among these communities that is not being addressed in education policy?

My experience is just that the parents are very, they respect the school very much and they just think that the school knows best for the children, so I have not, yeah I'm not experienced any parents coming and wanting something from the school.

As a teacher, principal, etc, did you feel prepared to address immigrant students' needs in your school/classroom? If not, what could be done to solve this?

I felt quite prepared but that was my education so. But I think many mother tongue or like Norwegian teachers they are prepared in a way. And I think it's getting more and more, because Norwegian as a second language is a subject at the university so the teachers learn about Norwegian as a second language, at least if they specialize in it. But I think also many of the problems occur in other subjects like mathematics, natural sciences, and then the teachers, they don't know anything about Norwegian as a second language or about how they can help the students so I think that's maybe a bigger challenge for them because maybe they don't know how to deal with it, or break down the content for students like that.

Do you think that all teachers will soon be required to take some sort of Norwegian as a second language at the university as part of their teacher training programme?

I hope so, but also its very, in some schools its very relevant and in some schools it's not relevant, so that's why I think it's difficult in Norway generally to implement something in the teaching at the universities because yeah, I think teachers should be aware of it at least.

What about bilingual education and the possibility to take their native tongue as a foreign language? Norwegian as a second language? Do all of these programmes work together effectively?

Yeah, they opened up an opportunity to take because all students in Norway they need to have a third language like normally it is German Spanish or French, but now it's also Arabic and mandarin, Chinese is coming to the schools but also they opened up the opportunity to have Somali instead or other typical minority languages so that students could show their expertise in that language and get credit for it and so that they did not have to learn a fourth language.

Do you think it's a good thing?

Yeah I think its good, but I also think that it's not very well known that this is an option so I think that students almost have to find it by themselves and it's not very well known to teachers either. It has to be specially requested, it's not like you're ticking off the list but maybe it says ok do you want German, French, or other but it's not I don't know if it's talked about, what they have to learn. The curriculum, I don't know how they can get the teaching in the curriculum in a way because then they need to find a teacher for themselves or.... It's not like organized, like you need to read these texts and you have to analyze this, like in French and Spanish where it's you have this teaching and you get this curriculum, but in Somali, I don't think it's like this. I'm not sure, but I've not looked so much into to so I don't know actually and I've never had any students who've had this programme but I know it exists and it's an opportunity.

What is your role now?

Right now, I am a Ph.D. student

What type of institution did you work for when you were a teacher?



I worked at a primary school, it was a normal public school at the eastern part, so it was very many immigrants. And I also worked at a high school or upper secondary school, between 16 and 19, public school again.

Do you consider yourself to be bilingual/monolingual/plurilingual?

I am bilingual in the way that all Norwegians are bilingual in Norwegian and English, but not more than that.

What languages do you speak in your personal life and your work life?

Norwegian/English – work, Norwegian – home.

If you have learned other languages, what has been the most significant language learning experience for you?

It's been living in another country, in southern America, learning Spanish, for 6 months. So that's a very fast way of learning.

## **Interview 8**

### **Educational sphere, face-to-face interview.**

Could you describe what you do?

I'm a class leader, half of the second term which is basically you know we have a broad approach so we teach more or less all the subjects which is you know general skills but also subjects such as science, religion, all sorts.

Are you in the classroom with another teacher?

No, this year I'm not. Do you want me to describe the bilingual model that we used to have or would you like me to describe the one that we have now?

If you could do a little of both, that would be really interesting to hear.

Ok, it used to be, we used to have, and it varied a little bit over the years. Some years we had bilingual classes where we sort of gathered together the language groups so that for example, me and R, we would teach in a class of mostly Urdu, Punjabi speaking children, also Hindi were included with Norwegian but also other smaller languages that we didn't have any language teachers for, that was one way of organizing it. The last few years, we organized classes with different language groups. There were spread all over, not homogenous groups, but heterogeneous groups. And then, every Monday, we would start by having an introduction so the children who couldn't use Norwegian as their learning language, they got their introduction in Somali, Arabic, Urdu, we had for a while Tamil - he left. But those were the three main languages that we had. But also in Norwegian of course, two kinds of Norwegian groups. We had one with Norwegian as a first language and one with an introduction to Norwegian for a second language. Then it varied how they were given bilingual training during the week. With the first introduction, sort of the week's theme that they got, they received the first introduction in their language.

And now it's not bilingual because there are not two teachers in one room?

No, it's nothing. There's hardly anything going on. The bilingual teachers mostly are teaching Norwegian and there's some children I think, up to 3 hours a week, get something but it's just a group of five children actually receive some sort of first language training because they've arrived during the school year.

Out of the whole school?

Yes.

Five children?

Yes.

And you did have mother tongue programmes in the past, say ten years ago, is that correct?

Mother tongue? Yes, well now we had it up to 5 years ago, no 3 years ago mother tongue, then we had bilingual subject training but now it's all gone, everything's gone, it's just Norwegian.

Ok. Do you know why?

Politically. It's not a question of, because they can't show any, they can't show you know we've done research and we can show such and such, but you know our results are poor. I mean, we're not doing well in the tests, the school testing. We're not the bottom, but we're doing generally not well, but the tests are all in Norwegian and of course, if they were tested according to their tuition they've been given over the years, it would've been different. It's political, yes.

Ok and now I have some questions for you from the list. There have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students, as well as family oriented early childhood programmes (information from the Equal Education in Practice document, 2007-2009). Do you think that Norway has responded in an effective way to support new immigrants in their education and language needs?

No.

How not?

There are other programmes that are working but it's so, I think, in a way it should be political, these issues are political. But when it comes to children, they should really listen to educational theories. And it shouldn't be up to politicians to decide because we see good programmes when it comes to grownups, for example. We see a lot of ladies in this area, mothers, being introduced to work, you know they get their first introduction into getting their, being in a workplace, which is wonderful for them. Some of them are really happy about that. When it comes to the children, it's very poor and I think they're breaking international laws by doing it this way. Saying that, it's up to the local council and Oslo council is particularly negative towards mother tongue teaching and bilingual training of any kind.

Are mother tongue programmes realistic for implementing in schools?

Yes.

Oslo has over 150 languages, so do you think mother tongue programmes are the most effective way to teach this specific group of minority speaking students or is bilingual education more important?

I think you should use all three. I think you have to have especially special Norwegian training, you have to have bilingual training, you have to have mother tongue training because the child, it's not part of the child, you have to see the child as a whole. If a child cannot speak on the phone with their grandmother, you've robbed the child of their cultural inheritance which is very important. We see now children are not really able to communicate in the depth with their parents or their grandparents because their parents have been very loyal to what politicians have said, yes only speak Norwegian at home and they've spoken very bad, poor Norwegian to their children because they don't have any nuances in the language, there's lots of concepts they don't know anything about. They can't use them. So I think you need all. Then, the teacher should be able to go into a dialogue with the parents and discuss, what do you think your child needs? And I see other councils, like Trondheim council, they've been able to do it, to implement it. When you think about it, the population of Oslo is more, is better educated than the rest of the country, and here you will have more of these people speaking these languages with a higher level of

education, so it should be easier in Oslo to find these people than anywhere else. Schools can share. Like next year, this school and another school will share a headmaster. Why can't they share a Tamil teacher? There's hardly any distance between schools, and that's done in other councils. So, it's not an argument.

I've heard before that the power is with the parents, do you believe that? That if the parents were to speak up as a group because it is a law that children are entitled to mother tongue education?

Yes. But it depends because parents as well, I suppose teachers also and everybody, are influenced by the topic of the day, influenced by the general attitude, and of course, when like they've said for many years, oh Toyen skole is a bad school, and they have poor results – of course they also start to agree with it as well. So I think for example, we see some parents that are very happy that now there's only Norwegian teachers, very happy. They think that's going to improve the quality of the children's training, but it's not.

Because that's the popular opinion that's being spread?

Yes, we can practise more tests, and of course, then we would do better. But, that is what is going to happen.

Teaching to the test?

Yes. Happens all over Oslo. It's been an ongoing process, but some schools sort of stuck to bilingual training and mother tongue and sort of defied the owners of the school, both the political owners and the educational board. So but when we changed, the principal who sort of spoke up for these issues, when he resigned two or three years ago.

What is a pertinent issue among these minority-language speaking communities that is not being addressed in education policy?

I think they're very concerned about their youth. I think they are very concerned about being allowed into society. It's a big scare what happens to especially young men, black male, young black male. I think they're terrified, some of the parents around here because the level of unemployment is so high and young people with Muslim names particularly, and Somalis are targeted very particular and in a bad way. I think that's the scariest bit, that they feel so outside the society.

Have you experienced the reactions of parents to mother tongue or bilingual programmes?

Yes, well some have reacted but oh, will they learn Norwegian and we go through with them and explain and we use also the bilingual teacher of course to explain why and of course most of them understand it. Some don't, and some don't want it. Over the years we've put them into groups with Norwegian as a first language speakers and Norwegian as a second language speakers.

Do you think that teachers entering the field now are prepared to have these students in their classrooms?

No, not at all. It varies a little bit from college to college, but no, they don't have enough practice, practical learning. You know, through the teacher training, they should have a lot more practical work in the fields when it comes to bilingual training. In Oslo, there more than 40% of the children who are actually bilingual, so when you think about it, it's gross negligence by many parts.

Do you see Oslo as embracing a multilingual city?

To some extent yes, but in other respects, no. For example, now we've got this general debate of gentrification in city centers, happening all over Europe I suppose and maybe in America as well. People, young white middle class people coming into the old working class areas, which are black communities, white properties, which it is what has happened here. Now they want the council to sell the council houses in the area to be put out on the open market, things like that. I think when it comes to not having a strategy on housing for example, we have a

lot of poor people in Oslo and housing isn't addressed in a sort of anti-racist way. There shouldn't be so many council houses here, but when they are here, they should be kept up to date and looked after. I think there's a lot of anti-racist talk, but when it comes to practice, I don't think it works. But I think there are a lot of really nice neighborhoods around here where they really look after each other and people are very happy. Depends on which level you look at.

Ok, and lastly, what are the specific obstacles you see that prohibit schools or others from providing mother tongue instruction for all students who request it?

Well there are obstacles, of course you need qualified teachers and that sort of thing, so you need the colleges to look at this seriously and they say oh it will be fine as long as we get the second generation because they speak Norwegian very well but they don't know their first language so well so they can't. In this school we've hired bilingual teachers but they couldn't work as bilingual teachers because they don't know how to read and write in their first language. So you need qualified teachers, you need to make sure they are qualified in every aspect. So that's one thing, but I think it's possible. You need parents to understand why it's important, that's an obstacle that can be overcome, but the most important obstacle is the political. Generally it's the right side, the conservative side. They have very strong advocates of Norwegian only.

Can I just ask one more thing? Do you think that mother tongue programmes contribute to academic success for these students?

Definitely. Yes. I think if you have children who are proud and happy about their background, and I mean we were listening to the radio one day and there was a programme from Canada and how researchers now are looking into bilinguals are actually, bilingualism compensates for Alzheimer's.

Oh, I've read about this research.

Yes, Bialystock. There was certain criteria, you needed to exchange between languages every day, a certain amount of the time. You needed to use them both. If we could get more research like that out in the open, you know. Because the right side, their arguments are that they are getting more isolated when they speak their own language. They get more isolated, not integrated. I think it's the opposite because I see so many young families, they want to be a part of society and the most serious concern is to be outside of the society.

