

LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN NORWAY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The National Linguistic Situation

There are three official languages in Norway. Two of these are the written standard forms of Norwegian: *bokmål*, by far the most frequently used, and *nynorsk*. The third is Sami which is a minority language, used by a smaller group of people living up north in the country and used as an administrative language in six municipalities alongside the two standard forms of Norwegian. As to spoken language Norwegians speak a whole range of fairly different dialects.

An objective in public administration is to obtain a balance in the use of the two Norwegian language forms, either by publishing two language versions of official documents or by partly writing them in *bokmål* and partly in *nynorsk*. Each municipality (or even each school district by vote) decides which of the two standard Norwegian language forms should be the language of written instruction in the first seven years of the primary and lower secondary school system which now covers 10 years of schooling (according to Reform 1997). From the lower secondary level onwards the pupils may themselves decide which language form they would like to use as their primary written language. And from the 9th grade in this school system the study of both language forms constitutes a compulsory part of the curriculum. All public employees have to master both.

The first foreign language in the public school system is English which is an obligatory school subject all through the compulsory part of the school system, *i.e.* from 1st grade to 10th grade (according to Reform 1997).

By law all pupils have the right to three years of upper secondary schooling. English is also a compulsory school subject at this level. This means that an obligatory course of a basic character must be taken by all pupils in all branches, general academic as well as vocational, of the upper secondary school system. English at this level is now called A-language. In addition various types of advanced courses in English are offered according to definite rules in the general academic branches (Reform 1994).

A second foreign language is optional in the lower secondary school system. It is offered as an elective from 8th to 10th grade. German and French are the most common second foreign languages taught, although Finnish is also a possibility. This language is called B-language when pupils study it in the lower secondary school system *and continue* studying it at more advanced levels in the upper secondary school system. Pupils may choose between two levels in their B-language course.

However, if the pupils in the upper secondary school system start studying a completely new foreign language, it is called C-language. Thus a C-language means starting it as a beginner course. However, progression is meant to be steeper with this age group. Like in the lower secondary school system German and French, in addition to English, are the most commonly taught foreign languages in the upper secondary school system. However, schools may offer languages such as Latin, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Finnish or Sami as C-languages. Pupils in the general academic branches of the upper secondary school system must always study one or two foreign languages in addition to English. In some of the vocational branches the pupils must also take a smaller course in a B- or a C-language in addition to English (according to Reform 1994).

In the higher education system foreign language studies are primarily offered at the four universities but also at some of the twenty-six regional colleges (see below). A handful of colleges have university status but will not be dealt with in the description below since their importance is less significant in a language teacher education context.

The universities offer courses in Norwegian as L1 and L2 and in a whole range of foreign languages and basically up to three different levels (Norwegian as L2, however, only up to the second level outlined below; 10 credits means half a year's full-time study, 20 credits a year's full time study *etc.*):

- a 20 credits level *i.e.* a one year's full-time study (*grunnfag*),
- a 30 (20+10) credits level *i.e.* a full-time study of one and a half year (*mellomfag*),
- and
- a 70 (30+40) credits level *i.e.* a full-time study of three and a half years (*hovedfag*).

The traditional major content components of language studies are linguistics, literature, and culture. In addition, skills components such as writing are taught. In foreign languages skills components, including translation skills, have a central place.

Evaluation in our higher education is a very formal thing, normally consisting of several examination days for each level and always with both internal and external examiners involved. All components are evaluated, including the language skills components.

Normally the courses given in the higher education system are based on a minimum level of competence in the language from the upper secondary school system, mostly a minimum level equivalent to a C-language. The relevant foreign language thus normally is the language of instruction. However, some foreign languages, such as Russian and Finnish, are also given as beginner courses at the universities. The situation as to language of instruction is, of course, to some extent different there.

In the humanities the lower academic degree, the *cand. mag.* degree, consists of 80 credits, *i.e.* four years of full-time study. The upper degree, the *cand. philol.* degree, consists of 120 credits, *i.e.* six years of full time study. Definite rules regulate the minimum levels of the components which may make up the academic degrees. The upper academic degree must, for example, always consist of one 70 credits component (cp. above), including a master's thesis in addition to components of a less extensive nature. The thesis must always be a piece of autonomous research.