## **Interview 9**

**Educational sphere, face-to-face interview. Recording started during ongoing conversation on the topic.**

It's not the same with what happens in the classroom, so on the paper it looks very good, it looks like wow.

I'm learning that bilingual education is currently the only form of 'mother tongue' education that students get in schools. Is this true?

Yes I think so, the public schools anyway. But there are many organizations that provide the mother tongue instruction themselves, like the Tamil have a big organization on their spare time, and after school maybe.

And those are community based?

Yes, Polish, Russian, the big languages, because they have a big network. In Bergen, the Tamil community is very big.

There have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students, as well as family oriented

early childhood programmes. Do you think that Norway has responded in an effective way to support new immigrants in their education and language needs?

I think on paper its more better but in real life, I don't think the commune (county) and each county has smaller towns and regions and there are school owners in this which are responsible for the teaching and the education so in Oslo there is one school leader so they decide what happens in Oslo and in Bergen, another. It's not national, it's not the same, because it's political. In Oslo it's like the blue parties which have the political power right now but last year it was the social politic parties and they decide different.

So that dictates what happens in schools?

Yes, it's political. The law the same. But it's confusing because the words is like people who don't have Norwegian or Sámisk, the other Norwegian language, as their mother tongue, has to write to have mother tongue instruction, bilingual, or special Norwegian teaching, but they often say that oh we don't have the teacher for Urdu or Punjabi, so it's not possible, but they actually don't do much work to hire them in the first place so it's very difficult to have the competent people in the school because you hire a Norwegian teacher before you hire an Urdu teacher. But I think it's very different if you are in Oslo or in other places, so Oslo is now in a period that only Norwegian, you are going to learn Norwegian by talking Norwegian and that's the best way, right now. But for the back, you have to learn Norwegian by learning your mother tongue, and then you can learn Norwegian because the main goal has always been to learn Norwegian and to include yourself, but I think it's the methods, how to learn Norwegian and if you want to be bilingual, if you see that as a resource in itself to be a bilingual person. That's not the main goal in the politics right now because it's not what sells in politics. You're going to learn Norwegian to live in Norway.

When this document was released in 2007, 2009, was there more of a push for mother tongue education at that time because of the politics at that time?

More than now.

And gradually it's been decreasing?

It goes like this, and depends on which people are sitting in power. I think many many more outside of Oslo because the immigrants are moving all over the place now especially in the north in the small counties that have oh my god what shall we do, we don't speak Polish, we don't speak, especially Polish and Russian little bit because of the work immigration, and what are we going to do. We have to talk to them and then we have to get some teachers that can help us, but in Oslo, it has always been more or less over 30 percent minority speaking pupils in the school. So it's like we have done this a long time but the reality is the results are not that good as we thought so we want to teach them Norwegian now and the results are that this 2nd generation, it's not all new arrivals, they don't speak daily basis mother tongue with their parents, like can I go to the shop, can I go out to play but it's not academic mother tongue, they don't think academic in their mother tongue, it's just like ordinary, daily.

Very basic?

Yes. So as a teacher, I tried to provide like tests in Polish or Turkish or whatever to learn the subject, but they say ah I can't write and I can't read in my mother tongue, I can read and write in Norwegian, but I understand only the words and the meanings of the words in my mother tongue. So you have to support the subject with some words from, use word lists in bilingual, focus words, like what are the important words to understand if you were to understand the focus words, ok I have to learn this and this and this key words.

And in both languages?

In both languages. Because they need to understand the whole picture, so even if I don't speak Arabic, Urdu, I tried to find these words online or if I have teachers, of course. But it's I think it's not, if you're lucky, you get one Arabic teacher, then the Arabic speaking pupils are like ok good, then you can give this right to them, but this year we don't have one Urdu teacher, so sorry, not for you. But this year, we have one Polish teacher, yes he can help you.

So in my class we had 14 different languages, you can't hire 14 different teachers on a school budget for 1-2 hours in the week. So then I have to use online resources, which we provide.

But still, 14 languages to have to do online resources for, isn't it a lot?

Yes, but there aren't many languages online either. Because Somali since it is quite new [here], you don't have many resources online. But Polish, Russian, English of course, there are many. Some groups have better services than others, so it like you get lucky, by chance. But on paper, the rights are the same, but in reality, it's like ok sorry I couldn't because paragraph 2.8 in the law which talks about the students, you have written about this?

I have read about it, yes. That specific paragraph.

Because it's like pupils who don't have Norwegian or Sámi has the right ... until they have sufficient proficiency in Norwegian, so what is 'until'? I think this way, but my colleague may think differently, so we can do it. So it's up to the principal and then ok, he can understand, but this one, he doesn't understand anything, we have to have one. Like ... the criteria is not the same, it's from different heads. The law, it seems very good, yes oh Norway does it very good, but when you start thinking it's not diffuse, you can maybe, maybe not, and ok if it's possible, they can have mother tongue, but if it's impossible, ok you can't have a Somali teacher, ok we can't do that. But maybe the neighbor schools says ok I will try to find a Somali teacher and works hard to find a Somali teacher and provides it. So they both aren't breaking any laws so that is why this difference all over Norway then. And after I started working here, we are like a national centre, so we are like in all of Norway and I think that Trondheim and Bergen is doing better to try to fulfill the law instead of Oslo. Oslo is not trying so hard and they want not to try because they want to talk Norwegian and the school I was working at, we had, when I started working there in 2004, it's a school with over 90% minority kids

Toyen Skole?

Yes, Toyen Skole. When I started there, about 50% of the teachers were Norwegian teachers and 50% bilingual teachers. And they had teacher, pedagogical education from university. So in my classroom, it was me, like a Norwegian teacher, and I had one Arabic teacher and he was there 50% and in the classroom next to me, it was one Norwegian teacher and one Urdu teacher. And in both classes, we had the same language groups, like Arabic/Urdu class and Arabic/Urdu class. Norwegian teacher 100% and Arabic/Urdu – 50%. So we did all the same. So when I teach in history and I started to talk in Norwegian and you saw some of the students were like (gestures confusion), then my coworker in Arabic. Norwegian/Arabic all the time. And also, when I write Norwegian, he writes Arabic on the blackboard and all the homework, everything we did both languages. But then, politics came and all the bilingual teachers were, not fired, but some did get, they had a job, a project so they couldn't just get fired, they would get moved to another school and have to work there now. So and they hired just Norwegian teachers and that's the situation there now. It's called the toyen 'lofta'. It's a promise to do good for the area, Toyen because that's an area in Oslo that has many problems, social, economics, violence, there was like a murder there yesterday. It's very tough to grow up so they're trying to raise the standard and that's very good actually but they are doing it in the wrong way because the answer is like (gestures) ok all the mother tongue teachers had to go because we are going to learn only in Norwegian because that's the way to do it. So um who loses in this? It is the parents and the teachers because they don't understand when the parents came to talk to me about, I don't know, anything about my child in this and that. We stood there and just smiled at each other and but when I had the mother tongue teacher, they had this conversation and they had the daily basis contact and I was the Norwegian teacher, you talk in Arabic I can learn them Norwegian in school. You talk the language you think and feel in and do at home, to be a parent in the language you are the best in so but my thought is that in 2004 when we started this we had bilingual first reading and writing from the first grade. And all the way up to 7th, so when I work in the 7th grade, those pupils who have had it since the 1st grade, they could understand and write in their mother tongue. Because they learned their mother tongue and Norwegian at the same time, for 7 years. And this is just my thought because there are no results that could verify this, but I think that those students had more of an understanding in the whole picture but before those many years ago, we didn't have the bilingual all the way. They couldn't understand the bilingual Arabic texts, they only could hear and understand. So then I had to provide the sound resources. I had to have, run around and ask the mother tongue teachers can you translate this and read it to me in this device, and they read it

and it was the homework and then we talk about it in Norwegian after. And we say “alright what did you hear?” “Ah it’s about.” Ok. We talk in Norwegian after but they get the understanding in the language they understand first so it’s nice on paper and in some places, it is very nice in practice, but not so much in Oslo.

The other places you are talking about are outside Oslo?

Yes, so I think you maybe need to look at how they do it in Bergen and uh and you can because we have a website, Tema Morsmål. And we have some people we work with in Bergen and in Trondheim and they are like school leaders and they it is not teachers, it is the school leaders who decide how they are going to do it in Bergen, how they are going to do it in Stavanger, how they are going to do it in Trondheim and that’s a whole other thinking than Oslo. In Oslo it’s like one principal decides on his school. This is my school and I do it this way, but in Bergen, it’s like we in Bergen do it this way, when you are a new arrival, you do it this way, and we have bilingual teachers, and then after some while you get over here and then you get... so there is like more, you see the whole picture more in a way than Oslo does now. But it’s the same law! The law is for all of Norway, the paragraph 2.8, in the equal education and that’s from first to tenth grade and in higher education, it’s the same, 3.12, it’s the same actually but its higher education and primary, until 12th grade.

Do you think that mother tongue programmes in the schools, Toyen for example, have the ability to alleviate those social issues because if you show that their language is valued in school, maybe you feel more of a community or something like that?

Yes, I think so, and that is my experience. I think that parents meet someone who talk their own language, they want to be more in school. They will, they came to me and came to school and talked to us. They were in class summer parties and things and meetings with the parents, parent meetings, everything. Because then they were, they could express themselves in the language that I feel this way, why do you do this and that in a language that they actually could. It’s like me and English now when I try to discuss something in a language that I’m not comfortable with, and then these parents, they decide to be quiet but inside, they all have so much to say and so much to learn us about their children, and no my child is not like that, they are like this. Because they are the parents, they know. This is from me. I also have children in Oslo schools and when I’m meeting the teacher, she’s sitting there telling me your daughter is this, your daughter is that, she knows this test and that test. She’s over or under the criteria, this is good, this is bad. And I am a teacher, I have high education in the school system and still I don’t understand what she’s talking about sometimes, but what about my daughter as herself, how does she learn, how does she want to learn, is she a person who likes to read or write, does she need to hear it, talk on it, and there is oh no its just a test and formal now. They are very strict in the schools now like ok this test, this test, this test. And there are some results like this is a good school, this is a bad school, and maybe it’s like England has been like this for a while, many tests, and the programmes and you, the whole picture and more subject in the same topic. Just like a little bit history, a little bit Norwegian, You do like the theme teaching. And you can’t do that now because this is your math teacher, this is your history teacher, this is your Norwegian teacher, and it’s not possible for the students to work on a topic like my town and incorporate different subjects and this is a good education for minority kids because they need to see the whole picture because you need to teach them to talk, to have the dialogue, to have the experiences, go out and see, go back and do something and you don’t have to. When you have like 45 minutes Norwegian, 45 minutes math, 45 science, you don’t have the time to do this type of education for these types of kids which actually need it. So I think it’s very of course, some of the bilingual teachers, or mother tongue teachers – it’s actually the same. It started in the school here as Monsterplan. And then there was more meaningful mother tongue and then there was more teachers but no one gets hired as a mother tongue teacher as your title, it’s not ‘mother tongue teacher,’ its bilingual teacher in the subjects, because you have a science background from university, and you actually are Somali speaking and you get hired as a Somali speaking bilingual teacher in the science subject. So you can provide them speak Somali support in Norwegian science programme. You don’t have like a science programme on Somali whatsoever, all the way. You are actually the science teacher for the class, and if you are also a Somali teaching person, you could provide, like do all the things in Norwegian and then in Somali you say. And you go on in Norwegian, and stop and say, in Somali it’s like this. And you have this support teacher, you see them together, in Norwegian, it’s this, you break it up – it’s not the whole theme in Somali first. Now we are going to learn about the leaves on the trees and you do the whole lesson in Somali and afterwards, you can get the Norwegian teacher in Science and I do the same in Norwegian. That’s

the best because then those children who are the new arrivals, they have like a little pre-start and they understand very much the subject and when they come in the whole class with the Norwegian students, they had like ah I know this. Because they had already learned it in Somali so they can have the same opportunity to reach the same goal but if you don't have this pre-teaching in your mother tongue, then you will never at the same goal as the native language speakers, so always, all the way up. But in the 10th grade, everyone will have the same exam even if you had this 2.8 paragraph rights, in the end, you are going to have the same outcome anyway, the same test and even I had a Somali teacher, and he had the Somali teacher all the way, but in the 10th grade, he gets the same exam, that's quite new actually.

The exams?

Yes, now. Before they could have different when they were Norwegian as a second language curriculum, but that was out in 1996 I think. Yes, and that was a Special Norwegian curriculum. The same, you have a Norwegian curriculum, and you have a Grunnlagen Norwegian curriculum, and if you had paragraph 2.8, you followed this special curriculum, only in Norwegian though. But it's more like culture, they take your background into consideration, so you can read text from your own culture instead of (Norwegian author's names), you can read some others. It's all in Norwegian, its adapted you know, and at another pace, but at the end, the same. It's like two paths to the same exam. Native language Norwegian learners here and second language Norwegian learners here, and they meet in the same exam.

And do you know how they are doing on that exam?

Not so good. In Oslo, we have like but this on the higher education, in Oslo I think, 24% of the minority kids that doesn't fulfill the higher education. In Larvik, I think the percent is 0.7% don't fulfill, and that's because the politics are winning. It can't prove anything because there aren't any programmes who followed this because they're always changing.

Based on the politics?

Yes, so it's like you can't follow one programme all the way and said this is working and this is not working, it's like 5 years not so good, something new, 4 more years, something else. So you actually don't have enough data to say this one's good, this one isn't. So it's quite difficult actually for the politics because they are just pulling what is good what works, now it's all in Norwegian.

And they have very little data to base this decision on?

Yes, very little to base the truth on. They won the election and they are doing this now because everyone says the Norwegian schools are doing not good, we have to do something. There's always something they have to do. So back to the question, I really think in terms of reaching this area, Toyen, that you have to have people who speak the native languages. It's a natural thing if you want to communicate with someone, you must communicate in a language they understand. Then you can get cooperation and understand each other and actually going on the same way. Because now the parents, they are actually thought, many minority parents think I know she or he gets mother tongue because that's the law, but no, they don't. Why? It's the law isn't it? No but it's not so easy, because they get it until they have enough Norwegian to follow the ordinary education and what is possible and what is enough is different from each head. So we want to do the law more specific, like this is your right and this is not. You can't understand it in a different way. But now Oslo is saying this and Bergen is saying that. And this is very weird actually because both Bergen and Oslo have the same political powers on the top. It's also political, and it's also personal interests.

Would this centre push for this law to be more specific?

Yes we want to do that. We are like under the ministry of education in Norway and they have all the counties under them. We are national centre so we are just advisors, we are not a political centre. We are not allowed to mean anything political and if we write something political on our website, it's like no you can't say this. Because we are



just advisors. We can advise and say you can do it this way because of research on this topic. We know it's best to learn bilingual because we use [...] these texts that provides advice, why should we provide a mother tongue teacher, how long does it take to learn a second language?

So you advise them on issues and they do what they want with that advice?

Yes of course. But we are working out with schools and methods in the classroom. What will you do then if you had a mother tongue teacher, you could do this. If you don't have you can also do something. Each student has their own programme, etc., so we are like advisors. Yes, but actually many don't know about us. So when I go around to a school in a kindergarten or anything and talk about what will they do to show the bilingual and their different cultures in the classroom. Because they are like counties and schools and the principals under them, so many levels of deciding. So the teacher inside the classroom who actually should do these methods is the last to know. And we try to go around and have education for the teachers and schools leaders and this is our main group. So we try. We have Tema Morsmål, where we have bilingual teaching in the subject's material.

For the teachers?

For the teachers. So if I am a Somali teacher and I want something about leaves, ok.

What do you think could be done better? Do you think that bilingual education or something else is the answer?

I see so many students who don't understand me when I talk Norwegian and like ok, so how are you going to do well then and learn something when you don't understand the language I am speaking? When the Arabic teacher came, you see ah ha [gestures an 'ah ha' moment]. And that's the best feeling for a teacher to see in their pupil. Do you understand now? Yes, good. And as a Norwegian teacher, and they don't understand what you are saying, it is typical that they just talk a little slower or a little higher but they're not stupid, they're actually smart, they just don't understand what I'm saying. And so my pupils who have lived here, born here and lived here all their life, for like 12 years. When I'm in the classroom and writing on the board and I say what's this? Ok, Ali. Ali doesn't have it. Ok, Sahra. And as Sahra is answering, Ali says what? You didn't give me time. Because a second language learner, they use more time. Ok you asked me in Norwegian, it's in my head, I have to answer it in Arabic and translate it and I raise my hand and tell you. So even if you don't have mother tongue teachers available, you have to have some understanding what it takes to learn Norwegian as a second language because there are many methods you have to do like to talk to each other, the dialogue. It's more important than doing the task on paper. You learn more about speaking to each other. If you are going to learn a language you have to speak, use the words, all the time. So it's something we teach. You have to speak with your students instead of just giving them work to do and saying, do this, and do this. So it's a whole picture, it's not just mother tongue, not just Norwegian, it's all the time both. So I think of course bilingual [teaching] is the best way.

Do these programmes support a multilingual Oslo?

I think it's important and many people think it's important, except for the people who decides. It's not all about speaking Norwegian in Oslo right now. And we talk about bilingual as a resource when it came to English, French, German, Chinese, and all these big languages, but if you have Somali or Arabic, it's like why? It's not as high status because of the business of Norway, and you need to think big, you are going to learn Mandarin Chinese and do well for Norway. But it's just words actually because in the daily base thinking, everybody is like because there are many groups who have social difficulties to get that, to get involved in society and doesn't have work and is all like ok, learn Norwegian- that is the answer. It's another whole political side of it. But it influences speaking and education. When you're like ok, bilingual is good, we know it, for the brain, and for thinking and bilingual person has more ability to cooperate. But because of the big social issues, the main experiences are like just learn Norwegian, it's easier for you, easier for me. And easier for Norwegian people because we can understand each other, but by all means, talk Somali, just not so I can hear it. But I think Oslo is I think its bilingual, of course. You go out in the streets and you hear so many languages, on an everyday basis so it's more and more accepted, and the world is getting smaller because of movies and the internet and everything, so it's more and more accepted. And for our generation, but still, our generation thinks this but those who decide now are actually our parent's

generation. So I hope it will be better but I don't think because of the political programme, but because this is how the world is going. The world is getting smaller and we talk to each other on more spaces than we did before, social websites and everything so it's more natural to hear – in the music, in the movies, and everything. I think it's on the right track, but only because this is the way the world is going. But in educational terms, still a difference, I think they still want to do it in the ordinary, traditional way. I don't know if the programme is the reason, I just think it's the general development in the society.

Did you get your training as a Norwegian as a second language teacher?

No.

So as a teacher did you feel prepared to address immigrant students in your classroom?

No.

Do you think teachers today are?

No. There are programmes you can choose at the University level, so there are many who does it, I know that. But in the schools, maybe you have one or two teachers, but I had more cultural issues in my education, not second language learners, not this how to learn a language, but more how to understand each other so I had this cultural experience. But when I started as a Norwegian teacher in a school with 95% minority kids, I get wow what to do. I was dependent on the bilingual teacher, my co-worker, and they taught me – now, you have to understand, if you are Turkish and you're teaching Norwegian, you do it this way, subject, verbal, vocals, and in Turkish you have more vocals. And there are sounds which are the same those that are different from Norwegian. I was checking the students work, all wrong. The guy I worked with would say, you know she's on the way to learn this so she's going to do it this way now. It's like a middle language. You have to understand the process. So I had to take up books and read to learn myself, in my spare time, and then I understand much more, and then because I wanted to and I had to do it, for understanding my pupils.

So most teachers are generally not prepared for this?

No, if you do the ordinary track, you don't take classes on this. But I think that this is now a bigger issue or topic on University now, because I started in 2000 and finished in 2004 and we had maybe one lecture with like, what would you do in gym when you have Muslim students? That's it. Ok, what do we do to understand Islamic people and that's it. If you get Norwegian as a Second language in the University then yes, but in the teaching school, no.

And you went to school here in Oslo?

Yes. Where I am working now.

Because I want to talk about mother tongue programmes, how they are in the literature, and then how the reality is, and I want to talk about the specific obstacles, so you've mentioned the politics and maybe lack of resources, teachers – is there anything else you can think of that's a very specific obstacle that has to be overcome in order for this to work?

Ok you have to make more money to hire a bilingual teacher in a higher percentage. In many schools, you have a mother tongue teacher two hours in the whole week, and they, the mother tongue teacher, are working in maybe 10 schools. They go from here to there in their car. Because in Oslo the schools are near each other but in Oslo we don't use mother tongue teachers right now so that's not an issue, but for example, in Tromsø, all the way up north, the teacher has to you are like 3 hours in this school and ok bye, get in their car and go 5 miles to the next school, have like 1 hour, and back again. So the working environment is not good. They are going from this school and this school and they aren't included in the community of all the workers. They might think ah who's that, ah it's the mother tongue teacher, and they don't have keys, have to knock. Not the same status. And the Norwegian teachers might say ah I forgot Mohamed is coming today, well my class is on a school trip and I didn't tell him. It's like this. I think to educate the bilingual teachers in pedagogy and methods in the classroom so they could be sent to courses

with the other teachers, because they don't know about these extra courses. Nobody tells them and they are all the time in their cars, driving to the next school. That's what we do, Tema Morsmål, the website here. We have this national conference each year. Last year we were in Trondheim, where there are 250 bilingual teachers. It's the most perfect two days. They get to discuss what the methods are, they're going to learn something new, they're going to meet, and they're going to meet someone who believes in what they do. So I think one of the biggest obstacles is that they are not present enough and they are never with when there are after education, continuing education for teachers, conferences. That is for the results, but also for raising the standard on the education but also to give them a position to be important persons, to be respected. It's like 'I am so dependent on you to help me with these kids, but still I'm here and you're there, and I'm telling you what to do.' Yes now we will have science, so if you could learn [teach] him about trees, its ok, if you can't, its ok. There are no plans, long term plans with what they do. Some places they work as a team. We have this project now in NAFO, in different counties, for example in Ostfold, Fredrikstad, we are trying to (four mother tongue teachers), instead of going back and forth, back and forth to schools, 4 weeks they are there, the next four weeks they are there. So we can have this long term development in some subject. The project summary, I will have it soon and its quite interesting because the parents are saying this is a much better way to do this because then I can talk to Mohamed on a daily basis for four weeks, better than knowing he's here Monday, not Friday, but not next week. Maybe they have 4 hours in one week because you have this money and we need... ok we have money to give 4 hours of Somali teaching each week, 4 hours is like one day, ok then two hours Monday, two on Thursday. It's not more, but they're more there now, but not more throughout the whole year. The experience was that it is much better. Some places, you have a teacher 100%, all week. Again, it's that this school has more money, this school doesn't. This one is 10% and this one, 100%.