Since 1992 half of the mandatory 20 credits course in teacher education at the universities, *i.e.* 10 credits, can be included in the academic degree. In addition to the *cand. philol.* upper

academic degree (henceforth called M.A. level or degree - although not completely comparable) the postgraduate linguistic programmes at the universities offer Ph.D.-degrees in, among other things, Norwegian, foreign languages, and applied linguistic disciplines (cp. post-graduate programmes in subject didactics in 2.1.1.2. below).

Some of the regional colleges offer courses in foreign languages, as noted above, largely English. Courses given are normally courses pertaining to lower credits levels. Up to now only one regional college is offering a foreign language programme at the M.A. level. This applies to English and is a joint responsibility with one of the universities.

1.2 Description of Area Specific Understanding of Bilingual Education

Three different understandings of the term 'bilingual education' will be outlined in the following, of which the last one clearly is the area specific understanding.

1) Among a small group of teacher educators involved in The Council of Europe's work the term 'bilingual education' is known as an education which implies that pupils from several language communities, a host community and one or more immigrant communities, through classroom and playground interaction should be enabled to understand each other's languages. However, this is not a common understanding of the term in the educational community in general in Norway.

2) The term 'bilingual education' has only fairly recently been used in Norway about the teaching of non-language school subjects to classes where minority language pupils are represented. The idea is that the teacher of the non-language school subjects should be assisted by a bilingual teacher or teaching assistant knowledgeable in both Norwegian and the minority language involved for the purpose of *helping* minority language pupils understand the subject matter taught in Norwegian. However, this idea has been difficult to implement, among other things, for the lack of funding and qualified bilingual personnel. Thus this particular conception of 'bilingual education' is unknown in the educational community at large.

3) The term 'bilingual education' is normally understood as the teaching of other school subjects, for example history or mathematics, in a foreign language. The area-specific use is, in other words, synonymous with the term *content-based language instruction* (CLI), equally often used in the L2 teaching literature.

1.3 Legislation and Language Teacher Education

The term 'language teacher education' will be used below in an effort to get away from the more restricted term 'training' and thus to view it more as an integral part of the total education of a language teacher.

A white paper on teacher education was presented in 1996 and passed through Parliament (*Stortinget*) in the spring term this year (Reform 1998). Since the new ideas introduced there are not yet put into operation, the following sketch will be based on the existing set-up of teacher education.

All teacher education for teachers in both primary, lower, and upper secondary schools is regulated by the Act of 8 June 1973 concerning the education of teachers and the Act of 12 May 1995 concerning the universities and regional colleges. The acts specify the minimum

requirements of a teacher's qualifications. Presently this normally means minimum qualifications in terms of either a four years' programme at a regional college or an academic subject matter degree combined with one year of teacher education studies at a university (cp. above). The teacher education part is, in other words, offered both at a university and a regional college.

2. LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION

2.1. Initial Teacher Education

2.1.1. At university level

2.1.1.1. The curriculum

At three of the universities the teacher education programme is presently organized according to a consecutive study model. At one university the programme is organized according to a concurrent model.

For the sake of economy the following will focus on education for the teaching of *foreign* language courses in the school system.

The current teacher education programme at the universities consists of a one year's study, as noted above. For foreign language students this presently includes theoretical studies and practice in the following three domains:

- general educational theory,
- foreign language didactics, including subject didactics, and
- student teaching.

Various courses are given within the two first domains. Student practice consists largely of teaching practice in two different schools (lower and upper levels) within the public school system. Students take subject didactics courses and get teaching practice in the language(s) included in their academic degrees.

The first two domains are assessed by means of written exams and/or term papers and, in accordance with what was said above, graded by internal as well as external examiners and credited with a traditional academic grade. Student teaching is assessed in the co-operating schools by a commission consisting of the student's supervisors in the relevant foreign language(s) taught and representatives from the university teacher education department. Student teaching is either credited with a traditional academic grade or a passed/failed grade, depending on university.