Very inconsistent depending on where they live?

Yes, in the whole of Norway. And within the same county as well, some schools are rich, some aren't. At Toyen Skole, where I worked, there was more money because all the social issues and you have more, you give money on other projects, more money.

I hear that there is a controversy right now about how much money is put into each student attending schools in the east versus those who attend school in the west of Oslo?

That's actually. My daughter is in a west school, they give one pencil in first grade. My daughter is needing new paper, no no you have to get it yourself. Because they know that we can buy it and we will do it because we want to provide our kids with stuff for school so we would do it anyway because we have the resources to do it. But in those areas, no, you have to sit there without something so they put more money into them.

What's your role and position right now?

I'm an advisor, that's what the role is called, at the National Centre for Multicultural Education.

And when you taught, you were a Norwegian teacher, is that right?

Yes, general pedagogic.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual, bilingual, or plurilingual?

Monolingual. Yes, just Norwegian. I only had English until the 10th grade, and I can speak some, but not write.

What languages do you speak in your personal life and your work life?

Norwegian, Norwegian.

Ok, and do you have any significant language learning experiences for yourself?

Nope. Traditional at school, and actually bad English, because today actually there was an article about the royal

family taking their children to a private school because the English teaching is so bad and I do understand that because I think really the English teaching is bad. Because I was an English teacher in 7th grade and who am I to do this? English is a forgotten language actually, in the schools. It's been all mathematics and Science now in the last 8 years. Because test results told us we were bad in mathematics and science and forget everything else. English is falling behind.

Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to add?

No I don't think so, there are many people in the school around who really are good at this type of teaching for these types of kids. Bilingual and Norwegian as a second language learners and methods. I think there are many people who are good in it and do it very well and in spite of they want to do it for themselves and for their students, it's not because the principal is telling them to do it. It's because I see the need to teach myself how to do it because I want to be a good teacher for them but not because some programme has said this is the way we should do it because... so I think there are many good teachers, I see it now, because now I travel all over the Norwegian country and see it, myself. That the teacher want to do good for the bilingual kids but we don't have the teachers, the mother tongue teachers, and the resources to do this. So it's like try your best anyway, all the time.

It's good that these teachers are seeing the need and taking the steps themselves to provide a better education for their students.

Yes, and I think that it is typical Norway, [unknown Norwegian word], when you're doing something without getting paid, you know when you're in the community and doing things and you go together in the groups and do something and I think that's like a Norwegian spirit that you like have to do it. And though its bad paid and bad everything, you do it anyway, because you want to do something for these kids. And for their parents and you work, work, work all the time and this is the big issue in Norway right now because of the teaching contracts and every year if you want to be more paid, raises. Worker's unions are decided with the community, the teacher will work this. The community now wants the teachers to have less holidays and longer weeks and more, 8 hours on the job each day. As a teacher, I can do school, then I can go home and do work at home, it's not in my spare time because I have 10 hours per week that I will do these things at home. [Some talk about strikes and unions, etc. omitted from the transcript]. It's bad employment politics right now.

If someone were to raise this issue with the government and say why can't my child have mother tongue education if by law, they are entitled to it? What would happen?

They could try and many people do. I had parents who called me and said ok my child is living in Bergen for example, and they tell me that he can't get mother tongue education because he has so many hours extra Norwegian so this is the way because the law says extra or more adapted Norwegian before or bilingual or mother tongue if possible. And that's vague. And then they say oh but we are fulfilling the law because your son is getting 10 hours Norwegian per week, not 5 as it's in the curriculum so we are trying to support him by giving him more Norwegian and therefore, we are fulfilling paragraph 2.8. So because we have no mother tongue teacher, and it's not possible to do it on our budget so the table is clean. If you are parents who can talk and do know your way, you can get it because you're going to make noise, and nobody wants noise but many of these parents doesn't have the speaking ability to make that point in Norwegian and maybe if they don't have an interpreter to help at those meetings. The parents also come to the teacher and ask why and I have to say because the principal says and that's my level, ok go to the principal, and they go to him and ask the same question, why? And he says because this is how much money I get, go to the next level...they say no, because in Oslo we do it this way. And then stop. So but, it's the parents who have the power so we can try them to go together and make, like the parents on the religion topic in Norway. There is a course, Christianity, religion, and something, but it was like more Christianity and not so much other religions so the human ethics parents were very angry because in the human rights, it stands that the parents are supposed to choose religion and how they're going to teach it for their children. But in Norwegian school, it's always been a choice, the humanities. But still Christianity is 60% of the curriculum. The parents went to the human rights board in Norway and they had to do something about it and they did. So it's the parents who have the power, the parents have to come together and say paragraph 2.8 isn't good enough, we need something more specific. Something they can relate to and know what rights they have. Because now it's like

if I live there I get, if I live there, I don't, because it's too vague, it's up to the principal. The parents have the power and I try to say it that the parents have to go to the top and say something. This is the way Oslo is, you are out you are in. All the bilingual teachers, out. Some of my co-workers 60 years old, Somali teacher, lovely lady, in Sudan she was a professor and she wrote many books and she comes to Norway and worked beside me in the classroom as a mother tongue teacher. When she was 60, they came in and said sorry, no more mother tongue, and she was out. She's now in another school, very rich school. She tells me she is the only one who wears a hijab. But they actually appreciate her because she is like some 'exotic'.

What is she teaching?

She is teaching science in Norwegian. She speaks many languages though and has high education and all the students in 10th grade had better grades because of her and all the rich parents are like wow. It had to be a Somali teacher, woman, 60 years old, 5 languages – then you're satisfied. It's actually you see a person, you're from Somali, you have hijab, ok you're not so good. It's still there. They don't see inside, what they know and what they can do, and oh you smell a little funny – it's still there, in 2014. And it's still there in my friend group, they still have these thoughts. So I think it's going to take a good time to turn over Norway to understand the resources of bilingualism in general. Norwegian/English, good. Norwegian/German good. Norwegian/Spanish, good we can go on holiday. Norwegian/Arabic, why? Norwegian/Somali, Oh my god. Many of the Russian and Polish parents are bilingual, and encourage this in their children. They make this decision and they see the benefits and they want them to talk to grandparents with this language. But the parents in Toyen, they are told by society and politics that you are going to be integrated, you have to get a job, and you need to learn Norwegian. So that they talk actually bad Norwegian with their children at home instead of their mother tongue. But no, talk mother tongue, it's better for him, for his brain, for his teaching [learning], and I do the Norwegian in school. Yes, but we live in Norway, we have to learn. Yes! But, like this, not like that. The society is telling them, if you want to be one of us, talk Norwegian. So they do, but they do it bad and its doing more damage than good for them, and for their children. So that is the issue. But some teachers also think this. The students came up to me recently and said we can't speak Urdu in the class anymore, why not? Before, half the class was in Urdu for these kids, but now the teachers say - don't speak it.

Because the principal has told them this?

Yes.

## **Interview 10**

### **Educational sphere, face-to-face interview.**

There have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students. Do you think that Norway has responded in an effective way to support new immigrants in their education and language needs?

Not in practice, but in the documents that we rely on, like the education act and so on, it's ok. It could be stronger though because you know this education act?

Yes.

What it says, it is... I don't remember.

Paragraph 2.8?

Yes, this here, it says if necessary, the pupil should also be entitled to mother tongue instruction, IF, If necessary. So what is necessary? That is for the school to decide. And that is the big problem I think in Norway, you can have a nice document that you refer to, but each school in Oslo, each community can decide themselves. And there is not

really a big system for to check what the school is doing so even if the law is like this, the school can say no, we don't give mother tongue instruction here, and finish.

Even though it's a law?

It's a law but it's how you read the law, interpret. So that's the biggest problem I think because we have a good law but the practice is something else and it's up to the school and it's up to the community to decide so I think that is the big issue and the big problem. In schools generally, but especially for pupils who need something more to learn Norwegian.

Did it look different several years ago?

The practices?

Yes.

You mean Oslo?

Yes.

In Oslo now, it was different than before. Why it has turned, I think it's because some research that says that mother tongue instruction is not good for learning Norwegian. It's not so effective and they are relying on this. If you are interested in the research, I can find it to me. There are some researchers in the University of Oslo that wrote about... what is it called... I know that I think one or two years ago this researcher had a meeting with all the municipalities for the schools in Oslo and then they told about this research and after that it was said that we will not allow, also it was said that someone was saying they shouldn't speak their own mother tongue at home, but the research is not saying that. It's interpreted this way and that's why. This research is about reading actually and it's about how you read in your mother tongue and how it is affecting reading in a second language. [Stops interview to find it.]

Was the intention of this research to have an effect on mother tongue policy?

I don't know, it's difficult to say. But I think it's for the people who decide the politics in Oslo, you know that its political parties that are deciding in the schools in Oslo and you know that this political party is [Hoyde], that's the national. But in Oslo for many years, it has been the same party.

It's the conservative party?

Yes, and it's not that, their view is that everybody has to learn Norwegian as fast as possible and they think to help that is to learn even more Norwegian. Not to base it on their mother tongue, but just to have more hours in Norwegian, just give them more Norwegian then they will be much better in Norwegian and that's the thought. I think it's actually a political question at the bottom and they use this research just to say that see here is the research that can really undermine education policy.

Was it just this research or was it more that they were basing this on?

I don't know of any other research. We had this meeting, this centre is part of a national strategy so we have meetings with the ones that are responsible for the national learning in Norway so we had a meeting what about mother tongue – is it important, has there come new research that says something else? And so on, and it's only this research that they can say something not so positive as research has shown before. So I don't know about anything else actually.

Are the mother tongue programmes realistic at the level of implementation? To your knowledge, are they currently employed in schools?

No. They are not currently in schools. I think its individual, I think for some pupils it's very necessary, for others, it's not maybe so necessary. The most important for me is that all the education that the pupils get should be good and it should be like every teacher that they have should know what these children need. When you are learning a new language, what do you do, what kind of pedagogy do I use to learn Norwegian and this information, competence, the teachers don't have this competence. That's the big problem from my point of view.

Even recent graduates?

Yes.

Do you think that will be something that changes in the universities?

Not soon, but I hope it will change and I hope that the work we do here will change it. Because I think that the competence is not so easy to find here in Norway. There's not a university that have, all the universities have specialized areas but they don't have the whole like how do we learn other people Norwegian? And they should, and of course they have pupils who are newcomers, but they also have pupils that have lived here their whole and maybe their mother tongue is Norwegian also, but when they don't speak Norwegian good enough, what should they do? So I think the answer is not only mother tongue programmes, I don't think that is a solution to everything, it is a part, but it has to be more, bigger competence raising of the people who will be teachers.

From your own observations, do you think that mother tongue programmes that were in place contributed to students' academic success in schools?

I don't have experience with those programmes because in my teaching, there was no mother tongue instruction. There was some but I didn't saw it so I don't know anything about it. But I have more belief in the bilingual education because I think the problems for many that don't speak Norwegian as they should to learn all the things they should learn in school, the problem is subjects like science, social studies, and if they only get more competence in their own language, they can't translate that to the subjects themselves, so I believe in the bilingual education. But I don't think that if every pupil had bilingual education, the results would be very good. I don't think it's the only answer, but I think it's one of the keys, but not the only one.

Besides raising the competence in teachers, what do you think that either the city could be doing or the teachers or principals could be doing to meet these students' needs, ones who speak a minority language as their first language?

There's a lot of things they could do. I mean to work with the parents, to have good relationships, is very important I think. I think a lot can be done by including the parents and by making the parents believe that they can do something good for their children. So I think that it is a very good idea to work with them, and not just give them information and tell them what to do, but have a real dialogue. That's one thing I think they can do, but also, they can work with the social environment in the local environment, especially for these children, but for every child as well. The school can do much there I think and maybe you know that the last 5 years, 10 years, it has been more focused on results, on school results, in all Europe I think it's come to Norway because of the PISA studies. Math and science and reading and writing, I don't know what it's called in English, but as like the basic knowledge. And we had a new curriculum in 2006 and after that, it was a big change, in Oslo, but in all the schools in Norway. It focused more on the competence that you can measure but as we know, much cannot be measured and I think those areas, those social areas is being, they're not being used so much time for that now as before and I think that's not good. I think before the Norwegian schools were very good to raise all the pupils to make a good social environment in the class so they used a lot of time on that and now I think it has changed and I think that's bad and especially bad for those children that maybe needed more.

What about the differences between the east and west sides of the city, is there a policy that can be applied to all schools in Oslo or should it be school specific, as it kind of is now?

You know now, all schools have pupils with a mother tongue other than Norwegian, all the schools have that. So I think that it shouldn't be differences in the politics, but in the reality, of course it should be different. I live in the

eastern part of the city and some of the schools there have 90-100% pupils who have another language than Norwegian as their mother tongue but of course, it should be seen in the practice but that's the problem, it doesn't [isn't]! So of course it should be a difference in the practice but in the political and in the laws, it should be equal.

Do you think mother tongue programmes or bilingual programmes support a multilingual Oslo?

Yeah.

And is that an important value for Norwegians?

Of course in any way but if you look to the economy, that the Norwegians and especially interested of, we need all these languages. That's a very strange thing because in Oslo, they don't appreciate the mother tongue, I can see they appreciate it if you have English or French, maybe Spanish because its nice languages, Western languages we can say. But if you have Somali, it's not so important, and in Oslo, I don't know if you know it, but you can choose another, to have another language from 5th grade I think then you can choose English, Spanish, and they also have it so you can choose Arabic, but then it's not a study because it's your mother tongue, it's like a second, what is it called when you learn another language at school? In Norwegian we have two different names, if you learn a language that you have as your mother tongue, its one name, but if you're learning a language that you don't know from before, and you're learning it from scratch, it has another name.

I think we call that foreign language instruction.

Foreign language, yes. So in Oslo, you can choose foreign language from 5th or 6th grade and you can choose Arabic, but then it's not like your mother tongue, it's as a foreign language. So for me in the practice, it looks like they don't appreciate, they appreciate some of the mother tongues better than others, that is just my point of view, of course, and some, for example Somali is not so important, but when you come higher up in the grades, and when you get older, then it's good to have people that know Arabic for example, but then many of the pupils don't know or have forgotten their Arabic because they don't get any support in this language at the primary school, so for me it's not logical.

Could you take any language as a foreign language?

No, not Somali, but Arabic yeah.

Just because it's a bigger language?

I don't know the answer to that, just because of the economic situation and also in the military operations, we need people that speak Arabic or Chinese for example and also for the countries that have oil, we need Arabic, but Somali, what do we need it for?

So it's all about economic interests?

Mainly I think yes. That's my point of view.

What is a pertinent issue among these minority-language speaking communities that is not being addressed in education policy? We touched on this a little bit already.

You know, I have a son now and he's starting at school after this summer break and there was an information meeting for all the parents that have children that are beginning school and two of those parents, they asked about mother tongue education, because they were interested in that their children could have it. And they said we don't have mother tongue education in Oslo, that was the answer from the principal.

From a school on the Eastside?



Yes.

Even though the law...?

Yes, but they doesn't care about the law. But I don't know if you know it, but I think this year, it will be a national, what's it called? They will check all the schools, well not all the schools, but the schools in Norway for how they are responding to this law so I know that now that all the schools know this, it will maybe change some of their practice but I don't know if it will change it or they give more mother tongue education or I think that they be more strict about it because it's very formal, this law. If a child is getting special Norwegian instruction, they give the parents a note that says your children need this and the parents should sign it, but the law now also say that before you can give a child this, you have to test the child so you have to prove that the child is needing this kind of education. But I know that it's something that is bothering the school now that they know that it will be a national checking how the schools are responding to this law. But I don't think it will change the mother tongue instruction in Oslo, because if you saw in the links that I sent you, the last years in Oslo, there are no mother tongue education. As you can see in the charts, from 2007-2008, it gradually started to be less and less, and now its zero. It's only this year that its zero. But I think also that the schools that gave mother tongue instruction a lot have been fighting hard for doing that. I don't know if you know it but the leader of this centre is married with a man who was the principal at Toyen Skole, and he really fought for having mother tongue instruction, a really bad fight I think so when he quit, they quit mother tongue instruction. So they don't want it. And during many times a year, there comes in the paper that so many pupils in the east side of the city are not speaking well Norwegian, and what should we do about it. The big question has been they are not getting better with mother tongue instruction, we have to do something else.

But they haven't really had mother tongue instruction?

No, but they just say it doesn't help without having any proof. But it's a political issue, it's always political I would say. And I think they also, many of the parents know about it, they ask about it. Two of the parents asked about it at the meeting I was at, but they meet that we are not giving this type of education and maybe if they knew something more, they would fight for it more maybe because most of the parents don't know about their rights, but that's true.

If they fought for it, do you think they would give it to them because it is a law?

Yeah. I think the parents power in Oslo are very big because I had experience myself as a teacher that I said something to the principal that was wrong with the school and they didn't do anything about it but as soon as a parent complained about it to the principal and maybe higher up they have to do something. So I think that if the parents had cooperated in Oslo, that's the only thing that could change it really.

So the parents really have the power in this?

I think so I think so but I think that the schools know that these parents don't know about the system and they don't know how to do it so they are.. yeah it costs money, of course money is the question here, to fund the teachers, and also many can say we don't have teachers, they don't have teachers in Somali. They can also use it as an excuse.

Have you experienced the reactions of immigrant parents to any of the above mentioned programmes?

Because I was a project leader in a programme in Oslo called spragluftig, language lift or something, in English. It was about doing ... they picked up students for their report that they thought didn't know Norwegian as well as they should and they follow them two years in the kindergarten and two years in the schools and when they came to the schools, I was responsible for that project and in that project, we included the parents also and they were very positive to the things that we did, but we didn't have mother tongue teachers, so what we did was to really try to do something good in Norwegian. But also we had meetings with the parents, and we also had courses that gave the mothers more Norwegian competence so really all that you do for these children, the parents are happy for it and especially when you meet the parents where they are, and when you meet them and say that you should

continue to speak mother tongue at home, that is your language, the language that you know best to the children, they are so happy to hear it. But I also know that some parents think, because they have been hearing this, many times, that their children should speak mostly Norwegian to be better in Norwegian and most of the teachers have said that also. So after this meeting that I told you about, where they gathered all the principals in Oslo to talk about this article, I got a phone call after from a teacher that was so confused because they had new immigrants from southeast Europe and the principal said to them that stop speaking your own language at home, you should start to speak Norwegian. But this research doesn't say it.

Were you a Norwegian teacher?

Yes.

When you started teaching, did you feel prepared to have immigrant students in your classroom?

No, not at all. Because my education didn't tell me anything of this group and that was in 2000, when I ended that education so I wasn't prepared at all, so what I learned, I learned through practice and to do many bad things and of course I also learned it through watching other teachers who had competence in that area but I didn't know anything actually. Nothing.

And it was something that you dealt with from the start?

Yeah because I had special groups that should have special Norwegian education from the start, from my first year, I had groups. I asked my principal what am I going to do in this group and he said I don't know and then, back in that time, there was an own curriculum for, there is that now also but in another way. Before it was more decided what you were going to do in these few hours but they didn't know about this curriculum and I didn't know about it so I began as what the teacher said they should do but I found out that was not so good either so I had to try it out but oral language of course you have to start there. I realized that quick but otherwise I was not competent but I felt that they learned during the years, hopefully, through practice, but it took a long time and I think that I should have learned that in the teacher school but they didn't learn [teach] me anything on this for how to learn [teach] another pupil Norwegian.

And is it the same situation today, for teachers?

I think they have a bit more but I don't think it's good enough.

What are the specific obstacles you see that prohibit schools or others from providing mother tongue instruction for all students who request it?

It's many I think. It's first of all the view that you have yourself when you're leading a school, what you think about mother tongue education and if you're working in Oslo and you have heard that it doesn't work, I think it's starting with the principal because the principal is the one who decides. The principal decides which teachers will work at the school and if they have mother tongue instruction, they have to have mother tongue teachers so yeah the principal are the most important person there. It's also about getting mother tongue teachers, because even if they can use it as an excuse, some of them are also for real. Like in some of the mother tongues, they are so rare that they don't find any people that can be mother tongue teachers, that's a hindrance. But I think the biggest thing is what the principal, his view or her view about mother tongue education, if you believe in it or not, that's the number one I think. And before that, it's where you work, like in Oslo, maybe you don't have an alternative. I don't know if they have told the same to the principals, it's not allowed, I don't know but when its zero, something has happened. What they have been saying, I don't know.

And it's the first year that it's all zero?

Yeah, and it's interesting that you're writing about this now, really. It's illogical, because we need all these languages in Oslo, we need these languages. So I don't really understand the politics here, but politics are linked to money

I think. Because it costs money. But you know also when you, the schools get more money if they have many students who need special Norwegian training so if they can write that they have 100 students, they get money for them. But in practice, they don't always use this money on especially these students but that I think they will change with the national review that is going to check it out, what they really are doing because that's necessary and very, very important. It hasn't been done before, not a national review. It will be interesting but I don't really know if they will be going into the classrooms, maybe they will just look at the papers, and if it looks like everything seems ok. The school that I worked at, we had a review and they only looked at the papers. I will have to look out for it. If I can find it, I can help you to understand what it says. But I think in the bottom, its political, it sure is. And when you have a system like in Norway where the law says one thing but the different cities, they do whatever they want because the law that is very strong in Norway is about just that cities can decide themselves, they have their own political group, so this law is like higher than the national law. The city law, in practice but it shouldn't be that way. So it's a very strange situation I think.

What is your role/position here at NAFO and what type of work do you do? Could you comment on what NAFO does for mother tongue?

We have the responsibility to guide the universities in providing additional teacher training. But it's difficult for the universities to really ask us I think. They don't want it. But actually now, we are just in the beginning phase. We are making education that will on be on NAFO's site that teachers, not teachers but the schools themselves can do that competence based raising or something. But we are just starting that because we see the needs, so we'll, we don't have it now, but we will have it. On our site, you can find a lot of information, if you're a teacher and you want to know what to do, you can find a lot of tips on what to do. And in the case of the mother tongue, we have a website and behind that website, there are mother tongue teachers that are making the content and some of them are also working in Oslo. But what do we do in case of Oslo? We have a network in Oslo, but it's not a very big network because we have been struggling in having the contact with Oslo because they don't, I don't know the reason actually I think it's something that I don't know in the history of the council here, I don't really know the reason, but also that they don't believe in mother tongue education and this centre has, from the beginning, raised mother tongue as one of the biggest issues for this group.