The courses in foreign language didactics presently include the following five major content components, with subcomponents:

1. Academic subject and school subject.

The history of the academic subject and the school subject; the place of foreign languages in society; the multicultural society; analyses of study programmes, syllabuses, and teaching

materials; choice of content matter and the role of literature, culture, and grammar in the academic foreign language subject as well as in the school foreign language subject; the training of skills; the selection of different types of texts; research and development work in relation to foreign language learning and teaching, appropriate research methods; and basic theoretical and empirical problems.

2. The pupil and the subject matter

Theories of language, language in use, language learning and motivation; teaching methods; analyses of learner language; learning to learn; differentiated teaching, teaching of specific groups, and teaching pupils with other mother tongues than Norwegian.

3. The teacher, the subject matter, and the school

The role of and the qualifications of the foreign language teacher; the possibilities for updating in subject matter, subject didactics, and language skills; the co-operation between teachers; and interdisciplinary teaching.

4. Planning and organizing teaching

Defining objectives; planning teaching; selecting teaching materials, activities, and media; and different ways of organizing the classroom.

5. Evaluation

The distinction between process and product evaluation, formal and informal evaluation, and self-evaluation.

Bilingual teaching in the area-specific sense, *i.e.* as CLI, is not defined as a separate component but can normally be discussed in connection with

- content component 1: research and development work,
- content component 2: teaching of specific groups,
- content component 3: co-operation between teachers and interdisciplinary teaching, and finally
- content component 4: planning teaching.

2.1.1.2 The structure of the programmes and prerequisites

The programmes at the universities aim primarily at qualifying teachers for teaching in lower and upper secondary schools. Foreign language teaching at these levels requires in principle a minimum foreign language subject matter study of 20 credits (*grunnfag*). Accordingly the minimum subject matter foundation for the one year's foreign language teacher education programme is 20 credits. A minimum grade in the subject matter studied has from time to time been suggested as a prerequisite for admission into teacher education.

Foreign language students are strongly encouraged to spend some time in the target language country, and shorter study trips are normally arranged by the major university departments to special study centres (Caen, Kiel, and York) where tailored programmes are offered for students, mostly at the lowest, *i.e.* the *grunnfag*, level.

Students normally enter a university teacher education programme after completing either a minimum of three and a half years or five and a half years of various subject matter studies at a university or an equivalent institution. The following minimum subject matter requirement, as part of the lower academic degree, must normally be met:

- one subject matter study of at least 30 credits, and
- another of at least 20 credits.

The interest in subject didactics as both a teaching discipline and a research field is rapidly growing in Norway. In particular this applies to the major school subjects such as Norwegian and foreign languages. To illustrate this it may be mentioned that several M.A. and Ph.D. theses have been written in subject didactics during the last 10 - 15 years. Special M.A. programmes in subject didactics have been established in some of the university departments and others are being planned, for example, in foreign languages. These programmes have several purposes, among other things,

- to strengthen teacher education by increasing the theoretical understanding of future teachers,
- to increase the sum total of systematic knowledge in the field of subject didactics through the writing of M.A. theses on the basis of autonomous, scientific investigations, and
- to function as *a first step* in the qualification of researchers in subject didactics.

2.1.1.3. Practical training

Student teaching for students in the university teacher education programmes usually lasts for approximately 12 weeks. Student teachers normally have to teach two school subjects, subjects equivalent to their subject matter studies. This may, for example, apply to the foreign language in which they have written their M.A. thesis and thus earned 70 credits and to another subject where they may have earned only 20 or 30 credits (cp. above). All student teachers are supervised by co-operating teachers, one in each school subject taught.

2.1.1.4. Impact of community programmes

The number of exchange students in the ERASMUS mobility programme has steadily been increasing. For students studying foreign languages for the purpose of entering teacher education later this is an important programme. As to action C of LINGUA, "Assistantships for future language teachers", this had a difficult start in Norway. However, good feedback from students who already have had such assistantships abroad has increased the interest among students presently involved in studies leading to a degree in language teaching. The interest among schools in receiving an assistant from abroad is also increasing, and so is the interest among European students in being assistants in Norway.