And you're an advisor?

I'm an advisor here but I don't have any experience with mother tongue instruction so my focus is the other, all the other subjects, what can they do, because that had been what I've been working with myself. So I see that mother tongue instruction and using the mother tongue, you can use the mother tongue even if you don't have a mother tongue teacher, so I think that is important too but I think that all the education should be good to this group and even if they get maybe one or two hours mother tongue education, if the rest of the education is bad, they don't get better in Norwegian so this is what I personally want to work with and my position here, I began working with that site Tema Morsmål, but now I have I'm like a project leader on a new project that is looking for the alternative for giving bilingual education via net.

To actually give this education online to students?

Yeah, but we're looking at all the possibilities and we have many suggestions but it is finally a political decision and we are waiting that decision.

So would students take time at school and be doing this bilingual education or would they take the time at home to do it?

No, in the classroom. It has to be included in the ordinary, that's my point of view. For example, if they have, if there is a new arrived student in 2nd grade, in Oslo for example, and they have science, on this website, you can have this same information in your mother tongue and in Norwegian because that's the whole idea that we suggest and then you can continue to be with your class because I think to be in the ordinary class is important and I think that also during a project like that, we can raise the competence of the teachers and that's using this website. We are in the beginning phase and there are a lot of things that need to be done before we can try it out and we want to try it out and the directorate, they want to try it out and it's on a politically higher level and they have to give money to it

and of course, it will cost a lot of money to make this web resource but I think it's a really good idea.

Sounds like it!

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual/bilingual/plurilingual?

Bilingual I think would be the answer. I speak Norwegian, English and a bit Arabic, just at the beginning phase.

Which languages do you speak or interact with in (a) your personal and (b) work life?

Norwegian, both, sometimes English in working life but not so much as you can hear.

If you have learned other languages, what has been the most significant language learning experience for you?

Yeah, Arabic, I lived in Lebanon for four months.

And you learned formally or informally?

Informally only and I learned a bit after when I came to Norway, but I stopped.

Is there anything I haven't asked and you would like to add?

Only it is a political question, mother tongue instruction in Oslo, completely. And I said it. Also this illogical thing that they provide language as a foreign language in some languages and that is a very highlighted thing and they write about it and it's so nice when Norwegians are learning Chinese, it's so beautiful. And then when someone is coming here and maybe knows Chinese, they don't appreciate it, and that for me is a very illogical way to look at languages. Yeah, you can say that for many of the students that I had in school, I was feeling that the Norwegian schools, or the schools in Oslo, they are asking about the things that they don't know, always, because many of them, they don't know the culture, they don't know the literature, they don't know the language, and all we speak about is that. And I think another topic that we haven't discussed is the international view that you should have in Oslo when you have subject. I don't think that either is integrated into language in Norwegian or English, maybe you learn a little about London or New York, more like Western countries. So they don't have an international perspective. I don't think it's included in school. And that I think is a very important thing, for students to feel that there is something they know that the schools ask for.

For the immigrant students?

Yeah, yeah. I think many students feel they don't have anything to offer because the school, they don't ask them. They have a lot but the schools do not appreciate what they know and I know that many teachers, they have students, and if I ask the teachers, because sometimes we have some courses for teachers, and then if I ask, oh can they read or write in their mother tongue? They don't know. So teachers can have second language learners, and they don't know that they can read and write in Arabic. That's good to know when you're learning [teaching] somebody Norwegian, it's good to know if can write or not.

It's also maybe a missed opportunity, because you can build on those resources.

Yeah it is, but they don't have the competence in that.

And are teachers trained in culturally relevant pedagogy?

Maybe it's better now, I hope, in teacher education. But when I went there, not so long ago, it was not a topic at all so I hope it's better now.

## Interview 11

### Educational sphere, face-to-face interview.

Could you describe your role right now?

Now I have been here since, we two have been here at the same time, we are very good friends. We started here in 1998, and I have been all around, taught everything with the mother language. I am teaching for the children who can't understand the subjects or if they can't in Norwegian, they must learn in their own language. So I can see that we have a very good time here with the mother tongue language and everything, but now, they don't want.

And so you were first a mother tongue teacher and then in a bilingual classroom?

Yeah, I have been in a bilingual class the whole time. I had never been in an Urdu class. We have different types of children, and then we had small groups with the different language teachers in the subjects, but now since 5,6 years, I have been class teacher all the time.

Ok, and now are you the only teacher in the class?

We are three teachers which are having third class. So we have three A and three B and I have ten children, and we also have contact teachers and the others have 12 and 13, so we have 35 children altogether. This year I have been giving a little bit, some of the children they need mathematics scores. I take them out and give them in the small groups. So sometimes I have Urdu children there too so I can use Urdu, I know they don't want, but I still do that.

So they officially say don't use it?

Yes, but I do it. For my children. For the older children. But I used to take the younger children too and those that need the language, and help in the Norwegian course.

Now you are speaking only Norwegian in the class?

All the time, Norwegian. No Urdu, in class I can't speak Urdu, I'm not allowed to.

That's because the principal or the politicians have advised no Urdu?

Oh, the politicians, they don't want. I do remember when I came in 1998 [to work here], there were two Pakistani parents that didn't want me to speak Urdu with their children. They said our children are going to learn Norwegian and they couldn't. So they thought that only in if they speak in Norwegian, they can learn anything but after 6 months, he was really angry with me and I knew the mother could not speak Norwegian, so I was really strict with him, don't miss the gap between mother and child. Because he could speak Norwegian, but not his mother. So but he understood. I had a pretty good time, I love my job here, but in the last 2 or 3 years, everything has changed.

Can you comment on your feelings about the importance of mother tongue education?

You know, I think the mother tongue language is so necessary because you can think about that, you can feel it, you can have culture if you think about something and you know what the background of it is. Mother tongue is the identity for me, as I think that Norwegian is very important too, as I have been here 20 years now I can speak now good Norwegian, but I came old so I can't learn everything but I have taken my teacher training here, 4 or 5 years so I'm a competent teacher here but I think that something, you can't miss your mother tongue. You have learned when you were in the womb of your mother, so mother tongue is so necessary.

And do you think that it contributes to academic success for the students?

I think so, yeah yeah. I have two children, they are 37 and 39. And I can see that they can speak so good Urdu and they speak so beautiful Norwegian, more better than Norwegian people do I think because they have studied here,

one of them in information science, masters. And the other was a masters in civil economics. So they can speak English as well too. If they get proper teaching, it helps. I have been very busy with my children. I wanted for them to be able to read the Quran, to read the Urdu, everything so I'm very happy that I've done that and I think they are successful, they have three languages and they have good jobs, and they haven't missed anything. They had a mother tongue teacher for 3 years, I don't know how clever he was, he was not teacher educated, and he was just a speaker of the language. So I don't think that he can teach the children so well but I'm very grateful that they got him. When I was at home, I didn't talk Norwegian with them, just Urdu. So I'm really happy for that. But now with the grandchildren, I talk Norwegian, so now my kids say mama, you used to get so angry if we talked Norwegian with you but now you talk Norwegian with them. [Laughs.] And I told them, ok now it's your job, I can speak whatever I want.

What do you think could be done better to ensure that classes here are meeting the minority students educational, cultural, linguistic needs?

What the school is doing, I don't know what they are doing now! I don't think the school has very good teacher/parent communication, they don't have so many teachers that can help them. Maybe they are going to miss that connection.

Because they speak different languages?

Yes, because there aren't many teachers who can talk the language. And I don't know. I'm really afraid and maybe I'm wrong but we had a so good time with our balance but I want to see in two more years. They can't do many things, they can't do but the last two years have been so many difficulties in the school life so I don't know. I'm really afraid, I miss my sympathies with the teachers.

And not being able to teach your mother tongue? How does it change your job?

You know that there are many things, we have many parents here that came from their language, I can't speak their languages, but because I am a foreigner, so they used to come to me and I can understand their languages and the children have been interpreters for me. So I think that they are going to lose something and the politicians think that we don't get so good results because they don't learn Norwegian properly. So bad thinking. I think they are not looking at the research. There are many research, and you know the administration now, they don't want to learn about that. Maybe they can learn very good Norwegian I think they can learn, it's not like that – that they can't learn [through the Norwegian only model], but I think that they think inside the language, they can't learn that, maybe. It will take more years, I think so.

Have you experienced the reactions of parents back when you had mother tongue/bilingual education and now?

Most of the parents told me that if you don't have mother tongue, I can take my children wherever else. If they have. Most of them will try at a school nearby. Most of them are very very angry. But what helps?

So they know that their children are entitled to mother tongue?

I don't know, you know we have parents who don't have so much knowledge of the laws, I don't think that they can fight for themselves. I have told many of them.

Do you think the power is with the parents?

They can't do anything, I don't know. I don't know how much, maybe it helps, because if they are not only one but a group of them. I was thinking that maybe I could ask most of the parents to come with me, but not allowed to do it with my job so I can't say anything. But I've told somebody, please come and talk with them. I think that they have done it, they told me that they have done it, but we have so many different types of teachers, leaders here that they can't see that I have been with you and talk to the other, they can't see that and how will you tell them, we have so many things to do, I can't tell them. So I hope that they are going to come, the parents, maybe they can

change the teaching system or mother language so we will see. We will see.

Ok, what are specific obstacles that you see that prohibit schools from successfully providing mother tongue instruction besides politics?

Most of them, I have two sons. They have many friends. They send their children to private Arabic teacher after school time. So most of them have done this private system, then they need money. Most of the mosques have their own training because then they don't have to miss out, community classes. I know that most of them, 2 or 3 groups, they are doing. I don't much how much they are going, but we are going to the mosque and we know that.

Do you see anything that could be done differently in the schools so that they could provide mother tongue?

Ah, you know that everything depends on the teacher or the parents coming out, to come and fight for that, maybe it helps. But I think that the parents are so tired, they are fighting for Christianity and they are so many things they are fighting for. I don't know. Our third generation here are saying ok I can't speak Urdu to my children. So they are thinking just as the Norwegian people are telling them. So I don't know what we are going to do. I think it will help most of them if they understand that my ethnicity is Norwegian, mother language, plus because of course we are living here so we have to know Norwegian, but I don't know.

## **Interview 12**

### **Educational sphere, face-to-face interview.**

Can you start by telling me about your background with mother tongue education or just education for minority speaking students in general?

I'm a social professor here at the university college faculty of education. I've worked as teacher trainer for many years. My subject teaching at the teacher training is religion and world views, this is a common subject – Norwegian world views and philosophy, and also teaching social sciences. So I'm not teaching languages. So my background for giving you some information is partly that within religious education and social science, I have teaching about religious education in a multicultural context for many years. I've also been teaching at the master's programme for multicultural and international education so actually teaching different subjects especially religious education, life sciences, philosophy and social sciences has been my topic. I have a Ph.D. from the University of Warwick in the UK on Muslim children in Oslo. So that is why I'm kind of more on the religious and ethnic identity issue. But, I've been, I was the dean of the faculty of education for four years, from 2003 -7 and then from 2007-11, I was the rector, the principal of the whole university college, the elected rector. In that period, partly we had a specific strategy for a programme. It was called Intercult, it combined intercultural perspectives and international perspectives for the whole college, and I was asked then in that period, to be the leader of a group appointed by the government to look at the situation for children and young people with another mother tongue than Norwegian. We call them in official Norwegian terminology, they are called minority language pupils. This is the, you of the white paper, it came in 2010, I'm sorry but this is only in Norwegian, but I was in charge of that group and in that white paper, which was actually then followed up by, maybe that is the white paper when it is presented to the parliament, I'm not sure. This is more public research, not research but you have a broad group kind of coming up with, describing the situation, making references to research but not being a specific researcher themselves. Often these public papers, they end up then – this is appointed by the government, so they ask for an investigation in a certain area and then sometimes the issue itself or part of it is integrated into a proposal put forward to the parliament so this was from 2010. We had actually hoped that the whole paper would be then presented to the parliament because there were some principle discussions, I'll come back to that. But it didn't happen, but they took some of it and worked further and then in 2012-13, the government made this, this is called the complete policy of integration, so chapter 6 here is about education so they have picked up a lot of the proposals they came up with here. And of course, bilingual education and mother tongue instruction is very central in this year, so I'll just mention that it's not my research since I was the leader of that, I have some opinions about mother tongue, both

in the kindergarten and in primary and secondary. The new thing about this investigation is that we were asked to look at the minority language children from kindergarten, no from preschool age up to adults so we looked at the whole, all the educational programmes, so yeah, that is my background. And if, I was thinking just before you came, what could I recommend you in English, and we are making references in this to an investigation taking place approximately the same time by the OECD, called Migrant Education. Some of the findings that we did are similar to the findings that they find.

You were appointed to this group and did not necessarily choose to be in it, is that right?

Yes, I was appointed to the group by the minister of education, as the leader so I was in charge, but I didn't appoint the other members, we were 16 altogether, representing the whole country because that's always important in Norway to have because you know some of these discussion are very relevant to Oslo and maybe some other big cities but maybe not so much to the countryside, more rural but the so there were representative from the whole country and also some of them had background from working in kindergartens, some from primary schools but there were also lots of people in that group that what we would call in charge, in the municipalities, some teachers but not many practitioners, more people who are in charge in the community or the municipalities around the country. And also some one researcher from Sweden and one from Norway, the one from Sweden, Agneta Bolinder, she is actually a specialist in languages, but the researcher from Norway, Anders Bakken, he is more educational researcher, sociologist. He is a very important source for getting information about statistics about the number in schools, how they're doing, where the problems are, he's published lots of stuff on the educational situation for migrant students.

There have been many policies put in place in regards to increasing levels of immigration to Oslo, for example, teacher training programmes in cultural diversity, special language support for immigrant students. Do you think that Norway has responded in an effective way to support new immigrants in their education and language needs?

I would say partly, because and to start with, how can we measure this, so that the research done by Anders Bakken and others, they actually tell that and we also have in this NOU said that the situation is not all black and white. We can use the expression, it's kind of a success story in the way that more students with parents who immigrated are now inclined to take higher education in Norway, more than the majority of the Norwegians. So if you look at it in this way, girls and boys, especially the girls but that is also a parallel to the ethnic Norwegians that the percentages of girls now who go into higher education is higher than boys. But among these, what we previously called the second generation immigrants, those who have not immigrated, but their parents have immigrated, and they have been all throughout the Norwegian school system, and they a lot of them do it very well and they start studying. So that in a way, it's a success story but another part is not a success story. There are still, on the international tests, students with minority background score lower generally than those with Norwegian as their mother tongue. And of course what we have found out and also it's not surprising that the biggest problems are with those which we may call the 'latecomers', those who arrive in Norway when they are more or less 14, 15. So if they arrive late, then they struggle to complete lower secondary and upper secondary. So in upper secondary, there has been for many years and is quite stable actually but there are too many who drop out. Drop-outs in upper secondary are quite high, especially among boys and now I'm speaking regardless of ethnic or religious background. The dropouts are too high, and also among boys and especially among boys with a mother tongue other than Norwegian so we may ask why is that so and why do more boys with an immigrant background drop out in upper secondary, why are the grades lower in minority backgrounds and another thing is how do pupils and their parents report about their schools so their reporting about school, how they feel about it is actually quite good. So in a way, that is also a success story. All the research in Norway has shown that also pupils with minority background they are very content but the results are not that good and I think that the laws are not bad, in Norway. Regarding the minority rights but there are some things that I am critical towards and not only me but in this group, NOU the diversity and competence. What the law you know is that states that, paragraph 2.8 you've probably heard about that. That you have the right, if you're not competent enough in Norwegian, to attend a normal classes, you have the right to have mother tongue instruction, to have specific instruction in Norwegian as a second language, and/or you have the right to have bilingual subject instruction, bilingual teaching in subjects, until you are good enough to attend. And this, in some schools then, in most municipalities, offer then introduction classes so if you are a newcomer, and you don't know Norwegian you have to attend this introduction class. Some places have



introduction schools, and that's what we have recommended, to have classes at ordinary schools so let's say they attend classes for one year, maximum two years. But then they have to then of course it's a good thing to have an aim, that they are going to be integrated as soon as possible, but what we have written here, and that is my opinion is that partly they stay too short in this introduction class so they are integrated into ordinary classes too early, it means that they presumably know the Norwegian language, but they are not confident enough so that when it comes to Norwegian as a language of instruction in subjects, it's a different thing than just to be able to communicate. So partly they are too early transferred, partly when they are transferred, a lot of teachers or school leaders, they think the job is done so what we have recommend ins that ok, I n a way you have enough competence to be transferred but there should be some continuation because you know research tells that it takes 5-7 years to be good enough in a second language good enough to have a full outcome of the teaching. And thirdly, we also see that sometimes municipalities they interpret these laws in the way that they can kind of avoid using money for it - which they don't think it is necessary, for instance, I'm very critical to what I know in Oslo and maybe Baddun as well. If you are a newcomer and you are going to start in class 1, 6 years of age, you don't need to go into an introduction class, you can go and just start because then the others they are also going to learn to read and write, but you know it's a dramatic difference between learning to read and write in your first language and learning to read and write in a foreign, second language. So actually what we have said is that we recommend increased application or use of paragraph 2.8, so there's actually a minus little thing that ok, the law is there but not everyone is getting the right they have. It's partly, maybe mainly because of resources, its costs money to provide this services, but also because of lack of competence among politicians and leader that they think, they haven't really thought through what it means to be a student with a mother tongue other than Norwegian. So that there is um, I'm not quite content and I think that part, some of the results of the lack of grades in let's say in class, you know we don't have grades until class 7, and you know why class 7 and 8 the grades are measured on international tests between 5 and 8 and when these minority students score less, it could be because they haven't enough Norwegian as a second language competence and I think that is, if you start like that it's difficult to keep track with the others, and the older you are, the more complicated the academic subjects, and the more difficult it is, so sometimes they even, we who are working in higher education sometimes we have students that pass through the whole Norwegian school system and have got good enough marks to be accepted at a higher education institution but still when they are there, they may discover that they lack something so it's not perfect but on the other hand, you cannot say that there are some good things as well partly measured by they enjoy themselves and that they like to go to school and also that so many succeed it's also a good thing. And then one more thing, you know before this last reform, there was a right also to have mother tongue instruction as part of your education but now its only mother tongue as long as you're not good enough in Norwegian. So that's a very instrumental thing, it's only to have mother tongue as a way of being a learner, but actually its not to promote multilingualism, its only to have the right to mother tongue instruction until you are fluent in Norwegian, and then you don't have any right. So some people in that community, they wanted us to re-introduce or at least propose the right to mother tongue instruction. But we didn't do that, but what we did recommend and what I highly recommend now is that we should increasingly in primary, secondary, and upper secondary school, we should offer subjects, language classes, where they can have their mother tongue, not then as a foreign language, but kind of instead of having Spanish or having German, they could have Arabic or Urdu, Turkish. Because I think there should be more emphasis on the value of multilingualism because I think that is a lack in Norway. There is still this opinion that there is, I am now speaking about among politicians, also among some teachers and some parents, that there is a competition between learning Norwegian as a second language and being fluent in that. That should be kind of priority one, and you don't think about, or you kind of forget your first language. What we know now that there is no contradiction between really developing you first language and learning a second language, so we had hoped to have this debate, we wanted actually to have it in parliament. There are some proposals now and there are some schools which offer some of these other languages and also some schools maybe competent or maybe they employ bilingual teachers, that is also a way of not necessarily offering mother tongue twice a week but at least if they have an environment where more languages are heard or that the teachers can help out, both with the learning process and also with the communication with the parents.

I've heard of classes, Tamil, Somali, Urdu being offered as foreign languages in schools?

I think the terminology for language classes in Norway is that you have Norwegian, mother tongue, and all other languages are called foreign languages but what is important, I had, not only me but also someone who had a

Ph.D. from the university of Oslo, she has a Turkish background and she was asked to make a teaching book in Turkish to be used in schools and the directorate in the ministry said she should make a book that could be used so that Turkish could be offered both Norwegian students and for Turkish and you know it's even if some of the Turkish students maybe not that good in their first language, they are far ahead of what the Norwegian speakers would be so we have a hard time to get the ministry and the directorate to understand that you cannot have these pupils in the same classes. If you have heard that Arabic, Somali, that these languages are offered as foreign languages, I would guess that they are offered as language instruction for those who have Arabic and Somali. I hope that is the case because otherwise it shows you a complete lack of competence if they have one student who doesn't know Somali to be in the same class with those who have Somali as their mother tongue. I think it's just a kind of category, the category would be foreign language class. It's relatively new and maybe it's a result of some of pupils that they had and I think that's a good idea because the thing about some years back when you had mother tongue instruction, first of all, it was maybe only two lessons a week. The teachers were very often not qualified, so the reputation wasn't that good, there could become a stigmatization, stigmatizing the pupils who follow Norwegian as a second language curriculum and you have mother tongue. Even some parents, minority parents didn't like it because they felt it was not ambitious enough. So I think to have a real subject and then you can have that subject instead of having another foreign language, that's a natural positive way. I hope that the pressure comes from society, from business and other, who actually need multilingual competence. I hope for the future that this will succeed, it's also about respect, and it's also about recognizing the background, the competences of minority students.

Do you think that mother tongue programmes are realistic?

They're not good enough as they are. There are those mother tongue programmes which are very instrumentalistic so they are just you look at the plan, it's just too much on instruction, transference or intermediate language instruction, it's just meant for learning Norwegian so that is not good but then what we talked about, these other mother tongue, these language classes where you're taught Arabic, Somali, they might be quite good. I don't know the plans or practices. I think it's a shame that there should be more of it. I would like to see the main thing is I would not say that they don't work, but there's too little, there should be more of it.

Do you think mother tongue programmes contribute to a better understanding of Norwegian, or general academic success?

Yes, absolutely.

In what ways?

This is about cognitive development, that the learning process is much easier if you do it in your first language and the more you know in your first language and the more you are learning in your first language, you develop ways of thinking, categories, diversity, vocabulary, so the more competent you are there, the easier it is for you to learn another language and to be able to have a good academic for the teaching of all the subjects in a second language. So I think that it's about how the brain is actually working, how it's developing ways of thinking, analyzing, and that's much easier to develop in your first language.

What do you think could be done better by either the government or the teachers or principals themselves to ensure that minority students' needs are being met in schools? Linguistically, as well as culturally?