2.1.2. At non-university level

2.1.2.1. The curriculum

Teacher education at non-university level means studies at a regional college. This type of teacher education normally aims at educating teachers for work mainly in the primary and lower secondary school system. As noted above, it consists of a four years' programme. The role of foreign languages at a regional college is, however, modest compared to a university. Apart from this fact, which naturally influences the resources available for foreign language didactics, the teacher education part of the study at a regional college is not much different from that of a university (see 2.1.1.1 above)

2.1.2.2 The structure of the programmes and

2.1.2.3. Practical training

The teacher education study at a regional college consists largely of a series of smaller subject matter components which are meant to qualify the students for teaching several school subjects in the primary and lower secondary school system. The first two and a half years (*i.e.* 50 credits) consist of a series of compulsory components, such as educational theory, student teaching, mathematics (5 credits are compulsory), social studies, practical-aesthetic topics, religion, and Norwegian (10 credits are compulsory). During the last one and a half year of the four years' programme the student may choose subject matter studies freely and may choose to take larger subject matter components (the final 30 credits of a total of 80). If he so wishes, he may, for example, take the last 20 credits at a university.

2.1.2.4 Impact of community programmes

Students at regional colleges take part in the ERASMUS mobility programme on a par with students at the universities. It has been difficult, however, to get students at regional colleges interested in action C of the LINGUA programme, "Assistantships for future language teachers", although the programme is in principle equally relevant for these students as for the students at the universities.

2.2. In-service teacher programmes (INSET)

2.2.1. At university level

2.2.1.1. The curriculum and

2.2.1.2. The structure of the programmes

In-service courses are offered by the universities, both by subject matter departments and teacher education departments. Mostly it is a question of shorter in-service courses, ranging from a couple of days to two weeks. The courses offer updating in content areas such as literature and culture, in language skills, and in subject didactics - depending on which university department is responsible. Some of the courses are given abroad in the target language culture, although most often planned and taught partly by Norwegian university teachers and partly by target community teachers. As part of the national agreement between the Norwegian universities and the University in York, for example, the Norwegian Study Centre in York offers in-service courses for teachers of English. Similar in-service courses are offered for teachers of other foreign languages. Institute for In-service Courses (*Statens Lærerkurs*), a unit of the Ministry of Education, has a coordinating function and invites the universities and other institutions to apply for grants to arrange and give courses. Courses have lately been offered in bilingual education, *i.e.* in the area-specific sense, (cp. 1.2. above) and particularly interested teachers have joined a Nordic network as well as European networks in the field. This activity is encouraged by the Ministry of Education which gives special grants, although still small, for this particular field of in-service education. A national conference on bilingual education, funded by the Ministry of Education, takes place in October 1997.

2.2.1.3. Practical training

Some of the in-service-courses mentioned in 2.2.1.2. above include a period of practical training in between course sessions. The participants are then normally expected to try out in their own classes ideas discussed in the course and then evaluate them.

2.2.1.4. Impact of community programmes

The community programmes are steadily getting better known in the language teaching community. Action C, "In-service training in the field of foreign language teaching", had problems getting enough applicants in the first year of the programme. However, the situation is now quite different. We still have a problem in that it is difficult to recruit participants to courses in the smaller languages. We also actually have a problem recruiting teachers of languages such as French and German. Teachers of other languages than English and teachers of French and German have therefore been defined as priority groups by the Norwegian national LINGUA committee and ranked accordingly in connection with applications for grants.

2.2.2. At non-university level

2.2.2.1. The curriculum

2.2.2.2. The structure and

2.2.2.3. Practical training

In-service programmes offered by the regional colleges are similar to those offered by the universities. Institute for In-service Courses (*Statens Lærerkurs*; cp. above), also has a coordinating and funding function for courses arranged by these colleges on a par with courses arranged by the universities and other institutions.

2.2.2.4. Impact of community programmes

It has been difficult to recruit language teachers working in primary schools to the community programmes, *i.e.* teachers largely educated at regional colleges. For the LINGUA programme, for example, this applies to all the actions, although teachers of English in primary schools have been defined as a priority group by the Norwegian national LINGUA committee and ranked accordingly in connection with applications for grants.

3. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION

3.1. With respect to the nature of the schools

Norway has a strong public school system with a strong standardization of educational offers given. To a large extent this is due to a concern for ensuring equality of educational opportunities across the country. Norway is a sparsely populated country and a country with a distance south-north equivalent to the distance between the southern tip of the country and the centre of Italy. This may turn out to be a serious problem for us unless we are able to educate enough qualified teachers for bilingual education. It is a question of being able to meet the requirement of equality of learning opportunities across the country. Apart from teaching at a handful of international baccalaureate schools, teaching in the public school

system is normally consistent with nationally established syllabus guidelines, where bilingual education has no official standing yet, as noted above.

3.2. With respect to new technologies and autonomous learning

New IT technologies are gradually being adopted although machines in sufficient numbers are still lacking in most schools. IT has been defined as a priority area in teacher education as well as in the public school system in general. Autonomous learning is encouraged in schools, the concept appears in the most recent syllabus guidelines, and many in-service courses have been offered in this field during the last 5-10 years.

3.3. With respect to initial and INSET training

The concept 'bilingual education' still only has an occasional position in initial and in-service teacher education compared to other concepts (cp. 2.1.1.1.). An in-service course in four stages is, however, being planned for next school-year as a co-operation between three Nordic countries and Great Britain and supported by the LINGUA programme. Considerable funding for research and development work in the field will be necessary in the future (cp. 4. below).

3.4. With respect to the mobility of language teacher trainees and trainers

See point 2.2.1.4 and 2.2.2.4 above.

3.5. With respect to methodology (didactics) and innovations (open and distance learning)

The concept 'methodology' is in general replaced by the concept 'subject didactics' in research and teacher education in Norway, opening for questions of 'what' and 'why' in addition to questions of 'how' (cp. point 2.1.1.1. and 2.1.1.2.).

In a country of the shape described above we will undoubtedly - at least to some extent - have to use distance learning and various kinds of new technologies to be able to ensure a highest degree of equality in the offer of educational opportunities, irrespective of where you live. This will probably be relevant for bilingual teaching for the public school system and for teacher education programmes, whether at the level of pre-service or in-service/continuing education. Fortunately we can already draw on some experience as to distance learning. Programmes have already been offered in some academic subjects such as history and English. A programme for distance education in various subject didactic disciplines is currently being considered.

4. NEW NEEDS IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION

How to educate teachers who are qualified for bilingual education or CLI must be investigated thoroughly. Among other things, the minimum level of linguistic competence such teachers must have, must be clearly defined. Both subject matter departments and teacher education departments must be involved in this work. Research in this field is now urgent and clearly appropriate as joint projects with community funding.

5. NEW MEASURES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION

a)

Research is necessary in order to develop new ways of teaching foreign languages to young pupils by exploiting these learners' capacity for informal learning. This is necessary in order to implement the objective of the community: giving skills in two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue for *all* pupils. To start teaching a second foreign language to pupils in the lower secondary school system, as is done in Norway, may, of course, be successful for the academically gifted pupils but seems to be far less suitable for other groups, at least with the methodology applied. A research programme in this field is appropriate as a joint project with community funding.

b)

In the enthusiasm for a European dimension in education where many citizens speak each other's languages and understand each other's cultures we must not forget the need in the community as a whole for enough citizens with sufficiently high skills in non-community languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, and with sufficient knowledge of non-community cultures. In the perspective of internationalization and globalization of, for example, trade this is an important issue.

c)

It is a well-known fact that there are more and quicker changes in our society now than previously. In general this is an enormous challenge for teacher education, and a problem that will have to find its solution fairly quickly. Short in-service courses of the types we know so well, may often give a lot of inspiration, but they seldom give new basic qualifications. Continuing education in terms of credit-giving courses of some weight is therefore an absolute necessity in the future. And this clearly applies to bilingual teaching.

How do we ensure that a sufficient number of credit-courses are offered and how do we ensure that all teachers, not only the most interested, sign up for such courses? It seems to me that an efficient start could be for employers of teachers nationwide to require a certain number of new credits taken every 5th or so. This would create a need for courses to be developed, including courses in bilingual teaching, and I am convinced the so-called "market mechanisms" would come into play fairly quickly.