I think it's three different ways. First of all, I would like to see more of different types of mother tongue instructions. So, more visibility in more classes in different ways of mother tongue instruction. More systematically working with Norwegian as a second language in all subjects in school so to work to develop your Norwegian is not only a thing you do in the introduction class, not only a thing you do in the classes with you take Norwegian as a mother tongue, but every teacher should work on oral and written Norwegian, even if its maths or natural science. Actually, I would like to see every teacher in every subject working more on language competences for every child, not only for those with a minority background. And this is in accordance with also the curriculum in Norwegian schools and I think that I think that there's a lack of systemically doing this and that is maybe because of a lack of competence,

so I think that there's a need for training more instructors or teachers in Norwegian as a second language teacher instruction. That is also in teacher training, we have some, but we should have more of those teaching Norwegian here, especially in Norwegian as a second language. And thirdly, I think that especially in Oslo where more than 40% of the pupils have another mother tongue than Norwegian, some of them are fluently bilingual, so it's not that they need something specific but being bilingual, it means that they have a different cultural background or a mixed cultural background, and this cultural complexity for me it means that all teacher training, all teaching and learning in primary and secondary and in kindergarten should have this intercultural or multicultural approaches that means that they should look at, every time you have a subject, you should think is this subject equal and relevant for all pupils, is this subject very monocultural and if it is, I mean some historical subjects, maybe its unavoidable, it's about Norwegian history but how can I teach that to make it interesting for everyone and how can we make teaching in natural science culturally sensitive and this is what I am working with now at the teacher training college. We have a research and development project that we've been trying to find out how we all think about these issues and how we can improve the teacher training and it's to make these not only the specific topic for specialists, but to have these integrated as a normal perspective in the training because that teaching in schools and kindergartens is about seeing each individual, recognizing their background and confirming their identity, and at the same time, broadening their perspectives, and making us all a part of our commonality or some joined common experience of being citizens but at the same time appreciating diversity.

Do these classes exist now at the university?

They exist, at least at the university college here, a lot of my colleagues, they do these things. So some do, some don't. I'm not saying it's not there, but still if I'm going to say something about how is the situation in Norway, I think still, you have a division in higher education teacher training programmes both at the universities and the colleges where they're still these multicultural issues and multilingual focus are for some who are specially interested or who have some specific education and the rest may just be going on as before. But we are working on it. And I think there is a development, there's no antagonism anymore. Some years back, some of my colleagues didn't like these things, but now it's more everyone who are out in the preschools or the schools, they can just see by themselves what the situation is and they see the need. And we cannot all be specialists, but we can all have some of these things as able to do without being specialists, it's more like an attitude.

Do you think bilingual programmes or mother tongue programmes support a multilingual Oslo or do the people of Oslo see multilingualism as a value?

I think it's a lack of seeing it as a value. I think it's politically so much emphasized on the Norwegian, and I agree with what they are saying, that when you immigrate to Norway, you have to learn Norwegian. I'm not saying that is wrong but what I'm saying is wrong is that it's wrong to think that this emphasizing learning Norwegian should come instead of developing your mother tongue. I'm afraid that in Oslo, a lot of these students in preschool and in the primary school, they are not given praise. For example, I have grandchildren who are English/Norwegian, bilingual because their father is from Wales, and they are living here, and they are bilingual Norwegian/English. They get a lot of positive feedback and so do their parents, and their grandparents, oh how lucky they are being bilingual so I think neighbors who speak Norwegian and Urdu, how often do they hear oh you are lucky, you are bilingual, you know Urdu and Norwegian, you have a great future. I think it's very seldom they hear that and it's a pity. As I say, I think it's partly lack of competence, but partly also because maybe there's still even if all public policy in Norway is integration, not assimilation, underpinning it all could be that kind of Norwegian, we have this idea of equality that is very strong and it's a good sense, anyways but in a bad sense, after all people think that assimilation into Norway is better and to forget where they come from. Some people may say now in a speech, like the mayor or somebody, that we are happy about all the languages and if you go out in the street and in the schools and you ask parents and pupils I think they will feel that they get approval when they speak in Norwegian but they very rare get approval for speaking in Turkish, Somali. It's kind of a hidden competence.

And the languages – Spanish, French, German?

Of course, that is positively. There is especially in private sector in business, there's a lot of talk about how important it is to be multilingual, bilingual. So it is about the language status.

Do you see any issues among the immigrant communities that aren't being addressed in the classroom that should be?

You know in many years, 10, 20 years back there have always been these issues about physical education, swimming. Also there are things that are typical in Norway, outdoor activities, skiing, some of these issues are culturally strange for some of the newcomers. Some of the issues have to do with gender. I think schools generally now are much better, much more pragmatic in finding solutions but still these things may be issues, but we're not hearing so much about them anymore. Religious education is very surprisingly, there aren't any critics anymore, and we have a common subject for all pupils.

That covers most religions in the class?

Yes, a majority on Christianity, but all religions are covered, philosophy, ethics, and parents have the right if there are some activities that they don't like their child to attend but it's supposed to be objective, critical, pluralistic, so actually in most places, all students are attending. So this was a great issue some years back. It many become an issue again because the new government has announced that they will reintroduce the K in the name of the subject, now it's called religion, life stances, and ethics, but they said they reintroduce the K for Christianity and they will give instruction, 55% of instruction will be on Christianity. That's the proposal, there has been a major reaction from the churches, from the minority religions, from the association for humanities. From all the teacher training, and teacher organizations. If that is implemented, it could lead to a new period in which parents ask for exemption so then we're back to a fight we had some years back. So there are not, I can't say there are so many specific issues that are raised by parents. But of course, if you ask, some parents would say that they want to have mother tongue instruction in school, some would say that they are not content, they have to fight to have their daughters avoiding having swimming, with a t-shirt on, and not just a swim costume. As I said, there were more of these issues, some 10 or 15 years back partly because the schools have become more competent and more pragmatic at finding solutions and partly because these parents of the second generation.

Speaking of parents, have you experience the reactions of parents to what their kids are receiving in school, whether they request mother tongue and don't receive it or they are receiving mother tongue and how they feel?

Yes, throughout the years, I have talked to parents and I've also seen some research, and I've also done another type of research because there are some, let's say 5-7% of parents who for the time being, send their children to their country of origin for schooling. Some Pakistanis, some Somalis. And there have been two different research investigating this, one that I was in charge of, in 2005, and another one that is nearly done. The main reason for doing that is not that they are discontent, the main reason is actually that they had to go back to take care of the parents so they bring their children with them and then they attend school, some of them argue that it's good for the children to learn their own religion, culture, language but typically both in our research in 2005 and the one now, done by another institute, stated that these immigrant students attend schools in their parent's countries of origin, they attend private schools where the language of instruction is English. So the ambition of the parents is to give their children a more international education. They say that they learn more there than they do in Norwegian schools, so they are critical. The ambitions are not high enough, they can be critical towards the maths education or too much outdoor activities, they are more themselves used to a more traditional way of teaching. There are some voices that are critical, but the main majority of the parents are also in these investigations, they say that they are content with the situation.

I want to talk about mother tongue programmes and talk about the specific obstacles that are preventing them from begin implemented and then to talk about bilingual education and what this looks like today. Can you tell me any more specific obstacles that you think are stopping mother tongue education from being a successful model in schools?

Partly, they can get away with denying students mother tongue education, by saying that we think it's more important to learn Norwegian. They are still in this dichotomy, that they give priority to that and they are not so interested. Partly, let's say some of the reasons that are legitimate are that there are so many languages, so I think it's unrealistic to think that everyone could get mother tongue instruction, I mean there are hundreds of languages, some of them have very few students. Then of course, the counter argument would be ok, we can't offer all, but we could offer classes in Urdu, Turkish, Arabic, Somali, and some of the other big languages, but then, that is not

fair. It is their right, everyone should have it. Before the last reform, it was a right but I think approximately 50% who wanted it got it, and there were some who didn't apply because some minority parents who don't care, who think we can take care of that ourselves and I think it's the same now in Sweden, I think they have a right to mother tongue instruction there. Approximately 50% here get it. I think there are so many languages so it's unrealistic. We can't find teachers, you know, and we can find teachers to some subjects, in some of the big languages, but so the competence of teachers is also a problem because if the competence of a teacher is too low and you know then the pupils are not doing and the parents are not doing it, etc. Idealistically, I would like and I would recommend that the big cities, like Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø, Trondheim, where there are large communities, that I think the cities and communities would benefit if they could offer mother tongue instruction in some big languages. But then they have to convince the parents that this mother tongue instruction is beneficial for their child and that it is not something that competes with their child's competence in Norwegian that is one thing, you have to convince parents about this. And then you have to have qualified teachers. A step in that direction would be to have at least these classes in lower secondary, instead of having everyone taking Spanish, French, or German, some of them could take these other languages. I think that's a realistic approach to these issues and I hope that is the way that we go.

As a side note, I've seen a chart and the total enrollment for mother tongue programmes this year is zero. According to this, they do not currently exist, do you know why that is?

It's because of this paragraph 2.8 saying that you have the right to mother tongue until you know enough. So if you go into the introduction classes, there you will find mother tongue instruction but it will be a type of mother tongue instruction that is very instrumental, meant to build, to be a transition from one language to the other so then you don't have the right to mother tongue instruction now, so it is all dependent on the municipalities, the authorities, if they are willing to, if they see the advantage of it. You know in a time when at the moment, there are so many limited amount of money and they don't have to use it. If it was a broad, if this was very important like, but it's like that in school, if it's a law, then you have to offer that many classes in maths, you do it, but if its mother tongue instruction, there's no saying you're supposed to offer it, and they don't do it. It's a pity because I think we could have a, I see, and I don't think the way to go forward is to say that it should be a right for everyone because I think that's unrealistic, but I think there should be a demand saying at least the large communities' mother tongues should be offered as a language in schools.

Do you consider yourself to be monolingual, bilingual, or plurilingual?

I regard myself in a narrow sense, monolingual because Norwegian is my language. I am multilingual in the way that I speak and write also English, German, and some French, but it's all languages that I have learned in school. I'm not using all the languages every day and it's not part of my everyday life except that I now have to use English a bit more. Because the definition of being bilingual is that you use two languages every day, in that, I'm not bilingual in that way.

Which languages do you speak or interact with in your personal life and your work life?

In my work life, it's Norwegian and English now but I was also a German teacher, so I also spoke German. Then, thirdly, French.

Have you had any significant language learning experiences?

Yes, I've studied German, I have a degree from university to be a German teacher. I learnt French in France working as an au pair and some courses afterwards. English, I never studied but I learnt it through my work and by being accepted as a first M. Phil and then Ph.D. student at the University of Warwick, and also privately then I use English because of my son in law and because of my grandchildren. I also learned some Urdu, by doing research among Urdu speaking Norwegians. It's part private, part work related.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

In the bill, the main perspectives we focused on were to promote bilingualism or multilingual approaches, we came

up with proposals promoting Norwegian as a second language, I mentioned that. We also found out that there was a lack of competence both among leaders, politicians, and among teachers, and that NAFO is a very important national centre, but there's still a lack of competence among teachers and also we found another perspective, that there's typically a lack of, or the implementation, as I've said there's a discrepancy between not perfect, quite good laws and rights for minorities in Norwegian law, education law etc., but I think we found that throughout the different parts of Norway, there is absolutely a lack of implementation and that is bad. It doesn't help to have good intentions if there is no practice.



